



## Pro Rodeo Canada

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Canadian Professional Rodeo Association . 272245 R.R. 2 Airdrie, Alberta Canada T4A 2L5  
Phone (403) 945-0903 . Fax (403) 945-0936 . Email [cpra@rodeocanada.com](mailto:cpra@rodeocanada.com)

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### Besplug Invitational Provides Spectacular Kickoff to CPRA Season

If the crowd at the first ever Chad Besplug Invitational Bull Riding has its way, this won't be the last Chad Besplug Invitational Bull Riding.

A jam-packed Claresholm Agriplex (long-time observers called it the biggest crowd ever to be in the building) applauded, stomped and cheered their way through the March 8 event that kicked off the 2014 CPRA season.

And when the southern Alberta dust settled, Dakota Buttar of Kindersley, Saskatchewan rode himself into the history books as the first-ever CBI champion, netting \$3426 in the process. Buttar was the only rider to conquer his four-legged opponent in the short go, putting together an 87 score on the Franklin bull Rainy Nights to go with his long go mark of 78 for a two head total of 165 points.

"I was surprised more guys didn't ride in the short go," Buttar acknowledged. "That was a pretty good bunch of bull riders."

The soft-spoken two-time CFR qualifier was right—the ten short go qualifiers included four Canadian title-holders—Jesse Torkelson whose 87 score had topped the field in the long go-round, 2008 champ Tyler Thomson, two-time titleist Scott Schiffner and the reigning champion (also a two-time champ), Chad Besplug.

"It feels good to win this," Buttar added. "It's nice to get a win to start the season."

But this night was about Besplug, the man who had spent countless hours over several months putting together the event.

"I've never been so nervous about anything in my life," Besplug confessed. "When I walked into the arena and saw that crowd I almost choked up."

And the second generation cowboy from an all-rodeo family wasn't about to let the Claresholm faithful down. Having already ridden his long go bull to an 86 mark and second place behind Torkelson, Besplug was bucked off the sensational Girletz bull, Finkle's Dog in the short go.

But that merely set the stage for the evening's finale—the much-anticipated grudge match between Besplug and the Big Stone Rodeo Company's superstar, Pop Evil, last year's top bull of the CFR. The two had met previously - at Innisfail in 2013 - and the result, Besplug hit the ground at 7.2 seconds.

But, with everyone in the building on their feet cheering on the hometown hero, Besplug was not to be denied this time around. Despite the fact that the Tyler Thomson-raised grey outlaw had an outstanding day and threw everything he had at his rider, the Canadian champ prevailed and dismounted after his success to the deafening approval of the capacity crowd. The mark was announced at 91 points but it's unclear how many actually heard the announced score as the high decibel cheers continued for a couple of minutes after the completion of Besplug's masterpiece.

"That might be the best ride I ever made," the 2012 Calgary Stampede champion grinned, "and the funny part is—it's for no money."

Which isn't entirely true. While Besplug himself won't pocket a dime for the ride, a 50-50 style Calcutta allowed fans to wager on their choice of rider or bull as the eventual victor. (Not one person admitted to choosing Pop Evil over the local favourite). Proceeds from the grudge match

wagers were spilt between the winning ticket holder and the Count on Cowboys Foundation, the charity Besplug had set up in conjunction with the bull riding event.

But for Besplug, the event sponsors and organizers, maybe the best part of the evening came as fans made their way toward the exits, many of them repeating the same refrain..."I can't wait for next year."

Complete results of the Chad Besplug Invitational can be found on the CPRA website...[rodeocanada.com](http://rodeocanada.com)

Next CPRA action will take rodeo fans to Vermilion, AB for another new event—the Lakeland College CPRA Bull Riding, then to Medicine Hat for the Broncs and Honky Tonks Rodeo April 11-13.

For more information:

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Airdrie, Alberta

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Email: [cpra@rodeocanada.com](mailto:cpra@rodeocanada.com)

Web: [www.rodeocanada.com](http://www.rodeocanada.com)