



Organizing the national Ferreligas Bobtail Rodeo were Randy Warner (center right), manager of retail operations, and technical analysts Randy Smith, Mark Dettloff, and Rufus Youngblood.



Brian Tripp (center in the dark shirt), the winner of the rodeo and the other driver finalists were treated like kings at the company's picnic and each had their own cheering section.



A large number of Ferrelgas employees and members of the drivers' families were on hand to watch the final competition, which included driving forward and backward through an S-curve path,

backing up to a designated stopping point, and driving through a narrow pathway without knocking over the markers on either side.



The four finalists were (from left) Randy Morad of Brunswick, Ga.; Todd Dupy of Platte City, Mo.; Tripp and Paul Anderson of Dal-



las. Tripp's cheering section had balloons, confetti, and hugs ready when the final score was announced.

Safety Skills Spur Drivers to Success

Instead of bucking horses, there were bobtails backing up and plenty of skilled drivers.

More than a thousand bobtail drivers answered the call this spring to compete in Ferrellgas' first company-wide bobtail roдео. They came from across the country ready for the competition.

They didn't need chaps, cowboy hats, or spurs. Instead, cool heads and strategic planning were in demand. To qualify, Ferrellgas drivers first had to be incident/accident-free for the past three years. Then, they took an initial written test designed by a team of the company's technical analysts led by Randy Warner, manager of retail operations. Warner and his team also devised a driving course for each regional, divisional, and the final competition, held in mid-August at the company's facility in Liberty, Mo. The roдео was held in conjunction with Ferrell's company picnic.

Driving into first place at the roдео was Brian Tripp of Ferrellgas' West Branch, Mich. plant. He is a 10-plus-year veteran bobtail driver, starting out with Thermogas. After acing the driving test with the best time, Tripp, with his wife Darlene at his side, was speechless. In an emotional comment to those attending the event, Tripp said he was very proud of his achievement, his work with Ferrellgas, and how much he didn't want to disappoint his co-workers in Michigan. A serious accident in which his truck was hit by another large vehicle several years ago almost ended his career. After recuperating from his injuries, Tripp told BPN that he almost didn't return to driving, but he missed his customers and felt bad not checking in on those who are house-bound due to age or illness.

Beaming with pride, Ferrellgas' CEO James Ferrell congratulated Tripp and the other drivers who made it to the final event. He thanked the drivers for their hard work and dedication to safety.

After the initial written test, the number of drivers was narrowed down to two drivers per service center, or about 250, who then advanced to the regional competition. Ferrellgas' Blue Rhino division drivers were also eligible for the contest and several placed in the regional events. Warner and his team organized 17 regional competitions and then four division events that were held between May and early August to further narrow down the number of competitors to

four finalists.

At each event, drivers had to pass another written test plus a test using their handheld devices and the driving test. Warner and his crew came up with at least four different tests. The road course encompassed parallel parking, how close they could back up to a designated stopping point, driving forward and backward through an S-curve pattern, and driving a narrow pathway without knocking over the markers on either side.

Drivers were timed on how quickly they completed the driving test, which most drivers accomplished in four to six minutes. The drivers were expected to do a walk-around of the truck, and use chock blocks.

Winners at the region and division levels received monetary prizes between \$100 to \$1000, depending on their placement. Tripp received a check for \$2000 along with a plaque, while the runner-up drivers received prizes ranging from \$250 to \$1000.

A brand new, Jarco-equipped Kenworth truck was brought in for the event. The bobtail is Tripp's while he works for Ferrellgas. With loads of chrome, the truck doors will be personalized with Tripp's

name, saying he is the winner of Ferrellgas' 2006 national roдео. Jarco loaded the truck with an Arrow tank, Hannay reel, AM/FM radio, Base PTO system, Neptune meter, and several upgrades.

"It's been an exciting experience, for not only our drivers but for all of our employees," said Steve Wambold, Ferrellgas' president and COO. "We're very proud and impressed with the drivers that were qualified." Wambold has been an enthusiastic supporter of bobtail rodeos since his time as regional manager based in Indiana. His region, along with others in the company, have hosted local rodeos.

The four finalists who survived the regional and divisional competitions were Todd Dupy of Platte City, Mo.; Paul Anderson of Dallas; Randy Morad of Brunswick, Ga.; and Tripp. Their wives and families were invited to the roдео and company picnic. Employees attending the picnic got into the spirit of the competition with signs, confetti, and special cheers for the driver they were rooting for. Employees were divided into teams for picnic contests as well as to provide support for the driver assigned to them.

The drivers were also invited to the opening session of Ferrellgas' annual management meeting following the picnic. Lou Holtz, former Notre Dame football head coach, made brief appearance at the meeting.

—Ann Rey.

