

Rodeo club readies for its biggest event ever

By Craig Gehrke
Contributing writer

Dump trucks will begin hauling dirt into the ASUI-Kibbie Dome tonight to prepare for the University of Idaho's first indoor rodeo, an event sponsored by the UI Rodeo Club.

The first performance will be on Friday at 8 p.m. Three additional performances are scheduled, with two on Saturday at 1 p.m. and 8 p.m., and a final show Sunday at 1 p.m.. The rodeo will be part of Parents' Weekend activities.

"The first year the rodeo will be a novelty," said Casey Amy, Rodeo Club president. "People will come to see the indoor set-up. We want to put on a class performance to bring them back next year."

The Rodeo Club let the bid for construction and later removal of the indoor arena for \$34,000 to Roach Construction of Genesee.

As a first step, sheets of plywood will be put on the asphalt floor of the dome. Next, sheets of fiberboard will go over the plywood in the area of the basketball court to give it extra protection. Then polyethylene sheeting will go down, followed by eight inches of soil which will form the arena's surface.

The arena will measure about 150 by 200 feet. The entire rodeo grounds, including pens and chutes, will take up a 250 X 200 ft. area.

Brad Roach said his company will have three trucks and 22 workers on the project, and that the dirt will come from a road recently cut in Moscow.

Roach said he expects to have all the dirt hauled in by 8 or 10 p.m. Wednesday. Then the crew will spend the rest of Wednesday night and all of Thursday spreading and packing the dirt.

Before each performance, Rodeo Club members will groom the surface to insure smooth and stable footing for the animals. Amy said the surface will be similar to that of an outdoor arena.

Roach Construction will also remove the dirt after the rodeo performances, using a front-end loader and the dump trucks. Roach said that the dirt will be taken to the construction site of the new Agricultural Engineering Building where it will be stockpiled until the Rodeo Club decides if it wants to save the dirt for next year's performance.

Gerald Willet, Rodeo Club advisor, said that the arena and the pens and runways will be enclosed with interlocking steel fence panels the club is renting. Such panels are made from steel pipe and are free-standing. The panels will be used to construct the arena itself, and the animal holding pens and runways. Portable loading chutes will also be used.

Ed Chavez, dome manager, said he's pleased that the rodeo is being held in the dome. Chavez sees the event as another use for the structure.

As the rodeo draws near, Amy said he's "more confident that ever" that the rodeo will be a success.

The major promotion for the event began when 3,000 flyers were distributed at the Idaho-Boise state

basketball game in Boise. Posters for the event were printed, and ads will be placed with area newspapers and broadcasting stations.

Amy said the bulk of the promotion for the rodeo is being paid for by national sponsors such as Copenhagen and Skoal tobacco products, Wrangler jeans, and Miller Brewing Co.

The club has selected its first rodeo queen, Julie Cahill, and she will go to community service organizations to promote the rodeo. Cahill, an animal science and agri-business major who will graduate this spring, is from a ranch near Weiser.

Amy had no estimate of the size of the crowd that has attended previous shows. Earlier performances were at the rodeo grounds in Lewiston and at the Latah County Fairgrounds.

The club's expenses are expected to total about \$60,000 and are being underwritten by the university. The rodeo must draw 15,000 spectators to cover expenses.

Amy acknowledges that the indoor rodeo is an ambitious project, but he says that all responses to the plan have been positive. If the club falls short of paying its expenses, Amy said, the debt will be one the club assumes and will pay back over the coming years.

Terry Armstrong, executive assistant to UI President Richard Gibb, is not worried about the university backing the Rodeo Club. "These kids have done an excellent job in planning," said Armstrong. "They've figured their expenses within a gnat's eyelash."

Armstrong said that the UI administration has been monitoring the club's plans. "We gave them the loan with the understanding that we'd keep track of what they're doing," he said.

Armstrong considers that backing the Rodeo Club in this venture is no different from sending a campus theater group to Coeur d'Alene or the ski team to McCall. Armstrong said that helping the campus groups is "what we're here for," and that "we do it all the time."

The executive assistant stressed that no state money is being used to fund the rodeo. If the rodeo doesn't pay its expenses, then other funds the university has access to will be used to pay the debt. Armstrong said that the university has funds which are used to help student groups.

Armstrong entertains no thoughts that the university will be left with a large debt if the rodeo is less than successful. "The Rodeo Club has been around for years and years," he said. "We believe the club has analyzed this enough to make it go."

The Rodeo Club was founded in the early 1950s, and presently has about 30 active members. Of these, Amy expects 10 to 12 to compete in the rodeo. From 150 to 175 participants are expected for the rodeo.

Amy and Armstrong both hope the rodeo will become a yearly event during Parent's Weekend. Amy hopes that the rodeo will eventually make it possible for the university to offer a scholarship to attract top rodeo athletes.