



Photos by Ellen Morris Bishop

LEFT: Scarlet Lady is an NFR bareback bronc who unseats her riders, but is kind and gentle when not at work. RIGHT: Not many bull riders last the entire eight seconds on Whose Bad News.

anyone who can stick on him for eight very long seconds a great score? Bridwell has just the ticket: Whose Bad News. This little 1500 pound white and black bovine bombshell is seldom ridden for a full eight-second ticket. “Anyone who can get him ridden will score 85 to 90 points,” Bridwell said. “He’s a great NFR bull.”

The CJD board doesn’t just allow any old company to bring livestock to the rodeo. Bridwell is one of the top stock contractors in the United States with their horses and bulls permeating the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (AKA: NFR or now, starting in 2019, WNFR) lineup. The Red Bluff, California stock contractor bought out the previous stock contractors, Growney Brothers, and now are the sole stock suppliers for CJD.

Bridwell said the company usually brings about 50 head of horses to CJD, the same horses you’ll also see in the

Tuesday, July 23 bucking horse stampepe through Main Street in Joseph that kicks off the rodeo. The logistics to bring the livestock to Joseph is impressive: In addition to 50 premier bucking horses, 20-30 bulls, about 50 calves and 75-100 head of steers will be arriving in Joseph’s Harley Tucker Arena livestock facility a day or two before the rodeo.

All these animals are athletes. And like any athlete prepping for a big event, they will all be well-rested and ready to perform. Prior to Chief Joseph Days, they’ll all be competing at the big Salinas, California rodeo, and then at the St. Paul rodeo east of Portland. “From there, we’ll take them up to Hermiston, where they’ll have a week of rest before we head for Joseph,” Tim Bridwell said. “The key is that like any athlete, they’ve gotta be fresh to give their best performance.”

Good bucking horses and high

performing bulls don’t happen by accident. Bridwell has an extensive breeding program that produces their top-quality livestock. Through the years, stereotypes of livestock, for example smaller horses for the bareback event and larger horses for saddle bronc, have vanished. Today, horses are assigned to events according to their bucking style and talents, Haley Bridwell noted.

She added that bull stock contractors started to breed for bucking ability before the horse world took it up. “At this stage of the game, it’s much easier to find good bucking bulls than good bucking horses,” Bridwell said.

But regardless of whether you are looking at bulls or broncs, you’ll see some of the best athletic performances in rodeo at Chief Joseph Days. And it’s not just the riders. It’s also the star four-footed performers who make the show go on.