



- 1987**
Cody Matthews won national steer wrestling championship
- 1988**
Undeafated in Ozark Region
- 1989**
Claimed Ozark Region title
- 1990**
Men's team was Ozark Region champion
- 1991**
Tony Coleman became the first full-time rodeo coach
- 1992**
Women's team finished third in the nation
- 1993**
Frank Graves (header) and Bret Gould (heeler) won the national championship in team roping while Staci Patterson was the barrel racing champion in the region
- 1994**
Dr. N.W. Robinson was the first inductee in the Rodeo Hall of Fame
- 1995**
Pavilion named Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex
- 1996**
Both teams finished in the top-15 in the nation
- 1997**
John Luthi became head coach
- 1998**
UT Martin wins Rawhide Team Scholarship Award
- 1999**
Jeremiah Diffie wins second go in bareback at CNFR
- 2000**
Johnathan Taylor finishes third in the CNFR's bareback
- 2001**
Playoff system implemented; 18 UT Martin cowboys qualify
- 2002**
UT Martin wins second Rawhide Team Scholarship Award
- 2003**
Curtis Griffin won men's Ozark Region All-Around Cowboy
- 2004**
Lyndsie Brower named Reserve National All-Around Cowgirl
- 2005**
Scotty NeSmith wins Ozark Region AA Award
- 2006**
Men's team 6th in the nation
- 2007**
Men's team won the Ozark Region team title
- 2008**
Men's team 3rd in the nation

21 years at UTM Rodeo for this rodeo family

By Karen Campbell
Press Reporter

When they first met, he was coaching rodeo riders and she was behind the scenes, making sure what needed doing got done. Three decades later and the roles John and Diane Luthi played then haven't changed much.

John Luthi, head coach of the University of Tennessee at Martin rodeo program since 1997, has seen the team to their historic 2014 national championship when they became the first from east of the Mississippi to claim that title. The championship ensured that Luthi, himself a winner of 15 all around saddles during 22 years of competing, was named that year's National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Coach of the Year.

Diane was the assistant director of Young Life for Tri-Lakes in Missouri when the couple first met at one of the Sankey Rodeo School options that are offered nationwide. While John coached alongside school founder Lyle Sankey, Diane helped Kathy Sankey with the faith-based elements of the program like nightly presentations and working behind the scenes with capturing videos, meals, etc.

After the Luthis married they lived in Kansas until John, then coach for the Fort Scott Community College rodeo team, was tapped to become the UTM coach. They packed up their two-year-old daughter Katelyn and made their way to Martin. Twenty-one years later, Katelyn is soon to graduate from UT Knoxville and the Luthis continue to live out their commitment to their rodeo family.

Initially, Diane focused on making a home in Martin and enjoyed the fact that the practice arena was a short stroller-ride for she and her daughter to secure daily visits with John. Katelyn even hitched a ride now and then as John drove the tractor to prepare the practice space.

But primary responsibilities for Katelyn fell to Diane as the rodeo schedule is not only busy but requires long rides to compete in the various states of the Ozark Region which includes Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Alabama.

The Luthis gave Katelyn the option of a rodeo life of her own which she briefly enjoyed but once



MOTHER'S FAVORITE PHOTO — Diane Luthi had this photo of her daughter Katelyn and husband John enlarged and framed as it captured a critical moment in both their family and UTM rodeo life. Due to the nature of rodeo scoring, immediate results are unknown. But Katelyn was online and doing some of her own math in 2014 at the Casper, Wyoming competition. The photo shows the moment when both realize UTM had won the national championship.

she reached junior high she traded boots for soccer and basketballs. That decision set well with Diane since, in John's absence, she had hesitantly served as Katelyn's rodeo helper.

"I didn't feel comfortable hitching the trailers and doing the physical things it takes for rodeo," said Diane, a former basketball player herself. "A lot more can go wrong if you don't know what you're doing. I knew what to do with basketball!"

Katelyn's goal-oriented nature meant when she reached her high school playing days, she was doing conditioning at Westview High School at 6:30 a.m. and completing her school day with more practice after the final bell. That also meant mom had some

rare time on her hands.

So, once again, she looked behind the scenes and filled it.

"Rodeo coaches don't have lots of assistant coaches," Diane explained. "John has 53 kids now on his team and 85 acres plus \$100,000 of livestock to care for. So when Katelyn started school, I started as a volunteer doing whatever was needed."

That volunteer role grew to part-time employment and has included doing ad sales for the annual rodeo program, producing a quarterly newsletter, and now overseeing the growing social media presence of UTM Rodeo. When Katelyn, her unpaid assistant, graduated school, I started as a Valedictorian of her Westview class and went on to study mechani-

cal engineering at the UT Knoxville, Diane tapped team members with social media expertise to grow her communications team. Their efforts have thus far resulted in more than 7,000 Facebook followers, established Twitter and Instagram accounts and, netted 240,000 views on Snapchat during the 3 days of the 2017 rodeo.

Katelyn's studies in east Tennessee meant she missed out on some of the long rides to competitions that had formed the basis of much of their quality family time as they often added extra legs to the journey to enjoy after competition. But she was able to pull away for the 2014 College National Finals in Casper, Wyoming where she live "tweeted" the event on Twitter. There, the photo that now captures Diane's heart was taken. It's one of coach and daughter with eyes fixed on Katelyn's phone. Due to the nature of rodeo scoring, immediate results are unknown. But Katelyn was online and doing some of her own math. The photo captures the moment when both realize UTM had won the national championship.

Katelyn graduates this year and already has a position secured with Eastman Chemical in Kingsport. That goal-oriented focus is something John passed on to not just his daughter but

his rodeo family as well.

"I teach how to set goals and the importance of goals," said John. "We teach that attitude makes a huge difference. We want them to understand that God is control and not us. Their job is to do the best they can."

Both Diane and John have the kind of quiet faith that is more visible than verbal. Members of First Baptist Church Martin, they have spent their lives in service. Sometimes it's in a rodeo arena and sometimes it's behind the scenes.

Having never been a rodeo rider, Diane has gained an interesting perspective from the behind the scenes. She sees rodeo life as more a lifestyle than simply a sport, even comparing events like the upcoming UTM Rodeo to somewhat of a family reunion. She notes that horses become part of the family, cared for, celebrated and mourned when they are lost and where riders aren't going one-on-one against a foe as much as trying to better their personal best – as well as looking out for one another.

"If you don't have a rope, then someone will," she added. "Even if the opposing team needs something, you provide it.... You can compete and be friends with people. It's different ... and I like it."

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