

COMPETITORS: Best in the West are headed to Sisters for weekend

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the Wild Horse Race, the pace is set for fans yelling and stomping in response to a burst of energy from horses and hopeful riders all over the arena. That group of contenders includes Jason Smith and his world-champion team from nearby Warm Springs.

The 23 Wild Horse Race teams include five Oregon teams, eight from Warm Springs, seven from Washington and two from Arizona. That's 69 cowboys attempting to saddle an unbroken horse and get one cowboy into the saddle who then tries riding a bucking, twisting horse across the finish line without any control. The Jason Smith Team (Warm Springs) is a World Champion in this event.

With some of the top contenders in the nation entered in the Bareback competition, fans can expect some high scores and impressive rides. Caleb Bennett is holding the No. 1 position at this time

with Clayton Biglow at No. 6. The 2015 World Champion Steven Peebles of Redmond is back, with an 86-point winning ride in his rigging bag already this season.

Local Austin Foss of Terrebonne is at No. 19 early in the season, but expect him to rise in the standings after Sisters. Pit these contenders against some determined bareback horses who are giving riders points in the high 80s this year.

The Saddlebronc competition will be as exciting, as Mike Corey brings a bronc named Diamond Fever that has allowed only one eight-second ride this year at 88.5 points. The horses will meet CoBurn Bradshaw, who holds No. 6. Then, there are the Wright brothers, always bringing thrills. Ryder Wright won this World Championship in 2017.

Fifty-one calf ropers are entered in the Tie Down Roping competition. Many of these will have their first go-round in Slack competition on Thursday, which is free to the public. Terrebonne's Russell Cardoza and Shane Erickson are in this group, which matches the skills of a roper

and his horse against the quick speed of a calf. It is a skill still necessary on cattle ranches today, to brand and vaccinate.

Steer Wrestling is an event that began as a rodeo entertainment act in the early 1900s by a cowboy named Bill Pickett. He would attempt several patterns of jumping off a speeding horse and wrestling a running steer to the ground. As other cowboys began to try this "trick," the popularity grew until rodeos added this as an event.

Sisters has seen world champions in this event — cowboys who are strongly built. Their times have to average in the four-second range to win a buckle. Two go-rounds give these cowboys their totals, so they will also be competing during Slack on Thursday.

Team Roping has 46 teams entered, with a header roping a steer and turning it so the healer can rope both back feet. This is a precision event that demands a quick break from

the gate and fine timing from the partners. Jason Duby of Klamath Falls is rated at No. 11

A pack of Oregon cowboys will compete in Team Roping, with Steven Peebles, Shane Erickson, Charley Crawford, Russell Cardoza along with the Stafford brothers, Trevor McCain and Critter Lopez representing Central Oregon. Four Minor brothers of Ellensburg, WA, are also Northwesterners to watch in this event.

Barrel Racing, a crowd favorite for cheering cowgirls and their mounts, has 84 women entered. Amberleigh Moore of Salem is currently in second place in the world standings with Nellie Miller of California giving her a challenge at number four.


In Bucking Stock, the bucking horse or bull

accounts for half the points of a ride. The better the buck, the higher a cowboy scores in a 50/50 percent rating. In the other events of rodeo, years of training and conditioning of rodeo horses is paramount in a cowboy or cowgirl's chance of success. This makes these animals extremely valuable financially.

Rodeo is a spectator sport that gives the viewer an opportunity to see animals performing at their best, either in partnership with a rider or in direct competition with a cowboy. Sisters Rodeo expects fans to enjoy a high possibility of more arena records this season.

The ticket office in Sisters is open until Friday at 220 W. Cascade Ave. After that, tickets can be purchased at the rodeo grounds as available.

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