

Extreme cowboys to compete in risky rides at Chicopee Ag Center



A rider competes in the Extreme Cowboy Racing event Aug. 12, 2017, at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center in Gainesville. - photo by David Barnes

Layne Saliba

Updated: Aug. 8, 2018, 7:22 p.m.

Joe Holloway stumbled into riding horses. He didn't start until age 72, after helping out his wife at a horse rescue. Dennis Tipton, who's been riding for the better part of his life turned Holloway onto the idea, and now they ride together as part of the Extreme Cowboy Association.

"I was volunteering at a horse rescue, just to be useful because I like horses," said Holloway, member of the Extreme Cowboy Association. "(Tipton) offered one of his horses for me to come and ride and I did that, and the rest is kind of history."

Extreme Cowboy Racing

When: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 11

Where: Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center, 1855 Calvary Church Road, Gainesville

Cost: Free

Contact: 770-855-5841

More info: extremecowboyassociation.com

After having to travel out of state to ride in competitions, Holloway, now 80, and Tipton, 71, petitioned the association to start having events in Georgia at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center on Calvary Church Road off Queen City Parkway in Gainesville. They succeeded and have hosted competitions there for the past three years. This year's Georgia State Championship will take place at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 11.

Extreme cowboy racing is a timed event that's meant to test the abilities of both the rider and the horse. Judges are looking at bravery and skill as riders maneuver through 10-13 obstacles, depending on the rider's class.



Joe Holloway watches riders compete Aug. 12, 2017, in the Extreme Cowboy Racing event at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center in Gainesville. - photo by David Barnes

Obstacles can be anything from simple jumps to jumps of up to 25 inches. There are also water crossings, opening and closing gates and roping barrels. Holloway said stepping sideways, backing up and executing precise circles around various objects are judged, too.

"They're not meant to be dangerous obstacles, but technically difficult to execute with a horse, because a horse doesn't normally do some of those things," Holloway said.

There are different classes for riders to join so the competition is evenly spread out. There's a class for ages 6 through 12, teens, novice riders, intermediate riders, non-pros, pros and ride smart, for ages 55 and up.



Holloway competes in the intermediate and ride smart class. He said the ride smart class is difficult because of the amount of experience each rider has.

At this year's competition, there will be 50 races. Although the riders are "there to win," Holloway said, it's a nice community to be a part of.

"It's not a cutthroat sport," Holloway said. "Everybody wants to see every other rider do as well as they can ... so there's a lot of encouragement among the participants. And I think everybody really appreciates that aspect of the sport."



Jane Peniston, right, and her husband Rick Peniston help their horse Smoochie, 9, after she sustained a minor injury Aug. 12, 2017, during the Extreme Cowboy Racing event at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center in Gainesville. - photo by David Barnes

"It's very competitive, but it's also still a family-friendly environment," said Tipton.

At the end of each year, points are added up for riders in each region. Those with the most points qualify for the World Title competition, which is the dream for everyone.

"It's just proof that you can still do things at any age," Holloway said.



Jason Hiser, left, and his daughter Casey Hiser go over the course in a walk-through Aug. 12, 2017, before they both compete in the Extreme Cowboy Racing event at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center in Gainesville. - photo by David Barnes