

## **The Edwards Siblings' Rodeo Legacy is Just Beginning**

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July 28, 2024,

JACKSON, Wyo. — Jaden Edwards, the 16-year-old, roper stands on the outskirts of the Jackson Hole Rodeo grounds on a patch of grass surrounded by the dusty chaos of cattle, horses and hundreds of competitors on Saturday afternoon. Jaden seems relaxed while standing with his horse Dale and his 14-year-old, barrel racing, twin sisters, Chloe and Mylie Edwards, and their horses, Jagger and Tommy.

They patiently await their turn to compete in Saturday's slate round hoping to earn a coveted spot in tonight's Jackson Hole Rodeo performance. "For the performance round, they can't fill in as many holes for the timed events. So they have an extra round earlier to qualify for the main round because they couldn't have this many people," said Jaden, as he waited for the 50 teams of ropers still ahead of him to complete their slate rounds before he and his roping partner could perform.

Every summer the Jackson Hole community and rodeo performers from around the country come together to put on the Jackson Hole Rodeo at the base of the Teton Mountains. According to the Jackson Hole Rodeo's website, In 1890, Sylvester Wilson led the first group of settlers over Teton Pass into the area now known as Jackson Hole. He arrived with his family to raise cattle on the valley's fertile, abundant grass. "120 years and six generations later, the pioneer spirit lives on through the Wilson family who continue the western heritage and traditions of the rodeo." The rodeo runs every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday night, starting the last week of May and ending the last week of August.

Professional rodeos consist of two types of competitions, rough stock events and timed events, according to The Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association. According to their website, the Jackson Hole Rodeo consists of the following events: bronc riding, bareback bronc riding, bull riding, barrel racing, calf roping, breakaway roping and team roping.

Jaden Edwards competes in team roping, a timed event where one teammate acts as the “header,” roping the front of the steer, aiming for the horns, while the second teammate acts as the “heeler,” who ropes the hind legs of the steer. According to the Jackson Hole Rodeo, if the heeler only ropes one leg a five-second penalty is added to the team’s final time.

When asked how he began roping, Jaden said, “My family’s been doing it forever. I’ve been doing it since I was little, so I was just kind of born into it.” Competing in rodeos is the Edwards family’s business and it is quite lucrative when competing at a high level. Jaden’s favorite experience in his career is helping his friend win \$10,000 in a team roping jackpot in Arizona. As a Jackson Hole native, whose parents both attended Jackson Hole High School, Jaden believes the Rodeo does a lot to uphold the town’s culture, something locals work to preserve.

According to “Jackson Hole Real Estate Company” the national parks report over 3 million annual visitors in the summer season. While improving the town’s economy, tourism also impacts local resident’s lives as new people from big cities move in. When asked what role he thinks the rodeo serves in upholding the town’s culture, Jaden said, “It serves a big role here. Everybody’s trying to push it out but keeping it western is how it’s always been.” Jaden’s sisters Chloe and Mylie share his sentiments about the town and his love for the rodeo.

Chloe and Mylie Edwards are competitive barrel racers, a rodeo event primarily for women. Barrel racing is the final event at the Jackson Hole Rodeo and requires speed, skill and

a strong bond between the rider and her horse. The Jackson Hole Rodeo explains barrel racing as, “A rodeo event in which a horse and rider attempt to complete a cloverleaf pattern around preset barrels in the fastest time”... “The timer begins when the horse and rider cross the start line, and ends when the barrel pattern has been successfully executed and the horse and rider cross the finish line.”

Chloe returns to the Jackson Hole rodeo after winning the Junior High Barrel Racing World Championship on June 29 in Des Moines, Iowa. According to “Sports Illustrated,” Chloe and her horse Jagger won the short round at 15.364 seconds and scored the best average at 46.17 seconds. As twin sisters competing in the same sport at a high level, Chloe and Mylie see each other as teammates rather than competitors, “Either I win or she wins, the win still comes home with us and we just cheer each other on no matter what” said Mylie.

Before a race, they both said they take deep breaths, “We just trust our work and what we've done at home and if it goes right it goes right. And if it goes wrong, it's a learning experience,” said Mylie. They both feel that participating in the rodeo strengthens their bond within the family and the Jackson Hole community.

The rodeo adheres to the PRCA, NBHA and NHSRA rulebooks if contestants violate these rules, they will be disqualified and possibly suspended or banned from the Jackson Hole Rodeo. All contestants and helpers must wear Western attire, which according to the website, “will consist of a long sleeve button down shirt, pants, cowboy boots, and a cowboy hat.” Along with this, any animal mistreatment leads to immediate disqualification and violators forfeit all entry fees. All contestants must purchase a Jackson Hole Rodeo Membership Association card for \$100 to acquire points and qualify for the finals, all purchases go directly towards prize money for the events.

Jaden, Chloe and Mylie each won money Saturday afternoon and placed in their events during the slack round. “We were just out of making it back for the night performance,” said Jaden, demonstrating the competitive nature and high stakes of the Jackson Hole Rodeo. However, this does not discourage the Edwards, who know the importance of practice, patience and respect for their competition. Above all else, they value the sacred bond and traditions they share with the Jackson Hole Rodeo community.



(Left to right) Jagger, Jaden Edwards, Chloe Edwards, Mylie Edwards and Tommy.

Sources: [Jackson Hole Rodeo](#), [Sports Illustrated](#), [Jackson Hole Real Estate Company](#)