

Chisholm Trail Ram Prairie Circuit Finals Rodeo

PrairieCircuitFinals.com

For information
Contact Ted Harbin

(660) 254-1900
imteditor@gmail.com

RELEASE DATE: Sept. 11, 2024

Dessel returning to circuit finals

DUNCAN, Okla. – Much has changed since Allan Dessel worked his first Prairie Circuit Finals.

That was in 2010, when the rodeo was in Park City, Kansas, and Dessel was teaching school in Soper, Oklahoma. In 14 years since, he has moved back to his native Iowa and operates a bookkeeping business, all while still working as a rodeo clown at up to 50 performances a year.

He will return the regional finale, the Chisholm Trail Ram Prairie Circuit Finals Rodeo, set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 17-Saturday, Oct. 19, at the Stephens County Arena in Duncan.

“My office is actually in Cherokee, but my home address is in Paullina,” he said of the communities that are about 25 miles apart in northwestern Iowa. “It’s exciting to go back to the Prairie Circuit Finals. This is my first circuit finals I’ve worked since 2013, so it’s been a while. I’ve heard a lot of good things about the rodeo there in Duncan, so I’m ready to come back.”

Dessel began his rodeo career at age 15, when he fought his first bull. He was following in the footsteps of his father, a bullfighter in the 1970s and ’80s. Dessel’s mom was a barrel racer, so her son was horseback even before he was born. Allan Dessel fought bulls and was selected to work several big events as such. He fought at his first PRCA rodeo the day after his 19th birthday at Cherokee, his hometown. That was in 2003, and he continued to chase his bullfighting dreams.

He began the transition from bullfighter to clown three years later at the urging of his peers. He moved to Soper to learn from John Harrison, the most awarded entertainer in the PRCA today, and earned the right to work as a clown in the association in 2008. He’s focused on that side of the business for the last five years, and it’s just part of who he is.

“I feel like my walk-and-talk is really strong, but my dance act is very much crowd-participation,” Dessel said. “It’s not a classical clown act at all. I do dance evolution. I do every major dance hit, starting with the Charleston all the way up until now, and I do it in four minutes. It’s like (announcer) Roger Mooney always says, ‘It doesn’t matter if your 6, 66 or 96, you’re going to know one of the songs in there.’ I don’t wear a mic, so I don’t say anything during the dance. We just play music, and I dance. It’s kind of like being in a small bar, and you always have fun in a small bar. If there’s one person in a small bar having fun, then you’re all having fun.”

Now 40 years old, making those kinds of moves in a four-minute span can be exhausting.

“It hurts; every day it hurts,” he said with a laugh. “I’m definitely not in the shape I should be in, but I try to eat right and work out on the weekends at least.

“Everybody says, ‘Hey, you must work out a bunch,’ and I am like, ‘No, but if you do that dance act three days a week, that’s enough.’ ”

Dessel had never really considered clowning until he got the push from Harrison, who had transitioned from trick rider to full-fledged rodeo entertainer and comedian.

“I didn’t really see it until John said something, and then I started thinking about it,” he said. “I was always the kind of guy that was willing to do whatever it took to make a rodeo work.”

He’s still that guy, and he’ll be doing it in Duncan.