

'This Mean Little Calf Drew Me in for the Kill': ABC's Neal Karlinsky Gets Roughed Up at Bullfighting School in California

Reporter's Notebook by NEAL KARLINSKY (@NealKarlinsky)

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My job requires me to do a lot of strange things. I cover everything from wars to wildfires, earthquakes to energy prices, scandals to Spongebob (yep, I once interviewed The Sponge, himself).

Anyway, when I got the call to go to bullfighting school for "Nightline," I thought, "Cool! How hard can it be?"

And when they said I would get a chance to fight a calf, I thought, "Great! Bullfighting a baby is just my speed."

Holy cow, was I wrong.

After a day training with a former professional matador, Dennis Borba, a guy who I swear has a bull's face, me and my fellow students got our chance to face off in the ring.

Up until now, I can tell you, the hardest part of the day was holding the cape, or capote, correctly.

Anyway, when they let the calf into the "arena," I have to say, for the first time I felt fear and thought, "No way am I getting in there with that thing."

It took off from the trailer into the wild of the ring like a motorcycle, full sprint around and around, bashing its horns into the boards that me and my classmates were standing behind.

This was not the kind of baby I had in mind. This was 500 pounds of fury, not much different to my eye than an actual bull.

Immediately, it became clear that I had reason to worry. Two students got chased over the boards and out of the ring right in front of me. One at a time, each was pierced through his clothes by the calf's horns. One tore his shirt and scratched his stomach. The other had his jeans ripped open. Both were lucky to not be in worse shape.

When my turn came, I turned off my feelings and did what I had to do. I stepped into the ring and faced a calf that I swear had it in for me. Finally, *it* was going to have a steak -- me. A nice semi-kosher slab of hair sprayed, Detroit-grown Neal kabob.

The bull let me take a couple of passes, just enough to feed my ego, so much better for the flavor. And then this mean little calf drew me in for the kill.

It wouldn't charge, so at Matador Borba's urging I got closer and closer ... and still it just stared at me, digging with its hoof in the dirt, like it was getting ready to floor it full speed toward the bull's eye that was my knuckle-headed expression.

When it launched this time, I blew it. I couldn't decide whether to take the calf to my right or left. I was handcuffed and I got creamed head-on. It was like getting hit by a fast-moving couch with horns, really.

Watching the video of it, I see how lucky I was, as the horns pushed in straight under my arm but didn't pierce the skin. On the video, not my proudest performance, you can hear the sickening grunt as I'm hit and plowed over.

I managed to spring right back to my feet, more or



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less unharmed, foolishly eager to get even and take another run. When I did, the calf blew by me just as I lifted my cape and I tricked it into missing my body.

Right then, Matador Borba said the most memorable thing I heard all day: "Neal, I think it's getting smarter. You might want to quit because this thing could get dangerous."

"Thank you, Matador Borba," I thought, while leaving for the comfort of a more familiar bull -- a kind I like to talk.

And thank you, angry not-so-little calf, I promise to think twice before I order a steak because, wow, did you eat my lunch that day.

Disclaimer: No calves were hurt at bullfighting school. Only foolish humans.



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