

# RNCFR Champs First to Punch Tickets

The Road to Vegas is filled with more lucrative opportunities in 2017 than ever before. The first opportunity came when it was agreed for the first time ever that money won at the RAM Circuit Finals Rodeos would count toward the WEATHER GUARD® PRCA World Standings, followed by money won at the RAM National Circuit Finals Rodeo counting. Now, yet another game-changer is in play with the \$1 million Days of '47 Cowboy Games and Rodeo in Salt Lake City.

"The Days of '47 Cowboy Games and Rodeo is excited to bring a fresh look to professional rodeo and provide additional opportunities, especially to the cowboys' and cowgirls' bank accounts," said Tommy Joe Lucia, Days of '47 General Manager. "We must continue to raise the expectations of the competitors, committees and the fans in order for our sport to continue to grow. We feel this game-changing rodeo will make the Road to Vegas even hotter with \$50,000 being awarded to the champion in each event, along with a one-of-a-kind Gold Medal."

A total of 32 contestants each in bareback riding, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, tie-down roping, barrel racing and bull riding, along with 32 teams in the team roping, will earn the right to compete in the Komatsu Equipment Days of '47 Cowboy Games & Rodeo presented by Zions Bank, July 19-22, 24. The first to punch their tickets to the largest one-day payout in the PRCA regular season were those who captured the coveted RNCFR titles in Kissimmee, Fla. One of which was steer wrestler Justin Shaffer of Hallsville, Texas.

"It was incredible," said Shaffer, when asked what it meant to learn that he had earned a spot in the \$1 million rodeo after capturing the steer wrestling title at his first RNCFR. "It is awesome to have a shot at that amount of money for our standings, but more so to put food on the table for our families is a big plus."

Shaffer spent the 2016 season focused on making the RAM Texas Circuit Finals and the All American ProRodeo Finals, knowing that money won would count towards the world standings. It was an added bonus to find out after winning the RNCFR that he also qualified for the Days of '47 Cowboy Games and Rodeo.

"It gives me more of a cushion when I do take off this summer, and takes some of the pressure off," said Shaffer, who is still looking for his first qualification to the Wrangler NFR. He is currently ranked 14th in the world standings. "I didn't totally change my plans for this year from the past, but seems like it is just coming together better this year. The money has landed in the right spot, and I have a horse that is working better now and I am comfortable with. It seems to all be falling in line."

Although Salt Lake was not initially in his plans for 2017, Shaffer said he is thankful for the opportunity and will probably fly out for the event with hopes of a big win before he and wife, Katy, welcome their second girl.

"I will fly out and back as we are expecting our second child the first of August," said Shaffer, who is already a dad to three-year old Blakey Jo. "It is appreciated would be the best way to describe this opportunity. For a committee to come together and want to pay the cowboys that much really helps our sport overall. It is an honor to get to compete, but even if I wasn't a competitor in that rodeo, it is still neat that they are trying to do



Ric Andersen photo

Justin Shaffer won the RNCFR title with a 3.6-second run in the final round.



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something for the cowboys."

2015 World Champion Saddle Bronc Rider Jacobs Crawley also earned a spot after winning his second RNCFR title. Crawley, of Boerne, Texas, is excited for this new opportunity for all the cowboys going down the road.

"I think any time we can have as much money as is going to be involved in this rodeo, it is exciting and gets cowboys talking," said Crawley. "We all get a little more pep in our step and see another opportunity that could not only help a guy financially, but can get a boost in the world standings."

Others who have earned a trip to Salt Lake City in July are R.C. Landingham (bareback riding), Jesse Stipes/Buddy Hawkins (team roping), Matt Shiozawa (tie-down roping), Emily Miller (barrel racing) and Tanner Learmont (bull riding).

In addition to the RNCFR champions, the top 10 contestants in the PRCA world standings, the leading PRCA Rookie of the Year in each event and the leaders from each of the 12 national PRCA circuits as of July 5, will earn a chance to compete for this record payout. For more information on how the final eight contestants can earn a spot visit [www.daysof47cowboygames.com](http://www.daysof47cowboygames.com).

— Ann Bleiker, Courtesy Days of '47 Cowboy Games and Rodeo