

# RODEO 101

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**F**or a sport born on the straight-forward ranches of the American West, rodeo can be confusing for the uninitiated. If you're reading these words, that's probably you. Don't fret, you're starting in the right place. Rodeo 101 is here to provide the basics and get you up to speed.

## All-around

The top award at every rodeo, which also comes with additional money and prizes. It goes to the cowboy who earns the most money in more than one event, which is not always the cowboy who earns the most total money that week. If no cowboy earns money in more than one event, the all-around goes to the cowboy who earned the most combined money while entering more than one event.

## Bareback riding

Bareback riders must compete without the benefit of a saddle. The horses used in bareback are the same as those used in saddle bronc, but the ride is more violent because of the lack of padding between the horse and rider. Contestants grip a handle that is strapped behind the horse's shoulder blades, leading to bone-shaking impacts with each buck. Riders must stay on for 8 seconds for a legal ride.

## Barrel racing

The only women's event in major rodeo. Contestants start at one end of the arena riding toward a time line that automatically times their run. They must traverse a three-leafed clover pattern starting on either the left or right, and after looping around the first barrel must cross the arena to the opposite barrel. After looping around the second barrel they ride to the middle barrel before heading straight back to the



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**Jesse Brown, of Baker City, competes in steer wrestling at the 2019 Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston.**

time line. Contestants are allowed to bump the 55-gallon barrels, but if one falls over, a 5-second penalty is added to their time.

## Bull riding

Considered the most dangerous 8 seconds in sports. Contestants grip a bull rope that is wrapped around the bull's body just behind its front legs. Riders may only use one hand. If their free hand comes into contact with the bull, it is not a legal ride. Riders are not required to mark out or spur like the bareback and saddle-born riders. Although they take on the largest animals in the sport, bull riders tend to be some of the smallest competitors.

## Rough stock

The name applied to the bucking events — bull riding, bareback riding and saddle bronc. In all of the events, contestants earn scores for success-

ful 8-second rides. Once situated on the back of the bronc or bull, the cowboy will signal the gate man, who then opens the bucking chute. With only one hand holding him onto his mount, the cowboy must successfully ride for 8 seconds to earn a score. Rough stock is scored by two judges, who award up to 25 points to each the rider and animal based on varying criteria. All scores are combined to get a total for the ride, with 100 points as the maximum.

## Saddle bronc riding

Rodeo's signature event. From a specialized saddle with free-swinging stirrups and no horn, contestants grip a cotton rein that is attached to a halter worn by the horse.

## Slack

Because of time restrictions, not every cowboy gets to compete in the main performance. Slack is the name

for competitions before or after the main performances and counts the same in the overall standings. Slack ensures larger entry fields and higher payouts for winners, and is less expensive to attend for fans.

## Steer wrestling

Also known as bulldogging, steer wrestling requires the most brute strength of any of the timed events. The cowboy starts behind the barrier, and once the steer has been released, the cowboy must catch up to the sprinting steer before dropping down from the side of his horse and catching the steer by the horns. The clock stops when all four hooves are off the ground and pointing in the same direction. Steers weigh between 450 and 660 pounds.

## Team roping

Consisting of header (the cowboy who ropes the head of the steer) and a heeler (the cowboy who ropes the hind legs), the event begins the same as tie-down, except with one rider in each box on either side of the chute. Once the barrier is released, the header must make one of three legal catches — around both horns, one horn and the head, or the neck — and then make the steer change direction before the heeler throws his lasso at its hind legs. Catching both hind legs is a successful run, while catching just one adds a 5-second penalty. The clock stops when there is no slack in both ropes and the riders' horses are facing each other.

## Tie-down roping

Also known as calf roping. A cowboy must lasso a calf before dismounting and successfully tying any three of its legs together. After he throws his hands into the air to signify a completed run, he must get back on his horse and create slack in the rope. The calf must stay tied for 6 seconds to make the time official.