

Below, sweethearts Bryce Dibbern of Amherst, Neb., and Tylee Coffman of Dunning, Neb., catch the team roping competition during Nebraska's Big Rodeo in July.



At left, Chuck Fryzek catches Luis Maldonado as he is knocked over the fence during the wild horse race. Burwell's rodeo is one of the few in the country that still have the race, which requires participants to contain and saddle a horse, then ride it completely around the track.

Below, Burwell native Bryant Kelley waits to compete in the Marty Sheets Memorial Junior Steer Riding. Junior events are mixed with professional events and allow young cowboys to develop their skills on a large stage.



A defining tradition

When the rodeo hits Omaha or Lincoln, it brings a little country to the city. Nebraska's Big Rodeo in Burwell brings spectators and competitors to the source. Burwell is the front door of the Nebraska Sand Hills, a geographical region marked by more than 19,000 square miles of grass-covered dunes. It's a land of unbroken prairie, shallow lakes, deep skies, hills, windmills, horses and cattle. People here don't wear cowboy hats as fashion accessories. They make a living raising cattle, and for generations they have tied their lives to the land. —Joe Duggan



Above, Josh Graff of Ainsworth, Neb., wrestles a steer to the ground in 8.5 seconds during Nebraska's Big Rodeo. In addition to bronc and bull riding events, the rodeo has several races, steer wrestling, tie down roping and team roping.

At right, thunderhead clouds threaten before moving on during saddle bronc riding. In its 92nd year, the Burwell rodeo continues to draw thousands of fans to the town of 1,200.

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