

PRCA HOSTS RODEO CLINIC FOR YOUNG RIDERS

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LOREN BENOIT/Press Jace Emery, 10, rides a makeshift bull during a PRCA Rodeo 101 Clinic Saturday afternoon at the Kootenai County Fairgrounds.

COEUR D'ALENE — Youngsters from across the state came out to the Kootenai County Fairgrounds Saturday for the PRCA Rodeo 101 Clinic, presented by the Gem State Stampede Rodeo Committee.

The free instructional event featured several former professional riders teaching the kids the fundamentals of roughstock riding.

Justin Andrade — a retired PRCA professional from central California who now helps at clinics around the country — said events like the one Saturday provide young rodeo fans with a behind-the-scenes view of the sport.

"It's a special event, not only because it's free, but also because it brings kids who may never come to a rodeo otherwise and lets them get an inside scoop," Andrade said.

Sean Culver of Grandview, Wash., another former rider and current PRCA judge, said the clinic was the first public event where he had instructed youngsters.

Culver usually coaches high school students and adults privately, but he said Saturday was about teaching kids the fundamentals.

"A lot of these kids are really green, so our goal is to give them a better understanding of all three roughstock events and the fundamentals of each one," Culver said.

Andrade and Culver were two of the five professional instructors present to offer guidance to the roughly 25 young riders in attendance.

Cousins Colton and Hayden James of Emmett flew up from Boise early Saturday morning with their grandmother just to attend the camp.

Colton, 15, said this was the sixth or seventh rodeo school he had attended.

"Our family has been in rodeo for three generations," he said. "I just want to be the best I can be and work as hard as possible to do that."

Hayden, 14, was impressed by how willing the instructors were to help.

"They're the best of the best," he said. "They know what they're talking to about, so you gotta pay attention to what they're saying."

Makya Emery, 13, of St. Maries attended the clinic with three of her siblings. She said she became interested in rodeo because her older siblings participated in the past.

"I'm getting a horse named Ruby next summer (2019) so I can start to do barrel racing," Emery said.

Dave Paul of Post Falls, who volunteers for the Gem State Stampede Rodeo Committee and helped organize the clinic, said the benefits of these events extend beyond roughstock.

"If these kids continue with rodeo through high school, they're almost guaranteed a full-ride scholarship to go to college somewhere," Paul said. "We talk a lot about education."

Andrade echoed Paul's sentiments, adding that he hopes to teach young people to make good choices.

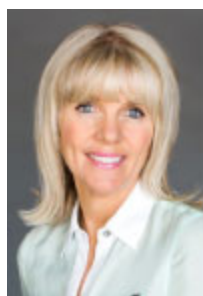
"In everyone's life, there's a point where you come to a fork in the road, and you gotta choose whether to go left or right," he said. "So, rodeo is just a small part of the whole deal."

Paul noted that the event is organized entirely by volunteers, and alternates between Coeur d'Alene and Lewiston each spring. He said this was the third year the clinic had been held in Coeur d'Alene.

For any young riders fortunate enough to reach the professional level, Culver said the sport offers unique benefits.

"At one point I knew more people from Texas, California, Louisiana and Wyoming than my hometown because I was gone 230 days a year," he said.

"The people you compete against are generally your best friends," Culver added. "They become your extended family, and your friends for life."



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