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For the Red Bluff Round-Up

WILD HORSES CAN'T KEEP KIDS AWAY

Wild Pony Race at Red Bluff Round-Up an attraction for the youth

Red Bluff, Calif. (April 2, 2018) – Competition at the Red Bluff Round-Up isn't just for the grown-ups.

The kids get into it, too.

The Wild Pony Race will kick off each performance of the Red Bluff Round-Up this year, April 20-22, at the Tehama District Fairgrounds.

Teams of three kids, ages eight to twelve, try to corral a wild pony, get on him, and ride him for two jumps. The team with the best score wins.

Each youth on the team has his own role: that of rider, mugger and anchor. The pony is released from the chute with a halter on, and the team must try to get a rider on it and ride for two jumps. The team with the fastest time wins.

It's an event that Lucas Owens loves. The eleven-year-old boy, a resident of Red Bluff, has participated each year. His dad wasn't around when Lucas was asked to participate, and Lucas was "all for it," his dad Adam said. There was no changing his mind, Adam said. "It was hard to head off at that point."

People enjoy the wild pony race, Adam said. "It's been very well received by the crowd. It gets things going." The Round-Up is always looking to change things, and the wild pony race was a good addition. "They always have to change their format a little bit to keep things interesting, year after year," Adam said. Lucas' team is his cousin, Bryce Owens, and a friend, Gunner Church.

The kids wear protective equipment like helmets, gloves, and the same type of vests that bull riders wear. The biggest threat of injury is rope burns, Adam said, as the ponies sometimes drag kids hanging on to the rope. The kids are tough, and used to working with animals. Lucas helps his family brand in the spring and the fall, and "he's used to mugging calves. (The kids) aren't scared of the ponies."

Adam and Lucas have strong ties to the Round-Up. Adam's great-grandfather was Roy Owens, president of the Round-Up from 1928-1940. A bevy of Owens have been involved with the Round-Up, all Adam's relatives: Pete Owens worked behind the chutes, Bert Owens was manager of the Tehama Distr. Fairgrounds, John Owens opened latches, and Craig and Kenneth Owens also helped.

The Wild Pony Race at the Round-Up is held at the start of each Round-Up performance. The Round-Up is held April 20-22; tickets can be purchased online at www.RedBluffRoundUp.com or at the gate. Wild Pony Race teams have already been determined for the 2018 Round-Up.

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Cutline: The Wild Pony Race at the Red Bluff Round-Up kicks off each rodeo performance. This year's rodeo is April 20-22.