

CALIFORNIA RODEO SALINAS  
**events**



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# A tenderfoot's guide to Rodeo excitement

*Cowboys have to beat the clock, impress the judges and avoid ending up on horns of dilemma*

Staff report

Professional rodeo action consists of two kinds of events: roughstock events and timed events. In the roughstock events — bareback riding, saddle bronc riding and bull riding — a contestant's score is equally dependent upon his performance and the animal's performance.

In the timed events — calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping and steer roping — a contestant's goal is to post the fastest time in his event.

In these events, calves and steers are allowed a head start. The competitor, on horseback, starts in a three-sided fenced area called a box. The fourth side opens into the arena. A rope barrier is stretched across that opening and tied to the calf or steer.

Once the calf or steer reaches the head start point predetermined by the size of the arena, the barrier is automatically released. If a cowboy breaks that barrier before it is released, he is assessed a 10-second penalty.

The California Rodeo Salinas hosts six of the seven events sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, including the three roughstock events and calf roping, steer wrestling and team roping.

Here's a closer look at the various events.

## Bareback riding

Bareback riding offers a sensation about as enjoyable as riding a jackhammer, pogo stick-style, using only one hand.

And that's the easy part. The bareback rider's real challenge is to look good while he's being punished. Bareback riding is the most physically demanding event in rodeo; its toll on the body is immense.

Muscles are stretched to the limit, joints are pulled and pounded mercilessly, and ligaments are strained and frequently rearranged.

The strength of the broncs is exceptional, and challenging them is often costly.

Bareback riders endure more punishment, suffer more injuries and carry away more long-term damage than all other rodeo cowboys.

To stay aboard the horse, a bareback rider uses rigging made of leather and constructed to meet PRCA safety specifications. The rigging, which resembles a suitcase handle on a strap, is placed atop the horse's withers and secured with a cinch.

As the bronc and rider burst from the chute, the rider has to mark out his horse. In other words, he must have both spurs above the horse's shoulders until the horse's feet hit the ground after its initial move from the chute. If the cowboy fails to do this, he is disqualified.

As the bronc bucks, the rider pulls his knees up, dragging his spurs up the horse's shoulders.

As the horse descends, the cowboy straightens his legs, returning his spurs over the point of the horse's shoulders in anticipation of the next jump.

But it takes more than sheer strength to make a qualifying ride and earn a money-winning score. A bareback rider is judged on his spurring technique, the degree to which his toes remain turned out while he is spurring and his exposure, or willingness to lean far back and take whatever might come during his ride.



Bareback riding

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Saddle bronc riding

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## Saddle bronc riding

Saddle bronc riding is rodeo's classic event, both a complement and contrast to the wilder spectacles of bareback and bull riding.

The event requires strength, but it is as much about style as anything. Grace and precise timing are mandatory.

Saddle bronc riding evolved from the task of breaking and training horses to work the cattle ranches of the old West.

Many cowboys claim riding saddle broncs is the toughest rodeo event to learn because of the technical skills necessary to master it.

Every move the bronc rider makes must be synchronized with the movement of the horse.

The cowboy's objective is a fluid ride, as opposed to the wilder and less-controlled ride of bareback riders.

Among the similarities shared by saddle bronc riding and bareback riding is the rule that riders must mark out their horses on the first jump from the chute.

While a bareback rider has a rigging to hold onto, the saddle bronc rider has only a thick rein attached to his horse's halter.

Using one hand, the cowboy tries to stay securely seated in his saddle. If he touches any part of the horse or his own body with his free hand, he is disqualified.

Judges score the horse's bucking action, the cowboy's control of the horse and the cowboy's spurring action.

While striving to keep his toes turned outward, the rider spurs from the points of the horse's shoulders to the back of the saddle. To score well, the rider must maintain that action throughout the eight-second ride.