



## Pro Rodeo Canada

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Pro Rodeo Canada  
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### Pro Rodeo Canada Announces New Grass Roots Finals

It's a concept designed to take pro rodeo in Canada a step forward into the future, by going back to the roots of the sport.

Canadian Professional Rodeo Association officials announced the creation of the Grassroots Finals Pro Rodeo at the organization's annual general meeting in Ponoka. The two day event will be held the first weekend in October at Calgary's new Agrium Western Event Centre. The roster will include the top ten qualifying contestants in the seven major events from the new Grassroots Tour, which includes all rodeos except those on the Wrangler Canadian Rodeo Tour.

"We want to develop the depth of Canadian rodeo talent and help support some of our smaller rodeo committees," explains CPRA Interim General Manager Jeff Robson.

"The unique thing about this Finals is that it's open to semi-pro card holders as well as full pros, and all stock contractors are eligible to bring bucking stock," notes Robson. "We feel this will encourage and prepare our athletes and stock for the future growth of the sport.

"We're not trying to double up with the CFR, which is our biggest event. We've been in discussions with Northlands all through the process of developing this. We'll be able to differentiate the two products."

With an added purse of \$10,000/event, the Grassroots Finals earnings will still count towards the Canadian Finals Rodeo. But organizers expect the Grassroots Tour requirements of attending 40% of the rodeos for Canadians, and 50% for non-residents, to give a different set of contestants the opportunity to qualify.

"We believe it will encourage more competitors to rodeo through the summer.

"As well, because it will include non-CFR stock, it gives us a chance to highlight some of our permit stock contractors. Because we won't overlap support staff with the CFR either, it's an opportunity for pick-up men, timers and bullfighters to experience a Finals as well."

While the Grassroots Finals is a CPRA event, Robson says the group certainly appreciates the expertise and support provided by the Calgary Stampede organization to develop this concept.

"We are thrilled that the CPRA's Grassroots Rodeo Finals will be the first rodeo held in the new Agrium Western Events Centre in the fall of 2014," said Calgary Stampede Western Competitions Manager Robert Wise. "We are working diligently with the CPRA to ensure they have a successful event at Stampede Park and encourage rodeo fans and those new to the sport of rodeo to mark their calendars to attend this inaugural event."

The CPRA is confident Calgary's new 2500 seat arena is the right fit for the new Finals.

"The venue is smaller, and it's more up close and personal, so we're hoping we can attract a bit of a different type of rodeo fan within Calgary," stated Rodeo Administrator Kynan Vine. "We're not trying to fill the Saddledome. It's going to be a 'walk before we run' type of venture for us. I think that creating this from the ground up is hopefully going to get us get a new following as well," said Vine.

Extending the Canadian rodeo season by another week will mean a challenge for CPRA office staff busy preparing for the biggest show of the year, a month later in Edmonton. But it's one

they're up for, according to Vine.

"It's exciting for us to give our cowboys another opportunity to try and qualify for the Canadian Finals. But at the same time, it's a separate concept for the grassroots level of our association. It's creating a whole other level of rodeo," stated Vine.

While Tour rodeos like Ponoka, Grande Prairie or Strathmore attract contestants with their substantial prize money, a strength of Canadian pro rodeo is the fact that fans can enjoy the sport's best in smaller communities like Handhills, AB; Luxton, BC or Kennedy, SK. Vine believes the Grassroots Finals should benefit such smaller committees, many of whom have a long history of hosting top-notch events.

"Hopefully, it will entice the cowboys to keep going down the road in the later days of the summer or to some of the little-bit-out-of-the-way type of rodeos so they can qualify for the Grassroots Rodeo," added Vine.

"When guys realize they can't make the Canadian Finals, they often slow down. We also have a lot of American competitors up here in the early part of the year because there's a lot of big rodeos, and we kind of see them tail off a bit after the July first run. As well, a lot of our young permit guys come on fairly hard in the spring, and if they haven't made any money by mid-summer, then they kind of go back to their other associations. Definitely our late July, mid-August rodeos do see a decline in contestant numbers."

While CPRA officials are optimistic the addition of the Grassroots Finals will help with that, they also see it as paving the way for future pros.

"It's a step towards that," commented Vine. "For us, it's about trying to define those lines of who are our professional cowboys, and how do we build our future stars of rodeo, and carve out a place for them within our organization. I think this is a stepping stone towards maybe a bigger picture of what that's going to look like. At the same time it takes care of part-time cowboys, as well as those up and coming rodeo committees, to help build them as well."

Word of the new event is just starting to spread among the contestants. Ponoka steer wrestler Craig Guthrie was one of the CPRA members at the AGM to first hear of the Grassroots Finals. "I like that the CPRA is able to retain control of the event," Guthrie commented. "I think it's a pretty neat concept. I'm for anything to add excitement to the fall. The fact that it counts towards the CFR is big because if a guy forty percented it, the money could cover quite a few holes and make a real impact on the standings."

"At the meeting, we heard from committees, and the challenges they're facing are only getting larger. The fact that we might be able to give back to them with this Finals has got to be good for all of us, and I think is one of the big features. We sure wouldn't want to lose any more of them."

Guthrie agrees the Finals could benefit some of the younger contestants.

"A lot of them do well at the smaller rodeos. They're newer to having their cards and are more jazzed up. Often the smaller rodeos don't have quite the same pressure either, and that allows younger competitors to flourish while still developing."

But whether it's a rookie or a veteran chasing a dream, the CPRA hopes the new Grassroots Finals will become an exciting new asset to the Canadian pro rodeo world.

"I know if my name were on the list, I'd sure go," declared Guthrie.

### **Facts and figures about the Grassroots Pro Rodeo Finals:**

- \* Two performances October 3-4, 2014 at Agrium Western Event Centre, Calgary Stampede Park
- \* Two head/run contest with 25% of purse paid in each go, and 50% to the average.
- \* Four monies in each go and the average
- \* \$200 entry fee
- \* Earnings to count to 2014 CFR standings

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA), with its headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta, is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA sanctions over 50 events

annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. For more information, please visit [www.rodeocanada.com](http://www.rodeocanada.com) or call (403) 945-0903. Follow us on Twitter @prorodeocanada or find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/prorodeocanada](http://www.facebook.com/prorodeocanada) or check us out on You Tube at [www.youtube.com/user/RodeoCanada](http://www.youtube.com/user/RodeoCanada)