



## Articles

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### NCHA Riders Hall of Fame: Rock Hedlund

The quick way to the million-dollar mark is to win the big events on great horses, banking fat win checks, but very few find that path each year. The rest of NCHA's riders, including newly-christened NCHA Hall of Famer Rock Hedlund, travel from show to show, one weekend at a time. When the miles and wins add up, the dollar threshold will inevitably be crossed.

The Acampo, California horseman has watched the odometer of his own life tick along like that of his truck. He's always been a horse nut, advancing from youth and non-pro status to hanging out his training shingle. Hedlund showed in 4-H and the Nevada Quarter Horse Association, stringing all-around year-end titles in both the 13 & under and 14-18 age divisions. "I bet I'm one of the few cutters out there that has a bareback equitation title," laughs Hedlund.

It was in a cutting saddle that Hedlund found his true passion. After winning the AJQHA Youth Cutting World Championship title in 1981 and a third place at the National High School Rodeo Finals Boys Cutting in 1982, Hedlund began showing NCHA in both the youth and \$5,000 non-pro divisions.

The year 1982 found the high school senior hunting for money to fund attending University Nevada-Reno to study veterinary medicine. Hedlund began to train client horses that spring. At the University of Nevada-Reno, his first semester experience was exceptional, with a scholastic honor roll note on his transcript. Spring semester didn't go as well, and Hedlund dropped out to resume his cutting career. Later that fall, he married Landy, and the two dove into his cutting career together.

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## Non-Pro Hall of Fame

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After enduring the starving lifestyle of a young cutting trainer out on his own, Hedlund secured his first full-time training job. NCHA Hall of Fame Member Chester Dennis chose Hedlund to help establish his Santa Rosa, California branch of the PRMCo Ranch. Dennis saw talent in Hedlund and sent him to train with his Texas-based trainer, NCHA Hall of Famer Bill Freeman. "Bill taught me how to get a great horse shown," remembers Hedlund. "He always gave me the older show horses to learn on. He's been a great mentor."

Taking a couple of those older horses with him back to California, Hedlund began to taste success. His break-out horse was 1985 NCHA Classic Challenge Champion and 1986 NCHA Masters Challenge winner Cee Fly Chick. Both of the horse's titles were earned with Bill in the saddle. "I showed Cee Fly in the aged events after Bill got him really broke", laughs Hedlund. "I hauled for the PCCHA Open and Open Gelding titles in 1987."

When it came time to part ways three years later, family friend Jerry Rapp offered Hedlund stalls out of his own Napa-based barn, giving the trainer facilities not only to train out of, but to raise his new son, Cody. Cody toddled around the barn, eventually tagging Jerry's son and his wife "Uncle Phil and Aunt Mary Ann." "Phil and I are very good friends," says Hedlund. "We go hunting and fishing, and take house boat trips together."

The Hedlunds hopped to another leased barn in Wilton, California, on their way to saving enough for a down payment on their own property. Sweet Likalena helped make that possible, earning the 1998 \$3,000 World Championship. Dont Tel Sis and Hedlund snagged the 2002 reserve World Champion honor in \$3,000 Novice.

The Hedlunds purchased their own 40-acre ranch in Acampo, California in 2002, but they're rarely there. "We're on the road what seems like more than half the year—it's easy to lose track—but we still take cutting one weekend at a time," says Hedlund. "We're very proud of our new ranch, and I'd like to be able to stay home and work on it."

After settling into their new facility, 2003 was arguably Hedlund's best year yet. Faith N Risk earned a top 10 finish in the 2003 World Finals Open. Hedlund followed that with a rare double, winning the \$3,000 Novice with Little Bitty CD and reserve in the same class aboard Flites Riata Doc. His biggest check also came that year, when Amando Pistolero was named a 2003 NCHA Open Futurity Finalist.

"I'm so fortunate that I have a family that wants to cut," says Hedlund, whose wife and son both compete. "It's exciting to share my passion with my family and haul weekend after weekend. I am honored to be recognized for my earnings, and be classified among my peers, mentors, and friends."

## Non-Pro Hall of Fame

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