

Before Chase Williams purchased Ebony's Moonbeam, she had quite the career in AQHA competition. Previously owned by Peggy Van Dorn of Woodward, Oklahoma, and shown primarily by Roger Branch, the mare was a finalist in senior tie-down roping at the 2012 AQHA World Championship Show. She was the high-point AQHA tie-down mare in 2011, and she placed third in junior tie-down roping at the 2009 World Show. She has earned Superiors in both tie-down roping and heeling.



A Rising Star

Two “A Team” horses are helping Chase

Williams work his way up in the standings.

By Mary McCashin

IT'S A CHILLY MORNING IN STEPHENVILLE, TEXAS, BUT AS TIE-down roper Chase Williams reflects back on the 2016 rodeo season, a warm smile spreads across the 25-year-old's face.

His career highlights already include tying the arena record at the College National Rodeo Finals for Tarleton State University in 2013 and winning the semi-finals of RFD-TV's The American in 2015. But 2016 brought something magical – being crowned tie-down champion at Pendleton (Oregon) Round-Up.

“I usually hate doing victory laps,” he says, “but that was the best victory lap of my life. It was so much fun.”

Chase also won the 2016 Spicer Gripp Memorial Calf Roping and finished 23rd in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association world standings.

However, Chase knows none of that could be accomplished without great mounts underneath him.

“I've had (Ebonys Moonbeam) for three years, and she absolutely has helped me get where I am right now, and she'll help me get where I want to be – the NFR.”

The 13-year-old 14.1-hand Quarter Horse fell into Chase's lap in an odd turn of events.

“A good friend of mine asked me to go look at horses with him and his son, (looking) for a nice junior rope horse. I honestly didn't really want to go at first, but he's a good friend so I went to help them out. We drove all the way up to Oklahoma from Texas to Roger Branch's place. Right away, I could tell this kid and horse weren't going to be a good match – she was way too much horse for him, and I was just drool-

ing over her. That kid ran 15-20 calves on her, and she didn't make one mistake, she was just as strong every run.”

Chase returned home with the unique mare still on his mind. He told his friend that if they didn't like her, he sure would like to buy her, and that's exactly what happened.

“She's the best hauling horse I've ever had,” he says. “She drinks water every time she's offered, she's sweet and easygoing for a mare. My hauling partners get frustrated with her, though; all their geldings just fall in love with her and can be total idiots around her. They just don't exist to 'Ebony,' though.”

Eventually Chase would like to breed Ebony (Night Time Shiner-Miss Black Thunder by King Rebel Wimp), but for now, “If it's not broke, I'm not fixing it,” he says. “I just don't want to have to take that much time off right now. One day, it will happen, though; she's too nice of a horse, and she has been too good to me.”

Ebony was also named Spicer Gripp Memorial Roping's Rope Horse of the Year.

To balance out Ebony, Chase is a half-owner of Mytee Rodeo Cat, along with Troy Pruitt (father of Chase's traveling partner, Riley Pruitt). The stout 14.1-hand 17-year-old bay gelding is a powerful, strong roping horse.

“He is an old-school horse – he's good on fresh and strong calves.”

But “Tank” almost didn't make it onto Chase's trailer.

“He has some nerve issues in his front feet, and I wasn't sure if I should buy him. I was at a point where Ebony needed a break, so the Pruitts just told me to ride him. We



Mytee Rodeo Cat, a grandson of the renowned rope-horse sire Cee Booger Red, is Chase's other tie-down horse, although he considers both horses first-string mounts.



At 25, Chase has big goals and the horsepower to help him accomplish them.

put pads on his feet, and he wears Soft Ride boots until he's on dirt. Once I figured out how to manage him, I decided I needed him."

Tank is by Boogers Mytee Tonka by Cee Booger Red, and his dam is Casino Rodeo Cat by Mi Ways Trouble.

"I'm just blessed with two A horses," Chase says. "There's no Plan B or back-up horse. They're both so adaptable to any given situation." Ebony tends to run open and hard, while Tank is very exact in every movement.

"No matter the situation, I have the horse I need. They really do balance each other out."

So with that kind of talent in his trailer, Chase knows he needs to be on the top of his game. Fortunately, it's something he has been working on for a very long time.

The New Mexico native got into rodeo quite naturally.

"One whole side of my family is ropers," Chase explains. "Growing up, my backyard was an arena, so I never considered any other option."

Chase grew up looking up to his grandfather, Phil Fifer. His mentor managed to tie a calf in record time with just seven fingers, having lost three middle fingers in a roping accident, so Chase had no excuses when it came to striving for perfection.

"I'm pretty aggressive when it comes to (setting) goals and reaching them. If I don't reach my goals for the year, I'm really displeased with myself and set even higher ones for the following year."

But while he's pursuing his goals, he makes sure to take the very best care of his horses. That includes not letting too many other cowboys ride them.

"I'm the guy who doesn't like to mount out his horses," he says. "If a friend is in a pinch, I will, but for the most part, I don't. There's too much risk involved."

Chase generally rides one horse per week, allowing each horse ample time to rest and recover on the road. When he's home, he entrusts his horses' care to Brazos Valley Equine Hospital in Stephenville.

"I have such a great team at home – supportive family, supportive vet and a great traveling partner in Riley Pruitt. I realized how important all that was my first year going pro (in 2013). I never knew that roping would be the easiest part of things. Now I've figured out how to get up and down the road without it making my head spin, and I couldn't do it without their support."

2017 is filled with goals for Chase – first and foremost, qualifying for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, which means he'll have to be ranked in the top 15. Chase says he'd like to finally win California's Rodeo Salinas after placing in the short round there three times in the last four years on Ebony. Also on his list is Cheyenne Frontier Days and its big payout.

Chase is ready to tackle 2017 in his normal aggressive, passionate manner, but he has learned how critical it is to stay in control and not waste opportunities.

"I have to focus on one run at a time. When I get somewhere, I need to focus on that run versus worrying about getting to the next one.

"I just have two amazing horses, and I know that they'll work for me. They're going to do their job, so I need to do mine." ■

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