

Let's Learn About Rodeo

Rodeo as we know it did not exist until the late 1800's, but its roots in North America are traced back to the Spanish settling California and becoming cattle ranchers.

The skills of the early Spanish vaqueros were eventually passed along to the American Cowboy after the civil war when the frontier territories were heavily expanding. The difference between Spanish rodeo and American rodeo is that the Spanish version focuses on style, while the American version focuses on speed.

In the late 1800's, Wild West Shows began traveling throughout the Eastern states and did so for about 50 years. Today's rodeos are an offspring of these early shows that featured great cowboys. The early 1900's marked the introduction of the Wild West Show overseas, with performances in England and Africa. The cowboys in these shows were paid performers and it was not a contest like modern rodeos now.

In 1936, the cowboys decided to form their own organization after striking at the Boston Garden Rodeo. The organization was named the Cowboys Turtle Association because they were slow to organize, but eventually "stuck their neck out". The organization wanted to ensure fair prize money, equality in judging and honest advertising of the sport. In 1945, the name was changed to the Rodeo Cowboys Association. Again in 1974 the name was changed, this time to the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

The PRCA sanctions nearly 600 rodeos yearly. The standard events are saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, bull riding, tie down roping, steer wrestling and team roping.

Rodeo's "classic" event, saddle bronc riding has roots that run deep in the history of the old west. Ranch hands would often gather and compete among themselves to see who could display the best style while riding untrained horses. It was from this early competition that today's event was born. There is a saddle and stir ups. The saddle bronc rider should stay on for eight seconds without touching the animal with his free hand.

A bareback ride is done without a saddle and is again timed to be an eight second ride. A rider is disqualified if he touches his equipment, himself or the animal with his free hand or bucks off. Unlike the other rough stock contestants, bull riders are not required to spur. It's usually impressive enough just to remain seated for eight seconds on a bull that may weigh more than a ton and is as quick as he is big.

Tie down roping is an event born on the ranches of the old west. Calves were roped and tied down for medical treatment. Today, success in tie down roping depends largely on the teamwork between the cowboy and his horse. After the calf is given a head start, horse and rider give chase.

The contestant ropes the calf, then dismounts and runs to the animal. After catching the animal, the cowboy ties three of the animal's legs together.

Steer wrestling (also known as bulldogging) is an event that begins with a steer wrestler on horseback. He will begin the chase after the steer after the steer has been given a head start.

The steer wrestler is assisted by a hazer, another cowboy on horseback tasked with keeping the steer running in a straight line. When the bulldogger's horse pulls even with the steer, he eases down the right side of the horse to reach for the steers horns, after grasping the horns, he digs his heels into the dirt. As the steer slows, the task of the cowboy is to tip the steer over. The clock stops when the steer is on the side with all four legs pointing in the same direction.

Team roping is unique in that two cowboys work together for a shared time. The first cowboy, known as the "header", ropes the steer either by the horns, around the neck, or around the horn and neck. After the catch is made, the header wraps his rope around the saddle horn and turns the steer to the left. The second cowboy known as the "heeler" goes behind the steer and ropes the back feet.

Some links that may be shown on the events:

Saddle bronc

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bbPz3epETE>

Bareback

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGqUIFZihO4>

Bull Riding

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0f81-ZhDckU>

Tie down roping

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfw3rEbBZtg>

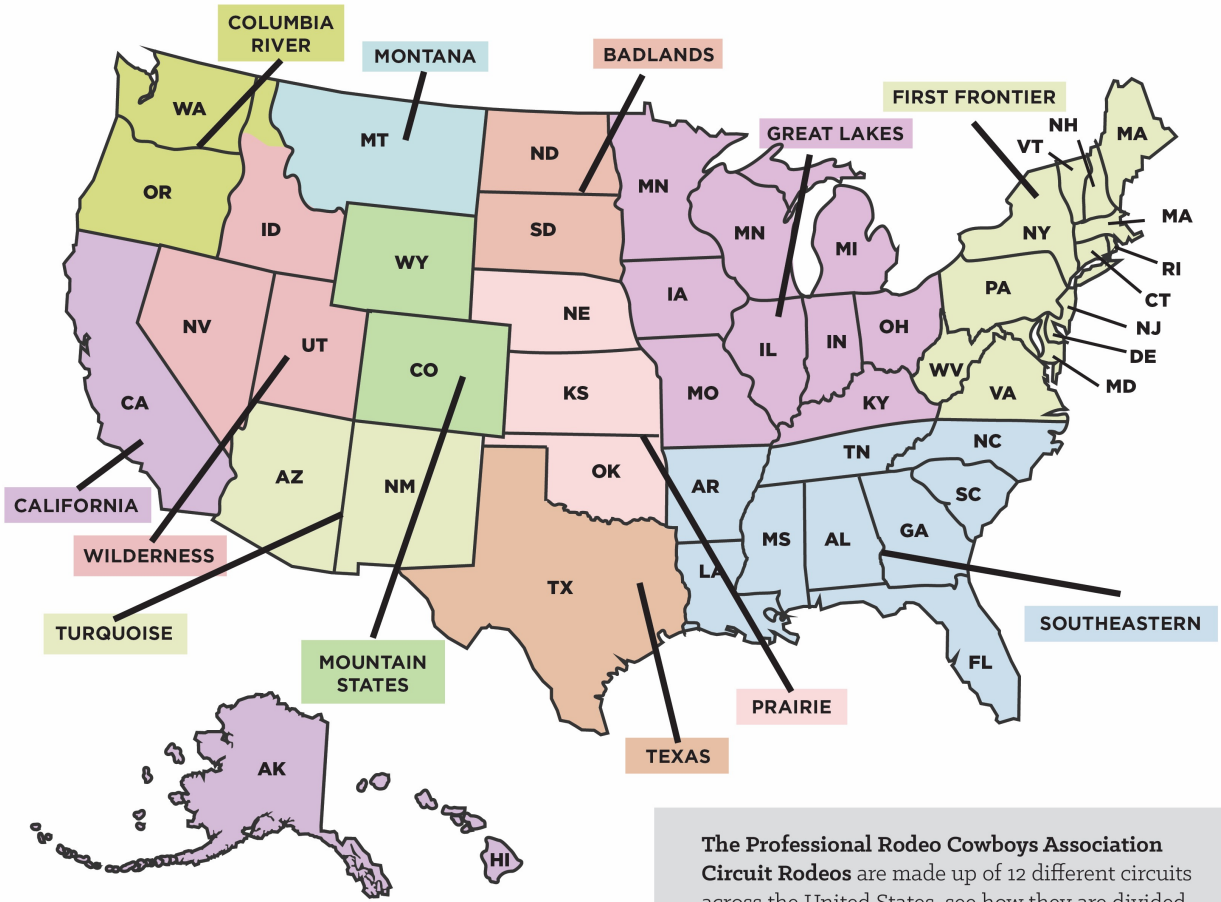
Steer Wrestling

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID2WawNF2il>

Team Roping

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfXxPupJuYg>

A Map of The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Circuit Rodeos



The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Circuit Rodeos are made up of 12 different circuits across the United States, see how they are divided.