

NEWS RELEASE

Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

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Oklahoma's Richest Rodeo heads to Guymon May 1-3

GUYMON, Okla. – In just a few days, thousands will converge on No Man's Land in an effort to be part of Oklahoma's Richest Rodeo.

This is a state where rodeo tradition runs deep. It's where world champs are enshrined and beloved, where cowboys become statesmen, and the biggest and the best is in the Oklahoma Panhandle. Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo is a weeklong festivity that features four rousing performances May 1-3: 7:30 p.m. Friday; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday.

But the competition begins Monday, April 27, and continues for seven straight days through the final performance at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena. It's the greatest cowboys and cowgirls in ProRodeo, racing the clock or matching moves with some of the nastiest bucking beasts in the sport.

"This is always a great rodeo," said Taos Muncy of Corona, N.M., the 2007 saddle bronc riding world champion who was part of the tradition-rich rodeo program at Oklahoma Panhandle State University in nearby Goodwell. "It's almost like my hometown rodeo, and it's one of my favorite rodeos to watch."

It's also one of his favorites to win, which he did en route to his first gold buckle two seasons ago.

"For timed-event contestants, it's always a good rodeo," said veteran Garrett Nokes of McCook, Neb., a Panhandle State graduate who is regularly among the very best in the all-around standings. "For me, it gives me several chances to win money."

The opening day features the cowgirls of the Women's Professional Rodeo Association, who will run the cloverleaf barrel-racing pattern. It's all part of the non-performance competition, known as slack in rodeo circles, and it's free to watch with concessions available. Slack begins at 10 a.m. Monday. The top 48 after the first round qualify through to the progressive second round, which will take place during the performances.

Tuesday will feature the opening go-round for steer wrestlers, tie-down ropers and team ropers, and it's an important step for all the cowboys involved. Not only will the competitors be hoping to score fast enough times to finish high enough to win money in each go-round, but they also want to position themselves in the two-round aggregate. Slack Tuesday-Friday begins at 8 a.m.

The top 40 times in each event after two rounds qualify through to the progressive, which will consist of the third go-round and will take place during the weekend performances – 10 ropers or teams in each event for each of the four shows.

"This is a good way for us to get the top cowboys in our event in front of the fans," said Ken Stonecipher, a member of the volunteer committee that produces the annual event. "This is the best of the best Guymon has to offer, and it's typically the best

in the world, too. That's just the way it works, but you also allow for some of the rising stars of the sport to shine brightly."

Steer ropers are showcased during slack Thursday and Friday, then the arena is cleared and prepared for the performances. For the first time in a long time, steer-roping slack will take place at Hitch Arena in Guymon.

In this year's field, world champions will compete against rookies and every contestant in between.

Muncy, who wasn't able to defend his title last year while recuperating from a broken leg he injured just a few weeks before Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, is hoping to come back to the rodeo trail in time to return "home." He fractured an ankle a few weeks ago while working in Texas, but he was expected to be back in action by May.

"I'm just trying to improve every time I get on," said Muncy, 21, whose sister, Jordan, is a major player on the Panhandle State women's rodeo team. "If I can do that, everything else will take care of itself."

Besides some of the hottest rodeo action in the country, Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo will also feature two of the best-known bullfighters to serve as cowboy protectors, Scotty Spencer and Darrel Diefenbach. The funnyman will be barrelman John Harrison, who comes from a rodeo family and has incorporated tremendous athletic ability with his entertainment side to be one of the hottest names in the sport.

Louisianan Andy Stewart, now in his third straight year, will call the action with Guymon's Stonecipher, a card-carrying member of the PRCA. And as it has been for years, Hitch Arena will be the weekend home of some of the very best bucking animals in ProRodeo.

It's the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, where cowboys become legends.