

Crimber, 24, is riding in his first NFR one year after joining the PRCA. It was his first successful ride for the week. Remember the .5 score. It will be worth a lot of money.

ROUND THREE: The Semi Eliminators. A salty pen of pretty bad bucking bulls are out tonight and only three of them were ridden.

Paulo Crimber, with a recently broken bone in his riding hand, won the round with an outstanding ride on *Mr. Smokeless USA* for a 93.5 score. The big, flashy bull with lots of moves from Diamond G always seems to buck good in Las Vegas.

Mr. USA made a big, high jump out and a fast turn into Crimber's hand, went a couple of more, then made a reverse turn that put the rider out on the end of his arm. Somehow, Crimber made a great get-off at the whistle and went into his famous Brazilian Victory Break Dance that bull riding fans are so familiar with.

While people in the audience were going nuts waiting for the score to come in, Flint Rassmussen, the barrelman, faced off against Crimber and did a great job of mirroring his dance moves, but the fun wasn't over yet.

When Crimber mounted up to take a victory lap, his horse pitched a bucking fit with him on board. Crimber hung on as the saddle slid to one side until the horse



Paulo Crimber shows off his saddle bronc riding skills when attempting his victory lap after round 3.

Photo © 2004 Rusty Riddle Photography.

bucked close enough to the chutes for him to grab hold of the gate and bail off. With a big grin on his face he threw his hat at the horse. Crimber stayed on the horse so well during the wild and western ride, he might have a hidden talent and be a two event cowboy.

The other successful rides in the round were: BJ Schumacher 88; Jesse Bail 83.5 and Matt Austin 67.

ROUND FOUR: The bulls out tonight are mostly good to ride and several guys should get the whistle.

Crimber won his second consecutive round of bull riding tonight in front of 17,367 fans at the Thomas & Mack Center. He scored 92 points on Burns Rodeo's *Black Sabbath*. The bull had a 90% buck-off rate.

His bull took a big jump out and around into his hand. Crimber had a good seat, but he had to work hard to keep it.

As the score came in Crimber and the barrelman did their duet victory dance to cheers from the crowd.

"My bull was real fast and wanted me inside and then outside," Crimber said. "I had to work harder than last night, but I made it. I've been blessed. I am drawing good bulls and riding good. I've got a good woman, my wife, behind me and she gives me a lot of help," he said after the round.

"I just want to say thanks Lord for giving this present to me." When the reporter said, "I think your dance is awesome," he replied, "I just do this for the peoples. You know everybody likes it. I just do it to make the clown happy and to make myself happy."

Everybody in the locker room likes Crimber because he always has a smile on his face whether he is 92 or 0.

The other six guys who got the whistle in the round were: BJ Schumacher 85.5 and Dustin Elliott 84. Matt Austin, Zack Oakes and Fred Boettcher all tied with an 82.5 score.

ROUND FIVE: It's 'Are You Tough Enough To Wear Pink?' night. As a national television and official sponsor of the NFR, Sutter Home designated December 7th as Breast Cancer Awareness Night in recognition of the Sutter Home for Hope campaign.

Donations were made based on the number of contestants who wore pink shirts during tonight's performance. For each contestant wearing a pink shirt a \$100 donation was made. If a pink-shirted contestant won one of the night's seven events an additional \$1,000 was donated.

Easily 90% of the contestants, arena helpers, announcers and fans in the seats were wearing some shade of pink.

The rank eliminator pen is out tonight. If most of the bulls on the stock draw list have the word Dippin' in their name, it's not a good sign.

It wasn't surprising they rode only four bulls tonight and two of them had softer trips than usual.

Perhaps the patriarch of the pen was Rafter G's *Dippin' Durango*. In his lifetime, the 12-year-old bull had been bucked 400 times and rode only three. This was his sixth trip to the NFR. Recently, Neal Gay made the decision that after the finals he would buck *Durango* twice at the Fort Worth, TX, rodeo early next year then retire him.

World standings bull riding leader Dustin Elliott drew *Durango*. The bull came left out of the chutes. Elliott kept riding the front and reaching for the left horn with his free arm and stayed square with his body. He had a great seat and was in shape and control of the ride all the way. He scored 89.5 well-earned points to win the round.

The other rides tonight were Beau Hill with a 83.5 on *Dippin' Oreo* from Slash T rodeo for second place; Cody Buller 69.5 and Crimber with a 59.5 score.

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Crimber is the only one who has ridden four bulls and he refused a reride tonight. Remember watch that .5 score.

ROUND SIX: The bulls in this pen are very uneven. Their buck-off percentage goes from 53% all the way to 100%.

They rode six bulls tonight so everyone who made the whistle gets a paycheck, but Fred Boettcher gets the biggest one. He scored 86 points on Guidry's *XS Energy* to win the round.

The bull went to the right, away from his hand and kept spinning as he faded across the arena in front of the chutes. It was a rough get-off for the cowboy from Wisconsin, but he bounced up quick and climbed to safety.

Boettcher, one of the most likeable guys around and almost the oldest in the locker room, was not 100% healthy coming into the finals and they beat him up some more in the first round.

"That bull is small and hard for someone tall like me to handle," Boettcher said after the ride. "I felt like a cat on water all the time. I was trying to get around there, but he had me in and out of the well. I just wouldn't let go."

"I separated my right shoulder two weeks ago in Dallas and the first night here they welcomed me with a black eye. It's bull riding I guess. That's why they save it to the last," he added.

"These are some of the best bull riders in the world here and a great bunch of guys. I'm just glad to be a part of it. Thank God for Myron (Duarte), I'm the second oldest. It's a great bunch of good young kids and I'm looking forward to the rest of the week," he said.

The other rides tonight were: Cody Buller 85.5; Dustin Elliott 85; Matt Austin 83; Beau Hill 79.5 and Cory Melton 77.

ROUND SEVEN: Two of tonight's bulls have never been ridden and the guys don't know much about a couple of others.

Cody Buller from Glendive, MT, an NFR rookie, drew one of the better known bulls and one he has had previous close encounters with, Korkow Rodeo's *Action Cat Dip*.

Tonight, he was hard to get out on, lying against the backside of the chutes so Buller couldn't get his leg forward and down to the slat. When he did get right, Buller called for him and *Action Cat* took a big jump out, made a hard right into his hand, but Buller had found a good seat, got his head back and square. The bull pulled him around each turn. He finished the ride with a smooth get-off at the whistle. Buller's score was 89 to win the round.

"I've been on that bull three times and rode him twice. The first time was three years ago. He was just a calf and real wild, but I rode him then," Buller said after the ride.

"I got on him a second time earlier this year and it didn't turn out quite as well. He jerked me down on the second jump. He bucked probably the hardest tonight that I've ever been on him," he added.

"He comes from up in North Dakota and I've seen him a lot, but never out of a left hand delivery. Tonight, it worked out for me."

The other five successful rides were: Matt Austin 88.5; Zack Oakes 85.5; Cory Melton 82.5 and Fred Boettcher 81.5.

Melton took a hooking from his draw *T Bar Snuff* of Barnes Rodeo after making the whistle that put him in the hospital. He is out of action for the duration.

ROUND EIGHT: The bull pen tonight has some really good ones in it and a few that are kind of slow and droopy. There could be a number of really fast ones too, so it is another mixed bag. This is the first time out for some bulls, others have been out twice.

Boettcher is back for his second go-round winners' gold buckle after making a 91-point ride on *Wild Side* from Growney Brothers Rodeo Co.

Wild Side went both ways and did everything he could to dump his rider, but Boettcher stayed hooked, made a great ride and a good dismount.

After throwing his hat Boettcher gave his version of the 'Raise the Roof' sign to the crowd.

He started a customary winner's TV interview by saying, "I had a tough bull, but first I want to give my thoughts and prayers to Cory (Melton) and his family. I talked to him in the hospital today and he is doing well and going to be fine. I think that is more important than me riding today."

Thoughts like those are why Boettcher's win tonight was a popular one with the fans.

He added, "I've seen some other guys ride *Wild Side*. As a matter of fact, Cory rode him at a matched bull riding about a year ago. I just kind of thought how he rode him all day today and got it done. I don't know how but it felt pretty good," he added.

"I tell you what, if this is how good it feels to keep winning and coming here, I better pack my bags and try again next year," he grinned.

Other successful rides tonight were: Matt Austin 87.5; Beau Hill 86; Jerry Shepherd 83.5; Paulo Crimber 80.5 and BJ Schumacher 71.

Five guys have now rode five bulls. With two rounds left, the point spread in the average is only 29 between those five. Boettcher leads with 429 and Buller is fifth with his aggregate score of 406.

Those with experience can tell you what the mindset should be now with just two more performances. If you're having trouble, get it fixed in these last two rounds, but if you've got the lead in the average don't make a mistake.

ROUND NINE: The nasty eliminators are out again. They are a bad pen of bucky bulls and the guys are pretty sore.


Every bull has been marked consistently by the judges for 23 points out of a possible 25. Some have buck-off percentages right at 100%. Experience may be the key here.

Cody Buller drew a real heavy hitter with a 96% buck-off record, the 2003 Bull of the Year, Bailey's *Dippin' Super Cool*. He rode him for a round winning 96 score, but it wasn't easy and the get-off was painful to watch.

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The bull came around to the right into his hand and Buller made a good turn, but got stretched out on his arm. He hung tough for a couple of seconds and the bull turned back left into his hand partially picking him back up.

It was a mistake for the bull and right what Buller needed. Maybe the bull realized it because he slam dunked the rider out the back door when he pulled his rope. Buller made a one point landing on his Resistol and did a no-hands headstand. The acrobatics must have dazed Buller a bit because he didn't get the customary TV interview. He did, however, pick up his second gold buckle.

Matt Austin from Wills Point, TX, another NFR rookie, rode Rafter G's *Dippin' Durango* for 87.5 points and placed third in the round.

The win was important for him because he needs some average money to stay ahead of Dustin Elliott who has won a little bit more in go-round money.

Elliott scored 91.5 points on *Dippin' Drop Zone* from Five Star, another bull with a 100% buck-off record, which placed him second in the round.

Zack Oakes had the only other ride tonight. He scored 85.5 for fourth.

ROUND TEN: The bulls out tonight are mostly tough, fast spinners, but the kind you can get a high score on when you make the whistle.

It's going to be a real riding contest because the world championship race is alive and well. Elliott, Austin and Buller are first, second and third in the world standings. While Elliott is leading by about \$18,000, he is sixth in the average having ridden only four bulls.

Buller and Austin are first and second in the average with six bulls rode and only four points apart in their total scores. Boettcher, Hill and Crimber are third, fourth and fifth in the average on five bulls, but including their NFR monies to date they are out of the top five in the world.

The animals are the X Factor tonight and they could care less if a PRCA Championship is close enough to touch. Stub your toe and they will reach out, touch you, and shatter your dreams.

For tonight's performance the bucking order starts at the bottom of the roster with the guys lowest in the average standings and works towards the leaders, who are the last to go. Saving the best for the last always makes for an exciting finish.

Paulo Crimber won the round by making an 89.5 ride on Bad Company's *Hammer Time*. The bull went around to the left, away from his hand, Crimber's feet stayed in,



Paulo Crimber, the 2004 WNFR Bull Riding Champion.
Photo © 2004 Connie Klassen

he made a good move and rode him.

A mighty happy Brazilian did his arena victory dance on Sunday afternoon in Las Vegas.

Beau Hill placed second with his 86 score on *Mojo Dippin'* from Powder River Rodeo and Zack Oakes finished third with an 85 on *Copper Top* of Stace Smith Rodeo fame.

Buller bucked off Beutler Brothers & Cervi's *J-Lo* at 3.7 seconds. Austin rode *Delightful Doug* from Silver Spurs for only 7.2 seconds and Elliott, the last guy out went down from Joe Simon's *Dippin' Cooter* at 3.3 seconds.

So the top three leaders all failed to make the whistle and opened the door for Paulo Crimber to win the \$37,898 average check with a score of 500.5 on six bulls and pick up another \$14,778 for winning the round. Unfortunately he was so far behind Elliott that he couldn't overtake him for the lead in the world standings.

Elliott was so upset with himself for bucking off that the fact he was the new 2004 World Bull Riding Champion didn't sink in for several minutes.

Cody Buller placed second in the average with 500.0 on six and earned \$30,747. Remember the .5 score mentioned earlier? It meant the loss of a great deal of honor, a gold NFR average buckle and \$7,000 to Buller.

Beau Hill finished third in the average with 499.0 on six, Matt Austin was fourth with 496.0 on six and Fred Boettcher with a 429.0 score on five bulls.

This was Hill's third NFR and although he didn't win a round, he placed in six of them. Since the third night, he was riding with a very painful torn tendon and muscle on his riding arm between the wrist and elbow. It was a gutsy performance for the family man from Montana.

During the TV interview Elliott said, "I guess it has sunk in now that I won, but I'm still mad at myself because I bucked off tonight. I hate bucking off. I didn't want to go out like that. I wanted to go out in style."

"It's been a week of ups and downs, but I guess this means I recovered OK. I started off slow and my wife was getting on me. I'm glad I won a round and was 91 last night," he added.

"Man! It does feel good. Thanks to everybody that has been behind me all year, especially my family and my sponsors."

The top four in the world are NFR rookies. To say the sophomore class looked great this year is an understatement. Congratulations to all the contestants.



Dustin Elliott, the 2004 PRCA Bull Riding World Champion.
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