

FREE RIDE BUCKOUT

The Free Ride program at Three Hills Rodeo, Inc., Bernard, IA opened the gates to up and coming new rough stock contestants three years ago. Three Hills' concept helped give cowboys unsure about spending the money to get their permit an incentive to take the first step. The two day event includes instruction by highly qualified PRCA competitors in each event and unlimited bucking stock to ride provided by Three Hills. The contestants are then judged over the two day event with the top five in each event selected to ride for Team Three Hills through the following rodeo season. Three Hills purchases a PRCA permit for each of the selected cowboys and pays their entry fees at all Three Hills PRCA rodeos. The cowboys selected commit to entering Three Hill's events in exchange for their "free ride". If they have already purchased their permit, since the selection process isn't until May, they may choose to enter the Free Ride program, if selected they are reimbursed for their permit, but must commit to entering the series of rodeos.



The program has been a successful undertaking for Three Hills and with a positive impact on the Great Lake's Circuit as well as their rodeo committees. The series provides 15 additional permits entered at each of our rodeos which has boosted rough stock entries, increased the payoff benefiting all cowboys entered, and provides a better show for our fans with more cowboys competing in the rough stock events. It's a win-win program for Three Hills, PRCA contestants entered, and our rodeo committees as well.

The annual event attracts contestants from many different skill levels. Eric Wolford, standout Bareback and Saddle Bronc rider took advantage of the Free Ride program in 2008. A talented individual, Eric was a great addition to the Great Lakes Circuit. He had put off getting his PRCA permit, but this gave him the nudge he needed to take his talent to the next level. He was highly successful and filled his permit handily during his debut in the PRCA.

The event information is disseminated also to state high school rodeo teams and college rodeo coaches. We attempt to schedule a weekend prior to the end of the college year and a open rodeo weekend to the best of our ability. The event has attracted many college rodeo coaches with several members of their teams. It gives them an outside learning experience from skilled PRCA professionals, a session on equipment and safety, and all the practice stock they desire. It is also a great opportunity to solve riding problems, work on skills and learn from others.

Contestants sign up for the rough stock events interested in competing in by calling the Three Hills office 563-652-3326 for the May 8 and 9th event. Friday morning all contestants sign in and instructors begin the program with hands on equipment, safety, and event specific instruction. All meals are provided complimentary by Three Hills. Saturday night following the event, a dance and barbecue is also hosted by David and Marla Morehead as a thank you to participants and a fun social event for the local community. It is a great learning experience and opportunity for cowboys looking for a hand up into the ranks of the PRCA.