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### **HARDEN, SIPPOLA CFR BOUND AFTER CINCH PRO RODEO SERIES FINAL**

From "also-ran" to "favourite" in a span of 24 hours. That's Josh Harden's story.

"I had no idea how much money I needed to win," claimed Harden after pocketing \$2,812.50 in the saddle bronc riding at the Cinch Pro Rodeo Canada Series Finals in Calgary. "If you look at it, what's the difference? You're trying to win first anyway."

Those who were keeping track knew the Big Valley, AB, cowboy had to win \$575 to pass National Finals Rodeo qualifier, Tyrel Larsen for the final bronc riding berth into the Canadian Finals Rodeo in Edmonton in November.

"It kind of hit me on Saturday night because everybody was high-fiving me and shaking my hand," grinned Harden, who will turn 33 on October 8th. "It's a big accomplishment for me. I'll keep the same game plan and treat it like any other rodeo."

Harden will enter the CFR at Rexall Place as the leading money winner among the three cowboys in contention for the Canadian All-Around championship. He'll bring \$24,668 into the Finals, about \$5600 more than defending all-around champ, Ky Marshall and over ten-thousand more than four-time champion, Kyle Thomson.

"Being a two event cowboy (steer wrestling and saddle bronc) all my life, this is great," offered Harden, whose only other appearance at the CFR was in 2003 in the novice saddle bronc riding. "This is my best season ever in both events. I won over \$10,000 in each of them. It was a fun year."

While the task of qualifying for the all-around race (winning three cheques in each of a timed and roughstock event) was taken care of by the end of June, earning a spot to compete at CFR turned out to be the difficult part of the equation.

"My first horse (at the Pro Rodeo Canada Series Finals) wouldn't get out of the chute," explained Harden, who watched his older brother, Jeremy, win the All-Around buckle in 2005. "It was supposed to be really good but he didn't like something out there."

"The judges told me I had an option but there were no re-ride horses left. I'm thinking 'c'mon I really need this, guys'. Then they found *Gone Country* from Kesler's string. He takes a lot of reign and felt really good. I knew if I could do my part, I'd be ok."

A 78 score in round one on Friday would be good enough for a second place cheque worth \$937.50. A 76-point ride the next night on another re-ride horse kept Harden 2nd in the aggregate standings for a bigger cheque worth \$1,875. Added together with his earnings heading into Calgary, Harden

bumped his season total to an unofficial \$12,750, enough to propel him to 11th in the Pro Rodeo Canada saddle bronc standings.

But Harden wasn't the only bronc rider to make a move. Dustin Sippola also used the Calgary finals to secure a spot in Edmonton.

"It's pretty outstanding," understated Sippola, who earned \$2,344 to capture the 12th and final CFR berth. "Not sure it's really sunk in just yet. But I'm excited anyway."

The Nanton, AB, cowboy finished fourth in the opening round, split second on Saturday and ended up third in the aggregate.

"My first horse (Barcode Buckers Rodeo's *Aussie Rules*) was a little tougher to ride," began the 30 year-old, Sippola, who won the Foothills Cowboys Association bronc riding championship last year. "But I managed to stay on. Then I had (John Duffy's) *Patches* in the second round. I got on it at Medicine Lodge so I knew what I had to do.

"I watched the standings and knew what I needed to win and what I needed to do. Obviously I'm pretty happy they have these finals because it worked for me. But I think it's a good thing. It gives everyone on the bubble one last chance to get in."

Sippola's last visit to the Canadian Finals Rodeo was long before the 2003 appearance by Harden.

"My dad went to the CFR a bunch so we were up there in Edmonton," recalled Sippola, who's father, Roland, competed in the steer wrestling seven times between 1988 and 1997. "But I haven't been up there since I was a kid."

Champions from the Cinch Pro Rodeo Canada Series Finals included bareback rider, Jake Vold and tie-down roper, Scot Meeks, who both swept their respective events by winning both rounds and the aggregate for the maximum \$5,000 payday. Other titleists were saddle bronc rider, Jim Berry (\$3,906.25), barrel racer, Kirsty White (\$4,062.50), bullrider, Adam Jamison (\$3,750), steer wrestler, Dustin Walker (\$4,375) who won the event for the second time, and team ropers, Roland McFadden and Tyrel Flewelling (\$3,750 each).

Next up on the Pro Rodeo Canada schedule is the Canadian Finals Rodeo at Rexall Place in Edmonton (Nov. 11-15).

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**About Pro Rodeo Canada:** With its headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta, Pro Rodeo Canada is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The organization endorses over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Join us for the 42nd edition of the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) November 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in Edmonton, Alberta at Rexall Place, our association's premiere event. For more information please visit [RodeoCanada.com](http://RodeoCanada.com) or call (403) 945-0903. Follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com), or like our page on [Facebook](https://facebook.com), and watch the action on [YouTube](https://youtube.com) throughout the year.