

# The Brotherhood: Casey, Cody and Chuck Lambert

By Pete Herrera

Ruidoso Downs, NM--The bond between brothers can be a marvelous thing.

It's genuine. It's unfiltered. It's unconditional.

It knows no boundaries. It's a mixture of love and loyalty that lives not for the moment, but for a lifetime.

Jockey Casey Lambert had just turned 16 in the summer of 1981 when he won his first race aboard a late-closing thoroughbred named Double B Express. His older brothers Cody and Chuck were there to help Casey celebrate that special day at Ruidoso Downs.

Thirty-four years later, the Lambert brothers were back at Ruidoso Downs and this time as before, Casey was the man of the moment.

Casey Lambert rode into retirement this past Labor Day in a day packed with emotion, two more wins and a riding title. It was a day and a summer that Casey and his family will cherish for years to come.

Cody, a former star saddle bronc and bull rider on the Professional Bull Riders circuit, drove more than 800 miles to make sure he got to Ruidoso Downs in time to watch Casey's last ride.

Chuck, along with Casey's younger sister Cheyann, their parents, Cliff and Glenna, and a whole lot of other members of the Lamberts' extended family, were there to toast one more milestone in Casey's riding career.

"I was there for your first race and I'll be there for your last," Cody promised Casey about a week earlier.

Cody and his wife Leanne, left a PBR event

in Oklahoma late on Sept. 5 and drove all night, getting into Ruidoso early Sunday morning. Cheyann and her husband Birch flew in from their home in Wyoming.

Casey couldn't have scripted a better ride into retirement. He won the first race of the day—an 870-yard sprint—aboard the 3-year-old quarter horse Yer On My Last Nerve.

He finished out of the money on his next two mounts, then in the eighth race—his last ride—he rallied the thoroughbred Magero to a win in a six-furlong race.

Seemingly beaten turning for home, Magero, under strong urging from Casey, caught a second wind and rallied in the final 100 yards for Casey's 28<sup>th</sup> win of the summer at Ruidoso Downs. The two wins on closing day gave Casey the thoroughbred riding title.

"It was an unbelievable feeling crossing the wire," said Casey. "Winning anytime is just a tremendous feeling. I once rode a mule race in Winnemucca, Nevada for 15-hundred dollars. Just the feeling that I was going to (retire) on a result that I wanted. Fifty yards from the finish I realized I was going to win my last race."

In the post-race celebration in the winner's circle, there were hugs, cheers and tears.

That his siblings made sure they were there wasn't lost on Casey, who conceded it was at times an emotional day for him.

"I realized how much all that meant to me," said Casey. "We all know that it goes back to my mom and dad and my grandparents. That's

where it all started."

For Chuck, Cody and Casey, their brotherhood bonding took roots in their youth. Back then the Lamberts had a place on the outskirts of El Paso. It was where most of the neighborhood kids learned to rope and ride.

It was Cody and Chuck who taught Casey how to rope when he wasn't much more than a toddler.

"He roped anything that moved," says Cody. "He was obsessed with riding and roping. By the time he was 12, he rode steers and junior bulls at a level not seen before or since. There's no doubt in my mind that at 12, Casey was the best bull rider that's ever been at that age."

"He was the best bull rider in our family. He rode bulls until he was in his mid-30s and competed at a professional level, but riding (racehorses) was his priority. He competed in a lot of rodeos after he had ridden six or seven races that day. And he won a lot of money."

It was Cody who taught his kid brother the technique and toughness needed to stay aboard a calf and later a bull for longer than eight seconds.

Cody would come home from school and put Casey on 20 to 25 calves every afternoon. By the time he was in middle school, Casey was one of the top junior bull riders in the country.

"Everything that I learned about rodeoing, I learned from Cody and Chuck," says Casey. "Cody is one of those guys who could convince you you could do stuff you didn't think you could do."



The Lambert Family