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For Kansas Biggest Rodeo

THE LOVE OF RIDING BULLS

Local bull rider alongside world champions, last year's Phillipsburg champions return to rodeo at Kansas Biggest Rodeo

Phillipsburg, Kan. (July 29, 2019) – Over 425 cowboys and cowgirls will make the trek to Phillipsburg, Kansas, this weekend, for the annual Kansas Biggest Rodeo.

They hail from 22 states and a Canadian province, from Oregon to Florida to Alberta.

But one bull rider won't have far to travel.

Richard Schleicher, of Stockton, Kansas, started his bull riding career as a kid, mutton busting and riding steers, and competing at Little Britches Rodeos and junior high rodeos.

But by the age of twelve, he quit. He was burned out and tired of the travel.

After graduation from Stockton High School in 2015, he decided to start back up.

Two months shy of his nineteenth birthday, he got his PRCA permit, and, since then, he's been competing at as many rodeos as he can get to.

Schleicher, a graduate of a welding program, is an employee at the New Holland dealership in Plainville, and is able to take off to rodeo most weekends, except during harvest, when he's needed.

And he's having the best year of his four year pro rodeo career.

Much of the winter he spent in practice pens, getting on five or more bulls a week. Friends like PBR bull rider Cooper Kanngiesser and stock contractor Mark Ward helped him, as he practiced in Garden City, Medicine Lodge, and North Platte, Neb.

After each ride, he and his mentors would assess what went right and what didn't, and he'd get on again "When you make a mistake, you get on another one till you get the problem figured out," Schleicher said.

Injuries have plagued him, too. He's torn ankle ligaments, broken the radius and ulna bones in his right wrist, torn his groin, and had concussions. This winter, he took time off for surgery on his riding hand. The injuries kept him from riding well. "I was trying to ride and I wasn't healthy," he said. "You keep trying and you dig yourself into a hole."

Schleicher is pleased, because he's finally making money at riding bulls.

But whether he was making money or not, he loves it. He thrives on the competition. “I hate losing,” he said. The adrenaline rush is still there, but after four years of competition, it’s lessened. “When I started riding better,” he said, “I got a lot more calm.”

And he loves the rodeo atmosphere and the camaraderie. His favorite part? “The people, honestly,” he said. “They’re like family, pretty much. I go to a rodeo and see all my friends.”

This week is one of his busiest so far, with several Kansas and Prairie Circuit rodeos going on. He competed in Manhattan, Kan. and Burwell, Neb. last weekend, and this week he’ll be in Hill City, Dodge City, Abilene, and on Saturday night, Phillipsburg. He’s entered the Phillipsburg rodeo three times but only competed there twice. Last year, Phillipsburg was his last rodeo before he was out due to a torn abductor muscle from his groin to his pelvis. This winter, he’ll have surgery on his other wrist, to repair damage done from bone chips from the ulna.

Schleicher, who is 22 years old, is the son of Harold and Deb Schleicher.

Six of the nine champions from last year’s rodeo will be in town to defend their titles. They include bareback rider Blaine Kaufman, Pretty Prairie, Kan.; steer wrestler Blake Knowles, Heppner, Ore.; team ropers Clay Tryan, Lipan, Texas and Travis Graves, Bluff Dale, Texas; saddle bronc rider Colt Gordon, Comanche, Okla. and all-around champion Marcus Theriot, Poplarville, Miss.

Seven of the reigning world champions will be on hand to compete. They are bareback rider Tim O’Connell, Zwingle, Iowa; steer wrestler Tyler Waguespack, Gonzales, La.; team ropers Clay Smith, Bowie, Texas and Paul Eaves, Millsap, Texas; saddle bronc rider Wade Sundell, Boxholm, Iowa; tie-down roper Caleb Smidt, Bellville, Texas; and bull rider Sage Kimzey, Salado, Texas.

The rodeo starts with two nights of slack, the extra competition that doesn’t fit into the performances, on July 30-31 at 7 pm both nights. The performances are August 1-3 at 8 pm each night.

Tickets start at \$15 for adults and \$11 for children ages 3-12 and can be purchased at Heritage Insurance Co. in Phillipsburg (685 Third Street) or over the phone at 785.543.2448. They are also available at the gate.

For more information, call 785.543.2448 or visit the website at www.KansasBiggestRodeo.com.

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Cutline: Richard Schleicher, Stockton, Kan., competes at the 2019 Cheyenne Frontier Days. The bull rider will ride in Phillipsburg on Sat., August 3, at Kansas Biggest Rodeo. Photo by Hubbell Photos.