

Canadians Make History at Wrangler NFR



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Levi Simpson and Jeremy Buhler had already written a page in Canadian rodeo history when the pair became the first all-Canadian team to qualify for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in the team roping. But they might have written an even cooler story when the duo blistered a 4.4 second run to win the opening round and collect the go-round winner's cheques of \$26,230 each. Simpson, the Ponoka (via Claresholm) header and Buhler from Arrowwood, showed almost no sign of first-time jitters as they backed into the box at the hallowed Thomas and Mack Arena for the first time.

"To tell you the truth," Buhler commented after the run, "the money wasn't on my mind at all. It was just awesome. I've run that steer in my head ten million times. It was nice to run him in real life tonight. And the way it went, it couldn't get any better."

His partner was equally thrilled, "When we were on stage getting our back numbers, it kind of hit me right there," Simpson admitted. "Well, maybe we could be back here getting a buckle. But to have it happen in round one is pretty exciting."

Both cowboys were especially appreciative of the support they have received from the Canadian rodeo community. "You have a whole country standing behind you, Buhler noted. "The messages, the calls, everything we got from our families, friends, acquaintances... it felt awesome knowing that there's that many people pulling for you."

Unfortunately, Kolton Schmidt of Barrhead, Alberta and his Texas partner, Shay Carroll took a no time as, like Simpson and Buhler, Schmidt made his debut appearance at the WNFR.

Jake Vold was the first of the eight man strong Canadian contingent to display his wares at Thursday night's first round of the 2016 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. The Ponoka native posted an 81 score on Sankey and Robinson's Sozo to earn a 5/6/6 split and \$3666. Unfortunately, things didn't go as well for Inglis, Manitoba's Orin Larsen as he and Frontier Rodeo's Night Watch combined for only 66.5, not the start the number two man in the world coming into the NFR was looking for.

Recently married Tanner Aus, the Minnesota bareback rider, won the opening round with an 85.5 score to collect \$26,230

The saddle bronc riding was the other event that featured Canadian contestants and like the team roping there were three Canucks three in all. Clay Elliot had a tough start to his ten days in Las Vegas as he was bucked off a nasty bronc from Dakota Rodeo called Bridal Shower. Jake Watson, the BC man who just made the WNFR roster in 15th spot, spurred out a 77.5 on Bar T Rodeo's Heart of Gold. That left it up to Zeke Thurston on Sweet Maria from Pete Carr Rodeo and Thurston, at his second consecutive Finals managed an 80.5 to finish just out of the money in a round that saw the amazing Wright family finish one-two-three. It was 18 year old Ryder, (Dad) Cody and (Uncle) Jake with 87.5, 86.5 and 85.5 respectively. First man out, Alan Boore, of Ardell, Utah, was 4th in the round with an 85 on a Canadian bronc, C5 Rodeo's Black Hills.

Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

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Other winners included travelling partners Clayton Hass and Tyler Waguespack in the steer wrestling, each with 3.8 seconds on the clock; two time Canadian champion tie-down roper and 2013 World titleist, Shane Hanchey of Sulphur, Louisiana with a 7.1 second run; Cheney, Washington's Pamela Capper with a an arena record-tying 13.75 in the barrel race and in the bull riding, two time World Champion, Sage Kimsey did what Sage Kimsey does, posting a sensational 86.5 on Frontier Rodeo's Aftershock to win the round. A couple of Canadian bulls made their presence felt. Outlaw Buckers' Chip Shot carried Brennon Eldred to an 83 points and a third place cheque. And Kesler Championship Rodeo's Flight Plan bucked off Garrett Tribble.

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About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Join us for our premiere event - the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) - in early November each year in Edmonton, Alberta at Northlands Coliseum. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat at @prorodeocanada, like Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook, or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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