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Two-Time World Champion Team Roper Matt Sherwood

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Sherwood, Petska have best run of NFR, place 2nd

LAS VEGAS – The 10 nights of the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo is the time for the best cowboys in the game to have a good week of work.

It's better if it's a great week of work. Matt Sherwood is hoping the former turns into the latter and that he and partner Cory Petska can step up the pressure on the other 14 teams in ProRodeo's championship. They took a pretty big step by finishing in a tie for second place in Tuesday's sixth go-round, each earning a check worth \$12,404.

"I'm just so happy to be making good runs and placing," said Sherwood, a two-time world champion header from Pima, Ariz. "If they let us win the round or if we win fourth or fifth in the round, we'll just take what we can get."

The tandem posted a 3.8-second run, tying Turtle Powell and Jhett Johnson as runners-up to reigning world champions Trevor Brazile and Patrick Smith. After winning the opening go-round, Sherwood and Petska have placed in four others; Tuesday's round was the first time the two have posted a sub-4.0-second run.

"Tonight was our best run, if we can keep making smooth runs and placing, we'll see where we are at the end of the week," Sherwood said. "We're roping aggressive. You'll notice that teams that were first, second and third in the average finished first, second and third in the round.

"Turtle is stealing our show, sort of. Those guys are doing so good, you can't back off. (If) you want to have a chance to win the world at the end of the week, you've got to keep pressing."

The key is to continue collecting checks. Through six nights in Las Vegas, Sherwood and Petska have pocketed \$45,577 each, a significant living in less than a week. In rodeo, though, dollars also are championship points. The contestant in each discipline that finishes the season with the most money won is rewarded with the Montana Silversmiths gold buckle for being world champion.

Sherwood knows all about that; in his two previous trips to the NFR, he left the Thomas & Mack Center with those wearable trophies. He'd like to make it three.

"We need to stay aggressive, but smooth," he said.

That's easier said than done, especially with the pressure mounting in the final stages of the grand finale, but that's why the game is played. Sherwood wouldn't trade it.