

MAKING *History*



After all the events had been completed, the team sat in anticipation as they waited to find out the final results. They knew it was close. Chris Guay, Texas Tech University's rodeo coach, told the team he was pretty sure they had the lead, but he needed to check point totals one more time.

He came back with downcast eyes and a disappointing look on his face as he dismally said, "Well, we uh..."

His lips slowly began curl up as he finished his sentence with a huge smile and the long awaited words, "We won it!"

June 16, 2012, will live on as a memorable day in the minds of the Texas Tech women's rodeo team members. It is the day when Jessica Frost, Taylor Langdon, Bailey Guthrie and Haley Nelson achieved their goal of winning the collegiate national title. The team finished nearly 100 points ahead of Central Wyoming College and Sam Houston State University, which were second and third, respectively.

According to the College National Finals Rodeo website, the CNFR has been hosted in Casper, Wyo., for the past 14 years, and it has been described as

the "Rose Bowl" of college rodeo. Approximately 400 contestants from over 100 universities compete individually and as a team with one goal in mind: win a national title.

The first accomplishment of the year for the Texas Tech women's rodeo team was winning the Southwest region, which is one of the 11 college rodeo regions.

Guay said the southwest region is fiercely competitive

and often considered the toughest college rodeo region.

Although they dominated the region, the team was sitting in seventh place

going into nationals. However, Guay said he felt sure they had a chance to win.

"It wasn't a cakewalk; we had competition," Guay said. "I just felt real confident that we were going to do good with the momentum we had going."

Jessica Frost, a senior animal science major from Somis, Calif., represented Texas Tech as a barrel racer at nationals.

She said her main focus throughout the year was conquering the region. After the team achieved that goal, her sights were set on the national title.

"The fact that it's the first womens team in Texas Tech history to do it, we kind of get to go down in history and never be forgotten."

She knew only a small number of people had the confidence, which she lacked at times, that the team could bring home the gold.

"We (Texas Tech) had never won it before, so I mean underdogs is a good way to put it," Frost said. "We'd never even been considered for it before."

The CNFR website notes that the last team national title won by Texas Tech was in 1955, and it was the men's rodeo team. In order to win a national title, the team must have the greatest number of points from the events in which the team qualified to compete.

Also according to the website, the national finals rodeo consists of three go-rounds of every event and a short go-round for the contestants who have the best average from the three go-rounds. Contestants are also recognized for placing in the aggregate, which is the average of all go-rounds.

Frost said the women on the Texas Tech rodeo team proceeded to make Texas Tech a notable name in the realm of rodeo. Along with winning the national title, each woman on the team placed in the top ten in at least one of the go-rounds she competed in at the national contest.

Guthrie, a recent exercise and sport sciences graduate from Rigby, Idaho, won the all-around champion title for the Southwest region. Therefore, she qualified for nationals as an all-around competitor and competed in the goat tying and breakaway roping events.

"I love each event because I love competition," Guthrie said, "and I love how as rodeo athletes we get to work individually but still succeed as a team."

Although only four women from Texas Tech qualified to compete at nationals, team members Kirsten Stubbs and Carley Richardson played a huge role in the art of getting there. Stubbs and

Richardson competed well throughout the rodeo year, and ultimately, the contribution of their points from placing at various college rodeos helped carry the Texas

Tech women's rodeo team to its first national title.

Guthrie said, "The best part about winning nationals was seeing how every member of our team contributed to our winning success."

Guay stressed that one of the keys to the team's successful year was how the contestants kept their composure at each rodeo they competed in, including nationals.

"It's a pretty big mental game, that rodeoing," Guay said. "You just have to get to the point where you block it all out and go do what you've been doing all year."

Guthrie agreed that confidence triumphs nerves in intense situations.

"I would get a little nervous right before I competed, but it was more of an excited nervous than a scared nervous," Guthrie said. "I knew I had prepared myself the best I could to compete, and I just had to

do all I could in each run and then let everything else fall into place."

Furthermore, Frost said rodeo is a unique sport. What makes rodeo different from other sports, she

said, is that while each contestant competes individually in events, the focus still heavily relies on what many other athletes would consider an atypical team.

"Every time you're racing against a clock you're not really racing against other people. You're trying to beat your best time," Frost said.

"It's not necessarily an individual sport because you have a partner as your horse."

Frost will no longer be competing at the collegiate level, but after graduation in December she plans to try her hand as a professional barrel racer. She said she could not have ended her college rodeo career on a better note.



Jessica Frost, a senior animal science major from Somis, Calif.



Guthrie, a recent exercise and sport sciences graduate from Rigby, Idaho

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"I've got to say winning that national title is pretty awesome," Frost said. "It's the last thing I got to do for my team, so kind of go out with a bang."

Guthrie commented that the team made her college experience worthwhile.

"One thing I'll always remember is the friendships I made while competing for Tech," she said. "There truly are great people everywhere who are willing to help and be there for you in times of need, and that's what makes teams so special and fun to be a part of."

Frost also said one of things she will miss the most about college rodeos is the friendships she made. For example, Frost and Guthrie not only competed as teammates, but they became close friends as roommates. Now, they share a monumental achievement of which they will always remember.

"I've never been part of a national team before," Frost said. "Everyone dreams of it, and the fact that it's the first women's team in Texas Tech history to do it, we kind of get to go down in history and never be forgotten." 

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