

Arrests put rodeo in unwelcome spotlight

Two College National Finals Rodeo contestants made news Monday, but not for their exploits in the arena.

Police arrested the pair early Sunday after they allegedly activated a security alarm at a Mills business. They were charged with criminal entry, minor in possession, interference with a police officer, loaning ID to someone else and vandalism/destruction of property.

All of the charges may be misdemeanors, but they are nonetheless serious offenses.

These cowboys are presumed innocent until proven guilty. But the incident is a black mark that the rest of the 400 CNFR

competitors don't deserve. Unfortunately, sometimes people who are part of a large group get painted with the same broad brush when something goes wrong.

The National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association took undisclosed disciplinary action against the two Texas cowboys on Monday, but the case is being appealed to the association's executive committee today. We don't know exactly what penalties were meted out by the NIRA.

But it's important to note that the rodeo association took pains to let contestants know before the event that underage drinking would not be tolerated here. Natrona County District Judge David Park spoke to the contestants and told them that local law enforcement and the courts were cracking down on minors in possession of alcohol and drunken driving.

As most CNFR competitors know, they

are expected to be good ambassadors of their local colleges. To get to the Casper event, the contestants must prove themselves to be among the premier athletes in college rodeo. As such, they are expected to be role models for younger cowboys and cowgirls to emulate.

Casper and its neighboring communities are proud to host a prestigious national event like the College National Finals

Rodeo. The relationship between the rodeo, the city, sponsors and rodeo fans has generally been great.

But that doesn't mean the area is going to give a free pass to anyone charged with breaking the

law. These college athletes should be held to the same standards as any county resident or visitor.

To some observers and participants, rodeo cowboys and drinking will always be linked. Tales of cowboys who partied hard at night and turned in great performances in the arena the next day are legendary. In fact, one of the cowboys who was charged earned the top score in his event later Sunday.

But this isn't the Wild West anymore. There are rules that must be obeyed. Everyone associated with the CNFR — and that includes any establishment or person who provides alcohol to underage participants — needs to recognize that fact.

Fortunately, most people do. And this one incident shouldn't tarnish what promises to be another highly successful CNFR in Casper.

Our view

CNFR contestants are expected to obey the law like everyone else.

What do you think?

We welcome viewpoints from our readers on this and other issues.