

CALIFORNIA RODEO SALINAS cowboy



PHOTO BY RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN



PHOTO BY RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN



PHOTO BY RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

From Page 39

A top tier of professionals can afford planes to fly from rodeo to rodeo each week. But for most, an old pickup and a horse trailer have to do.

The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association is not unmindful of the strains of getting from Nampa, Idaho, to Salinas, from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, to Cheyenne, Wyo., and so forth. It encourages a buddy system that allows as many as five competitors to travel together and share expenses.

Those select few athletes who can afford it enter more than one rodeo at a time and don't decide until the first day-money pay windows open whether it's worth it to stick around or not.

But for most cowpokes who compete in Salinas, this is it. There's no refund of the entry fee if all goes badly or you happen to draw animals who don't want to perform.

Sometimes the only pay a cowboy or cowgirl will get is some polite applause after a bad spill, a missed lasso throw, a barrel knocked over. Bestow it generously.

Cowboys watch the goings on of the California Rodeo Salinas from the vantage of the chutes in 2005. Some use the time to visit and catch up with friends, others to prepare themselves for their own competition.

Cowboys have their spiritual side, bull riders particularly so. Bull rider Gary Burt says a prayer of thanks and gratitude in 2003 after scoring a 92 on a ride. Burt won the bull riding championship buckle that year.

A professional rodeo cowboy has fewer things in this world of greater value to him than his saddle. In 2004, competitors in the saddle bronc event check their gear before climbing into the chutes.