

Top Rodeo Journalist Michael dies of leukemia

Ground-breaking sports journalist George Michael, honored in 2007 with the PRCA award for broadcast excellence, died Dec. 24 in Washington, D.C. of complications due to chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Michael was 70.

“The George Michael Sports Machine,” was the first nationally syndicated sports show to make liberal use of highlight films, and Michael, who loved rodeo, made sure the cowboy sport was part of the package with baseball, basketball, football and hockey.

Michael may be best remembered in the Western community for his coverage of the Challenge of the Champions bull

riding series in 1988, matching World Champion Lane Frost and Red Rock, a bull unriden in 309 outings.

He covered all seven rounds of the series in California, Utah and Oregon, lending it credibility with coverage on his nationally syndicated program.

Michael was sports director and sports anchor of WRC-TV, the NBC affiliate in Washington, for 27 years. His strong work ethic, larger than life personality and his belief in the power of video highlights anticipated what much of television sports reporting has become, especially as presented on ESPN’s Sportscenter.