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

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Muleys return to Guymon rodeo

GUYMON, Okla. – The Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo has always been known as a true cowboy experience.

Nothing epitomized that more than when the rodeo featured hornless steers for team roping. The muleys added a wild experience for all involved. Like all timed-event cattle at Pioneer Days Rodeo, the animals had never been through the chutes or into the arena.

For the first time in 11 years, the wildness of muley team roping returns to Guymon's rodeo, set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 4; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 5; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 6, at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena.

"This might be the most exciting thing going on in Guymon for Pioneer Days this year," said Ken Stonecipher, a longtime member of the rodeo committee who serves as the production manager. "As one spectator put it, 'Muley roping separates the real cowboys from the rest of the field.' "

That it does. Stonecipher said the return of hornless steers came together through a collaboration of volunteer Chuck Hoss and locals Jeremy Carman and Mike Ray. Now a longtime fan favorite returns to Hitch Arena.

"There's something wild and unpredictable with these cattle," Stonecipher said. "It's truly our Western heritage. We're bringing fresh steers in off the pasture and roping them for the first time.

"It's going to be a test of athleticism for both the horses and the cowboys. I'm very excited about that."

He should be. A number of the top players in the game are excited, too.

"I love the idea," said Jhett Johnson, an Oklahoma Panhandle State University who won the heeling world championship in 2011. "Guymon was the first rodeo to really do it. It just makes Guymon different and sets it apart.

"Team roping has gotten so specialized that this breaks it back down to a cowboy technique. Anybody on a nice horse that can do a good job on a good on a fresh steer can do well there."

Johnson is one of those cowboys. He's earned multiple Pioneer Days Rodeo titles in his career and has one championship while roping muleys.

"What makes it wild is they're fresh, and they're so unpredictable," he said. "I've had them do everything you could think of. I had one that walked out until my header roped him, and I've had another start running as soon as you start chasing them. You just never know what to expect, and that makes it fun."