

## **TOP CALF ROPERS BEING SUED BY RFD-TV EVENTS FOR RIGGING THE AMERICAN EVENT**

### **TUF COOPER AND TIMBER MOORE CHARGED; REESE RIEMER SUES RFD-TV**

**By Glory Ann Kurtz**

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According to an Aug. 10 article in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, two top Texas calf ropers are being accused of rigging the payout during the high-paying "The American," held March 1, 2015 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

A civil lawsuit was filed Tuesday, Aug. 9 in Tarrant County, Texas, by RFD-TV Events, against Tuf Cooper, 26, a three-time PRCA World Champion from Decatur, Texas, and Timber Moore, Aubrey, 30, the current top-ranked PRCA roper in the world. RFD-TV Events promoted and hosted the event.

The suit states that the one-day event offered prizes of \$100,000 for winners of seven competitions, featuring a bonus reward for cowboys who qualified for the event rather than being invited. Those "invited" were cowboys who were or had ranked high in their event. Qualifiers had to compete and win at special qualifying rodeos. A qualifier who won was eligible to earn up to \$1 million from a side pot for winning any of the seven events.

RFD-TV alleges that Cooper and Moore, who were "invitees" to the tie-down roping competition agreed with Reese Riemer, Stinnett, Texas, a qualifier, to "intentionally perform poorly" so that Riemer would have a chance to win the bigger prize. In exchange for the "fix," Riemer would split his winnings with Cooper and Moore. The suit also said another competitor declined to participate in "the scheme."

The lawsuit continued that the cowboys agreed to carry out the plan in the finals of the competition, after the field had been cut from 17 ropers to four. Riemer ended up winning the event, with Cooper finishing second and Moore finishing third.

As a result, Riemer won \$100,000 for first place and \$417,000 – for a total of \$517,000, as part of the bonus reward available only to qualifiers. (He received only a share of the \$1 million bonus because two other qualifiers had won their divisions.)

RFD-TV Events learned of the scheme and stopped payment on Riemer's winning check of \$517,000. However they say that Cooper "obtained and holds money and other assets" earned at the rodeo. He would have earned \$25,000 for finishing in second place. RFD-TV Events is seeking "monetary relief of \$100,000 or less" from Cooper and Moore.

#### **PREVIOUS LAWSUIT FILED BY RIEMER:**

Not mentioned in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* article was the fact that on Feb. 24, 2016, Reese Riemer sued rodeo organizers Rural Media Group Inc. of Gretna, Nebraska, and RMG Events LLC of Nashville, Tennessee, for failing to pay his winnings from RFD-TV's 2015 The American rodeo competition.

"The incredible thing about this case is the fact that, even as we sit here today, the RFD Network

publicly acknowledges and proclaims Reese as the winner of the event," said attorney John B. Thomas of the Houston-based litigation boutique Hicks Thomas, LLP, counsel for Mr. Riemer. "There is simply no legal justification for their failure to pay him."

Following *The American*, Mr. Riemer was flown to Nashville for interviews on RFD-TV. It was only after the interviews were completed that officials notified Mr. Riemer that a stop payment was placed on the check for his winnings

The lawsuit says RFD-TV relied on rumors of an alleged agreement to split the purse when deciding to stop payment on the winner's check. According to Mr. Riemer, he and other cowboys were threatened by RFD-TV CEO Patrick Gottsch.

"He called me saying he was going to stop payment on the check and threatened me with jail," says Mr. Riemer

Mr. Thomas says, "There is no evidence that Reese agreed to share the proceeds, and certainly no basis to suggest that he did anything wrong."

**1-Click for article about lawsuit>>**

**2-Click for original complaint from Riemer>>**

As of this date, that lawsuit has not been settled. The case, filed in the Northern District of Texas, Amarillo Division, was referred to nonbinding mediation before Friday, Aug. 19, 2016 by United States District Judge Mary Lou Robinson.

The order, dated Aug. 3, 2016, stated, "The parties shall meet prior to mediation for the purpose of settling this case. After this meeting the parties are to tender to the Clerk of the Court a joint settlement conference status report on or before Friday August 19, 2016."

It also said the parties to this action "shall convene a mediation conference on all claims and counter-claims – such conference and all subsequent conferences to be completed before Friday, September 16, 2016.

"This mediation process shall be private, confidential and privileged from process and discovery, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. The mediator shall not be a witness in this action, nor may the mediator's records be subpoenaed or used as evidence without the express permission of the Court. No subpoenas, citations, writs, or other process shall be served at the location of any mediation session upon any person entering, leaving, or attending any session."

It ended, saying "The fees for mediation are to be divided and borne equally by the parties unless agreed otherwise. They shall be paid by the parties directly to the mediator, and shall be taxed as costs."

**3-Click for Mediation Order>>**