



BIG CAT IS BIG TROUBLE FOR THE PBR

BY CHALISA MADSEN



DID YOU KNOW we have a mega-celebrity athlete living just outside of Athens? I'm talking top of his sport, 30,000+ followers on social media, and even starred in a Steven Tyler music video. Ringing any bells yet?

Athens is the proud home of 147 Big Cat, currently one of the top-rated bucking bulls of the Professional Bull Riders Association (PBR).

At a staggering 1,900 pounds, it is easy to see where Big Cat gets his name. And since his debut in the big leagues, he has been causing big trouble for the world's best riders.

During his 2016 season, he has made quick work of knocking his opponents into the dirt. Most of his buck-offs have come in less than 3 seconds. At the Last Cowboy Standing Championship in Las Vegas, Big Cat downed the reigning PBR World Champion rider, J.B. Mauney in less than 2 seconds.

But his imposing size does not hinder his athleticism. Far from it, in fact. Big Cat moves like a much smaller bull, using his

sheer strength and quick reflexes to send riders flying.

Big Cat had a perfect, unriden record going into the PBR National Finals in Las Vegas, but an off day allowed Luis Blanco from Brazil to actually hear the 8 second buzzer. This is the one and only time a rider has stayed on. Going into the 2017 season, Big Cat's professional record stands at 29-1.

Big Cat is owned by Tracy Williams of TLW Bucking Bulls of Athens. He was bred and raised by Sugar Kuhn, from Kuhn Livestock. Along with trainer and handler, Joey Almand, these three have made Big Cat into the force of nature that he is today.

It was Kuhn who first recognized the bull's potential and pitched him to contractor, Williams.



“He was big, strong and athletic,” said Kuhn. “But on top of that, he is the smartest bull I have ever seen.”

Big Cat uses this intellect to his advantage in the arena, as well. After the impressive defeat of Mauney in Las Vegas, he discussed his run-in with Big Cat on the PBR website. “You can tell he is smart. He can go either way and launch you and roll,” said Mauney. “He will put you where he wants to and you end up on the ground, and on your a**.”

Mauney had his chance for a rematch in Oklahoma during the PBR 15/15 Bucking Battle, but Big Cat once again bucked off the two-time world champion rider before the timer hit 3 seconds.

In the sport of bull riding, half of the total score is determined by the rider’s performance and the other half is determined by the bull’s performance. That means the highest score possible for a bull to rack up is 50 points. Big Cat has a 45 point ride to his name, and averages around 44.13 points.

This sport relies on the rider to anticipate and respond to the actions of the bull, and react accordingly. One of the reasons Big

Cat is such a good bucking bull is the fact that he is unpredictable. No one has stayed on long enough to get a good read on him. Riders say they think Big Cat feels them out, and appears to think through his attack plan. And just like all of the greats before them, they are soon brushing the dirt off of their Wranglers and planning for their rematch.

Big Cat made an appearance on the Netflix original series, “Fearless,” and has an impressive fan following on social media. His Facebook page alone has over 33,000 followers. He is also featured in the music video for Steven Tyler’s song, “Hold On (Won’t Let Go),” which is the theme song for all of the PBR events.

Undoubtedly, there is still much to see of Big Cat. His impressive record and intimidating stature offer the perfect example of what this sport truly embodies. Man versus beast, in a battle of wits, strength, grit and determination. While some cheer for the cowboy and others root for the bull, one thing is certain; America’s original extreme sport is truly for the toughest of the tough.

