

The rise of Zach Call



Ted Harbin Media Coordinator Bullfighters Only

COURTESY PHOTO

Nebraska man is working his way up the Bullfighters Only standings

There is a rugged mentality that is just part with living and working in the Nebraska sandhills.

It comes from harsh winters and dry summers that can lay a burden on people who reside in the 20,000 square miles of prairie grass over sand dunes. Like the winds that sweep across them, the sandhills have a way of crafting a soul.

Zach Call is 24 years old and owns the lifestyle. He grew up working on a ranch and now handles day work for various ranches across north-central Nebraska. It allows him the opportunity to work for everything he owns while also providing him with the ability to escape and chase his dreams.

Call is a bullfighter, and he's pretty darn good. He has worked his way through the inaugural Bullfighters Only season to be among the best in the game, and he proved his talent even more during the BFO's Las Vegas Championship this past December. Over seven days of freestyle bullfighting competition, Call earned \$11,000 and became a showcase player in one of the greatest extreme sports spectacles in the world.

"In bullfighting, you're basically the underdog every match you go into," he said. "It's cool that you can stay focused enough that even though you're going up against something that's bigger, stronger and faster than you, you can come out unscathed."

"The only way to beat the bull is with your head. You don't outrun them. You have to outsmart them."

He has done that quite often, utilizing his exceptional athleticism to maneuver past the agile bulls, which are bred to be aggressive and quick. With scores based on a 100-point scale, men can earn up to 50 points per fight based on their ability to exhibit control and style while maneuvering around or over an animal; a bull can earn up to 50 points based on its quickness, aggression and willingness to stay with the bullfighter.

The best in the business are making it matter through Bullfighters Only. It's quite a statement for Call, who only began fighting bulls four years ago.

"I came back one summer after my sophomore year in college," he said of his hometown of Mullen, NE. "They had our hometown bull riding, and I asked my brother if I could fight it. (Bullfighting legend) Miles Hare was there judging it, and I talked to him afterward. It all took off from there."

It's still taking off, much like a space shuttle leaving Cape Canaveral.

"We discovered him off a Facebook video when he won the bullfight in Rapid City (S.D.) a couple years ago," said Aaron Ferguson, founder and CEO of Bullfighters Only. "Once he figured it out, he's been pretty much unstoppable. He's really made a name for himself."

That he has. Call was a four-sport athlete at Mullen High School, and that athleticism is a big reason he's found success in the BFO. Throw in a little sandhills work ethic, and Zach Call's rise to the top is no surprise to those that know him.

"He's definitely a very tough guy," said Beau Scheuth, who has worked and traveled with Call for the past couple of years. "I think his greatest strength is his mental side. He doesn't let things rattle him. He might get in a tight situation, but he doesn't let that frustrate him."

"During the short round in Vegas, he had a bull that caught him in the corner, but because he was aware of it, he got out of it. Some other people might have gotten trapped there and beaten up pretty good."

It goes well beyond being tough, more than continuing the fight after taking a shot or series of shots. It's a reflection on those days working cattle in the prairie grass in the rolling hills.

"It's in the middle of nowhere," Call said of his home. "There's not a lot there. It's nice and quiet. There's always people needing help, and that's what I like doing."

"Where I've grown up around cattle, just learning the way they move, you can learn a lot from them even when you're out in the pasture. You pick up on things that some people might not pay attention to."

Understanding cattle is vital when going face to face with beasts hell bent on running over him. When it's mixed with fantastic athleticism, the show is amazing.

"To me, a lot about bullfighting is reading the animal," he said. "When you get into a sticky spot, that athleticism is what gets you out of it. Footwork is one of the most important things, and that's what I pay attention to. To step into the right spot at the right time can mean all the difference in the world."

He's stepping in the right direction, and he's excited about where he's heading with Bullfighters Only.

"The popularity of freestyle bullfighting is unreal," Call said. "I think for a long time, bullfighting was put on the back burner. The BFO has done a good job about making people realize we're athletes. To see it get to this point is really cool."

Zach Call is cool, too, and it's served him well.

Thedford Area Community Foundation Making An Impact



COURTESY PHOTOS

Halsey Rural Fire Department received a new roof on their fire hall and used funds given to them by the Thedford Area Community Foundation.

Thedford Area Community Foundation is making an impact on the community in a big way. Since its inception, the TACF has given out over \$152,000 in grants and has committed \$7,000 to scholarships for local students.

The TACF is working for the continuing betterment of the Thedford, Seneca, Brownlee, and Halsey areas.

Four grants were awarded in 2016 totaling \$22,000 and two scholarships for \$2,000. Grants went towards a new cart shed at the Thedford Golf Course, a roof for the Halsey Rural Fire Department's fire hall, the Little Girls lost statue and creation of a historical marker and a scoreboard table for Thedford Public Schools.

Scholarships were



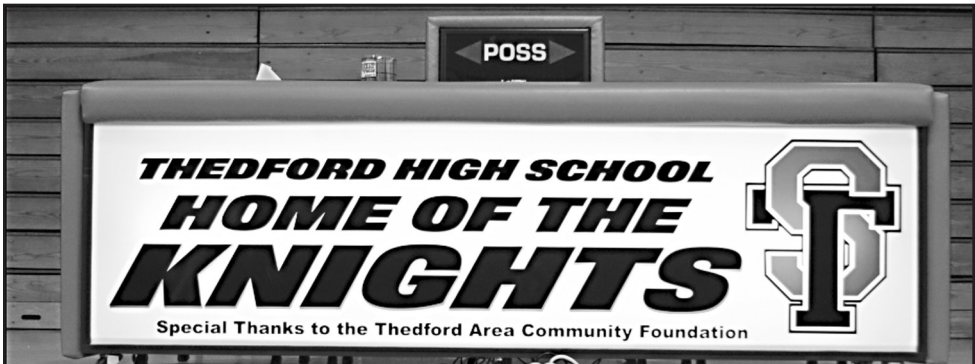
The Thedford Golf Course was able to build a new cart shed with the help of TACF funds.

awarded to Dylan Andersen and Makayla Rines-tine, who are attending two and four year colleges this year.

TACF is a part of the Nebraska Community Foundation and donations are tax deductible. Checks or money orders payable to TACFF may be sent to Thedford Area Community Foundation, P.O. Box

14, Thedford, NE 69166.

Board of directors are Marcy (Neal) Andersen, president; Rosalea (Boyer) Gift, vice president; Jay Jones, secretary; Jamie (Ray) Taylor, treasurer; and BJ Thomas, Richard Jameson, Ariane Arensdorf, Shirley McIntosh, Dixie Hoffman, Bob Broweleit, and Russell Licking, board members.



The new scorers table at Thedford High School purchased with TACF funds.

Mech Techs Named Global Innovation Award Candidate



COURTESY PHOTO

Mech Techs members are pictured presenting their Science Project at Sidney. They are, l-r: Chase Rath, Alex Werner, Cayden Hampton, Tyler Rath and Ethan Hardin.

by Sue Pearman
Central Sandhills Area
Extension Educator
The Central Sandhills Mech Techs 4-H Club competed in the 2016-17 First Lego League Qualifier held at Sidney on Jan. 21, 2017.

They were awarded both the Science Project trophy and were named a Global Innovation Award Candidate. The Mech Techs will compete in the Global Innovation Award contest at the State Championship Tournament to be held at the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum at Ashland on Feb. 18.

Team members are

Tyler and Chase Rath from Thedford and Ethan Hardin, Cayden Hampton and Alex Werner from Mullen.

At Sidney, the team competed in the Science Project, Robot Design and Core Values competitions in the morning and in the Robot competition in the afternoon.

This year's theme was Animal Allies, so the robotics board contained several opportunities to program a robot built by the team to save, feed and assist animals. The Science Project also related to animals, so the Mech Techs developed an innovative monitoring system

to assist ranchers with calving. They will present their project at the tournament in Ashland, and have the opportunity to move on to regional competition.

The team is coached by 4-H volunteer Judy Rath and Sue Pearman, CSA Extension Educator.

Younger members of the team who were too young to compete this year, but enjoyed learning how to build and program robots were Tate Kvanvig, Brandon Hardin and Jacob Wingebach.

Thanks to Hooker County Meat and Packing for sponsoring the team.

Inside This Issue



Who dunnt?

The Sandhills-Thedford parents are hosting a mystery night, February 25 at 7:00 p.m. at the Thomas Co. Fairgrounds. All adults 21 and over are welcome.

Proceeds will go to the after prom event for S-T 9-12 students.

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