

## RODEO: Milestone anniversary edition was a standout

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were surprisingly high for a small-town rodeo, so the cowboys tagged the little rodeo “the biggest little show in the world.” And it still is today, with the biggest available purse in the nation during the second weekend in June.

The first Sisters Rodeo was located on the old Creighton Place, just east of Sisters Eagle airport. Two years later it moved to the location where it would stand for the next 34 years, on land that the original nine cowboy entrepreneurs who had produced the first rodeo purchased at the west end of town (where Hoyt’s Hardware is now located).

The Sisters Rodeo became a member of the rodeos sanctioned by the International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) in the early 1980s, and throughout the ’80s many of the IPRA world champions competed at every Sisters Rodeo. The association became a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) in 1988. It was in 1980 that the Sisters Rodeo purchased 33 acres as the permanent site for the rodeo, four miles southeast of Sisters.

The Sisters Rodeo has seen its share of ups and downs. There were many years that looked dim when key sponsors withdrew and government regulations increased costs. But the devoted kept it going, and today there are over 200 volunteers devoting their time year-round to work together to put on “The Biggest Little Show in the World.”

With announcers like Curt Robinson, who has been announcing at Sisters Rodeo

for 22 years, and smooth-voiced Wayne Brooks, voted the 2014 PRCA announcer of the year, it couldn’t get any better for rodeo fans that packed the stands, waiting on the edge of their seats watching the thrills and spills of the exciting competitions.

For nine years barrelman/clown J.J. Harrison, a crowd favorite, has entertained the spectators with his antics at Sisters Rodeo.

“I have been to many rodeos all over the place, and I have to say that Sisters is my favorite,” Harrison told all the little cowgirls and cowboys during an assembly at Sisters Elementary School (SES) on Friday.

The most popular specialty act in Sisters Rodeo history was back to celebrate the rodeo’s 75th anniversary. Wherever John Payne — The One Arm Bandit — performs, he steals the show, including at SES. On Friday before any rodeo performances he rode his mule Moe into the assembly and while the kids were amazed, they remained quiet so not to disturb his famous mule.

The One Arm Bandit and Company has now taken their legacy act throughout the United States, Canada, and Dubai. So what is it that keeps John Payne coming back to Sisters Rodeo?

“This country is really pretty and it’s cool up here in the summer, and that’s good for me since I don’t like to sweat. The people are so friendly and the rodeo committee is fun and energetic. They have been really great about making any improvements and they are always working their tail off. I’m just glad to be part of the Sisters Rodeo, it’s a win-win deal,” Payne said.

Spectators packed the stands, selling out most performances.

It was the first time for Gary Dean and his wife, Melissa, attending Sisters

Rodeo.

“We came all the way from the coast of Washington to be with some friends that invited us to Sisters Rodeo, and we are glad we did because it’s beautiful here and the rodeo is full of excitement. It’s the best rodeo we’ve ever been to,” Gary Dean said.

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District and Cloverdale Fire District also play an important part each year at Sisters Rodeo by handling any emergencies that pop up. Brian Budak, a paramedic for the Cloverdale Fire District, was on hand to explain to *The Nugget* just how the two Sisters Country fire departments team up to take care of any emergencies at the rodeo.

“The way it works is Cloverdale Fire comes in and is on standby for EMS and fire, for everything outside of the arena, and Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire has a contract for medical for all the contestants. It’s teamwork,” Budak said.

Those firefighters had to roll out on an emergency call after a vehicle took out a power pole on Highway 20 on Sunday afternoon. The accident took down all the power in the arena, leaving the last few bull rides of rodeo weekend to be conducted with no sound system or big-screen replay, with no sound but the roar of the crowd — a glimpse of what rodeo was like 75 years ago.

Two vintage airplanes flew over Sisters Rodeo on Sunday during the start of the



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

John Payne, The One Arm Bandit, rode his mule into Sisters Elementary School for a special assembly on Friday.

last performance as another special addition to the rodeo’s 75th-anniversary celebration. The aircraft, one a P-51 Mustang and the other, a Skyraider, were from the Erickson Aircraft Collection in Madras.

Rodeo association member Bonnie Malone was happy with the success of a very special year for Sisters Rodeo.

“The rodeo had an arena record broken in Saddlebronc by Taos Muncy Saturday

night, an 88-point ride in front of a sold-out crowd of standing-room-only. The rodeo sold out in three of its four performances, accommodating as much standing room sales as we could reasonably allow,” Malone said. “Our 33 former rodeo queens and princesses were warmly welcomed in the best parade we’ve ever presented.”

Winner for best all-around cowboy who took the highest purse was Trevor Knowles, from Mount Vernon.

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