

# PRCA ready to get rodeo athletes back to work

During this time of uncertainty when the spread of the coronavirus has shut down numerous sports activities, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association organizers are highly determined to put athletes back to work.

Take the Houston Livestock Show Rodeo for example. The renowned rodeo was forced to shut down on March 11 by local authorities because of COVID-19 concerns. RodeoHouston began March 3 and was scheduled to conclude on March 22 at NRG Stadium.

But the PRCA has devised an innovative plan to partially salvage it. The PRCA will transplant the remainder of the rodeo's preliminary performances to Cowtown Coliseum in the Fort Worth Stockyards.

"I'm glad it's coming to the Stockyards," said Hub Baker, the Cowtown Coliseum's longtime director. "We're going to make the best of we can out of it. We're glad about doing it."

Seven performances are scheduled this weekend (May 29-31) and the shows will be broadcast on the Cowboy Channel. Fans will not be allowed during the performances.

Rodeo venues, along with many other entertainment businesses in Texas, were allowed to reopen on May 22 as part of the second phase of Gov. Greg Abbott's plan to jump-start the economy.

The rodeo performances in Fort Worth will feature high-profile competitors such as four-time world champion Tuf Cooper, a Childress native who has homes in Weatherford and Decatur. Hunter Koch, a 2019 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo team roping qualifier from Vernon, also is on the card.

While the Houston Rodeo was making its run in



By Brett Hoffman

March, officials were using a tournament format called the Super Series. PRCA chief executive officer George Taylor said the Cowtown Coliseum will host "the last of seven performances of the Super Series."

In Houston, each cowboy and cowgirl was competing in three performances within a bracket during the prelims. At the time, competitors were attempting to qualify for a semifinal performance. But when the Houston Rodeo is held in Fort Worth, no semifinal or final round performances will be conducted.

Taylor said "the PRCA, event sponsors, and the Cowboy channel" are financially backing the rodeo. The prize money has been reduced. Each performance will pay a minimum of \$800 for a first-place finish, \$600 for second place, \$400 for third place, and \$200 for fourth place.

If the Houston rodeo had stayed in NRG Stadium, competitors would have earned \$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second, \$1,000 for third and \$750 for fourth place.

But as it was in Houston, each contestant will be paid a \$300 appearance fee in Fort Worth.

The Rafter G Rodeo company of Terrell (Neal and Jim Gay), which serves as the senior stock producer of the Fort Worth Stock Show Rodeo, and Pete Carr, who is from Dallas, are among the group of contractors supplying the rodeo stock. Stace Smith of Athens, an 11-time PRCA Stock Contractor of the Year, also will be involved.

In order to address coronavirus concerns, Taylor said rodeo personnel will be undergo medical screening.

"We have a screening process that includes a variety of questions and a medical screening," he said. "If medical authorities have concerns at any time about an individual's suitability to participate,

that person will be denied access to the event until cleared by their personal physician."

Ryan Motes, a five-time National Finals Rodeo team roping qualifier from Weatherford, will compete May 29 with partner Coleman Proctor in the third of three performances after completing the first two in Houston.

Motes said he was grateful for the opportunity to compete.

"The whole thing is complicated in general and there's no set human answer in any sport for any of this," Motes said. "So, I'm glad they're trying to do something and to have somewhere to go and to try to salvage the season."

Cowtown Coliseum will have a much different atmosphere than in Houston, which sometimes draws crowds of around 70,000 at NRG Stadium. The performances there are held in conjunction with concerts by popular entertainers.

But Motes said the quiet atmosphere will be a familiar one. He regularly competes in rodeo slack performances, which features the overflow of competitors not competing in the main shows.

"Especially in team roping, we compete in slack a lot," Motes said. "We're used to a handful of people there and roping in the mornings. It's definitely different than Houston with 70,000 people."

The PRCA, which had been shut down since mid-March because of the pandemic, resumed its 2020 regular season last weekend in Arizona. The Cave Creek Rodeo Days, which was May 22-24 in the Phoenix area, was closed to fans but was broadcasted on the Cowboy Channel each night.

Matt Reeves, a Pampa native who is from Cross Plains near Abilene, clinched the steer wrestling at last weekend's Cave Creek (Arizona) Rodeo Days with a time of 3.7 seconds and earned \$1,849. Reeves, a seven-time National Finals qualifier, is ranked No. 1 in the PRCA's 2020 steer wrestling world title race.

In tie-down roping, Shad Mayfield of Clovis, New Mexico, a 2019 National Finals qualifier, snared the title with an 8.5 and pocketed \$1,751. Mayfield is ranked No. 1 in the PRCA's 2020 tie-down roping world title race.

According to prorodeo.com, the other winners at the \$84,929 Arizona rodeo were team ropers Pedro Egurrola and Trevor Knowlin (4.3 seconds); saddle bronc rider Colt Gordon (86 points on The Cervi Brothers' Mortician); steer roper Dalton Walker (63.0 seconds on three head); barrel racer Amanda Butler (15.45 seconds); bull rider Garrett Smith (89 points on 4L & Diamond S Rodeo's Rustler's Roost) and bareback rider Caleb Bennett (84.5 points on The Cervi Brothers' Little Bucker).

*Brett Hoffman, a Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame member, has reported on rodeos and horse shows for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram for more than 35 years. Email him at bchoffman777@earthlink.*

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