

Personal Lifestyles : Greg Carlson

Debra Trnovec*

A man in a popular Country-Western song dreams, "I should've been a cowboy. I should've learned to rope and ride..." Greg Carlson (Class of 1995) isn't just dreaming. Not only is he fulfilling his dream of becoming a veterinarian, he has also become a nationally ranked cowboy. This is no easy task.

Greg is a junior in Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University. Last spring (1993), in addition to dealing with the stress and demands of the sophomore curriculum, Greg enjoyed his final and most successful year of college and Pro-Am rodeo. He competed in eleven college rodeos which involved travelling quite frequently on weekends within a collegiate region that included North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. Greg's spring consisted of 3-4 day school weeks, driving an average of 1100 miles for a single rodeo, studying between events and on the road, and playing "catchup" every Sunday night. Greg says his final rodeo was May 7-9, the weekend before final exams. Was it worth it? After talking with Greg, you know he wouldn't have wanted it any other way! When the dust cleared and the final time was recorded, Greg received year-end regional awards of: 2nd-Calf Roping, 3rd-Team Roping, 4th-Steer Wrestling, and Reserve Champion All-Around Cowboy. These statistics qualified Greg for an invitation to the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Finals in Bozeman, MT, representing 32 states. Greg's practice and talent gained him a national ranking of 11th in both Calf Roping and Team Roping. After final exams, he spent his summer - you guessed it - roping!

Greg also had an outstanding Pro-Am year, competing in approximately 33 North Dakota Rodeo Association, Northern Plains Rodeo Association, and Roughrider Rodeo Association sponsored rodeos. The Roughrider

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Rodeo Association awarded Greg year-end Reserve Champion Steer Wrestling and Calf Roping awards, as well as, Champion All-Around Cowboy; a title Greg has held four of the past five years.

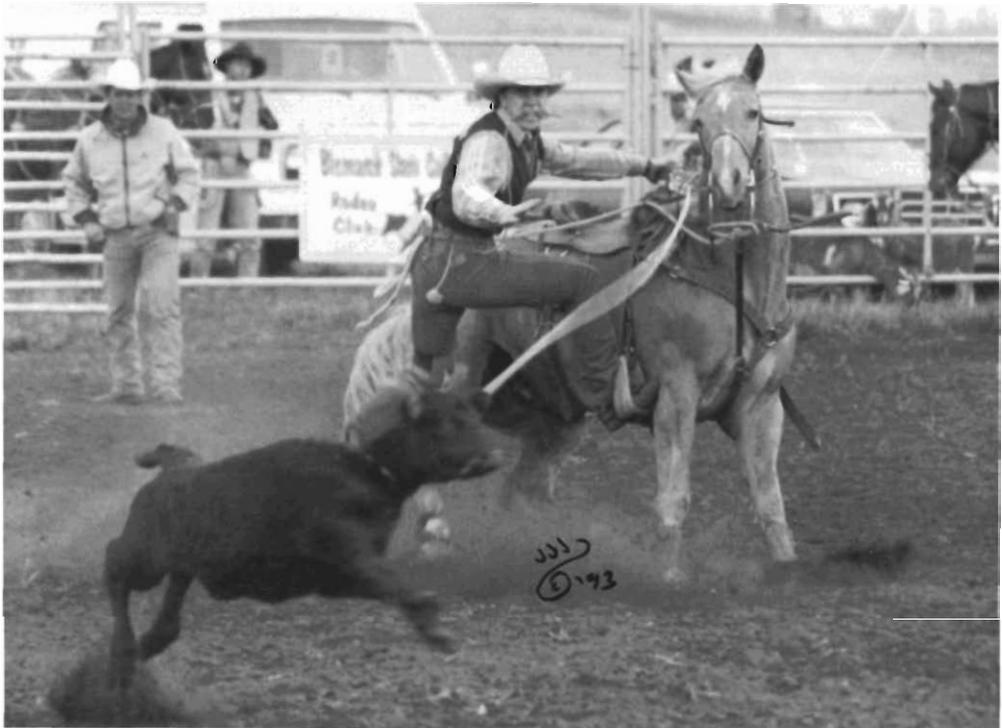
Success in 1993 for Greg also meant money. Rodeos, both college and Pro-Am earned him around \$10,000; not bad for a "summer job". As is the way of rodeo, after gas money, animal feed, medical expenses, hotel and bar tabs, Greg estimates he cleared \$1,000, "but I had a really good time", he says.

Greg is a native of North Dakota, where he began competing in rodeos at eight years of age. Rodeo and Veterinary Medicine came together when he was 13. His first job was at a feedlot doctoring calves, because he was the one talented enough with a rope to "catch 'em". He became serious about rodeo his senior year of high school, and earned an all-expenses-paid rodeo scholarship in addition to an academic scholarship to Dickinson State Univ. in 1988. He transferred to North Dakota State Univ. in 1991 to pursue a pre-veterinary curriculum. In 1991-92. Greg met the down-side of rodeo when knee injuries and five subsequent surgeries delayed his rodeo career. After intense therapy and knee braces, he returned to competition. Overcoming the physical challenges made his 1992-93 victories even sweeter achievements.

Why does he rodeo? "I love the thrill of competition. It's something I'm good at and can make money with, and I've met some good people through rodeos. Growing-up in North Dakota, I see rodeo not just as a sport, but as a way of life unique to the American West. If we lose rodeo, we lose part of our heritage." What is his future? "I'd love to quit everything to rodeo, it's a great way of life. But, it's a young man's sport, and I'm not sure my knees can handle it." Upon graduation from veterinary school, Greg plans to work in a North-Central US equine/beef practice, and still make some rodeos as time allows. Someday, he hopes, he can take his children to rodeos and pass on to them their Western heritage.



Brookings, South Dakota, collegiate rodeo



Bismarck, North Dakota, collegiate rodeo