

# THE HISTORY OF PRCA RODEO

Professional rodeo evolved from a working lifestyle, and the cowboys who compete in today's events carry on the rugged tradition established by their 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors. Life on the cattle trails produced a breed that became a living legend --- the American cowboy.

To succeed in the early West, cowboys had to develop their roping and riding abilities to a high level. As they honed these skills, their competitive sprits broadened as well. Wild West shows, such as those produced by the legendary Buffalo Bill, painted a colorful portrait of this hybrid of frontiersman and athlete. Challenges to determine who could rope the quickest calf or ride the wildest horse became common practice at day's end. Roping and riding contests were often staged in the nearest available corral or pasture. These friendly competitive matches among ranch hands evolved into the modern sport of professional rodeo. Today, PRCA rodeo evokes images of the early West with its contests between untamed horses and cattle and that independent breed --- the American Cowboy.

During the past century, rodeo has developed from casual, individual contests into a highly organized national sport. Cowboys first organized in 1936, calling their group the Cowboys' Turtle Association (CTA). In 1945, the CTA became the Rodeo Cowboys Association (RCA), and the sport of rodeo began to grow. By 1952, the RCA sanctioned more than 500 rodeos annually. In 1975, the name of the organization was changed to the "Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association" (PRCA), a more accurate name for what had become the largest and most prestigious sanctioning body in the history of rodeo.

Today the PRCA has over 9,000 cowboy members and each year sanctions more than 650 rodeos, which entertain an audience estimated to exceed 23 million. In addition, more than 40 million people annually enjoy the Wrangler Pro Rodeo Tour series on OLN, CBS, and ESPN2 cable TV networks. Total prize money exceeds \$34 million annually, and the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nevada, has grown into a more than \$5 million super series held each December to determine world champions in each rodeo event. The Wrangler NFR is also televised on the ESPN and ESPN2 TV networks.