

The Team Roping Journal's

EXTRA

JUNE/2020

Wesley Thorp

2019 WORLD CHAMPION HEELER



Wrangler®

ONE ON ONE with Wesley Thorp



{ Vital Stats }

AGE:
24

ROPE:
Powerline Lite HM by Classic

HOMETOWN:
Stephenville, Texas

PARTNER:
Chad Masters

EARNINGS:
\$763,655

ONE ON ONE WITH Wesley Thorp

From "The Score" Podcast, when Wesley Thorp won his first gold Buckle at the 2019 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. By Chelsea Shaffer

CS: You've kind of put yourself in a spot your whole life. I was looking back through the your records as far as what you've done in the US Finals. How prepared did you feel for this moment?

WT: Wesley Thorp: Going back to the US finals, when I was 12, 13 years old, having a chance to win a lot of money, that prepares you for a lot. Being a young kid backing in the box for crazy numbers and at a young age. I've been used to that and I've had a lot of failures in that spot, too, so I've actually roped a leg at The American one year for \$350,000. I was fortunate enough to have put myself in that spot enough times that I really try to make myself have fun with it tonight because, I mean, I've grown up with the fast lane over and over and every time, I mean, you're at 10th round for a gold buckle you know and I knew I had an equally as good a chance as anybody.

CS: You got to go before Kaleb (Driggers) and Junior (Nogueira) and got to go at the beginning of that batch of people that had a shot at it.

WT: I did. I had to be the gunner of the guy that had the chance. We had nothing to lose. As good as everybody ropes, you don't plan on them just stumping their toes. They don't lay off and just do it. The round was soft when we roped, but we try to stick to the same game plan and we did to ourselves at the first of the week that we want to make the same type run, whether we were way up front of the average, out the average, behind. So, we had a good formula of what we want to do and that was good, having a good foundation coming in. It gave us both the peace of mind of what each other was going to do. I thought it really could not have worked out better for me.

CS: You have won nearly everything you could win in the sport of team roping. How much pressure did you feel to get to this point?

WT: I set a really broad goal at a young age. I never told myself I wanted to win a World Championship. I never even set a goal to do that. I always told myself that I want to be the the best heeler in the world. I want to know, myself, that I was best heeler in the world and it be point blank. I am not and I'm honest enough with myself to know that I'm not the best heeler in the world. I hope to be there and this is a pretty good milestone to help prove myself that, but I always thought it was cool that, you know, because some people say, 'What if you do win the world? There's nothing left.' Well yeah, I just set a broad goal and even though I won the World Championship, it's a cool accomplishment but, I mean, it's the the biggest thing I've ever accomplished in roping. Honestly, I have a lot more that I want to do and to prove to myself.

CS: What has your family been telling you this week?

WT: My family is very supportive. they've always been huge fans—my mom, my dad, my wife, my father-in-law, my mother-in-law. If I had to prove to them that I was the best it wouldn't take much. I disagree with them on where I'm at. They're super supportive and always bring me up and I truly think my dad has always been the best person with advice growing up. He always knew the right things to say. I wish more kids had the opportunity to experience that because he's better than anyone I've ever witnessed working with kids, being around kids and how he handled me growing up and helps me. I wish more kids had opportunities to listen to somebody like that and to experience

that relationship with their dad.

CS: How did he handle you when you were a kid?

WT: He told me one time, when I was at a very young age ... he said that he would match the effort I put in. He said he would do whatever he could in his power to match whatever effort I put into it and he never pushed me. I was always on my terms and he says, to this day, that he had work his butt off to match that effort. He was very supportive. The only time he would get mad at me is if I threw a fit. If I threw a fit and I was negative, he didn't handle that. He could handle me losing. He never had to push me to practice or to prepare for anything but, if I was prepared to the best of my ability and I made a mistake, he could handle that. If I threw a fit and caused a scene and didn't handle myself correctly, that upset him. He just had great advice. I feel like he always knew the right thing to say. Another thing I thought really stood out to me is, if he didn't know something, he would say it. He would never give false information. He would give the very best information as knowledge, but he would never say anything he wasn't sure of, and I think that is the biggest misconception of any junior rodeo parent to this day.

CS: Are you going to be a junior rodeo parent soon?

WT: I don't know. I'm not going to push my kids at all. My 2-year-old, he is really into it. He loves to ride and loves to ropes. He wakes me up at 7:00 out here every morning, pokes me in the shoulder and says, 'I want one to rope.' He gets up and has of these plastic dummies that sit on a glass table with a suction cup and he'll rope it until he doesn't want to rope it anymore. ■

Thorp's Handle on the "Shelter in Place" Order

Here's how 2019 World Champion Heeler Wesley Thorp—who won the world and the NFR heeling for Snow—has been spending his time away from the rodeo trail.

COURTESY OF THORP FAMILY



I've been at home in Stephenville with my wife, Susanna, and our little boys. Matthew will be 3 on June 30, and Charlie just turned 1 on April 9. It's been pretty slow on the roping front, so I've just been roping around home with friends and going to some of Austin Robertson's ropings, where we all rope in different, staggered time slots. There have been a few little round-robin ropings to go to some mornings, too.

I haven't been too worried about being temporarily out of work. Instead, I've been trying to take advantage of the extra time. I needed some time to work on my roping and horses, and this is a good time to enjoy being home with my family and not getting caught up in the old rat race. It's been good for me to not

be wrapped up in how hectic this lifestyle can be at times.

I've looked at the break as an opportunity, and have done the best I can to take advantage of the time off. It's been fun spending more time with my wife and kids. They play outside all day and get into about everything. Being home to see that has been nice. The kids are growing so fast and change so much every day, so getting to experience this time with them has been cool.

I think a lot of guys are getting a big appreciation for what stay-at-home moms do. Matthew likes to rope all day now. He ropes inside, outside and, sometimes, it gets him into trouble, like when he ropes his little brother. Charlie started walking at about 10 months, so he's



off and running everywhere now and is into everything. I've been too busy to be bummed out. I'm going to have to start rodeoing, so I can get some rest. The Fourth of July might feel like a day off this year. ■

LARIATS OF FIRE



WESLEY THORP
WORLD CHAMPION
HEELER

Wrangler®
LONG LIVE COWBOYS™

Patience Through the Turn

I've been working on staying patient and not panicking, no matter the conditions, the steer or the situation. I don't want to feel behind the run, but I want to relax leaving the box and carry that throughout the run.

OLIE'S IMAGES



1 I'm patient when the head rope goes on, and I let the steer develop and make my entry. From the start of the run, I want to be patient, even if I get into a bad spot or feel behind.

2 What I mean by not panicking is that I don't want to make any extra movements if I'm in a weird spot. I want to use my left hand to engage my horse as I make my entry into the corner, requiring my horse to be light and coming off my hand, allowing me to use my legs to move him.



3 I'm trying to keep my upper body still. I want to use my core and keep my right shoulder back to maintain power on my rope. I want to give myself plenty of momentum through the run and keep my shoulders back to not get off balance. If you get in a bad spot, you have to use your feet to catch up, but the idea is not to panic or overreact. When you do, your upper body gets thrown forward, and your right shoulder leans forward and you lose power in your rope. You want to keep your upper body still but drive your horse with your legs up under you.

STEP BY STEP with Wesley Thorp



4 This keeps me from rushing a bad throw. If I can stay patient, and keep my shoulders back, I can see things in front of me better. If it's bad, I can stay moving, use the momentum and power of my swing so I can feel them later.

OLIE'S IMAGES



5 Panicking can also mean forcing your rope speed to try to catch up to the run. I don't focus 100% on my rope speed because I feel like the more you emphasize swinging your rope hard, the more you'll fight it. I want a fluid swing that's controlled. I want my shoulder back because that gives me more power in my delivery. And I want more weight in my stirrups to give me more balance in my saddle to help me continue my swing. ■

WHEN IT WORKED:

In Round 1 of the 2019 National Finals Rodeo, Cody Snow and I drew a stronger steer, and I was really happy with how patient I was through the corner. I was patient and kept my shoulder back and didn't do anything unorthodox but still heeled him on the first or second hop. It could have been a run that got a little out of control—especially on that critical first steer of the Finals that sets the pace for the rest of the week.



JAMIE ARVISO PHOTO

No Wasted Motion

Give yourself the easiest shot you can every time by eliminating wasted motion in your heeling.

RIDE FIRST

I don't swing from the second my header nods. I ride my horse out, get the right distance, and get to my position before I get my rope up. If I'm trying to get my rope up, I'm wasting swings when I could be getting to position and creating distance. I want to be getting my weight in my stirrups and riding to a good spot so I can set up the run.

POSITION IS...

At a World Series or USTRC roping, I like to ride a little narrower position down the arena because the headers get such a good start and the head horses are so fast that, as a heeler, you can get behind more easily. If I'm narrow through the corner, I can follow the steer's tracks and stay to the outside around the steer so I don't get too far inside and don't feel out of the loop. That means I'm wasting

less motion through the corner, ready to throw faster, and riding my horse better.

SWING SCIENCE

My goal is to have a swing that allows me to go straight into my delivery. I want every swing to matter. That means from the first swing I take, I should be able to deliver my rope. The only reason you swing is so you can have the power to throw your rope. A lot of people—including myself—can make a mistake and get caught up in swinging too much. We need to have a swing that allows us easy delivery. That way, we don't have to change up a lot of different things to throw and can be ready in the same spot every time. ■