

Mussell, Allen take saddle bronc riding to the next level

In a dirty world of grit and grime, broken bones, bruises and broncs, times are changing. The ride is still rough and the broncs are still bucking but the sport of saddle bronc riding has evolved, to allow room for at least one woman.

Until March 9, 2003, saddle bronc riding had been a hard-hitting world exclusively for men. It was on that day nearly five years ago that Canadian born Kaila Mussell, then 25 years old, placed third at a rodeo in Florida and began her career as a professional saddle bronc rider.

Mussell said she is proud to be the first and only Professional Female Saddle Bronc Rider in the world. "I am boldly paving the way for other competitive women who would follow in my footsteps," she said.

As a role model for women, Mussell said she represents equality by showing that women can do anything. "I have broken the stereotype and transcended the gender barrier in saddle bronc riding and other rodeo events, an arena dominated by males," she said.

"I have accomplished what was seemingly an impossible task and will continue to

face new challenges with the same determination, as I progress successfully in my chosen profession," Mussell continued.

One of the many challenges Mussell has faced in her bronc riding career was overcome with the help of local artisan and saddle maker extraordinaire Wendy Allen. Allen is a world acclaimed custom saddle designer and maker with her shop located right here at 201 N. Patrick St. in Dublin.

Mussell said, "Throughout my years of experience riding bucking horses and saddle horses, I have ridden in saddles designed for a man. I recently came to realize that to ride the most comfortably and effectively as I can, I need a saddle built specifically for me, as women have special needs according to their body structure. With this in mind, I enlisted the help of Wendy Allen to address the saddle issues I was facing."

Working together, Allen and Mussell designed the first bronc saddle specifically for a woman and more specifically still, just for Mussell. "I am very excited about riding in a saddle that will fit me perfectly, as it will allow me to make the world-class rides I so

greatly want to achieve."

Mussell got a chance to officially break in the ride at a "rodeo school" held in Malakoff during the Thanksgiving holiday. "I think the new saddle is going to make a big difference," Mussell said. "I had some good rides at the school and have gotten in the practice ring several times since and the rides have been really good."

As for the future, Mussell has high hopes for 2008 and the determination to turn those hopes into a reality. "I am ready and expecting positive things to happen in the rodeo arena for 2008! In terms of my plans for the New Year, I will focus primarily in the Texas Circuit and on the Heartland Series rodeos. I also hope to go up to Canada and the Northwest States to compete somewhere in late June, early July," Mussell said.

For more information on Mussell, her journey as the first professional female bronc rider in the world and her touring schedule, visit www.kailamussell.com.

For more information on Wendy Allen Saddlery, Inc, visit www.wendyallensaddlery.com