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ENGL 1013

Date

National Championship Chuckwagon Races

The National Championship Chuckwagon Races are held in Clinton, Arkansas, every Labor Day weekend. People come from all over the United States just to see these events; some come from all over the world. The hosts of the exciting, entertaining, and often dangerous events are Dan and Peggy Eoff at the Bar Eoff Ranch. The events are divided into Bronc Fanning, Classic Wagons, Snowy River Race, Oklahoma Land Rush, and Buggy/Buckboards.

The Bronc Fanning Contest begins with seven tough competitors who ride during both the Friday and Saturday performances. The rough cowboys are required to fan or wave a hat over the bucking bronc's head after completing the eight-second ride. The fanning proves to the audience the horse has been conquered. Scoring is based on the ability of the rider to stay aboard; the way the horse bucks; and, most importantly, the fanning of the hat. The five riders with the highest scores return on Sunday for the championship ride.

The Classic Wagons Event requires a pair of fast horses, wagon, cook, driver, and an outrider. The cook's responsibility is to instruct the driver how close the opposing wagons may be, load a folded tent into the back of the wagon, and make sure it stays in the wagon during the race. When a gun is fired to start the race, the horses rapidly run about half a mile. The outrider has to throw a cardboard stove in the back of the wagon and mount his horse when the gun is fired. This can be the most dangerous part of the Classic Wagons Event since the wagon must weigh one thousand pounds. The start of the race is crucial because if the outrider has problems

mounting his horse, he could get in the way of the wagons. The outrider and the wagon must both cross the finish line, but the outrider has to finish in front of the wagon. If the wagon finishes with the fastest time but does not have an outrider, the wagon does not qualify. The team with the outrider and the fastest time wins.

The Snowy River Race requires a tough rider in good physical condition and a horse that has endurance and speed. In the first step to winning this race, the rider must descend from a steep hill without his horse stumbling or falling at the sound of the gun being fired. A good start to the race is one of the keys to being in the lead. Next, the riders race across an open field; then they enter the river and swim a short distance across the Little South Fork River. At this point, the horses are tired and wet, and their endurance is tested. Trying to reach the finish line, the riders whip and ride their horses. The rider with the fastest time wins. This event is different because there can be a different winner each day, but with the other events, the winner is the one with the overall best score after three days of competition.

The rules and regulations of the Oklahoma Land Rush state that the wagon must weigh at least three hundred pounds without the driver, the ponies and mules must be no taller than ninety-two inches total, the wagons must resemble miniature Classic wagons, and the twenty-four inch wheels must be iron or wood. The team runs about five hundred yards, and the procedure of the race is basically the same as the Classic Wagons Event. The only difference is that the Oklahoma Land Rush is a shorter distance, and wagon drivers do not have to proceed around a barrel; they just run straight ahead to the finish line.

The Buggy-Buckboard Race is one of the events that illustrate most clearly how the wagon looked back in the western frontier. In this event there are no tarps allowed, the ponies are to be no taller than 104 inches, and the name of the team must be attached to the side of the

buckboard. Timing is everything in this race. If there is less than one second between the first and second fastest time, a runoff will be held with the top three teams. The first team across the finish line is the winner. This race is the same distance as the Oklahoma Land Rush, but the event is run just like the Classic Wagons Event.

All these events make up the National Championship Chuckwagon Races, a highly anticipated event each year. Many thousands of fans follow every second of the excitement. Even though the wagons have improved, the competitors still like to keep it as wild and western as they can at the Bar Eoff Ranch.