

COWBOY 101

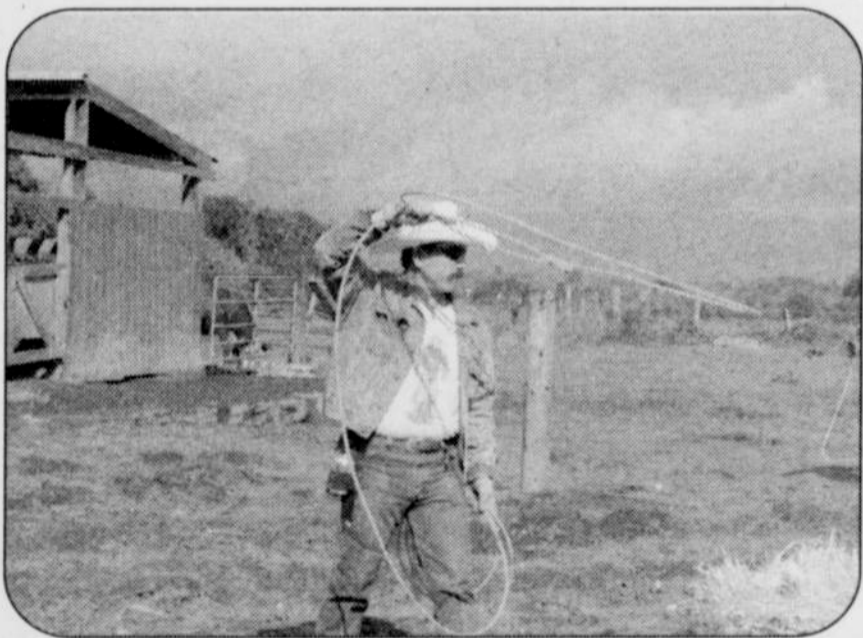
These are traditional rodeo events found at most rodeos (gay and straight).

POLE BENDING: This event has nothing to do with bending your own pole. It is also a "regular" rodeo event, so it's not just a gay thing. The horse and rider run a linear pattern through six equally placed poles 21 feet apart. This challenges the horse to change direction as it weaves through the poles. Riders receive a five-second penalty for knocking over a pole and disqualification for breaking the pattern.

BULLRIDING: You may not have ridden a bull before—and the ability to spout bullshit is not yet a sanctioned event. However, bullriding is rodeo's most dangerous event and a spectator favorite because of the added danger factor. Because of the bull's erratic and powerful twists and leaps, only the toughest contestants can endure the six seconds. Contestants may not touch the animal, rigging, their hat or themselves. (Touching yourself is for after the event, not during.)

BAREBACK BRONC RIDING: You know *Just Out* always promotes safe sex, so dispense with the barebacking references *right now*. In this time-honored event, the rider mounts the horse in a chute, grasping a rigging that is strapped around the horse. With a single handhold and no reins, saddle or stirrups, the contestant must ride the horse for six seconds. (In pro rodeo the duration is eight seconds.) Up to 50 points are awarded to both the horse and rider: power and bucking pattern (for horse) and strength, form and spurring action (for rider). This is not a sport for the meek or mild: During the International Gay Rodeo Association Finals last year in Las Vegas, one female bronc rider's back was broken in this event.

STEER RIDING: This event is similar to bull riding, but on smaller animals with better temperaments. (Think of it as *twink* bullriding.) Recommended for newcomers to participate in before moving up to the bull league.



BARREL RACING: This is the only professional rodeo event for women—so listen up, lesbians. In gay rodeo, both men and women compete, but women can generally trounce the guys in this event, where contestants vie for the fastest time running a cloverleaf pattern around three barrels in a triangular formation. Knocking over a barrel results in lost points. To compete you need to be a strong, expert horseperson and, um, have a horse.

FLAG RACING: Flag racing (not fag racing, which is an entirely different sport) is an event utilizing two barrels and a pole. Atop each barrel is a weighted bucket; one has a flag with a pole in it. The riders must bring their horse as closely as possible to that bucket, grab the flag and then deposit it in the second bucket at the far end of the course. Penalty points assessed if bucket, barrel or pole is knocked over.

CALF ROPING (BELOW): Contestants rope a calf when their lasso goes completely over the calf's head and catches around any part of its body. There is competition on foot and on horseback (called "mounted breakaway") as well as a pair's competition with two cowboys and one calf (called "team roping").

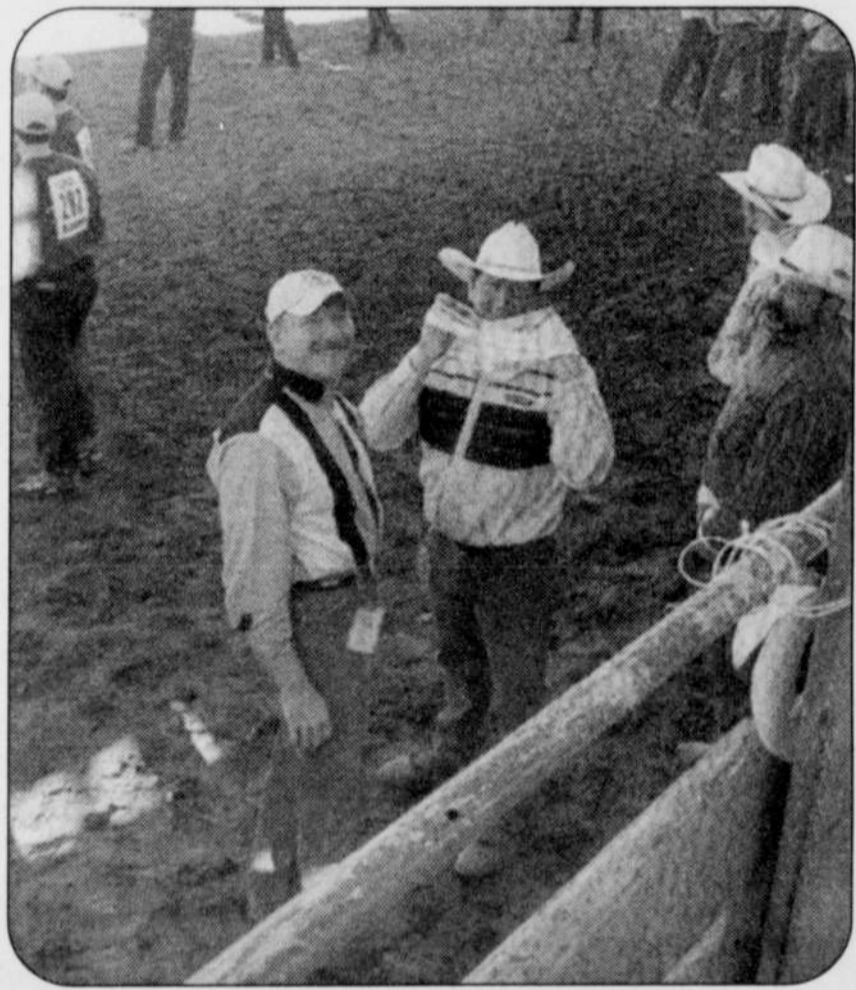
These are events found only in gay rodeo. Yippy yay-hoo!


STEER DECORATING: The competition begins with a rope attached to a steer's horns and with the first contestant anchoring the rope. When the steer leaves the chute, the second contestant has to tie a ribbon to the steer's tail (called "decorating" in cowboy slang). Once the ribbon is tied to the steer's tail, the first contestant must also remove the rope from the steer's horns. It's more dangerous than you think: Some have seen cowboys catch a steer's hoof in the face during the "decorating" part of the competition—and with steers weighing as much as 500 pounds, that's a lot of hoof.

GOAT DRESSING (RIGHT): This event often takes longest at each rodeo because of the number of contestants. Teams of two must run to a goat tethered to a stake. (Imagine the trauma to the poor goats at the sight of a herd of faggots running at them like in the battle scenes in *Braveheart*.) One contestant raises the goat's hind legs into the air while the second contestant fits on a pair of jockey shorts and pulls them up into the "dressed" position. Both contestants (here comes the hard part) must then run back to their original starting point before the goat "drops his drawers." Usually, the embarrassed goat just stands still in the BVDs, happy to see the homos running away.


WILD DRAG RACE: This event embraces the entire queer community, as it requires a three-person team: a man, a woman and a person in drag. The cowgirl stands 10 feet away from the chute holding a rope attached to a steer by a halter. She must hold the steer in place while the cowboy helps the drag queen onto the steer's back. *Hilarity* ensues. The team with the drag queen fully astride the steer (one leg on

each side) must cross a finish line some 70 feet away. While this sounds funny (and is), it is also dangerous. During the 2003 International Gay Rodeo Association Finals in Palm Springs, Calif., one drag queen caught a steer's horn in the face and broke her jaw! Luckily, her makeup remained miraculously intact. 10






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