

The Team Roping Journal's

EXTRA

APRIL/2020

Jackie Crawford

19-TIME WORLD CHAMPION

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ONE ON ONE with Jackie Crawford



JAMES PHIFER PHOTO

Jackie Crawford is a 19-time Women's Professional Rodeo Association World Champion, leading the charge as breakaway roping surges to the forefront of professional rodeo. From her home in Stephenville, Texas, and across the globe, Crawford is coaching the next generation of champions as well as training some of the best horses in the sport. **By Chelsea Shaffer**

ONE ON ONE

WITH Jackie Crawford

Why did you choose roping instead of more traditional women's events?

JC: I didn't grow up around reining or cutting, but I grew up around rodeo. Being a natural tomboy and liking that type of stuff and having physical strength and ability. I liked that route better. Really in high school I focused on the roping events. High school was where I knew that roping was my thing.

Tell us about the greatest horse you've ever owned.

JC: T-Boy. He's a winner and he just wins. He's not fancy, he's not special. But he's let me win in every set up and everywhere. His name is DS Sassy Shiner, and he's out of the same daddy as Jake Long's Colonel—Zans Diamond Shine. It's hard to believe, but T-Boy is 15 this year.

What does it take to keep T-Boy going at 15?

JC: I've been really lucky with him as far as injuries or joint problems. I've had him on Lubrisyn for seven years now, and I've been conscious of how hard I press him.

What are your goals past your 19 world titles?

JC: I'd like to continue to add at least one world title a year now, whether it be in the team roping, breakaway or all-around. With the way the breakaway is going, it's hard to set out my biggest goals because they really just keep getting bigger. I've switched my focus more toward the breakaway, though I am still keeping a few head horse prospects. I'm putting everything into breakaway side really.

Who have been the biggest influences in your career?

JC: My mom was, for sure, growing up. She instilled the things that still stay with me: most importantly work ethic. There's not going to be a day I show up somewhere and lose because I got out-worked. I might get beat, but I won't be out-worked. The other thing my mom helped me with was confidence and making myself truly believe I was good, even when I sucked. She made me feel like I had all these special gifts, and a lot of that is in your mind and that really stays with you. Next, Lari Dee Guy helped me a lot with horses when I went to work for her. I learned a lot about the type of horse I wanted to ride and have and how broke I wanted them. Of course, I've always looked up to Trevor Brazile to be able to be as good as he is at all of the events he does. I've seen his work ethic first-hand, and I admire that. Then there's my husband Charly. He's a huge factor in what keeps me going. He pushes me and believes in me. If I start thinking something, he wants me to do the best I can do at it. To have someone like that daily, who believes in you and who has a drive and a work ethic as good as yours, it keeps you pressing forward.

Is there one thing you're really focusing on in your roping right now?

JC: With this rare down-time in March and April (2020), I've been really concentrating on getting my riding better on my young hroses. I'd gotten away from it because we'd stay so busy. I'd come home and jump on and hurry to get them rode and get the fresh of them about the time I'd have to leave again. I'm working on my riding and on my

left hand. I've got a scoring lane, and I'm working on keeping my horses in my hand leaving the box, staying soft and listening to my hand.

What young horses are you really excited about right now?

JC: I have a Starlight Gypsy filly right now that's probably one of the best prospects I've ever had. I call her Roulette and she's a full sister to one of Charly's head horses. She's something special, she can run so fast and she drops her bottom every time. You never feel her front end hit ever.

{ Vital Stats }

ROPE:
Breakaway Rope:
Classic Spitfire

Head Rope:
Classic Triton XXS

WPRA WORLD TITLES:
19

HOME:
Stephenville, Texas

SUPPORT SUPPLEMENT:
Purina High Octane
ALLEVIATE Gastric

Motherhood with Jackie Crawford



WCRA BULLSTOCK MEDIA PHOTO

Motherhood & the Mental Game with Jackie Crawford

Jackie Crawford is winning while balancing life on the road with a toddler.

When my money was on the line in a high-pressure situation, I've always been able to have confidence in the fact that I have prepared myself to the best of my abilities. I'd breathe deep to be sure my heart wasn't racing, and I'd be able to keep from getting nerved-up when I was backing into the box.

But now motherhood has changed how prepared I am for the roping before I get there. I don't have all the runs in the practice pen I once did from which to source my confidence because I lose at least two to three hours a day of practice to my son, Creed. I have had to practice smarter, not harder.

Without the rope being in my hand as much, I needed to get the feel back. I've increased my dummy roping a ton if I can't be horseback. At least I'm having my rope in my hand, staying sharp. I try to find things I can do faster—like

around the world dummy drills.

This is what I do for a living, so I have had to refigure my days. I'm still in the process of figuring out how to get more accomplished in the time that I have with the help that I have. I have to make enough money to pay someone to help me so I can ride that same amount of horses I used to. I have to have a hand, at least that saves me that time, and I'm still working on making that a cost-efficient proposition.

When it comes to going to the roping, I've always been late. It's not because I'm lazy, but because I have zero time-management skills. I hate waiting to rope, so I hate being early. But I do have to try to plan a little bit more in advance these days. I need to line up who will be there or who I will take with me to take care of Creed. My step-daughter, Kaydence, is a great help when she can go. I have to

make extra money if I need to take someone to babysit. I have to be sure I can have time to warm up and place my kid somewhere. I don't want to take something that will buck me off, because I might not get a lot of time to warm them up. I have to spend the time to pack, because you can't get to a roping and not have diapers and not have snacks. But I have great people who are always willing to help and that makes a huge difference.

Now, I can be backing into the box literally hearing my son screaming and throwing a fit for whoever is watching him. I have to try to push that out of my mind, though, and focus on the fact that what I'm about to do will only take a few seconds. This is what I need to do to provide my part for him, and I know I'm not going to stop the roping to go to him, anyway. So I have to focus, no matter what he's doing, just for those few seconds. ■

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5 Tips for Consistency in Leaving the Box with Jackie Hobbs-Crawford

CONSISTENCY IN LEAVING THE BOX.

People's horses go bad in the box and out in the field because ropers have inconsistent cues with their hands. When ropers are inconsistent, horses will go bad because they're dreading what's about to happen. If you can stay consistent and black and white with your cues, that keeps your horse knowing what you're asking of him and that keeps him from being confused and getting nervous and hot.



JAMES PHIFER PHOTO

1 A team roping run is set up completely from how you leave the box. Your entire run flows from right there in that corner. In the corner of the box, you can tell that I don't want to face my horse down the left rail and I don't want to face him toward the chute. I want to see the steer the whole time I'm leaving. My goal is to have my horse break directly down the center of the box. That way, it puts me in the correct lane to rope. If he steps left, I have room to react, if he goes right, I'm not so far over to the left that I can't go catch him. It's just a small adjustment from the center.



2 In the box, a lot of people want to take too much of a hold of their horse or they score loose-reined. When it gets to be competitive, your start is so important. My horse can feel my hand on his mouth, but I'm not pulling on him to a point that his mouth is gaping or he's uncomfortable. And I don't have a loose rein to the degree that he doesn't know when my hand is going to go forward. To be competitive at a high level, those horses have got to be able to leave the box off your hand. When your hand drops, they've got to go. That's the fastest cue there is because it is direct to their mouths. If you want to ride your horse good out of the box, you can't be relying on kicking, you don't have time. My horse's head is straight, I have contact with his mouth and when I drop my hand, he's going to be moving forward.

Some people like to put their left hand on the saddle horn as a way to keep it still. But your horse's mouth, head, neck and poll all move when he leaves the box. So then you have to throw slack in the reins and you lose control of his mouth. Instead, keep your hand off the horn, so that no matter where that horse's mouth goes you can stay right behind it and have a slight hold on his mouth, feel him and keep any cue that you make very black and white.

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STEP BY STEP with Jackie Crawford



3 The reason I want my horse standing comfortably—and I'm not pulling him too much so he's rocked back—is so when I move my hand forward, he can break flat. With his first stride out of the box, I'm able to get my rope up by the time I'm at the mouth of the box because it was an easy stride. You can see that he moved forward because my hand moved forward—not because I just shucked the reins down. I'm giving him his head, but he's right in my hand and I can feel his mouth. My left hand goes up his neck and I'm pushing him in the direction I want him to go.

4 After I'm able to leave flat, I keep my hand up, pushing him in a direction. You can see my reins are short enough that I'm not hanging on his mouth, but if I need to move that horse, I can have contact very quickly. Moving left or right, my reins are going to hit his neck quickly and I can control him within a six-inch circle right above the middle of his neck. Ideally, I want to be able to stay at the front of my saddle, pushing him to run, but not leaned over my horse. I'm square in my saddle and connected to it, but at the front of it.



5 I think a lot of people put too much emphasis on the roping itself instead of how important it is to have black and white cues on your horse. If you can start your run off correctly, have your horse in your hand and have him leave flat, it's going to set your entire run up and make a difference on your time and how easy it is for your horse to work. This will keep your horse consistent and keep him from getting so hot because he's confused. ■



JAMES PHIFER PHOTO

PROFESSIONAL COWGIRL: Jackie Crawford

To get to a point in your life for some little girl looks up to you, that's what it's all about: to have kids influenced by positive people and good people. I hope people consider me to be one. I try to put more back into the sport and evolve it in a positive way and be someone parents can tell their little girls—and even little boys—to look up to. I hope that I'm doing that and representing women and inspiring little girls to find a goal of their own and a dream of their own and know they can achieve it.

I really, really, really hope that myself as well as others are blazing a trail that will see a woman in the top 15 in team roping. It's going to take a tough girl who makes a lot of sacrifices. There's a lot of variables, she's going to have to be physically strong, mentally strong, she's going to have to want this and she's going to have to have some help. We've come a long way, Willow Nicholas made the short go at Cheyenne, I made it to the short round before The American. I hope that I can spark a fire in that particular

girl who has all those talents and we get to see her prevail and move up in this industry.

We moved to Oklahoma when I was 11 from Illinois. There were more youth events and all these kids were roping and I just loved it. Growing up, I was always playing sports, was kind of a tomboy, and always wanted to be the best at whatever I did, whether it was against boys or girls. It was just a mindset even from when I was young.

The one thing I admire my mom for was she put a mindset in me—whether she believed it or not—that I could do anything. What's more, if I couldn't do it, it wasn't going to be because I didn't work the hardest at it. She has a work ethic that's incredible and she gave me that mindset. Any failure was not going to be because of a lack of work. Anything less than trying harder than everyone else was not acceptable.

I knew I had a good shot of making roping my career when I started getting college scholarship offers in my senior year of high school. I had been able to go enough places and see the competition level and think, I can do this. When I came to college in Texas, it was a rude awakening. I turned down full ride scholarships closer to my hometown just because I wanted to get around the best competition. My freshman year was a downer because I got beat pretty bad. By my sophomore year I had come back and figured out what I needed to do. I won the region in college, the nation in college, so from that point on, I have a drive for this and breakaway and women's roping is getting bigger. ■