

Steer Wrestling

Event Description

Speed and strength are the name of the game in steer wrestling. In fact, with a world record sitting at 2.4 seconds, steer wrestling is the quickest event in rodeo.

The objective of the steer wrestler, who is also known as a “bulldogger,” is to use strength and technique to wrestle a steer to the ground as quickly as possible.

That sounds simple enough.

Here’s the catch: the steer generally weighs more than twice as much as the cowboy and, at the time the two come together, they’re both traveling at 30 miles per hour. Speed and precision, the two most important ingredients in steer wrestling, make bulldogging one of rodeos most challenging events.

As with tie down and team ropers, the bulldogger starts on horseback in a box. A breakaway rope barrier is attached to the steer and stretched across the open end of the box. The steer gets a head start that is determined by the size of the arena. When the steer reaches the advantage point, the barrier is released and the bulldogger takes off in pursuit. If the bulldogger breaks the barrier before the steer reaches his head start, a 10 second penalty is assessed.

In addition to strength, two other skills critical to success in steer wrestling are timing and balance.

When the cowboy reaches the steer, he slides down and off the right side of his galloping horse, hooks his right arm around the steer’s right horn, grasps the left horn with his left hand and, using strength and leverage, slows the animal and wrestles it to the ground. His work isn’t complete until the steer is on its side with all four feet pointing in the same direction. That’s still not all there is to it.

To catch the sprinting steer, the cowboy uses a “hazer,” who is another mounted cowboy who gallops his horse along the right side of the steer and keeps it from veering away from the bulldogger.

The efforts of the hazer can be nearly as important as those of the steer wrestler. For that reason, and the fact that he sometimes supplies the bulldogger with a horse, the hazer often receives a fourth of the payoff.