



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

Lisa Hansen of Brawley loses her hat as she navigates barrels in a 2005 barrel racing heat at the California Rodeo Salinas.

## **ACTION/** Barrel racing is crowd favorite

From Page 58

As well, in Salinas, both team roping contestants are required to leave from the same box, rather than them having the standard box on each side of the steer's chute.

### **Barrel racing**

Barrel racing is one of professional rodeo's most colorful and exciting

events. The fast-paced contest teaming horse and rider is similar to a horse race, easy to understand and ranks just behind bull riding in crowd popularity.

Barrel racing began as a friendly challenge of horsemanship skills between cowgirls and has developed into a multi-million dollar professional sport. Once considered a sideline event of traditional rodeos, it is now

an integral part of most PRCA rodeos.

The lure and the thrill of barrel racing lies in the excitement of seeing equine athletes and their skilled trainers perform at their best.

From the grandstands, the event seems simple.

Horse and rider cross the start line at a run, follow a cloverleaf pattern around three barrels, then dash across the finish line.

What is not seen are the years of practice required to train that horse to run barrels.

The times of top riders are so close that electronic timing devices accurate to the hundredth of a second must be used.

Professional women's barrel races are run under the direction of the Women's Professional Rodeo Association.