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

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Reigning champs eager to repeat

GUYMON, Okla. – There are certain events in ProRodeo that contestants love to win.

The Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo is one of them.

That's one of the reasons it was inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame last summer, and it's why nearly 1,000 competitors will make their way to the Oklahoma Panhandle for this year's event, set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 6; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 7; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 8, at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena.

"It's a great rodeo to win," said heeler Jake Long, who won the title last year with then-partner Coleman Proctor. "It works as a double dip for us, because the Prairie Circuit is our home circuit. Any time we can get some money together to get to our circuit finals, it's a good thing."

It marked the first Pioneer Days victory for Long and Proctor, and they plan to return this spring to defend their titles, albeit with different partners. Long is roping with header Luke Brown, while Proctor is competing with heeler Buddy Hawkins. Still, Long and Proctor have a lot of great memories together, and the Guymon title is one of them.

"I know Jake was hungry for this one," Proctor said. "The first time I headed was in college for Jake, and we won the college rodeo here. We've wanted to win the ProRodeo here, so I just wanted to get him turned and give Jake a chance."

Pioneer Days is Oklahoma's richest rodeo and the only Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association sanctioned event in the Sooner State to have been inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame. It holds a long history and has featured the very best cowboys and cowgirls.

It's especially prestigious to those who have ties to the area once known as No Man's Land. Take Taos Muncy, an alumnus of the Oklahoma Panhandle State University rodeo team, and Shali Lord, who was born in Guymon and spent a good portion of her childhood in Texas County, Okla. Both earned their second Pioneer Days titles last May.

"It's always fun going to Guymon because of friends and family," said Lord, who last earned the Guymon trophy belt a decade before. "I think the ground has been the best it's been in years. They had some moisture on it, and they try to keep it good and consistent.

"It was really good and really even throughout slack. My horse really liked it. It was hot on Sunday (the final day), but it was good underneath."

Muncy has been back to the Oklahoma Panhandle often since hitting it big in 2007. That year, he parlayed the momentum of his first Pioneer Days title into the college championship, then clinched his first world title that December by having a fantastic run at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo.

Last May, he rode Powder River Rodeo's Miss Chestnut for 88 points to pull off the victory, outlasting a field of ProRodeo's elite talent.

"This is where it all started for me," said Muncy, who also won the world title in 2011. "As soon as I came here for the bronc school my freshman year of high school, I knew where I wanted to go to college and where I wanted to hang out."

It's worked out quite well for the New Mexico cowboy. He has qualified for the NFR eight times in nine years – the only year he missed was in 2008 when he was sidelined for much of the season with an injury.

“It's a big rodeo for us, and that's a good time of year for us to all get there,” Muncy said.

“Guymon is really special to me. I went to school there, and I have a lot of great friends there.

“It's my secondary home.”