



CANADIAN PROFESSIONAL RODEO ASSOCIATION

Big Cowboy Christmas Paydays

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For immediate release

Three is a significant number in the bronc riding career of Canadian rodeo superstar, Zeke Thurston.

The three-time Canadian and World Champion notched his third Ponoka Stampede title July 2 with a 92.5-point Showdown ride on the Calgary Stampede's Dandy Delight. The Showdown at the famed Ponoka rodeo (a stop on the SMS Equipment Pro Tour) pits the top four finishers through the Stampede head-to-head on the final night for a shot at \$15,000 in bonus money.

"Rodeos of this stature are hard to win," Thurston noted. "There's guys go through their whole career and not win here. So it doesn't get old."

It was a little different Ponoka for the Big Valley, Alta cowboy this time around as he didn't have to fit back and forth trips to other destinations around his Stampede schedule.

"I wasn't sore or tired," Thurston, who will turn twenty-nine in two weeks, chuckled. "That's the best I've ever felt for that rodeo. It was actually quite nice."

Thurston enjoyed his outing on the seven-year-old mare from the Calgary Stampede string. "I'd seen her [Dandy Delight] lots, from when she was a colt to where she is now, and I'd say she's gonna be around and really good for a long time. There was a lot going on during the ride," the number three ranked cowboy in the world standings admitted. "Some direction changes and things were happening pretty fast, but she was fun to ride."

The second-generation mega-talent pocketed just over \$18,000 for his Ponoka efforts and will move into a comfortable lead in the Canadian standings.

At the other end of the arena, the world's number one steer wrestler was enjoying similar success in his event. Oregon cowboy, Dalton Massey, brought his Showdown round steer down in 4.6 seconds to collect the \$9750 bonus check as he too topped \$18,000 in Ponoka earnings. Massey then added \$4661 for a 2-3-4 split at the Williams Lake Stampede (another SMS Pro Tour event) for a weekend haul that might result in his having to alter his schedule for the remainder of the regular season.

"I'm going to try to get my rodeo count in up here (15 to qualify for the Canadian Finals Rodeo)," Massey stated. "I have six so far and I'll probably never have a better opportunity to get to the CFR. I think it would be pretty cool to be there and have a Canadian back number on my wall at home. I'm rodeoing with some Canadians and they know how to make it work up there."

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The Oregonian drew the same steer he'd had for the short round earlier in the day. "He wasn't my favourite steer, that's for sure, but a few things went wrong with that first run and I knew I could do better on him."

And that's exactly how it played out for the 2023 Rodeo Houston Champion. Riding Stephen Culling's horse, Buck, Massey bulldogged the steer in 4.6 seconds for a comfortable margin of victory over the only other man to record a time in the Showdown round, fellow American JD Struxness who was 10.8 for second place.

It's been a spectacular season as Massey vies for a first trip to the NFR. "The horses are working good, I've been drawing good and I've got a ton of confidence every time I back into the box... and that's how you win."

Massey's huge weekend (\$22,721 in total) will propel him into the top five of the Canadian standings, leaving just the rodeo count box to check to ensure a trip to Red Deer, Alta. (home of the CFR) in November.

Among the other big winners for the weekend were reigning Canadian Tie-Down Roping Champion, Ty Harris, with \$22,032 in total money won including a Ponoka win, veteran barrel racer, Dona Kay Rule who amassed \$15,278 at three Canadian stops—Ponoka, the historic Raymond Stampede and Airdrie Pro Rodeo, and a trio of Canadian team roping brother combinations who all made five-digit weekend hauls—Dawson and Dillon Graham (\$13,890), Tyce and Tuftin McLeod (\$12,174) and Logan and Keely Bonnett (\$11,909).

Next weekend will see only one event on the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association schedule – the Benalto Stampede, July 7-9.

For complete unofficial results from the weekend, head to rodeocanada.com

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alta. is the official sanctioning body for Professional Rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves 55 + events annually with a total payout exceeding \$6 million. The organization oversees the SMS Equipment Pro Tour Finale each fall in Armstrong, BC, holds their premiere event—the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR)—at Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alta. in early November and endorses the Maple Leaf Circuit Finals as part of Canadian Western Agribition in Regina, Sask.

For details, please see RodeoCanada.com

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