



TOWN OF ESTES PARK

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ROOFTOP RODEO www.RooftopRodeo.com

When: 7 p.m.
July 5-10, 2024

Where: Granny May Arena
Estes Park, Colorado

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Denny gets back to wild side

ESTES PARK, Colo. – Bareback riding can be tortuous on a cowboy's body.

Men wear specially designed gloves that have binds on the outsides, then they wedge those hands into a suitcase handle-like rigging that is strapped tightly around a bucking horse. When ready, they are virtually locked onto the animal, and every jump, kick and twist is felt while the cowboy tries to spur the bronc in rhythm with its bucking motion.

Wyatt Denny knows all about it. Now in his 10th year riding bareback horses in ProRodeo, he'd felt every jerk, every whiplash-like reverberation to his spine that comes with the job. He's a three-time qualifier to the National Finals Rodeo, but he hasn't been back at ProRodeo's grand finale in five seasons.

"I've just been focusing on quality over quantity," said Denny, 28, of Minden, Nevada, the 2015 Resistol Bareback Riding Rookie of the Year. "As bad as it sounds, I'm getting up there in age, and my body ain't holding up as it used to. I'm cutting the smaller rodeos out, and I'm just putting all my eggs in these big baskets, these big rodeos like Estes Park, Sheridan (Wyoming) and all these others that are coming up."

That mindset is paying off. Denny rode Cervi Championship Rodeo's Snafu for 79.5 points to take the bareback riding lead during Saturday's second performance of Rooftop Rodeo.

"I'm taking more time off now, trying to love it, and that's what's in it for me," Denny said. "I have more time to work on my body, work on my mental game, fuel myself, get everything ready. That way, when I show up, I expect to win."

He's freeing his mind, allowing his natural athleticism to follow that lead. He's going back to the basics, the things that worked early in his career. With some mentoring from Kelly Wardell, a rodeo coach and former NFR bareback rider, Denny has found a new pot of gold in his rainbow.

“What me and Kelly have gone over is setting that right foot up and go back to being the wild man, go back to that wild-man style,” Denny said. “That’s how I ride them. I’m not the kind of guy that’s going to get ahold of those horses. I need to be the wild man and just let it be free.”

“When I was a kid, I didn’t have much training, so when it came to spurring horses, it was wilder and much more exciting. I’ve adapted from that, and I need to go back to that.”

He and his traveling partner, Shane O’Connell, competed Thursday in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, then spent that night at O’Connell’s place nearby. With a day in between, they opted for an early start for Rooftop Rodeo.

“We were just sitting around Rapid City (South Dakota), and we thought, ‘Let’s just drive there and be tourists,’ ” he said. “That’s one of the things I like about rodeo. Riding bareback horses and the money and the buckles ... all that stuff is cool, but when it goes away and when you leave rodeo, you’re going to forget about all that stuff, and all you have are memories like what we made in Estes Park.”

Rooftop Rodeo

July 5-10

Bareback riding leaders: 1. Wyatt Denny, 79.5 points on Cervi Championship Rodeo's Snafu; 2. Owen Brouillette, 77; 3. Myles Carlson, 76; 4. Hunter Carlson, 74; 5. Shane O’Connell, 73; 6. Jayce Harrison, 70.

Steer wrestling: First round: 1. Wyatt Johnson, 3.9 seconds, \$1,215; 2. Cole Trainor, 4.2, \$1,006; 3. Kodie Jang, 4.3, \$796; 4. Hadley Jackson, 4.6, \$587; 5. Jacob Sterkel, 5.4, \$377; 6. (tie) Kalane Anders and Gage Hesse, 5.6, \$105 each. **Second round leaders:** 1. Zach Hamar, 5.0 seconds; 2. Avery Jamerman, 6.2; no other qualified runs. **Average leaders:** 1. Avery Jamerman, 27.2 seconds on two head; 2. Wyatt Johnson, 3.9 on one head; 3. Cole Trainor, 4.2; 4. Kodie Jang, 4.3; 5. Hadley Jackson, 4.6; 6. Zach Hamar, 5.0; no other qualified runs.

Team roping: First round: 1. Coy Brittain/Michael Fortenberry, 5.1 seconds, \$1,702 each; 2. Tanner Pallesen/Jade Espenscheid, 5.2, \$1,408; 3. Teagan Bentley/Matt Schieck, 5.4, \$1,115; 4. (tie) Devon McDaniel/Walt Woodard and Wyatt Murray/Rhett Nebeker, 5.6, \$675 each; 6. Brayden Fillmore/Josh Fillmore, 6.0, \$293. **Second round leaders:** 1. Brayden Fillmore/Josh Fillmore, 5.1 seconds; 2. Chris Francis/Cade Passig, 5.5; no other qualified runs. **Average leaders:** 1. Brayden Fillmore/Josh Fillmore, 11.1 seconds on two head; 2. Coy Brittain/Michael Fortenberry, 5.1 on one head; 3. Tanner Pallesen/Jade Espenscheid, 5.2; 4. Teagan Bentley/Matt Schieck, 5.4; 5. Chris Francis/Cade Passig, 5.5; 6. Wyatt Murray/Rhett Nebeker, 5.6; no other qualified runs.

Saddle bronc riding leaders: 1. Chance Barrass, 76 points on Cervi Championship Rodeo's Rocket Sox; 2. (tie) Sam Martin and Coleman Shallbetter, 75 each; 4. Ean Price, 74.5; 5. Jake Schlattmann, 74; 6. Chris Williams, 72.5.

Tie-down roping: First round: 1. Hayden Ford, 8.4 seconds, \$1,675; 2. Trevor Thiel, 8.6, \$1,386; 3. (tie) Cash Fuesz and Cole Walker, 8.8, \$953 each; 5. Sterling Smith, 9.0, \$520; 6. Ace Slone, 9.1, \$289. **Second round leaders:** 1. Rodney Jackson, 8.5 seconds; 2. Hayden Ford, 8.9; 3. Colby Anders, 9.1; 4. J.D. McCuiston, 9.6; 5. Colton Greene, 9.9; 6. Sterling Smith, 10.5. **Average leaders:** 1. Hayden Ford, 17.3 seconds on two head; 2. Colby Anders, 19.2; 3. Sterling Smith, 19.5; 4. Rodney Jackson, 26.6; 5. Cole Tierney, 31.9; 6. Clay Reiner, 35.6; no other qualified runs.

Barrel racing leaders: 1. Sage Kohr, 16.60 seconds; 2. Jentry Vandenberg, 16.62; 3. Sami Buum, 16.63; 4. (tie) Ashlyn Goven and Kelsey Lensegrav, 16.73 each; 6. Shannon South, 16.74.

Bull riding leaders: No qualified rides.