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

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Guymon partners with Days of '47

GUYMON, Okla. – Pioneer Days Rodeo is taking a step in a new direction, but it will still be the same kind of show fans have come to expect over the years.

It was inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame, and annually it will feature nearly 1,000 contestants all vying for this prestigious title. But this year's event will have another carrot to dangle in front of the cowboys and cowgirls, thanks to its partnership as an official trial event for the Days of '47 Cowboy Games & Rodeo, which takes place July 19-24 in Salt Lake City.

"We think this will be a good way to not only promote Pioneer Days but also promote ProRodeo in general," said Earl Helm, chairman of the volunteer committee that produces the annual event, 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.

"When we were approached about this partnership, we looked at all the possibilities that came with it. It looks like it's a win-win for us and for the cowboys and cowgirls."

Pioneer Days Rodeo is one of several trial events where contestants can earn points to qualify for the Days of '47. Contestants finishing among the top five in each discipline – top four in barrel racing – through the trial series and being in the top 35 of the world standings will qualify.

"This exciting, new format will bring a fresh approach to the sport and greater financial prospects to the rodeo athletes," Dan Shaw, CEO of the Days of '47 Cowboy Games & Rodeo, said in a release. "Through the trial-event process, competitors from smaller rodeos across the nation are afforded a unique chance to be a part of history.

"The Cowboy Games will give the fans an opportunity to be more engaged and will bring widespread national exposure to the sport."

That exposure will begin with events like Pioneer Days Rodeo. In addition to chasing points in order to qualify for Salt Lake City, cowboys and cowgirls will ride, rope and race for the money available in Guymon. But there are plenty of rewards that come by advancing to the Cowboy Games.

Points will be gathered through how the contestants finish in the overall race in each event. Bareback riders, saddle bronc riders and bull riders will all be based on a one-ride format, with the highest scores winning the money and gathering points. Those that earn points in the timed events will do so based on their cumulative finish through multiple runs.

Points earned in Guymon will be matched with those earned at other trial events. Once they earn the right to compete in Salt Lake City, athletes will battle for their share of the purse, valued at \$1 million in cash and prizes.

"We're all about the cowboys in Guymon, and we think this gives them another chance to make money this season," Helm said. "When you make a living in rodeo, all you want is an opportunity."