



FARM-CITY PRO RODEO, FIRST PERFORMANCE



Clayton Biglow of Clements, California, rides Candy Smile for 85 points in bareback riding Wednesday at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

First-timers steal the show

No Hermiston experience, no problem on opening night

By **ERIC SINGER**
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HERMISTON — The Farm-City Pro Rodeo opened its doors for the 31st consecutive year on Wednesday evening, where a few first-time competitors earned victory laps in their events.

Bridger Chambers (steer wrestling), Tanner Lockhart (saddle bronc) and Eli Vastbinder (bull riding) all finished the first night atop the leaderboard for the round, earning themselves a victory lap, a \$100 dash-for-cash bonus and a bottle of coveted Chute 8 whiskey.

Chambers, from Stevensville, Montana, made his debut at Farm-City on Wednesday in his debut season on the national circuit. He failed to record a time in afternoon slack, but was able to wrestle his steer to the ground in a blazing 3.7 seconds — only a half-second off the arena record of 3.2 seconds set back in 2000 — to win the night, holding off Scott Guenther (Provost, Alberta) at 4.0 seconds, Chase Black (Coalville, Utah) at 4.1 seconds, and Andy Weldon (Greenleaf, Idaho) at 4.2 seconds.

“My game plan was just kind of to go for it,” said Chambers, who also earned an extra \$500 bonus for the Darrell Sallee gray ribbon challenge, given in memory of the late Farm-City board member Darrell Sallee. “I was out of the average, so I just wanted to try to get some money out of it tonight.”

Chambers’ first year making the national tour has been well worth it for the 30-year-old cowboy, as he came to Hermiston ranked No. 6 in the



Bridger Chambers of Stevensville, Montana, pulls down his steer in 3.9 seconds in steer wrestling.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

world standings with more than \$66,000 in winnings. After winning the RAM Montana Circuit Finals last season, Chambers said he thought he might as well give it a go outside of the confines of his home state and it has certainly worked out for him.

“At the beginning of the year, the goal was just to go at them chop by chop and try to win some money here and there,” he said, “and I think I’ve been able to do that, and stay consistent. It’s been a really good year.”

Lockhart, from Lewis, Col-

orado, rode Kesler Rodeo’s Break Away for 81.5 points to set the bar in saddle bronc. His ride also netted him an extra \$500 bonus as his horse was selected as the nightly Coca-Cola bonus challenge.

“I knew a lot of people that had been on that horse,” Lockhart said, “and I knew if I kind of did my job it’d work out. That horse is usually real consistent in the way it bucks, and I’m glad it didn’t throw anything at me because I wouldn’t have been prepared.”

Lockhart held off Rusty Wright (Milford, Utah) and his 81 points, Ryder Wright (Milford, Utah) and his 80 points, and Spencer Wright (Milford, Utah) and his 79.5 points, and now heads to Missoula, Montana, where he will be keeping an eye on the competition in Hermiston as Lockhart hopes to stay in the money.

And Vastbinder, of Athens, Texas, was one of only two qualified rides in bull riding on Wednesday, as his 74.5 points on Korkow Rodeo’s

Laser Beam was just enough to hold off Dallee Mason (Weiser, Idaho) and his 74 points to win the nightly bonus.

“I’ve sat out the last four or five days with a back injury, so coming back and getting a score on the board felt good,” Vastbinder said, “and that’s what I needed.”

Vastbinder currently sits 14th in the world standings, but is only a few hundred dollars above the cutoff line for

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— **Bridger Chambers**, steer wrestler