

Suppliers stock is rising

courtesy of San Antonio Express-News

He owned his first horse at age 2.

At 8, he lugged his boot shine kit to stock shows, buffing dusty cowboy boots to a luster and bringing in \$100 on a good night.

By 18 he was on the rodeo circuit, trick riding and cart-wheeling his legs above his head on the backs of galloping horses.

It's no surprise to family and friends that 20-year-old Binion Cervi now creates crowd-pleasing shows across the country — rodeo is what he was raised to do.

Like his father before him, Cervi is responsible for bringing prize livestock to the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo at the SBC Center.

Before the main event Saturday, he jawed with wranglers sitting on a paint-chipped railing at the SBC Center. Black cowboy hat tipped back, he wore a black tie dotted with bronco-riding cowboys, a green-striped western shirt, blue jeans and leather square-tipped boots, the perfect attire for conducting rodeo business.

In addition to being the primary stock contractor for the Beutler Bros. and Cervi Championship Rodeo, he is a sophomore at Texas Tech University. He is majoring in agricultural business, on a San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo scholarship he earned last spring.

Cervi drives his Dodge crew cab truck several hours from campus to weekend events around the Lone Star State, exchanging livestock from Lubbock when needed.

He uses phones, faxes and computer spreadsheets to negotiate with more than a dozen contractors for the highest caliber of livestock. Much of the stock he seeks was featured at the No. 1 competition of man vs. beast — the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.

Once they arrive, Cervi can be found talking to the horses in low, calming tones, just as he did as a youngster on his father's spread in Roggen, Colo.

"I have to find out who needs to have stock, what horse and on what night," Cervi said. "I have a passion for rodeo that's uncommon to other people."

He was groomed for his spot by his father, Mike Cervi, a 35-year rodeo veteran and two-time Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Stock Contractor of the Year.

Then two months ago, Mike Cervi handed the reins of the operation to Binion and Binion's business partners, brother Chase, 18, and cousin Scotty, 23, who accompany him to each rodeo.

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“They’ve grown up in it,” Mike Cervi said. “They should know what to do. They’re doing very well.”

Binion Cervi can fall back on the expertise of his dad and veteran contractors such as Sammy Andrews, who owned the legendary bull Bodacious, considered by many to be the world’s most dangerous bull.

Andrews said having Cervi take over contracting duties from his father is a good thing for a young person.

Guy Elliott, rodeo arena director, added, “Binion is an unusual young man. He’s been around bucking horses and bulls all of his life.”

After riders rounded the arena with American and Texan flags rippling in the air Saturday, Cervi slipped in from behind the maze of bins and railings.

A glance at the SBC Center video screens showed the young entrepreneur sitting astride a chute in the arena.

From his perch, Cervi watched the results of his negotiations explode from the chute.

A bronco and rider, one gloved hand hooked deep into the saddle, fighting to hang on. Stampeding bulls bucking like jackhammers. Calves sprinting from cowboys twirling lassos.

As the crowd cheered, Cervi flashed a slight smile.

They had asked for the best and he’d done his best to deliver.