

The Team Roping Journal's
EXTRA

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Trevor Brazile
25 TIME WORLD CHAMPION

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ONE ON ONE

WITH Trevor Brazile

*The 25-time World Champ
talks life after rodeo and
what it takes to make a
great horse..*

— By Chelsea Shaffer



What have you learned since retirement?

TB: I've learned about how much other stuff there is outside rodeo. I've been in that one capsule for so long. Not that that was all I did or all I focused on, but it was the majority of what I got up thinking about. It was where my goals rested. Everyday my goal was to be the best I could in that field. And I guess I learned the most it was all right that I didn't do that every day. I mean I still rope every day, but I was so in depth into the rodeo cycle of entering, logistics. Just taking that off my plate has been so nice.

What has been a moment you've gotten to be a part of since retirement with your family that you wouldn't have gotten to see with your family that you'd have missed while you were rodeoing?

TB: It's not one thing, it's just being there for everything. When your gone, the big moments stick out because those are the moments people talk about. But when you're here, you realize there are a lot of moments people don't talk about that are special even though they're not a touchdown or a homerun. One of my favorite things to do in the day is take the kids to school, even as jacked up as the school lines are. I love getting to talk to them on the way there about their day, and what they got going. Just everything that might not seem like a big deal to us is a big deal to them.

Have you seen anything change in your relationships with your kids or with your wife Shada since you're around more?

TB: I don't drive her any crazier than I did before I don't think. Other than the very last year of rodeoing—the year that put me over the edge when they were at school and I was on the road—they were with me the whole time. It wasn't that I missed out on my kids' lives. It

was just that they were with me everywhere. It was under a different pace, and we were not in Decatur, Texas. We were on the rodeo trail and they were just with me. It was the hardest year, when they started school, because they'd been homeschooled previous to that. That was the tough year, when I didn't have them with me. When you're not winning, it doesn't get any more lonely. When you're winning, it makes it OK barely. There's never really any good times when they're not with you.

You're still steer roping in the PRCA and the reigning world champion. Is your tripping better than ever?

TB: I don't say it's better than ever. I'd hate to think I waited until 42 to hit my prime. I've got a good horse, and I haven't been to any more trippings than before. Trick, is by default my only horse. That's been the funnest thing about steer roping for me. He's the first green horse in a while I've trained and it's been a fun process.

You've said before steer roping horses are some of your favorite horses. Explain that.

TB: They have to have so much more trust. Team ropers never get off their horses, so everything is run with reins or feet. Calf roping, there's neck ropes and keepers to keep them looking. If that stuff wasn't there, they'd be long gone. And they've got jerk lines to back them up. There's nothing other than tied hard and fast to the saddle horn and a lot of trust in a good horse, and that's what makes steer roping fun to watch when it's done correctly.

How has your horsemanship grown since you've been focusing so heavily on making young horses in retirement?

TB: I think the biggest thing that's helped my horsemanship is no deadlines. It used to be I'd come home, and

I'd know I'd have two weeks here, three weeks there, and I'd be gone. I used to be always getting ready for something. Not having any timelines and really going by what the horse needs—they're all different, and they mature faster in some areas than others do then they'll catch back up—the thing I've learned most is that I would have made every deadline or faster doing it this way. I just didn't have as many mistakes to fix along the way, rushing here, fixing this.

What is your biggest pet peeve in a young head horse?

TB: Elevation in the box. They don't have to score great, but they just can't take their front feet off the ground. That's hard to overcome. And it's really one of those things to where every horse has its own release and if it's up, the way they get away from pressure, it becomes a habit if not dealt with soon.

Is that something that's man-made?

TB: They're all looking for that release, and if you don't have it in place for it to be forward or feel it coming so you can kind of manipulate how they release that pressure, and if you don't notice that and let them elevate, then it gets hard to fix.

What are you looking for in the young horses you're looking for now?

TB: Oh man. I go from cow horses, still, racehorses—I look for good bone. I don't like them real straight in the hind end. Not real post-legged in the back. Not long in the pastern. I like a good balanced horse. I used to like a real short neck, but now I just look for balance. I'd rather watch them move then get on them sometimes. If I see what I like, I'll eventually have what I want.

Common Heading Mistakes with Trevor Brazile

3 mistakes headers make when trying to up their game that instead hinder their roping.



THE SCORE

There are so many ways to mess up when you're teaching your head horse to score. I see guys wanting to score on a light rein, a heavy rein—but in a perfect world, I like to put more pressure on my rein so there's a clearer signal to the horse. Ultimately, though, I adjust my scoring to the horse. Each horse will let you know their preference on scoring, and I try to change the stuff I feel really strongly about but work around each horse in certain areas. People worry about being too light or too strong, but the most important thing is consistency in the box. Whatever you're doing, however your horse needs ridden, you've got to stay consistent.

THE MOVE

One of the biggest mistakes people make is that they think they understand this big head-horse move—making the horse drag it and get across the pen too early in the horse's career where it affects the roper's roping. If a horse makes that lateral move in the middle of your delivery, it's the kiss of death. Everybody can love watching it from the stands, but those are the people who've never really ridden it. If you put that move in too early, to where their first step is out, with their ribs heading left, it's one of the biggest mistakes people don't even know they're making.

THE FACE

I'll watch horses go at the jackpot and think, 'This is going to be a good horse,' but then I'll see him face. What I see most commonly is a header failing to make his horse finish his face and take it off the horn and allow the horse to move laterally. A bad face will starve you to death rodeoing. You can get away with a bad face at some jackpots, but not when hundredths of a second really count. ■

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6 Steps to Heading

TREVOR BRAZILE'S TIPS FOR HEADING, STEP-BY-STEP.

IMPULSE PHOTOGRAPHY



1 Scoring is obviously a big, big deal to me. You need to keep even pressure without sending mixed signals to your horse. Your horse can only score as good as you do, so you have to have the patience to sit there and not move your hand or send messages with body language. A lot of people don't move their hand but they start leaning forward, which tells the horse they're ready to go. However you start, you want your horse to stay there until you drop your hand.

2 Once you start, you need to stay in your lane, keeping from getting too close behind or too wide, just staying exactly the same distance, width-wise from the steer the whole run. Team roping is a game of percentages, and that gives you a high-percentage shot and teaches your horse to run to a consistent spot. If you're running to a different spot every time you rope, your percentages go down. So if I'm dropping a half a coil or a full coil, I want it to be from the same basic position every time—as much as I can control—with the set up and the steer.



3 The next thing people need to think about is having their swing level to the steer's horns. Especially when you reach, you can't have a lot of funky angles to your rope. I see a lot of people with too much dip to the left—and if you're reaching you'll miss that right horn. You have to have a level swing and a level delivery when you're at the rodeos. The guys I see dipping it to the right are the ones roping right horn to left horn, and they aren't used to reaching. There is a place for both loops, but you can't reach with a loop going right horn to left horn. When you're in good jackpot position you can rope right horn to left horn.

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STEP BY STEP with Trevor Brazile



4 My next big thing is keeping your horse's body position parallel with the steer's through the corner. It's important everywhere, but especially at these smaller, NFR-type set ups. If your horse has already made his move left before you have control of the steer's head, the steer's legs, instead of turning right in front of your heeler, will shoot down the arena too far instead of having a smooth corner.

5 A lot of guys run up in there and wait to dally to see if their horse is free. I like to rope and get it on the horn before I really know if I'm in control or not. It's easier to control a horse when you don't have weight on the horn. So, if they want to get strong, you have to do your correcting—standing the shoulder up, pushing them back to the steer and getting them back in your hand—once the weight has hit the horn.



6 The last thing that I feel I concentrate on more than most is the face. I feel like if my horses are facing as good or better than everybody else's horses, I can take a higher percentage shot because I'll make that time back in the finish. By the same token, I feel real strongly about never giving that steer his head back once you've got it. A lot of steers get their head back when guys go to face, and not necessarily even when they face too early. Sometimes, with an incorrect face, you'll give that steer's head back and cause the heeler to slip a leg. Even at the NFR, I've seen the steer get his head back before the heeler's rope has even got the feet. It makes it twice as hard on a heeler.

When I'm working on a correct face—which means my horse continues to pull as he faces—my main goal is to never give that steer his head back until I'm looking at him. To do that, you can never get your horse's butt under the rope because it takes a rare athlete of a horse to face and keep the rope tight through his entire turn-around if the rope is straight behind him when he starts.

It's a little bit of a sidepass, but most people put it in too early. They put it in right at the corner. The corner is about just staying framed, position for position, with the steer. If you start too early, your horse can get weak. They're good in the corner, but lose everything after that. I think, to keep my horses facing better, I don't put the sidepass in until I really start towing the steer. That way, the horse doesn't have to hold them as long and it's not as hard on their bodies.

CHAINS, PORTS AND GAGS:

Trevor Brazile's Bit Theory

Trevor Brazile shares how chains, ports and gags each fit into a head horse program.

As much as I like one bit over the other, the horse will tell you what they're comfortable with.

When I get a horse in to ride, I'll take out two bits—a chain and a port. I need to know what kind of bit each horse is most comfortable in in the box. A horse will tell you more in the box than he will anywhere in the run, and if a horse doesn't score, then he's no good to you anywhere else anyway. The box is where I address everything right off the bat.

I don't start with one bit over the other, but I'll ride them both throughout the day. I want to see if a horse is more comfortable with or afraid of a port. The response is usually 50/50; half the horses like the tongue pressure of a chain bit—more relaxed with that constant pressure—and half are a little pushier and like the tongue relief of a port, where they feel the pressure on their bars.

If I've tried to make the horse comfortable with the port or the straight chain, and the horse is wanting to be afraid of the bit or he wants to come back when the gates bang, it's not my first choice, but somewhere in the progression I'll go to a gag bit. If the horse was rushed into a curb or ridden wrong with a curb too early, a lot of them will relax with a gag.

A gag is probably my last choice, but it's worked on a lot of horses and even some great horses. There are a lot of different types of gags out there, but the main thing about a gag bit and the success you can have in the box is that there's no curb pressure. A lot of horses will relax in the box or not react to the gates as much if they have confidence leaning into a gag.

When you've got your horse comfortable in a gag, you can add a leather



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curb to it, and it hits a little higher. They might react differently to a curb with a different placement than in their prior experiences, taking away some of the stress from the curb. ■