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Cowboy Roots Continue With Rodeo

Above: Dan Weekley, Paul Bowers Sr., Ron Bergeron, Troy Weekley and
Wayne Weekley at the Bergeron Rodeo Grounds in Davie. See Story, Page 3

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Davie Holds Onto Its Cowboy Culture Through Rodeo

By Cathy Rose

Troy Weekley has a simple answer for folks who aren't sure about rodeo.

"If you think you might not like rodeo, you haven't been to one in Cowboy Town," he said.

You'll have a chance this week, though, because for the fifth consecutive year, Davie's Bergeron Rodeo Grounds has been chosen to host the Southeastern Circuit Finals Rodeo – the biggest rodeo east of the Mississippi.

It kicks off Thursday for three nights and brings the top cowboys, cowgirls and stock to compete for more than \$100,000 in cash and prizes, Weekley said.

Like so many other such events in Davie, also known as Cowboy Town, this rodeo continues honor the town's rural and agricultural past. Despite its position amid the urban sprawl and the collective bustle of the eight million people who live in South Florida, the Town of Davie has managed to hold tightly to its cowboy roots.

"Davie is actually a crossroads of Broward County," said Davie Mayor Judy Paul. "It's an agricultural community that has tried to retain its rural and agricultural roots while becoming very urban. We're proud of our business and industrial development because that's what allows us to keep the rural areas rural. You have to understand the balance."

It's balance that leaves room for celebrating roots that go deep, back to the days when Florida's cowboys rounded up the feral descendants of cattle that had escaped Spanish conquistadors. On

horseback and snapping the whips that some say earned them the title "cracker," they drove the cattle to railheads for shipment to distant markets.

Those days are not that far back in history, says "Alligator" Ron Bergeron, an eighth generation Floridian whose family name graces Davie's rodeo grounds. He remembers when Davie had more posts to tie a horse than places to park a car.

"We didn't have golf courses or tennis courts," Bergeron said. "But we had rodeo, and cowboys became our heroes."

Thanks to community leaders who've sought to preserve the cowboy way of life that was old Davie and the efforts of the Weekley brothers -- Troy, Dan and Wayne -- the town still has rodeo as a centerpiece.

The Weekley Brothers Davie Pro Rodeo has been drawing the top names in rodeo since 1986 to hundreds of top notch, family oriented events, including this year's Southeastern Circuit Finals Rodeo.

"People enjoy putting on their cowboy boots and hats and having a cowboy evening," said Troy Weekley. Though western wear is not mandatory, those who want to cowboy it up can find cowboy attire at Grifs Western, 6211 Orange Drive, where they can also buy rodeo tickets, Weekley said.

In addition to enjoying rodeo action, anyone can attend the nightly championship buckle presentations after each performance. The nightly presentations will be held at Cowboys Saloon, 1805 South University Dr., and give rodeo fans the chance to meet and greet all the sponsors, cowboys, cowgirls, and committee members that are responsible for this event.



The color guard presents the American flag at the Weekley Brothers Davie Pro Rodeo event at the Bergeron Rodeo Grounds in Davie on Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013. FPG Photos/Eric Bojanowski

Southeastern Circuit Finals Rodeo tickets are:
 Adults – \$18 advance,
 \$20 at the gate
 Children 3 to 12 years old –
 \$8 advance, \$10 at the gate.
 Children 2 and under – free

Cash only at the gate. No credit cards are accepted, but there is an ATM available.



Chris Dillard, of Altoona gets thrown from a bull.

For more information on the Southeastern Circuit Finals Rodeo event, visit www.davieprorodeo.com.

A complete schedule and event map is located on the website. You can also sign up for email notifications to receive the latest information.