

BLACK COWBOY EXCELLENCE CELEBRATED IN FORT WORTH AS BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO CROWNS NEW CHAMPIONS

BPIR in collaboration with PBR proudly concluded the second stop of its 2025 Texas Connection Series on Saturday, May 17, at Fort Worth's Cowtown Coliseum

FORT WORTH, TX, UNITED STATES, May 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo](#) (BPIR), in partnership with PBR ([Professional Bull Riders](#)), proudly wrapped up a memorable second stop of its 2025 Texas Connection Series this past Saturday, May 17, at the historic Cowtown Coliseum in Fort Worth, Texas. With two electrifying shows at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM, the event honored military heroes and spotlighted the unmatched talent of Black rodeo athletes, continuing BPIR's legacy as "The Greatest Show on Dirt."

The evening rodeo show featured a powerful tribute to the United States Armed Forces. U.S. Navy Retired Veteran Ramona Ross-Bacon was awarded the BPIR/Crown Royal

"Royal Rider Community Award" for her exemplary service and community leadership.

Commander Robert Polk opened the show with a heartfelt rendition of the National Anthem, followed by a soul-stirring performance of Lift Every Voice and Sing by Dacia Kings, Fort Worth finalist from the 2024 Soul Country Music Star.

Earlier in the day, BPIRF (Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation) hosted a dynamic "Saddle Up with BPIRF – Ridin' High with STEM" youth workshop for 50 local students. In partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the workshop introduced young minds to career paths in agriculture while connecting Western heritage to science and innovation.



BPIR Bull Rider Texas Connection Series Fort Worth, TX. Photo Credit: Cowboy World, AD Hatton

During the 1:30 PM matinee, the BPIR Foundation and Crown Royal awarded \$100,000 in grant funding through the 2025 Hats Off Grant, supporting the dreams and development of six exceptional BPIR athletes: Azja Bryant, Breanna Meyer, Kaneshia Jackson, Daryl Elliott, Dennis Chachere, and Wyatt Raymond.

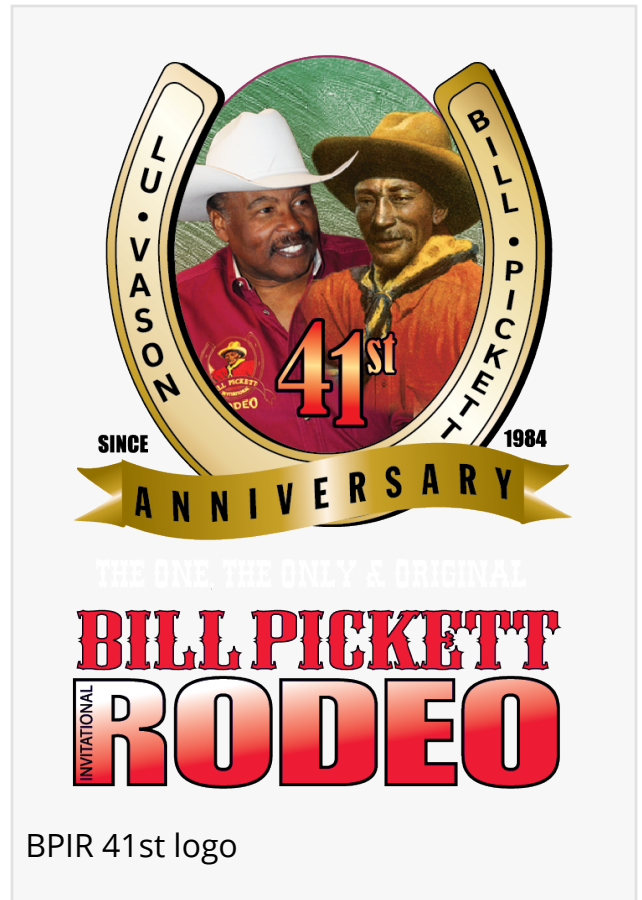
Competition Highlights

Crowds were treated to thrilling, high-stakes rodeo action across categories including bull riding, barrel racing, tie-down roping, bulldogging, team roping, ranch bronc riding, and youth events. The athletes showcased their agility, courage, and commitment to preserving Black cowboy heritage through sport.

Main Show Results – Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

The competition was fierce as the top Black cowboys and cowgirls brought their A-game to the arena. Here's a look at the standout performances from the main show:

- Bareback/Ranch Bronc Riding: Damon Hopkins impressed the judges with grit and style, earning a top score of 68 points and riding away with the win.
- Bull Riding: The bulls won this round—no qualified rides were recorded, proving once again why this is one of the most difficult events in rodeo.
- Team Roping: Timing and teamwork paid off for Devon Johnson and Montrel Gilder, who stopped the clock at 4.11 seconds for a smooth and skillful win.
- Steer Wrestling: With strength and precision, Tony Aska claimed victory with a time of 4.42 seconds, showcasing his veteran experience.
- Ladies Steer Undecorating: Jazmine Bennett delivered a lightning-fast run, snagging the ribbon in just 1.69 seconds to secure her spot at the top.
- Ladies Breakaway Roping: Azja Bryant roped the win with a clean, quick catch at 2.41 seconds, highlighting her sharp timing and focus.
- Ladies Barrel Racing: Paris Wilburd blazed through the barrels with a winning time of 13.449 seconds, combining speed and control.
- Jr. Barrel Racing: Young talent Josephine Gajewski clocked in at 14.151 seconds, earning first place in her division.
- PeeWee Barrel Racing: Future rodeo star Kali Poole made a strong showing with a time of 16.335 seconds, bringing smiles and cheers from the crowd.
- Jr. Breakaway Roping: KJ Akins roped in a win at just 3.13 seconds, proving the next generation of ropers is already making waves.
- Jr. Tie Down Roping: With a time of 9.31 seconds, Jeffrey Hayes III secured a well-earned



BPIR 41st logo

victory.

- Open Calf Roping: Tyler Calhoun took the title with a precise run of 7.41 seconds, standing out in a stacked field of competitors.

Progressive Round Results

At the 7:30 PM performance, the top seven cowboys and cowgirls advanced to the Progressive Round, where the competition intensified and the evening concluded with the following standout results:

- Bareback/Ranch Bronc Riding: A tie at the top, with both Lamar Hankins and Arthur Taylor earning 68 points for their rides—demonstrating the high level of talent in the field.
- Bull Riding: Once again, the bulls dominated—no qualified rides were made, underscoring the raw power and challenge of this event.
- Team Roping: Trey Morton and Montriell Gilder worked in sync to post a time of 10.21 seconds, earning the win in this round.
- Steer Wrestling: Tory Johnson muscled his way to the top with a strong run of 16.02 seconds.
- Ladies Steer Undecorating: Kanisha Jackson showed skill and speed, finishing with a winning time of 1.36 seconds.
- Ladies Breakaway Roping: Lucile Jackson captured her calf in 2.99 seconds, securing the victory with style.
- Ladies Barrel Racing: Paris Wilburd once again came out on top, delivering a consistent and fast run of 13.512 seconds.
- Open Calf Roping: Kadrion Richard nailed a clean run at 8.03 seconds, sealing his win in the round.

BPIR President and CEO Valeria Howard Cunningham praised the Fort Worth event as a defining moment in the 2025 season: “We’re proud to honor our service members while continuing to elevate the visibility and power of Black rodeo athletes. Our partnership with PBR ensures these events reach broader audiences, while our programs off the dirt—like our STEM workshops and Hats Off Grant—keep our mission strong and community-first.”

The Texas Connection Series continues at Cowtown Coliseum on June 16 and August 16, 2025. For full tour details, tickets, and media inquiries, visit www.billpickettrodeo.com.

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR): Founded in 1984 by Lu Vason, the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo is the nation’s longest-running African American touring rodeo. Created to honor the legacy of legendary cowboy Bill Pickett, BPIR showcases the history, culture, and contributions of Black cowboys and cowgirls, while providing a national platform for today’s top Black rodeo athletes.

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation (BPIRF): The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring future generations by preserving the legacy of Black cowboys and promoting the Western way of life. Through educational

programs, scholarships, and historical preservation, BPIRF ensures that African American contributions to agriculture, rodeo, and American culture are recognized and celebrated for generations to come.

About PBR (Professional Bull Riders): PBR is the world's premier bull riding organization. More than 1,000 bull riders compete in more than 200 events annually across the televised PBR Unleash The Beast tour (UTB), which features the top bull riders in the world; the PBR Pendleton Whisky Velocity Tour (PWVT); the PBR Touring Pro Division (TPD); and the PBR's international circuits in Australia, Brazil, and Canada. In 2022, the organization launched PBR Teams—10 teams of the world's best bull riders competing for a new championship—as well as the PBR Challenger Series with more than 60 annual events nationwide. PBR events are broadcast on CBS Television Network and Paramount+. PBR is a subsidiary of TKO Group Holdings, Inc. (NYSE: TKO), a premium sports and entertainment company. For more information, visit PBR.com, or follow on Facebook at Facebook.com/PBR, X at X.com/PBR, Instagram at Instagram.com/PBR and YouTube at YouTube.com/PBR.

For BPIR tickets, sponsorship opportunities, and media credentials, visit:

www.billpickettrodeo.com

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