

AFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

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Locals battle for Guymon titles

GUYMON, Okla. – There's something in the water in Texas County, Okla.

This place is the breeding ground for great cowboys, whether they're raised here or have transplanted to the Oklahoma Panhandle. There are plenty of great ones.

The proving ground has always been the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo. It will be again during this year's championship, 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.

"It's an important one for me, for sure," said Trell Etbauer, a four-time Linderman Award winner from Goodwell, Okla., just 10 miles southwest of Guymon. "It's my hometown rodeo and the closest big rodeo I go to all year."

The son of two-time world champion Robert Etbauer and his wife, Sue, Trell grew up in this neck of the woods. He was a star athlete at Goodwell High School and a champion cowboy from youth rodeo through college at Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

But he's one of many elite rodeo cowboys with ties to the Oklahoma Panhandle who have made their name on the ProRodeo trail. A list of world champions from the area is a good indication of that.

In addition to Robert Etbauer, there are 10 other gold buckles that have been earned by cowboys from the area once known as No Man's Land: Billy Etbauer has the most with five saddle bronc riding world titles, followed by Taos Muncy, who has two; fellow bronc riders Tom Reeves and Jeff Willert join heeler Jhett Johnson with one apiece.

They are just a few of the elite contestants who make their living in ProRodeo who have ties to the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles. Atop the list, though, is Trevor Brazile, a 21-time world champion who grew up in nearby Gruver, Texas. He is a 45-time qualifier to the National Finals that also owns a record 12 all-around gold buckles.

He isn't the only north Texas Panhandle cowboy to make the NFR; he was joined by Bray Armes, who also grew up near Gruver. This past December, they were joined in Las Vegas by Muncy and fellow bronc riders Cort Scheer, a Panhandle State alumnus and two-time Reserve World Champion, and Tyler Corrington, who lives near Gruver; and Joe Frost, a senior at Panhandle State who finished the 2014 season as the Reserve World Champion.

This is the perfect proving ground, but Pioneer Days Rodeo is a tough place to win. Nearly 1,000 contestants sign up to be part of the week long competition that concludes the first weekend in May each season.

"A lot of times, Guymon falls after the California run, so a lot of the guys heading back to Texas can hit it," Trell Etbauer said. "It's also one of the bigger rodeos, and all the guys go to those."

Those are the attractive features for the sport's greatest stars, but there are many more. The prize money is a key ingredient, but so is the competition. All steer ropers participate in four go-rounds, with the top 32 times returning for a fifth round. In tie-down roping, team roping and steer wrestling, each contestant is afforded two runs, with the top 40 teams returning for a third round.

Barrel racers all compete in the first round on Friday morning, then the top 40 times are brought back during the performances for the second round. When it's all mixed together, it allows for a cut-throat approach to the big purse.

"I've placed in some rounds and placed in the average in calf roping and steer wrestling, but I'd really like to win it at least once," Etbauer said. "You always want to win your hometown rodeo, and it's usually the toughest to win. Guymon is especially tough, because so many great cowboys are there."