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For Immediate Release



## **Crazy Eights ... Canadians Headed to the 2016 WNFR**

When the Canadian Alpine Ski Team was dominating ski races all over the world, the mega-talented team members came to be known as the 'Crazy Canucks'.

The eight Canadian cowboys who will be carrying Canadian colours to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas in December may or may not be crazy but they are every bit as talented as their skiing counterparts and, more importantly, they comprise the largest number of Canadians to qualify for the NFR in recent memory.

Two bareback riders will make return trips to the Thomas and Mack Arena. Two-time and reigning Canadian Champion, Jake Vold, was there in 2014 and gave an excellent account of himself as he battled the best in the world. This year the Ponoka athlete, who now makes his home in Airdrie, Alberta, heads to the year-end showdown in 10th place in the standings and while Jake has battled injuries at various points in the season, he's in relatively good health and at the top of his game as he makes the journey south.

Manitoba cowboy (with some Alberta roots), Orin Larsen, is coming off a spectacular regular season that will see him in second place overall, just \$40,000 behind the leader, when that first gate cracks at the desert home of the NFR. Larsen was there a year ago and enjoyed a decent rookie NFR experience but this year he's taken his game to a new level as his big San Antonio win back in February announced to the world.

Canadian bronc riders were a force to be reckoned with all season long so it's no surprise that a trio of young lions from the north side of the border will be taking their bronc saddles south.

The youthful threesome are Water Valley's 4th place qualifier, Zeke Thurston (making his second NFR appearance), Nanton, Alberta hand, Clay Elliott who will head to Las Vegas in 8th place, and the Hudson Hope, British Columbia native, Jake Watson who squeaked onto the finals roster in 15th place with just a \$260 margin. For Thurston who has back to back Calgary Stampede \$100,000 titles already on his resume, this will mark his second consecutive NFR qualification while Elliott (who was the Houston champion this year) and Watson will both be making their inaugural forays into the battle for world supremacy.

The remaining three Canadians will be riding into the Thomas and Mack in the Team Roping event. The Barrhead, Alberta third generation talent, Kolton Schmidt, capped off a season that saw his great mount, Badger (owned by Kolton's dad, Ronald), named AQHA/PRCA (and CPRA) Heading Horse of the Year. Schmidt will team with season partner, the Texan, Shay Carroll, and will head to Las Vegas in 4th place, only \$26,000 back of the heading season leader. And the team of header Levi Simpson of Ponoka and heeler Jeremy Buhler of Arrowwood became the first ever all-Canadian team to qualify for the WNFR team roping event. Simpson will go into the Finals in 14th place with Buhler sitting 12th among heelers.



Congratulations are also in order for a couple more Canadian competitors. Fort St. John bulldogger, Stephen Culling, is the 2016 Resistol PRCA Rookie of the Year in steer wrestling. And Brownfield, Alberta cowboy, Luke Creasy, overcame injury to claim the Turquoise Circuit bareback riding title for 2016.

### **About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association**

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alta. is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Join us for our premiere event - the 43rd edition of the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) November 9-13, 2016 in Edmonton, Alberta at Rexall Place. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat at @prorodeocanada, like Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook, or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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