

THE

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BREAKAWAY

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Vegas Baby

Sawyer Gilbert Soars with Breakaway Roping World Title



THE RIGHT KNOT:
How to Tie-On at the Rodeo

WPRA AWARD:
Julie Mankin



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The Right Knot: How to Tie-On at the Rodeo

Two-time National Finals of Breakaway Roping qualifier **Erin Johnson** breaks down the steps it takes to tie your breakaway rope onto your saddle horn for competition.



You're going to want to get a piece of string—sometimes they will have them pre-cut at the rodeo and sometimes you'll have to cut your own. I tie knots

at the very ends of my string first. It's not completely necessary, but it gives me something to grip the string with when I'm trying to pull it tight.

There are a couple of different ways that you can put it on your rope. I tie the string onto the end of my rope with a square knot. I like the knot of my rope on the left side of my saddle horn. I usually get ahold of those knots and pull as tight as possible. I like to wrap twice around my horn and come to the front with it because that's how my fingers work best when I'm tying this knot by myself.

I put the first wrap on it and then hold down with my ring finger. There's no one way to do this that is right or wrong. I get my next knot and I keep my ring finger down on it right up to the last second. You want to make sure and pull it tight and if you're not sure that it's tight, then tie another knot on there because you don't want it slipping off. The tighter the string is tied, the better of a snap you're going to get when the calf hits the end. **BRJ**

► **BONUS TIP:** A square knot is always the best way to tie your rope on so that it doesn't slip.

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Behind the Byline

This year's WPRO Media Award recipient is our own **Julie Mankin**. Behind the byline, she's a ropey hand and a hell of a survivor.

—**G.R. Schiavino**

As a reader of *The Breakaway Roping Journal* and *The Team Roping Journal*, you are no doubt familiar with the name and works of Julie Mankin—longtime contributing editor to our roping and cowboy brands. But as the writer of others' stories, hers is often left untold.

Mankin grew up in the company of her two sisters on a ranch in Gillette, Wyoming, and the girls grew up to be powerhouse high school and college rodeo contestants throughout the 90s.

"My older sister, Mandy, was the 1991 national high school breakaway champion and I was the 1994 runner-up national barrel racing champion," said Mankin, who'd been horseback since she was 3.

The Mankins then saw success in the arena rodeoing for the University of Wyoming and taking the team to the College National Finals Rodeo multiple times, where they accomplished major feats and suffered sickening losses both, including Mankin having to pull out of the breakaway due to a branding-pen broken hand—though she still managed to run a cloverleaf two-handed and cased that year.

Post-college, Mankin continued to breakaway while—as the era dictated—

maintaining an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. career. It didn't stop her from winning the average at the Colorado Professional Rodeo Association Finals but, due to the gaping lack of opportunity in roping for women, it was clear the path forward needed to be aligned with her career, which she began as PR Coordinator for the PRCA, where she helped developed their first-ever public relations department.

Her career continued in the writing of award-winning pieces and editing for newspapers and magazines; running PR and communications teams at events like Cheyenne Frontier Days, the NFR and *The American*; contributing articles to publications like *Spin to Win*, *Western Horseman*, and *American Cowboy*; as well as helping orchestrate production for Yost Events, until a 2015 Texas highway wreck.

"I slid my F-250 under a barely-moving tractor trailer at 80 miles an hour," Mankin said. "The truck was in the passing lane of an interstate in the dark with no brake lights."

The crash broke every bone in Mankin's face and more in her neck, plus caused severe trauma to her face, and it took hours to extract her from her crushed vehicle.

Remarkably alive at the accident, she was predicted to be dead upon arrival of her life flight to the hospital. But she wasn't.

"I was in a coma for almost a month and then spent about six months learning to walk and talk. I moved to Nashville to work for RFD-TV, despite doctors advising me that I would not be able to."

Shortly after, Mankin understood how correct the doctors had been and then, tragically, she was the victim of a second car wreck, and hit at 60 miles per hour.

"That was kind of the ballgame for me," Mankin said. "My heart didn't know how to beat. My blood didn't have the right oxygen or glucose. My respiration wasn't regulated. Everything was mayhem."

Mankin suffered and continues to suffer numerous maladies—including, but not limited to, brain injury, PTSD and cancer—and the battle to understand, treat, and then, how to pay for them, has been immense. A generous GoFundMe account kept food on her table in the first year, but her talent and passion for the Western and rodeo community's history has remained her ace in the hole and a reason her contributions to our publications are invaluable.

"There's were always girls who roped good," Mankin affirmed. "And I'll tell you, if that WPRO hadn't kept going and providing world championships to these women The WPRO has just been quietly doing their thing for almost 75 years and I just hope young barrel racers and ropers understand why they have a WPRO card. It's important that they know that heritage and how they've gotten here.

"As women ropers, it was pro-level competition that we could go to and, not only that, but the camaraderie of an all-female rodeo—produced, put on by, organized by and competed in by just all women—was incomparable."

Equally incomparable is the grit and determination that Mankin demonstrates through her daily pursuit of health and an award-winning career. Her recognition by the WPRO for her contributions to women's rodeo couldn't be more deserved.

Congratulations, Julie. **BRJ**

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JAMIE ARVISO PHOTO

Dream Come True:

Gilbert Crowned 2021 World Champion & Average Champion Breakaway Roper in Las Vegas

Sawyer Gilbert maxed out at the 2021 National Finals of Breakaway Roping and won both the World Championship title and the average championship title.

—**Kaitlin Gustave**

“Everyone still remembers the Sawyer Gilbert on the paint horse that had her boots tucked in her pants, probably in a misshaped black hat that when it was 110 degrees out,” Sawyer Gilbert said. “That was me. She’s still in there, we just put a professional spin on it now.”

Gilbert, 19, showed the world that the little cowgirl from Buffalo, South Dakota, is in fact gold-buckle quality.

She showed up and made a bold statement at the 2021 National Finals of Breakaway Roping as she was crowned the World Champion Breakaway Roper

and the average champion.

“It was my dream before it was even possible for breakaway ropers,” Gilbert said, “to win the average and the world title. Obviously, coming into this, I wanted to win the world, for sure, because

it’s the coveted gold buckle, but to win the average to get me to that world title is even more special.”

Gilbert came into the NFBR sitting second in the PRCA/WPRA World Standings behind regular season leader Shelby Boisjoli. After placing in five out of 10 rounds for \$8,218.23, plus earning an additional \$11,313.46 for winning the average by roping 10 head in 46.3 seconds, Gilbert shot herself to No. 1 in the world with \$71,653.83. Boisjoli finished as the Reserve Champion with \$69,456.61 in season earnings.

“When I got to the 10th round, I didn’t even need to win the round, I just needed to catch my 10th-round calf,” Gilbert said. “When they said ‘Average Champ’ I was like, ‘Perfect’—I expected that. I still knew that it was close. Shelby and I have been back and forth all year, counting cents and pennies. To get the world title is awesome.”

Gilbert rode a blaze-faced sorrel mare she calls Hollywood, who was trained by Colorado’s Linsay Sumpter and Nebraska’s Hayley Kobza, in eight out of the 10 rounds.

“I wouldn’t trade her for the world,” Gilbert said. “She has taught me a lot. She is so tough. She fractured her splint bone in the slack run at Cheyenne. We didn’t know it until we hauled her to Salt Lake (City, Utah,) and I was going to ride her there again and she probably would have



JAMIE ARVISO PHOTO

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Aspen Miller

All-In Breakaway Champion

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Jessy Remsburg

WPRA World Champion Heeler

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Linsay Sumpter

National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Head Coach
Breakaway Roper

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World Champs

worked. She is stupid tough. It's probably a good thing because I need a stupid tough one. There is no cheat in her. She's going to give me her best when I need it."

The two rounds that Gilbert wasn't riding Hollywood, she brought in her long-time partner, Roger, the Paint horse that has been with her since she broke into the breakaway roping scene.

"[Hollywood] reared out one time [in Round 3] and it was my own fault because I was amped," Gilbert said. "I knew that Roger would be awesome, so I got on him for the last two rounds [of day 1 of the NFBR.] He is the horse that made me. He is the reason why I do the things that I do. It only felt fitting to give him a chance to run two here."

The horses that Gilbert credits for getting her to this memorable milestone have made her gold buckle dreams come true.

"I've already looked at the buckle and have already imagined my name etched in it. It's a cool buckle. I'm scared to wear it. I think it's starting to set in."

As the 2021 ProRodeo season ends, Gilbert is already planning to excel in the new season.

"Next year, I'm going to approach it like the last year. I'm going to be smarter for it. I'm going to have people in my corner that are really in my corner. I'm going to do the traveling a little different. I want to go to more." **BRJ**



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