

# Two rides left for Red Rock

by Kendra K. Santos  
PSN Features Editor

He may be Lane Frost's Tornado.

If anyone weathers him for eight seconds, he will be added to the history books right next to the legendary Freckles Brown.

He's also the 1987 Bucking Bull of the Year.

Red Rock, an 11-year-old red brindle bull owned by John Growney and Don Kish of the Growney Bros. Rodeo Co. of Red Bluff, Calif., remains unriden after 307 trips out the gate. Only two more cowboys will get a chance.

Red Rock will be drawn twice by National Finals Rodeo (NFR) bull riders this December in Las Vegas. Some hope their name is picked out of the hat with his; some don't.

"I don't want him in the 10th round at the Finals if it comes down to riding him for the title," said world title contender Lane Frost, Quanah, Texas, the 1986 NFR bull riding average champ, who covered nine of 10 last year (Red Rock is the only bull who could throw him) for an NFR record. "I would like to get him for my 10th one if I already have the world won."

Two-time NFR bull riding qualifier Cody Lambert of Henrietta, Texas, says he would like one more crack at Red Rock unconditionally.

"If they'd let me get on him today for nothing, I'd get on him," said Lambert, who stayed with the bull last June for six seconds at the Cedarville Rodeo in Cedarville, Calif. "But I got too excited. I've had two fair chances at him, and I needed help getting up both times."



PSN photo by Kendra Santos

John Growney (left) and Don Kish scratch the back of Red Rock, the PRCA Bull of the Year.

"You can't control the situation with Red Rock. Whoever rides him (if anyone does) is going to be right on the edge, exposing himself. And if one little thing goes wrong, he's going to hit the ground harder than he ever has in his life."

Kish says Red Rock is a bull that can be ridden for seven seconds and still be a long way from ridden.

"He's strong, he's fast and he's smart," he said. "There are stronger, faster, smarter bulls than Red Rock, but he has the combination."

They say Red Rock knows who's on his

back. According to Kish, the bull has only bucked into his rider's riding hand three times ever, regardless of which hand is used. He's also known to buck only as hard as is necessary to ditch his rider.

"When the good guys are on him, he's at his best," Kish said. "But if some young or unexperienced rider draws him, he knows he doesn't have to try as hard. If he bucked that hard with a really good rider they could ride him. He knows the difference."

Though he has never intentionally tried to harm a fallen cowboy, Red Rock's strong

style tends to turf hopeful riders harder than other bulls.

"Lane and I have both had him twice and Tuff's (Hedeman) had him once," Lambert said. "All three of us had to tape our wrists for a month after we rode him, and he bucked a different pattern every time."

"Red Rock intimidates a guy because he's so ready. He gets hard as a rock in that chute. It's like sitting on a brick. Then he throws people off so hard they break bones when they land."

See Page 33

## Red Rock

from page 10

One might assume an unriden bull to be feisty, if not just plain mean. Never assume.

Small children can sit on Red Rock's back in his pen. Bucking is like a job for him—when he's off work, he relaxes.

Red Rock was born at the Burnt River Ranch in Burns, Ore. His mother died when he was a tiny calf, so the little "bummer" was raised by a milk cow in the back yard with another orphan calf.

When he was a young bull, Red Rock was purchased by Mert Hunking, an amateur stock contractor from Sisters, Ore. The first time Kish saw the bull was when he drew him at a rodeo in Silver Lake, Ore., when he was 18 (1980). He lasted only a few jumps before being turfed with authority.

"Nobody knew the bull then," Kish said. "Mert took Red Rock to the World's Toughest Rodeo in Tacoma in 1982 and Jody Tatone drew him. That started the cowboys talking about him."

Red Rock won several awards while he was an amateur buckler.

In 1983, he got his chance at the "big time."

"Mert found out he had cancer and had to sell some of his stock," Kish said. "He wanted Red Rock to have a good home. If he hadn't been dying he never would have sold him."

When Kish and Growney looked over some of the animals Hunking was selling, Kish recognized Red Rock immediately. They bought him that day in early 1984 for \$10,000.

Red Rock has been the reserve bucking bull (voted on by the stock contractors) at all three Finals since (1984, '85, '86).

"We had no idea that he was quite this

caliber a bull when we bought him," Growney said. "I think we owe it to him to retire him unriden after the Finals this year."

"He makes me think there might be something to reincarnation. I think there's a bull rider inside this bull. I thought about naming him George Paul (The 1968 world bull riding champion who was killed at age 23 when his twin-engine plane crashed in Wyoming July 30, 1970)."

Red Rock will finally be used for his originally intended purpose upon his retirement in December.

"Our objective when we bought him was to make him a herd sire," Kish said. "Winning bucking bull of the year is such a long shot—we had raising calves to be bucking bulls in mind."

After eight years under a bull rope, crawling on and off stock trucks, standing in portable pens awaiting the next crack of the gate, Red Rock will have earned his spacious green pasture at the Growney Ranch in Red Bluff.

Red Rock's most-worthy challengers would like to see him stick around awhile longer.

"Of course I'd like another shot at him," Lambert said. "But I also think he'll never get the recognition he deserves unless someone does ride him. As of now, no one knows his limits."

Frost, like everyone else, would also like to be the first to ride the invincible bull.

"It'd be the thrill of anyone's bull riding career," he said. "Like when Freckles Brown rode Tornado." □

## Standings

from page 2

### TEAM ROPING

1. Clay O'Brien Cooper, Gilbert, AZ	48,844
Jake Barnes, Bloomfield, NM	48,844
3. Matt Tyler, San Marcos, TX	35,208
4. Dee Pickett, Caldwell, ID	34,868
Mike Beers, Rufus, OR	34,868
6. Bob Hiers, Voca, TX	33,985
Tex Workman, Llano, TX	33,985
7. ...	31,186

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