

# 2021 Stonyford Rodeo Highlights

by Roy Stewart

The 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Stonyford Rodeo roared back after a hiatus last year due to Covid 19. In its second year as a three-day pro-amateur event, the rodeo began with mostly professional competitions on Friday. Continued with mostly professional events on Saturday, and ended with all-amateur events on Sunday.

Friday's rodeo began at 5 p.m. The weather was balmy with light winds and the crowd was sparse—about 400 people. Likely, having a full-fledged rodeo on Friday has not caught on yet; this being only its second year. Nevertheless, it was a good rodeo that began with Bareback Riding. The first rider was Mitchell Parham. Shortly after leaving the chute, he was thrown from the horse such that his hand was stuck in the rigging and he could not free himself from his still-bucking horse. Mitchell was thusly trapped and drug about the arena for two-or-three minutes until the pickup men, Matt Twitchell and Bobby Marriott, could get the horse stopped. Fortunately, Mitchell was not injured. The horses won most of the contests, however. Cache Hill was the only rider who stayed up and finished in the money, at 4<sup>th</sup> place.

Steer Wrestling was the next event and here, again, the animals had the upper hand. None of the eight cowboy competitors finished in the money. Breakaway Roping came next. This is a new event for our rodeo, and is one in which the ladies compete. It is similar to tie down roping, except that only the roping--and not the tie down--is judged. The rider and the calf leave the chute the same as in the tie down event, only now, when the rider lassoes the calf, her rope breaks away. The rope is attached to the saddle horn and has a small flag attached to its end that marks the breakaway and stops the clock. Friday's event had six girls competing; none, however, finished in the money.

Saddle Bronc Riding, a perennial favorite, had seven men competing. Reed Neely was the first rider and the overall winner at 77 points. Team Roping, another favorite, had twelve teams competing. Two of which finished in the money: David Motes and Justin Spence shared 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Ryan Reed and Matt Costa took 6<sup>th</sup> place.

Tie down Roping had eight competitors, three of them won money: Jason Anderson won \$625 (3<sup>rd</sup> place), C.J. DeForest snagged \$461 (4<sup>th</sup> place), and Seth Niederhauser took home \$165 (6<sup>th</sup> place). The second ladies event, Barrel Racing, had ten cowgirls competing with only two finishing in the money: Katie Pascoe (2<sup>nd</sup> place) and Mary Jo Camera (6<sup>th</sup> place).

Bringing up the rear was the most exciting of all events: Bull Riding. There were thirteen riders on Friday and fifteen on Saturday. Of these twenty-eight cowboys, only four had qualified (8 second) rides—three of these four were on Friday: Wyatt Covington, Hayes Weight, and Colby Demo. Wyatt Covington, with an 81 point ride was the winner; Hayes Weight, with his 79-point ride took 2<sup>nd</sup> place; and Colby Demo's 70-point ride finished at 4<sup>th</sup> place.

Saturday, the second pro-rodeo day, began with a hearty breakfast offering in the fire hall, which is next door to the arena and its adjacent campgrounds. The day continued with a charming little parade at 10

a.m., with its Sheriff's posses, old cars and marching people. The parade was the event that started the Stonyford Rodeo weekend; it began in 1939 and was known as the "Gay Nineties" parade where the people wore turn-of-the 20<sup>th</sup> Century costumes and paraded in old buckboards, wagons, and on horseback. The rodeo began in 1943 and continued uninterrupted until 2020, when it paused for the pandemic. The parade had a 27-year break between 1958 and 1985. When it restarted, it lost its "Gay Nineties" roots.

Saturday's rodeo--which played to a near-sellout crowd of 2,000 or more fans--began at 1 p.m. It had all of the same professional events as on Friday, plus an added amateur event: Novice Bull Riding. Also, the Mutton Bustin' event in which ten children, ages 4-6, competed in riding sheep and for a best-dressed award, was moved into the rodeo proper. On Friday, it was presented as an extra event at the start of the evening.

Also, for this year's rodeo, we had a new announcer and musical director: Kelly Kinney and Austin Lopeman, respectively. The past announcer and musical director, Don and Anita Jesser, who had been working with us for the past 28 years, had retired in 2020. Kelly and Austin were great replacements for Don and Anita, and were well received.

Following the grand opening, with its introductions of our Rodeo Queen, Grand Marshal, American Flag and singing of our national anthem, the rodeo began with Novice Bull Riding. In this event, each of five young cowboys attempted to remain on the backs of five angry bulls for eight seconds; none succeeded. Bareback Riding was next with only three contestants, all of whom finished in the money: R.C. Landingham, with his 81.5 point ride, won the event. Clayton Biglow, at 78.5 points, finished 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Payton Wright, with a 77.5 point ride, finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Clayton Biglow was also judged the All-Around Cowboy because of his finish here and in the team roping event, which was to follow.

As in the Bareback Riding event on Friday, this one, too, had a near injury that was prevented by the astute intervention of the pickup men. Payton Wright, who was hanging upside down on the left side of his horse, had a near collision with the metal bars of the fence on the arena's north end. Here is how the announcer, Kelly Kinney, described it to the crowd: "When that horse was in that corner, that cowboy was upside down; his head was just inches away from that pipe. J.J. did you see that!, Bobby Marriott got in there, cut that horse off, lifted that horse's head around away from that pipe. That one move right there might have saved that cowboy's career."

Steer Wrestling came next. This time, the steers lost half of the challenges. Ten cowboys competed and five of them successfully wrestled their steers to the ground. Luke Branquinho won at 4.6 seconds. Stetson Jorgensen, at 4.7 seconds, came in 2<sup>nd</sup>, Sterling Lambert, at 4.3 seconds, finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, Blake Knowles, at 5.5 seconds took 4<sup>th</sup> place, and Josh Garner, with his 5.8 seconds, finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place.

Breakaway Roping was next with its seven contestants. Two of whom won money. Kate Branco, roped her calf in 2.7 seconds and won \$773; Liz Hirdes roped hers in 3.6 seconds and won \$386. Mutton Bustin' followed with ten youngsters, four to six years old, competing in a best-dressed contest and in riding sheep (mutton). The fans loved it. This has been a popular event since its start in 1990. When the kids left the arena, Saddle Bronc riding began. Twelve men competed and three remained on their

broncs for the required eight seconds. They were Wade Brown, who finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place; Cameron Messier, who took 3<sup>rd</sup> place; and Riley Simmons, who finished fifth.

Team Roping was next. Fourteen teams ran and three of them finished with cash prizes: Aaron Tsinigine (header) and his partner Kyle Lockett (heeler) won and took home \$1,465 each. Bryor (header) and Brushton Minton (heeler) tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and won \$1,086 each, and Clayton Biglow (header) and Wyatt Adams (heeler) won \$707 each. Tie down Roping was the next event. Of the nine men who rode, three finished with money. Westyn Hughes won with his 8.2-second tie down, D.J. Parker took 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and Tyler Forsberg finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place.

The Barrel Racing event came next. Twelve ladies competed and three of them won money: Shelly Mull finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Amberleigh Moore took 4<sup>th</sup> place, and Megan Champion came in at 6<sup>th</sup> place. Bull riding finished the day. Fifteen cowboys tried their luck, and only one, Ray Mayo, stayed up for the required eight seconds. The bulls had a field day.

The third rodeo day, Sunday, also began with a breakfast offering and moved on to a church service in the rodeo-arena grandstands at 9 p.m. The service was conducted by Pastor Daniel Reagan of the Stonyford Community Church. It began with about thirty people present and ended with more than seventy joining in the singing and praying. Sunny and temperate weather blessed the service. It would have been perfect, except for the strong, gusty winds. These winds hung around all day and made it difficult for some of the rodeo contestants, especially the ropers.

The rodeo began at noon with a repeat of the opening ceremonies then went to a steer riding event that featured the younger cowboys. Staying up for a little over five seconds—instead of the qualifying eight seconds-- was the winning performance by Jonathan Reyes of Hidden Valley.

Team roping was the next event. Twenty-five teams competed in two sets.

This rodeo day was great for families. In addition to mutton bustin' that had children aged from 4 to 6 competing, the arena opened to children of all ages three other times. The first of these was sandwiched between the two sections of Team Roping. Here the kids raced from the arena's south end to remove ribbons from the tails of calves bunched at the north end and delivered the ribbon to the clown at the middle of the arena. A good time appeared to be had by all who competed.

Mutton Bustin' followed the team roping. As with the previous two rodeo days, ten youngsters competed for the best dressed and a wild sheep (mutton) ride. 1st place & Best Dressed went to Hazen Wright (Orland) and the Wildest Ride went to Alexis Alvarez (Willows).

Breakaway Roping followed with eight female contestants. Jessie Jones (Red Bluff) won 1<sup>st</sup> place and Stephanie Andrews (Orland) finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Team Roping returned with a runoff contest between the top ten teams. Jon Swaner & Rick Lederer (Willows), took 1<sup>st</sup> prize, Cole Hook & Robert Jones (Red Bluff), came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and Rhett Milney & Wyatt Stokes (Orland), finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Amateur Barrel Racing was next. Twenty-five ladies competed in this event. Jesica Betz (Washoe Valley, NV) won 1<sup>st</sup> place, Sandy Corbin (Stonyford), took 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Caylie Gardner (Elk Creek) took 3<sup>rd</sup> place, and Tina Hermann (Lakeport), finished in 4<sup>th</sup> place.

The afternoon finished with the third and fourth people-in-the-arena events. A boot race was the first event and a dog race was the second. Again, from all appearances, both of these events were very well received.