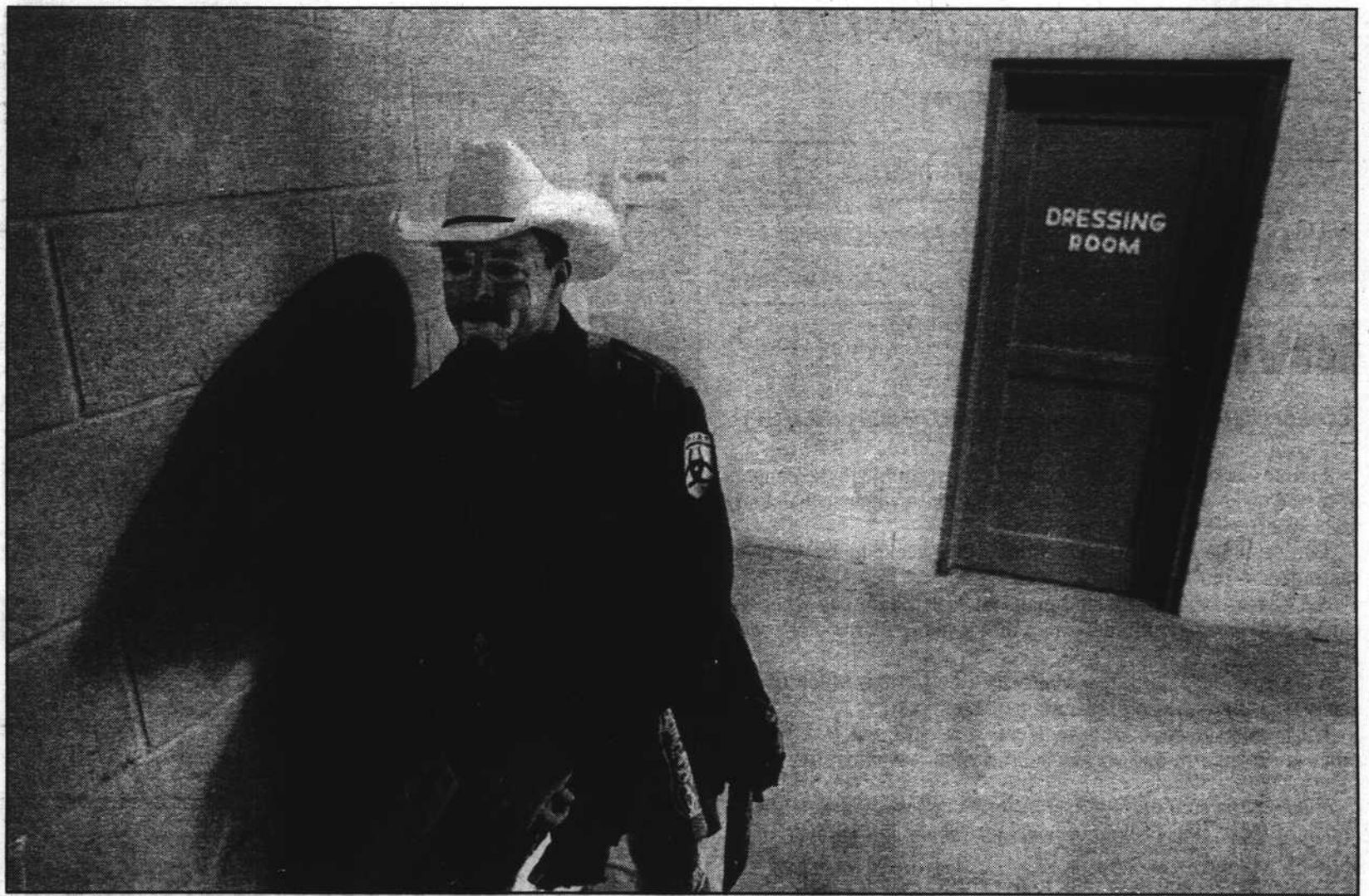


# INSIGHT

Monday, April 9, 1995

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## Rodeo

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A wound sliced across his left forehead.

Jerry Norton has worked as a bull fighter and clown at college and professional rodeos for nine years. His job — protecting the rider — becomes harder and more dangerous at college rodeos.

Students are learning the trade, he said, and many have rode fewer than five bulls. They dismount on the wrong side, get hung up or jump off without warning.

"It keeps me from getting complacent," Norton said.

This weekend, Norton shouted at the bulls, sometimes slapping it on the nose to make the bull charge at him.

Sometimes, the bull is faster. "When you are fighting bulls, you just accept it," Norton said of the danger. "When you're fighting bulls, it's just a question of when and how bad."

So far, how bad means a broken back, neck and leg, several broken ribs and "a lot of beating" for the 26-year-old.

The graduate of Dakota Wesleyan University has faced 400 bulls this year and plans to dodge thousands more over the next 10 years. After that, who knows?

"I haven't figured out what I want to do when I grow up," he said.

Norton emerged from this rodeo unscathed. Others did not.

A bull rider from North Dakota State University staggered from the area after a raging bull threw him then stepped on his leg. He struggled to climb five steps leading to the stage area and a place to rest. He spent the rest of the afternoon competition there.

The bull that Cinch Munson, a senior rider with the University of Nebraska, was about to ride appeared calm in its chute.

When the gate opened, the bull flew out, spun to the right and continued spinning as Munson struggled to keep his grasp. After slipping down the bull's side, Munson regained his position — only to be thrown to the left.

He lasted only seven seconds.

Munson was a right-handed rider, and his hand stayed hung-up on the rope as the bull continued to buck. Before Munson removed his hand, the bull's horn grazed the right side of his face and blistered his chin.

Shaun Stroh's bronc, Sioux Nation, tried to jump from the shoot earlier in the day. Stroh had just climbed into the chute when the horse reared, throwing its front hooves over the top of the gate and its head back.

It took several minutes to calm the horse enough for Stroh to remount and ride to a first-place finish in the first go-around. He finished third in the finals.

Stroh, 22, was national champion last year. Asked why he does it, he simply smiles.

"It's a rush," he says. "It's eight seconds that lasts forever."



*"When you are fighting bulls, you just accept it. When you're fighting bulls, it's just a question of when and how bad."*

**JERRY NORTON**

Bull fighter and rodeo clown

Top: Jerry Norton, a bullfighter from Mitchell, S.D., watches participants before the bull-riding action got under way Friday evening. Middle: A South Dakota State University steer wrestler takes down a steer during Friday evening's rodeo. Bottom: Chuck Obrecht, a bull rider from Iowa State University, smokes a cigarette to relax before Saturday's final round.

Photos by Travis Heying