



Challenging Start for Canadian Contestants at WNFR

Night number one of the 2018 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo wasn't quite what Canadian competitors had hoped for. 2016 World Champion saddle bronc rider, Zeke Thurston, was the top Canuck as he rode Frontier Rodeo's Griz for 82 points and a 5/6 split in the go round with season leader, Jacobs Crawley, for a \$5500.00 cheque. Cort Scheer grabbed first place in the round with a pretty 86.5 point ride on the Calgary Stampede 7 year-old bay mare Y U R Friskey. Scheer's win was one of two recorded on Canadian stock on opening night.

Thurston sits in 7th spot in the world standings, a very makeable \$55,000 back of Crawley. Nanton's Clay Elliott who won his second Canadian title a month ago finished just out of the money after his 80.5 point ride on Big Bend Rodeo's Spotted Blues.

In the bareback riding, the lone Canadian, Orin Larsen, finished 9th in the round with an 82 point score on Kesler Championship Rodeo's Imperial Beach while Wyatt Denny rode Pickett Pro Rodeo's Night Crawler for 87 points to win the first place cheque of \$26,230.77.

It wasn't the first round either of the Canadian steer wrestlers wanted to have as both Curtis Cassidy, who came to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo as the number one ranked bulldogger in the world, and the number three man and recently-crowned Canadian Champion, Scott Guenther, took no times on Thursday night. The round winner was the 2016 World Champion and recent bridegroom, Tyler Waguespack, who posted a rapid 3.6 to earn the go-round victory lap.

Kaleb Driggers and 2016 All-Around Champion Junior Nogueira put together a 4.2 second run in the team roping to capture round one honours. The Texan and the Brazilian continue to hold a comfortable lead in the world standings.

2015 World Champion, Caleb Smidt, won the tie-down roping with a 7.6 second run. Tuf Cooper and Trevor Brazile, the top two men in the All Around race both had to go to a second loop and finished well out of the money while season tie-down roping leader and recently crowned Canadian champ, Shane Hanchey, broke the barrier. All of this opened the door for several ropers, including Smidt, who were further down in the standings coming to Las Vegas.

In the barrel racing, 2017 Canadian Champion Carman Pozzobon and her tremendous mare, Ripn Lady (Ripp), running on the bottom of the ground, combined for a 14.24 second opening night run. The round was won by season leader, Hailey Kinsel, who was first out on night number one and dominated with a 13.51 to pad her lead in the race for the world title.

Bull Rider, Trey Benton III was a sensational 88.5 points on Wayne Vold Rodeo's five year old brindle, VJV Whiskey Hand, to win the round but four-time titleist Sage Kimzey continues to lead the world by almost \$150,000 after yet another season of virtually total domination. Kimzey had Big Stone Rodeo Inc's Mortimer and finished just a half point behind Benton. Chase Dougherty, competing at his first Wrangler

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National Finals Rodeo rode Northcott Macza's Chaba for 84 points for a sixth place cheque.

For daily stock draws, round winners, results and highlights during the ten days of the NFR, go to <http://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 26-27 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 29 - November 3. Follow the CPRA on Twitter and Instagram @prorodeocanada, 'Like' Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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