

RODEO ROPES IN FANS

*Thousands
turn out for
Norco event*

BY JERRY SOIFER
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NORCO

Progress can't strip rodeo of its old-time appeal in the equestrian city of Norco.

The 23rd annual Norco Mounted Posse PRCA rodeo drew a standing room crowd Saturday at Ingalls Park to set the stage for a weekend of possible record-breaking attendance.

The rodeo drew about 8,200 Saturday combined with 7,500 Friday, said rodeo spokeswoman Laura Eliassen. Fans saw stars such as former steer wrestling champion Luke Branquinho compete for a total of \$28,000 in prize money.

The rodeo concludes today at 6:30 p.m.

"People know we're a fun rodeo," said rodeo chairwoman Nancy Shannon. "We try to do things for the spectator. We've kept our prices down."

"We have gotten more enthusiasm out of these Norco people than any event we've ever done," said Dallas Tuff, spokeswoman for Quality



Gary Gordon, of Porterville, competes in an event during the rodeo in Norco on Saturday.

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Toyota of Corona, the presenting sponsor of the rodeo for the first time.

The zeal of the fans for the

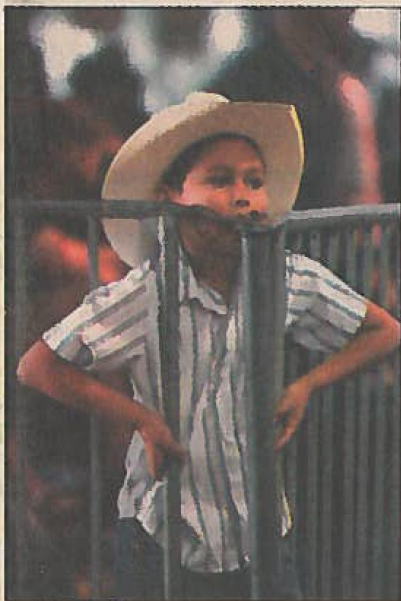
sport was surpassed by some of the performers.

Branquinho performed in Bremerton and Kennewick,

Wash., during the week, drove about 1,500 miles with three other cowboys to his ranch in Los Alamos, practiced Friday

and Saturday, drove to an Orange County rodeo and then doubled back to Norco.

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Jorge Brito, 7, waits for the Norco Mounted Posse PRCA rodeo to start. The event drew about 16,000 over two days.

RODEO

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World all-around champion Trevor Brazile, of Decatur, Texas, competed in San Juan Capistrano earlier in the day and later drove to Norco to ride.

Trailers are so improved that the horses now ride in limousine-like luxury.

"They make them so they ride so nice now," said Branquinho. "You put feed and water in front of them and they're happy. It's more our bodies we're concerned about. We get some good sleep."

Even the two horses used to pick up the riders from the bucking events are groomed in salon-like conditions.

Jeri Reeder, of Corinne, Utah, used a device that not only washed but also massaged the two horses. Reeder said she can feel the adrenalin pumping through the pick-up horses like an athlete's body during the bucking events.

Riders turn to energy drinks for a boost. Eric Frazier, of Mira Loma, consumed an energy drink before scoring a 55 on



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Eric Frazier, of Mira Loma, competes in the bareback riding event during the annual rodeo in Norco on Saturday. The 23rd annual Norco Mounted Posse PRCA rodeo will wrap up at 6:30 p.m. today.

Scooby Doo DG in the bareback event. Frazier said he needed the boost to jolt the horse before the horse could attempt to buck him off.

"I felt I did good," said Frazier.

Jody Jackling, of Quail Valley, traveled even farther than the performers to get to the Norco rodeo Saturday — 41 years. That's how long it had been since he first rode a steer as a 10-year-old boy growing up in Norco. Jackling had a

diamond earring in his left lobe, something cowboys didn't wear back in the 1970s.

Jackling said he and his wife arrived nearly two hours before the start so he could get a seat in the front row of the west stands across from the bucking chutes.

"This is special," Jackling said. "I've never seen them ride bucking horses before the grand entry."

Reach Jerry Soifer at 951-893-2112 or jsoifer@PE.com