



K-State RODEO News

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NEW BILBREY EVENTS CENTER OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Students, faculty, staff, donors, K-State rodeo alumni and friends of the university gathered October 10 for a ribbon cutting at the new Bilbrey Family Event Center on the north end of the K-State campus. The official opening of the new K-State Animal Science facility launches a new era of the annual K-State rodeo, as it is the future home of this iconic event, replacing the beloved Weber Arena.

During the ceremony, speakers included K-State President Richard Linton, interim K-State Dean of Agriculture Dan Moser and representatives from the Kansas governor's office and the Kansas Legislature. Major donors also were recognized. Among them was Marty Vanier, who was mounted



Vanier on Sixes Sixgun

on Sixes Sixgun and carrying the flag of Tee Jay Quarter Horses/Walker Family Arena. Also featured for the estimated 1,000 in attendance were team roping and barrel racing exhibitions by the K-State Rodeo Team, as well as jumping and reining demonstrations.

The beautiful 2,500-seat building features the 130' by 250' Tee Jay Quarter Horses/Duane and Jo Walker indoor arena complete with purple WW roping and bucking chutes. An 80' by 80' indoor warm-up area is adjacent to the arena. There are covered stock pens for housing and sorting timed event and rough stock animals. Upstairs, there is an impressive VIP room for guests and educational opportunities. Showers for competitors and a wash rack for livestock also are part of the main building.

In addition to serving as the home of the K-State rodeo, the facility will support K-State Animal Sciences & Industry (ASI) teaching, youth and extension events. Following the rodeo, February 19-22, 2026, K-State Cattlemen's Day will take place March 6 in the building.

A new arena the magnitude of Bilbrey has been on the list of stated goals set by the K-State Rodeo Advisory Council for 30 years. The new arena will complement other key components the K-State rodeo program already has in place, including a full-time coach on the ASI staff and an expanding scholarship pool. K-State alumni or friends who would like to help elevate the rodeo program by supporting scholarship efforts should contact K-State Rodeo Advisory Council Chairman Clarke Jackman at (785) 865-6514 or Casey Drodgy at the KSU Foundation at (785) 775-2042.



K-State Rodeo Advisory Council

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(Ex-officio)

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BRAUDRICK BRINGS EXTENSIVE RODEO EXPERIENCE TO K-STATE

The K-State Department of Animal Sciences & Industry (ASI) has named Christi Braudrick as the new coach of the K-State Rodeo Team. She brings more than 25 years of experience in coaching and education to one of the most tradition-rich college rodeo programs in the country.



Braudrick

Braudrick had numerous individual contestants and teams qualify for the College National Finals during her 12-year tenure as rodeo coach at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. She is known as an excellent recruiter and has helped many college rodeo athletes take their performances to a higher level.

“We are thrilled to welcome Christi Braudrick as our new rodeo coach,” said Teresa Douthit, interim department head of K-State ASI. “Her depth of experience in college rodeo, strong leadership, team management skills and understanding of what makes a program thrive make her an outstanding fit.”

Outside of coaching, Braudrick is well connected in the rodeo community. She currently serves as roping director for the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association. Braudrick also is a member of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Alumni Board of Directors.

She also is a winner as a competitor. Among her many wins was claiming the 2024 year-end and finals champion breakaway roping titles in the Prairie Circuit of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

In her new role at K-State, Braudrick will serve as the Rodeo Club advisor and oversee team practices, as well as competitions and events, including the upcoming K-State Rodeo, February 19-22 at the new Bilbrey Family Event Center. Her first day on the job will be January 5. She will lead recruiting efforts for prospective student athletes and continue to build the team’s long-standing tradition of turning out individuals who learn from real-world experience producing the K-State Rodeo and other events.

“I’m confident Christi will bring energy, professionalism and a great sense of connection to our students, alumni and the broader rodeo community,” said Douthit.

Founded in 1946, K-State rodeo has thousands of alumni across the country.

RODEO TEAM OFF TO A GOOD START

The K-State Rodeo Team traveled across Kansas and Oklahoma to compete at four National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association events within the Central Plains Region during the fall semester. Wildcat student athletes delivered impressive performances in multiple events, earning top placings, short-go qualifications and showcasing the depth and strength of this year’s roster.

Karsyn Fuchs secured a seventh place finish in goat tying at the Colby Community College Rodeo, contributing valuable points for the women’s team.

Timed event cowboy Stranton Oftedahl led the team with a second place finish in the steer wrestling at the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Rodeo in Durant. Karsyn Fuchs added another strong



Shoemaker

performance with fourth in the goat tying average, while Braden Nation advanced to the short round in team roping and finished ninth overall.

The Wildcats continued their momentum at the Oklahoma State University Rodeo, where Bayli Ladner earned a fourth place finish in breakaway roping and Ashley Smith qualified for the short round in barrel racing, securing seventh place overall.

K-State capped off the fall season at the Northwestern Oklahoma State University Rodeo in Alva. Kassandra Shoemaker earned second place in the breakaway roping, while teammate Alli Nip-



Oftedahl

pert tied for fifth in the same event. In the goat tying, Kasey Carr tied for fifth and Taylor Gustafson turned in a strong performance to finish fourth in the barrel racing.

Going into the spring schedule, the K-State women's team is eighth, while the Wildcat men's team sits 15th in the Central Plains Region. Individually, Stranton Oftedahl is seventh in the region in steer wrestling. On the women's side, Cassandra Shoemaker is 10th in the breakaway roping, Bayli Ladner is tied for 15th in breakaway, Karsyn Fuchs is 11th in goat tying and Taylor Gustafson is 12th in barrel racing. With strong momentum, rising talent and a dedicated support network, these Wildcat athletes are well positioned for a competitive and promising spring run toward the College National Finals Rodeo!

Beyond arena competition, the program saw significant growth and engagement. A total of 42 team members competed this fall. Additionally, more than 20 students joined as club members, helping support daily team operations, assisting in practices and contributing to the successful hosting of several events, including a five-roping breakaway and tie-down series and other key activities that ensure the program's continued success.

As the Wildcats look ahead, the team and club is excited for the arrival of new Coach Christi Braudrick and eager to host the first K-State Rodeo at the new Bilbrey Center!

K-STATE RODEO RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER IN SHINY NEW BILBREY

Rodeo fans will get their first look at the Bilbrey Family Event Center as the first K-State College Rodeo will be held in the new facility February 19-22. Regardless of whether fans want chairbacks or general admission seating, the arena-side views are spectacular in the Tee Jay Quarter Horses/Walker Family Arena. About 10,000 total fans are expected to attend. Spectators will see 450 contestants from 18 colleges, universities and junior colleges in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association's Central Plains Region compete in eight events. The event is scheduled to be broadcast on Cowboy Channel+.

Performances will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 7:00 and Saturday afternoon at 1:00, with the short-go scheduled for Sunday at 1:00. Timed event slack will take place Friday and Saturday mornings at 9:00. Discounted tickets will be available for K-State students Thursday night. Friday night is Cancer Awareness/Pink-Out Night. Saturday night is Pack Bilbrey in Purple Night. Sunday afternoon is Military Appreciation Day, with fans asked to wear red, white and blue.

A Cowboy Church service will be held at 10:00 Sunday morning in the Bilbrey Center. All are welcome to attend.

Cowboy Channel broadcaster Steve Kenyon will announce the rodeo. He appears regularly on the Cowboy Channel's Western Sports Roundup, which airs weeknights on the network. Kenyon also is part of the Cowboy Channel's 10-day coverage of the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, NV. When not on-air, Kenyon announces dozens of Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association rodeos across the country. He'll use this experience to bring special insight to his role behind the microphone at the K-State Rodeo.

Tickets are available at <https://bit.ly/2026KStateRodeo>. Before tax, prices are \$20 for general admission and \$30 for chairbacks. There is a \$5 discount if purchased before February 10. K-State students will receive \$10 off Thursday night. Saturday afternoon, kids 10 and under get in free with a canned good donation and a paid adult admission by using the code RODEOKIDS. Tickets will not be sold at the door.



*K-State Rodeo Queen
Madeline Meyer*

ALUMNI INVITED TO SPECIAL TOUR AND SOCIAL DURING K-STATE RODEO

K-State rodeo alumni and friends are invited to a special tour and social Saturday, February 21. A guided tour of the new Bilbrey Event Center will start at 4:00 p.m. and precede a social hour including food and drink in the Bilbrey VIP room overlooking the arena. The social will conclude before the rodeo.

Tickets are \$25 to take the tour, participate in the social and attend the rodeo. Click on this link <https://bit.ly/2026KStateRodeo>, then go to "K-State Rodeo Alumni and Friends Special Event and Premium Tickets."

FUCHS, NIPPERT, SHOEMAKER EARN NIRA HONORS

Three members of the K-State women's team were named 2025 Scholar Americans by the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA). The recipients are Karsyn Fuchs, Alli Nippert and Cassandra Shoemaker. They were among 262 NIRA members nationwide earning Scholar American recognition.

This prestigious honor goes to student athletes who met specific qualifications. They had to earn points at a 2024-25 NIRA sanctioned rodeo, complete more than one semester of college and maintain a 3.5 cumulative grade point average. Nominations come from rodeo coaches at NIRA colleges and universities.

Congratulations to Karsyn, Alli and Cassandra for representing K-State and being recognized as the best of college rodeo both in the arena and in the classroom!

REMEMBER YOUR ROOTS BY SUPPORTING RODEO SCHOLARSHIPS

K-State rodeo has a special place in the hearts of many alumni and friends across the country. You may have been a K-State Rodeo Club member who helped put on the annual college rodeo or one of many fundraising events or competed on the K-State Rodeo Team. Then there are those who were not part of the program, but saw students directly benefit from being involved in K-State rodeo. One way



Advisory Council members attending the ribbon cutting were (L to R) John McDonald, Jeff VanPetten, Clarke Jackman, Todd Domer and Greg Gardiner. (Not pictured Jeremy Ostrander.)

people who fondly remember the program show their support is by creating a named scholarship honoring someone in their family or a close friend. These endowed scholarships can be tax deductible and create a legacy for special people.

Some of the named scholarships supporting K-State rodeo students include the Wimer Family Foundation, Mary Vanier/KSU Family, Paul Family, Fitzgerald Family, Bob Clore Memorial, R.B. Warren Memorial and J. Michael Christiansen Memorial. The K-State Rodeo Advisory Council thanks these donors for their generous support of the program.

Anyone interested in setting up a named rodeo scholarship to honor a family member or friend can contact Clarke Jackman, current chairman of the rodeo advisory council and a 1988 alumnus from Baldwin, at

(785) 865-6514 or Casey Drodgy with the KSU Foundation at (785) 775-2042. Scholarships are one of the priorities of the K-State Rodeo Advisory Council.

Individuals can give to the J. Michael Christensen Memorial, which is an open endowed scholarship fund, by going to www.ksufoundation.org/give/rodeo or calling Jackman at the number above.

THE TIME A BULL ESCAPED THE K-STATE RODEO AND VISITED A FRATERNITY

This firsthand account was written by K-State Rodeo Team alumnus D.K. Hewett, who lives at Broken Arrow, OK. Hewett graduated from K-State in 1973 with a degree in technical journalism. He pulled the bull rope for the contestant who drew Twister during one of the performances at the 1967 K-State rodeo. From there, the story progressed to epic proportion and became part of K-State rodeo lore. Thanks to D.K. for preserving history!

There was a time when the powers-that-be in the K-State Ag Department were adamantly opposed to the idea of having a rodeo in Weber Arena. So, for some time in the 1960s, the annual K-State rodeo was held in Ahearn Field House. Yes, Ahearn

A landmark on campus, it was home to Wildcat basketball, physical education classes and intramural activities. The athletic department was never overly thrilled about hosting a temporary rodeo, or the livestock that came with it. But the rodeo had a distinctive feel.

The Chaparajos Club, the rodeo club, would always build and remove a temporary arena. Two cables suspended from the balcony and anchored on the corners made side fences.

The north end was set up for the timed events. The south end was set up for the bucking chutes, pens and a loading chute into the stock truck at the east door. The west corner had the stripping chute out-gate, and an adjacent four-foot arena gate for the rough stock riders.

Friday was opening night. It went well for a first performance. Stock bucked. Some good rides. Timed-eventers made some good runs, and things ran smoothly for a decent crowd. And as always, stock contractor Floyd Rumford made things click.

But for Saturday's matinee, the stands were unusually full. Everything had a different feel. Kind of electric, and the performance was a step up in every regard, all the way down to the bull riding.

Floyd had recently acquired some new, but seasoned bulls. Twister was among them. Like a throw-back classic "bremmer," he had good size, was a characteristic grey with dark points, floppy ears and a nice, distinctive hump. He was one of four seasoned bulls new to the herd.

When it was bull riding time, Twister came in almost nonchalantly and stood like a statue as Floyd snugged the flank, and the rider took his wraps. But when the chute gate cracked, the story changed.

The bull left fast and kicked hard. He followed the gate around and made two good wraps, then jumped out of it and turned back left. Two hard rounds that way ended the cowboy's best effort.

Twister made one more round for himself, then stopped, rock still. He raised his head defiantly and looked both ways, as if expecting applause. Then he willingly trotted toward the out gate.

That's where the real adventure began.

As Twister neared the gate in the corner, someone unwittingly opened the contestants' gate to come through. Twister went through it instead, just as a matter of habit with an open gate.

That left him outside the arena.

Still not realizing the situation, he continued around the edge of the pens, alongside the loading chute and stock truck, through the fieldhouse entrance and another 20 yards beyond.

He stopped and raised his head again. This time he was confused. There weren't any pens.

He was suddenly "at large" on the K-State campus.

He didn't know where he was, but was sure he wanted no part of the herd of guys with flailing arms and their "H'yaah!, 'yaah!, 'yaah!." He left that scene.

The pick-up men had to hustle all the way to the gate on the far end of the arena, then all the way around to the big door. By then, Twister had disappeared, except for a dwindling group of cowboys who couldn't keep up afoot.

Around the south of the fieldhouse. West across Denison. West up Huntington. When Twister got to Sunset, he stopped.

Across the street was an open space with an alleyway gate at the far end. Well, actually it was a parking lot, and the lower floor entrance to a FRATERNITY HOUSE!

He trotted across the street, then the lot, and dutifully toward the door. By the time the bull entered, a dozen fraternity guys were bailing out of any available exit, hoping to save their lives.

Through the door, down the hallway and up the short stairway into the fraternity house living room he went.

He stopped again, paused for a long time and looked around. It was the most luxurious pen he'd ever seen.

He didn't sit on the sofa and put his feet up on the coffee table, but he did relax. He let his air out. His muscles softened. The chase was over.

When the pick-up men arrived, one went into the living room, lobbed a loop on the bull, then shoed him outside and down the front steps. There, the other pick-up man tossed a loop on him. A good deal of the drama had ended.

Twister was an experienced rodeo bull. He'd obviously been roped several times before. He stood politely for the first man to emerge from the frat house and mount up.

When all were ready, a simple flap on the butt put Twister into his familiar trot. The pick-up men guided him as easily as a carriage, back to the fieldhouse.

When they entered the door, the crowd went wild, crazy wild. They stood up and screamed and hol-lered in the joy and amazement of the moment.

They'd been there. They'd seen the start and the finish. They had been part of a legend-to-be, and they felt it.

Most of all, they had a great story to tell and to pass on. Now you do too. The day a bull escaped from the K-State Rodeo and joined a fraternity!