



Jesse Brown of Baker City wrestles his steer on Sept. 15, 2022, at the Pendleton Round-Up.

Champing at the bit

Baker steer wrestler preps for berth in National Finals Rodeo

By JAYSON JACOBY Baker City Herald

Now that the pressure's off, Jesse Brown only has to worry about leaping off a horse galloping at 25 mph and landing on a quarter-ton of uncooperative muscle and bone.

But in the rodeo arena, at least, he has a level of control.

Waiting on elements over which he has no influence is a different matter — tougher than wrestling a steer to the ground.

Tougher mentally, anyway. Watching helplessly as results from his competitors appear on a cellphone screen is exhausting in its way.

But a cellphone isn't likely to crack your ribs or rearrange your vertebrae.

Brown, a professional steer wrestler from Baker City, knows about having his nerves wracked while he waits to find out if his months of toil — dozens of hours driving through the night, seconds of exquisite focus as his horse pulls beside a steer — will pay off with the ultimate reward.

That's a berth in the National Finals Rodeo, the annual 10-day event in early December at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

The Super Bowl of rodeo.

"That's the number one goal," Brown, 30, said in a phone interview on Sept. 20. "Everybody wants to be there."

And for the third straight year, Brown will be there.

With the season wrapping up at the end of this month, Brown is 11th in the world steer wrestling standings, comfortably within the top 15 who qualify for the National Finals.

"I'm safe right now," he said.

This is the second straight year that Brown, a 2011 Baker High School graduate, has solidified his

"THAT'S THE NUMBER ONE GOAL. EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE THERE."

— Steer wrestler Jesse Brown, referring to the National Finals Rodeo

spot in the National Finals without any great drama. In 2021 Brown was ranked second in earnings at the end of the season.

But 2020 was quite a different situation — and not only because the pandemic interrupted the rodeo schedule at times.

In late September of that year, just before he competed in his final rodeo in Texas, Brown was in 16th place, just \$500 out of 15th and a berth in the National Finals.

One of his two closest competitors was at a rodeo in New Jersey. The other was in South Dakota.

HAINES STEER WRESTLER RANKED 20TH

Mike McGinn of Haines is the 20th-ranked steer wrestler in the world, with earnings this year of \$63,557.

Brown, who played football at Washington State University before transferring to Montana State University — where he competed in team roping and earned a degree in business management — before taking up rodeo full time, had to monitor results on his phone that day.

When the numbers were finally tallied he had made it — by a margin of \$1,650.

"When you're close to 15th it's kind of an uneasy feeling," Brown said. "You don't want to be on the other side of it."

The 2020 season was different in another sense.

That year, due to the pandemic, the National Finals were moved from Las Vegas to Texas. Brown was grateful to qualify, but he was disappointed that he didn't get to compete in the Thomas and Mack Center.

He finally had that chance in December 2021.

Brown finished the year ranked sixth, with yearly earnings of \$165,000.

He kicked off the 2022 season

with his biggest paycheck by far. Brown won \$100,000 as the steer wrestling champion on March 6 at The American, a rodeo in Arlington, Texas.

Although that rodeo didn't count toward qualifying for the National Finals, the payout easily boosted Brown's earnings above his previous record from 2021.

He's earned another \$91,000 from "official" events this year.

Brown said he's generally happy with his performance this season.

He spent much of the year traveling with fellow steer wrestler J.D. Struxness of Minnesota. Struxness is ranked fifth.

"We've pushed each other," Brown said.

Most recently, he placed fifth at the Pendleton Round-Up.

"Probably my favorite rodeo of the year," Brown said.

In 2019 he set the Round-Up's steer wrestling record, bringing down his steer in 3.7 seconds.

Getting ready for Vegas

As a National Finals veteran, Brown said he feels confident that he knows how to prepare for the event, set for Dec. 1-10.

"I know how it works now," he said.

In particular, Brown said he understands how busy he'll be, with sponsor commitments and other tasks, each day leading up to the evening performance.

"Knowing that routine will be nice," he said.

He's also looking forward to having family among the 20,000 spectators.

He said his parents, Jim and Vicki Brown, plan to attend all 10 nights, and other relatives and friends probably will attend some performances.

"It's always a blast to see everybody," he said. "It's a fun time."

SPORTS ROUNDUP

By JUSTIN DAVIS Blue Mountain Eagle

contest is slated for 4 p.m.

Grant County football teams finish the week 1-2

GRANT COUNTY — Grant County football teams were all on the road this past week, finishing 1-2 in games played over the weekend.

The first game of the week was on Thursday, Sept. 22, and saw the Prairie City/Burnt River Panthers head to Joseph for a High Desert League showdown. The Panthers found themselves back in the win column following two straight losses after a 48-32 victory.

The Panthers improved to 2-2 on the season with an identical 2-2 league record following the win.

Two Grant County prep football squads played on Friday, Sept. 23.

In the first matchup, the Dayville/Monument Tigers traveled to Echo to take on the Cougars in another High Desert League contest. Echo was just too much for the Tigers, who fell 58-13 on the road.

The loss drops the Tigers' season mark to 1-3 with a 1-3 league record thus far.

The last football game of the weekend had the Grant Union Prospectors travel to Hermiston High School looking to enter the win column for the first time this season as they took on another winless team in the Irrigon Knights in a Blue Mountain Conference game.

The Pros would come up just short of that goal, falling to the Knights in a close contest that ended with them on the wrong side of a 32-28 scoreboard. The loss keeps Grant Union winless on the season at 0-4, with an 0-2 mark in the Blue Mountain Conference.

All three Grant County teams are at home this week following their road trips. Prairie City/Burnt River will look to keep its momentum going against Huntington on Friday, Sept. 30, at Prairie City High School. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m.

Dayville/Monument will be looking for its second win of the season on Friday when the Tigers host South Wasco County. Kickoff is scheduled for 1 p.m.

Grant Union will have another chance to get into the win column on Friday when Lyle/Wishram makes the trip from Washington state to John Day. Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m.

Lady Pros pick up 3-1 win over Irrigon

IRRIGON — The eighth-ranked Grant Union volleyball team traveled to Irrigon on Wednesday, Sept. 21, for a Blue Mountain Conference match and left with a 3-1 win.

The contest was the first league match of the season for the Lady Pros, who pushed their record to 10-5 following the victory.

Scores for the match were 25-17, 15-25, 25-19 and 25-18.

Grant Union was scheduled to host Burns in a non-conference matchup on Tuesday, Sept. 27, with a 6 p.m. start time (after press time for the Blue Mountain Eagle). The Lady Pros will look to add another league win to their record when they host Weston-McEwen on Thursday, Sept. 29. Tipoff for that

Tigers, Panthers fall to Adrian on same day

ADRIAN — Both the Prairie City and Dayville/Monument volleyball teams traveled to Adrian for High Desert League contests on Saturday, Sept. 24, with both suffering 0-3 losses to the Lady Antelopes.

Scores for the Dayville/Monument match were 25-8, 25-13 and 25-5. The Prairie City match was quite a bit more competitive, with scores of 25-22, 25-10 and 25-17.

SPORTS SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, SEPT. 29

Grant Union volleyball vs. Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 30

Prairie City volleyball vs. Huntington, 5 p.m.

Grant Union football vs. Lyle/Wishram (WA), 6 p.m.

Prairie City football vs. Huntington, 7 p.m.

Dayville/Monument football vs. South Wasco County @ Monument HS, 1 p.m.

Grant Union cross country @ Baker Invitational, Baker City Golf Course, time TBA

SATURDAY, OCT. 1

Grant Union volleyball @ Enterprise, noon

Grant Union volleyball vs. Hepner @ Enterprise HS, 2 p.m.

Prairie City volleyball vs. Jordan Valley @ Monument HS, 1:30 p.m.

Prairie City volleyball @ Dayville/Monument, 3 p.m.

Dayville/Monument volleyball vs. Jordan Valley @ Monument HS, Noon

Dayville/Monument volleyball vs. Prairie City @ Monument HS, 3 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT. 4

Grant Union volleyball @ Crane, 6:30 p.m.

Home games in bold

The young Dayville/Monument team fell to 3-6 on the season with a 1-2 league mark following the loss. The Lady Tigers will look to rebound when they host Jordan Valley and Prairie City on Saturday, Oct. 1, at Monument High School. Tipoff for the Jordan Valley match is scheduled for noon, while the Prairie City match has a 3 p.m. tipoff.

Sixth-ranked Prairie City fell to 13-4 on the season and hold an 0-1 league record. The Lady Panthers will look to return to their winning ways on Friday, Sept. 30, when they host Huntington. Tipoff for that contest is scheduled for 5 p.m.

GU girls place second, boys eighth at Champs Invite

LEBANON — The Grant Union boys and girls cross country teams headed to Lebanon to participate in the Champs Invite and left with a pair of Top 10 team finishes in a field that included more than 40 Oregon high schools.

The Lady Pros placed second in the 3,000 meter event with 28 points, losing out to eventual winners Oregon Episcopal by a single team point.

Sophomore Maddie Bailey paced the Lady Pros with a time of 14:15.18, good enough for third place overall. Fellow sophomore Abby Justice finished eighth with a time of 15:35.00.

The Lady Pros had another Top 10 finisher in junior Aliciana Archibald, who finished ninth with a time of 15:41.10. Sophomore Macy Carter finished just outside the Top 10 at 11th with a time of 15:47.38.

The Grant Union boys finished eighth in the 5,000 meter race with 254 team points. The Pros were just behind seventh-place Vernonia, which finished with 242 team points, and ahead of ninth-place Banks, which finished with 271.

Senior Brady Dole was the top finisher for the Prospectors cross country team, finishing 12th out of 183 runners with a time of 18:01.12. Grant Union's second-fastest runner on the afternoon was senior Quinn Larson, who finished 41st with a time of 19:22.89.

Sophomore Logan Randleas had a respectable showing in Lebanon, finishing 80th with a time of 20:48.93. Junior Skylor Boyd was the final Grant Union runner to place inside the top 100, finishing 92nd with a time of 21:13.25.

The Grant Union cross country teams will look for another strong showing when they head to the Baker Invitational on Friday, Sept. 30. The meet is being held at the Baker City Golf Course, with a start time to be determined.

TOM CHRISTENSEN CONSTRUCTION advertisement with contact info and services.

CANYON CREEK Clinic advertisement for Shawna Clark, DNP, FNP.

DGDriscoll's BOOKS! Adventure at Sea advertisement for All Glive Gussler 1/2 off.

dish BRING EVERYTHING YOU LOVE TOGETHER! advertisement for 2-year TV price guarantee.

AT&T internet FEEL THE SPEED, EVEN AT PEAK TIMES. advertisement for fiber service.

Smart security. Professionally installed. advertisement for Vivint security services.

Prepare for Power Outages & Save Money advertisement for Generac power storage system.

LeafFilter GUTTER PROTECTION advertisement for gutter cleaning service.

Prepare for power outages today advertisement for Generac home standby generator.