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30TH FARM-CITY PRO RODEO

Champions crowned

By ERIC SINGER
STAFF WRITER

A pair of 2016 world champions in roper Tyson Durfey and bronc rider Zeke Thurston were on hand for the final night of the 30th Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Both cowboys have followed up their championships with another great season so far and gave the Hermiston fans something to cheer for with top scores of the night in their respective events.

For Durfey, he tied his calf in 7.7 seconds to win the night and the second round. A no time recorded in slack on Saturday afternoon prevented Durfey from winning any average money, but he still managed a \$1,737 payday for his run.

"That's definitely the best run I've had here in Hermiston," he said. "I had a good calf ... they actually won the first go round on that calf so I knew he was going to be good."

"But all the credit to my horse, Nico, he was on point tonight. He really worked sharp, scored good, ran hard and allowed me to win."

And for Thurston, he rode Stampede Warrior from the Calgary Stampede pen for 83.5 points for the \$100 bonus. It was a rematch for the pair, which Thurston rode earlier in the year for a lower score.

"It was a really nice horse and I wish I could get on 100 like that a year," he said. "It's fun to have."

Thurston's ride also boosted him to a tie for third for the rodeo with Brody Cress, earning a \$2,461 check on his way out of town.

"You want to win money everywhere, but I really enjoy it here and all the Northwest rodeos," he said. "There's a reason we keep coming back, because they treat us well and they're all great rodeos."

Another world champion on hand was four-time bareback champ Kaycee Feild. The 2017 season has been a rough one for Feild, as a late start with injury and some bad luck currently has him way down in the standings at No. 33 nearly \$28,000 behind the final qualifying spot to the NFR.

However Feild's luck has been turning around in recent weeks and it continued on Saturday as he scored an 85.5 to tie him with fellow Utah cowboy Mason Clements for the top ride of the night.

Feild took on Calgary Stampede's Reckless Margie which was a match-up he had been waiting on for a while.

"That horse was a lot of fun," he said. "If you stub your toe, he'll buck you off but if you ride him right, eight seconds isn't long enough."

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Above: Austin Foss of Terrebonne rides Special Delivery for 89 points in bareback riding Friday at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston.

Right: Tillar Murray, of Fort Worth, Texas, puts in the best barrel racing time of the night Saturday at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston.



STAFF PHOTOS BY E.J. HARRIS AND KATHY ANEY

New arena draws praise after months of tireless work

Cowboys, rodeo board happy with new digs

By ERIC SINGER
STAFF WRITER

When Farm-City Pro Rodeo announcer Randy Corley and his wife Michelle stopped by Hermiston in June to check out the new rodeo grounds, they were both surprised at what they saw. And what they didn't see.

"There was no grass or anything here June 2, I can tell you that," Corley said prior to the start of the 2017 event. "There were studs on the Chute Eight (building), no walls, we had concrete poured for seats but no bleachers, no fences were in."

However, as Corley and his wife departed the rodeo grounds more than two months ago, he had no doubt that the Farm-City board would be able to work its

magic and churn out the state-of-the-art facility they set out to build. When he rolled back into Hermiston last week, he was not disappointed.

"I'm not just sitting here bragging on this committee because I'm here," he said. "I bragged when I drove out of here when most people would have thought it would be impossible to have this ready to go, and they did it. They got down, rolled their sleeves up and said 'we're going to have it' and they did have it."

Construction and excavation of the arena got underway in October, but work was slowed by the abnormally cold and snowy winter for the Hermiston area. It led to a lot of overtime and tireless work for the past few months by the rodeo board and numerous volunteers that helped put the finishing touches on the arena, which opened its doors for business Wednesday evening.

Board member David Bothum



STAFF PHOTO E.J. HARRIS

Rodeo announcer Randy Corley watches Brady Nicholes of Hoysville, Utah, ride Duck Butter in saddle bronc riding on Wednesday in the new Farm-City Pro Rodeo Arena in Hermiston.

said prior to the first performance on Wednesday that seeing the arena finished and people in the stands allowed for a short sigh of

relief. "We knew it would happen no matter what," he said. "We all knew we'd do whatever it took

one way or another to get it done, but it was a little stressful. It's been a complete whirlwind for about four months so this is good to finally see it finished."

And the cowboys and cowgirls were certainly appreciative of the work put in and the new facilities that they have to work with. A few praised aspects of the facility, including wider runs for the timed events, a larger warm-up area and even the expanded parking area that made it easy to navigate for the competitors.

Two-time steer wrestling world champion Hunter Cure was one of those with only positive things to say after his ride Wednesday night.

"There's only one grand opening to anything," he said. "And with all the amount of man hours and all the people working up to the last minute today to get this ready, you couldn't ask for anything better than you have here. Job well done to everybody."