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Part of the Cowlitz County Events Center

## Saddle Bronc Riding

Saddle bronc riding is rodeo's classic event, both a complement and contrast to the wilder spectacles of bareback riding and bull riding. This event requires strength to be sure, but the event also demands style, grace and precise timing.

Saddle bronc riding evolved from the task of breaking and training horses to work the cattle ranches of the Old West. Many cowboys claim riding saddle broncs is the toughest rodeo event to master because of the technical skills necessary for success.

Every move the bronc rider makes must be synchronized with the movement of the horse. The cowboy's objective is a fluid ride, somewhat in contrast to the wilder and less-controlled rides of bareback riders.

One of the similarities shared by saddle bronc and bareback riding is the rule that riders in both events must mark out their horses on the first jump from the chute. To properly mark out his horse, the saddle bronc rider must have both heels touching the animal above the point of its shoulders when it makes its first jump from the chute. If the rider misses his mark, he receives no score.

While a bareback rider has a rigging to hold onto, the saddle bronc rider has only a thick rein attached to his horse's halter.

Using one hand, the cowboy tries to stay securely seated in his saddle. If he touches any part of the horse or his own body with his free hand, he is disqualified.

Judges score the horse's bucking action, the cowboy's control of the horse and the cowboy's spurring action. While striving to keep his toes turned outward, the rider spurs from the points of the horse's shoulders to the back of the saddle. To score well, the rider must maintain that action throughout the eight-second ride. While the bucking ability of the horse is quite naturally built into the scoring system, a smooth, rhythmic ride is sure to score better than a wild, uncontrolled effort.

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