

MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

## 8 Seconds

Bull Blast brings top bull riders to Reed Arena

BY AMY DAUGHERTY  
The Battalion

The bulls will be trapped in their chutes at Reed Arena, snorting and stomping, while they await their turn to buck the men who have an overwhelming desire to tempt fate this weekend, as 84 of the world's top bull riders face off with 50 of the highest ranked bulls on earth at "Bull Blast on the Brazos."

Several world champions, as well as men on the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) Tour, will be riding for \$30,000 Friday and Saturday night. Bull Blast on the Brazos is one of the major stops for the bull riders as they make their way to Las Vegas, where they will compete over a three-day period with the winner receiving \$2 million.

Jimmy Menges and Mindy Doolittle of Premier Productions are putting on Bull Blast. Menges, a stock contractor, said there will be other entertainment in addition to bull riding.

"We will have bull poker at intermission," Menges said. "It's where four guys are playing poker [in the arena], and you turn out a bull. Whoever is still sitting last wins \$250 a night."

Three of the world's top stock contractors — Jerry Nelson, James Harper and Terry Williams — are bringing the bulls participating in the competition. Troy Dunn, reigning world champion, will be a contestant in the events.

The Professional Bull Riding Tour, the major league of bull riding, has hit the American mainstream and the sport of bull riding is often considered the most dangerous eight seconds in sports.

Brian Herman, a professional bull rider and one of Bull Blast's participants, has been in the top 10 for eight years and said PBR competitors earn a living through their bull riding.

"Well, really, we're professional," Herman said. "We don't have side jobs. Bull riding is how we make our money."

Herman said PBR competitors do not participate in other rodeo events.

"[PBR] broke away from the rodeo," Herman said. "This is a touring pro, and it's [Bull Blast] a minor

event. A lot of the top 45 guys on tour in the world will be there. It's a minor event with a lot of 45s and younger guys trying to get on tour. When the cut comes, you might get picked."

Bull riding is unlike other roughstock riding competitions, in that the contestants are not required to spur their animals. They must remain seated for eight seconds. If the rider falls off before time is called, they receive no points for the ride.

Strong legs and good upper body control are must-haves in the sport of bull riding. The rider keeps his body forward to keep from getting whipped when the bull is bucking. Judges look for good body position, as well as things like spurring action, which adds points to a rider's score, and the rider's use of their free arm.

Herman said he has been riding bulls since his childhood, but that bull riding comes naturally to some people.

"I grew up in Yoakum, and I just fell into it," Herman said. "I was around it at six years old, and I started riding then. I thought it was fun. From the first time, I was hooked, and I haven't stopped doing it since. Other guys start in their 20s and go right into it."

Mary Helen Bowers, associate director of Reed Arena, said Reed Arena is a good location for Bull Blast.

"The arena will be set up with roughly half of it for bull riding," Bowers said. "Everyone will be up close and personal."

Bowers said the bull riding events will utilize a large amount of dirt.

"The dirt will be hauled in [today]," Bowers said. "This takes more dirt than the monster trucks event did. It takes 4-6 inches of dirt."

Herman said he does not consider professional bull riding to be a dangerous sport.

"For us pros, [bull riding is] pretty safe," Herman said. "We know what we're doing. If something happens, it's an accident just like in any other sport. For the amateur guys, when they try to stick their heads in something where it doesn't belong, it can be really bad."

SEE BULLS ON PAGE 5.



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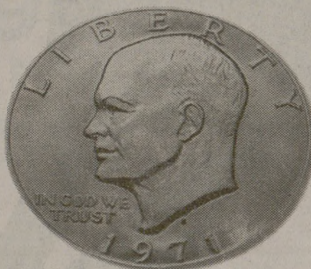
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