

ACTION/ Quarter horse is key player

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One end of a breakaway barrier is attached to the steer then stretched across the open end of the header's box.

When the steer reaches its advantage point, the barrier is released and the header takes off in pursuit, with the heeler trailing slightly behind.

If the header breaks the barrier before the steer completes its head start, the ropers are assessed a 10-second penalty.

The header ropes first and must make one of three legal catches on the steer around both horns, around one horn and the head or around the neck.

Any other catch by the header is considered illegal, and the team is disqualified.

After the header makes his catch, he dallies the rope, turns the steer to the left and exposes the steer's hind legs to the heeler.

The heeler then attempts to rope both hind legs. If he catches only one

foot, the team is assessed a five-second penalty.

After the cowboys catch the steer, the clock is stopped when there is no more slack in their ropes and their horses face one another.

Another aspect vital to the event is the type of horse used by the ropers. The American Quarter Horse is the most popular among all rodeo competitors, particularly team ropers. Heading and heeling horses are trained separately for their specialties.

Heading horses generally are taller and heavier because they need the power to turn the steer after it is roped.

Heeling horses are quick and agile, enabling them to better follow the steer and react to its moves.

Unlike most PRCA-sanctioned rodeos, the California Rodeo uniquely has a long scoreline, giving the calves and steers the longest head start of any arena in the nation.

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