

Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

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Fresh from Vegas, cowboys find home in Panhandle

GUYMON, Okla. – They came to the Oklahoma Panhandle for an education, yet a month ago, they were playing on ProRodeo’s biggest stage.

Five cowboys, four of whom were in competition at the 50th National Finals Rodeo, have ties to Texas County, whether it’s through their involvement in the rodeo team at Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell or having just touched ground in this neck of the woods enough to call it home – Billy Etbauer, Dan Etbauer, Dusty Hausauer, Cody Taton and Beau Franzen.

“It was pretty cool seeing Danny in the arena at the finals,” said Ken Stonecipher, a longtime member of the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo committee. “We’ve had a bigger representation at the finals before, but this was a pretty good bunch.”

Dan Etbauer was the lone dog in the pack who wasn’t part of the competition – he was selected as a pickup man, becoming one of the very few former NFR qualifiers to later be voted in by the competing cowboys to work the finals. After graduating from Panhandle State, he has remained in this area and has his own property south of Goodwell.

His older brother, Billy, took part in his 20th straight NFR, and five times he’s walked away from Las Vegas with the champion’s hardware – the elusive gold buckle. And while he was only member of the five who didn’t attend Panhandle State, Billy Etbauer was within arm’s reach of a record-tying sixth saddle bronc riding world championship.

Still, he followed Dan and their oldest brother, Robert, to Texas County in an effort to learn more about riding rank broncs and making a living in the sport he loves. And though he watched Utah bronc buster Cody Wright strap on the gold buckle, he had a solid 10 in the Nevada desert, winning two go-rounds and earning nearly \$64,000.

Though he has lived in Edmond for several years, there’s still a sense of home, especially the first weekend of May when the region hosts the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo. Like all other great cowboys in the sport, the trip to Oklahoma in May means a good chance at big money. That’s why there will be nearly 1,000 contestants in the field.

“There’s always a chance someone can’t make it,” Stonecipher said. “Last year, we were ready to welcome home our newest champ with Taos (Muncy), but he broke his leg and couldn’t compete.

“Still, I expect it’ll be like an old reunion for these guys when they get back here.”

Franzen was a college champion while studying at Goodwell, and he returned to the NFR for a second time. In all, he won \$31,000, finishing the 2008 season 12th in the world standings.

A year ago, Franzen walked away from the Guymon rodeo with a healthy paycheck, and he attributed a big portion of his financial success to having a good week in his old stomping grounds.

“Beau started off strong at the NFR,” Stonecipher said. “He’ll be back again, and I bet he’ll do better the next time.”

Hausauer lives in Dickinson, N.D., but like so many from his home state – the Etbauers, Tom Reeves, Jeff Willert and Jesse Bail, to name a few – he headed to the Oklahoma Panhandle to school. At the NFR, he won the second go-round and earned more than \$40,100, finishing ninth in the world standings.

Just as important as his first finals qualification, Hausauer also qualified for the Canadian Finals Rodeo, walking away with the bronc-riding championship north of the border.

And while it was a solid year for all those who came out of the Panhandle, it was another South Dakotan who walked away with the biggest Vegas paycheck. Taton, of Newell, won the bronc-riding average, placing in five rounds and pocketing \$80,859. He moved up to fifth in the world standings, having earned more than \$142,000.

“He beat them all, so that says a lot about the caliber of an athlete he is,” Stonecipher said.