



## THE FINER POINTS OF RODEO EVENTS HOW TO KEEP SCORE WITH THE JUDGES

For Immediate Release

Surrey, B.C.: Professional rodeo isn't one sport. It's eight. Each of those eight events is unique, with its own rules, techniques and scoring.

Some of the differences are obvious. Roughstock riders, for example, are usually thin and muscular which help them maintain their balance. Timed-event cowboys most often have the bulk required to bulldog a steer.

And, in addition to all the other factors that come into play, a winning score is determined by both the cowboy's and the animal's performance. In the roughstock events, the horse or bull accounts for half of the score. Contestants in the timed events depend on their horses to assist them in a good run, and the timed-event cattle can make or break a run.

As with any sport, it is to the spectator's advantage to recognize what judges are looking for in any ride or run. This guide should assist in that endeavour.

### 1) Saddle Bronc Riding

Timing and control are the definitive factors in scoring saddle bronc riding. A rider who synchronizes his spurring action with the animal's bucking efforts will receive a high score. Other factors considered in the scoring are the cowboy's control throughout the ride; the length of his spurring stroke and the length of the ride - a perfect rodeo ride is eight seconds.

Model spurring action begins with the rider's feet far forward on the bronc's point of shoulder sweeping to the back of the saddle, or "cantles", as the horse bucks. The rider then snaps his feet back to the horse's neck a split second before the animal's front feet hit the ground.

A bronc rider will be disqualified if he touches the animal, himself or his equipment with his free hand, if either foot slips out of a stirrup or if he drops the bronc rein.

### 2) Tie Down Roping

The tie down roping contestant starts behind a barrier and gives chase after the calf has taken a pre-determined head start. He then ropes the calf, dismounts and runs to the calf. After catching the calf, the cowboy ties any three of the animal's legs together using a pigging string he has carried in his teeth throughout the run. If the calf is not standing when the cowboy reaches it, he must allow it to stand, then flanks the calf and ties the three legs, and throws his hands in the air as a signal to the judge he has completed the roping. He then remounts his horse and allows the rope to become slack. The run is declared invalid if the calf kicks free within six seconds.

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### **3) Barrel Racing**

Barrel racing is pure speed – the fastest time wins. Times are so close that only an electronic eye timer measuring to the hundredths of a second can record the differences. The horse and rider start in an alleyway, gaining momentum as they approach the first of three barrels, placed in a cloverleaf pattern that they will circle. After circling the third barrel, the horse and rider races back to the start/finish line, where time is stopped. A rider may touch or even tip a barrel, but a five-second penalty is added if the barrel is knocked over. A barrel racer looks for a supple, athletic horse that can make turns around the barrels without pausing or stopping.

### **4) Bull Riding**

Bull riders are not required to spur. Staying aboard a wildly kicking bull that weighs a ton or more is usually enough to impress the judges. Officials watch for bull riders to remain over the middle of the bull without tilting or leaning back. In addition to good body position, other factors considered in scoring are use of the free arm and spurring action. Although not required, spurring will add points to a rider’s score. As in all the roughstock events, half of the score in bull riding is determined by the contestant’s performance and the other half is based on the animal’s efforts. A bull rider will be disqualified for touching the animal, himself or his equipment with his free hand. Like other roughstock events, the perfect ride is eight seconds.

### **5) Bareback Riding**

A bareback rigging, made of leather and rawhide and roughly resembling a suitcase handle, is the cowboy’s grip during his eight-second ride and the only equipment allowed in bareback riding. The rider must hold on with only one hand; he will be disqualified if he touches his equipment, himself or the animal with his free hand at any time during the ride. A bareback rider must begin with his feet above the break of the horse’s shoulder. This is called a “mark out”, and failure to have the feet in proper position at the beginning of the ride results in disqualification. The rider is judged on his control during the ride and on his spurring technique. The horse’s performance also accounts for half the total score.

### **6) Steer Wrestling**

A keen understanding of the principle of leverage is as important to the steer wrestler as sheer strength. The steer wrestler starts behind a barrier. After the steer has been given a headstart, the bulldogger gives chase aided by his hazer, another horseback cowboy who keeps the steer from veering away. When the steer wrestler’s horse pulls even with the steer, the bulldogger eases down the right side, reaching for the steer’s horns. After he has the horns in his grasp, he digs his heels into the dirt to stop the steer’s momentum. After the catch, the steer wrestler must either bring the steer to a stop or change the direction of the animal’s body before the throw. A 10-second penalty is assessed for a broken barrier.

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### **7) Team Roping**

Two cowboys, a husband and wife, a father and son, or any combination can compete as team ropers if they can achieve the necessary timing and coordination. One rider, the Header, rides out from the left side of the box and ropes the steer by the horns. He dallies his rope (wraps it around the saddle horn), slows and turns the steer to one side. The Heeler moves in behind the steer and ropes both hind feet while the steer is still upright and then dallies his rope. Time is stopped when the steer is stopped and dallied between horses. There are penalties for breaking during the steer’s 10 – second head start, or for roping just one hind leg. Useful when cattle have to be branded or doctored, team roping is still a part of the ranch cowboy’s work in many parts of the country. Professional team roping requires fast handling and well-trained mounts.

### **8) Cowboy Cow Milking**

An event sure to get many cheers from the crowd (everyone has a favourite milker), Cowboy Cow Milking is a seemingly impossible task. Each Cowboy Cow Milking team consists of a milker (roper) and a helper (mugger). The milker ropes the cow from his horse and jumps down after the mugger has caught and held the cow. The milker then squirts the required amount of milk into a bottle. The cow must be on her feet throughout the whole event. The first milker to reach the judge with the required milk is declared the winner.

For further information on the Cloverdale Rodeo and Country Fair visit:  
[www.cloverdalerodeo.com](http://www.cloverdalerodeo.com).

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