



Bareback Riding

Bareback riders are known to endure more abuse, suffer more injuries, and carry away more long-term damage than all other rodeo cowboys. Most cowboys will agree that bareback riding is the most physically demanding event in rodeo. It takes toll on the cowboy's body where muscles are stretched to the limit, joints are pulled and pounded mercilessly, and ligaments are strained and frequently rearranged. It is said that bareback riding is like riding a jackhammer with one hand.

Instead of a saddle, a double-thick leather pad, called rigging, is cinched on the bronc's back. This rigging resembles a suitcase handle on a strap, which is placed on the points of the horse's shoulders and secured with a cinch. Like bull riding and saddle bronc riding, the cowboy must only use one hand to hold onto the leather handhold of the rigging, which is customized to snugly fit to the riders grip.

As the bronc and rider burst from the chute, the rider must "mark out" his horse by keeping his spurs touching the horse's shoulders until the animal's feet hit the ground after the move from the chute. Like saddle bronc riding, if a rider fails to mark out his horse, he will be disqualified and will not receive a score. As the bronc bucks, the rider pulls his knees up while rolling his spurs up the horse's shoulders. As the horse descends, the cowboy straightens his legs and returns his spurs over the point of the horse's shoulders.

It's the bareback rider's arm that takes all the stress as it absorbs most of the horse's bucking power. While his arm endures this incredible tension, his hand must remain intact within the rigging's handhold for the full eight seconds. If the

rider touches his animal or himself with his free hand during the ride, he will be disqualified and will not receive a score.

A bareback rider's score is based on more than just his strength and ability to stay on the horse. He will be judged on his spurring technique, the degree to which his toes remain turned out while he is spurring, and his willingness to take whatever may come during his ride.

Show What You Know

1) What are the main goals of every cowboy in bareback riding?

2) What are the two ways a cowboy can be disqualified?

3) How is a rider judged in bareback riding?

4) Compare and contrast bareback riding to saddle bronc riding.
