

Roping Pressure \$100 Per Second No Time Lost in Wasted Motion

Putting a limber loop around the bobbing head of a hightailing calf, under pressure that builds as high as \$100 per second, is not an easy trick. But this part of roping, the catch, is the step that seems to concern most ropers the least. Calf roping is a race against time—the seconds counted in decimal points and the money going to the fastest tie. There's no time to be lost in wasted motion,

not much to be spent signalling the horse.

To win, the roper and horse must work together at peak efficiency, with automatic teamwork polished to precision smoothness. And that's what keeps the calf ropers practicing.

Virtually all roping is done from behind the barrier, a rope stretched across the box where the roper waits for the calf to be released. Nowadays most barriers are automatic, tripped by a measured length of twine around the calf's neck.

When the calf, breaking fast from the chute, reaches a predetermined head start, he hits the end of the twine, which falls away as it releases the barrier.

If the roper rides through the barrier before it is released, a penalty of 10 seconds is added to his time, usually enough to keep him from finishing in the money.

So the teamwork starts in the box. The horse should break instantly, on a slight signal from the roper. A slow start will cost the cowboy precious seconds as he tries to catch up with the fast breaking calf; a start that's a split second too soon will cost him a 10 second penalty.

Out of the box, a good horse will "rate" the calf, closing on him quickly and holding a steady interval, regardless of how the dogie bobs or weaves, usually a length behind and a little to one side to allow a good throw.

If the thrown loop misses, the cowboy gets another try, provided he carries another rope at the ready, made up in a loop and tied on his saddle. Calf roping is catch as catch can, with any catch allowed as long as the loop is thrown and gets the calf until the roper can hold to him.

As the loop hits, the roper sets it, pulling it tight around the calf's neck, and throws away the slack. He dismounts as the horse makes a sudden, dime-sized stop. All this must happen immediately, almost without a signal, in a single, smooth motion.

For example, if the cowboy doesn't throw the slack, it's liable to wrap around a leg and ball things up considerably when the running calf hits the end of the rope. Or, if the horse stops too abruptly, he'll fling the dismounting roper flat on his face.

The roper uses the horse's quick stop to propel him down the rope toward the calf. He comes off the horse running. So, if the horse stops slowly, the roper's run must be made from a dead start.

On the ground, the roper must throw the calf by hand, a job made easier if the horse keeps backed against a tight rope. If the calf is down when the cowboy reaches it, he must let it up and throw it by hand. Too much pressure on the rope by the horse, which drags the calf, is as bad as too little.

The calf may be downed either by "legging"—lifting a leg and tipping him over—or by "flanking"—picking him up and laying him down on his side. Flanking is quicker on cooperative dogies. But it's riskier on a rank one that wants to fight back.

Once the calf is down, the cowboy gathers three legs and wraps and ties them with a short length of light rope, a piggin' string, he has carried ready in his teeth from the box. Time is called when the tie is completed.

How long does it take? About 10 seconds, maybe less, if everything is perfect. Quicker, say the cowboys, than a butcher can wrap a pound of hamburger.

SUPPLEMENTAL FEED

Don't rely on summer pastures alone for good milk production. According to the August issue of Successful Farming, herds that were fed hay or silage throughout the year have produced 1,000 to 1,500 pounds more milk per cow than those that didn't get supplemental feed in the pasture season.

Hawkins Won Event But Lost Title Point Award System Explained

Last December, champion bareback rider Jim Shoulders and challenger John Hawkins flew into Crestview, Fla., to enter their last rodeo of the long season. The contest had put up a purse of only \$1,125, not much as rodeos go, but its results would decide the world's bareback bronc riding championship for the year.

Hawkins won the bareback riding at the rodeo but lost the championship. How did it happen? The answer lies in the method by which rodeo champions are named, the point award system of the Rodeo Cowboy's Association.

Basically, the system is simplicity itself. Each cowboy gets one point for every dollar in prize money won. The contestants with the most points in each event at the year's end win the titles. But simple as the method is, it took rodeo nearly 50 years to get around to working it out.

In the early days, the cowboy sport had as many world's champions as a wrestler's convention, with just about every good sized rodeo naming its own. It wasn't until the first national rodeo organization, The Rodeo Association of America, stepped into the sport in 1929 that the champ-naming chaos was resolved.

The RAA, now the International Rodeo Management, Inc., set up a

point system similar to the one in use today and named the champions until the RCA set up the present system in 1945. The RCA system includes all rodeos open to their members, many times the number represented in the other system. The IRM has since dropped its system of naming champions.

Counting the dollars—or points—is the only practical or fair method. It stands to reason that the best man in any event at any rodeo is the cowboy who wins the most in that event. It's also reasonable that the contestant who consistently wins the most at several rodeos through the year is the best hand that year.

When they arrived in Crestview last winter, Shoulders, who had won the bareback title the year before, led Hawkins in the bareback standings by 62 points, 15,109 to 15,047. So, while Hawkins won top bareback money of \$132.18 at that rodeo, he didn't win enough more than Shoulders, who placed second in the bareback riding for \$88.13, to win the championship.

It's not exactly accurate to say the championship was decided at Crestview. If Shoulders had not placed there, Hawkins would have won the title, it's true.

But, on the other hand, Hawkins could have won the \$18 he needed a month earlier at Harrisburg, Pa., when he disqualified on a horse that would have paid off five times that much. Or he could have made up the difference at any of the other 50-odd rodeos he entered during the year-long season.

Thus, any rodeo approved by the Rodeo Cowboys' Association is open to the entry of the men, whoever they are, who will win the championships this year. The money they win may prove just the amount extra they need at the year's end.

GOOD CORN KNIFE

The handle of a broken or discarded ball bat makes a fine grip for a corn knife. Slightly flatten the bat handle on opposite sides for easy gripping, says the August issue of Successful Farming magazine.

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