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around the nation, it will be real good. There will be a lot of good cowboys in Hermiston.”

But that didn't mean it would automatically be a success. That first night, with the late-arriving crowd, went off without a hitch. Eventually, the rodeo separated from the fair due to financial reasons. Each year for the first two or three, Bothum said, Farm-City started from scratch financially because the money went back to the fair. As an independent organization, as it is now, FCPR could pool its profits, pay vendors who helped, and save a little for the next year. It proved to be a wise decision.

### Evolution

The first major evolution of Farm-City Pro Rodeo is the

STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

When the Farm-City Pro Rodeo kicks off this week some of the best professional cowboys and best rough stock in the work will blast out of these chute gates.

*“The grounds looked totally different then. Nothing that was there then is here now.”*

— David Bothum

Farm-City Pro Rodeo co-founder



arena itself. At that first event, it was a small arena with just one semi-large wooden grandstand. It was old. The wood was warped. But it was all they had and Bothum and company made do.

“The grounds looked totally different then,” Bothum said. “Nothing that was there then is here now.”

They cleaned it up. They planted grass along the backside between the arena and

Hermiston High School. Each year for the first few they went under the bleachers to shore up the deteriorating wood. They replaced posts. They replaced benches. Then, finally, they replaced the old decrepit wooden bleachers with new, modern aluminum benches.

“They got up on Tuesday (when) we used to have a horse pull here,” Bothum said. “We were tightening the last bolts when people were sitting down.”

More box seats were added. The gold buckle section was added. They began to rent even more collapsible bleachers that

required more retaining walls. From nothing, Farm City's arena sprung up to become a wonderful place to watch rodeo.

“Every year, we've done something more,” Bothum said.

But that's just the arena. The event itself has evolved, too, and even affected the sport of rodeo as a whole.

Farm-City was where the back-to-back started; meaning that a cowboy, who could be participating in as many as three for four rodeos simultaneously, can get his or her two runs in and leave without having to come back another day and spend more money on travel.

“They'd have to come back and forth,” Bothum said. “And there were four, five rodeos going on at the same time, and it was hard to work them all.”

After a trial run of the back-to-back at Farm-City, it's been picked up by the overall sport of rodeo. Farm-City was also one of the first rodeos to alter the rosters so big-named cowboys could perform in front

of a crowd. Bothum laid out a hypothetical scenario where 30 cowboys have to do an event, but only 14 can be in the performance and the other 16 have to wait and ride after the performance, as he called it. If, say, Trevor Brazile, the 12-time PRCA All-Around Champion, is in the group of 16, Bothum can decide to put him in the 14 by changing the order so the fans see the best cowboys in the world.

Farm-City was also one of the first smaller rodeos to hire multiple stock contractors and “cherry pick,” as Bothum said, the best bulls, brones and calves. As a result, Farm-City won the Remuda Award last year for the best bucking broncos in the country at any rodeo.

“The thing that (Farm-City) has done,” Bothum said, “was to put Hermiston on the map in a lot of different ways. This rodeo has done a lot as far as helping the rodeo business. It's changed the rodeo business a lot.

“It's pretty neat how (Farm-City) has made the rodeo business better.”

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