



BULLDOGGING is no sport for the faint of heart as is obvious from this photo by famed rodeo photographer DeVere Helfrich of Klamath Falls. While traveling at top speed, the cowboy must jump from his horse, miss the flailing horns of a steer and lock himself over the animal's head. His job then is merely to stop the steer and roll him on his side. The steer is seldom helpful in this venture.

Speed, Skill Prove Fascinating In Bulldogging Where Man Is Pitted Against Brawling Beast

There's something fascinating about watching a man wrestle a steer three times his size and throw it to the ground with his bare hands.

Steer wrestling—or bulldogging as it's frequently called—looks like a job that takes not much skill but a lot of brute strength. Bulldoggers, at least, are all strong, husky young athletes.

On the contrary, it takes as much skill and training to throw a rank steer in less than ten seconds as it does to drive a clean wood shot 275 yards off the tee, straight down the middle of the fairway.

Steermen Study

Rodeo's top steer wrestlers study the techniques of their trade as

avidly as any football squad goes through long hours of skull practice. They make films of good wrestlers in action, run them in slow motion to study the fine points of timing and balance it takes to persuade an 800-pound pile of bone and muscle to lie down.

Many doggers have a few steers on their home ranch and in the off weeks of the long rodeo season you'll probably find them out in the corral, practicing to improve their technique.

Watch them in action at the rodeo and you'll appreciate that steer wrestling is not as easy as years of practice make it look.

Steer wrestlers compete against each other for the best time and the first thing a cowboy must do in

this event is make a good start out of the chute, whether the local rules call for starts behind the barrier or lap and tap.

In large arenas, the steers are all given a pre-determined head start marked by a score line several feet in front of the chute. Next to the score line stands one of the flag men, with a line to a spring latch holding a rope across the box where the contestant waits. As the steer crosses the score line, the flagman drops his flag to indicate the start of time and simultaneously pulls the rope barrier from in front of the waiting bulldogger.

Penalty Added

If the dogger starts too soon, he breaks the barrier and a ten-second penalty is added to his time. If he starts too late he loses pre-

cious seconds trying to catch up with the steer.

In lap and tap starts the steer is given no head start and the dogger can jump it right at the chute gate. If the cowboy starts too soon he gets ahead of the steer and it gets away.

The next problem is the jump. No two steers run alike and you'll see quite a variation in their speed. On the opposite side of the steer another cowboy rides as a hazer to keep the steer running straight. There's always the danger that the steer will "set up"—stop just as the wrestler slips out of his saddle—and the cowboy will take a hard fall in the dust.

Once he has a firm grip on the head of the critter, the cowboy must bring the running steer to a complete stop by planting his boot heels in the dirt ahead of the steer. If his feet get behind him he'll be dragged along helplessly.

Time is up when the steer falls on its side with all four legs free and the feet and head pointing in the same direction. If the steer "dog falls," with its legs under it or spread eagled, the cowboy usually has to let him up and start over. And at any minute the big, sturdy animal may wrench free and escape.

Must Throw By Hand

As soon as the steer is properly thrown, the other flagman, mounted nearby, drops his flag in a signal to stop the timer's watch.

"Houlihaning"—jumping on the head of the steer so it's knocked off its feet—is out. If it happens accidentally, the dogger must let the steer up and throw him by hand. "Pegging"—driving a horn into the

ground to gain leverage—is also outlawed.

Like roping, steer wrestling depends on the closest possible teamwork between cowboy and horse.



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'Bulldogging' Has Strange Background

Before 1903 there was no such thing as steer wrestling or bulldogging. Unlike most other rodeo events, steer wrestling is not a skill that a man needs on a ranch. If a cowboy wants a steer downed he'll do it with a rope.

One of the most skillful and exciting contests of today's arena, steer wrestling is the joint invention of an angry cowboy and a bawky steer. Fifty years ago, Bill Pickett, a cowhand from southern Texas, was trying to drive a steer into a corral. Several times it turned away. Finally Pickett, exasperated, leaped from his saddle to the horns of the critter, twisted its neck till it flopped on its side.

Some people say that as Pickett brought his head close to the steer's, he bit the tender lower lip to help subdue the animal in the same way that a bulldog will grab the lip of an attacking bull. Some folks say he didn't.

But enough people thought he did that it wasn't long till the trick was known as bulldogging. For several years it was done at rodeos only as an exhibition. As it gradually changed to a contest event (and none of the cowboys bit the steer) the name was changed to steer wrestling.



BACK FOR '63—Bob Chambers, considered one of the best rodeo announcers in the business, will be back this year at the Douglas County Rodeo. He was the announcer in 1962.

IT PAYS TO PATRONIZE
NEWS-REVIEW
ADVERTISERS



Calf Roping Skills Meld

No single rodeo event displays as many of the cowboys' skills as does calf roping. In fifteen seconds or less, you'll see how well a horse can be trained and ridden, how well a man can handle a rope and tie a kicking calf, and how well horse and man can work together as a team.

Most of the work it takes to be a successful calf roper is never seen by rodeo spectators since it is done long before the chute gate opens and the calf streaks across the arena.

No roper would invest an entry fee without having a good roping horse, and the horses you'll see in this event are some of the best-trained working horses in history, trained from the best quarter horse stock.

They have the quick burst of starting speed—necessary to come right up on the running calves—that is characteristic of their breed. They are trained to follow the calf through every twist or turn, holding their position just behind it and a little to one side to give the roper the best chance to throw his loop.

At a signal from the roper, they'll stop on a dime, sitting back on their haunches and braking with all four feet as the cowboy steps out of the saddle to run down the rope. Then, without a rider, they stand alertly facing the calf, facing slightly to keep the rope taut but never dragging the calf.

Contest calf roping is a timed event and frequently several hundred dollars depend on the saving of a split second. You'll see how the teamwork between horse and cowboy is polished in this event to machine-like smoothness.

At most rodeos all calves are given a head start determined by the size of the arena and other conditions. The officials who work the event are a scoreline judge, a field judge and two timers.

When the calf is out of the chute and has crossed the scoreline, the scoreline judge drops his flag to signal the starting time and pulls the rope barrier from in front of the box where the roper waits. If the contestant starts out of the box before the calf crosses the scoreline, he breaks the barrier and a ten-second penalty is added to his time.

Once out of the box, the horse closes on the calf as quickly as possible. As soon as he's in range the roper lets fly with his loop—usually from about twelve feet away. The rules are catch as catch can, which means the roper may catch the calf any way he can—around the head, feet or body—as long as the loop is out of his hand when it catches and holds until the roper gets to the calf.

As soon as the rope has settled on the calf, the cowboy throws away the slack and swings his weight into the left stirrup. The horse stops, taking all the slack out of the rope; the rider dismounts and runs down the rope.

The calf must be thrown by hand and if it has accidentally been jerked off its feet, the roper must let it up. He tosses the calf on its back, gathers any three feet and ties them with a short pigging string, using two quick wraps and a half hitch. His movements are lightning fast, ending in a signal that he's done.

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