

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

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# **Panhandle is rodeo's proving ground**

GUYMON, Okla. – There's a distinct Panhandle pride when it comes to rodeo in this area of Oklahoma.

Cowboys live here, work here and attend school here. Over the years, there have been plenty of great ones with ties to Texas County, Okla. In fact, more than 40 cowboys and cowgirls that have made their home here at one time or another have competed on the grandest stage in the game, the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo.

Those that have moved on always return, especially for Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 5; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 6; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 7, at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena.

"Going to school for four years in Goodwell, you could see the whole community was excited when Pioneer Days would roll around," said Clay Elliott, one of five Oklahoma Panhandle State University rodeo team alumni who competed at the 2016 NFR. "It's a pretty cool community and everyone gets so involved in the rodeo.

"I feel like I'm part of that community. It feels like a hometown rodeo, and I sure enjoy going there every year."

Elliott was one of three saddle bronc riders who competed in Las Vegas this past December, joined by Allen Boore and Jake Watson. The others were bareback rider Orin Larsen and bull rider Joe Frost. While he didn't compete in Las Vegas, Panhandle State graduate Rocky Patterson claimed his fourth world championship last November at the Clem McSpadden National Finals Steer Roping.

Expect all to be in the field for this year's Pioneer Days Rodeo.

"It has its unique style and its unique setup," said Larsen, a two-time NFR qualifier from Inglis, Manitoba, who finished the 2016 season third in the world standings with \$219,373 in season earnings, \$81,077 of which came in Las Vegas. "The stock is usually really good there. It's got its own special twist."

While Larsen had the best year-end salary, Watson, of Hope, British Columbia, had the best NFR earnings with more than \$136,000. He finished fifth in bronc riding. Boore, of Axtell, Utah, won \$107,097 in Las Vegas, while Frost, of Randlett, Utah, earned \$100,538. Elliott, of Nanton, Alberta, rounded out the solid NFR with nearly \$60,000.

Patterson took home the biggest prize of them all with the world championship in his discipline. He set a new single-season earnings mark in steer roping with \$142,432, including more than \$57,000 at the finals. It was the biggest year of the 51-year-old Kansas cowboy's career, one that included a solid finish in Guymon.

When Pioneer Days Rodeo rolls around, it's the perfect setting. Nearly 1,000 contestants make their way to the Oklahoma Panhandle during rodeo week.

"Everybody's still pretty hungry for rodeo, and that's the biggest rodeo for that time of year," Larsen said. "Winning that rodeo would be really sentimental to me."

It's sentimental to any winner, but that's specifically true for those that have lived in Texas County. Whether they represented Panhandle State at the College National Finals Rodeo or just utilized

their college education at the NFR, they know there's great support in the region once known as No Man's Land.

"There was almost as much pride in representing Panhandle State at the NFR as it was for me to be a Canadian at the NFR," Elliott said. "They treated me so dang good in Goodwell – from the teachers to coaches to the old man at the elevator where I would buy my horse feed. To be part of that community is very special."

And that feeling is reciprocated by the community.

"To us, all these cowboys and cowgirls are still part of the Panhandle, and we're very proud of them," said Earl Helm, chairman of the Pioneer Days Rodeo committee. "We're still part of them. We want them to still feel at home when they come back here.

"When they ride at the NFR, we're very proud of them. We feel like we're with them there, too."