

Rodeo...from Page 1A

people to thank, so I am not going to (try) remembering all the names. I just appreciate everybody for making this possible.”

Rodeo contestants were equally excited to be competing again after months of delays and cancellations from other events, including the postponement of the Hiawassee Pro Rodeo from Memorial Day weekend to the end of June due to COVID-19.

“I think it is a good time to be back in the action,” Bull Rider Walter Smithson said of the outdoor event. “It has been a long time, and we are looking forward to it.”

Of course, fans of the rodeo were all too happy to be part of the event and put the novel coronavirus temporarily out of mind for a few hours, including Mike Elridge, who traveled from Tennessee to catch the show.

“I am just excited that they are having this thing,” Elridge said. “I was worried that it was going to get canceled due to weather or the pandemic again. It is wonderful to see so many people enjoying themselves for the first time in a long time.”

“Everything has been all about COVID and the riots; I think it is good to have something to let us have some fun. I’m thankful for those that allowed this here.”

Another fan, Jacob Holt of Alabama, came to the rodeo to revel in the Americana of it all and support some of the friends he’s made during his years watching events like this.

“The rodeo is a staple in American culture,” Holt said. “We have been doing rodeos since this country was young, and we will continue to do them for years to come. Like the announcer said at the beginning, this is a show to honor our tradition and to honor those that serve the country.”

“Some people may look down on us like we are country trash or something, but this is what we love. This is American, and these are good people here that just want to enjoy a show. I know we may get some attention for not social distancing, but rioters didn’t social distance.”

“People just want to do something fun and enjoy each other. Families are here having



Rodeo fans of every stripe enjoyed all the bull riding, calf roping and barrel racing competitions at the first ever Hiawassee Pro Rodeo June 26-27. Photos by Lowell Nicholson



a great time, and you really can’t say anything bad about that. We know what we are risking, and we are choosing to support this event because we want to see more like it.”

The Georgia Mountain

Fairgrounds is hoping to make the rodeo an annual happening for Hiawassee and the area. For more information on upcoming shows and events, visit GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.