

22ND TEXAS LINEMAN'S RODEO

BRAWLING the HEAT

Bluebonnet's linemen showcase their skills and safety

By Jen Schattle
Photos by Sarah Beal

Each July, competitors in the Texas Lineman's Rodeo know it's going to be hot. This year, it was hotter than hot. The National Weather Service had issued warnings about excessive heat, predicting temperatures would reach triple digits.

"Linemen work in the elements every day. One month, you can be freezing, the next sweating. They know how to prepare for the weather," said Heath Siegmund, Bluebonnet's superintendent of operations in Red Rock. "Hydration and physical fitness are also extremely important. Just like running a marathon, you can't go from the couch to the finish line."

Braving extreme temperatures "is a team effort, every day and night. They watch out not just for themselves but for each other on the job," said Randall Bownds, a Bluebonnet assistant superintendent in Giddings and coordinator of the co-op's rodeo team.

The heat did not deter several hundred electric line workers from across the state from competing in the annual competition at Nolte Island Park outside Seguin on July 21. The events tested their knowledge, skills and commitment to safety. Hosted by the Texas Lineman's Rodeo Association, 49 journeyman teams and 114 apprentice linemen participated. The events are designed to mirror challenges encountered daily by utility crews who work, sometimes in dangerous conditions, to ensure reliable power is provided to Texas' more than 28 million residents.

Three journeymen and seven apprentices competed for Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. Apprentice Michael Wagner took second place in the arrester change-out event.

"I am really proud of the Bluebonnet rodeo team this year; they gave their all, and it shows," Bownds said. "Every year we strive to practice more, but we prioritize our members come first. The rodeo just makes us better and more prepared linemen."

A four-member Bluebonnet barbecue team also competed at the rodeo, serving up their best brisket, ribs and dessert (this year it was a cherry and blackberry "clump" cake cooked in a Dutch oven). The Texas association founded the lineman's rodeo in 1996; this year marked the event's 22nd anniversary. ¹

²⁴ Texas Co-op Power | BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE | September 2018



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1) Bluebonnet's journeyman team of Danny Bolding, Jeffrey Bolding and Chris Rivera (pictured in photo **6**), below) compete in a "mystery" event, in which they are not told the nature of their task until moments before the clock starts.

2) Apprentice Ty Kasper lowers the dummy during the simulated hurt-man rescue event.

3) Apprentice Michael Guajardo carries his equipment off the field. Of 114 apprentices competing, Guajardo placed 5th overall and 6th on the written test.

4) Apprentice Drew Brownwood collapses an insulated pole, called a "hot stick."

5) Apprentice Michael Wagner yells a warning "Headache!" before dropping a piece of equipment. Wagner won a 2nd place trophy in the arrester change-out event.

7) Apprentice Auston Shipley prepares to climb. He placed 4th out of 114 apprentices in the pole climb event.

