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Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo Where Champions Play the First Weekend in May

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Rodeo queen among elite in Guymon

GUYMON, Okla. – Lauren Heaton is quite proud to represent the state of Oklahoma as she travels the rodeo circuit in 2015.

She is the first Miss Rodeo Oklahoma to win the Miss Rodeo America title, and she will be in the Oklahoma Panhandle for the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 1; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 2; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 3, at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena.

“I was raised in Oklahoma rodeo,” said Heaton, a 2013 Oklahoma State University graduate from Alva, Okla. “It gave me so much. It created so much of who I am today. I want to take so much of what Oklahomans are. There’s such a spirit to Oklahomans.

“I really hope to take that across the country and showcase that to the rest of the rodeo industry.”

Heaton was crowned last December during the pageant that took place in conjunction with the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. She’s spent the last five months as the sport’s primary ambassador.

Now she’s adding a home state rodeo to her list of events this season.

“We’re very excited to have Lauren coming back to Guymon this year,” said Becky Robinson, a longtime member of the Pioneer Days Rodeo committee. “It was important to us to have the first Oklahoman Miss Rodeo America in Guymon.”

Heaton is one of many rodeo queens who will be part of the festivities. It’s just part of the overall package that is Pioneer Days Rodeo, which will feature seven straight days of competition with “slack” beginning at 8 a.m. through the weekdays – steer roping will take place Monday, April 27, and Tuesday, April 28; team roping, steer wrestling and tie-down roping will be Wednesday, April 29, and Thursday, April 30; and barrel racing will be Friday, May 1.

In all, nearly 1,000 cowboys and cowgirls will be battling through the week for Oklahoma Panhandle cash. Guymon is a major stop on the ProRodeo tour.

“We take a lot of pride in being a rodeo that the cowboys want to come to,” said Jim Quimby, chairman of the rodeo committee. “We have a great history of more than 80 years, and the contestants know that we’re going to cater to them.”

It makes sense. After all, cowboys with ties to the Oklahoma Panhandle have earned 12 gold buckles: saddle bronc riders Billy Etbauer (5), Robert Etbauer (2), Taos Muncy (2), Tom Reeves and Jeffery Willert join heeler Jhett Johnson as world champions. All six cowboys were part of the rodeo team at Oklahoma Panhandle State University in nearby Goodwell, Okla.

But there are many more contestants with ties to Texas County that are or have been NFR regulars, including two-time reserve world champion saddle bronc rider Cort Scheer, another Panhandle State rodeo team alumnus.

“We’re very proud of the cowboys and cowgirls that are from here and look forward to seeing them every year when they come back for our rodeo,” Quimby said. “To me, it shows everyone that we have some of the best cowboys in the world from right here.”