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FORT WORTH
Dallas East Edition

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BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

Following surgery and physical therapy, American Home Care's Doug Pritchett still competes!

By Don Brown

Play any sports back in school? Have anything that still hurts? What a surprise.

Playing sports in school is good. It's the right thing to do. The list of benefits derived from participating in sports is long and easy to understand. It's great socially; it gets you involved with others and helps you make friends. It teaches teamwork and cooperation. It develops the desire and the ability to compete.

Playing sports requires practice, which takes time. Time spent practicing or competing in sports is time that is not spent being involved in less desirable activities.

Playing sports keeps you in shape which translates into staying healthy. Until you get hurt.

The National Federation of State High School Associations estimates that nearly 7.2 million students played high school sports during the 2005-06 school year. And in the post-Title IX universe, girls are more active participants today, accounting for 41 percent of the players compared to 35 percent 20 years ago. And, as girls have entered sports in high numbers, they're entering the nation's emergency rooms as well. Some sports, such as girls' basketball have higher injury rates than their male-oriented counterparts.

According to a recently released study by the Center for Disease Control, and conducted by the Ohio's Center for Injury Research and Policy at Columbus Children's Hospital, participation in high school sports resulted in an estimated 1.4 million injuries during the 2005-06 school year. That amounted to 2.4 injuries per 1,000 athlete exposures (practices or competitions).

According to the study, football continues to have the highest injury rate per 1,000 athlete-exposures (4.36), followed by wrestling (2.50), boys' (2.43) and girls' (2.36) soccer, and girls' basketball (2.01). Sports with injury rates of less than 2 per thousand included boys' basketball, volleyball, baseball, and softball.

The good news is that the number of sports-related injuries among high school athletes has declined dramatically since the 1990s when injury rates were nearly double the current number in most of the sports.

The fact is student athletes get injuries at about the same rate as professional athletes. However, these injuries are often to tissue that is still developing. Without proper treatment, injuries sustained while in high school and college can linger for years or even resurface later in life to cause renewed discomfort or pain.

I can turn my ankle just walking down the sidewalk and have to wrap my ankles before attempting to play softball. This is the result of so many twisted and sprained ankles during my days playing baseball and football. My father's neck is so stiff he is unable to turn his head fully and he claims he has a cracked vertebra from playing football in high school and college.

As some of you may remember, back in the day, if you were an athlete, you competed in as many sports as you could fit into your schedule. This may have been because the main objective was to have fun, not because you hoped to become filthy rich as a professional athlete.

But Doug Pritchett, of American Home Care, was an athlete and good at sports. Good enough in high school to make all district in football, basketball and track. He went to state in

track and went on to play baseball in the Texas League and football at Texas A&M University.

But, as much as Doug liked to participate in those sports, they are now a part of his resume. It is the other sport he loved as a youngster that is still his passion...and has been his pain until recently undergoing shoulder surgery. You see, Doug likes to rodeo!

Growing up on a ranch in Quinlan, Doug naturally gravitated towards rodeo events like bull and bronc riding, which he did all through high school and college. But graduation didn't mean the end of his desire to compete and he soon gained an interest in Cutting Horse events.

Do you, or someone you know, have a child or grandchild who is, or was, really into a sport? Enough so, that they played in the special year round kind of leagues? Every sport has them. There are "Select" teams in baseball, football, hockey, soccer, even lacrosse. These teams travel all over the place to play other select teams. Individual sports like tennis, golf, swimming/diving, gymnastics and, yes, even bowling have regularly scheduled tournaments. If you are or have been involved in these types of special sports activities you know it can be all-consuming. Every weekend is committed to competition. Every week day is practice. You have to really love your sport to give it this much of your life, not to mention the expense. Just ask any cheerleader's parents!

But did you know there is a huge, and I do mean HUGE, community devoted to what may be broadly described as "rodeo" competitions?

For a lot of "city folk", the closest they ever get to farm or ranch livestock is at the Texas State Fair. Every year contestants from all over the state enter animals they have pampered over the past year in the Livestock Show and Auction. Arguably, the most popular events in the competitions are for the kids. If you haven't taken the time to sit and watch as youngsters proudly show off their prize cow, sheep, goat or pig, you should make plans to attend an event next year. You'll be glad you did.

But don't think for a moment this isn't serious business. Those who grew up in small towns will remember people who were in the 4-H and FFA clubs. Well, times change and these clubs have changed with them. With over 500,000 members, the Future Farmers of America changed its name to National FFA Organization in 1988 to reflect the expanding career field of Agricultural Education. Along

with the six million 4-H clubs members, these future ranchers enter their animals with the hope of being named the Grand Champion like Kaycie B. Carter, of Caney Creek FFA, whose grand champion steer sold at auction for a record-breaking \$96,000!

Both Doug and Lecia Pritchett's families have been ranchers in our area for generations. The Pritchetts have been raising cattle and horses in the Quinlan area since before the Civil War when Doug's Great Great Grandfather was Justice of the Peace in Wood County and each of Lecia's grandfathers were named Soil Conservationist of the Year.

If you have ever spent any time on a farm or ranch you know the work never ends. Actually, you can discover that fact just tending a decent size garden. Lecia says she learned her work ethic very early in life from her mother and grandmothers and from her responsibilities on the ranch which included tending the garden.

On his family ranch, Doug learned everything needed to maintain a successful operation. It may not be quite as glamorous as it seems in the movies. It involves a lot more work, building and repairing fences and pens, planting, tending, and harvesting feed and hay and, of course, moving the livestock around. While Doug learned to be a pretty decent carpenter and farmer, what he really loved was learning to rope cattle and horses. On a working ranch this must be done for many reasons.

Back in the days of Open Range, cattle were allowed to roam

across a large area, grazing as they went and the herds were often spread out over a "range". The Spanish word "rodeo" literally means "round up" and practically all rodeo events are derived from chores that needed to be done on a working cattle ranch like the ones Doug and Lecia grew up on. The first rodeos were just competitions between cowboys to see who could rope and ride the best but



Doug & Lecia Pritchett with Dr. Scott Quinby

have developed over time into major entertainment.

One of the most exciting events involves separating individual animals from the rest of the herd and requires special skills of both rider and the horse he or she is riding. This is called "Cutting" and, what was once just one of the many tasks a cowboy and his horse were expected to do, has now spawned a select sport and a major industry to support it.

After college, Doug began "showing" horses in competitions at National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) events in places

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like Ft. Worth, Oklahoma City, Abilene and Las Vegas. Of course, just like with the other sports he had pursued, Doug excelled in the Cutting Horse competitions, earning a number of placements with the buckles and saddles that are the prizes to show for his efforts.

Unfortunately, at a recent event, he also collected an additional prize that he was not expecting and really didn't want. He was working with one of his favorite horses, Tivios Smart Scoot, and had just turned a steer when he felt a pull in his shoulder and heard a loud "pop".

What was fortunate is that Doug's family physician, Dr. Charlie Risinger, is also a cowboy with a long history of roping cattle himself. After taking a look at Doug's x-rays, Dr. Risinger told him, in so many words, "Doug, you're a mess."

All the years of putting stress on the tissues in his shoulder, playing football, throwing a baseball, getting jerked around by thousand pound cattle and horses, had finally taken its toll. Doug had a torn Rotator Cuff in his right shoulder.

The term "rotator cuff" refers to a group of four tendons that attach four shoulder muscles to the upper arm. Tendons are stringy tissues that attach muscle to bone. A healthy shoulder is the most versatile joint in the human body. It has a wider "range of motion," which means it can move more freely, and in more directions, than any other joint. The shoulder's versatility enables us to retrieve soup cans from the cupboard, to hammer nails, swing golf clubs, roll bowling balls, and perform thousands of other activities.

The shoulder's flexibility is due to its unique structure. Like the hip, the shoulder is a "ball-and-socket" joint - a "ball" at the top of the upper arm bone (the humerus) fits neatly into a "socket" formed by the shoulder blade (scapula).

But unlike hip joints, where the ball sits in a deep, well-protected socket, the shoulder socket is very shallow. As a result, the shoulder is the most frequently dislocated major joint in the body. It's also prone to a variety of other injuries and chronic problems that can be painful and hinder a person's ability to perform ordinary tasks.

Dr. Risinger referred Doug to Dr. J.

Scott Quinby of North Texas Orthopedic Specialists and following his examination was scheduled for surgery.

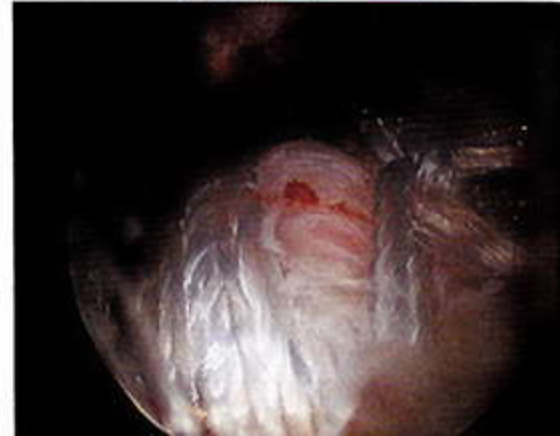
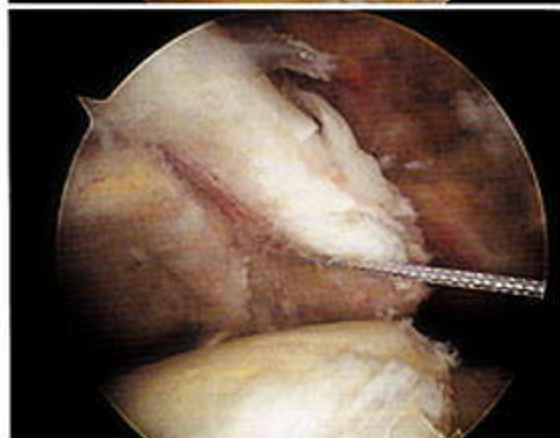
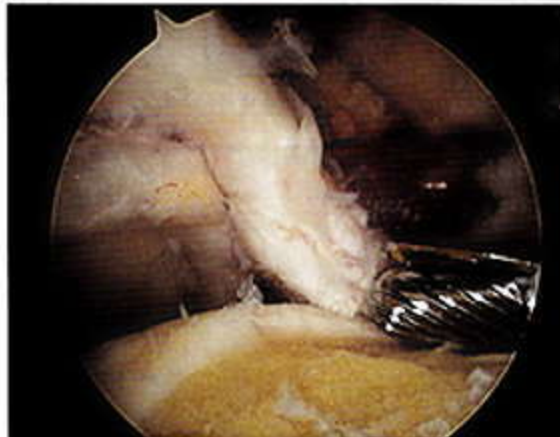
I had an opportunity to visit with Scott Quinby who is, in my experience, one of the most personable physicians I've had the pleasure of meeting and very easy to talk to. His explanations of the procedures he performed on Doug's shoulder were very easy to understand and the addition of models and photos made it easy to visualize.

What Doug had experienced was a "full thickness tear" of the rotator cuff which means the entire tendon and attached muscle had separated from the bone. In addition, because some time had passed before the surgery, the tissue had retracted, or pulled back away from the arm towards the neck. This required Dr. Quinby to "grab" the muscle and pull it back into place before attaching it to the bone with screws.

As explained to me, it is common to have situations where people have waited too long to have surgery and the retraction of the muscle has "set" causing more severe problems. But Doug's surgery went very well, with a successful re-attachment and Dr. Quinby was able to correct some other problems, shaving a bone spur and trimming the collar bone, which had been causing Doug discomfort.

Once surgery has been performed to repair a torn rotator cuff it is time to schedule physical therapy. The therapy you receive over the recovery period is critical to the successful return of your range of motion. As Doug says, "I haven't hurt since the surgery." But that doesn't mean he could lift his arm above his shoulder. That takes training and the assistance of a good therapist. Of course, Doug has connections!

Lecia Pritchett has been the Administrator for American Home Care (AHC) since its beginning in 1996 and, even though they now have over 300 employees and serve 17 counties in central and east Texas, she is still very much "hands on", and took a keen interest in Doug's rehabilitation.



Rotator Cuff treatment area and Kevlar sutures

Lecia says that, although Physical Therapy is "a major part" of the services AHC provides, it is still just a part of the complete home care service they can provide to their clients. Physical Therapists work to improve mobility and endurance, while Speech Therapists concentrate on verbal communication and swallowing. AHC also maintains a staff of Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) who assess patient symptoms and vital signs, provide treatments and family/patient education. Medical Social Workers help with social and economic needs, providing references to community resources and counseling.

Quality Assurance Professionals work closely with families and their care givers to ensure that every patient is receiving the care that is needed, that it is being effective and following the physician's instructions. They are also there to verify that the patient, their family and the care givers are communicating well and are a good "fit" for each other.

In addition to providing home care, AHC offers a full line of medical devices such as beds, walkers, chairs and oxygen equipment.

In order to satisfy Dr. Quinby's instructions for Doug's rehab, Lecia assigned Carolyn Buford, PT to Doug's case and starting the fourth week after surgery Carolyn began working with Doug three days a week. Why not before? Even though the repaired tissue is held in place with Poly Lactic Acid (PLA) Screws and Kevlar Sutures, Dr. Quinby instructed Doug to hold his arm against his stomach for three weeks.

"Don't move it. Don't even pick up a pen." Can you imagine!? Three weeks and you can't use your right hand for anything... not even to pick up a towel!

So, Carolyn started working with him to re-train his arm to move, not just to where he could move the arm before surgery but where he could move it years ago. Remember the sports, the chores, the jerking and pulling? Dr. Quinby said there was a good chance there had been a tear there for a long time. You know how it is, guys will put up with pain.

It has now been several weeks since his therapy began and, with Carolyn's help, he is now able to move his arm above his shoulder and back and forth. Every session she encouraged him, pushed him and motivated him to move a little bit beyond what he would have been able to do on his own.

Not that he is un-motivated. He wants to compete. The top ten horses in an area (Doug's is East Texas) get to compete in Jackson, MS against other areas and Doug made the cut!

In the meantime, he has horses that are being shown by trainers and he and Lecia are traveling to events. They have three horses in the Ft. Worth Futurity. Doug plans to show all three horses, two in Non-Pro, which means the horses are ridden by riders who are not professional trainers, and one horse in the Open event, which can include trainers.

It won't be long before he will be able to enter competition. You don't really strain yourself when riding the cutting horse. "You have to stay loose, move with the horse," says Lecia, as she demonstrates softly swaying while seated in the restaurant booth.

The horse is doing all the work. The rider just has to relax, move with the animal and look good doing it. As Lecia says, "The horses are really magnificent athletes, too!" Doug has been working with these superb horses all his life, so, he rides, like, well... In the saddle is where he belongs!

You know, there are a lot of guys wearing boots, buckles and jeans at every country dance hall and some of them just might look like a Texas Cowboy. For decades our culture has idealized the image of the soft spoken, lean, steely eyed cowboy in songs and movies. Shoot, for years now, guys (greenhorns!) have been taking vacations to Dude Ranches where they can dress up, ride horses and, even punch a few cows. But at six foot (plus a few), blonde haired and grey eyed, Doug doesn't just look like a Texas Cowboy, he is a Texas Cowboy!

"See the way that horse is looking at that cow." Doug said. "That's a good shot." We were picking out photos to go with this article and you could see how eager he is to get Back In The Saddle Again!

Doug Pritchett raises and trains cutting horses with Pritchett Cutting Horses. His surgery and physical therapy was intended to get him back in competition. If you need more information to get you "Back in the Saddle", contact American Home Care at 972-524-5800 or check out www.americanhomecare.us. For other info go to www.ntorthospecialists.com, www.bigtext.com, 4-H.org, www.ffa.org and www.nhacutting.com.

The Dink

by Kent Reeves

There's horses that buck, sunfish and pitch,
They're movin' so much you can't scratch an itch.

There's horses that spin and savvy the cow,
A puncher could ride 'em without knowin' how.

There's horses that help you weather a storm,
But then there's the Dink that don't fit the norm.
He'll bugger at some birds and wildflowers, too,
Why, he ain't even slicker broke at age twenty-two.

He trips and he stumbles, then falls on his face,
Before he'll step out and pick up his pace.
You know that he's lazy, yes lazy indeed,
Because he's the last one to come in for feed.

You wonder about him and all of his like,
For you'd be better mounted on a little old bike.
You curse and you swear, but he pays you no heed,
"Well hell," you just wonder, "who trained this durn steed?"

Then while you're ridin', that heavy fog clears,
He's had many riders these past twenty years.
Then it all becomes obvious while sittin' your kack,
It's just his way of gettin' dinks off his back.