

Fred Martin ‘Bud’ Connelly

Bud Connelly has competed in rodeo for a span of sixty years beginning with high school rodeo. In 1951, Bud was a two year High School District Champion, All-Around runner up for two years, and a national High School Rodeo finalist in 1951 and 1954. Bud is a 14-time holder of the Indian Rodeo Canadian Association (IRCA) champion title, Northern Rodeo Association (NRA) Bareback champion, NRA Saddle Bronc champion, and NRA All-Around champion. He won over 400 belt buckles, 20 plus saddles, and 10 or more trophies. Not only did he compete in rough stock but has also competed in steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, and rode a few bulls.

He and his horse, “One-Eyed Sam” were much in demand as hazers. Bud was also known for his outstanding skill as a pick up man. Besides Bud’s winning record in the Indian Rodeo Associations, he had an impressive record of wins and titles in the Chinook Rodeo Association, North Central Rodeo Association, and the North Western Association. Bud contributed to rodeo in other ways as well. He judged and produced numerous rodeos, furnished rodeo stock, and served as President of the United Indian Rodeo Association (UIRA). Because of his horse-sense, he has acted in a few movies, including Hidalgo, Cheyenne, and Appaloosa. Bud has helped many young cowboys perfect the art of their respective event. He provided advice and at times, paid their entry fees. In 1975, the Kaini News said Bud; the “old veteran” is like a good bottle of wine, which seems to improve with age. This was the year he won the All-Around IRCA steer wrestling title, the Senator Gladstone Memorial Trophy, and the Northern Circuit finals. In 2008, the Montana Indian Athlete Hall of Fame initiated a Rodeo category. Bud was the unanimous choice for being one of the first inductees within this category.

Bud hales from a family of rodeo stock producers. His parents, Brian and Ida Connolly, ranched and breed horses for the U.S. Calvary. The two-year old horses that did not meet the Army’s specifications were sold as polo ponies or bucking horses. Today, at age 77, Bud is recovering from a stroke that he suffered in early August 2011. While he is improving, he will not be able to help a friend with his annual round up and will need to forget his wild days as a cowboy. Martin “Bud” Connelly truly deserves to be inducted in the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame. His nomination packet for the Montana Indian Athlete Hall of Fame award included thirteen letters of family, friends, and especially former competitors. The letters reveal the high level of respect that Bud holds among ranchers and rodeo people. At the induction ceremony to the Montana Indian Athlete Hall of Fame, the Director Don Wetzel commented that Bud’s fourteen titles are like being named All-American. Don also said that Bud is one of, if not the best cowboy in the history of Blackfeet Country, Montana, and Canada.

His wife, Loretta, kept the following log from 1959 to 1962. It gives a bird’s eye view of Bud’s level of competition during his 60 years in rodeo.

Log of Rodeo Entries, 1959 - 1962

- Conrad Whoop Up Days: placed in Bareback and Saddle Bronc, received pair of Lee Rider jeans
- Blood Reserve Bull Horn Coulee: won Bareback and Saddle Bronc
- Browning Memorial Day: placed second in Bareback, Connelly brothers roped and branded five calves in 2 minutes 58 seconds, earning a 1st!
- Sweetgrass: events not list but listed prize money
- Fort McCloud: 4th in Bareback, 3rd in Steer Wrestling
- Raymond Stampede: won Saddle Bronc
- RCA Central Montana Rodeo July 30-31: 3rd in Bareback, 2nd day money in Bareback
- Chouteau County Fair: 1st in Bareback
- Ronan: 1st in Saddle Bronc
- Conrad Whoop Up Days: 1st in Bareback, Saddle Bronc, and Steer Wrestling
- Memorial Day: 1st in Saddle Bronc and Bareback
- Harlem Chuck Wagon Days: 1st in Bareback and Saddle Bronc, received buckle
- Winnet: 2nd in Saddle Bronc, 1st in Bull Dogging (Steer Wrestling), 3rd in Wild Horse Race
- Hot Springs: 1st in Bull Dogging (4.0 seconds)
- Columbia Falls: split 1st and 2nd in Bareback, 6th in Saddle Bronc, 1st day money in Bull Dogging, 2nd in the average and All-Around Trophy and 3 belt buckles
- Birch Creek Roping Club: 1st in Bareback, Saddle Bronc, and Steer Wrestling
- Blood Reserve: 2nd in Bareback and Saddle Bronc
- Roy: split 3rd and 4th in Bareback
- Sandpoint ID: 1st in Bareback day money, 1st in Saddle Bronc average, 2nd Decorating
- Bonner Ferry ID: 1st in Bareback and Saddle Bronc, 3rd in Bulldogging
- Warrick: 2nd in Saddle Bronc
- Fort Benton: 5th in Bareback
- Cut Bank: 2nd in Saddle Bronc
- Ronan: 1st in Bareback and Saddle Bronc, received two hats
- Lincoln: 3rd Bareback, 3rd Bulldogging
- Plains: split 2nd & 3rd in Saddle Bronc, 3rd Bulldogging
- Browning: 2nd Saddle Bronc, 1st Bareback
- Choteau: 1st Bareback, 2nd Saddle Bronc, All Around
- Geraldine: 1st Bulldogging, 3rd Saddle Bronc
- Hot Springs: 2nd Bareback, 2nd Saddle Bronc
- Augusta: 2nd Bareback
- Conrad: 1st in Bareback, 5th in Saddle Bronc