

## How Rodeo Came to Be

Unlike any other sport, rodeo is a reflection of the skills used in real life, a connection to the natural world. The beginnings of rodeo trace back to the ranches of the early 1700s when the Spanish ruled the West. These Spanish cattlemen, vaqueros, influenced the American cowboy with their clothing, language, traditions, and equipment. These all influenced the modern sport of rodeo. The rodeo as a sporting event holds the influence from the duties on the early ranches which included tie-down roping, bronco riding, and much more. The early 1800s saw the expansion of America's borders to the West. Americans from the East came in contact with the Spanish, Mexican, Californian, and Texan cowboys. These settlers began to copy and adapt their styles and traditions of working the ranches.

Ranchers from the Southwest would organize long cattle drives to bring cattle to the stockyards in towns where the trains would carry the cattle east. The American rodeo was born out of the desire for men who worked on ranches to see which group had the best riders, ropers, and all-around best drivers. These ranchers would hold informal competitions which led to the creation and design of modern-day rodeo. Towards the end of the century, the time of the open range would come to an end of the expansion due to railroads and the introduction of barbed wire. Along with the closing of the open range, the need for cattle drivers to drive cattle into the settlements in the West began to dwindle.

However, the informal, friendly competitions began to be performed in front of paying customers. The paying customers for these competitions would contribute to the prize money awarded to the top competitor. These competitions were usually connected to annual stock shows for cattle or horses. The joining of competition with the stock shows would be the spark for what we now see as rodeo.

### **Show What You Know**

- 1) Why is rodeo considered a unique sport?

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2) What was the name of the Spanish cowboys who influenced American cowboys? What did they influence?

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3) What original duties of ranches influenced the events of rodeo?

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4) How did rodeo develop?

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5) Why did the time of the open range end?

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6) How did the informal competitions turn into something that ended with competitors receiving reward money?

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7) If the westward expansion had not continued, how would this have affected rodeo as a sport?

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