



Justin Boots Playoffs moves contestants up standings



Courtesy of the PRCA

PUYALLUP, Wash. - What a difference a day makes - that is generally what several cowboys at the conclusion of the Justin Boots Playoff's, Sept. 13, at the Puyallup (Wash.) Fairgrounds.

"It was huge," said Jhett Johnson, a team roping heeler, who with his partner Steve Purcella each collected \$14,277. The Wyoming cowboy won the four-team final round with 1996 World Champion Purcella, and the duo jumped from 22nd in the Wrangler Million Dollar Tour Standings to eighth place for Purcella and sixth place for Johnson.

The longtime friends were subtly climbing the charts until their Playoffs win propelled them into the crosshairs of the ESPN camera crew. Purcella and Johnson roped their final-round steer in 6.0 seconds to narrowly edge Nick Sartain and Kollin VonAhn, who finished in 6.1 seconds. Purcella and Johnson had one second for a fist bump, congrats from the other teams and then took their victory lap.

"We were in the bottom of getting in here," said Purcella, who lives in Hereford, Texas. "And here we are now, and it looks like we're going to Omaha."

The top 24 in the Wrangler Million Dollar Tour Standings advanced to the Justin Boots Playoffs, which got under way with two preliminary rounds Sept. 11-12. The top eight finishers from the preliminary rounds advanced to the semifinals, and then the scores were erased, with the top four from the semifinals moving on to the final-four round.

The top 12 in the Tour standings after Puyallup advance to the Justin Boots

Championships, Sept. 24-26, at the Qwest Center in Omaha, Neb.

Purcella and Johnson, a three-time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo qualifier, did not look ahead to Omaha this summer. They evaluated each rodeo one at a time and found themselves within striking distance of postseason glory with a strong fourth-quarter run.

"We were close enough, so we thought we just weren't going to lie down," Purcella said.

Another man unwilling to go down was Dickinson, N.D., saddle bronc rider Shaun Stroh. He also was lingering on the outside looking in, and at four points during the year contemplated heading home for good before changing his mind.

Stroh swept the elite eight semifinals and final-four round to claim the Justin Boots Playoffs buckle. Stroh sealed the deal with an 86-point ride on Flying Five Rodeo Company's Sundance in the finals. All total, he collected \$15,140 and leaped from 12th to third in the Tour standings. He had just \$16,251 in Tour prize money coming into the Playoffs.

"I've been awfully blessed these last couple of weeks," Stroh said. "I just kept going and going."

Speaking of going, reigning World Champion Tie-Down Roper Stran Smith drove 1,900 miles with his prized mare Destiny to compete in the Playoffs. Smith has greatly enjoyed his year, but was 45th in the Sept. 8 PRCA World Standings and 13th in the Tour standings prior to the Playoffs. Not dismayed, Smith figured the smaller arena in Puyallup was a perfect setting for the mare, who carried him to a world title inside the small confines of the Thomas & Mack

Center arena in Las Vegas.

Fast-forward to the Playoffs, and Smith and Destiny finished third in the semifinals with an 8.6-second run and were clutch in the finals in seven seconds flat. Smith pocketed a total of \$17,038 in Puyallup and rose from 13th to third place in the Tour race.

"We have a great Tour system in place where we can win big money like this, so a guy like me, who was outside the top 50 (during the season) can realistically still make the Finals," said the Childress, Texas, cowboy. "Not only that, you can actually win enough to set yourself up in position to maybe contend for another world title."

The high-money winner in Puyallup was bull riding top finisher Bobby Welsh (\$23,338), followed by reigning World Champion Bareback Rider Justin McDaniel (\$20,533) who won his event.

Both Welsh and McDaniel are in the top five in the Tour standings and appear headed for gold-buckle contention.

In the other events, South Dakota's Jake Rinehart won the steer wrestling Playoffs buckle. Rinehart, the 2009 Cheyenne (Wyo.) Frontier Days winner, is having a breakout season. He was second in the Sept. 8 PRCA World Standings and continues to lead the Tour standings after winning \$16,036 in Puyallup.

Brittany Pozzi, the 2007 world champion, won the barrel racing after sweeping the semifinals and finals, winning the four-woman shootout in 14.04 seconds. She pocketed \$15,701.

The top-notch field on the final day of the Playoffs included 14 world champions and five contestants who hold the No. 1

spot in the world standings.

The Justin Boots Playoffs are scheduled to air on ESPN2 on Oct. 18 at noon (EST) and rebroadcast Oct. 24 (ESPN Classic), Oct. 25 (ESPN2) and Nov. 21 (ESPN Classic). Broadcasts are subject to change by ESPN. Check your local listings for broadcast times.

Justin Boots Playoffs Puyallup, Wash. Unofficial results

Finals and semifinals results Sept. 13

Bareback Riding: Finals: 1. Justin McDaniel, 85 points on Growney Brothers' Witch Doctor, \$9,746; 2. Clint Cannon, 78, \$7,310; 3. Bobby Mote, 77, \$4,873; 4. Will Lowe, NS. **Semifinals:** 1. Clint Cannon, 87 points on Bitter Sweet, \$5,178; 2. Will Lowe, 86, \$3,883; 3. Bobby Mote, 85, 2,589; 4. (tie) Justin McDaniel and Tilden Hooper, 82, \$647 each; 6. (tie) Tim Shirley and Casey Colletti, 80; 8. Joe Gunderson, 79.

Steer Wrestling: Finals: 1. Jake Rinehart and Hunter Cure, 3.8 seconds (Rinehart wins tie-breaker), \$8,528 each; 3. Lee Graves, 4.2, \$4,873; 4. Gabe Ledoux, 4.3, \$2,437. **Semifinals:** 1. Lee Graves, 3.4 seconds, \$5,178; 2. Jake Rinehart 3.6, \$3,883; 3. (tie) Hunter Cure and Gabe Ledoux, 3.9, \$1,942 each; 5. Curt La Duke, 4.1; 6. Luke Branquinho, 13.1; 7. Joey Bell Jr., 13.7; 8. Clint Robinson, 13.8.

Team Roping: Finals: 1. Steve Purcella/Jhett Johnson, 6.0 seconds, \$9,746 each; 2. Nick Sartain/Kollin VonAhn, 6.1, \$7,310; 3. Jay Adams/Richard Durham, 10.8, \$4,873; 4. Chad Masters/Jade Corkhill, NT. **Semifinals:** 1. (tie) Steve Purcella/Jhett Johnson, Nick

Sartain/Kollin VonAhn and Chad Masters/Jade Corkill, 5.0 seconds, \$3,883 each; 4. Jay Adams/Richard Durham, 5.1, \$1,294; 5. Shane Philip/Brock Hansen, 5.5; 6. Brandon Beers/Jimmie Cooper, 12.0; (tie) 7. Jake Stanley/Justin Davis and JoJo LeMond/Randon Adams.

Saddle Bronc Riding: Finals: 1. Shaun Stroh, 86 points on Flying Five Rodeo Company's Sundance, \$9,746; 2. Dustin Flundra, 72, \$7,310; 3. (tie) Cody DeMoss and Bradley Harter, NS. **Semifinals:** 1. Shaun Stroh, 85 points on Lynx Mountain, \$5,178; 2. (tie) Bradley Harter and Cody DeMoss, 82, \$3,236 each; 4. Dustin Flundra, 82, \$1,294; 5. (tie) Wade Sundell and Rod Hay, 76; 7. Josh Reynolds, 73; 8. Cody Wright, NS.

Tie-down Roping: Finals: 1. Stran Smith, 7.0 seconds, \$9,746; 2. Adam Gray, 7.5, \$7,310; 3. Tuf

Cooper, 7.6, \$4,873; 4. Jake Hannum, NT. **Semifinals:** 1. Adam Gray 7.3 seconds, \$5,178; 2. Jake Hannum, 7.8, \$3,883; 3. Stran Smith, 8.6, \$2,589; 4. Tuf Cooper, 9.9, \$1,294; 5. Monty Lewis, 10.6; 6. Ryan Jarrett, 17.8; 7. (tie) Landon McClaugherty and Hunter Herrin, NT.

Barrel Racing: Finals: 1. Brittany Pozzi, 14.04 seconds, \$9,746; 2. Jordon Peterson, 14.51, \$7,310; 3. Savannah Reeves, 14.58, \$4,873; 4. Lindsay Sears, 14.63, \$2,437. **Semifinals:** 1. Brittany Pozzi, 14.32, \$5,178; 2. Lindsay Sears, 14.33, \$3,883; 3. Savannah Reeves, 14.34, \$2,589; 4. Jordon Peterson, 14.39, \$1,294.

Bull Riding: Finals: 1. Bobby Welsh, 87 points on Golden Ghost, \$9,746; no other qualified rides. **Semifinals:** 1. Bobby Welsh, 85 points on Sha Bang, \$5,178; no other qualified rides.
