

THE INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL
RODEO ASSOCIATION
A REFLECTION OF THE PAST.....

The Vision of the Future

The Beginnings

The International Pro Rodeo Association is proud to continue its legacy of rodeo excellence. Founded in 1957 by two rodeo promoters, the Interstate Rodeo Association, IRA, was formed as a rodeo management organization and a sanctioning body. Concerned with expansion west of the Mississippi River, this new group's primary interest was to enhance rodeo's credibility with the news media in the east, where fly-by-night rodeos and Wild West Shows and unregulated contests had done much to discredit the sport.

The Interstate Rodeo Association began counting championship points won at its rodeos in 1957 and named their first world champions at the end of that year. Included among the rodeos providing championship points that year was the famous Cowtown, NJ rodeo, the sports first nationally televised event.

In 1964, the Interstate Rodeo Association changed its name to the International Rodeo Association, with headquarters in Pauls Valley, OK, where the association was located until April 1993. Office is now headquartered in Oklahoma City near the historic Oklahoma City Stockyards. The word "Professional" was officially added to the association's name in 1983 giving birth to the next generation of cowboys and cowgirls in the International Professional Rodeo Association.

Innovations

The International Professional Rodeo Association revolutionized the sport of rodeo in 1964 by creating a Board of Governors including representatives from each segment of rodeo—stock contractors, contestants, fans, producers, and contract performers. This body became the association's rule and policymaking body.

Revolutionary actions are not foreign to the IPRA. In 1961, the IPRA became the first rodeo association to recognize cowgirl's barrel racing as a world championship event, nearly a decade before the women's liberation movement became widespread across the country.

Women have regularly served on its governing boards and the IPRA has been an industry leader in rodeo management. A clinic for the education of rodeo judges in 1963 and an illustrated judging handbook made its debut in 1969. In 1996, a Senior Pro Judges program was incorporated to further enhance the quality of IPRA judging at all sanctioned rodeos.

The association created the Miss Rodeo USA pageant in 1965, providing the association with its own traveling rodeo ambassador and educator. In 1966, the association began providing insurance for its members. It established its own Humane Activities Office in 1970 in an effort to minimize the adverse effects of the growing and dangerous animal rights movement toward rodeo. The IPRA was the first to develop a strong regional system that continues to reward cowboys and cowgirls who choose to limit their travel.

In 1997, the IPRA incorporated its own Central Entry System. Through the CES the methods for contestants entering IPRA rodeos all across the United States were streamlined and made easier. The CES also produced a fair and unbiased method of entering rodeos for all members.

In 1998, the IPRA began recognizing both a world champion header and heeler in the team-roping event. In 2011, the association approved Cowgirls Breakaway Roping as a recognized championship event bringing the total number of world championships awarded to ten, including the all-around, bareback riding, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, cowgirls barrel racing, tie-down roping, team roping header, team roping heeler, and bull riding.

The International Finals Rodeo (The IFR)

The Past

The association began planning for its first post-season event, the International Finals Rodeo in 1968. The first IFR was held in February 1971 with a total payoff of \$47,000. The IFR was held at the Tulsa Assembly Center for the 1970 season and was sponsored by the local Jaycees. Tulsa remained the home of the IFR until the end of the 1973 season when it relocated to the Tingley Coliseum in Albuquerque, NM.

The IFR returned to Tulsa in 1975 and remained there until 1990. After the IFR celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1990, the IPRA announced that they had signed a multi-year agreement with the Oklahoma City All Sports Association to move the event to the Myriad Convention Center beginning in January 1991. In 1997, IFR27 moved to the State Fair Arena in Oklahoma City. The new Ford Center in downtown Oklahoma City hosted IFR33 in 2003.

The Present

The IFR's roots are now firmly planted back at the newly renovated State Fair Arena with four action packed rodeo performances. A western trade show transforms the concourse of the State Fair Arena into a shopper's paradise. The IFR Bucking Stock Sale draws contractors from across the country as some of rodeos top stock is bought and sold during the two-day event. The association's contract performers have an opportunity to showcase their talents before stock contractors and rodeo committees during the Contracts Act Showcase. The IPRA's annual convention held during IFR week includes several important meetings as well as informative seminars are held for rodeo committee

members and personnel. A Senior Pro Judges Clinic hones the rodeo judge's skills and knowledge of the events and IPRA rules. Miss Rodeo USA contestants also have a full schedule during IFR week as their pageant covers all aspects of a traditional pageant with a western twist.

The International Finals Youth Rodeo

The International Pro Rodeo Association is the parent organization of the "world's richest high school rodeo". The IFYR, held in July at the Heart of Oklahoma Expo Center in Shawnee, OK, hosts over 1,000 high school age cowboys and cowgirls from across the country. Canadian contestants as well as competitors from Australia and Hawaii have been part of the entry roster. The rodeo consists of 11-performances with 2-performances daily, three arenas running simultaneously, and loads of rodeo action. IPRA personnel handle the judging, announcing, and secretarial duties of this tremendous rodeo. The IFYR is now over 20 years old and has an annual payoff of nearly \$200,000.

Visions of the Future

With their focus on the future of the association and the industry of rodeo, the IPRA's general manager, staff, and Board of Directors, have their eyes trained on growth and expansion. Expanding the association into new geographic areas as well as expansion in sponsorship markets are both key factors in the future of the IPRA.

More information on the IPRA

To learn more about the International Pro Rodeo Association visit the website at www.iprarodeo.com or call the office at 405-235-6540.