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HOMETOWN CONTESTANTS

Bull rider Cody Keathley, barrel racer Dusta Kimzey don't have far to travel for this weekend's Elk City Rodeo

Elk City, Okla. (August 26, 2019) – When the 81st annual Elk City Rodeo of Champions stampedes into town this weekend, contestants from thirteen states will be there to compete for a piece of the prize money.

And among those several hundred cowboys and cowgirls are two who don't have to travel far to get to the rodeo.

Cody Keathley, a bull rider from Sweetwater, and Dusta Kimzey, a barrel racer from Strong City, will be in town to compete.

Keathley, who is twenty years old, has been a bull rider since he was young.

He competed in junior rodeos, including the Junior Rodeo Cowboys Assoc. and the Out West Bull Ridings, and in high school rodeo as well, finishing three of his four high school years as the Oklahoma High School Rodeo Association bull riding champion.

In his second year as a student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford, Keathley competes in the bull riding in college rodeo as well. He's working towards a degree in parks and recreation/law enforcement.

He remembers as a kid, being a spectator at the Elk City rodeo. "Me, my mom and my dad used to go there," he said. "I always looked up to everybody who was riding." He remembers hoping to see PBR world champion bull rider Justin McBride, who, at the time, was living in the area.

He also remembers tagging along with his older sister, Taylor, when she was a teenager. She'd ask to go to the rodeo with her friends. "My parents would say, if you're going to hang out with your friends, you can take your brother along," Keathley said.

This will be the second year for Keathley to compete in Elk City. He is on his PRCA permit, which means he's not a full-card holding member yet but can apply for his PRCA card after he's won \$1,000 at the professional level.

Cody is the son of Tammy Merz and the late Gene Keathley.

Barrel racer Dusta Kimzey may have some “customers” in the crowd.

The cowgirl is a relief pharmacist, subbing in the Grandview Pharmacy in Elk City, and pharmacies in Cheyenne and Wheeler and Shamrock, Texas.

She works about four days a week, which gives her the flexibility to compete.

Not only does Kimzey run barrels, but she is a specialty act performer that trick rides and has a mini horse that does tricks.

Kimzey performs at rodeos across the nation and estimates she’s worked 75 performances this year so far, one of her best years ever.

She competed in high school rodeo, qualifying for the National High School Finals four times in the barrel racing, pole bending, and as the Miss Oklahoma High School Rodeo Queen twice. She was also the National High School Association student secretary.

Competing at her hometown rodeo can be stressful, she said. “It brings a whole new level of pressure, honestly,” she said, “to go in and do well in front of your friends, family, co-workers and peers.”

Kimzey will marry Will O’Connell, a PRCA member, in October. Her dad, Ted, is a former bullfighter and barrelman and the fifth generation on the 11 Bar Ranch north of Elk City.

Her mother, Jennifer, lives in Foss City.

The Elk City Rodeo takes place August 30-31-September 1 at Beutler Bros. Arena at Ackley Park. Performances begin at 8 pm nightly; tickets range in price from \$9 to \$18 and can be purchased at Circle A Western Wear, at Doug Gray Dodge in Elk City, and at the gate. For more information, visit the rodeo’s website at www.ElkCityRodeo.com or call Doug Gray Dodge at 580.225.3005.

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Cutline: Dusta Kimzey competes at the 2015 Elk City Rodeo. The Strong City, Kan. cowgirl is the sixth generation of her family to be on the Eleven Bar Ranch. Photo by Lone S Photos.