

DERBY

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Vermillion's Matt Moore won the award for Best Looking car and took fifth-place in the compact race.

"It feels alright, I could have placed better," Moore said. "I only had a few weeks to build. I painted it my sister's favorite color since it was her birthday. I didn't think I would get best looking car."

The stock race had an interesting element as the dad-son team of Gary and Cody Leet took to the track like a motorcar version of a tag-team wrestling duo.

The Leet's smashed and thrashed their way along the track as their "Doon Posse" painted cars blazed a trail and crashed at will.

But it was Derek Bosler of Norfolk, Nebraska who benefitted from an official's caution that disallowed the Leets from teaming up on the only non-Doon racer left and the tide turned.

Bosler took advantage of some mechanical issues within the Leet camp and came away with the win.

"Once I got used to the car I got more comfortable," Bosler said. "One had trouble with his steering and the dad's car got hot and once I took a couple of hits on him I knew his motor wouldn't start. That's the way it went."

Despite the loss the elder Leet was pleased with his night at the races.

"It was a good time all in all, but I thought I had it won," Gary Leet said.

"That's how it goes. I blew a radiator and Cody's car got locked up. Derek is a good guy."

In the compact race, Moore may have had the best looking vehicle, but in the end Bryar Krohn of Sioux Falls did what needed to be done to win and escape the challenge of Sioux City's Ben Kuhlmann and Ponca's Parker Conrad who ended up in second and third place respectively.

"You have to drive hard to win," Krohn said.

Leading off the night of sprinting and mauling was the Pick-Up race and Cody Hames of Wayne, Nebraska held on to drive the last car purring as all other challengers seemed to peter out at the last minute and all in one gasp.

"It was really slick out there, but it was really fun out there," Hames said. "I was grinding out there and then everyone else were standing and I was just like...OK."

Pierce, Nebraska's Jesse Sackville and Steven Sherman of Wayne took the second and third-place trophies home back south.

Fair Manager Jessica Kennedy was pleased with the night as once again a packed house went home with their appetites for destruction quenched.

It also helped that the rains didn't completely ruin the track which was

made more than race-friendly thanks to local assistance.

"It was a great night, great turnout, great weather and everyone had fun," Kennedy said. "The track did very well because of the city of Vermillion's street department. They had been working on it all day. It turned out better than we expected."

Quite the team

They have been doing derby announcing for two decades and that couldn't be denied as Mark Upward and Bob Bowker once again gave the crowd their rendition of play-by-play.

Upward and Bowker team up to call Vermillion High School football games and took their derby duties seriously enough to evoke similarities to an ESPN call.

The two may be having fun, but it's obvious they want to do right by the crowd.

"I have been doing this for 20 years," said Upward. "It's a good time. They asked us if we wanted to do it again and we said sure. It's fun, it's a good community, and it gets exciting once in a while."

All for Vermillion and one for everyone else

It was pretty apparent that the derby attracted plenty of hometown fans and supporters, but that didn't mean a number of people from around the region didn't find their way to the Clay County arena.

Their reasons may have been slightly different, but their endgames were mutual as everyone who spoke about their time in Vermillion cited the fun to be had.

From locals to non, the derby was a time for all to enjoy.

"I like the entertainment and I love the cars smashing into each other and I love the tracks," Jim Zimmerman, of Vermillion, said.

Dell Rapids' Riley Wolles was in town to watch a friend compete in the derby.

"It's a pretty cool environment," "It's cool how the cars crash into each other. I like mud. I am a country girl so I like mud."

And for some of the local businesses it offers a chance to help keep the fair alive.

Heidi Schoellerman, co-owner of Bunyan's Bar and Grill may take in the festivities and enjoy the sights, but the food and drink services they provide is for a greater cause than just fun in the mud.

"All this money we make goes back to 4-H," Schoellerman said. "This is a good turnout for Vermillion and Clay County and it helps the fair 100 percent. If we didn't have the derby we wouldn't have much of a fair."

"We are working on getting a carnival back into the fair so the derby is a big strength for the town. The people are great and they come from all over and are willing to help out."

4-H members roaming around the arena trying to sell product while a number of leaders and volunteers got together to help stave off the crowds needing to be fed.

"We have them out selling popcorn and the adults are in here, but you will see them back the next day in here working," Hauk said. "It's easier for them to climb up to the top of the stands to sell popcorn while us older people it might be tougher for us to climb that high."

"Tonight is too busy," Falan said. "Derby is the biggest night we have here at the fair and we want to keep them out of here. We keep them out of here when it is really busy, but the kids do their share."

How about them cowboys?

By Alan Dale
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Will Kennedy thought, 'why not?' So Kennedy got to working on a new concept for the Clay County Fair and with the help of his wife Jessica and others, he came up with the first Ranch Rodeo.

The Rodeo was a three competition event featuring Doctoring, Team Penning, and... Cows Are Out.

"We had contestants that were riding at the fair for years and we wanted it to be something where if you couldn't be back on or had something wrong with your knee you could still ride in this deal," he said. "So we came up with something that would be crowd friendly and challenging."

This new look event was what Will Kennedy's vision really exemplified. He wanted something that best represented the day-to-day rancher and he got it ten-fold in a gripping and fascinating team event.

Teams began their heat behind a designated line with two of three cowboys/cowgirls off their horses. The third - on horseback - would approach the fence and pull out an envelope placed in the chain-link and have to calculate a mathematic formula that led to a number 1-7 being determined.

Once the number was figured out, all three cowboys would mount up and head over to the other side of the pen where seven numbered, social, male cows awaited their turn in this masterful game.

"We had some people who had more trouble opening the envelope," Will Kennedy said. "There is nobody out here who is a superstar. We are just out here playing."

If a team were given a number of 'five', that would mean they would have to start by finding that cow marked with the corresponding number and guide him across the same line first. From there the riders would try to make sure the remaining six were led to the same in the order of 6,7, 1,2,3 and 4.

Each team had 90 seconds to qualify and if a cow got too frisky and raced past the line without being the



Cows Are Out was one of three events held during the new Ranch Rodeo held during the 2014 Clay County Fair. Will Kennedy is seen here working to get his cows out and running in the right order.

Plain Talk Staff

needed next one in line, a no score would be recorded.

When the dust settled Will Kennedy's own 'America's Team' of himself, Chris Hopper, and Phil Iverson took first with a strong time of 57.12.

"I had good teammates that carried me," Will Kennedy said. "Throughout the year we ride together a couple of times and we just rode in one of these in Alcester last week that was a little different."

'Bad Company' captured second place as Kennedy again led a strong trio, this time consisting of Ryan Bear and Denny Fanning who finished with a 1:00.00 time.

The third-placed 'High Rollers' came across the line with the final cow with a time of 1:10.04.

A total of 16 teams competed in the event.

"It's really neat to see them go back with this event, because it's kind of a dying breed," Grant Sorensen, who was the public address

announcer for the event, said. "This is showing the true ranch aspect. Guys out on the prairie are doing this every day of the week. They are roping and riding and this is the true penning

where a team works on the ranch. This embodies the ranch.

"This is the competition featuring your cowboys, your ranch hands. This is the competition they could do. Instead of traveling miles for rodeo these guys could have competition between the local ranches and show off their working aspects of life."

Jessica Kennedy spoke to Will about the idea to institute the rodeo at the fair and it all played out smoothly.

"It was mainly Will that mentioned it and I brought it to the fair board and they were pretty easy events to run," Jessica Kennedy said. "(Cows Are Out) turned out good, it's a good event and it touches on some aspects of the horses and how to work the cows."

"You have to have good communication."

All told, it brought the fair back to the roots of living on the ranch and working hard to live the lifestyle.

"It was a fun deal," Will Kennedy said. "We just wanted to do something with the horses at the fair again."

Chainsaw carver's creations helps Clay County Fair

By David Lias
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Blair Smith, who had been a regular at recent Clay County fairs, was noticeably absent for the past couple years.

People were glad to see him return, with chainsaw in hand, to perform his unique sculpture at the 2014 county fair that began in Vermillion last Thursday and wrapped up Saturday, Aug. 9.

Smith, and his wife, Robin, from Westfield, IA, operate B&R Chainsaw Sculptures. During the summer months, they keep busy traveling from town to town, creating unique wood carvings at fairs, art festivals, town celebrations, and fundraisers.

"I haven't been here for a couple years," Smith said. "I went to the national chainsaw carving championships two years ago, and last year, I was in Mankato, KS."

This year, he brought along some extra help to Vermillion - his "neighbor kid," Scotty Toben, from Westfield, IA, who was showing his developing skills as a chainsaw artist at the fairgrounds while Smith took a break.

"He's been traveling with me, and doing some shows. He's a beginning carver, and he's doing really good," he said.

Smith can recognize a talented chainsaw artist, as he's been involved in this unique craft for 14 years now.

"I've been doing demonstrations and carving around the country for most of 10 years now," he said. "I do six fairs, anywhere from

northwest Iowa all the way to Kansas. I've carved all over the United States, I've been in two national chainsaw carving championships, and I've done pretty well."

Smith said he's now aiming at cutting a down a bit on the travel, and going to fairs not far from his home, like Vermillion's. "I also plan to do custom work out of my shop," he said.

Smith said he began chainsaw carving simply to provide some unique yard décor for his wife.

"I had seen people doing this, and then some circumstances happened that sort of just led me to pursue this. The first piece I sold was to my mom - of course your mom will always help you out - and then I sold a piece to the USPS guy, and the rest is history," Smith said, laughing.

He loves to carve walnut, and uses pine wood often in his carvings.

Smith won't cut down live trees to provide materials for his carvings

"They're all dead trees. The wood either comes from scrapyards, or I buy them off trucks that are going to mills," he said. "I don't cut live trees down."

Much of his art is utilitarian in nature, ranging from benches that work well in a garden setting, to a large mouth bass, appearing to leap from its stand with its mouth wide open, which is perfect for holding a bottled beverage at a picnic or campsite. Some of his work has a religious theme, such as a wall-hanging featuring three crosses that later would be sold during a fundraising

auction at the fair.

"You always need a holder for your bottle of pop next to your chair while you're fishing," Smith said.

The proceeds of the items he offers for sale at the auction, he said, all go back to the Clay County Fair.

"I'm a contract carver. I guarantee them four pieces a day, and they (the fair) pay me X amount of dollars to do it," he said. "Everything I do here belongs to them. They bring the logs in, I carve them, and they sell them."



Scotty Toben, a teenager starting out as a chainsaw carver, works on a small piece at the Clay County Fair in Vermillion. Toben accompanied Blair Smith to this year's event.

Plain Talk Staff photo

FOOD

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fair, the stand collects at an average of \$7-8,000 per year.

"Some of the food is donated, but a lot of it is paid for," Fallan said. "This is our main fundraiser for the program. We use that money to provide programming over the whole year."

"We do go beyond just the 4-H members and the money is spread out around the community."

Taking a look around last Friday night during the Demolition Derby one could see

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