

One In A Million

Las Vegas, NV

By Jennifer Powell, Melody Pratt and Sarah Ferguson

Special To Ropers Sports News

Having just completed his 10th annual, successful Double Dollar Performance Horse Sale in Las Vegas, Greg Kesler is no stranger to cattle, horses or a rope. He's spent a lifetime pursuing his dreams of being a successful businessman, a successful rancher, and a successful roper, so it's no surprise that Greg has more irons in the fire than a campfire cook at feed time. With decades of ups and downs, a successful chemical company under his belt, a large cattle and horse operation in Utah, a successful horse sale in Vegas, the real spark comes alive in Greg's eyes when he sees his 15-year-old son, Quinn Kesler, pick up a rope.

"Quinn's talent just blows me away," said Greg. "All my kids have amazing individual talents, Quinn's just happens to be roping."

When Quinn Kesler was five-years-old he would sit in the pew at church on Sunday, take his shoe strings out of his shoes, make a loop and practice roping his toes. Today, Quinn is still roping, although he's moved well beyond roping his toes.

Like most 15-year-old boys, Quinn hates cleaning his room, sees no purpose in making a bed, can eat twice his weight in food, loves to sleep and hang out with his friends, and enjoys picking on his sisters. He loves chocolate chip cookies, salt and vinegar potato chips, and hates coconut. It's not until he takes a rope into his hands that the transformation takes place.

While the change might be subtle to most, those close to Quinn say it's more than obvious to them. "You'll see a definite change come over him," says Greg. "His demeanor changes from being in kid-mode to being a serious, focused young man."

After all, in 2008 Quinn out-roped just about everyone he went up against. Currently listed as a #8 Heeler and a #6 Header in the USTRC triad system, he took either first or second place in the Hawaii Championships, Utah High School State Finals, West Coast Regional Finals, Color County Championships, and ACTRA National Finals. He was 3rd in the USTRC Northwest Regional Finals and placed 7th in the USTRC National Finals in the #15 prelim.

At the National High School Rodeo Association Finals in Farmington, New Mexico, Quinn and his partner lead the team roping all week through the last performance and ended up 2nd high call in the short round. (A complete list of Quinn's 2008 roping season accomplishments is available upon request.)

Greg Kesler attributes his son's success in the roping pen to plain old hard work. "Most kids have been told that they 'can be anything they want to be.'" Unfortunately, most of them haven't been told that those dreams take a lot of hard work."

All else aside, it's stating the obvious to say that Quinn has been blessed with natural talent and he's taken that gift and honed it, stretched it, refined it. His typical day includes an early wake up call followed by home schooling and a meal. After completing his daily religious studies, it's off to work. He works young horses first then the seasoned horses, and he ropes — everyday, weather permitting. In bad weather he typically loads up and heads to the nearest indoor roping arena. When his day is done he comes inside and watches roping videos, ropes the dummy, watches more videos, until he is told he has to go to bed.

At his tender young age, Quinn has had the opportunity to go one on one with some pretty well-known names in team roping and has bested many of them. At 10-years-old, Quinn found himself face-to-face with one of the most well-known faces in team roping, NFR champion Clay O'Brien Cooper. The two ropers had a "rope off" on a Heel-O-Matic roping machine. End result — 100 straight without a miss by either. Cooper finally called it quits so he would have enough left in him to do his job at the NFR that night.

Cooper isn't the only one who has taken notice. When six-time All-Around Champion Cowboy and horseman legend Larry Mahan calls you "special", you better take notice. In the case of Quinn Kesler, Mahan isn't shy about sharing his opinion about the young cowboy.

"Quinn is dedicated to winning," said Mahan. "If he sets his mind to it, he'll win a world championship."

Mahan knows first hand just how special he is. With several horses consigned to the 2006 Double Dollar Rope, Ranch and Trail Horse Sale, Mahan was involved in an accident and I wasn't able to ride them.

"Quinn took them and rode them from September to December for me. When we got to the sale my horses were so relaxed and calm. They knew exactly what they were supposed to do," said Mahan. "Quinn is so special it is unbelievable."

TAKING NOTICE

The roping protégé started making a name for himself from a tender age. During the 2006 season, Quinn placed eighth in the nation at the USTRC finals. He and his partner won the #15 & Under roping held in New Mexico, which draws the toughest ropers from all over the nation.

In 2007, as a #8 heeler and #6 header, the outspoken young cowboy with an easy smile was the second highest money winner for the entire USTRC association. He placed in the top five in three other categories. During the 2007 year he won the West Coast Finals held in Paso Robles, California, earning over \$12,000. He won the #7 roping during the Utah State ACTRA finals held in Salinas, Utah. At the Utah State Junior High Finals he won in the team roping and qualified in the breakaway and ribbon roping, then went on to the National Junior High Finals and took 6th in the breakaway-two places higher than he had placed the year before. That maybe doesn't sound like much of a feat, unless you add the fact that the only calves Quinn roped either of the two years were at the junior rodeos.

HORSE POWER

With impressive career earnings already totaling over \$300,000 by the end of 2008, Quinn feels strongly that it wouldn't have been possible without a lot of practice and reliable horses, all of which he trained himself. Having access to a good breeding program and a lot of cattle certainly doesn't hurt. Even with a string of strong contenders, Quinn's horse-of-choice to haul is a stocky seven-year-old sorrel named HICKORY, who arrived at Double Dollar ranch when he was three years old.

"HICKORY (a son of HIGH BROW HICKORY out of a daughter of PEPPY SAN) is one of the best horses I have ever ridden. I head, heel and breakaway rope off of him," said Quinn. "He's really smart. He's a good friend too."

HOME GROWN

So how did it all start for this young gun? "He hit the ground running," explained Quinn's mother Allyson Kesler. "Quinn has loved horses

See **ONE IN A MILLION** On Page ??

and roping from day one."

Around the time he could walk, Quinn started riding a wooden rocking horse that the family had passed down through the siblings. Equipped with wooden handles, Quinn deemed this not "real" enough so enlisted the help of his dad, Greg Kesler, to drill a hole through it and make a rein with some rope. He would ride for hours pulling back on the reins, yelling "whoa horse!"

With his obsession quickly growing, Quinn learned the agony of defeat at an early age. At the age of four, he accompanied his dad on a roping trip to St. George, Utah. He entered the dummy roping and lost.

"They cleaned his clock," said Greg. "He was quiet all the way home. That's when he started watching roping videos and roping the dummy non-stop."

Not too long after his defeat, on a roping trip to Mormon Lakes, Arizona, Corky Irons gave Quinn three \$1 bills and told him to place bets with the other kids who were roping the dummy. By the end of the day, Quinn had 20 \$1 bills stuffed in his tiny pockets. He was hooked on the competition of roping. He won his first buckle dummy roping when he was five. He started roping off a buckskin horse named BADGER that same year and he never looked back.

"He studies it and figures out what he needs to do to be faster," says Greg. "It is so much fun heading for Quinn because I get all excited when I catch one quick-even before I turn the corner since I know he's going to catch. Quinn just doesn't choke," says his Dad.

ROPIN' AND SCHOOLIN'

During the summer between his first and second grade year, Quinn proposed the idea of home school to his parents so he could have more time to pursue his love of roping and training horses. After extensive research into home school resources, his parents agreed and his mother Allyson became his schoolteacher. The arrangement worked so well for Quinn he continues to be educated at home today.

At only six-years-old, Quinn took the first horse he trained, ANGEL, to his family's Double Dollar Performance Horse Sale in Las Vegas, Nevada. To this day, Quinn is heavily involved in the sale and in the family's ranching business, helping make important decisions regarding which foals to keep, which cattle to sell, and which stallion to breed to each mare. Quinn also performs many of the daily ranching tasks such as feeding, watering, gathering, sorting, herding, vaccinating, dehorning, and castrating. In addition to the ranching, Quinn also has a small herd of Boer goats that he raises and sells.

FAITH AND ROPING

In 2005, Quinn struggled with the decision of whether to rope on Sunday during the Lucky 7 roping held in Las Vegas. Raised in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), which believes Sunday is a day of rest, Quinn was torn.

Respecting Sunday as a day of rest, Quinn let partners know that he wouldn't rope, but they were persistent and kept calling to try to coax him into it. Knowing that they would already be in Las Vegas during that time for their horse sale, Greg said to his son, "I don't know if it's the right thing for you to do; only you can decide, but you might consider roping and donating your winnings to good causes."

It wasn't until a couple of weeks later after a lot of thought and prayer that Quinn decided to rope at the event. He was 11 at the time and competing against the best in the country at his classification. By the end of the very cold and windy roping, Quinn had placed first and third winning over \$28,000.

Quinn donated part of the money to the LDS missionary fund, a portion to the Perpetual Education Fund and the remainder of the money to the LDS Book of Mormon Fund. Testing his commitment, Greg tried to tempt his son by saying, "Heavenly Father probably wouldn't mind if you kept enough out to buy that Coats saddle that you have been wanting so badly". Quinn quickly responded that he had made a promise to Heavenly Father and that none of the money was his to keep.

The next day Quinn and his family wandered through Cowboy Christmas, the large exhibit hall and shopping venue that takes place during the NFR in Las Vegas. They stopped at the Coats Saddlery booth where a friend of the family introduced Quinn to owner Larry Coats, who had heard about Quinn's win. Coats promptly offered Quinn a sponsorship if he would ride a Coats saddle. Quinn later remarked to his father, "See what happens when you keep your promises".

CHAMPIONS ON THE BACKYARD

In August of 2007, National Finals Rodeo Champion Denny Watkins taught a roping clinic at the Double Dollar Ranch.

"The first time I met Quinn I liked him, but how could anyone not like Quinn. He never brags. He lets his roping do the talking," said Watkins. "He is very coachable. He knows what he wants and he wants to be a great roper."

In 2007, two-time World Champion Header Matt Sherwood spent some time at the Double Dollar Ranch, giving Quinn the opportunity to heel a few fast runs with him.

"It was fun to let it loose with the National Champion," said Quinn. "He is a great guy."

Matt Sherwood also had some positive praise for Quinn. "He's a great kid with tons of dedication and ability. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with him," said Sherwood. "Quinn is super polite and has his priorities in order and will focus on what is important in life."

No stranger to the theory that practice makes perfect, Quinn focuses on being consistent. "Trying to stay calm and do the same thing every run just like in practice is the biggest challenge in roping," said Quinn. "It's all in the mind set."

Years on the back of a horse have also helped Quinn be successful in the roping pen. He has trained every horse he has ever competed on.

"Quinn's first concern is to ride his horses correctly," says Gene Aguiar, American Cowboy Team Roping Association vice president and friend of the family. "He is far ahead of most ropers with his horsemanship."

SIBLING RIVALRY

One of six children, Quinn's siblings certainly have their own opinion of their roping star brother, and unlike most sibling rivalries, they sing their brother's praises.

"He will run out of his way to hold a door open for an elderly lady, offer to carry your bags, and asks if he can get you anything from the kitchen while he's there," said his oldest sister Camille. "He is also very generous. He is always offering to treat his family and friends to dinner."

Quinn's siblings include older brother, Landon, three older sisters, Camille, Nicole and Lindsay, and a younger sister, Hailey who are all extremely supportive of him.

"I love to brag about him and tell people he's my little brother," said Lindsay. "Even though he is my little brother, he is someone I will always look up to."

"My family is a huge support," said Quinn. "My dad has influenced my roping the most. He

See **ONE IN A MILLION** On Page ??

One In A Million...

From Page ??

helps me with whatever I want to do. He tries to support me in anyway he can.”

A BALANCED LIFE

When Quinn isn't in the roping pen practicing or winning, he might be zipping around the ranch on his mini motorcycle or truck, snowboarding, bouncing through the hay fields hunting rabbits and pheasants, at a Boy Scout jamboree or spending time with family and close friends being a normal 15-year-old.

Having accomplished so much already, what's in store for the Utah cowboy?

“Eventually, I would like to rodeo and make it to the National Finals Rodeo, but first I'd like to compete at the George Strait Roping and Bob

Feist Invitational,” said Quinn, who is scheduled to rope at the BFI in 2009 with World Champion Doyle Gellerman.

With all of Quinn's success, a 15-year-old could lose track of what is important but Quinn encourages ropers of all skill levels. “Try your best and don't quit. Even if you are struggling, because we have all been there at one time.” He added, “So many people do so much for me. It's important for me to be nice and do what I can in return for them.”

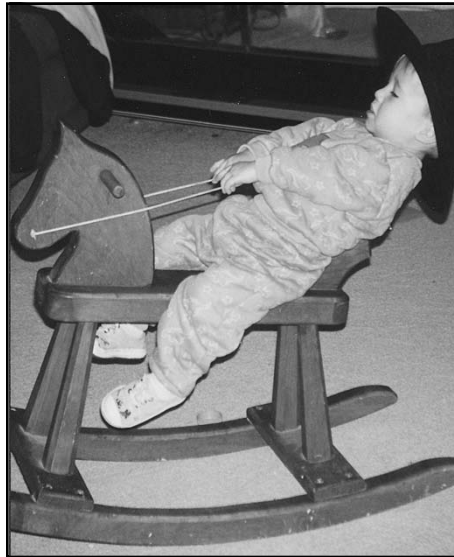
Like most young ropers, Quinn dreams of being on the floor of the Thomas & Mack Center and taking the NFR by storm. That dream might not be too far off.



Quinn Kesler heeling at a roping in Farmington, N.M.



Quinn Kesler roping in helmet at age 14. The wind was blowing so hard that day that he wore that helmet. It was so funny because he looked like a little astronaut on his horse.



Quinn Kesler riding his wooden horse, age 2 in 1995. This rocking horse has been passed around the family from cousin to cousin.



Quinn Kesler at age 14, relaxing at the US Regional Finals in Paso Robles, Calif.