



2017 World Champions Declared

December 16, 2017

It was a Gold Buckle night at the 2017 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo and while there were a few races that were all but decided before the night began, there was no shortage of drama on this Saturday night.

It went down to the last run in the steer wrestling before Tyler Pearson of Louisville, Oklahoma finally emerged as the 2017 World Champion. When Helena, Montana's Ty Erickson finished fourth in the round with a 4.5, it meant the man who had led virtually all season would finish second to Pearson by just \$2200.00. (\$265,457 to \$263,267). The die was cast in the ninth round when Erickson encountered all kinds of trouble and had to chase his steer around the arena on foot before finally having to settle for a 26.4 and the deficit after that run was just too much to overcome in just one round.

But one of the cool stories at this year's Finals was fashioned by Provost, Alberta cowboy, Scott Guenther, who finished second in the tenth round with a 3.6 second run. That came on the heels of his go-round win the night before; the first time WNFR qualifier wound up 5th in the average and took \$87,000 out of Las Vegas over the ten days - finishing up 6th in the world with \$186,839 in season earnings. The second of the Canadian contingent, two time Canadian Champion, Tanner Milan, had a no time in the final round, his second of this WNFR, but he also had two of Canada's five go round wins and finished eighth in the world with \$156,265 on the season.

It was another photo finish in the team roping as the Arizona duo of Erich Rogers and Cory Petska were fifth in the final round with an 8.3 second run which kept them in second place in the average. That was enough to hold off Georgia's Kaleb Driggers and his partner, Junior Nogueira, the defending All-Around World Champion, by \$11,000. The final round was won by Garrett Rogers and Jake Minor who roped their steer in 4.1 seconds. The Canadian presence in the team roping was defending World Champion, Jeremy Buhler, who was teamed with Arizona header, Tom Richards after the Arrowwood, Alberta heeler's partner for that world title and this year's Canadian championship, Levi Simpson, just missed qualifying. Richards missed the head catch and the team took a no time in the final round. Buhler earned \$30,096 at the Finals for a season total of \$98,101.

The bronc riding had a different kind of drama. When the teenage sensation from Utah, Ryder Wright, missed his horse out in round 10, it looked like the world title he'd been chasing may have eluded his grasp. But his four go round wins, coupled with a seventh place cheque in the average, gave him \$284,938 and a narrow \$2700 margin of victory over the hard-charging Wyoming hand, Brody Cress, who won the average. Wright, even with his 10th round disqualification, won \$185,576 at the Finals en route to his winning total.

As far as Canadian success in Round 10, Clay Elliott, from Nanton, Alberta, picked up a fifth place cheque of 2016 Canadian Champion took home \$32,423 as the 2016 Canadian Saddle Bronc Champion finished up 14th in the world. Last year's World Champion, Zeke Thurston, was 79.5 on C5 Rodeo's Double D to finish just out of the money in the round. The second generation bronc rider finished 10th in the average, won \$29,461 and finished up 7th in the world with \$199,917 in season earnings. And the third member of the Canadian bronc riding trio, Layton Green, bucked off the 2017 World Champion saddle bronc, Beutler and Son's Wound up to wrap up his first finals. Green the 2017 Canadian Champion, placed three times at the Thomas and Mack Arena and picked up \$45,679 as he finished 13th in the average and ninth in the world.

The drama reached fever pitch in the tie down roping as two guys went head to head for the title. Three time World Champion, Tuf Cooper, and the Brazilian sensation, Marcos Costa, would be the last two to rope. Costa was the second last man to go and was 7.8 to move to first place in the round. When Cooper could manage only an 11.0 flat, it meant the go-round, the average and the world title would go to Marcos Costa - the man who a year ago was runner-up for the championship.

However, Cooper wouldn't go home empty-handed as the talented Texan won his first All-Around title, edging his brother-in-law and thirteen time World AA Champion, Trevor Brazile by \$22,000.

And in the barrel racing, California cowgirl, Nellie Miller came from behind to win the world title. She and her amazing blue roan mare, Sister, put together a brilliant finals and though she finished one spot out of the money in round ten, she held on to win the average by eight one-hundredths of a second over Ivy Conrado. Miller's amazing WNFR haul of \$177,961, combined with a difficult ten days for the regular season runaway leader, Tiany Schuster meant Miller captured her first world title with a total of \$308,498. Hailey Kinsel, the Texas rookie WNFR qualifier, won the round in a blistering 13.17 to finish up second in the world. Kinsel and her palomino horse, had set the all-time arena record earlier in the week with an even faster 13.11. And, for Tiany Schuster, there was disappointment as the Texas cowgirl fell to third place overall, after an outstanding regular season that had her well in the lead coming into the Finals.

In the bareback riding, Iowa cowboy, Tim O'Connell, made his championship clinching ride on Wayne Vold Rodeo's Mucho Dinero. The nine year-old grey was making his fourth appearance at the WNFR and carried O'Connell to 85.5 and while that left O'Connell in seventh place in the go-round and out of the money, the score was enough to carry him to the average title (853.5 points on ten head) and the world title by a margin of an amazing \$103,000. That is the definition of a dominant season.

The bareback go-round was split between Steven Dent and Mason Clements, both with 88 points. Dent was on Pete Carr's Classic Pro Rodeo's Scarletts Web—it was the fifth time WNFR go rounds have been won on the mare while Clements rode Pickett Pro Rodeo's Top Flight. The lone Canadian, Orin Larsen of Inglis, Manitoba, was 81.5 on Pete Carr's Classic Rodeo's Fancy Free to finish out of the money in the final round. Larsen ended up 12th in the average and eighth in the world standings.

Things were pretty cut and dried in the bull riding as Sage Steele Kimzey, the superstar from Strong City, Texas, put the exclamation point on his fourth consecutive title with a spectacular 88 point ride on 4L and Diamond S Rodeo's Girl Money, a bull that had been unriden in 2017. The go round win and the average title gave Kimzey a season earnings total of \$436,479, and that, like so many of Kimzey's achievements in a brilliant career, is a record setting total.

2016 Canadian Champion, Jordan Hansen bucked off his bull, 4L and Diamond S Rodeo's Last Cigarette. But Hansen, competing at his first WNFR won round eight and placed in three others. He also picked up a sixth place cheque in the average for an NFR total of \$84,038 and season earnings of \$180,294.

Three time Canadian Champion Jake Vold suffered a knee injury in round eight when his horse fell into the chutes with him and the Airdrie cowboy missed the last two rounds after leading the average after the first seven performances.

While Canadians did not win any world titles this time around, they gave a tremendous account of themselves as both the two-legged and four legged superstars from north of 49 were tremendously successful. The nine Canadian cowboys riding for the Maple Leaf earned over \$536,540 while over \$350,000 was won on Canadian stock over the ten rounds.

Top Stock of the WNFR:

Bareback riding - (tie) **C5 Rodeo's Virgil** and Powder River Rodeo's Craig At Midnight

Saddle bronc riding - Andrews Rodeo's Brutus

Bull riding - D & H Cattle Company's SweetPro's Bruiser

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About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. The organization holds the Grass Roots Final (at the Agrium Western Event Centre, Stampede Park in Calgary, Alberta) each September and their premiere event - the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) - in November. Follow the CPRA on Twitter and Instagram @prorodeocanada, 'Like' Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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