

THE MOST THRILLING INCIDENTS OF THE ROUND-UP

Very First Event on First Program Was Unexpected Thriller—Roy Hunter's Fight With Vicious Steer Proved Memorable—Other Interesting Features Innumerable.

(By M. R. C.)

What was the most thrilling thing you ever saw at a Round-Up?

I have often been asked that question and I have often tried to answer it. Just as often I have failed, for no sooner have I committed a description of the "most thrilling" thing than the remembrance of another just as thrilling comes unbidden to my mind and I cannot help but speak of it. Before I have recalled so many thrilling moments that I have practically admitted to him the responsibility of designating any one with the characteristic of "most thrilling."

There have been six Round-Ups in Pendleton and there have been three afternoon exhibitions of each, eighteen full exhibitions besides the abbreviated morning exhibitions held the past four years on Fridays for the sake of eliminating contestants. I have seen all of them and all of the "Baby Round-Ups" and many of the tryouts. If I have missed any part of any exhibition it was because my attention was just then completely absorbed by some other incident connected with the exhibition. And right here I want to say, by way of digression, that I have not yet been surfeited of frontier entertainment and that I anticipate each succeeding Round-Up with as much excitement and pleasure as I did the first and enjoy it equally as much.

Having qualified from a standpoint of experience at least, to write something of the incidents of past Round-Ups that stand out in memory vividly because of the elements of the thrilling, the spectacular, the exciting or sensational to an extraordinary degree, I would like to explain the great difficulty encountered in essaying this task. To anyone who has seen a Round-Up this explanation will be entirely superfluous but I am assuming that there may be readers who have never seen anything of the nature of Pendleton's big cowboy carnival.

A Round-Up program is so surcharged with the essence of the thrilling, so teeming with exciting events, so replete with moments that test one's nerves that many incidents, which witnessed by themselves, would stamp themselves indelibly upon the viewer's memory, are lost in the multiplicity of similar incidents. There is never anything staid or sedate, prosaic or pedantic, cordly entertaining or quietly impressive about any part of any Round-Up program. It is a program with a punch and for any one incident to stand out pre-eminently above all others in remembrance it must be unusual, indeed.

Viewing in retrospect the Round-Ups that have passed into history, I note a half dozen or more such inci-

dent. They come under two classes, those which happened in the natural development and progression of some scheduled event and those which happened quite outside the scheduled program or as an interruption to a scheduled event. The one should properly be called incidents and the other accidents. Thus a particularly spectacular bucking horse may impress itself strongly upon the mind and be remembered much more distinctly than any of the other rides. And then again the horse in being mounted may rear up and fall over on the rider, and the incident or accident may so electrify that it cannot be forgotten. The one is impressive in degree, the other in character. Both are exciting enough. Those of the one class are more or less anticipated and come as the fulfillment of hopes. The others are unexpected and startling and come as the realization of vague fears. Of the two the latter are the more thrilling and exciting, perhaps, because they are unexpected and because they emphasize the reality of the dangers which attend the reckless sports of the cowboy.

Thus the cowboy race which I remember best was the one that inaugurated the Round-Up. It was the first event of the first exhibition of the first Round-Up. The track was small, then, and not adapted to horse racing. A group of twenty shouting cowboys on madly galloping ponies came dashing down the straightaway in front of the big grandstand. They were closely bunched, each trying to gain a lead. Suddenly one of the ponies in advance stepped in a small depression in the track. He stumbled and pitched forward. Immediately the pony behind stumbled over him and forming an obstacle to others. In much less time than it takes to write it, there were eight or ten ponies and riders sprawling on the track in a struggling, confused mass. There was a struggling, confused mass, a sprained ankle or two and many bruises as a result, but that was all. The pile-up was the first real thrill the Round-Up furnished and those who saw it will never forget it.

Perhaps the event of all events that has been featured by the happening of the unexpected is the stagecoach race. These lumbering old carriers were never built for racing on a quarter mile track and four horse stage teams, capable of running at top speed in perfect unison, are not developed these days as in the days when upon such a team depended the safety of driver and passengers. Thus the accidents which have attended these races are not to be wondered at. The most spectacular incident of any stagecoach race, and undoubtedly

one of the most spectacular of any Round-Up was the "upset" in one of the races of the 1914 Round-Up. It was driving four fine horses and they had drawn their coach well to the lead in the first lap. As the coach rounded the last turn at the west end of the track, careening and swaying while traveling full-speed ahead, it suddenly tilted too far and traveled a short distance on two wheels and turned over, throwing driver and passengers to the ground. Drugged a moment on its side, the coach suddenly opened, was driven a short space in this position, then turned clear over and righted itself. All this time the horses were plunging forward and, when the old vehicle finally righted itself, they continued down the track. Without driver they tore around the track, making another full lap and completing the race winner despite the accident. Braden Gerking, who was whip-pier on the stage, at the upset was thrown clear over the arena fence and sustained a broken collar bone.

Another stage-coach race that is well remembered is one of the 1914 Round-Ups. While running down the back straightaway, one of the lead horses at a team suddenly stumbled and fell, piling up all four horses in a heap. The coach was brought to an abrupt halt and the three men on top were catapulted from their seats out upon the horses as if shot from a torpedo tube.

An event that was particularly exciting to me and to many others who chanced to see it, occurred during the 1911 or 1912 Round-Up. Hank McGrath, mammoth cowboy from Union county, figured conspicuously in it. He was in the center of the arena and had been assisting in the saddling of buckers for the cowgirls' bucking contest. A long-horned Mexican steer had eroded the ropes in the preceding event and had been permitted to remain on the track for a short time in order not to interrupt the contest. At the conclusion of the event cowboys attempted to herd it into the corral.

Down the back stretch of the track it raced but suddenly swerved from its course and dashed its horns at a pair of gaudy orange chaps on the arena fence. Impaling them, the brute leaped the fence and made for a cowboy standing beside a bucker that had just been saddled. This cowboy, believing that discretion is the better part of valor, dodged around behind the horse and made his escape.

McGrath at the moment was some 25 yards away and with his back to the steer. He had been watching other things. He wore a bright red shirt and, when the infuriated steer caught sight of it, he lowered his horns and charged. McGrath, all un-

conscious of the onrushing danger, stood unconcernedly gazing toward the east end of the arena. A thousand voices yelled forth a warning to him just as the steer was upon him. Without a moment's hesitation he threw himself flat upon the ground and the steer passed over him completely. McGrath started to arise but the steer wheeled sharply and started a second charge. McGrath again flattened himself against the earth and the steer approached him, sniffed of him and snorted angrily. But McGrath refused to move a muscle, experience in cowland having taught him that a steer will not attack a body apparently lifeless. When cowboys with whirling lariats imprisoned the long-horned brute, McGrath arose and, with an unconcern that could not have been more perfect if studied, went about his business.

The steers of that year, imported by the Round-Up from Mexico, were unusually wild and vicious. At one of the performances one of the steers charged a horse and rider on the far side of the track and gored the horse so badly that it was necessary to shoot it. After goring the one horse, the animal charged Director Sam Thompson who was assisting in the efforts to run the animal from the track. The director was mounted on a spirited horse that, sensing the danger, wheeled and dashed madly around the track pursued by the steer. The rider could not manage his far-stricken mount until it had left the danger well to the rear.

The bulldogging event is always one fraught with danger and excitement and there have been thrilling hand-to-hand fights aplenty at the Round-Ups. But of them all none is remembered more vividly or recounted so often as the furious fight waged in 1912 by Corporal Roy Hunter of Vancouver Barracks. Hunter is a reckless cowboy soldier and has secured a furlough several years to attend the Round-Up. In 1912 he attempted for the first time to win the big money in the bulldogging event.

He swung from his saddle to the head of the fleeing steer just in front of the grandstand and while the strength of the animal was still unspent. For a full minute he was dragged, tossed and shaken but held on grimly to the murderous horns. Its first frantic efforts to shake loose its human foe defeated, the steer finally ceased its struggles and stood still. Then Hunter began his offensive. Seizing a good leverage upon the animal's horns he began to twist the steer's head. It was grueling work and he exerted every ounce of his strength. Finally with a last mighty effort he threw himself backward and pulled the animal from its feet. The latter, however, instantly arose and

renewed the battle, putting the cowboy on the defensive again. At this time the man was directly in front of the steer's horns and, to save himself from being gored, threw both arms and legs about the steer's head and literally bound his body to it. With head held low by the weight of the clinging body, the steer dashed him into the ground and then into the arena fence, with such force that the board broke. Still Hunter held on and, taking advantage of the steer's temporary exhaustion, secured another hold on the horns and began to twist its sinewy neck. He had almost succeeded in throwing it when

the steer gave a lunge, broke the hold and dashed away, saving his vanquished lying face downward in the dust. Other cowboys quickly picked him up and the audience waited with bated breath. Dirty and bloody the same soldier turned to the grandstand, smiled as he shook his head in his disappointment and waved his hand in acknowledgement of the tremendous tribute of applause paid him for his gritty battle.

Of the bucking horse rides I remember none better than those made in the finals of the 1911 Round-Up when members of the Caucasian, Ethiopian and Indian races fought for

supremacy. John Spain, white, George Fletcher, black, and Jackson Sundown, red, were chosen to ride for the championship and for them the three hardest buckers of the Round-Up string wear chosen, Long Tom, Hotfoot and Lightfoot.

Spain drew Long Tom and that big brute pounded across the arena and crashed through the fence. It was not the most spectacular ride of the day but it was a good one. Then Sundown mounted Lightfoot to stay with him through all his pitching and plunging until the little animal dash-

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