



Pro Rodeo Canada

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August 27, 2012
For immediate release

Byrne Punches Ticket to CFR

Tanner Byrne was a safe bet on the Canadian pro rodeo trail during the last full weekend of August.

He covered all three bulls they slid under him, earned a weekend-best \$4,159 and clinched his ticket to the November Canadian Finals Rodeo at Edmonton for the second consecutive year.

The key to it all was a big, bald-faced Hereford bull called Safe Bet from the Kesler family outfit at the Whoop-Up Days rodeo in Lethbridge.

Byrne was 83.5 points on what he called “a pressure bull” to pick up fifth money, worth \$490. But, it couldn’t have been a more timely successful trip.

There were 12 guys out on the second day of the rodeo and the 20-year-old Prince Albert, Sask., product was the last to nod his head. He knew when the chute gate cracked that if he made the eight-second whistle, he’d pick up all the day money.

Bull riding is the only event where contestants pay double their entry fee. The first half goes toward the purse, the other half to the day money pot. Each day, those who post a qualified ride share the day money and it counts toward the season standings.

Byrne didn’t have to share this time. He got all of it, which amounted to \$1,100. Throw in the prize money and he came out of the fray with \$1,790.

The following night at the AOA Bike and Bulls sanctioned event at Airdrie, Byrne covered two bulls for 82 and 87.5 points to finish second and take in another \$2,369.

Going into the weekend, he was 10th in the Canadian standings and on dangerous ground, a little more than \$2,000 from falling out of the top 12. But, his haul out of Lethbridge and Airdrie shot him up to fourth in the rankings and he’s now a safe bet to be in Edmonton Nov. 7-11.

“I had to make some money and I got that done,” Byrne said, his voice echoing relief. “I was feeling the pressure big time. I had close to \$19,000 won going into the August long weekend, didn’t do my job very well and didn’t win any money.

“I dropped down from second to 11th in the standings and I was fighting to keep my head above water.”

While he couldn’t have been happier to draw a bull like Safe Bet, he acknowledged he was facing a difficult situation.

"I got on that bull four years ago at an amateur rodeo and rode him and he's been the same ever since. You're not supposed to buck off him. If you do, the other guys laugh at you. So I had lots of pressure on me.

"And then, when none of the other guys rode and all that day money was sitting there, that added even more pressure.

"I tried to block all that out, came through and rode him like I was supposed to; I was in control from the very start, I didn't have any trouble with him.

"The hardest part about him is drawing him."

Byrne didn't place in the qualifying round at Airdrie, but his 82-point score was good enough to bring him back in the short round and he topped that with the event's highest score of 87.5 points.

It came aboard Outlawbuckers white painted bull Lazy Boy that was in the pen for the 2011 CFR.

"I was excited when I drew him because there had been some good scores on him," Byrne said. "He had a good trip and I think I might have underestimated him. I thought he was going to be weaker than he was.

"He kind of whooped it back, made two rounds to the left, caught another gear and turned back to the right. It was one of my better rides this summer. I was really happy with it."

Now, rather than worrying about qualifying for the CFR, he's thinking about winning the Canadian championship.

Byrne trails standings leader Scott Schiffner by \$7,700 and can close that gap this week with the Wrangler Canadian Tour championships at Armstrong, B.C., and conflicting rodeos at Okotoks and Merritt, B.C.

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There were no event lead changes in the Canadian standings as a result of the weekend's action, but the race at the top of the saddle bronc riding has become the tightest of all.

Rylan Geiger, who has led the pack for most of the season, hung on to first by winning last money at Lethbridge, worth \$135.

Had he not picked up that cheque, runner-up Luke Butterfield, who cashed second for \$1,557, would have overtaken him.

Geiger has earned \$33,447; Butterfield is at \$33,359 – a difference of a mere \$88.

Wrangler Tour finalists compete in Armstrong, B.C. starting Wed of this week. Also on the roster for the Labour Day weekend is Okotoks Rodeo Aug 31-Sept 2 and Merritt Pro Rodeo Sept 1-2.

For more information,
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