

Bulls on parade

Talented field puts on show during Ed Miller Xtreme bull riding event at Eastern Oregon Livestock Show

By RONALD BOND
For The Observer

UNION — The field in the 12th Ed Miller Xtreme bull riding featured former champions of the event, as well as PRCA National Finals Rodeo and PBR finalists.

But on Thursday, June 9, it was a 20-year-old making his Eastern Oregon Livestock Show debut who stole the show. California bull rider Cody Russell bested a field of about 40 contestants to win the Ed Miller Xtreme with the score of 87.

“It was pretty cool. I’ve seen this event a couple of times. My buddies have been here before, they tell me it’s a great one,” Russell, of Oakdale, California, said. “Being my first time (and) being able to hang on to one and win it is a blessing.”

Several big numbers had already been posted, including an 83.5 from Caleb McMillan and an 82.5 from Clayton Savage, when Russell hopped on his bull, Separation Anxiety. Several other high-pedigree riders were set to follow, among them last year’s champion Ruger Piva — who rode early but was granted a re-ride — two-time champion Parker Breeding, and PBR standout and Joseph native Derek Kolbaba.

Russell, who said he was “pumped up” by a standing-room-only crowd — one he described as “electric” — that packed the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show arena, put on a display. Separation Anxiety leaped out of the gate then spun left, but the youngster maintained control throughout the ride to gain some separation from the rest of the field.

“He took a jump out there, had a lot of pounding, but felt pretty good,” Russell said. “Kind of got a little stronger at the end, but felt amazing.”

Several 80-plus point rides followed, including an 83 from Jesse Flores and an 82.5 from Brady Portenier, and Russell did wonder if his score would hold up.

“I was hoping so. There were a lot of good guys who had a lot of good bulls drawn,” he said. “I’m just really fortunate to be where I’m at right now.”

Piva, last year’s co-champion with an 84 who was coming off a 90-point ride a night earlier in Sisters, dazzled



Hayes Weight, of Goshen, Utah, gets bucked from his bull during the Ed Miller Xtreme bull riding at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show on Thursday, June 8, 2022.



Ray Mayo, of Clearlake, California, holds on during the Ed Miller Xtreme bull riding at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show on Thursday, June 8, 2022.

the crowd to end the night in his re-ride attempt. He stuck to a bull that spun right, but was granted a score of just 80.5 that left him in sixth.

Russell’s lead held, too, when Breeding and Kolbaba failed to make 8 seconds. Breeding stuck to his bull,

Bud’s Delight, as it spun left, but he was thrown by a late shift to the right.

Kolbaba, meanwhile, said he liked his draw and felt he could get a good score on the bull Peacemaker.

“In my mind, I had the bull to have, one that you could dang sure win on,

ED MILLER XTREME PLACING RIDERS, PAYOUT

1. Cody Russell, 87 points, \$4,117
2. Caleb McMillan, 83.5, \$3,157
3. Jesse Flores, 83, \$2,333
- T4. Clayton Savage, 82.5, \$1,235
- T4. Brady Portenier, 82.5, \$1,235
6. Ruger Piva, 80.5, \$686
7. Dallee Mason, 80, \$549
8. Cole Hill, 77, \$412

Source: prorodeo.com

and one that you could dang sure stub your toe on,” he said. “That’s what happened. I stubbed my toe and he made me pay for it. I just kind of let him beat me out of the bucking chute and get rocked back, and the moment you let them bulls have all the power (over) you, they’re probably going to win that battle.”

Kolbaba said it was his first time seeing Russell compete in person.

“It’s amazing to see (this) young group of kids coming up and just remembering back in the day, being that age and kind of young. It’s cool to see that next generation coming up,” he said.

For Russell, getting to put his name alongside Breeding, Piva, Jory Markiss and other Ed Miller Xtreme champs was a good feeling.

“I’m extremely blessed,” he said.

SPORTS SHORT

Cascade Collegiate Conference lands six schools in top 50 of Learfield standings

Eastern Oregon checks in at No. 32 in final tally

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Oregon Tech leads 11 Cascade Collegiate Conference institutions on the final Learfield Directors’ Cup Standings, released Thursday, June 9.

The Owls rank 23rd overall with 486.5 total points, followed closely by the College of Idaho, which sits in the No. 24 spot with 475 points.

Lewis-Clark State College (427.5), Eastern Oregon University (417), University of British Columbia (408) and Southern Oregon University (403.5) fill in spots 31, 32, 33 and 35, respectively, to put six CCC teams in the top 50.

Corban University picked up 202 points to finish 79th, while Northwest University (156th, 63), Bushnell University (161st, 59), Multnomah University (175th, 38) and Warner Pacific University (181st, 25) rounded out the CCC schools.

Overall, 13 sports are counted in the final NAIA

standings, four of which must be men’s basketball, men’s soccer, women’s basketball and women’s volleyball. The next highest — nine maximum — sports scored for each institution, regardless of gender, are used in the standings.

The Learfield IMG College Directors’ Cup was developed as a joint effort between the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and USA Today. Points are awarded based on each institution’s finish in NAIA championships.



The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon’s Kayla Berg (8) slides into third base during a matchup against the University of Providence at Peggy Anderson Softball Field, La Grande, on Friday, April 23, 2021. On the strength of the Mountaineers’ 43-17 record and an at-large bid to the NAIA tournament, Eastern Oregon finished No. 32 in the final 2022 Learfield Directors’ Cup Standings.

Find up-to-date scores and additional game coverage for your local high school, available 24/7 at www.lagrandeobserver.com.