

## **Texas Champions Challenge**

FORT WORTH, Texas --- The following are winners from the **Texas Champions Challenge** rodeo at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, **January 20, 2022**.

Bareback Riding-Elimination Round: 1 (tie), Tilden Hooper, Carthage, Texas, on Macza Pro Rodeo's Arizona Wildcat and Caleb Bennett, Corvallis, Mont., on Korkow Rodeos' Ringworm. 3, Tim O'Connell, Zwingle, Iowa, 83.5. 4, Logan Patterson, Kim, Colo., 82. Head to Head Round: 1, Hooper, 90 points on Korkow Rodeos' Wiggleworm, \$10,000. 2, Bennett, 88, \$4,000.

Steer Wrestling-Elimination Round: 1, Jacob Talley, Keatchie, La., 3.77 seconds. 2, Tanner Brunner, Ramona, Kan., 3.95. 3, Josh Garner, Live Oak, Calif., 4.87. 4, Jacob Edler, Alva, Okla., 5.27. Head to Head Round: 1, Talley, 5.20 seconds, \$10,000. 2, Brunner, 14.40, \$4,000.

Saddle Bronc Riding-Elimination Round: 1, Zeke Thurston, Big Valley, Alberta, Canada, 87.5 points on Brookman Rodeo's Freaking Fabulous. 2, Jesse Wright, Milford, Utah, 85. 3, Spencer Wright, Milford, Utah, 84.5. 4, Kolby Wanchuk, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada, 80. Head to Head Round: 1, Thurston, 90.5 points on Brookman Rodeo's Flirtacious, \$10,000. 2, Jesse Wright, 88, \$4,000.

Breakaway Roping-Elimination Round: 1, Erin Johnson, Fowler, Colorado, 2.07 seconds. 2, Shelby Boisjoli, Stephenville, Texas, 2.12. 3, Sawyer Gilbert, Buffalo, S.D., 2.16. 4, Kelsie Domer, Dublin, Texas, 2.25. Head to Head Round: 1, Johnson, 2.12 seconds, \$10,000. 2, Boisjoli, 12.25, \$4,000.

Barrel Racing-Elimination Round: 1, Carly Taylor, Anderson, Tenn., 16.767 seconds. 2, Hailey Kinsel, Cotulla, Texas, 17.133. 3, Shelley Morgan, Eustace, Texas, 17.345. 4, Tiany Schuster, Krum, Texas, 17.836. Head to Head Round: 1, Taylor, 17.353 seconds, \$10,000. 2, Kinsel, 17.410, \$4,000.

Freestyle Bullfighting-Elimination Round: 1, Chance Moorman, Lytle, Texas, 87 points. 2, Weston Rutkowski, Haskell, Texas, 85. 3, Alex McWilliams, Paso Robles, Texas, 84.5. 4, Noah Krepps, Jasper, Texas, 78.5. Head to Head Round: 1, Moorman, 90 points, \$10,000. 2, Rutkowski, 83, \$4,000.

Bull Riding-Elimination Round: (three rides) 1, Brady Portenier, Caldwell, Idaho, 88 points on Macza Pro Rodeo's OLS Tubs Riggs. 2, Trevor Kastner, Roff, Okla., 87. 3, Clayton Sellars, Wildwood, Fla., 80. Head to Head Round: (no qualified rides) 1, Portenier, \$10,000 (highest elimination round score). 2, Kastner \$4,000. (2nd highest elimination round score).

## Texas Champions Challenge Rodeo Pays \$119,000 to Winners

Johna Cravens

Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo

**FORT WORTH, Texas (Jan. 20, 2022)** Three reigning Fort Worth rodeo champions were among the seven individuals who earned \$10,000 paychecks at the Texas Champions Challenge rodeo in Dickies Arena. The event featured winners from five iconic Texas rodeos in six events, plus four Texans in freestyle bullfighting.

The 125th edition of the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo (FWSSR) paid out \$119,000 to 34 competitors in bareback riding, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, breakaway roping, barrel racing, freestyle bullfighting and bull riding.

The format of the rodeo featured an elimination round in each event where five contestants competed. The top two returned almost immediately for a head-to-head round with the winner taking home \$10,000 and a bottle of TX Whiskey. The runner-up received \$4,000 and the three other contestants from the elimination round each received \$1,000. In the bullfighting, the two individuals who did not make the head-to-head round each received \$1,500.

Bareback rider Tilden Hooper of Carthage, Texas, was the first to compete Thursday night and he set a high mark by scoring 85.5 points on the Canadian bucking horse Alberta Wildcat from Macza Pro Rodeo. The next three cowboys scored between 81 and 83.5 points, guaranteeing Hooper a slot in the head-to-head round. The fifth rider, Caleb Bennett of Corvallis, Montana, managed to tie Hooper's score, marking 85.5 on Korkow Rodeos' horse Ring Worm.

After the first of four 60-second bullfights and the traditional FWSSR calf scramble, Bennett was the first to ride in head-to-head round. He rode a Montana horse -Brookman Rodeo's Smiling Bob for 88 points. Hooper proved he was up to the challenge by scoring 90 points on Korkow Rodeos' Wiggleworm to win the event. That was Hooper's second championship in a row in Dickies Arena as he is the reigning champion of the FWSSR Pro Rodeo Tournament.

Jacob Talley of Keatchie, Louisiana, followed Hooper's example. Talley, the tournament's reigning steer wrestling champion, clocked a time of 3.77, edging past Tanner Brunner of Ramona, Oklahoma whose time was 3.95. When the two came back in the head-to-head round, Brunner made a solid 4.4-second run that turned into 14.4 seconds after he was assessed a 10-second penalty for failing to give the steer the allotted head start. Talley just needed a solid run to take home the \$10,000 and he did that, wrestling his steer to the ground in 5.2 seconds.

The saddle bronc riding started with Utah's Spencer Wright scoring 84.5 points. Two-time world champion Zeke Thurston of Big Valley, Alberta then rode Brookman's horse Freaking Fabulous for 87.5 points. After Canadian Kolby Wanchuk scored 80 and Montana's Chet Johnson bucked off, Jesse Wright climbed on Brookman's horse Rude Roomate. His 85 scored bumped his younger brother Spencer to third.

Again, the head-to-head round was a bucking horse clinic. Jesse Wright rode Korkow's Spanish Onion for 88 points. Thurston countered with 90.5 points on Brookman's Flirtacious to win the \$10,000 prize.

The tightest elimination round of the night was in breakaway roping where just 69 hundredths of a second separated the five cowgirls. South Dakota's Sawyer Gilbert set the pace with 2.16 seconds. Then, Shelby Boisjoli of Stephenville, Texas, was even faster—catching her calf in 2.12. Eighteen-time world champion J.J. Hampton stopped the clock in 2.76. Kelsie Chase Domer, who has eight world titles, clocked a time of 2.25, followed by Erin Johnson of Fowler, Colorado who bested them all with a 2.07. In the championship face off, Boisjoli clocked a time of 2.25 seconds, before earning a 10-second penalty at the starting line. That meant Johnson only had to be faster than 12.25 to win the \$10,000. But she did not coast to the championship. Instead, she matched the second-fastest time of the night with a 2.12.

Carly Taylor of Andersonville, Tennessee, set the pace in barrel racing. The 2019 Rookie of the Year stopped the clock in 16.767 seconds. Three-time world champion Hailey Kinsel turned in the next-fastest time of the elimination round – 17.138 on a horse she borrowed from a college friend. The two cowgirls chose to ride different horses in the head-to-head round because of the brief time between runs. Kinsel clocked a 17.410, but Taylor's time was faster – 17.353, and earned her \$10,000.

For the first time the FWSSR crowned a freestyle bullfighting champion with four Texans battling Mexican fighting bulls for the \$10,000 title. Noah Krepps of Jasper started the event with a score of 78.5 points. Then Chance Moorman of Lytle marked 87 points. Multiple-time world champion Weston Rutkowski of Haskell was next and scored 85. Alex McWilliams of Paso Robles fell half a point short of Rutkowski's total with 84.5. That set up the head-to-head round with Rutkowski going first and marking 83 points. Moorman made the most of his chance, scoring 90 points and winning the \$10,000 paycheck.

Only three bull riders managed to stay on the required eight seconds in the elimination round. Brady Portenier of Caldwell, Idaho, scored 88 on Macza Pro Rodeo's bull OLS Tubs Riggs, one point higher than Trevor Kastner of Roff, Oklahoma who rode Diamond S Rodeo's Ferdinand for 87. That set up a final match between reigning FWSSR Pro Rodeo Tournament champion Portenier and two-time FWSSR World's Oldest Indoor Rodeo bull riding champ Kastner. Neither cowboy managed to ride until the buzzer sounded in the head-to-head round. That meant Portenier won the \$10,000 due to his one-point edge in the elimination round.

Fort Worth also crowned an overall mutton busting champion Tuesday. The top five to seven year olds from earlier rodeo performances competed with the winner receiving a trophy buckle and a \$500 scholarship. Paisley Bristow of Holly, Texas, took top honors with a 92-point ride.

The second FWSSR Pro Rodeo Tournament rides into Dickies Arena Friday night at 7:30 p.m. for the first of 16 performances. The event culminates with the Championship Finals on February 5.