



John Tyson rides Oubre Rodeo Company's horse No. 334 in the saddle bronc riding competition at the 2019 rodeo.

Bucking Broncs and Family Fun

THE COWETA CATTLEMEN'S RODEO RETURNS

Written by **JACKIE KENNEDY** | Photographed by **BETH NEELY**

Dust and cowboy hats will fly on the second weekend in May when the Coweta County Cattlemen's Association brings its international award-winning rodeo to Newnan.

The two-night event is set for May 13 and 14 at Coweta County Fairgrounds; gates open at 6 p.m. and rodeo action begins at 8 p.m. The rodeo celebrates its 30th edition this year after being on hiatus in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.

"We're excited to be doing the rodeo this year, and we've had lots of people telling us, hey, I'm so glad y'all are back," says Ron Chamberlain, president of the local Cattlemen's Association. "We've had tremendous support from the community."

Support over the past three decades has been strong, he adds. In fact, in 2019, the International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) named Coweta's rodeo one of the Top 5 Outdoor Rodeos in the United States and Canada.

"It was a privilege and an honor to receive that award," says Chamberlain. "It takes a combined effort from a lot of people working together throughout the year. Is there room for improvement? Always. But we must be doing something right to be voted Top 5. It's a proud distinction to have."



Mark Lahmann of the Rawhide and Dusty Show, based in Missouri, entertains the crowd.

With 544 American and Canadian IPRA-sanctioned rodeos in the running, making Top 5 is an honor indeed. Chamberlain attributes the win to “the little things” that add up to make the event a big success.

“It’s the little things we do, like award nice belt buckles to the winners and provide a barbecue meal to the cowboys and their families when they get here,” he says. “We have a great facility to host the event at Coweta County Fairgrounds, and the cowboys like the way everything’s set up with Oubre Rodeo Company. Bubba (Oubre) puts on a good rodeo, and he’s got us set up to have another good one this year.”

The Coweta rodeo is a special one, according to Oubre, whose Oubre Rodeo Company serves as the stock contractor responsible for the local event almost all of its 30 years. “The Coweta Cattlemen go above and beyond to make everything right,” he says. “That group makes it happen. They’re cattlemen, true farmers, just great people, and they go all out.”

In both 2018 and 2019, the rodeo attracted a standing-room-only crowd of approximately 3,500 people each night, according to Chamberlain, who says the event is the second best-attended local event in Coweta County, second only to the Coweta County Fair.

The annual rodeo features a grand entrance parade each night with 4-H members on horseback carrying the American flag and the National Anthem performed before the action begins. That action includes eight IPRA-sanctioned

events: bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, tie-down calf roping, team roping, steer wrestling, cowgirl breakaway roping and cowgirl barrel racing.

This year’s major sponsor for the rodeo is Newnan Peachtree Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram. The late Bill Cline and Lyle Bowers, longtime Coweta County Cattlemen’s Association members, will be remembered in special tributes at the rodeo.

Along with the hospitality it extends to contestants, the reason the Coweta event attracts quality cowboys is because it awards more prize money than most similar-sized rodeos, according to Oubre.

“Most of the rodeos I do have \$500 in prize money in each event, but the Coweta rodeo does more than that,” he says. “Plus, the winners get buckles in each event. That’s a real big prize that’s not done at all rodeos. You’ll see a lot of guys and girls come to Newnan just for the chance to win a buckle.”

Along with action inside the rodeo arena, there’s plenty going on outside, too. Vendors offer cowboy attire, belt buckles and T-shirts along with boiled peanuts and other food and drinks. Recruiters for various armed forces are set up to visit with guests, and a kids zone offers pony rides and inflatables. Miss Rodeo USA makes an appearance each year after visiting local elementary schools leading up to rodeo weekend; she will be at Bar W Feed Store in Grantville on Saturday afternoon, May 14, visiting guests.

This year, the rodeo is offering online ticket sales and backstage passes at



Cowboy Jesse Cook, a professional steer wrestler, talks rodeo with a young cowpoke.

In this series of photos, Hogansville resident Cody Pringle competes in saddle bronc riding at the 2019 rodeo in Coweta. Pringle is a three-time champion saddle bronc rider with the Southeastern Professional Rodeo Association.





Professional steer wrestlers put on a show for the crowd at the 2019 Coweta County Cattlemen's Association Rodeo, the last held due to pandemic concerns in 2020 and 2021.



Oubre Rodeo Company pickup man Patrick Green watches from the saddle as Miss Rodeo USA dances with the rodeo clown.

cowetacattlemens.com. The special passes offer seating by the arena and a chance to go behind the scenes to meet contestants, see the livestock and visit with the handlers, according to Chamberlain.

The biggest portion of funds generated from the rodeo go to scholarships for local high school and college students. On average, about 10 scholarships, ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 each, are presented each year. Scholarship criteria and applications are on the Cattlemen's website at cowetacattlemens.com.

Funds also support local 4-H activities, the Coweta County Sheriff's Office drug awareness program, and the Coweta County Fire Department's fire safety program for kids.

"The rodeo is an awesome thing to be a part of and it's great to know that all we do goes back to the community, especially to give young people a chance to further their education," Chamberlain concludes.

Bubba Oubre: A lifetime in rodeo

On the same day in 2019 that Coweta County Cattlemen brought home their Top 5 award for best outdoor rodeo in the U.S. and Canada, their longtime partner, Oubre Rodeo Company, was named one of the International Professional Rodeo Association's Top 5 stock contractors.

It's high praise for the LaGrange-based company that provides livestock and equipment each year for the Coweta and other rodeos.

Bubba Oubre started Oubre Rodeo Company in 1990, the same year Coweta Cattlemen held their first event. Oubre has handled the event almost the entire time, bringing in everything from bucking broncs and bulls to chutes and contract workers to put on a top-notch show.

Typically, says Oubre, he'll haul to Coweta 15 wrestling steers, 20 team roping steers, 10 tie-down calves, 10 breakaway calves, 10 bucking horses and 10 to 12 bucking bulls.

"We'll furnish the livestock, the announcers, the bullfighters, everybody involved in the rodeo," he says. "We'll have acts there that are world-class rodeo performers, the same people you see at the national finals in Las Vegas."

While some forms of entertainment grow increasingly raunchy, rodeo remains a good option for families, according to Oubre: "You can still take your family to a rodeo and it's good wholesome entertainment. You can go there with your grandparents, your mom and dad, and not be embarrassed. You might get a little bit dirty, muddy or whatever, but it's just good family entertainment."

The son of a cattleman, Oubre grew up on a farm with a fascination for rodeo. In his younger years, he rode bulls and bucking horses and steer wrestled. In 1976, he was named champion bull rider of the American Cowboy Association. In the years since, he has passed on his knowledge



Award-winning rodeo contractor Bubba Oubre says rodeo remains a family-friendly form of entertainment.

of and love for rodeo to his two sons and countless neighborhood kids.

What does it take to be a rodeo cowboy?

"Heart," says Oubre, tapping his chest. "It's just there. That's where you get it."

With his wife Becky and sons Matt and Charlie, Oubre averaged putting on about 20 rodeos annually for most of his career. Nowadays, his company handles about a dozen each year, with the event in Newnan one of his favorites.

At 70, Oubre says his friends routinely ask him, "When are you going to quit rodeoing?"

His answer is the same every time: "When they throw dirt on my face." **NCM**



Representatives from the Coweta County Cattlemen's Association receive the IPRA award for 2019 Top 5 Outdoor Rodeos in the USA and Canada at IPRA National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City. From left are Bubba Oubre, stock contractor; Cattlemen Association members Fred and Connie Hall, the late Bill Cline, Ron Chamberlain, Elise Farnham, and Dale Yerigan, general manager of IPRA.