Cunningham wins national title in goat tying



Louisburg graduate Lakin Cunningham won the national title in goat tying last month at the Little Britches Rodeo in Guthrie, Okla.

Lakin Cunningham couldn’t have asked for a better way to finish her high school rodeo career.

Cunningham, who is a 2021 Louisburg High School graduate, won the world title in goat tying at the National Little Britches Rodeo (NLBR) in Guthrie, Okla. In the high school division, approximately 175 girls competed at the national finals

“Going into Nationals, I knew that all I could do was go out and do my best and hope it would be good enough as there’s a lot of great goat tyers across the nation that qualify for Nationals,” Cunningham said. “Loading my horses in the trailer for Nationals I had a horse step on my foot and beat it up to the point I could barely walk. Luckily, I drew up in the middle of the week, so I had a couple days to recover a bit. In the back of my mind, I was still very worried about tying goats on an injured foot and was pretty nervous, but knew there was nothing I could do but go out and tie.

“Last year at Nationals was a disappointment and I’ve ended up in the top 15 in the world standings in goat tying three times. Last year, I didn’t even qualify for the Short Go in goat tying. “I was ready for redemption.”

She definitely got that as she put together a couple good runs, and got off to great start. She had 6.6 second run in the first round, which was the fastest time for the entire competition.

Cunningham then had a run of 7.1 seconds in the second round, before struggling a little bit in the short go.

“Honestly, after I tied, I thought I didn’t win the title and had thrown it away,” Cunningham said. “Although I felt defeated, I was still proud of myself as I’d never placed as high as the top 7 in the world in goats and knew I’d have at least accomplished my highest world finish. When the point standing sheet was posted and my name was at the top of the list, I was so excited I didn’t know what to do. I’d actually done it. I’d won the World Championship title. If you ask my mom, it looked like I had no emotion when I found out as I truly thought I had lost that title and convinced myself that I had.

“I was so shocked and excited at the same time. I set a goal a few years ago to someday win a world title. This year my New Year’s resolution was to finish in the Top 5 in the world standings. I surpassed that resolution and that my dream I set a few years ago had come true. It was such a great feeling knowing that a small-town Kansan had won a world title that I’d dreamed of for so long.”



Lakin Cunningham poses with her prized saddle after winning the goat tying competition at the Little Britches Rodeo.

Prior to her world title in late July, Cunningham had racked up another title earlier and had some success alongside a pair of two other Louisburg students.

At the Kansas High School Rodeo Association, Cunningham won the state title in goat tying and was also a reserve state champion in the reined cow horse event.

“Throughout my high school career, I have won many state and reserve state championship titles in other events, but this

year’s state title was probably the most special,” Cunningham said. “Seven years ago, I set a goal to win a goat tying state championship title and follow in the footsteps of my long-time goat tying mentor Jacoby (Hotsenpiller) Johnson. Although the other state championship wins have been special, this one was by far the best. I’ve come very close to this title over the years and have many reserve champion finishes, but have always been a bit short of points needed for the title at the very end.

“I came home with that State Championship title in the goat tying that I’d set the goal for all those years ago. That evening at the rodeo, I cried, and I don’t normally cry for things like this, but I did. It was a mix of emotions, knowing that it was my last KHSRA rodeo ever and I’d finally won that state title on my last shot at it.”

Breck Nielsen, who is a student at Louisburg Middle School, won the state title in barrel racing at the Kansas Junior High School Rodeo Association.

Freshman Shylar Whiting was reserve champion in pole bending at the junior high state competition. Whiting also ended up in the top 20 I the world standings for breakaway roping for the National Little Britches Rodeo Association.

“Louisburg has some true rodeo athletes among us and I know these girls have many more successes they’ll bring back to our hometown in the year’s to come,” Cunningham said.

Now Cunningham is preparing for life on the college circuit with Missouri Valley College and she is looking forward to the challenge.

“I’m nervous, but also excited,” she said. “Being gone rodeoing and pursuing my last summer run as a high schooler has definitely helped me get ready for college. My MoVal rodeo coach Ken Mason was at two of the large competitions I was at this summer. I got to talk to him a few times, he gave me some

coaching after my second round at Nationals, and he got to see me win the world title. That helped tremendously. He saw me make some great runs, some ok runs and some bad runs this summer.

“I witnessed first hand before I head off to college how encouraging he is and that helps tremendously as I prepare to head to school in a few weeks. I know that college and college rodeo will be a totally different experience than high school, but I’m ready to tackle this next challenge. My first college rodeo goal is to qualify for the College National Finals Rodeo.”