

COMPETITION LETS FIDDLES FROLIC

State championship gives fiddlers a chance to show their stuff

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BY BJ LEWIS - VICTORIA ADVOCATE

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HALLETTSVILLE – As the sun came out, so did the fiddles at the 38th annual Texas State Championship Fiddlers Frolics on Sunday.

Morning showers left the carnival and cook-off grounds a bit soggy, but they did nothing to disrupt the flow of fiddling and cooking fun.

The Knights of Columbus Hall was packed with fans of the fiddle. Outside were several tents with vendors of various goods, including fiddles, naturally. Looking right, left, forward and back behind the hall, and one couldn't help but see the cooking setups or get caught up in the smell of barbecue in the air.

Back inside, Texas State Champion Ricky Turpin and guitarist Rex Gillentine were inducted into the Texas Fiddlers' Hall of Fame. After saying a few words to the audience, the brand-new hall of fame musicians jammed together for several minutes before the Texas State Championship Fiddle Contest began.

It was Elijah Stone's third time participating in the contest. The 26-year-old from Kerrville said he is still fairly new to the fiddle and likes the idea of the Fiddlers Frolic as a way to immerse himself into the music.

"Right when you think you know something, someone comes along and shows you something new," he said, between practicing.

A fellow contestant, Jordan Greer has been around the contest a lot longer than Stone. Jordan, 17, from Burton said he has been playing for nine years and attending the Frolics for seven.

"I am really competitive," he said about what has brought him back year after year. "And I really like to play with other people and just jam."

Jamming together was something Marina Pendleton and Mitchell Butaud spent Sunday afternoon doing. Mitchell, from Magnolia, and Marina, from Tulsa, had just met each other Saturday and were playing together Sunday, trading off with each other between the fiddle and the guitar.

This year was the first that the Pendleton family attended the Frolics, Marina's mother, Virginia, said as she watched her daughter jam with her new friend.

"We had heard a lot about it. It's one of the biggest in the country and a lot of our friends come down," she said. "We've had a really good time."

Mitchell has been coming for four years now.

"It's fun. There is no time where there is not something going on," he said as he strummed his guitar.

When the state contest began there were 25 contestants. The top three contestants moved on to the Cliff and Velda Fryer Championship Play-off. Dennis Ludiker from Austin emerged as the winner and 2008 state champion.

Traveling from Corpus Christi for the event, Ronnie and Kris Naquin, freelance photographers, were busy snapping pictures and scarfing barbecue.

"This is great stuff. The fiddlers are great, the barbecue is unbelievable," he said with a wide grin. "This is a great place to bring your kids and get in touch with rural American."

The duo just discovered the Fiddlers Frolic last year, Kris said.

"We will be back for many more," Ronnie added.

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