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GREAT FALLS, MONTANA

Rempel's rope a life-saver

The Associated Press • November 14, 2010

EDMONTON, Alberta — A 1,300-pound bull jumped a six-foot fence and plunged into the stands at the Canadian Finals Rodeo, injuring four spectators and forcing others to scatter.

Fort Shaw pickup man Gary Rempel was instrumental in preventing other injuries.

Rewind had just bucked rider Tanner Girletz and was trotting around the competition area at Rexall Place on Friday when he leaped the fence. Rempel, who has been selected to work the National Finals Rodeo next month in Las Vegas, had just gotten a rope on the 1,300-pound bull and was able to keep him from running further up into the stands.

"People were kind of just standing there. The announcer was saying to people in the seats, 'Go high, go high!' There was no really big panic," said Murray Janz, who was at the rodeo. "It was scratching, just trying to go somewhere. But the pickup man was holding him tight."

Rodeo officials are reviewing what took place and rodeo commissioner John Windwick said it was the first such incident in the event's 37-year history.

"It's a very rare occurrence," Windwick said Saturday. "If there's a way to make sure this doesn't happen again, we'll look at it."

All the spectators who were injured were sitting in the front row. Three were treated at the scene and another was taken to the hospital.

Windwick didn't have an update on the condition of the person taken to hospital. However, an announcer at Rexall Place told fans Saturday that the injured person joked with paramedics, saying, "That's what you get for being in the front row."

Rempel has worked the Canadian Finals Rodeo a dozen times and has been a pickup rider for close to 30 years. He told a news conference Saturday that bulls can be hard to predict.

"Who knows what goes on in their minds? This one decided he was going to jump and that's what he did," Rempel said.

Windwick said Rewind received a cut to his leg and

won't be used again at this rodeo. He said the animal, which Windwick described as "the best of the best," will likely be used again in competition.

The bull riding events continued Friday following the incident, and the rodeo resumed as scheduled Saturday afternoon.

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