



Bouchard Beats the Clock at Innisfail Pro Rodeo

In a year that has seen a number of outstanding performances by rodeo's young competitors, a couple of veterans made their presence felt at the 58th Annual Innisfail Pro Rodeo.

The 17 time Canadian Finals tie-down roping qualifier, Al Bouchard, turned in a sizzling 7.9 second run on the final day to capture his first Innisfail buckle.

"I'd won money here before but I'd never won first," the lanky Scandia, AB roper smiled. "It felt pretty good out there, but you're never sure if you're quite fast enough." The top prize was worth \$2199.60 to the former champion who moved from seventh all the way to second place in the Canadian standings.

It was fitting that the four-time Canadian Champion, Larry Robinson, sponsored and presented the champion's buckle to Bouchard - who during Robinson's storied career - went up against the legendary Innisfail roper many times.

"He was one of the hardest guys ever, to beat," Bouchard acknowledged.

Another veteran and three time Canadian champion, Dustin Flundra, made a triumphant return in the saddle bronc riding - after a year on the DL - where he paired up with Kesler Rodeo's cool stallion, Sparks Fly, to split seventh for \$375.20.

"I was pretty careful about when I was coming back," said the Pincher Creek, AB rancher. "I figured that horse would be perfect for my first one back and I was really glad it happened at Innisfail... one of my favourite Canadian rodeos."

Another weekend highlight was the induction of bull fighter, Doug (Shakey) Russell, into the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame on Saturday night. Russell, who hails from nearby Caroline, AB, was the first Canadian to fight bulls at the Canadian Finals Rodeo and went on to enjoy four consecutive CFR appearances.

"I look at the list of people in the Hall of Fame," commented Russell, "and I just shake my head. I don't feel I belong." That sentiment was not shared by either the selection committee or the many bull riders Shakey worked with and protected during his stand-out career.

Other Innisfail winners included Princeton, BC's Renee Rae Willis, who topped the barrel racing field with a 15.777 second run to take home the weekend's biggest cheque at \$3214.80; Cole Goodine (Carbon, AB) in the bareback riding who made an 87.5 point ride on Kesler Rodeo's Uptown Flash for

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\$1837.14 and Zeke Thurston (Big Valley, AB), who matched Goodine's 87.5 - this time in the saddle bronc riding as the 2016 World Champion rode Kesler Championship Rodeo's Sundance Kid to collect \$2001.08. Lucas Parker, from Marwayne, AB, saw his 4.1 second time hold up throughout the four days to take home \$1988.10 while American team ropers Chase Tryon and Brenten Hall were 4.9 to earn \$1971.82 each. And a pair of Saskatchewan competitors split the honours in the bull riding with 85 point rides. Sonningdale's Ty Ellis (on Kesler Rodeo's Goose Bumps) and Meadow Lake's Cody Coverchuk (on Kesler Championship Rodeo's Times Up) both pocketed \$1865.38.

And in the junior events, 2017 CFR novice bareback qualifier, Colton Ouellette (Meadow Lake, SK) was 72 points on Calgary Stampede Rodeo's Alpha Warrior for top money of \$853.60; Hunter Sawley (Fox Creek, AB) split the novice saddle bronc with New Mexico cowboy Preston Ogle. Both young men were 74.5 points: Sawley on Calgary's Yorkton Sandhills and Ogle aboard Calgary's Angel Dust for \$801.22 each. Alberta's, Tristen Manning, was one of only two steer riders to cover their stock. The second generation cowboy scored 72.5 points and \$799.28.

Next up on the CPRA rodeo schedule is the first stop on the Finning Pro Tour - the Wainwright Stampede - which runs from June 21-24 and two Grass Roots Rodeo events, Guy Weadick Days in High River and Sundre Pro Rodeo June 22-24.

For complete weekend results, go to www.rodeocanada.com

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 September 27-28 at Stampede Park in Calgary, Alberta and their premiere event - the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) - at the ENMAX Centrium, Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alberta, October 30 - November 4. Follow the CPRA on Twitter and Instagram @prorodeocanada, 'Like' Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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