Stars align for Pony Express BBQ Challenge

After weeks of winter that wouldn't let go, the sun emerged and shone brightly on the first-ever Pony Express BBQ Challenge in Gothenburg.

The event kicked off with a chili championship Friday night, where the public got a chance to sample and judge 21 different kinds of chili, followed by the barbecue challenge Saturday.

One professional competitor, who is also president of the Rocky Mountain Barbecue Association, has competed in many contests.

Doug Piersel, representing the Smoke N the Rockies team, said he loved the Gothenburg event, especially the hospitality.

"The event organizers have gone out of their way to make us feel welcome," said Piersel, who lives in Pueblo, CO. "They've offered little perks like free ice and electricity."

And the attraction of 47 teams, from Nebraska, Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming and Kansas is "extremely awesome," said Ryan Grob of Backdraft Barbecue.

Grob, of Henderson, CO, attributed the large number of teams to the work of organizers in promoting the event, listening to judges, working with teams and making it appealing to come to

Gothenburg.

“Cooking on grass under the trees is big,’ he said, noting that the $8,250 offered in prize money was also a big pull.

Also impressive was the appearance of ParrotHead Smokers of Dakota Dunes, SD, who Grob said is the number one-ranked team in the Kansas City BBQ Society.

Anne Anderson, Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce director, said local volunteers were amazing, especially the Chamber’s ag/non-dues and BBQ committees.

Sponsor support was overwhelming, public response was exceptional and the competitors were awesome, she said.

Anderson noted that several teams have already committed to return to Gothenburg for the 2014 barbecue competition.

Chamber administrative assistant June Blauvelt described the weekend as a huge success.

“We had a few bumps but we

worked efficiently together and solved any problems quickly,” she said.

On Saturday, Blauvelt estimated more than 500 people wandered through vendor booths set up by the pavilion or lining up to buy barbecue wings, pulled pork or hot dogs.

In addition to the competition and other events in the park, the public was treated to a pancake feed by the Lions Club and could peruse city-wide garage sales throughout the day.

A farm chore relay in the afternoon attracted many youngsters.

Judged grand champion after the barbecue contest was

Lonestar Smoke Rangers of Rapid City, SD, with CQUE of Superior as reserve grand champion.

Others in the top ten overall, in order of finish, were Parrothead Smokers of Dakota Dunes, SD, Swinestone Cowboys of Highlands Ranch, CO, Burnin Bob's Butts-N-Bones of Morrison, CO, Phat Jacks of Lincoln, Flyboy BBQ of Bailey, CO, Jo-Bawb's BBQ of Rozet, WY, Pork Patrol BBQ of Omaha and Rogue Q Smokers of the Serengeti of Omaha.

Other categories and money winners were;

CHICKEN

1. Parrothead Smokers, Dakota Dunes, SD; 2. TWSS BBQ, Omaha; 3. Flyboy BBQ, Bailey, CO; 4. Smoke n' the Rockies, Pueblo, CO; 5. Big Daddys, Lincoln; 6. Lonestar Smoke Rangers, Rapid City, SD; 7. Burnin' Bob's Butts n' Bones, Morrison, CO; 8. Cooter's Country Catering, New Castle, CO; 9. Phat Jack's, Lincoln; 10. Jo-Bawb's BBQ, Rozet, WY.

PORK

1. Swinestone Cowboys, Highlands Ranch, CO; 2. Gque, Superior, CO; 3. Phat Jack's, Lincoln; 4. Rogue Q Smokers, Omaha; 5. Lonestar Smoke Rangers, Rapid City, SD; 6. Grillin' Beavers,

Thornton, CO; 7. Cornfed BBQ, Scott City, KS; 8. Jo-Bawb's BBQ, Rozet, WY; 9. Smoke n' the Rockies, Pueblo, CO; 10. Clark Crew BBQ, Scott City, KS.

PORK RIBS

1. Burnin' Bob's Butts n' Bones, Morrison, CO; 2. Jo-Bawb's BBQ, Rozet, WY; 3. Team Behr BQ, Ravenna; 4. Cooter's Country Catering, New Castle, CO; 5. Swinestone Cowboys, Highlands Ranch, CO; 6. Clark Crew BBQ, Scott City, KS; 7. Lonestar Smoke Rangers, Rapid City, SD; 8. Uncle Ed's Smokers, Grand Island; 9. Tattoo Bob's BBQ, Omaha; 10. Out of the Blue BBQ, Petersburg.

BRISKET

1. Grillin' Beavers, Thornton, CO; 2. Backdraft BBQ, Henderson, CO; 3. Gque, Superior, CO; 4. Got Wood, North Platte; 5. Lonestar Smoke Rangers, Rapid City, SD; 6. Swinestone Cowboys, Highlands Ranch, CO; 7. Parrothead Smokers, Dakota Dunes, SD; 8. Tattoo Bob's BBQ, Omaha; 9. Flyboy BBQ, Bailey, CO; 10. Rogue Q Smokers, Omaha.

KIDS' FARM CHORE RELAY

10-12 year old division—Allie Bartels, Gracie Stienike.

7-8 year old division—Gage Anderson, Jake Burge.

6-Under age division—Corbin Coe, Jonathan Davis

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636