

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

<http://www.guymonrodeo.com>

For information
Contact Ted Harbin

(660) 254-1900
imteditor@gmail.com

Community ready for 2010 version of Pioneer Days Rodeo

GUYMON, Okla. – From the inaugural Classic Events Championship to the beautiful Shire hitch to rodeo's entertainer of the year, there's a lot on tap for this year's Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo.

Texas County's biggest annual event hits town starting Monday, April 26, with a full day of barrel racing from hundreds of ladies from the Women's Professional Rodeo Association. The weeklong festivities at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena closes with four performances that the nearly 1,000 contestants consider a mini-Wrangler National Finals Rodeo.

"There's a good reason the contestants come to Guymon every year," said Ken Stonecipher, a key member of the rodeo committee that produces the event every year. "They know they're going to have the best stock, and they know they're going to be appreciated by people here in the Panhandle.

"They also know they're competing for big money, and that's important to them."

And while competition takes place all week, the performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 30; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 1; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 2.

"There are several people who volunteer, and that's part of their annual vacation to help with Pioneer Days," said Jim Quimby, the rodeo committee chairman, who noted that this year's event features 958 entries. "I can think of at least 15 people that help all year, but there's just tons of help during the performances, from the concessions to the hospitality booth ... just about everything.

"It takes several dozen volunteers, and we're proud of every one of them."

There are also plenty of activities, with one of the highlights being the inaugural Classic Events Championship set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 29. It will feature professional cowboys competing in both saddle bronc riding and steer roping. It's the brainchild of Guymon resident Rick Furnish, the manager of Texas County-based Hitch Ranch.

"I've been around this all my life," said Furnish, who also owns Bob's Cowboy Bar & Rodeo Room. "Steer roping and bronc riding are the two oldest events in rodeo, but there are timed-event guys and riding-event guys. You've never had a crossover where you had to rope so many and you had to ride so many in order to be the champion."

The field will feature 20 cowboys, most of whom make a living on the rodeo trail riding bucking horses but have enough skills to rope quite well. Each cowboy will ride two broncs and rope two steers, and their livestock will be part of a random draw – even the roping horses they use will be drawn.

"In my opinion, we don't have a true all-around champion," Furnish said. "I've known Trevor Brazile his whole life, and he's the best roper I've ever seen. But he's not the all-around champion cowboy, not until he can ride a bucking horse or bull.

"You can be the best roper in the world and the best rider, but you can't be the all-around champion until you can do things at both ends of the arena. It's just about being a cowboy."

It takes being a pretty handy cowboy to win the Pioneer Days Rodeo, which has been one of the elite events in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association for several years. When the performances begin that Friday night, they will feature a who's who of athletes, including the top bucking stock from Carr Pro Rodeos, Powder River Rodeo Co., D&H Cattle Co. and Korkow Rodeos.

World champions are not only part of the field, but they're regular winners inside Hitch Arena. And that's another reason the stands are filled each year with fans not only itching to see a great rodeo, but to see the best in the business at work.

"This is a great opportunity for people who live fairly close to Guymon to be part of world-class entertainment right here in the Panhandle," Quimby said. "There aren't many places where you can go and see this kind of action, this kind of entertainment for very little money. It's extremely economical, because we keep our ticket prices low.

"Our economy has not been good, and the rodeo and all of Pioneer Days offers the people from around here a vacation. They're not driving to Dallas or going to Disney World, but they can experience some great entertainment for a very reasonable price right here."

In addition to the exceptional athletic feats that will happen over seven days in Texas County, the rodeo also offers fans the chance to just sit back, relax and, as it happens, laugh out loud during each two-hour performance. Andy Stewart will partner with Stonecipher in announcing the event, providing intimate details of the contestants, stock and background of the rodeo so that any fan will have a better understanding of what they witness.

But they're just role players to Keith Isley, the funnyman/barrelman who is making his Pioneer Days Rodeo debut. Isley, who swept the PRCA awards in his categories in 2009, was named the Coors Man in the Can, the Clown of the Year and the Comedy Act of the Year. They mark three more awards and honors for the North Carolina man who has long been considered rodeo's feature entertainer.

Isley will be matched on the aw-factor by the Diamond Z English Shire Hitch, which will showcase the magnificent horses during the festivities. There is also a large video board that provides up-to-date scores along with highlights and replays of the action. It's a hit with the fans and the contestants.

"There's so much history in Guymon, from roping muleys in team roping to being the Saddle Bronc Riding Capital of the World," said Pete Carr of Carr Pro Rodeo, the primary stock contractor in Guymon. "Then you've got the national champions of Panhandle State University, which produces some of the greatest cowboys and cowgirls that ever rode into an arena.

"In addition, the people in the town and the surrounding areas really get behind the event and support the rodeo."

It all adds up to the Pioneer Days Rodeo serving as the event that brings the biggest economic impact to the Oklahoma Panhandle each year.