



## Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*

Osiyo -

Over the last year, an elite group of professional athletes shared many successes while proudly representing their tribe. It is true that we have Cherokees in the NFL and MLB, but we also have tribal citizens who are champions in professional sports that are played closer to home on a slightly smaller, but just as prestigious stage.

Watching these Cherokee athletes in their quest to show the world the many talents and skills found throughout the Cherokee Nation and northeast Oklahoma is gratifying and inspiring.

Just some of the Cherokee champions I have seen in action in the past year are Ryan Dirteater, professional bull rider; Jason Christie, professional angler; Haley Ganzel, rodeo performer and trick rider; Jaymee "Ambush" Jones, mixed martial arts fighter; Kathina "Kill Switch" Catron, mixed martial arts fighter; and Wes Nofire, professional boxer. Their list of accomplishments and well-earned victories over their respective careers is noteworthy.

Ryan Dirteater rode in as the year's fourth best PBR rider in the world and won the 2016 PBR World Finals, the largest event in the sport.

Professional angler Jason Christie fished his way to eight national wins over the past five years.

Haley Ganzel celebrated 16 years in trick riding and is widely considered one of the best trick riders in the world.

Jayme "Ambush" Jones has earned five wins across her professional career, including a knock out win in less than 40 seconds.

Kathina "Kill Switch" Catron has earned seven professional wins.

Wes Nofire has boxed his way to 19 professional wins in the toughest division of professional boxing, the heavyweight ranks.

These are just some of the professional competitors who highlight the diverse talent found throughout the Cherokee Nation. These athletes train hard, work hard and lead by example. Many of them are from small communities, and there is nothing more important than showing kids from home that they too can fulfill their dreams.

More importantly, they all serve as excellent role models for our youth to emulate and know that through hard work, commitment and character they, too, can accomplish great things. These Cherokee Nation citizens are pursuing exciting careers, and they serve as inspiration to others. They all bring different talents, skills and tenure to their respective sports but share a common desire to represent the Cherokee people, our values and our heritage when they step into the bright light of competition. I believe when they win and when they achieve levels of greatness, which they do quite often, we can all celebrate and be Cherokee proud.

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