

RIDING AGAIN

CHICK BEGINS TRAINING NEW HORSE AFTER RODEO ACCIDENT

By SARAH SLEE
Senior Reporter

Kara Lowe started with the Weatherford All-American Cowgirl Chicks when she was 10. Almost seven years later, she hasn't missed a practice, performance or appearance.

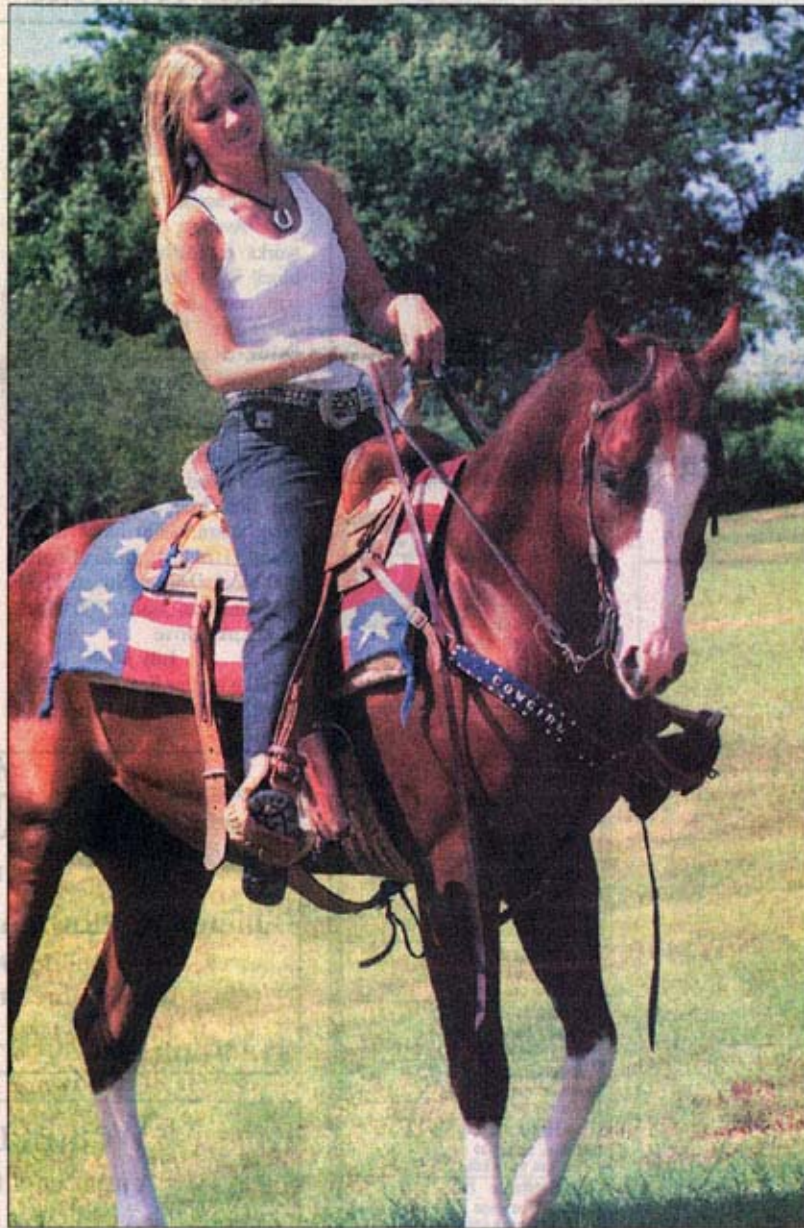
Even after her horse and companion, Dude, went down opening night of the Parker County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo, she refused to miss an event. June 16, her 10-year-old horse broke his leg in a freak accident and didn't survive.

"The loss was so tough," said Dorinda Whitworth, Lowe's mother. "We wanted to replace him with something as close to him as possible."

Lowe, one of the lead girls, rode a borrowed horse the rest of that week and the next week called Dude's trainer Kim Ferguson in Aubrey. When Lowe's parents talked to Ferguson, she thought she had the perfect horse. He reminded her of Dude and was trained in roping and reining. That day Smoken Glow, 4, went home with them.

"We were really lucky to find Smoken so fast," said Lowe, a senior at Weatherford High School. "He will never replace Dude, but he's a gorgeous horse. I think he's going to make it. He's willing to do whatever you want him to do."

Being a Cowgirl Chick horse
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SARAH SLEE/DEMOCRAT PHOTO

Kara Lowe, 17, a Weatherford Cowgirl Chick, rides Smoken, her newest riding companion. Her parents bought him two weeks ago after her horse and best friend, Dude, suffered a severe accident at the Parker County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo.

Horse

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isn't easy. They have to overcome many obstacles, said Cowgirl Chick head coach and drill coordinator Trish Carter. Running with flags everywhere, fireworks and staying focused is difficult.

"Kara has some hard parts," she said. "That horse has got to fill some big shoes."

Smoken went to his first official practice last night.

"That's when we'll really see what he can do," Whitworth said.

June 26, he went to the Cowtown Coliseum in the Fort Worth Stockyards with the girls and watched. Lowe said he did OK, but still has a lot of work to do.

"It really depends, but it will probably be about three months before he's ready to perform," she said.

In the meantime, she's riding one of Carter's horses.

Lowe has ridden Smoken with

her large American flag and he's OK with that, but seeing a line of girls running at him, all with flags, still makes him shake. Lowe keeps her flag with Smoken at all times. It's in his stall. It's in his trailer. Wherever he goes, it goes. She rides him every day.

"That flag is going to be his best friend before this is over," Whitworth said. "It's hard for horses to ride with those flags hanging in their face or snapping in the air. It pops and makes a lot of noise."

Although Smoken can't replace Dude, Lowe knows he's a good horse and is excited to get back on track.

"I'll never be able to find another Dude," she said. "Even with a broken leg, he didn't go down with me. We had a special bond that no one else shared. I don't know if I'll be able to share that with Smoken."

But she's grateful. She appreciates Ferguson helping her find a horse, she appreciates all the support from the Weatherford community, and she can't thank her fellow Cowgirl Chicks enough.

"It's unbelievable how many people we didn't even know reached out to us," she said. "Strangers were offering me a horse to ride. People dedicated songs to Dude and I on the radio."

Lowe's mother said people volunteered donations.

"We didn't even ask for donations, and people showed up at the rodeo wanting to give Kara money," she said through tears. "I can't tell you how much Weatherford has supported us through this."

Dude was the Chicks' lead horse. He won't be forgotten. But the girls know they have to move on.

"I think I've finally accepted it," Lowe said. "Dude was my

best friend. It's going to take time to adjust."

The Weatherford Cowgirl Chicks, a group of 18 girls, are a rodeo entertainment drill team. They ride in pro rodeo circuits such as the Women's Professional Rodeo Finals, CPRA rodeos, the CPRA Finals, PBR rodeos, UPRA rodeos and PRCA rodeos. They ride every year during the Parker County Sheriff's Posse Frontier Days Celebration. But most importantly they ride for cancer patients. Everything they do is dedicated to people suffering from cancer. They raise money for cancer patients, donate their retired horses to cancer patients and travel the country to do their part.

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