

The Team Roping Journal's

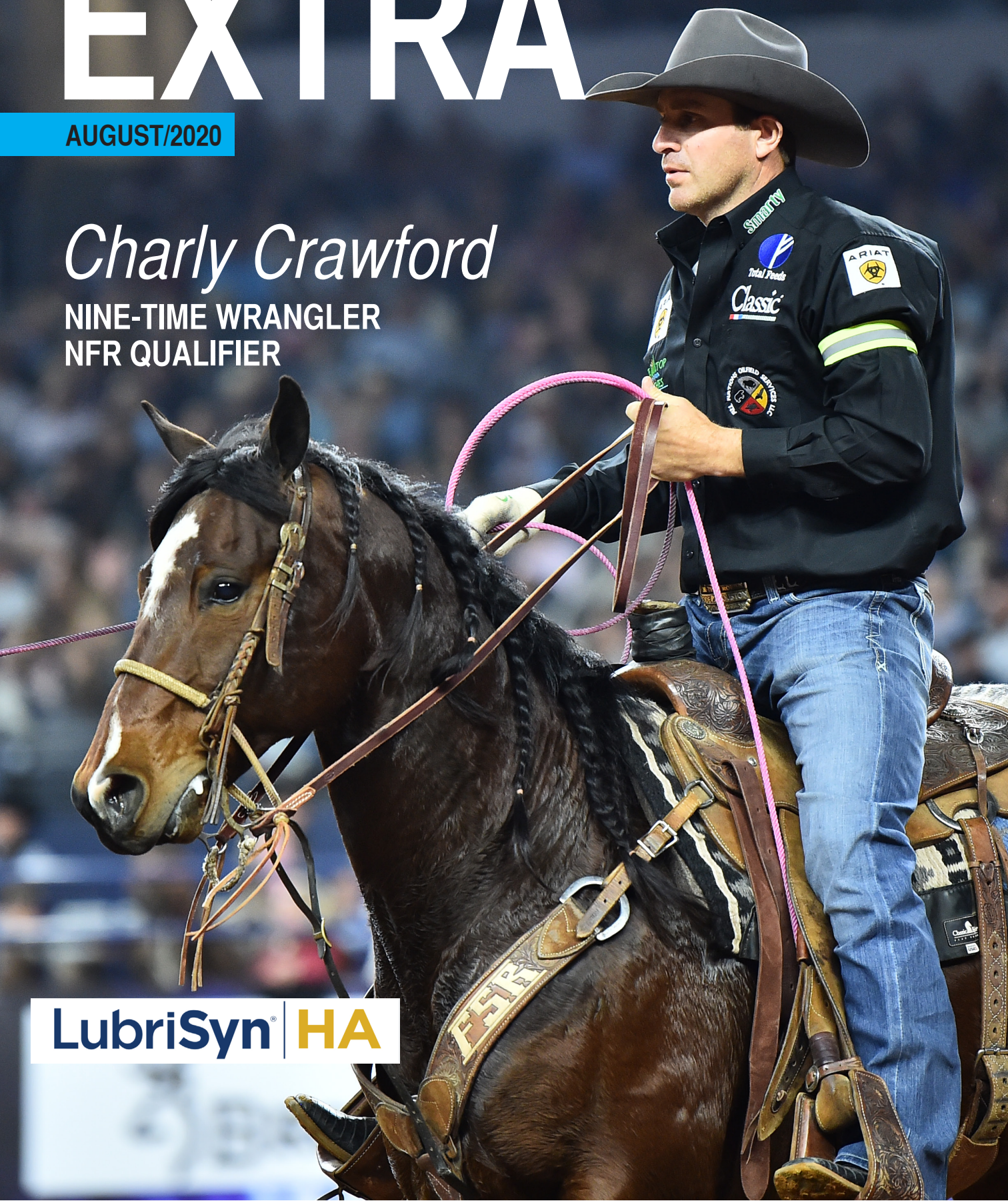
EXTRA

AUGUST/2020

Charly Crawford

NINE-TIME WRANGLER
NFR QUALIFIER

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ONE ON ONE with Charly Crawford





Charly Crawford's 2020 Resurgence

Crawford was the PRCA Resistol Rookie of the Year in the heading back in 1998, the same year he won the reserve title at the College National Finals Rodeo and just two years after he was the Oregon High School Champion. Two decades later, Crawford's career is as strong as ever.

By Chelsea Shaffer

Charly Crawford has qualified for nine National Finals Rodeos, starting with his first in 2005. But since his last trip to the Finals in 2017 (with heeling phenom Joseph Harrison), Crawford's been relatively quiet on the rodeo road. In 2018, he finished 31st in the world standings and, in 2019, he was 33rd.

But in 2020, Crawford is on a mission. A father to 3-year-old Creed and 16-year-old Kaydence, Crawford is looking toward a future after rodeo. He said early in the season that 2020 would be a final push, a chance to prove to himself that he could, in fact, still make the Finals.

The result? With few rodeos left on the schedule, Crawford and his partner—two-time College National Finals Champion Logan Medlin—are well inside the top 15 (fifth, with \$50,786 won at the time of this writing. That will ensure them a spot at this year's big show, in whatever form that rodeo takes in the post-COVID-19 world. In a year dominated by gunslinging one-headers, Crawford is proving he's still got it.

This achievement comes on the heels of the death of Crawford's father, Chuck. Always Crawford's biggest fan, Chuck died just two days before Crawford and Medlin kicked off their hotstreak with a win at the Wildfire Open to the World, worth \$12,000 a man.

"He was my biggest fan, rodeo's biggest

fan and team roping's biggest fan," said Crawford, 42. "I got the opportunity to win the Wildfire a couple days after my dad died, and I didn't get to go to the funeral because they put the funeral over the same time as the short round at Fort Worth."

Crawford, who each year dedicates his time to teaching a free roping school for American's veterans, is also a staunch supporter of women's roping. He's gotten to rodeo in 2020 alongside his wife, WPRA World Champion Jackie Crawford, who has helped lead the charge of breakaway ropers competing at PRCA rodeos this year.

The Crawfords, of course, have used dominant horsepower to propel them throughout their careers, and 2020 is no exception.

"Nastee—he's probably one of my better horses I've had," Crawford said of the 13-year-old gelding registered with the AQHA as Nastee Leader. "He's the only horse that I've ever had that's good at short setups and good at Cheyenne (Wyoming). He's a running bred horse—an ex barrel horse. When they're out there is actually when he does the best—he'll try to outrun them. It helps me to where I don't have to try to kick and panic—everything just comes to me. Joseph Harrison actually started him. It's nice to be able to have one that can go that fast but then not be out of control." ■

Inner Strength with Charly Crawford



TRUFILE PHOTO

Finding the Right Motivation

Charly Crawford draws his motivation from his fear of failure, and that motivation manifests itself in an early-morning wakeup call.

When you get older and you need that extra motivation, you've got to start looking for things that motivate you. One of the things that has always motivated me is the fear of failure. I hate failure, and I've always kind of had a chip on my shoulder that I use as motivation to do all the little things that nobody wants to do. It takes those little things, though, to really be great.

One year, I was paying my entry fees and had no idea how much I had won because I wasn't in the top 50 listed on *ProRodeo.com*. I got on my PRCA account online, and it showed I was

63rd in the world. So I put that on my morning alarm—just the number 63. If seeing that you're 63rd in the world isn't enough to get you out of bed, then I don't know what will. For me, I need to go to the gym to keep up my strength and endurance and maintain my back—and that's one of those little things I've really got to stay motivated to do if I want to be better than 63rd in the world.

Before I made the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo the first time, I might have kept the goal of the top 15 in my head, but now, it's about being the best team roper I can be and supporting my family.

I want to provide. When a guy runs out of things that motivate him, that's when he doesn't have the drive anymore. For me, I don't want to let my family down and I want to be the best I can be.

Whether it's using an embarrassment number or a picture of my wife and kids, it's what gets me up in the morning and keeps me motivated. I would slam that alarm off when I got out of bed, and I'd listen to motivational music on my way to the gym, work out and come home and be ready to get after it saddling horses as soon as I pulled in the driveway. ■

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The Tight Rope Through the Handle

How and why keeping a tight rope through the handle matters.

Lately, I've been giving a lot of lessons about keeping the rope tight from the steer's horn to the saddle horn so that a header can lead the steer anywhere he or she needs to from the corner. Whether you're trying to win the world title or the Ariat World Series of Team Roping Finale, this is really something worth mastering.

JAMIE ARVISO PHOTOS



1 The process of making sure your rope is tight between the steer's horns and the saddle horn starts at the throw. It's important that I'm roping on the way to the steer, throwing on my way to position. That way, when I'm pulling my slack, I'm collecting my horse at the same time. That's when he's going slower than the steer, and that's what allows him to get the rope tight. That allows my horse's shoulders to come up and his butt to go down, giving my heeler the best possible handle.

2 In this photo, I've got the rope tight between my saddle horn and the steer's horns. My hand is in the middle of my horse's neck, and my feet are quiet at my horse's sides. I'm letting him get collected and get the steer slowed down.



3 As soon as I get it tight from the saddle horn to the steer's horns, then I have to step up and out to get the angle I want. A lot of people will put it on the horn and use their right leg to sidepass across the arena, and they miss a step. I do that after I've got the steer under control across the arena. That sets my horse up to face, and that opens up the steer for my heeler.

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STEP BY STEP with Charly Crawford



JAMIE ARVISO PHOTOS

4 I keep my feet still unless I need them. The only time I use my feet is if I need to stand my horse back up underneath himself, pushing my right leg into his side to get his hip up under. Otherwise, I want my feet in neutral so my horse can work across the pen. I'm also careful to keep my bridle reins even and centered in the middle of my horse's neck. That way, when I put it on the horn and it's tight, my horse stays between the reins. If I'm crossing all the time, he'll be leaning on me. I have to be fairly disciplined with what I'm doing with my left hand.



5 I've always wanted to rope this way, but lately I've had to evolve it to happen faster. I used to do a good job of running up in there and controlling the steer. It used to be where, if it was a five-steer, I just had to go catch all five. But now, with the theory that legs will catch up to you, I've had to evolve and reach more and still keep control of my horse. Guys like Clay Smith and all of these young kids coming up can rope both horns at the same time, it's so much tighter and they handle their slack and handle their rope a lot better. Plus, they ride their horses so good they stay out of their way. It used to be you either roped good or you rode your horse well and ran close. Now, guys can reach and keep their horses moving and working. That's the challenge, and sticking with this formula to keep the rope tight between the steer's horns and the saddle horn will help. ■

REMEMBERING CHARLY CRAWFORD'S PATRON



BOB CLICK PHOTO

Nine-time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo header Charly Crawford lost his main mount, Patron, on Aug. 14, 2014. —By Kendra Santos

KS: *Talk to me about Aug. 14, 2014.*

CC: We'd come off of a great couple weeks. I'd given Patron some time off after Cheyenne, and he came back better than ever. It felt easy again, like we were peaked out going into the fourth quarter. Patron was breathing fire and hitting on all cylinders. As soon as we got done roping our first steer at Canby, I unsaddled him and washed him off. He started pawing and acting like he wanted to roll, which he does. I tied him up and he kept pawing. The rodeo's vet, Dr. Solomon, who works on my horses all the time when we're up there, drove by right then. He gave him something to help relax him. I walked him around about 20 minutes and nothing was happening, so he palpated him. He realized he had a displacement, and that we needed to get him to OSU for surgery. I needed to stay there and rope our second steer, so a friend of mine borrowed a truck from a committeeman and a trailer from a queen, and took off with Patron. He got him there in two hours.

KS: *Had Patron colicked before?*

CC: Patron was a chronic colicker. He had colic surgery in 2011, and came back from it fine. He'd tried to colic on me several times, but had almost gone a

full year without doing it, so I thought he was getting better.

KS: *Then what?*

CC: Shay (Carroll) and I needed to get to Billings by the next day, so we headed that way. Patron was in good hands, and I was just wondering if I'd get him back the next week or if it'd be the end of the season before I could get back on him. We were on Highway 205, fixing to get on Highway 84 to head east and I got a call from a Corvallis number. They told me they got Patron into surgery and found he had a displacement, and that one of his intestines was tight as a drum. His colon was dead, so they were asking permission to euthanize him. I was driving, and my head was going numb. They said, "We're sorry, but he can't live without his colon." I asked if there was anything at all they could do for him. There was a lot of silence. I looked down, and I was going 25 miles an hour in the middle lane and people were whipping by me.

KS: *How long had you been riding Patron?*

CC: Since 2009. B.J. Campbell had gotten him from Bill Hill down in Southern Oregon, and I got him from B.J.

KS: *What made Patron one of the great ones?*

CC: He was really quick and had a lot of foot speed. He wanted to score. The gates would bang and he wanted to stay put until you asked him to go. He always had kind of a funky move in the corner, but when I stayed ahead of him and rode him good, he was so good. And he was so tough. The more you rode him, the better he got. He was spooky, and a little bit broncy. But he just kept getting better with age. I truly felt like this was going to be his year to win Horse of the Year.

KS: *How rare is a horse like Patron?*

CC: I've watched a lot of horses out here, and for one to stay working that good for that long is something. To keep scoring, keep running and keep working at this level is a tough quality. When they have the ability and are so willing, that's a rare combination.

KS: *We all know how important the head horse is to any team. That's not an exaggeration, is it?*

CC: We rely on our horses so much, and I was tapped off with that horse. Our team losing Patron would be like losing your best quarterback going into the playoffs when you need to win the game. He won't be forgotten and he'll never be replaced. He was unique. ■