

Bareback Riding

Event Description

Most cowboys agree that bareback riding is the most physically demanding event in rodeo, taking an immense toll on the cowboy's body. Muscles are stretched to the limit, joints are pulled and pounded mercilessly, and ligaments are strained and frequently rearranged. The strength of bareback broncs is exceptional, and challenging them is often costly.

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

To stay aboard the horse, a bareback rider uses a 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 withers and secured with a cinch.

As the bronc and rider burst from the chute, the rider must have both spurs touching the horse's shoulders until the horse's feet hit the ground after the initial move from the chute. This is called "marking out." If the cowboy fails to do this, he is disqualified.

As the bronc bucks, the rider pulls his knees up, rolling 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.

Making a qualified ride and earning a money-winning score requires more than just strength. A bareback rider is judged on his spurring technique, the degree to which his toes remained turned out while he his spurring and his willingness to take whatever might come during his ride.

It's a tough way to make a living, all right. But according to bareback riders, it's the cowboy way.