



Young cowboy fills permit, joins the pros

Joe Naiman

Published 05/28/2009 - 11:13 a.m.

A split for third and fourth place in the team roping at Hayward's Rowell Ranch Rodeo May 16-17 allowed Ramona cowboy Marcus Battaglia to fill his Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) permit.

Jesse McNett, who also lives in Ramona, and Battaglia had a time of 6.5 seconds in the May 15 morning slack session. When the time held up throughout the rodeo as the shared third-place time, McNett and Battaglia each earned \$780.

When a cowboy begins his career in the PRCA, he does so as a permitholder. A cowboy fills his permit once he has earned \$1,000 from PRCA-sanctioned rodeos, allowing him to obtain a PRCA card and have full PRCA membership. The money to fill a permit does not need to be earned in the same event.

The payout at Hayward brought Battaglia's earnings to \$1,649.

"To fill a permit is kind of cool," Battaglia said.

Battaglia, who turned 19 on May 23, filled his permit in only his fourth PRCA rodeo. He made his PRCA debut at the Lakeside Rodeo April 24-26, which included two go-rounds for the ropers. In the first go-round, McNett and Marcus Battaglia had a time of 6.8 seconds to place third and earn \$484.50 apiece.

"It worked out. He (the steer) handled pretty good and I roped him good," Battaglia said.

Battaglia previously competed in California Junior Rodeo Association and California High School Rodeo Association competition, so competing in his first PRCA rodeo didn't intimidate him.

"It was different, but I wasn't really nervous," he said. "Just go out there and do the same thing I do in the practice pen."

Since the Lakeside Rodeo had a payout for the average (aggregate) as well as for each go-round, Battaglia and McNett were more concerned about a clean catch in the first go-round than about placing.

"We wound up catching him pretty quick," Battaglia said.

In the second go-round at Lakeside, Battaglia only caught one leg of the steer, which incurs a five-second penalty. Although their time of 13.3 seconds didn't place in the second go-round, their time of 20.1 seconds on two head gave them third in the average and an additional \$484.50 apiece.

"We got lucky and actually got to place," Battaglia said.

McNett and Battaglia had not only a five-second penalty but also a ten-second broken barrier penalty at the Woodlake Lions PRCA Rodeo May 9-10 and did not place. Their next PRCA roping was at the Redding Rodeo May 14-16. They missed their first steer, and their time of 6.1 seconds in the second go-round wasn't sufficient to place.

Sixteen pairs of cowboys roped in the Friday morning slack at Hayward. McNett and Battaglia were the 13th team out.

"There were some tough guys there," Battaglia said.

Battaglia recognized many of the steers from the Woodlake rodeo.

"We happened to draw one of the good ones and we made a smooth run," he said.

The cowboys in the slack had to wait for the runs in the performances. "We didn't think it was going to place," Battaglia said of the 6.5-second run.

Daniel Green and Todd Hampton had the winning time with a run of 5.9 seconds. Pat Boyle and Joseph Shawnego roped their steer in 6.3 seconds to place second. Nick Coats and Brandon Bates also had a time of 6.5 seconds to share third with McNett and Battaglia. Casey Branquinho and Gus Rodriguez Jr. placed fifth with a run of 6.6 seconds.

The notice of placing high enough for a payout also meant that Battaglia had filled his permit.

"I was kind of excited about it," he said.

The PRCA rodeos weren't fully as Battaglia had expected.

"I thought I'd be heading," he said.

Battaglia was a Team Roping header in high school rodeo. After high school he worked for the Double Nickel

Ranch in Kaufman County, Texas, which is near Dallas, running the Team Roping arena for the ranch. He roped as a heeler in Texas.

When Battaglia returned to Ramona, McNett, who has been a header and who has already filled his PRCA permit, needed a Team Roping partner and asked Battaglia if he would be McNett's heeler.

"I've been doing good at the rodeos, so I might as well keep doing it," Battaglia said.

Battaglia expects to return to Double Nickel Ranch after the Summer. Battaglia was born in Coronado and was eight when his family moved to Ramona in 1998. He attended Barnett Elementary School and Mountain Valley Academy before starting high school.

He spent his freshman year at Ramona High School, was homeschooled through Julian Charter School as a sophomore and junior, and returned to Ramona High School for his senior year.

Battaglia also spent nine years in Ramona's 4-H chapter, raising steers for the entire time while also raising veal calves and swine during his early 4-H years. He won champion market steer at the California state fair in 2006 and had the reserve champion market steer in 2008.

Upon filling his permit, a cowboy can apply to the PRCA to receive his PRCA card. However, issuance of the card makes that year the cowboy's rookie season, so many cowboys who fill their permits do not apply until the following year so that all of that year's rodeos can count towards Rookie of the Year earnings.

Battaglia expects to apply for a PRCA card for 2010 and seek the Rookie of the Year distinction next year.