

Barrel Racing

Description

Barrel racing has no judges, which means the event has no subjective points of view. Time is the determining factor.

Barrel racing is graceful and simplistic – one woman, three barrels, a horse and the ever-present stopwatch. The horse is ridden as quickly as possible around a cloverleaf course of three barrels. At the end of the performance, after all of the racers have finished their runs, the clock is the one and only judge.

Ride quickly and win. Hesitate and lose.

Not only have the best of the sport spent countless hours practicing and honing their skill, but they also have invested many dollars in the purchase and maintenance of the talented horses they ride. A proven barrel racing horse can cost \$50,000. For the professional barrel racer, this is indeed a small price to pay.

Not only must the horse be swift, but it must also be intelligent enough to avoid tipping the barrels, an infraction that adds five penalty seconds to the time and kills any chance for victory.

The horse also must be able to withstand the long roads a cowgirl must travel to reach the next rodeo. If a horse is fast, competitive and reacts calmly to the demands of travel, chances are good that that horse can stop the clock as quickly as or quicker than the animal in the next trailer.

Because so many barrel racers have finely tuned their skill, the sport is timed to the hundredth of a second. When the racer enters the arena, an electronic eye starts the clock. The clock is stopped the instant the horse completes the pattern.

Barrel racing at its core has changed little from the days when cowgirls raced for minimal, if any, prize money and support. And though the prizes and exposure are greater now than ever, the ultimate goal remains essentially the same as in the past: stop the clock as quickly as possible.