

# Busting Broncs and Buying Bulls



Saddle bronc rider Cort Scheer, runs a cow-calf operation with his family near Elsmere, Neb.

## Saddle bronc rider Cort Scheer invests his winnings into his cow-calf herd.

Story by **Austin Black**, photos by **Linda Teahon**

**W**hen Cort Scheer isn't busting broncs, he's looking at cows. This professional saddle bronc rider has a deep love for the land, good cattle and quality beef.

Scheer grew up in Elsmere, Neb., on the family ranch. His dad, Kevin Scheer, competed in bareback,

saddle bronc and bull riding when Cort was young. Following his lead, Cort rode sheep as a kid, then grew into more advanced rodeo events. He did calf roping and team roping throughout high school and was a bulldogger in college rodeo.

Scheer attended college in Garden City, Kan., and Bozeman,

Mont., and graduated from Oklahoma Panhandle State University. He started riding bucking horses and hanging out with Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) hall-of-famer Danny Etbauer. Scheer wasn't sure about his skills, but Etbauer convinced him to go pro. In 2007 Scheer bought his permit for the PRCA and hit the road.

"It's kind of a year-round deal," he says. Scheer starts the circuit in Texas during the winter. In the spring, he gets a month off before heading to Canada and the Northwest U.S. to compete for the summer. The season ends in October, giving Scheer another month's break before traveling to Las Vegas for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (WNFR) in December. Altogether, Scheer travels between 200-250 days each year to different rodeos. "It's a full-time deal," he says.

But, it's a lot of fun. "My favorite thing about rodeo is hanging out with my buddies and having a good time. It's right beside getting on a bronc and making a perfect ride," Scheer says.

"We're kinda like a bunch of brothers," he says. "Nobody really remembers the rodeos you win, but they remember the good times." But Scheer does remember the big rodeos won. In 2011 a few years into his professional career, he won the Houston Rodeo. This win put more than \$80,000 in his pocket and came after a successful WNFR that paid a little more than \$70,000.

A few years later, Scheer stamped a bigger win on his resume. A qualifier for the finals at the Calgary Stampede in Alberta, Scheer scored 93.5-points on a horse called Spring Planting. It was a rematch for Scheer, who had failed to ride the horse a few months earlier at the WNFR. His whole family was witness to his \$100,000 payday.

But the greatest success to date occurred in February 2018. The American, held at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas,

celebrated its 5th year as the “richest one day rodeo” in the country. Like the WNFR, The American starts with 15 competitors in each of the seven events. But of those 15, some are invited and some have to qualify to compete.

The invited competitors are the top-ranked in their respective associations. For most, this means they competed at the WNFR the prior year. If they’re not invited, contestants have to win a series of competitions to qualify for The American.

After the first round of each event, only four contestants advance to the finals — this is where it gets interesting. If the winner of the finals is an invited contestant, he receives \$100,000. If he is a qualifier, he will win the \$100,000, plus part or all of a \$1,000,000 purse. This purse is divided between all event winners that were qualifiers. Meaning if only one qualifier wins, he gets the entire \$1,000,000 check.

In the 2017 rodeo season, Scheer was beat out in the last rodeo by his traveling partner Audy Reed for a spot in the top 15. This loss kept Scheer from qualifying for the WNFR. So, he entered the qualifiers, hoping to compete at The American — and he made it.

Scheer had competed at The American twice before, coming in



Cort Scheer has taken his rodeo winnings back home to invest in his cow-calf herd.

2nd place both times to traveling partner Wade Sundell. This year, Sundell wasn’t at The American. “In the long round I had a horse I was really excited about,” Scheer says. But his horse stumbled and didn’t give Scheer a good ride. The judges awarded a reride, which Scheer finished with 84.5 points. The score put him as the third cowboy to advance to the finals.

His draw for the finals was a mare called Medicine Woman, owned by

Frontier Rodeo. Scheer knew she would give him a good ride. “[The arena] is Medicine Woman and Wade Sundell’s building,” he said. “She is a monster.”

Scheer landed an 89-point ride on the mare, giving him confidence he may win. But it wasn’t a guarantee. “There was still one guy to go — Clay Elliott,” Scheer says. “I’ve seen Clay ride. He’s one of the baddest guys going right

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Cort has combined his love for rodeo and raising cattle over the last several years.

now.” Elliott’s ride wasn’t enough to overtake Scheer’s win, though, and Scheer walked away with a total of \$433,333 in prize money.

“Even after I’d won it didn’t hit right away. Praise God, it was fun,” Scheer says.

### Cashing in on cattle

The big checks haven’t made Scheer rich, though, but he knows the money won’t last forever. Thus, he uses his winnings to expand the family’s cow-calf operation in Nebraska.

The ranch has been in the Scheer family for years. Cort and

his brother, Clete, got started when their dad gave them each a heifer. “We built our herd from there,” he says. Early on, the Scheers raised and showed club calves. Once they graduated 4-H, the brothers switched gears to focus on beef production. “We wanted to get to the F1 cross,” Scheer said.

When the time came to expand, Scheer made his rodeo career and ranching business pay for each other. “We’ve always been black and once you’ve done the same thing so many times, it stops working,” he said. “We were looking for some bang.”

The Scheers started looking for Hereford bulls to cross on their black cows. They saw how well baldy calves performed for their neighbors. The brothers researched breeders across the country and decided the Hoffman Ranch was the best choice. Jason Hoffman runs the ranch with his wife and parents near Thedford, Neb., about 20 miles from the Scheers. “Of all the Hereford bulls we could find, he was the best,” Scheer says. A statement proven by the Hoffmans winning the champion carload at Denver five of the last six years.

Their business started when Cort and Clete contacted Hoffman to buy semen. “We usually AI (artificially inseminate) about 200 head each year and clean up with bulls after that,” Scheer says.

Soon after, Scheer approached Hoffman about sponsoring him in rodeo. It was a new concept for Hoffman, but it had some appeal. “I’d witnessed that a majority of Cort’s winnings went back into real estate or the ranch. I thought that was impressive because he’s a rancher at heart,” Hoffman says.

Beyond that, Hoffman appreciated the character and personality of Scheer. “One of the things that I really liked about Cort’s

family was their commitment to God. They walk the walk,” he says. Hoffman combined the sponsorship with provision that Scheer use his bulls, and the two haven’t looked back.

Ever since Scheer’s Calgary win, he and Clete have purchased the best bulls they can find from Hoffman. The brothers take conformation very seriously, looking for heavy-muscled, easy-fleshing bulls. “They like them very practical and rugged,” Hoffman says.

While the Scheer’s focus on phenotype, Hoffman adds input on the genetics he believes will work the best. “He knows way more about genetics than us. That guy can go on for days and days,” Scheer says. “I can talk about broncs like he can talk about Hereford bulls.”

To meet their demands for muscle and thickness, the Scheers have bought bulls sired by Hometown, Redeem and 719T. “They’ve tied in together buying similar bloodlines. They’ve bought a lot of half-brothers,” Hoffman says.

The Hoffman Ranch runs a lot of Line 1 base cows, making the stout and massive bulls the Scheers want. “We do a tremendous amount of ET (embryo transfer) work. We try to make these Hereford cattle as stout as we can while keeping birth weight in check,” Hoffman says.

### Looking ahead

Scheer doesn’t get to spend much time on the ranch, so he relies on his dad and brother to manage and run the operation. The time away from family is tough, but Scheer still claims Elsmere as his home, and he hopes to return one day to be a full-time cowboy.

“I want to be the old rancher than just looks at cows,” he says, but for the near future, he plans to keep riding broncs and buying bulls, securing his rodeo retirement in the family ranch. “Looking at my calendar, I think [my future] is pretty bright. I’m going to rodeo as long as I can.” **HW**



Cort Scheer and his brother, Clete, have purchased bulls from Hoffman Ranch, Thedford, Neb. The Hoffmans have sponsored Scheer in rodeo because the family was impressed with his character and being a rancher at heart.