


A woman with long, wavy red hair is sitting on a brick wall. She is wearing a white cowboy hat with a blue band, a light blue and purple fringed jacket, and a large gold belt buckle. The jacket has several patches, including one that says "PRIME EQUIPMENT" and another that says "BESSY". The background is a brick wall with a metal panel above it.

Fallon's

DYNASTY

We talked with the World Champion Barrel Racer about fear, fashion and the future

By Heather A. Haines
Photography by Kristine Paulsen

A photograph of Fallon Taylor, a professional rodeo rider, in a vibrant, multi-colored outfit and a green cowboy hat. She is riding a brown horse with a white blaze, which is decorated with colorful fringe and patterns. The horse is in motion, galloping in a dirt arena. In the foreground, a yellow barrel is visible. The background shows a fenced rodeo arena with hills under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

“...that’s how I came back to rodeo all those years later... I couldn’t be without my horses every day.”

Fallon Taylor riding “Duty”

To picture the iconic cowgirl, one cannot conjure up a vision without certain core traits. Intangible characteristics, powerful features like vision, pluck and maybe even a dash of audacity.

Those unique features are a precise description of the flawlessly daring Fallon Taylor. At the age of thirty three, she has enjoyed career changes, taken risks, come back from tragedy and delved into a deeper understanding of who she is as a person. Now she’s looking ahead, past the pastures of her Texas home with that persistent spirit tucked away in her back pocket and an appreciative smile on her face.

When Taylor was seven years old, her parents took her to see the Mesquite Rodeo. Within a month, they bought her a horse and that impressionable little girl had a professional permit.

“I had no business turning professional at that age!” Taylor laughs. “I took some lessons but, it was all very quick. The truth is, I had some great trainers and a few exceptional horses that helped me reach the NFR at thirteen.”



Taylor graced the NFR stage for three more years. Given her popularity and successes at such an early age, it would be natural to assume Taylor would continue in a sport she had a innate aptitude for. And that's when she surprised people.

Instead of continuing with barrel racing, she headed to New York City and a waiting modeling contract. Exact opposite of the rodeo lifestyle. "I wanted to conquer something else. I got into model shape and walked runways and did editorial work. Eventually, I got bored with the one dimensional side of modeling so I decided to go to Los Angeles and try acting. I did some guest appearances on TV shows and a few movies. My parents always encouraged me to try different things so I could grow up without regrets of something I'd missed. That's what I was doing."

But the cowgirl in her didn't enjoy sitting in the backseat. "I was flying home to Texas every weekend to see my horses. I couldn't do without them! So truthfully, that's how I came back to rodeo all those years later... I couldn't be without my horses every day."

Taylor began training horses and playing, as she describes it, matchmaker for friends and others interested in finding their perfect horse. Then in 2009, her life took a turn she couldn't have predicted.

While training one of her own horses, she was bucked off and broke her neck. Over the course of the next year, her recovery would consume her. "It took me a year. I was in the halo for three or four months and the C Collar for a few more months. Eventually, I would attempt to ride and be really fearful. I had to build muscles again to even be able to hang on at a lope."

It's one thing to go through the daily grind of recovering from a significant accident. Muscles can be trained to be strong again but, it's the mind that proves to be the biggest hurdle.

"I had to break my fear down." Taylor clarified. "I read sport psychology books that talked about getting to the foundation of your fears. The root of my fear was falling off. Once I was able to pinpoint it, I took riding lessons. I started all over again. Like I'd never ridden a horse. I talked to someone who breaks two years olds and gets bucked off frequently. They taught me how to ride through it. I took lessons for six or seven months, seven days a week. That's how I got over it. Everyone has something they're afraid of. As long as you pinpoint the base of the problem, then you can attack it. You can find someone to help you work through your issue. It's possible to find a way to recover."

Her personal journey is what has made her return to rodeo that much more poignant.

After a fifteen year absence, Taylor returned with a vengeance, but it was her husband, Delbert Alvarado, who helped her get there. "If it weren't for my husband, I wouldn't be back in rodeo. He just wanted to see it and I tried to tell him it was a huge sacrifice of our family time but, he was enthusiastic about it. He told me to pick one of the colts out in the pasture and get to training!"

So she picked out her favorite colt and before anyone could question what was happening, she found herself back at the NFR.





“It’s one thing to go through the daily grind of recovering from a significant accident. Muscles can be trained to be strong again but, it’s the mind that proves to be the biggest hurdle.”



“I think I am a perfect example of how to do life. You just have to go full force even if it’s terrifying. You have to be willing to try because you never know what doors will open for you. The way things happened in my life, it all happened for a reason. I’ve had a lot of unique experiences. All the opportunities like modeling and acting and even my accident... they’ve all layered on top of each other to bring me to today.”

Taylor has found a way to utilize those experiences and throw them in one basket: a fashion line. And she’s not just leasing out her name for the sake of publicity. “When I went to New York I loved all of it, so the fashion line takes me back to the nineties and how I dressed back then. We felt like there was a real gap in the market, so my husband and business partners promote the line while I’m out on the road making sure things happen.”

Taylor continued: “So much of the Western (fashion) industry has been limiting. We wanted to manufacture a jean you could ride in and actually look cool. Our clothes come in all different sizes so it’s not restrictive. I’m 100% in creative control and it’s been so much fun so far. I can’t wait to see how things continue to develop. We’re at the point where retail stores are possible, so there’s a lot happening.”







“It’s pretty crazy but, even after my accident, I didn’t start wearing helmets right away. That first time I strapped a helmet on, I knew it was a huge advantage for me. And... it’s super comfortable!”

Taylor is an inspiration at this point. From early days at the NFR to New York City and hospital beds facing unknown time in recovery. The little girls who line up for her autograph may not know all those details but, they know someone who takes the time to talk to them and let them know they’re important.

“This year is my seventh NFR qualification. As an adult, it means the world to me to be able to go back and have an awareness of how many people I’ve touched with my little underdog story. Being able to make an impact on the industry is a huge plus too but, being able to see and meet people and listen to their stories,” Taylor pauses for a moment. “It keeps me encouraged. There are people who live vicariously through me and Babyflo. It keeps me going on the days my body is hurting and I don’t feel like doing it anymore. Then I remember that somewhere there’s a little girl out there who’s heartened by me. And well, it just inspires me too.”

There are two things Fallon Taylor takes with her every time she heads out on the road: her helmets and Officer Rob.

You can’t get around the stigma associated with helmets and western riding. Taylor wasn’t immune to it herself.

“It’s pretty crazy but, even after my accident, I didn’t start wearing helmets right away. That first time I strapped a helmet on, I knew it was a huge advantage for me. And... it’s super comfortable!”



She continued, “The screw holes where my halo connected to my head are in the exact place a cowboy hat sits. It’s painful but, I didn’t realize how painful it was because I’d never tried an alternative.”

Officer Rob is a retired police dog. Taylor got him for safety purposes while on the road. He’s become part of the family. Taylor has worked with a charity called K9’s 4 Cops and they helped her locate a company in Alabama called AMK9 to get a dog of her own.

To donate to K9’s 4 Cops check out their website at: www.k9s4cops.org or for more information on dogs like Taylors visit: www.amk9.com

“ If it weren't for
my husband,
I wouldn't be
back in rodeo”

Fallon with her husband,
Delbert Alvarado

