

Tangier Shrine brings the Wild West to Springfield with inaugural PRCA rodeo

Sponsored content by Tom Connor, Brand Ave. Studios contributing writer

All is calm in the chute — the narrow metal holding pen — as the bull rider climbs onto the bull and a buddy pulls the bull ropes around the animal-athlete, easily the equal of the biggest, baddest pro lineman.

When the rider finally nods and the judges start the clock, the gateman pulls the chute gate open, then gets out of the way because all hell is about to break loose as 2,000 pounds of muscle and fury explode into the arena. All the rider has to do is hang on for eight seconds, not only for dear life but for first place prize money that over the course of a year could top \$1.5 million.

Welcome to the rodeo, a long-cherished form of entertainment and competitive sport. In 1882, William “Buffalo Bill” Cody hosted the first major rodeo in North Platte, Nebraska. From its start in 1936, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, aka PRCA, has grown to rival other professional, competitive sport leagues.

On Friday and Saturday evenings, May 10 and 11, the Omaha Tangier Shrine will present the first-ever Tangier Pro Rodeo at the Sarpy County Fairgrounds in Springfield.

“We’re excited about bringing a professional rodeo to the area and to our surrounding agricultural towns,” said Tangier Shrine potentate and Tangier Pro Rodeo chairman Bryan Deming. “The rodeo is good, wholesome fun that will provide family-friendly entertainment as well as hopefully create some membership opportunities.”

Proceeds from the event will help the Tangier Shrine in its primary mission, which is to transport children to hospitals. Needless to say, the May event is for kids as much as for adults.

And, at \$15 a ticket if bought in advance or \$20 at the door, “it’s cheaper than a babysitter,” notes rodeo publicist Gretchen Kirchmann.

The two-evening event also features performances by the Tangier Clowns, Keystone Kops and world champion trick roper Rider Kiesner and wife, trick



Bull rider Jared Parsonage of Maple Creek, Dec. 9, 2023, Las Vegas

rider Bethany Kiesner. There will be face-painting, food trucks, Western novelties like cowboy hats and more.

But the stars of the Tangier Pro Rodeo are the professional cowboys and cowgirls who’ll be competing for prize money and points toward the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas in December of this year.

One up-and-coming cowboy likely to be competing this May is Garrett Wall. Last year, the 29-year-old bull rider from Sioux City, Iowa, took home first place purses from two rodeos in Nebraska — the Cedar County Rodeo in Hartington and the Days of ’56 Ponca Rodeo in Ponca. For him, riding bucking bulls is a thrill like no other.

“It’s awesome,” Wall said. “You have nothing on

your mind but just hanging on!”

For bull riders like Wall, eight seconds can seem like an eternity as thousands of fans and two judges watch.

In addition to making a qualified ride, two judges award riders up to 50 points each, based on performance: A rider must keep one hand on the bull or the reins and the other, his “free arm,” in the air for the entirety of the ride. He must also exhibit balance, control and rhythm.

In the history of the sport, only one rider — Wade Leslie, atop a bull named “Wolfman” — has ever earned a perfect 100-point score.

To purchase tickets for the Tangier Pro Rodeo or for more information, visit tangierprorodeo.com.