

World Champions highlight Round 1 winners at 2009 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo

LAS VEGAS — It was a good night to be a world champion during Round 1 of the 2009 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. Five past or reigning world champs made their ways to the winner's circle in front of 17,091 at the Thomas & Mack Center as the 51st Wrangler NFR — and the 25th installment of the sport's grandest event in Las Vegas — got under way.

Justin McDaniel, the 2007 world champion bareback rider, shared the opening-round victory with 15th-ranked Jason Havens after both cowboys recorded 86-point rides. McDaniel's ride came aboard Diamond G Rodeo's Little Brown Jug, while Havens matched the mark on Wayne Vold Rodeo's Centennial.

"What better way to start off the NFR," said McDaniel, who earned \$15,343 along with Havens to move to third in the PRCA World Standings. "I just take every ride the same and try as hard at a \$1,000-added rodeo as I do when it pays \$17,000 a night. You just have to go in with that kind of attitude and let it all fly in that first round to get the jitters out of the way."

Havens was excited to earn his second career round victory in Las Vegas.

"It's kind of wild, and I figured I needed to do something since I was coming in 15th," said Havens, who moved to 11th place in the world standings with the share of first place. "I always thought it would be cool to be the first guy out and win first. I got on that horse a couple years ago here at the Finals, and he's always really good. I think he was a lot better today than he was the last time I had him. I think he's grown up a little bit, and he's a little bit of a better horse now."

Reigning World Champion Heeler Randon Adams and partner JoJo LeMond took the opening round with a 4.3-second run, while 2007 world champion saddle bronc rider Taos Muncy won Round 1 with an 86-pointer of his own on Calgary Stampede's Knife Money. LeMond and Adams finished two-tenths of a second ahead of Steve Purcella and Jhett Johnson to earn the \$17,139 first-place checks, and

Muncy's score was 2.5 points better than Justin Arnold.

"I missed the barrier by a little bit, and that steer stepped over in front of Randon," said LeMond, who moved to third place in the PRCA World Standings along with his partner. "I put myself in a situation where I just had to go at him and reach. I should have ridden the barrier better, but my man, like always, can handle it. He's the best heeler in the world."

Adams praised his partner for setting up the winning run.

"I thought I got a good enough start, but that steer got in front of me," Adams said. "I think he left coming that way (to the right). You don't want that here, but I've got a great header who can make it work no matter what we draw. It's different than any rodeo we go to all year. I usually watch the chute, but here I have to watch him nod because it happens so fast."

Muncy was excited to begin the 2009 Wrangler NFR with a victory after missing last year's 10-day event due to a broken leg suffered during the season.

"I've been here (in Las Vegas) a few days, and I am really excited to be here," Muncy said. "It is way better than sitting at home. (Knife Money) is just a really nice horse to ride. I watched him on TV last year, and I have always wanted to draw him. If you ride him right, you're going to be a lot of points."

Canadian steer wrestler Curtis Cassidy earned his second career Wrangler NFR round victory and first solo win by turfing his steer in 3.6 seconds, one-tenth of a second ahead of Jake Rinehart. The Donalda, Alberta, bulldogger crossed the \$100,000 mark for the season thanks to his \$17,139 first-place check and remained fourth in the PRCA World Standings with \$114,089 in earnings. The top four places in the bulldogging are separated by less than a first-place check, setting the stage for quite a battle during the next nine days.

"It's a really fast start here, and the steers run," said Cassidy, who has 2007

World Champion Steer Wrestler Jason Miller hazing for him this year in Las Vegas. "When the steers run in a short building like this, it takes a great horse to get you there and put you in the three-second hole. I knew absolutely nothing about (the steer). I asked a few guys, and they said those red steers were good average steers. But I asked the other guys, and nobody had any lists on him, so I just backed in like you would at any other rodeo where you don't know about a steer. You just back in and go at him."

The tie-down roping went to Colorado cowboy Josh Peek, who roped and tied his calf in 7.5 seconds. Peek, of Pueblo, was two-tenths of a second faster than Justin Maass to move from 15th to ninth in the PRCA World Standings thanks to his \$17,139 first-place check.

Peek is the only other cowboy besides Trevor Brazile who qualified for this year's rodeo in two events, and he tied for fourth place in the steer wrestling with a 4.2-second run.

"It is as good as you could have asked for to place in both events," said Peek, who earned just \$2,704 in tie-down roping at last year's Wrangler NFR. "I think I was fourth or fifth in the 'dogging, winning the round in the roping. Last year, I struggled a lot in the roping, and it wasn't any pressure or anything like that; it was just a tough year. (In the tie-down roping), some guys had mistakes and some guys got close, but it wasn't about winning the round tonight. It was about making a strong statement, starting my week off really well with some good strong runs, and that's what I was focused on the whole time."

Bull rider Kanin Asay claimed his first career Wrangler NFR round victory with an 89-point score aboard Cervi & Guidry Rodeo's Hot Diggity Damn, 2.5 points better than Bobby Welsh's mark on Franklin Rodeo's Good Vibration. Asay, of Powell, Wyo., moved into third place in the PRCA World Standings with the win, crossing the \$100,000 mark in the process. He now has \$109,309 on the season.

"I rode that bull in San Antonio last year and was 89 points on him," Asay said of Hot Diggity Damn. "Those Cervi & Guidry bulls are really nice bulls."

Brittany Pozzi, the 2007 world champion barrel racer, was the fifth gold-

buckle holder to claim a win in Round 1. Pozzi, of Victoria, Texas, stopped the clock on 13.94 seconds, with Shelley Morgan finishing second with a 14.10-second time. Her \$17,139 first-place check widened her lead over reigning World Champion Barrel Racer Lindsay Sears to \$173,004-\$145,641.

"I am just very proud of my horse," Pozzi said. "(Duke) is only 6 years old, and this is quite a lot of pressure for him, but he handled it great. I can't say enough times just how proud I am of him."

ROUND 1 RESULTS

Bareback riding: First round: 1. (tie) Justin McDaniel, Porum, Okla., on Diamond G Rodeo's Little Brown Jug, and Jason Havens, Prineville, Ore., on Wayne Vold Rodeo's Centennial, 86 points, \$15,343 each; 3. Kelly Timberman, Mills, Wyo., 85.5, \$10,228; 4. Wes Stevenson, Lubbock, Texas, 84.5, \$7,188; 5. (tie) Clint Cannon, Waller, Texas; Bobby Mote, Culver, Ore., and Will Lowe, Canyon, Texas, 84.0, \$2,396 each; 8. Kaycee Feild, Elk Ridge, Utah, 82.5; 9. (tie) Tilden Hooper, Carthage, Texas, and Steven Peebles, Redmond, Ore., 82; 11. Ryan Gray, Cheney, Wash., 81; 12. Royce Ford, Briggsdale, Colo., 80; 13. D.V. Fennell, Neosho, Mo., 76; 14. (tie) Heath Ford, Greeley, Colo., and Jared Smith, Williston, Fla., 75.5.

Steer wrestling: First round: 1. Curtis Cassidy, Donalda, Alberta, 3.6 seconds, \$17,139; 2. Jake Rinehart, Highmore, S.D., 3.7, \$13,546; 3. Luke Branquinho, Los Alamos, Calif., 4.0, \$10,228; 4. (tie) Josh Peek, Pueblo, Colo.; Blake Knowles, Heppner, Ore., and Lee Graves, Calgary, Alberta, 4.2, \$4,792 each; 7. Joey Bell Jr., Athens, Texas, 4.6; 8. Shawn Greenfield, Lakeview, Ore., 5.5, 9. (tie) Matt Reeves, Pampa, Texas, and Casey McMillen, Redmond, Ore., 6.2; 11. Hunter Cure, Holliday, Texas, 6.9; 12. Stockton Graves, Newkirk, Okla., 7.1; 13. Todd Suhn, Hermosa, Texas, 9.5; 14. Dean Gorsuch, Gering, Neb., 18.8; 15. Trevor Knowles, Mount Vernon, Ore., NT.

Team roping: First round: 1. JoJo LeMond, Andrews, Texas/Randon Adams, Logandale, Nev., 4.3 seconds, \$17,139 each; 2. Steve Purcella, Hereford, Texas/Jhett Johnson, Casper, Wyo., 4.5, \$13,546; 3. Charly Crawford, Prineville, Ore./Russell Cardoza, Farmington, Calif., 4.7, \$10,228; 4. Clay Tryan, Billings, Mont./Cory Petska, Marana, Ariz., 4.8, \$7,188; 5. Derrick Begay, Seba Dalkai, Ariz./Cesar de la Cruz, Tucson, Ariz., 5.1, \$4,423; 6. Luke Brown, Rock Hill, S.C./Martin Lucero, Stephenville, Texas, 5.4, \$2,764; 7. Keven Daniel, Franklin, Tenn./Brad Culpepper, Ashburn, Ga., 6.9; 8.

Travis Tryan, Billings, Mont./Michael Jones, Stephenville, Texas, 9.1; 9. Nick Sartain, Yukon, Okla./Kollin VonAhn, Durant, Okla., 9.3; 10. David Key, Caldwell, Texas/Rich Skelton, Llano, Texas, 9.4; 11. Chad Masters, Clarksville, Tenn./Jade Corkill, Fallon, Nev., 10.8; 12. (tie) Trevor Brazile, Decatur, Texas/Patrick Smith, Midland, Texas; Kelsey Parchman, Cumberland City, Tenn./Richard Durham, Morgan Mill, Texas; Blaine Linaweaver, Leavenworth, Kan./Justin Davis, Cottonwood, Calif., and Riley Minor, Ellensburg, Wash./Brady Minor, Ellensburg, Wash., NT.

Saddle bronc riding: First round: 1. Taos Muncy, Corona, N.M., 86 points on Calgary Stampede's Knife Money, \$17,139; 2. Justin Arnold, Santa Margarita, Calif., 83.5, \$13,546; 3. Wade Sundell, Boxholm, Iowa, 82.5, \$10,228; 4. Billy Etbauer, Edmond, Okla., 81, \$7,188; 5. J.J. Elshere, Quinn, S.D., 80.5, \$4,423; 6. (tie) Jesse Kruse, Great Falls, Mont., and Isaac Diaz, Stephenville, Texas, 79.5, \$1,382; 8. (tie) Shaun Stroh, Dickinson, N.D., and Chad Ferley, Oelrichs, S.D., 79; 10. Cody Wright, Milford, Utah, 78.5; 11. Cody DeMoss, Heflin, La., 78; 12. Bradley Harter, Weatherford, Texas, 77; 13. Heith DeMoss, Heflin, La., 76; 14. Dustin Flundra, Pincher Creek, Alberta, 75; 15. Bryce Miller, Buffalo, S.D., NS.

Tie-down roping: First round: 1. Josh Peek, Pueblo, Colo., 7.5 seconds, \$17,139; 2. Justin Maass, Giddings, Texas, 7.7, \$13,546; 3. (tie) Clint Robinson, Spanish Fork, Utah; Adam Gray, Seymour, Texas, and Tyson Durfey, Colbert, Wash., 7.8, \$7,280 each; 6. (tie) Tuf Cooper, Decatur, Texas, and Monty Lewis, Hereford, Texas, 8.3, \$1,382 each; 8. Ryan Jarrett, Summerville, Ga., 9.5; 9. (tie) Blair Burk, Durant, Okla., and Cody Ohl, Hico, Texas, 9.6; 11. Hunter Herrin, Apache, Okla., 9.7; 12. Ryan Watkins, Dublin, Texas, 10.7; 13. Trevor Brazile, Decatur, Texas, 23.8; 14. (tie) Matt Shiozawa, Chubbuck, Idaho, and Scott Kormos, Teague, Texas, NT.

Barrel racing: First round: 1. Brittany Pozzi, Victoria, Texas, 13.94 seconds, \$17,139; 2. Shelley Morgan, Eustace, 14.10, \$13,546; 3. Tiffany Fox, Fox, Okla., 14.13, \$10,228; 4. Lisa Lockhart, Oelrichs, S.D., 14.15, \$7,188; 5. Lindsay Sears, Nanton Alberta, 14.18, \$4,423; 6. Sheena Robbins, Fresno, Calif., 14.24, \$2,764; 7. Sherry Cervi, Marana, Ariz., 14.26; 8. Mary Burger, Pauls Valley, Okla., 14.33; 9. Jordon Peterson, Chilton, Texas, 14.36; 10. Tammy Fischer, Ledbetter, Texas, 14.42; 11. Brenda Mays, Terrebonne, Ore., 14.59; 12. Cassie Moseley, Farwell, Texas, 14.70; 13. P.J. Burger, Pauls Valley, Okla., 19.04; 14. Danyelle Campbell, Beaumont, Calif., 19.31; 15. Sue Smith, Blackfoot, Idaho, 19.32.

Bull riding: First round: 1. Kanin Asay,

Powell, Wyo., 89 points on Cervi & Guidry Rodeo's Hot Diggity Damn, \$17,139; 2. Bobby Welsh, Gillette, Wyo., 86.5, \$13,546; 3. Jesse Bail, Camp Crook, S.D., 86, \$10,228; 4. Colin McTaggart, Las Vegas, Nev., 84.0, \$7,188; 5. Corey Navarre, Weatherford, Okla., 82.0, \$4,423; 6. Zack Oakes, Elk, Wash., 74.5, \$2,764; 7. (tie) J.W. Harris, May, Texas; Douglas Duncan, Alvin, Texas; Steve Woolsey, Payson, Utah; Cody Whitney, Asher, Okla.; Howdy Cloud, Kountze, Texas; Tate Stratton, Stanley, N.M.; B.J. Schumacher, Hillsboro, Wis.; Clayton Savage, Casper, Wyo., and Cody Hancock, Taylor, Ariz., NS.