

Rodeo action on tap this weekend in Vernon

Arlington, Texas, will be transformed into the rodeo capital of the United States this fall.

Two weeks after the National Finals Rodeo was moved to Globe Life Field this December, Arlington landed another huge championship event for the sport Thursday (Sept. 24) when officials announced that the Professional Bull Riders World Finals will move from Las Vegas to AT&T Stadium.

The PBR World Finals, pro bull riding's equivalent of the Super Bowl, now is scheduled for Nov. 12-15 at the home of the Dallas Cowboys.

Since 1994, the PBR World Finals has been held in Las Vegas, but officials decided to move it along with the NFR because of fan restrictions there during the coronavirus pandemic.

The PBR has conducted an event at AT&T Stadium every year since 2010. In 2019 and 2020, the PBR held its Global Cup, an international competition in February, at the renowned venue.

"It's in the heart of cowboy country," PBR commissioner Sean Gleason said. "It's a building we're familiar with."

In 2018, the PBR's Iron Cowboy event at AT&T Stadium drew more than 46,000 fans, which is believed to be a record turnout for a rodeo or bull riding competition in the DFW Metroplex.

When the PBR brings its World Finals to AT&T Stadium in November, about 20,000 to 22,000 fans will be allowed to attend a performance under current social distancing guidelines, officials said.

The PBR World Finals event winner will receive \$300,000. The 2020 world champion, the rider who finishes with the most points from the regular season and the World Finals, will receive a \$1 million bonus.

The CBS Sports Network will televise all rounds of the PBR World Finals, in addition to preview shows. The league's OTT channel, RidePass, also will feature daily broadcasts.

During World Finals week, fans can also attend the Women's Rodeo World Championship at the Will Rogers Coliseum Complex in Fort Worth. Competition

RODEO INSIDER



Brett Hoffman

begins on Nov. 9 and will culminate with championship rounds held inside AT&T Stadium in conjunction with PBR World Finals performances on Nov. 13-15.

General public tickets for the 2020 PBR World Finals: Unleash The Beast go on sale Oct. 5. Also, PBR Direct four-day packages will go on sale Sept. 28-30, with PBR Direct Single Day tickets on sale Oct. 1-2. Tickets can be purchased at the AT&T Stadium Box Office, online at AT&TStadium.com or SeatGeek.com, or via the phone to PBR Customer Service at 800-732-1727.

PRCA/WPRA UPDATE

The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association/Women's Professional Rodeo Association circuit will conclude the 2020 regular season on Wednesday, Sept. 30. At that point, the top 15 in each event will advance to the Dec. 3-12 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo at Globe Life Field in Arlington or the Nov. 6-7 Clem McSpadden National Finals Steer Roping in Mulvane, Kansas (in the Wichita area).

With that in mind, world class competitors saddled up for the Sept. 22-26 ProRodeo Tour Finale in Rapid City, South Dakota, and the Sept. 24-27 Cowboy Capital of the World PRCA Rodeo at the Lone Star Arena in Stephenville.

At the Rapid City rodeo, Hunter Koch of Vernon, a 2019 National Finals heeling qualifier, and his partner Kolton Schmidt, tied for fifth in the team roping first round with a time of 5.1 seconds. The duo also finished eighth in the second round with a 5.3. But during the semifinal round on Saturday, they fell short in their attempt advanced to the finals, which featured the top four from the semifinals. During the four-team finals, former National Finals qualifiers Riley Minor and Brady Minor clinched the title with a 4.1. Chad Masters and Wesley Thorp, the 2019 heeling world champion who is from Throckmorton and lives in Stephenville, finished second with a 5.0.

Koch finished the regular season ranked No. 14 in the team roping heeling title race. He's earned his second consecutive trip to the National Finals.

Stetson Wright, the 2019 world all-around champion, clinched the saddle bronc riding title at the Rapid City rodeo with a finals score of 90. According to prorodeo.com, the other winners at the \$290,616 rodeo were bareback rider Jesse Pope (90 points on J Bar J's Straight

Moonshine); steer wrestler Jacob Talley (3.6 seconds); tie-down roper Tyler Milligan (7.7 seconds); barrel racer Ryann Pedone (15.97 seconds) and bull rider Jeff Askey (82 points on Dakota Rodeo's Sitting Bull).

At the Stephenville rodeo, three-time National Finals qualifier Brody Cress clinched the saddle bronc riding title with an 89 point effort on Pete Carr Pro Rodeo's Secret Agent.

The Lone Star arena in Stephenville is a familiar placed for Cress, a Wyoming cowboy. Last year, he competed for Tarleton State, which has a renowned rodeo program at the university's main campus in Stephenville.

Though the regular season concludes Sept. 30, it actually ended Sunday, Sept. 27, at the Stephenville rodeo for tie-down ropers, steer wrestlers, bull riders, barrel racers and team ropers. The regular season for steer ropers concluded last weekend in Stephenville and the top 15 in that event will advance to the National Finals Steer Roping in Mulvane. But for bareback riders and saddle bronc riders, the regular season will conclude on Wednesday with the Cinch Gold Buckle Knockout on the Cervi Ranch near Stoneham, Colorado.

NFR TICKET INFORMATION

All available seats for the 2020 National Finals at Globe Life Field have been scooped up during pre-sale for season ticket holders and during public sales on Friday, Sept. 25, according to pro rodeo.com.

Tickets for the Wrangler NFR have been sold in blocks of four. Each block of four seats will be separated during the rodeo performances for social distancing because of concerns about the coronavirus pandemic. Globe Life Field is also encouraging all guests to check the CDC and the Texas Department of State Health Services websites for any guideline changes prior to the event.

If the public health situation evolves, there may be additional tickets available. Globe Life Field is working closely with state and local health officials and they have created a wait list for fans if additional tickets become available at www.texasrangers.com/NFR. Fans who sign up for the wait list will be given first opportunity to buy any tickets that might be made available. Limited suite rentals at Globe Life Field are still available for each performance. For informa-

tion and availability, fans should email speialevents@texasrangers.com or call 972-RANGERS.

BULL RIDER'S MEMORIAL

The memorial service for Rowdy Lee Swanson, 20, who was killed in a bull riding accident on Sept. 17 at the Mineral Wells PRCA rodeo, was Sept. 23 in his hometown of Duncan, Oklahoma, according to the Daily Oklahoman.

According to the PRCA, Swanson passed away on Sept. 17 following injuries sustained that night while competing.

In an interview with longtime Daily Oklahoman writer Ed Godfrey, Swanson's father, Jarrel, said it appeared that the bull stepped on his son.

"It looks like on the video that the bull, that both back feet, stepped right into the middle of his chest," Jarrel Swanson said.

Rowdy Swanson then got up and walked toward the bucking chute. Roper Swanson, Rowdy's brother, reached out and grabbed Rowdy's vest as his brother collapsed.

"Roper said (Rowdy) took about three deep breaths and then he just quit breathing," Jarrel Swanson said.

Rowdy Swanson's family is establishing a rodeo scholarship in his name at Oklahoma State where he was a student and was part of the school's rodeo program. Contributions can be made to the Rowdy Swanson Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o BancFirst, P.O. Box 430, Frederick, Oklahoma, 73542.

COLLEGE RODEO UPDATE

On the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association circuit, Southwest Region riders competed in the 75th annual Sul Ross State University Rodeo last weekend in Alpine.

Weatherford College clinched the women's team title with 245 points. Western Texas College clinched the men's team title with 515 points.

The Sul Ross rodeo was the first of 10 NIRA Southwest Region shows scheduled for the 202-2021 regular season.

This weekend, NIRA Southwest Region riders are scheduled to compete in the Oct. 1-3 Vernon College Rodeo.

Brett Hoffman, a Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame member, has written a rodeo column for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram over the past quarter-century. Email him at bchoffman777@earthlink.net.

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