

Pro Rodeo Canada



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Flundra Rides the Tide to Las Vegas

With the inaugural Grass Roots Finals a week away and the possibility of significant changes to the Canadian standings still out there, the focus for the final weekend of the regular rodeo season was on the Wrangler National Finals races.

And when the smoke had settled and the dust cleared, unofficial final standings indicated that three Canadian cowboys had punched their tickets to Las Vegas. No NFR race was more dramatic than in the Saddle Bronc Riding where it came down to the last ride of the season before Pincher Creek's Dustin Flundra nailed down the 15th and final spot on the NFR roster.

The three time Canadian champion will be making his third trip to the Nevada bright lights but never before was making the NFR quite as heart-stopping as this time around. Heading into the last performance at Hanna's final stop of the Canadian rodeo season, Flundra trailed Utah bronc rider Jake Wright and South Dakotan Troy Crowser by a tick more by just over \$500 for the final qualifying berth.

Flundra's draw--a C5 horse called Red Tide. And before a packed Hanna Indoor Pro Rodeo arena, Flundra worked the magic that has earned him four Canadian titles to collect 79 points and \$771.55, not one of the biggest but certainly one of the most important cheques of his career. With Wright making some money in California, it was Crowser who was odd man out of the NFR final standings just \$100 back of the Canadian.

"I think I'll sleep a lot better tonight,' Flundra admitted after the Hanna ride. "Between travel back and forth between Omaha and here—and a little bit of nerves, there hasn't been a lot of sleep the last few days."

Although Flundra pointed out that it was wife Niki who was thinking about the ride at Hanna more than himself. "I just try to go out there every time and ride the best I can. I told her it was meant to be then we'd be going to Las Vegas. And I guess it kind of worked out that way."

Flundra was also quick to credit the horse he'd drawn in Hanna. "I'd had him in Cheyenne and placed there and Sam (Kelts) had been on him a couple of times. I knew that horse would give me a chance."

Flundra was more than aware of how tight the race was for that last NFR spot. "I figured I had to win first or second. I didn't want to have to do the math if I'd finished third at Hanna."

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One stop Flundra won't be making is at this weekend's Cinch Grass Roots Finals in Calgary (though he is qualified for the event) as son Ridge is committed to being the ring bearer at fellow bronc rider Tyler Corrington's wedding in Texas next weekend.

But with the Grass Roots money counting toward the CFR standings, the inaugural edition of the Grass Roots Finals will be a make or break final shot at Edmonton for a number of cowboys and cowgirls. Saddle bronc rider, Todd Herzog, typifies the drama that will unfold at the Agrium Western Events Centre at Stampede Park this coming Friday and Saturday nights.

Herzog sits just \$401 away from the coveted trip to Edmonton, a journey he's made on four previous occasions but not since 2011.

The ladies barrel racing event is another that could see big changes. Montana's Lisa Anderson is clinging to the 12th and final CFR qualifying berth but she has not qualified for the Grass Roots Finals while no fewer than five Canadian cowgirls are within \$1100 of Anderson and all five will be in Calgary on the weekend.

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The second Canadian breathing a big sigh of relief after last weekend's action was Donald's Curtis Cassidy who had one eye on what was going on south of the 49th parallel and particularly at Omaha's big money bonanza—the Wrangler Champions Challenge—while Cassidy himself was trying to take care of business back home in Canada and lock down his own Las Vegas date.

And the oft-decorated Cassidy did just that, putting an exclamation point on his steer wrestling qualification with a third place Hanna 3.8 run netting the second generation timed event icon a payday of \$1070.66, then adding an icing-on-the-cake first place finish in tie down roping with a 7.8 second run worth \$1362.06.

Like Flundra, Cassidy has qualified for the Grass Roots and Canadian Finals before heading south for his fifth NFR appearance.

The third Canadian who will be at Las Vegas in December is Ponoka bareback rider Jake Vold who will make his first appearance at the Wrangler NFR. Vold had clinched his spot well in advance of the final weekend, saving himself the stress that plagued his two Canadian compadres. He too will be a three Finals athlete with Calgary, Edmonton, and Las Vegas on his travel itinerary.

Brownfield's Luke Creasy saw his NFR dream come to a disappointing end as he came up short at Omaha. But Creasy eased his pain by winning the bareback event at Hanna with an 84 point first-place ride on the C5 buckler, Fabio for \$899, then adding \$846 with an 81 point 2/3 split at Brooks' Dallas Sunstrum Memorial thus vaulting into the top twelve and a potential CFR berth. Creasy can add further to his season total depending on what he gets done at the Grass Roots Finals with its big added money counting for the final season standings.

Ponoka's Trygve Pugh was the weekend's biggest money earner (and one of two double winners), taking top spot at Brooks with a 3.5, then capturing first at Hanna where he was one tick longer at 3.6. Pugh rang up a sizable \$3026 bank deposit for the weekend's work and clinched his appearances at both the Grass Roots and Canadian Finals.

Not to be outdone was the seemingly unstoppable bull riding sensation Jordan Hansen who posted his own back-to-back weekend wins—the Okotoks talent was 86.5 on Gerlitz's Wonderlust at Hanna,

then posted an electric 88 score on Big Stone Rodeo's Attitude Dude for a \$2330 weekend haul. Hansen too had already guaranteed himself a shot at both the Grass Roots and Canadian titles in October and November respectively.

More good news for Canadian rodeo fans, Sherwood Park's, Kody Lamb is the unofficial PRCA Restistol Bareback Riding Rookie of the Year.

Next CPRA rodeo action is October 3 and 4. The CINCH Grass Roots Finals – presented by the Ranchman's - takes over the new Agrium Western Events Centre at Stampede Park for two performances. Both the Friday and Saturday performances are set for 7 pm.

About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association: The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with it's headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta, is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA sanctions over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Join us for the 41st edition of the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) November 5th to 9th, 2014 in Edmonton, Alberta at Rexall Place, our association's premiere event. For more information please visit RodeoCanada.com or call (403) 945-0903. Follow us on [Twitter](#), or like our page on [Facebook](#), and watch the action on [YouTube](#) throughout the year.