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A10

THE WRIGHT STUFF



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Stetson Wright, of Milford, Utah, rides Baby Kibitz for an arena record 90 points Aug. 12, 2021, in the saddle bronc competition at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston. Wright will compete Thursday at the Pendleton Round-Up.

Stetson Wright is going after records and world titles

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Stetson Wright is just 22 years old, but he has accomplished more in those short years than more cowboys do their entire career.

The Milford, Utah, cowboy has won three world titles — two in the all-around (2019-20) and one in bull riding (2020).

Wright also is closing in on the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association record for the most money earned in the all-around standings before the National Finals Rodeo. That record is held by rodeo icon Trevor Brazile, who earned \$282,242 before the NFR in 2015.

Wright, who has won the all-around title at 22 rodeos this year, has earned \$275,412. He trails Brazile by \$5,978. The regular season ends Sept. 30.

“That would be pretty sweet to start breaking some of his records,” Wright said. “He set the bar pretty high. To have my name mentioned in the same sentence as him is badass to me. For me, it has never been about the money, I just want to be a world champion.”

A good week in Pendleton could push Wright past Brazile. He will compete in the Xtreme Bulls on Monday and Tuesday, and will compete in Thursday’s main performance Thursday in the bulls and saddle bronc.

Wright would also like to get his hands on what he calls the triple

crown — world titles in the bulls, saddle bronc and all-around. All are writhing his grasp.

He has nearly a \$150,000 lead over the next man in the all-around standings, he ranks second to older brother Ryder Wright in the saddle bronc, and he trails six-time world champion Sage Kimzey in bull riding.

The bull riding title may be a tall task. He trails Kimzey by \$60,899.

“I do like to look at the standings,” Wright said. “I think it’s fun. A lot of guys say not to because it messes with concentrating on what you should be doing, but I don’t think it has hurt me.”

It’s a family thing

Wright and his older brothers, Rusty and Ryder, all went to the NFR last year in the saddle bronc, and Wright also was in the bull riding. Stetson and Ryder are headed back to the NFR, but Rusty, who has qualified for five NFRs, is sitting 35th and there aren’t enough rodeos left to try and move up 20 spots.

“We don’t really show anyone that we have a rivalry,” Wright said. “We have our rivalries, but we keep that in the truck. As long as the title goes to a Wright, we’re happy, but I won’t complain if it’s me. We all want to win, but we all want each other to win. Even when you win, you want them to win. I think maybe we hurt ourselves sometimes because we want each other to do so well.”

While his brothers dominate in the saddle bronc like their dad, Cody, a two-time world champion, and uncles

Jesse, Jake, Spencer (2014 world title), Alex, Calvin and CoBurn Bradshaw, Wright’s first love is bull riding.

“All of 2019 and half of 2020, all I cared about was bulls,” Wright said. “I wasn’t where Rusty and Ryder were. They dominated day in and day out. I dominated the bulls. I was mediocre in the broncs. In 2020, I didn’t know if I should have been there (NFR saddle bronc). Now, I like them both. Last year was that much harder to make the finals. The top 15 guys in every event were the ones who showed up at the limited amount of rodeos that were out there.”

Wright has made two trips to the NFR, and a Wright has made a trip to the NFR each year for the past 18 years.

In 2014, Cody, Jesse, Jake and Spencer all qualified in the saddle bronc. In 2016, Cody qualified for the NFR with sons Rusty and Ryder.

“Rusty and Ryder have told me stories,” Wright said. “The few times I went with my dad were special. I always try to get him to come back out.”

The Wrights also have done well at Pendleton.

Jake (2013), Jesse (2016), Spencer (2015) and Cody (2010) all have won there.

No one will likely admit it, but there have to be nights where guys look at the day sheet and think, ‘crap, the Wrights are here.’

“That’s what I’d like to think,” Wright said.

Brown looking for another title

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Jesse Brown’s name has been on the champions’ wall on the back of the Pendleton Round-Up Stadium for two years. He wouldn’t mind if it stayed there a little bit longer.

“That would be cool with me,” said Brown, who won the Pendleton steer wrestling title in 2019. “That would be a pretty awesome deal. And the fact we haven’t been back in two years, it will be exciting and the energy will be pretty good, I think.”

In 2019, Brown won his first Pendleton title, and set an arena record in the process.

Brown, 29, turfed his steer in a record 3.7 seconds in the finals, and finished with a time of 14.8 seconds on three head to pick up a hefty paycheck of \$9,982.

“As far as trinkets go, it is pretty unmatched,” Brown said of the prizes handed out at Pendleton. “You walk out of there with a truck full, and a pretty cool saddle. The way they build the saddle, it’s usable for steer wrestling, but I think I will leave it where it is to look at. It’s prettier than a treadmill.”

Coming into Pendleton, Brown ranks second in the world standings with \$84,715. Jacob Talley leads the standings with \$116,072.

With the top 15 in each event earning a trip to the National Finals Rodeo, Brown is headed to Las Vegas for his second one.

He placed 15th at the NFR last year, which was held in Arlington, Texas, because of COVID-19.

“My goal was to get back, and to be as high as I am right now,” said the Baker City cowboy. “Going back to Vegas is exciting. I will kind of be a rookie again. I couldn’t ask for more.”

Brown will be up Tuesday in slack and the Friday performance in Pendleton. The top 12 advance to Saturday’s finals.

Pendleton is my favorite,” Brown said of the rodeo schedule. “Calgary and the money compare, as does Houston. I am biased. I think Pendleton is hard to match.”

A man and his horse

Brown travels with Curtis Cassidy, Tanner Milan and Scott Guenther, and rides Cassidy’s horse, Tyson. Though at Pendleton, he will be riding his own horse, Gunner.

“I have done really well,” Brown said. “The horses I have been riding have been a big part of that. I have had better starts and my head catches have been better. I am with a great group of guys and things are positive. Things have been rolling the right way.”

As a group, Brown and Guenther (sixth, \$73,778) have earned a trip to the NFR, while Cassidy is sitting 20th and is less than \$5,000 out of 15th place. Milan, who had made two trips to the NFR (2015, 2017) is sitting 42nd.

Getting a late start

Brown, who was a standout quarterback at Baker High School, was the 4A Player of the Year as a senior. He went on to play football at Washington State University as a preferred walk-on.

“I do miss football, but I think this is what I was meant to do,” said Brown, who started rodeoing seriously in 2015. “I was never going to go past college ball. In rodeo, I have a chance to be the best in the world.”

And, taking down a steer is easier than reading Pac-12 defenses.

“Steer wrestling is less complex,” he said. “I was on the practice squad at WSU, so that was different. A lot less goes into steer wrestling than reading those defenses.”

Going to his second NFR at 29 also is not the norm for most high-end rodeo athletes.

“I got started late,” he said. “I don’t have the experience that most have who started out of high school.”



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian/Baker City Herald
Jesse Brown leaps from his horse onto a steer during steer wrestling at the 2019 Pendleton Round-Up. Brown won the event and set a new arena record of 3.7 seconds. Brown will be back to defend his title for the 2021 Pendleton Round-Up.

ON THE SLATE

Tuesday, Sept. 14

Prep volleyball
Chiawana at Hermiston, 7 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Stanfield, 4 p.m.
Pilot Rock vs. Umatilla at Stanfield, 5 p.m.
Umatilla at Stanfield, 7 p.m.
McLoughlin at La Grande, 6:30 p.m.
Sherman at Lone/Arlington, 5 p.m.
Prep girls soccer
Southridge at Hermiston, 7 p.m.
Riverside at Portland Christian, 3 p.m.
Irrigon at McLoughlin, 4 p.m.

Prep boys soccer

Pendleton at La Grande, 5 p.m.
McLoughlin at Catlin Gabel, 4:30 p.m.
Irrigon at Prescott, 4 p.m.
Riverside at Portland Christian, 5 p.m.
Prep slowpitch softball
Wenatchee at Hermiston (2), 4 p.m.
College volleyball
EOU at College of Idaho, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 15

Prep volleyball

McLoughlin at College Place, 6:30 p.m.

Prep girls soccer

McLoughlin at College Place, 6 p.m.

Prep boys soccer

Putnam at Pendleton, 4:30 p.m.

College volleyball

Columbia Basin at Blue Mountain, 6 p.m.

College men’s soccer

WWCC at Blue Mountain, 4:15 p.m.

College women’s soccer

WWCC at Blue Mountain, 2 p.m.

SPORTS SHORT

All-female crew works Hillsboro-Glencoe football game



Portland Football Officials Association/Contributed Photo
An all-female crew worked the Hillsboro-Glencoe game Friday, Sept. 10, 2021. From left, Kim Bly, Amy Pistone, Jeana “Fish” Fisher, Catherine “Cat” Conti, Rebecca Brisson and Mary Harvill.

By JERRY ULMER
OSAAtoday

HILLSBORO — History was made Friday, Sept. 10, at Hare Field, where an all-female officiating crew worked the Hillsboro-Glencoe rivalry game.

The six women in the crew included three from the Portland Football Officials Association and three from college associations. The idea was hatched when one of the PFOA members — part of an internet group chat for female football officials — connected with three women who were coming to Oregon that weekend to work college games.

Carl Haessler, the PFOA commissioner, coordinated the effort. The college officials arrived in Oregon earlier than previously planned to be part of the historic crew.

“I said, ‘You know what, let’s let people see that women can officiate football, and they know what they’re doing,’” Haessler said. “It’s a good thing that women and girls can see that they can be football officials.”

The PFOA members were umpire Geana Fisher, head linesman Mary Harvill and back judge Rebecca Brisson. The college officials were referee Cat Conti (Mountain West Conference), line judge Amy Pistone (Missouri Valley Confer-

ence) and center judge Kim Bly (Southern California Conference).

Haessler said he hopes to put together an all-Oregon female crew. The three PFOA officials are the only women in the association cleared to do varsity games, although others are in training.

“I think we could get three or four women together and run them down to some other part of the state with one or two officials,” Haessler said. “I don’t want this to just be a Portland thing. I think it would be appropriate if the first all-Oregon female crew was somewhere other than Portland. That’s what I’m gunning for.”