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NEWS RELEASE

Stampede's 4-H Rodeo attracts Alberta youth

CALGARY – Learn to do by doing. That's the 4-H motto, and that's the way Kimberley Tamaro found refinement in the rodeo ring.

Tamaro, 18, of De Winton, Alta., won the senior barrels event aboard Charis on Saturday afternoon under the Big Top during the first day of competition at the 12th annual Calgary Stampede Invitational 4-H Rodeo.

Many a rodeo career has begun at the Stampede's 4-H youth invitational affair, presented by the ECL Group of Companies and Lammler's Western Wear & Tack, and Tamaro is already a veteran at the annual fall event.

"I've been riding since I was just tiny," said Tamaro. "And I've gone into tons of amateur rodeos. Yeah, I was here when I was little, too. I was one of the young kids, having fun."

This weekend marks the first taste of rodeo action for many of the 95 young contestants, who hail from across Alberta, represent 30 4-H clubs across the province and are aged 9 through 20.

"It's a starting point," says Sharon Yeast, Calgary Stampede agricultural program coordinator. "The kids are here to compete, and they want to win, no doubt about it, but they're also here for the experience and the opportunity. This is an introductory point, and from here they can move on to the Wrangler (junior high) and high school rodeo events."

Tamaro and Charis blazed around the three-barrel cloverleaf pattern in 15.79 seconds, nosing out Taylor Werk of Bowden, Alta., aboard Billy, by 0.02 seconds for top honours in senior barrels, for contestants aged 15 through 20.

"It's the strongest relationship I'll probably ever have," says Tamaro of her partnership with Charis. "She's my baby. She goes everywhere I go. I high-school rodeoed off her, and I'm just starting college (at Olds College), and I'm going to be college rodeoing on her, too."

Nicole Lausen, of Carseland, Alta., took home the red ribbon in intermediate barrels, for contestants aged 12 through 14, completing the course on Freebie in 16.35 seconds. Sundre's Desirae Jackson and Frosty were runners-up in 16.39 seconds. Jaclyn Pickerell of Altario, Alta., took the barrels event for juniors (ages 9 to 11) on Ace in 17.67 seconds; Valeska Bak of Cayley, Alta., and Awesome finished second in 18.01.

Kathleen Nester of Cessford, Alta., won the senior thread-the-needle event – which involves negotiating a tight corridor, circumscribing a pole at the end of the course, and returning down the same corridor – in 10.85 seconds aboard Echo, her seven-year-old mare. Carlynn Stout of High River and her mount Billy were second in 11.18.

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"I've been watching the Stampede for years," said a beaming Nestor, 17. "Even to come here and compete in this building has been pretty sweet."

The intermediate thread-the-needle winner was Red Deer's Morgan Haryett, aboard Snap (8.92), about a half-second ahead of second-place Laramie Hlus of Innisfree, Alta., riding Rain (9.56). Top junior honours went to Coralee Shantz of Okotoks aboard Sprite (10.05); runner-up was Nicole Tremblay of Cayley on Tiny (11.49).

Werk and Billy later won the senior pole-bending event – head-to-head runs involving slalom racing and straight-out speed – in 20.74 seconds, ahead of second-place Mackenzie Miller of Dalemead, Alta., and Apachee (21.38).

Lausen and Freebie snared their second win of the day by claiming the intermediate pole-bending title (19.83). Pickerell and Ace matched that feat by winning the junior pole-bending class (22.41). Kelsey Hallett of Big Valley, on Misty, was intermediate runner-up (20.05); Shantal Smith of Blackie, Alta., on Jets King Boy, placed second among juniors (23.59).

With the timed events wrapping up Saturday, the rough stock events – breakaway roping, goat tying and cow roping -- will take centre stage under the Big Top on Sunday afternoon, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Daily schedules are split up into educational and performance components, with mornings devoted to sports medicine training and clinics to help novices prepare some of this weekend's events.

"A lot of these kids have never swung a rope, and don't know how to get off a steer that's bucking," says Wayne Waddell, chair of the Stampede's Invitational 4-H Rodeo committee. "And the sports medicine clinics are especially important. They help prepare the body (with strength, conditioning and flexibility tips) for the rigors of these events."

"We hope, first of all, that the kids have fun, and also that this event inspires some of them to go further into the world of rodeo."

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