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For the Red Bluff Round-Up

ALL (RODEO) EYES ON RED BLUFF

The month's largest rodeo is Round-Up

Red Bluff, Calif. (April 16, 2018) – Red Bluff is “rodeo central” this week, when it hosts the largest rodeo in the nation for the month.

The Round-Up, 97-years strong, will see more than 550 rodeo cowboys from across the U.S., Canada and Australia, stampede into Red Bluff, all to get a piece of a payout of \$250,000 and the coveted gold buckles.

Among those contestants are world champions, last year's Red Bluff champions, and northern California cowboys and cowgirls.

Reigning world champions competing in Red Bluff are bareback rider Tim O'Connell (Zwingle, Iowa); steer wrestler Kyle Pearson (Louisville, Miss.); saddle bronc rider Ryder Wright (Milford, Utah) and Cottonwood's own, Nellie Miller, who won the barrel racing.

Red Bluff native Zack Brown grew up with a dad (Doug Brown) who rode bulls and saddle broncs, and an uncle (Don Brown) who rode saddle broncs. When he was 15 years old, Zach got on a bareback horse, and his rodeo career was determined. “I was pretty excited,” he said. “The (bareback riding) bug had bit.”

Brown, who is 27 years old, competed in high school and college rodeo, attending Feather River College then transferring to the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. He first rode at the Round-Up in 2012, and says that riding bareback horses can be tough. “It's pretty demanding, both physically and mentally. It takes a lot of will power, a lot of grit.” Bucking horses weigh anywhere from 1,100 to 1,500 lbs, and cowboys must ride them for eight seconds to receive a score. “Bareback riding is all about being aggressive because you have those animal athletes who are performing with a lot of power. They explode (out of the chute) and you have to be as aggressive as you can to make a good ride.”

Brown keeps in top physical shape by working out. “I'm usually at the gym every morning at 5 am,” he said. He lifts weights, cross trains, and does high intensity workouts. He also works on his cardio and core exercises,” because the core is the most important thing in riding a bucking horse.”

Brown will marry Natalie Ray in August.

Another Northern California cowboy will compete at what he considers his hometown rodeo.

Colby Demo, a bull rider who grew up between Corning and Los Molinos, attended the Round-Up as a youth and couldn't wait to be a rodeo cowboy.

His parents never rodeoed, but at brandings, he and his friends would ride the calves. "We'd take baling twine and wrap it around the calves and ride them," he said.

His parents, Chris and Crystal Demo, supported their son's rodeo activities. "I've always been a pretty active kid, so when my dad found something I was interested in, he pushed me in that direction," Demo said. "My mom's happy with whatever I wanted to do. They've both been supportive."

Demo competed in high school rodeo, winning the California High School Rodeo bull riding title in 2014 as a senior. He rode collegiately for Colorado Northwestern Community College (Rangely, Colo.) and Feather River College, qualifying for the College National Finals Rodeo in 2015 while at Northwestern. Demo will graduate next month with a degree in ag business.

This will be Demo's second time to compete at the Round-Up. "I remember watching from the box seats, and knowing one day I'd be there, getting on bulls. It's a dream come true."

As soon as he has graduated, he and fellow bull rider Kyle Easton from Chico will hit the rodeo trail full time. "That's all I've ever wanted to do," he said. "That's all me and Kyle have talked about since we were little kids. We finally get to do everything we put our blood, sweat and tears into. It's pretty awesome."

Last weekend, Demo competed at the Cal Poly State college rodeo and Oakdale, Calif. Brown competed at Oakdale and Logandale, Nevada. Both men will ride in Red Bluff on Saturday, April 21.

The combined payout to competitors at last year's Red Bluff Round-Up totaled over \$800,000, including the purse money added by the Round-Up and competitors' entry fees. The Round-Up is tied for sixteenth place among rodeos across the nation, according to purse money by performance; the Round-Up adds \$15,000 to the purse in each of its seven events (\$30,000 in the team roping).

The chance to win a large check lures contestants to Red Bluff, but it's more than that, said one of the Round-Up's announcers, Bob Tallman. The atmosphere of the rodeo and the town is a big attraction. Red Bluff "is official spring break," Tallman said. The cowboys "from the east and the north are ready for some sunshine and good tri-tip." As for fans, "people have it on their bucket list to come to the Round-Up."

Other area competitors who will compete include barrel racers Kaillee Hamre (Los Molinos), Angie Hardin (Cottonwood), Kristen Holt, Brittany Manner, and Nina Moore (all of Red Bluff), and reigning world champion Nellie Miller (Cottonwood). Redding's Jordan Spears will ride bulls at the Round-Up.

The Red Bluff Round-Up will be held this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Tehama District Fairgrounds. Performances begin at 7 pm on April 20, at 2:30 pm on April 21 and at 1:30 pm on April 22. Tickets range in price from \$14 to \$30, with a handling fee, and can be purchased online at www.RedBluffRoundup.com or at the gate. For more information, visit the website or call the Round-Up office at 530.527.1000.