

# TY POZZOBON FOUNDATION



LIVELIKETY

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## About

Ty Pozzobon was made to be a cowboy. He grew up in Merritt, BC with a dream of conquering untamed wild beasts, eight seconds at a time, for gold buckles, glory and fame. The young bull rider saw his childhood dreams through, and became a hometown hero in his very young life.

At the age of 25, Pozzobon was a three-time Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) qualifier and was crowned the 2016 Professional Bull Riders (PBR) Canadian Champion. After an outstanding 2016 that included five event wins, he made his whole country proud by finishing fourth in the PBR Built Ford Tough World Finals in Las Vegas, NV.

Not all victories, however, are won free of injury, and Pozzobon was no stranger to impairment. The young phenom sustained his fair share of bumps and bruises including broken bones, and more notably, several concussions in the rodeo arena.

“Pozy” was described by his closest friends as someone who truly cared about others; a winner able to light up any room with his unforgettable smile and laugh. He was known widely for his positivity and was at the height of success inside the arena.

The battle within Ty’s mind was one he would tragically lose on January 9, 2017, when he took his own life. Images and kind words for the beloved cowboy covered media for days, with family, friends, and rodeo fans pouring out their love for Pozzobon. Many in disbelief, asking, how could this have happened.

As family and friends faced this ultimate sacrifice, discussion as to why began to surface very quickly. The reality of what those close to him had been concerned about - the number of concussions Ty had endured - quickly pointed towards the reality that he most certainly exemplified the traits of someone suffering from a Traumatic Brain Injury.







Research on concussions and their effects on the brain is still new and incomplete. After multiple studies on high concussion-risk individuals like the National Football League (NFL) players, a link has been found between sustaining multiple concussions and the risk of developing depression.

The Pozzobon family knew Ty's behavior was not typical of their son. In response to the pouring out of sympathy, Ty's mother Leanne made a statement publicly acknowledging that her son had taken his life, but also commenting that she truly thought it was the result of these concussions.

Quickly the medical world reached out to Leanne and the family agreed to donate Ty's brain to a leading research facility in the United States, known for their leading edge approach to the subject. A team from the University of British Columbia quickly embarked to the community of Merritt. With the Pozzobon family's blessing, they set out to recover Ty's brain to potentially be one of his last gifts to the rodeo world.

While in Merritt, the team of doctors met with the Pozzobon family and some of Ty's very close friends. In this discussion, medical professionals worked to give comfort to all and provide understanding that this continual concussion mistreated health management is very real and most certainly attributed to Ty's death. Unfortunately, with today's science, this cannot be completely proven until the research is done on the brain to provide proof and evidence.

It was at this moment those very near and dear friends decided that they would move forward to create a foundation in Ty's honor. Through the foundation, Ty's legacy would not die, but used to change and better the sport of rodeo, specifically bull riding.

With the blessing and support of Ty's family, the Ty Pozzobon Foundation roots were planted. A lot of work has gone on in a very short time; the foundation has been incorporated both in the United States and Canada. The Ty Pozzobon Foundation is well on its way, functioning with a board and a mission statement to forever honor Ty's legacy.



The mission statement for the Foundation follows and represents the goals and objectives of the foundation:

## Mission Statement

To protect and support the health and well-being of rodeo competitors inside and outside the arena.

## Goals and Objectives

1. To advance education by educating rodeo and bull riding athletes, administrators, medical professionals and the general public of the nature of concussions and the importance of prevention, including what concussions are, how concussions occur, how to recognize signs and symptoms of concussion and best practices for care and management once concussion occurs;
2. To promote health and safety by:
  - a. establishing and implementing clinical care pathways to diagnosing and managing concussions, including tracking those diagnosed with concussion and sharing information among health care professionals to increase the likelihood of a successful return to normal activities;
  - b. establishing and implementing concussion protocols, policies, guidelines and action plans which will promote proper safety, care and procedures for individuals participating in the sport of rodeo with an emphasis on bull riding;
  - c. facilitating and promoting access for rodeo and bull riding athletes to health and sports medicine professionals and services, including baseline evaluations and assessments, post-concussion clinical services and monitored return to play programs; and,
  - d. funding scientific research carried on by qualified donees in the area of concussions and other brain related injuries associated with sports in Canada, particularly bull riding.
3. To promote health and well-being including overall mental health awareness by providing individuals participating in the sport of rodeo with access to counselling, health and medical related information and resources, support programs and medical services.
4. To donate funds, from time to time, to qualified donees as defined in subsection 149.1(1) of the Income Tax Act (Canada), as determined by the Board of Directors.

These frequent, intense, concussion-type injuries that hit competitors over extended period of time, could begin as early as a fall off a first pony or getting bucked off a first steer, and continue until the end of a professional rodeo career. For some sports, the warning signs of these injuries can be obvious, but the nature of rodeo can sometimes cover them up. "They shake it off and away they go. You jump in the truck and away you go. Do you sleep? No. So do you know you have insomnia? No, because you haven't slept really well in probably five seasons."

Cowboys like Pozzobon may have been able to brush off their injuries, but the resulting mental health issues are not easy to shake. Through this selfless donation by the Pozzobon family his memory will live on. Someday Ty may help a fellow competitor through their brain injuries, and in fact, that day may have already come for some.







Ty Pozzobon left us with a few wise words in one of his last known interviews:

**"For me, I've just got to live in the moment. In the past I kind of took all of this for granted. I never really lived in the moment and I had it all taken from me. I wish I would have just really enjoyed what I had and lived in that moment. That's kind of what I'm doing right now, I'm just talking one ride at a time."**

It may be too late for the cowboy who seemed to be able to bring out the best in people. Ty Pozzobon will be a constant reminder that we can do better for the sport of rodeo. Injuries and accidents will never be completely preventable. Pushing rodeo towards advancements through education, injury protection equipment, along with the creation of standardized injury protocols and creating a culture that talks about mental health issues instead of pushing them aside, could someday mean that rodeo competitors do not have to suffer a loss like that of Ty Pozzobon again.

That is the ultimate goal of the Ty Pozzobon Foundation.











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