DHS grad helms national rodeo show

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"It's a weird circular life," said 1995 Dublin High School graduate Dustin Hodge of his career.

As the producer of "Little Britches Rodeo", now filming its 8th season, he oversees a national show for RFD-TX, a rural-themed channel in 50 million American homes and syndicated on The Cowboy Channel.

He didn't originally aim to focus on the rural lifestyle or get involved in film but an accident and circumstances led him there.

Hodge had moved to Dallas following graduation and got in a bad car accident in his early '20s.

"I was in the hospital for more than a month and re-evaluated my life," Hodge said. The accident had taken such a toll that he didn't know if his voice would ever return. It finally did but that silent period had led him to a decision.

"I decided I wanted to tell stories."

Hodge went to acting conservatories and film workshops before starting to shoot small projects and acting as a director of photography for an independent film, "Dwali." This work led him to film for non-profits and work as a news producer before he came to RFD.

The channel had partnered with the storied youth rodeo, Little Britches, and had filmed content for two years before they realized they wanted to restructure their coverage into a reality show with more focus. Hodge took charge and found it relatively easy since there are so many stories to tell.

"Every production is vastly different," he said recounting one season where the contestants all volunteered their earnings to the father of one of the contestants who had cancer and another young cowgirl who started a crisis relief fund, Hope Counts, at the age of 12.

Hodge said that the new season will begin airing around late September and keep him busy until January or February. Each season consists of 26 episodes and his crew conducts about 300 to 350 interviews for each season.

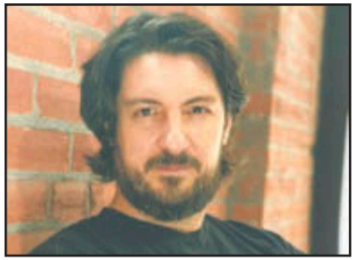
Once filming is done, they cut their footage into around 35,000 clips before they start editing episodes.

Hodge writes scripts to bring the stories together which are read by a professional rodeo announcer.

Hodge enjoys telling rural stories saying it reminds him of the native Dublin he loves. He even attributed some of his desire to film to Vicky Stone who used to allow him to film reports rather than write them.

"These are the people I grew up with- the ones who helped me in high school," he said.





| *submitted photos*

Dustin Hodge produces the nationally-aired "Little Britches Rodeo," now filming its eighth season. For more information, visit rfdcc.com/western-sports/little-britches-rodeo.