

BAREBACK BRONC RIDING

Bareback bronc riding is one of rodeo's most exciting and spectacular events. During an eight-second ride, a cowboy has only a single-hand rigging to hold on to. The leather or rawhide rigging, with its suitcase-like handle, fits over the horse's back and is held in place with a cinch and latigo around the animal's girth. The cowboy starts the ride with his feet placed over the break of the horse's shoulders. If his feet are not in the correct position when the horse hits the ground on its first jump out of the chute, the cowboy has failed to properly mark out the horse and is disqualified and given no score. He is disqualified if he touches the equipment, himself or the animal with his free hand.



Points are awarded on the turnout of the rider's toes, the proficiency of the spurring motion and the cowboy's control of the ride plus the bucking of the horse. A contestant's timing and strength are vital in maintaining a controlled ride. As the horse bucks, the rider jerks his knees upward, running his spurs up the animal's shoulders. As the horse comes back down, the cowboy straightens his legs so that his spurs are again over the horse's shoulders as its front feet hit the ground. Timing and strength are key factors to spectacular spurring and a high scoring ride. A typical winning ride can be in the 80's. Bareback bronc riding made its debut as a standard rodeo event in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association in the 1950's but it was seen in the rodeo arena much earlier than that.

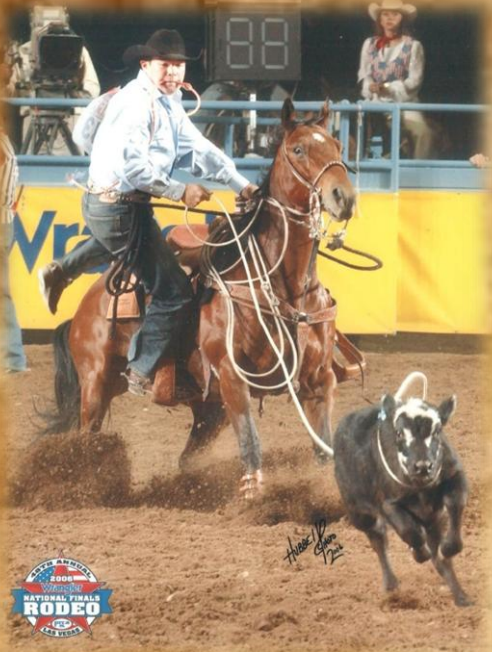
STEER WRESTLING



Steer wrestling requires a unique blend of speed, technique and power. It is generally the quickest event in rodeo with winning times often dipping below 5 seconds. Steer wrestlers begin their event on horseback in the timed-event end of the arena. The steer, waiting in a chute to the cowboy's right, is released when the steer wrestler nods his head. Once the steer reaches a pre-determined point in the arena that gives him a head start, the cowboy rides out of the box in pursuit. If he leaves the box too early, he is assessed a 10-second penalty for breaking the barrier.

While steer wrestling is an individual event, the cowboy receives help from his hazer who rides to the right of the steer. The hazer keeps the steer running straight and typically receives a share of any prize money won. Once out of the box, the steer wrestler rides alongside the animal, at speeds up to 30 miles per hour, then slides off his horse and onto the steer, wrapping his arms around the horns. He grabs the steer's right horn with his left hand, then digs in his heels to slow the steer. The cowboy then lifts the steer's nose with his left hand and, using leverage and strength, flips the steer onto its side or back. Steer wrestling is the only event in rodeo that didn't evolve from ranch duties. It was created simply as competition and entertainment. First called bulldogging, the event was started around 1881 by Bill Pickett, an African-American cowboy, who turfed steers by grabbing them and biting their lower lips until they fell to the ground. Pickett rode in the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Real Wild West Shows. The event evolved into steer wrestling in about 1910, and became a rodeo event much as it is seen today.

TIE-DOWN ROPING



As with saddle bronc riding and team roping, the roots of tiedown roping can be traced back to the working ranches of the Old West. When calves were sick or injured, cowboys had to rope and immobilize them quickly for veterinary treatment. Ranch hands prided themselves on the speed with which they could rope and tie calves, and they soon turned their work into informal contests. As the event matured, being a good horseman and a fast sprinter became as important to the competitive tie-down roper as being quick and accurate with a rope. Today, the mounted cowboy starts from a box, a three-sided fenced area adjacent to the chute holding the calf. The fourth side of the box opens into the arena.

The calf receives a head start that is determined by the length of the arena. One end of a breakaway rope barrier is looped around the calf's neck and stretched across the open end of the box. When the calf reaches its advantage point, the barrier is released. If the roper breaks the barrier before the calf reaches its head start, the cowboy is assessed a 10-second penalty. The horse is trained to come to a stop as soon as the cowboy throws his loop and catches the calf. The cowboy then dismounts, sprints to the calf and throws it by hand, a maneuver called flanking. If the calf is not standing when the cowboy reaches it, he must allow the calf to get back on its feet before flanking it. After the calf is flanked, the roper ties any three legs together with a pigging string — a short, looped rope he clenches in his teeth during the run. While the contestant is accomplishing all of that, his horse must pull back hard enough to eliminate any slack in the rope, but not so hard as to drag the calf. When the roper finishes tying the calf, he throws his hands in the air as a signal that the run is completed. The roper then remounts his horse, rides forward to create slack in the rope and waits six seconds to see if the calf remains tied. If the calf kicks free, the roper receives no time."

Winning calf roping times can run between 7 and 10 seconds and rarely even faster

SADDLE BRONC RIDING

Saddle bronc riding is rodeo's classic event, both a complement and contrast to the wilder spectacles of bareback riding and bull riding. This event requires strength to be sure, but the event also demands style, grace and precise timing. Saddle bronc riding evolved from the task of breaking and training horses to work the cattle ranches of the Old West. Many cowboys claim riding saddle broncs is the toughest rodeo event to master because of the technical skills necessary for success. Every move the bronc rider makes must be synchronized with the movement of the horse. The cowboy's objective is a fluid ride, somewhat in contrast to the wilder and less-controlled rides of bareback riders.

One of the similarities shared by saddle bronc and bareback riding is the rule that riders in both events must mark out their horses on the first jump from the chute. To properly mark out his horse, the saddle bronc rider must have both heels touching the animal above the point of its shoulders when it makes its first jump from the chute. If the rider misses his mark, he receives no score. While a bareback rider has a rigging to hold onto, the saddle bronc rider has only a thick rein attached to his horse's halter. Using one hand, the cowboy tries to stay securely seated in his saddle. If he touches any part of the horse or his own body with his free hand, he is disqualified. Judges score the horse's bucking action, the cowboy's control of the horse and the cowboy's spurring action. While striving to keep his toes turned outward, the rider spurs from the points of the horse's shoulders to the back of the saddle.



TEAM ROPING

Team roping is the only rodeo event where two cowboys compete together for a time score and shared prize money. This event also evolved from the open range where it took two men to rope and hold a large steer for doctoring. In modern, competitive team roping, the roping steer is given a designated head start into the arena before the two mounted cowboys can begin their chase. The "header" must avoid breaking the barrier as he begins his attempt to rope the steer's horns and turn the steer away from his partner, the "heeler". The heeler must rope both of the steer's hind legs in one of the most difficult maneuvers in rodeo.



Team ropers use loose ropes and must "dally" (wrap around the saddle horn) their ropes after their head or heel catches. The time stops after both horses are facing the steer with ropes secured on both ends. As in calf roping, there is a 10 second penalty for breaking the barrier as well as a 5 second penalty if the heeler catches only one of the steer's hind legs. A time of 10 seconds or less will often be required to post a winning score among expert team ropers. PRCA team roping is an event requiring expert riders, highly trained horses, an uncommon roping touch and endless hours of practice to perfect the skills, timing and coordination required between team members.

BARREL RACING



Barrel racing has no judges, which means the event has no subjective points of view. Time is the determining factor. Barrel racing is graceful and simplistic — one woman, three barrels, a horse and the ever-present stopwatch. The horse is ridden as quickly as possible around a cloverleaf course of three barrels. At the end of the performance, after all of the racers have finished their runs, the clock is the one and only judge. Ride quickly and win. Hesitate and lose.

Not only have the best of the sport spent countless hours practicing and honing their skill, but they also have invested many dollars in the purchase and maintenance of the talented horses they ride. A proven barrel racing horse can cost \$50,000. For the professional barrel racer, this is indeed a small price to pay. Not only must the horse be swift, but it also must be intelligent enough to avoid tipping the barrels, an infraction that adds ve penalty seconds to the time and kills any chance for victory.

The horse also must be able to withstand the long roads a cowgirl must travel to reach the next rodeo. If a horse is fast, competitive and reacts calmly to the demands of travel, chances are good that horse can stop the clock as quickly or quicker than the animal in the next trailer.

Because so many barrel racers have finely tuned their skill, the sport is timed to the hundredth of a second. When the racer enters the arena, an electronic eye starts the clock. The clock is stopped the instant the horse completes the pattern. Barrel racing at its core has changed little from the days when cowgirls raced for minimal, if any, prize money and support. And though the prizes and exposure are greater now than ever, the ultimate goal remains essentially the same as in the past: stop the clock as quickly as possible."

BULL RIDING

Bull riding is the most dangerous event in the sport of rodeo. It didn't come into being because of a ranch chore or because the bulls needed to be broken to ride. It came about as the ultimate challenge between man and animal. It was an extreme sport before the phrase was coined and it has become the most exciting and most popular event in professional rodeo.



The equipment needed is simple: a at-braided rope plus balance and a lot of nerve. The rope is pulled around the bull and then across the riding hand and wrapped. In eect, the bull riders are tied on. The powerful animals are quick and agile and often spin as they buck. The cowboy uses his free arm for balance and also holds on with his feet. Cowboys are not required to spur but are given extra points if they do. They are disqualified if they touch the bull with the free hand and the ride is timed for eight seconds.