

The Team Roping Journal's

EXTRA

FEBRUARY/2020

CLAY
TRYAN

THE THREE-TIME
WORLD CHAMPION



ONE ON ONE

WITH CLAY TRYAN

*from The Score Podcast,
with Chelsea Shaffer*



CS: What was the Tryan family practice pen like when you were a kid?

CT: I want to say it was railroad ties and wood with wire in between. We got lights when I was a little bit older. It was probably 300 feet long and 150 feet wide—that's kind of how everybody built arenas back then. We had a guest ranch, and we taught people how to rope so my dad was always trading horses here and there. He wasn't necessarily a horse trader, but he had all these horses for these people to ride. So we would just mix and match on whatever was left over that we didn't use that week, and we'd rope on them.

CS: Did you have a horse that helped build your roping as a kid?

CT: I did have a really good mare that I grew up roping on. She was the first horse that I got to ride and she kind of let me know what a good horse was. She had a colt and Brady and Travis both made the NFR on her. They never rode her at the NFR, but they rode her a lot during the season. I grew up on different horses that my dad would buy and sell. I was out there all summer long running the chutes, back then wrapping 40 head of steers every day and unwrapping 40 head of steers every day.

CS: How has your dad influenced you and your brothers' roping?

CT: I had this dream of actually doing what I do now and to actually accomplish some of it. My dad was a huge influence on me and my brothers making it. He obviously knew enough because we all made it. He was hard on me and Travis, but he wanted us to be good and wanted the best for us. I have to thank him a lot for the way he was.

CS: When you were a kid was your dad still rodeoing a lot or had he retired?

CT: No, he quit. I don't think he really liked it. He made the NFR in 1984. I

don't know how many years he rodeoed after that. I started school in '85 or '86, and he stayed home. He would amateur rodeo and ProRodeo over the Fourth of July. He would circuit rodeo, but he said there really wasn't money in it back then and he didn't want to be gone as much as it requires to be away from us to do it, which is cool and honorable.

CS: Were you and your brothers super competitive with one another when you were growing up?

CT: Brady is 10 years younger and Travis and I are 20 months apart. We were super competitive. I think it made us better because before me and him came along there wasn't many guys from the North that ever even made the NFR. It was mainly guys from California, Arizona or Texas. It was unheard of for guys in Montana. Nowadays there's people from up North that make it, but back then it didn't seem like there was a lot of people that were good enough. It's hard being from up there. You get about four good months out of the year—maybe five. In Texas, I know it's hot, but you can go 12 months out of the year if you need to, and that's a huge advantage.

CS: You love competing at jackpots. Do you think that after rodeo you could put on jackpots?

CT: I could. I have a lot of ideas. You go to places and you see certain people do well and certain producers that are good at what they do and you have ropings that you like going to. I could see myself doing a little bit. I don't know if I will or not. I have put on some ropings. I've always helped my dad out and have been around it. I plan on doing this a little while longer unless I can't win, then I'll be done. The sport kind of tells you when you're done. If you're a header and you can't get any heeblers to rope with you anymore and you don't really win—it's time.

CS: What else is life after rodeo going to look like for you?

CT: I've got ideas on certain things. I've really been one of those weird guys where I want to start some stuff but I feel like if you get too many irons in the fire then you're going to be terrible at this job.

CS: How long have you been with Fast Back Ropes, and what advice would you give to kids about sponsors?

CT: I started with Fast Back in 2003. It's been a great relationship. I only live 10 minutes from the rope shop, so it works out really good. I always tell kids to get good because no one really wants to sponsor you if you're not great. You need to be good at what you do and be a value that way. Try to be a good guy if you can and do what you're asked. If they want you to do autographs, you do autographs. You have to do some photo shoots. Have a good working relationship. It's been good both ways—I feel like I've been good for them and they've been good for me.

{ Vital Stats }

AGE: 40

ROPE:
Mach 3 XS by Fast Back Ropes

NFR QUALIFICATIONS:
17

PARTNER:
Jake Long

HOME:
Lipan, Texas

CAREER EARNINGS:
\$2,586,172



When to Go At 'Em and When to Back Off?

Clay Tryan talks about the importance of knowing when it's time to be aggressive or when it's time to just go catch.

Some ropers like to be aggressive every single run, and that works for those guys. That's not always been my game plan. I like to be one of the guys who, if I need to just go catch one, I can just go catch to win a roping or a rodeo. Here's how I decide.

ON A TOUGH STEER

If you're at a rodeo, and you have a bad steer, all you can do is try to get a really

good start and take an aggressive shot. If you get a great start on the barrier, you have a chance. The key to winning a lot is making the best of the bad steers. The best guys catch the most. They make medium steers look good and make good steers look like the best you've ever had.

AT THE JACKPOTS

I go off the steers. Hopefully, I'm not up right away and I see the start. It's only easy if you really have to score—if the steers aren't leaving, or the timing on scoring is funky. If you have a runner and know it, you try to make as good of a run as you can, then come back on

your next one and get back in it. Jack-potting isn't about who drew the best; it's about who roped the best. Guys who are good at all these ropings, they can still win if they draw bad. A lot of times guys get a runner and can't catch them.

NO MISTAKES

My way of winning is no mistakes ever: no broken barriers, rope when you get there and set them up good to heel. Over the years, that has really worked. But now, it works as long as you're not in the Open. That theory would work in a #16.5 on down. The Open, you might have to rope out of your comfort zone to win. ■

COBALT

WITHSTAND THE ELEMENTS

"I always keep Cobalts in my bag. They are some of the most consistent ropes I've ever swung.

Clay Tryan

3-Time PRCA World Champion Header



FASTBACKROPES.COM
800-479-1851

#QualityToTheCore



Stop Splitting Horns

WHAT CAUSES HEADERS TO SPLIT HORNS AND HOW TO PREVENT IT.

Splitting the horns makes me the most mad out of any miss. If I split the horns, that means I'm not even close. If I wave it off, at least I had it on them. I've missed every way possible, and I've gone in funks where I split the horns, wave it off, all of it. And sometimes, I'll miss different ways on certain horses. But figuring out how to make adjustments when this starts to happen is part of stepping up your roping.



IMPULSE PHOTOGRAPHY

1 From teaching schools and watching ropings all these years, I could watch someone rope the dummy and I could guess how he's going to miss. Or even if I watch a roper catch a steer, I can usually tell how he'll miss when he does. It's something you can see after years of doing it. All ropers are different, and what works for some doesn't work for others. But being aware of what happens when you do make a mistake and what happens when you are successful is really critical. It's all a matter of inches, so having the awareness of what separates catching from not catching is really crucial.



2 There are a bunch of different ways to split horns. If your swing is too open, meaning you turn your rope too far over to the right, it's too long a way to cover the left horn. People do that all the time. If I have too open of a swing and turn my hand over too early, I need to move my swing closer to my face and turn it over more in the center of the steer's horns or more toward the left horn. Where you turn your rope over is where it will end up.

"I've been using Fast Back ropes and boots for many years and have always depended on the outstanding quality. Using the very best tools available is important in my job."

Clay Tryan

3-Time PRCA World Champion Header



RIC ANDERSEN PHOTOS

#QualityToTheCore

fastbackropes.com



STEP BY STEP with Clay Tryan



3 If you bring your hand too low to the horns too soon, that's another way that causes splitting the horns. Your top strand has to go over the top of the horns. The bottom goes over the right, top over the left. If you come down too soon, your top strand won't go across the horns. If the steer has some cow horns and they go up, and you bring your hand too low too soon, there's no way you can make that catch.

4 On the horse side, if your horse is running too tight to the steer, in behind them, you'll split the horns. You'll want to move your horse over a little bit and finish to cover the left horn. The position you ride and your horsemanship is so important. I talk a lot in my videos about the lane you need to be in riding to the steer. If you're in what I call lane two, you're set. But if you're behind the steer, you need to make some adjustments to keep from splitting the horns. If your horse is moving in behind the steer, it's the same as the steer going left really hard. You have to really make your follow-through go past the left horn.



5 If I'm struggling, I try to work it out on the dummy or in the practice pen. The trickiest part is the summer time, when I don't get to practice on steers a lot because I don't have enough horses with me rodeoing. So I've got to figure it out on the dummy. I usually work on what I feel like I'm not doing well enough at the time. I might rope behind the dummy, too wide, and in the right spot. Say I'm having trouble splitting the horns, I'll really focus on tightening my swing up and keeping everything above the horns. Gravity brings it down, so I need to trust what I know. Roping is a matter of inches. It is harder than we think it is. A lot of catches barely go on and a lot of misses barely miss.

BONUS HORSEMANSHIP TIP:

I think if you're leaning over too much, that can be another reason you split horns. That will naturally bring your hand lower. Everybody does something a little bit different. I have two kids who are roping, and I tell them different things. You have to mix and match. One guy leans and it works for him, one guy leans and that's why he splits the horns. If you're leaning, that could be your problem. Watch more tips at claytryanteamroping.com



IMPULSE PHOTOGRAPHY

ROPING HANDLING WITH CLAY TRYAN

Keeping a rope in your hand as much as possible will help elevate your craft, says three-time gold buckle winner Clay Tryan

READY FOR ANYTHING

The most important thing about roping is how you handle your rope. How you swing it and how you control it makes the difference between being able to make a tough shot on a tricky steer and hitting the steer in the back of the head. Guys who get really good all have that in common.

YOUR BEST FRIEND

How you handle your rope is an acquired taste. Your rope has to be your best friend. Rope the dummy a lot. Swing your rope a lot. Learn what it takes for you to control your top strand, your bottom strand and your tip. This will build consistency in your swing—know where you like your arm, how you want your coils and how fast your rope speed needs to be.

ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

My kids already handle a rope well because they rope the Smarty, they rope the donkeys, they rope the Shorty, and they rope the Cowboy Toy when they're in the house. They match everyone they can, even in the parking lots at rodeos with the best in the world. I don't coach them through every swing—I let them have fun and get comfortable with their rope handling, and the rest will come. ■