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For the St. Paul Rodeo

COWBOY CENTRAL

St. Paul plays host to Nation's Greatest 4th of July rodeo, turns into cowboy town

St. Paul, Ore. (July 1, 2019) – If all the rodeo cowboys and cowgirls who will compete at the St. Paul Rodeo this week stuck around, they would outnumber the population of the small town thirty miles of Portland.

More than 600 rodeo athletes will swarm into St. Paul for the 84th annual St. Paul Rodeo July 2-6, and among them are world champions, those in the top fifteen in the world standings, and Oregon natives.

Amberleigh Moore is one of those contestants who will make her way to St. Paul.

The cowgirl, a barrel racer by trade and a resident of Salem, will compete in the matinee performance on July 4.

She rides a ten-year-old quarter horse mare, CP Dark Moon, whose barn name is Paige. Paige, who is very good at her job, is the reason Moore started pro rodeo five years ago. “When you get that one special horse, you take your chance and go play,” Moore said, of her rodeoing.

She is currently ranked twenty-first in the barrel racing world standings, and it's because of her horse, who is exceptionally smart. “Any time she's been somewhere, she knows where she's at. If we've been to a rodeo and we return, she will literally get off the trailer and drag me to where she thinks her stall is,” Moore said. “She is very smart, which makes her good at her job.”

Moore has competed at the pro rodeo world championships, the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (WNFR), three times (2016-2018), and she'd love to qualify again. But a barrel racer must be in the top fifteen in the world standings as of October 1, and Moore says qualifying for the WNFR isn't easy. “You can't force it and you can't make it happen,” she said.

Before she gets to St. Paul, Moore will have competed in Ponoka and Airdrie, Alberta, and Molalla and Eugene, Ore. After St. Paul, she has a couple days off before heading to the Calgary Stampede.

And Paige will be with her. “She doesn't like staying home,” Moore said. If she takes a different horse to run barrels on, “when I get home, she won't talk to me. She snubs me.”

Three hours east of St. Paul lives another contestant, bareback rider Austin Foss.

The 27-year-old has been coming to St. Paul the last eight years and won his event there five years ago.

Foss has qualified for the WNFR three times (2013-2015), and is on a trajectory to make it again this year. He's ranked seventh in the world standings with more than \$57,000 won, and he loves coming to St. Paul. "It's a pretty neat rodeo," he said. "It's the only rodeo that they have small shrubs (arbor vitae) in the arena. That's kind of cool."

For Foss' wife Bridget, St. Paul is a kind of a homecoming. A Salem native, she served as the St. Paul Rodeo Queen in 2012. Foss' sister lives in the Carlton area, northwest of St. Paul.

Foss and his traveling partners will be hitting as many rodeos as they can, trying to earn as much money as possible to stay in the top fifteen in the world. Before he gets to St. Paul, he'll compete in Prescott, Ariz. on July 1; in Red Lodge and Livingston, Montana on July 2; at Oakley City, Utah July 3; then to Cody, Wyo. on July 4. After that, they head to Oregon, where they'll be in Eugene on the fifth and St. Paul on Saturday, July 6. Then there's two days off, then they rodeo every day, July ninth through the fourteenth. "You become nocturnal this time of year," he said, because of the nighttime driving they do.

The week leading into the Fourth of July and the time after is often referred to as Cowboy Christmas, for the high number of rodeos that take place. But Foss has another name for it. "It's a cowboy marathon," he said. "The whole month of July, you can go to a rodeo every day."

Out of the nine reigning PRCA world champions (Women's Pro Rodeo Association champion for the barrel racing), seven of them will compete in St. Paul. They are: bareback rider Tim O'Connell, Zwingle, Iowa; steer wrestler Tyler Waguespack, Gonzales, La.; team ropers Clay Smith, Bowie, Texas and Paul Eaves, Millsap, Texas; saddle bronc rider Wade Sundell, Boxholm, Iowa; barrel racer Hailey Kinsel, Cotulla, Texas, and bull rider Sage Kimzey, Salado, Texas.

All of the 2018 St. Paul Rodeo champions return to defend their titles. They are bareback rider Tim O'Connell; steer wrestler Tyler Pearson, Atoka, Okla.; tie-down roper Cooper Martin, Alma, Kan.; team ropers Garrett Rogers, Baker City, Ore./Russell Cardoza, Terrebonne, Ore. and Kolton Schmidt Barrhead, Alberta/Cole Davison, Roosevelt, Utah; saddle bronc rider Chase Brooks, Belgrade, Mont.; barrel racer Tracy Nowlin, Nowata, Okla.; bull rider Stetson Wright, Beaver, Utah and all-around hand Clayton Hass, Weatherford, Texas.

The 84th annual St. Paul Rodeo, the Nation's Greatest Fourth of July rodeo, is July 2-6. Performances begin at 7:30 pm nightly, with a matinee on July 4 at 1:30 pm. Tickets start at \$16 and are available online at www.St.PaulRodeo.com and at the gate.

For more information, visit the website or call the rodeo office at 503.633.2011.

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Cutline: Amberleigh Moore, Salem, Ore., competes at the 2017 St. Paul Rodeo. She is one of six-hundred-plus cowboys and cowgirls making their way to St. Paul for the Nation's Greatest Fourth of July rodeo. Photo by Hoot Creek Photography.

Cutline: Austin Foss, Terrebonne, Ore., won the 2014 St. Paul rodeo with an 87 point ride. Foss will compete at this year's rodeo, held July 2-6. Photo by Hoot Creek Photography.