

## Team roping

The only team event in professional rodeo, team roping requires close cooperation and timing between two highly skilled ropers — a header and a heeler.

The event originated on ranches when cowboys needed to treat or brand large steers and the task proved too difficult for one man.

As in other timed events, the team ropers start from boxes on each side of the chute from which the steer enters the arena. The steer gets a head start determined by the length of the arena.

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,



Team roping

PHOTO BY RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

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.

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.



Barrell racing

PHOTO BY RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

## Barrell 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.