

which was good for a second-place tie, during the Wrangler ProRodeo Tour round on the rodeo's final day.

Downare pocketed \$9,581 after finishing eighth in Round 1 and tied for fourth in Round 2. Equally important, he earned 22.5 Tour points. How big was this win? In his three previous campaigns in ProRodeo Downare had never won more than \$13,667. He kicked off 2004 by winning \$10,000 in Denver.

"This is my biggest win ever," Downare said. "I won the Colorado State Fair in 2001, but nothing I've done compares to this."

It's not that Downare took anybody by surprise. He was runner-up for the PRCA's bareback riding rookie of the year award in 2001, so he displayed potential early on. But that potential didn't translate into a major payday until the Tour stop in Denver.

About the only thing that didn't go right for Downare during the Tour round was the luck of his brother, Micky, who also rode his way into the Tour round.

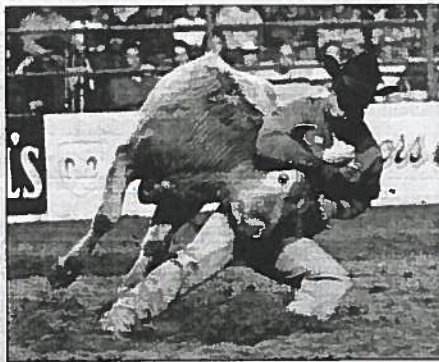


**Career win:** Bareback rider Monte Downare posted the biggest win of his young career, winning the aggregate title in Denver.

The two travel together and root for each other. Micky posted a 64-point ride on his first bronc in the Tour round and earned a re-ride, but couldn't match his brother's effort, finishing with a 78-point effort on his second bronc.

"There's no rivalry between us, none at all," Monte Downare said. "We travel together and we get along really well. I wanted to see him do better than me."

Jason Havens finished a productive week by winning the Tour round with an 84-point ride aboard Diamond G Rodeo's Lil Brown Jug. He finished with 18.5 Tour points and pocketed \$6,106.



**Quick work:** Matt Gilbert dominated the steer wrestling in Denver, capturing the Tour round and the aggregate title while earning \$10,982.

## Gilbert feeling a Mile High

With 1,000 head of cattle back home, South Dakota steer wrestler Matt Gilbert tries to make the most of his abbreviated rodeo schedule.

In Denver, the Ludlow, S.D., cowboy needed just 13.7 seconds to walk away with the aggregate crown, Tour-round title, \$10,982 and 27 Tour points.

"It's (Wrangler Tour) a real good deal for me," said Gilbert, 28. "It used to be a trailer race that I couldn't afford. I couldn't be gone that much. I'm on a ranch with my brother, dad and wife. We have a lot of cows and it gets pretty busy in the spring, summer and fall.

"I now have to at least go to the Tour rodeos and try to make the Tour finals where a guy can win big chunks and maybe not have to go to every rodeo."

Gilbert, the 2003 Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo champion, clinched his victory thanks to a 4.6-second run in the Tour round. Traveling partner Ivan Teigen, the 1990 NFR aggregate champ, worked the hazing side.

Teigen, Gilbert, 2003 reserve world champion Birch Negaard, 2000 World Champion Frank Thompson and Gilbert's brothers, Denver and

Pine, all attended Harding County High School.

"I've traveled with Ivan for seven years and he's been great," Gilbert said.

With January in the books, Gilbert leads the Jack Daniel's World Standings with \$12,189. Last year, he won a total of \$6,751 (not counting the DNCFR).

## Key, Cooper make clean break

Texans David Key and Clay O'Brien Cooper look back on their 2003 campaign and realize that their slow start kept them from making a serious run at seven-time and reigning world champions Speed Williams and Rich Skelton.

Their game plan is to make sure that doesn't happen in 2004.

Key of Caldwell and Cooper of Glen Rose celebrated the new year by winning the Tour round with a time of 5.4 seconds. The pair, who finished fourth and fifth respectively in the world standings in 2003, won \$4,595 each and picked up 19.25 Tour points each.

Chad Masters of Adams, Tenn., and Michael Jones of Stephenville, Texas, captured the aggregate title with a three-run time of 15.8 seconds. They won an event-best \$7,411 and notched 25.5 Tour points.

"Last year we didn't have a good winter and it's almost like putting yourself behind the 8-ball," Key said. "Then you have to do everything you can to catch up. We didn't make the first Tour finale at the MGM. This year my goal was to rope smart at all these Tour rodeos and make the Tour finale, both of them.

"There, you have a chance to win \$25,000 at each of them and get to Dallas. We didn't get to Dallas either, so we had only one chance at the \$25,000 where everyone else had two or three."

Masters and Jones, eighth and seventh respectively in 2003, are also hoping a fast start will help them stay in contention for a gold buckle.

Jones, though, said it's been a little bit slow since the curtain dropped on the Wrangler NFR on Dec. 14.



**Key win:** David Key, right, and Clay O'Brien Cooper came up big in the Tour round in Denver, posting a run of 5.4 seconds. The victory was worth a total of 19.25 Wrangler ProRodeo Tour points.



"We've kind of had the shanks here lately," Jones said. "Coming off something that big, things weren't going as expected. But we came here and just had good luck all week."

Jones said he and Masters hope to improve on a couple of areas of their roping this year.

"We don't jackpot very good and the longer setups and bigger cattle I'm not as good on them," Jones said. "So hopefully we can knock those out this winter and see if we can't have a better summer."

## DeMoss finds some good luck

Cody DeMoss hadn't had much luck in his four previous trips to the National Western Stock Show & Rodeo in Denver.

About the best he'd done was pick up a \$200 check in 2003. He'd never made it back for the Tour round.

But all that bad luck is a distant memory now. The 23-year-old cowboy from Crowville, La., walked away with the rodeo's saddle bronc riding aggregate title with a three-head total of 248 points after posting an 81-point ride aboard Big Stone Rodeo's Wolf Creek, which was good for a tie for second in the Tour round.

The victory earned DeMoss \$16,479 and just as big, he also picked up 31.5 Tour points.

"I had one that was kind of an eliminator today, but he worked out pretty good," said DeMoss, who earned his first trip to the Wrangler NFR in 2003, finishing 12th in the world standings. "You pretty much couldn't have asked for a better start to the year. This was perfect."

DeMoss was especially pleased with the bundle of Tour points he earned. He's never quali-

fied for a Pace Picante ProRodeo Tour championship event and would like to change that in 2004.

"I'd like to make it to one of those Tour finales," Demoss said. "This may be the first one I ever get to go to."

DeMoss' strategy for the rest of the year is simple.

"I'm going to go to all the big rodeos and try to win," he said. "That's all you can do."

Six-time World Saddle Bronc Riding Champion Dan Mortensen of Billings, Mont., and four-time world saddle bronc riding champion Billy Etbauer of Edmond, Okla., tied for the Tour-round victory. Mortensen rode Burch Rodeo's Bath Bubbles for 83 points and Etbauer matched it aboard Burch Rodeo's Mullen Hill.

## Bryant shakes injury bug

Blu Bryant has a simple wish for 2004. He wants to stay healthy. While that may sound reasonable to some, it's asking quite a lot given Bryant's vocation - ProRodeo bull rider.

Bryant, the world runner-up in 1999, has struggled with injuries in the past and 2003 was no exception. He separated all the ribs on his left side from the sternum, forcing him to miss the heart of the rodeo season and, as a result, failed to



**90-plus:** Cameron Castleberry produced the best ride of his young career, posting a 93-point score aboard Diamond G Rodeo's Mr. Smokeless USA to win the Tour round.

qualify for the Wrangler NFR.

Don't ask Bryant about his history of injuries, unless you've got plenty of time on your hands.

"I've got too many, you ain't got enough tape (in your tape recorder)."

But one thing is certain. When Bryant is healthy, he is good at what he does, as evidenced by his performance at the National Western Stock Show & Rodeo. Bryant tied for fourth in Round 1, won Round 2 and finished second in the Tour round en route to a three-head total of 253 that easily won the aggregate title.

He earned \$15,299 and picked up 30.5 Tour points.

"Those Tour finales are really good," Bryant said. "I missed the one in Omaha (Neb.) by a couple of points."

ProRodeo rookie Cameron Castleberry, 21, won the Tour round with a personal best 93-point ride aboard Diamond G Rodeo's Mr. Smokeless USA. He finished with 19 Tour points and paychecks worth \$7,810.

## Allen wins her case

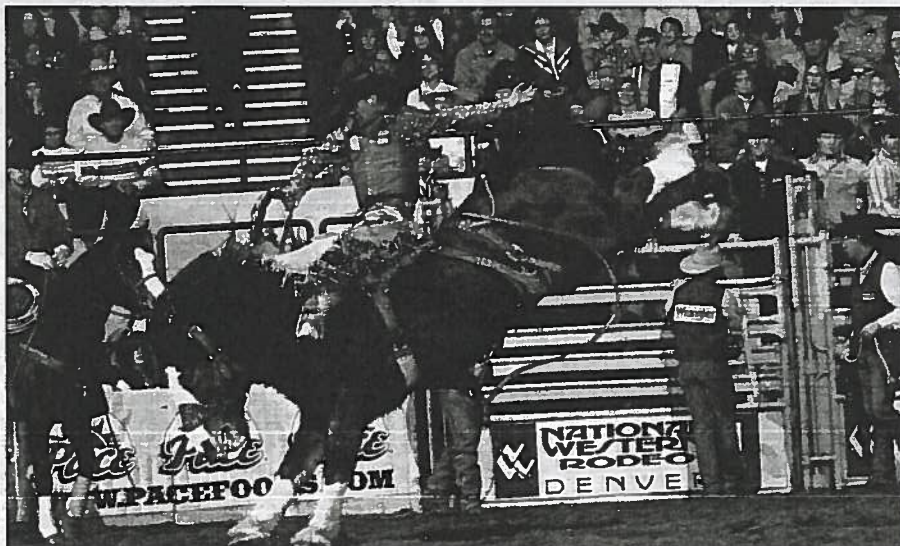
Kappy Allen scampered around the sold-out Denver Coliseum in a blistering time of 14.99 seconds to claim the Tour round and aggregate championship.

Allen, a civil attorney from Austin, Texas, completed the cloverleaf pattern three times in an event-best 45.18 seconds.

Ranked sixth in 2003, Allen kicked off the new season by winning \$9,403 in Denver.

Her textbook runs in the Mile High City resembled those of last year's Wrangler NFR, where she won \$59,731 over 10 days. Allen has qualified for four Wrangler NFRs and has never knocked over a barrel inside the Thomas & Mack Center.

Katti Cash of Wilcox, Ariz., finished with an event-best 34 Tour points, with Allen snagging 29.



**On a roll:** Cody DeMoss hadn't had much luck in Denver, but that changed. He rolled to the aggregate title and finished third in the Tour round, earning \$16,479 and 31.5 Tour points.