

Mike Visnieski Named Rodeo Coach at SWOSU

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One of the most sought-after, available coaching positions in collegiate rodeo has been filled.

Former Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) cowboy and alum Mike Visnieski has accepted Southwestern Oklahoma State University's offer to continue its strong rodeo tradition, agreeing to become the school's next head coach. Visnieski will replace longtime coach Chad Ramirez who announced his resignation earlier this year.

SWOSU Director of Athletics Todd Thurman expressed his excitement about the newest addition to his staff and looks forward to the rodeo team's future success under Visnieski.

"We knew the job would attract a number of quality applicants," Thurman said. "It was a tough decision, but Mike is the one that emerged as the best fit for SWOSU. He has the energy and commitment that will move the SWOSU rodeo program forward for the future."

SWOSU President Randy Beutler is pleased with the selection.

"I'm very excited about Mike coming back to SWOSU," Beutler said. "Not only is he a graduate, but I know that he will proudly carry the university's tradition of a quality rodeo program forward as well as excel in recruiting excellent student-athletes to the program."

Visnieski, a native of Harrah, was a member of the SWOSU rodeo team under legendary coach Dr. Don Mitchell from 1995 to 1999. He competed in both bull riding and team roping and was a qualifier for the 1998 College National Finals Rodeo.

Visnieski later went on to a successful rodeo career with the PRCA, the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) and the International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA). During this time, he accumulated career earnings in excess of \$500,000. Visnieski's best years in professional rodeo were from 2001 through 2004. During this time he was a four-time qualifier for the International Finals Rodeo. He was the IPRA's top money winner in 2002 and was the winner of the Longhorn World Series Championship in bull riding.

Visnieski, who most recently was teaching at Choctaw Public Schools and running his own construction business, said he had been considering the possibility of coaching rodeo the last several years. When he learned of the opening at his alma mater, he knew he wanted to apply and be a part of the storied program again.

"There is no place I'd rather raise my family than Weatherford and no place I'd rather coach than at SWOSU," Visnieski said. "The school and its rodeo program occupy a very special place in my heart."

SWOSU has enjoyed a lengthy and long run of successes in the collegiate rodeo world with six National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) championship banners occupying a prominent space in the school's fieldhouse. Both the SWOSU men's and

women's rodeo teams are currently ranked again among the leaders in the Central Plains Region and are positioning themselves for what could likely be a return to the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR) in June.

"It's such an honor to follow in the footsteps Doc Mitchell who built a program so rich in tradition and continues to the present-day under Chad Ramirez's stewardship," Visnieski said. "I will use all my abilities to ensure that SWOSU and its rodeo program continue to attract talented cowboys and cowgirls. My focus will be on giving them a meaningful experience that will allow them to develop their individual talents and interests even more."

Visnieski is married to the former Edie Spencer of Pink, Okla., who is also a graduate of SWOSU. The couple has two children, a seven-year old son, Kale; and a five-year old daughter, Jade.