



The Cowboy and the Country Singer

**Tie-down roper Tyson Durfey and
country singer Shea Fisher mix
business with romance.**

By Mary McCashin

Tyson Durfey and Shea Fisher have a lot of irons in the fire, including careers in professional rodeo and music.

THE ROMANCE BETWEEN TIE-DOWN ROPER TYSON DURFEY AND his country-singer wife Shea Fisher could have been pulled from a Nicholas Sparks novel.

One of their memorable chapters was written at the 2015 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, where Tyson shared the win in the third round on board his good horse A Prize Response. That was coincidentally the same night Shea sang her up-tempo song “Fast” in the rodeo’s opening ceremonies.

“Tyson had never seen me perform in such a big setting before, and he kept saying how nervous he was,” Shea says. “I kept asking why he was so nervous, and he kept saying, ‘I’m nervous for you!’ I think he wore off his nervous energy watching me perform, so when it came time to rope, he didn’t have any nerves left!”

The Texas-based cowboy and the Australian country singer first met at Rodeo Houston in 2010. Shea was doing modeling work for a clothing brand, and she met Tyson in the hospitality tent.

“I just thought he was a nice guy, I didn’t have any interest in dating him or anything. I just thought he was really nice,” she says of their first encounter.

The following year, Shea needed tickets for the Dodge Circuit Finals for her parents who were visiting from Australia, so she reached out to Tyson.

“He said he’d get me the tickets, but only if I agreed to go to dinner with him!”

Dinner turned into breakfast at a Cracker Barrel, and the rest, as they say, is history. Tyson and Shea were married in January 2014.

“We’re just best friends,” Shea says. “We balance each other out. He helps me be less demanding, and he can handle my strong personality. We spend as much time together as possible. I love going to rodeos to support him, but I’ll be the one in the stands on my laptop answering emails and processing jewelry line orders. We’ve never fought – we might not always agree, but we don’t fight.”

Tyson says, “Our foundation in our marriage is Jesus Christ. Whenever things get crazy, we just take a step back, decide to wrap up the day early and spend some time together.”

Shea has also brought a level of fitness into Tyson’s life. When she lived in Nashville, she was a certified personal trainer, so naturally when she and Tyson began dating, Tyson was introduced to a whole new level of athleticism.

“I was never the one who went to the gym five days a week and worked out,” he says. “But when Shea and I started talking in 2010, I realized I didn’t want her to leave me in the dust! It’s also about being an athlete. Every major sport has guys



Tyson and A Prize Response, aka "Nikko," had a successful 2015 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, sharing the win in Round 3, the same night Shea performed in the opening ceremonies.

consistently hitting the gym. I consider myself an athlete and certainly feel like that speed drills and quickness drills give me an advantage over my competition."

Shea was no stranger to the life of a rodeo cowboy. Her dad is an Australian bareback and bull-riding champion, and her mom is an Australian barrel-racing champion.

"Horses and rodeo have always been one of my passions. Riding just clears your mind," Shea says. "I'd love to make the NFR barrel racing at least once in my life, but Tyson and I would like to have a family at some point, and my 6-year-old mare is still in the seasoning stage."

Besides, her career keeps her pretty busy; Shea has two songs and two music videos being released in the United States this year.

In addition to rodeo and a singing career, Tyson and Shea also have a belt buckle company and jewelry line. The buckle company was originally started in Australia by Shea's parents 15 years ago. She expanded it to the United States when she signed her recording contract, and together she and Tyson started the jewelry line in 2013.

Growing up, Tyson always wanted to be a businessman, so it's not hard to see how he's putting that dream into action.

"I always imagined myself doing these multi-million dollar

deals," he says. "I'm certainly not doing the multi-million dollar deals I'd envisioned as a kid, but to be a cowboy today, you definitely have to be a businessman, as well."

You also, of course, have to have a great horse.

"I feel like if I don't have a great horse, I don't have a soul," Tyson says.

Tyson, 32, is no stranger to great horses. Born and raised in Savannah, Missouri, Tyson grew up learning from his dad, Roy, one of the best tie-down-roping trainers in rodeo. At age 9, Tyson had entered his first rodeo, and by age 10, he was training, buying and selling outside horses.

"My entire childhood was spent in a barn," Tyson says. "We'd start at 7:30 in the morning and ride until midnight, sometimes 25-30 horses a day."

In 2003, Tyson became a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. From the beginning, his goal has never wavered: to become a PRCA world champion. Although that's still a dream in the making, Tyson's hard work has earned him eight qualifications for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, and he has won the Canadian National Finals three times.

"The plan and the journey to achieve your dreams is very curvy," Tyson says. "I've just always stuck to the plan in my mind and my heart and followed through to the tiniest detail."



Check out the digital version of *America's Horse* (instructions are on Page 60) to watch Shea's music video of "Tough," which features appearances by Tyson and Nikko.

LAURA NORVELLE PURTEE/LAURA PURTEE PRODUCTIONS



At home in Weatherford, Texas, Tyson says, "I feel like if I don't have a great horse, I don't have a soul."

Besides chasing his goals, Tyson also makes it a point to give back. It's no secret that his pink shirts help him stand out in the rodeo arena, but it's what those pink shirts stand for that really makes the difference.

In 2008, inspired by a breast cancer scare in his family, Tyson decided to wear a pink shirt at the NFR and donate 10 percent of his earnings to breast cancer research.

"It was just going to be a one-time thing, but I was so moved by everyone's stories and support. People were coming up to me to tell me how much it meant to them," Tyson says. The pink shirts stuck, and since 2008, Tyson has continued to donate 10 percent of his NFR earnings to breast cancer research. (Fun fact: He has 15 pink shirts for rodeos.)

He knows that a big part of his success in rodeo and his NFR qualifications also have to be credited to his horses. In 2014, Tyson bought A Prize Response, aka "Nikko" (Smokums Prize-Peps Response by Doc's Remedy). The 12-year-old bay gelding has become Tyson's go-to horse.

"He's the easiest horse I've ever rode," Tyson says. He requires almost zero maintenance, with the exception that you have to feed him watermelon, cherries, carrots – you name it, he'll eat it! He's like a human."

Nikko is built like a reining horse or a cutting horse. He's low to the ground, stocky and quick strided.

"He just goes and does his job. He's consistent, laid back and can take care of anyone from a 3-year-old to an 80-year-old. He has just got a great mind, and that's key with a great rope horse," Tyson says.

When it comes to competition, Tyson has one major rule: "I don't like to mount out my horses. It's not that other guys aren't great horsemen, it's just that I feel like my horses work best for me because of a level of trust between us. They have to only be trained one way, and I wouldn't want to jeopardize even one run with anyone else."

Shea chimes in: "Tyson is one of the best horsemen I've ever seen, and I'm not just saying that because he's my husband. He has a way with horses behind the scenes that no one sees. He expects his horses to work correctly and work with him, but he also stays calm and collected when things aren't going his way."

Lately, things do seem to be going the couple's way. Tyson won tie-down roping at the 2016 Rodeo Houston, and Shea's newest single "Tough," was seeing success in its Australian release. It's also available on iTunes. 🎵

Keep up with Tyson and Shea on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.