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## **COWBOYS, COWGIRLS TO CONVERGE ON ST. PAUL**

*Big money, atmosphere entice contestants to rodeo*

St. Paul, Ore. (July 2, 2018) – Cowboys and cowgirls, horses, trailers, and bulls are making a beeline for St. Paul, Oregon next week.

The St. Paul Rodeo, billed as the Nation’s Greatest Fourth of July rodeo, will take place July 3-8.

Over 600 cowboys and cowgirls will compete for a payout of over \$350,000 in the rodeo, which is sanctioned by the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA).

Out of the eight reigning world champions, seven of them will be in St. Paul: Tim O’Connell (bareback riding), Tyler Pearson (steer wrestling), Erich Rogers (team roping, header), Ryder Wright (saddle bronc riding), Sage Kimzey (bull riding), Nellie Miller (barrel racing) and Tuf Cooper (all-around).

Two of those world champions: Tim O’Connell and Nellie Miller, also won their events at last year’s St. Paul Rodeo. For Miller, her 2017 win was extra sweet: her dad, Sam Williams, who won the team roping at St. Paul in 1977, was there, along with her mom, her husband James, and their daughters.

Miller has run barrels in St. Paul six times and has always placed at the rodeo. She loves coming to St. Paul. “It’s probably one of my most favorite rodeos to go to,” she said, “just because of the atmosphere, and it’s so different than any other rodeo. My horses always seem to do good there.”

The St. Paul Rodeo arena is unusual, in that it has trees (arborvitae) in it. They were originally intended to mark the race track, when the rodeo included races. The races were discontinued, but the trees stayed.

For Miller, the trees are no distraction to her or her horses. “So far, I haven’t had one get too weirded out by them. (The horses) are usually paying attention to the barrels. The arena is a pretty wide open feeling. My horses seem to like that kind of a set up.”

Miller is currently ranked second in the world standings, on her way to her third Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (where PRCA world champions are determined) this December. She won the Reno, Nev. rodeo last month. Her horse, Rafter W Minnie Reba (Sister), is the 2017 AQHA Barrel Horse of the Year.

Out of the nine St. Paul rodeo champions, eight of them return to defend their titles: O’Connell (bareback riding) and Miller (barrel racing); Kyle Irwin, steer wrestling; Brady Portenier, bull

riding; team ropers Charly Crawford and Joseph Harrison; Shade Etbauer, saddle bronc riding, and all-around hand Rhen Richard.

For Charly Crawford, the 2017 team roping heading champion, winning his hometown rodeo was very special.

Crawford, 40 years old, grew up in Canby, just down the road from St. Paul, dreaming of someday roping where his heroes roped.

His dad, Chuck Crawford, was a bareback rider and team roper and took Charly to the rodeo, beginning when he was four years old. After competition, the team ropers would gather at the Crawford ranch, practice, and have fun. The list of ropers the young Charly got to hang around is legendary: Jake Barnes, Clay O'Brien Cooper, Leo Camarillo, Mike Beers, Dee Pickett, and others. "It was a blast," he remembered. The ropers would rope with Charly on his practice cowboy toy in the living room. "We had a lot of fun."

As a kid, he remembers racing with the other kids to retrieve the small paper American flag that was shot out of a cannon during the national anthem. That flag hung on his bedroom wall for years.

Last year was the second time Crawford has won the St. Paul Rodeo; he also won it in 2006. He has qualified for the Wrangler National Finals rodeo nine times. Crawford is one of the inductees into the 2018 St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame.

Cowboys and cowgirls from 24 states and three Canadian provinces are scheduled to compete.

Rodeo week kicks off on July 3 and continues through the seventh with nightly performances at 7:30 pm. A matinee performance will be held on July 4 at 1:30 pm. Tickets range in price from \$16 to \$28 and can be purchased online at [StPaulRodeo.com](http://StPaulRodeo.com), through the ticket office (800-237-5920), or at the gate.

In addition to rodeo competition, fans can enjoy the Tack Room Saloon, fireworks following each night's performance, and a variety of other activities. For more information, visit [StPaulRodeo.com](http://StPaulRodeo.com) or call 800-237-5920.

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Cutline: Sage Kimzey, the four-time and reigning world champion bull rider, rides at the 2017 St. Paul Rodeo. The Oklahoma native is among the more than 600 contestants who will compete at this year's rodeo, which runs July 3-7. Photo by Hoot Creek.