

## Pro Rodeo Canada



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Pro Rodeo Canada  
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### J.D. Hays Hitting His Stride

It goes without saying that J.D. Hays was disappointed after missing the cut in the steer wrestling for last year's Canadian Finals Rodeo.

The only decent part of it was he got to watch younger brother Rowdy qualify for the season-ending showdown and end up third in the standings with a magnificent \$55,000 year.

J.D. went into this year confident he would restore his status, but it took him half the season to put himself in a position to become a CFR threat.

Last weekend – with rodeos at Morris, Man., Maple Creek and Kennedy, Sask. – marked the beginning of the second half of the campaign.

It didn't bring about any changes at the top end of the event leader boards, but it did shuffle things around the bottom end.

Hays was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in the standings going in, but he placed at all three rodeos for \$3,300, boosting his seasonal income to \$7,867. That carried him up to 16<sup>th</sup>, just \$253 out of a CFR playoff spot.

"I wasn't having a good year," he confessed over the cell from Cheyenne, where he was working the daddy of 'em all. "I've been rodeoing hard, but just not winning."

He drew steers at Maple Creek and Kennedy that he'd encountered before. But, the one at Morris was a stranger.

"The guy who owns him had a book on him and told me what he was supposed to do. But, the steers weren't leaving as hard as they were the first night, so I backed off the barrier.

"I got a good start and turned him down."

Hays split first four ways with a time of 4.3 seconds that paid \$1,963 and became the centre piece of his weekend.

Dallas Frank, from Stony Plain, also placed at all three rodeos for \$2,764 and crawled up to 13<sup>th</sup> in the bulldogging rankings with \$8,046, about \$80 shy of the playoffs.

Other athletes who also turned their seasons around:

Rookie Clint Laye won Morris with an 80-point ride on stock contractor Wayne Vold's black gelding Sweeney Todd for \$2,654. It was a much needed hit, moving him up to 11<sup>th</sup> from 16<sup>th</sup>.

Steele DePaoli and Riley Warren moved inside the top 10 in the American dominated tie-down roping rankings.

DePaoli won \$1,825 at Morris with a second-best 8.4 time to run his income to a eighth-best \$10,927 and Riley Warren, cousin of multi-all-around champion Rod Warren, earned more than \$1,000 to reach \$10,449 and improve to ninth in the standings.

Canadian standings leader Rylan Geiger gathered up another \$3,542 in the saddle bronc riding to push his leading income to \$24,073.

Tanner Byrne cashed at all three rodeos in the bull riding for \$3,636 to move into second spot in the standings with \$17,968.

Riley McKenzie was the top money winner in the barrel racing with \$2,917 and the Popescul brothers, Tyler and Jesse, led the team roping with two-rodeo earnings of \$1,159 apiece.

Coming up: A bull riding at Oyen on Wednesday, the Medicine Hat Stampede on Thursday through Saturday and Bruce on Sunday.

No conflicts; not hard to make all of them!

*For more information,*

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