

# Rodeo, one of Texas' toughest sports

By DANA McNABB

Take a handful of cowboys and cowgirls, their diligently trained horses, an arena, and a couple of officials to run the show and you have got yourself one of the most popular and roughest sports America has ever claimed.

It's the sport of rodeo. Rodeo has come a long way from its beginnings in the days of cattle drives. Cowboys would then seek entertainment during the long cattlehauls in-between cities and settled for bets of which cowboy could ride a certain bronc the longest or which hand could better an already established time record in roping a calf.

The adventure, the boastfulness, and the freedom linked with rodeo still exist, but, like the days the sport began in, rodeo has refined, and organized to its present day form.

Rodeo is organized in three national associations of rodeo, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, the International Rodeo Association, and the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association, with the latter (NIRA) being a college ranking association.

The NIRA is divided into ten regions representing the United States, with Texas A&M in the Southern Region. Each school represented in the NIRA has a rodeo team consisting of six men and three women; one for each event in rodeo.

The nine events in NIRA rodeo include the six men's events of steer wrestling (bulldogging), team roping, calf roping, bullriding, saddle bronc riding, and bareback bronc riding, and the three women's events of barrel racing, goat tying, and break-away roping.

These collegiate teams compete in regional rodeos throughout the season and accumulate points from each rodeo, for both individual status in all events and for the women's teams and men's teams from each school. At the end of the season, the top two men's teams, the top two women's teams, the top two individual winners in each event, and the all-around winners from each region participate in the NIRA finals in Bozeman, Montana. This competition is the "cream of the crop" in college rodeo.

Texas A&M, ranking number two in the Southern Region, 1975-76, and Sam Houston, ranking number one in the Southern Region, 1975-76, will travel to Bozeman this summer. This is the fourth consecutive year that A&M has competed in the national finals, winning fourth place in the nation in 1973 and tenth place in 1975.

Mike Cox, an A&M cowboy, won the region this year in bullriding and will be on the finals team from A&M.

Last season, Greg Court and Terry Chapman won the Southern Region championship in steer wrestling and saddle bronc riding, respectively. They each won for this a \$500 scholarship from the American Tobacco Co., of which \$400 total was given to the rodeo club's scholarship fund. The president of the rodeo club, Jerry Hayes, placed third in the region in steer wrestling in 1973 and fourth in 1976.

A total of \$100,000 in scholarships will be up for grabs this year at the national finals, donated by the American Tobacco Company.

The A&M rodeo team that will compete in Bozeman is comprised of Daryl Atkins, Johnny Powell, Cody Dutton, Mike Cox, Jerry Hayes, Kay McMullan, Linda Fletcher, and Marilyn Chesser. One additional cowboy will be selected to go to the finals.

These cowboys and cowgirls are the top A&M entries of the nine events of NIRA rodeo. These events differ little from rodeo in the other associations, but a few rules are changed to better fit the college situation.

Calf roping requires a cowboy, a rope, and a calf. The cowboy sets his horse up in a box or a fenced-in area with the side facing the arena open. A calf is placed in the pen alongside the roper's box. Upon signal from the judge, the calf is let out of the chute by another cowboy. The cowboy mounted on his horse, now proceeds to rope the calf. If the barrier is broken the cowboy gets no time. The barrier is a device which gives the calfa pre-determined head start. It is of a light rope held tight by a coil spring and is latched across in front of the roper and his horse. When the calf crosses the line marking the headstart, it releases the barrier. If the roper rides through the barrier before it is released, he is assessed a ten-second penalty.

The roper may catch the calf any way it works out — over the head, around the middle, even by a leg. But he must let go of the loop he throws when he throws it and the rope must hold on the calf until the cowboy can get his hands on him.

The cowboy must cross and tie his three legs, with any knot he likes, then snap his hands away from the

tie string to signal for time. The mounted field judge's flag drops down then to signal time to stop. The calf must remain tied for about six seconds after the cowboy has remounted his horse. If the calf struggles free during that time, that cowboy goes home with no time. This is a game of quickness with a good start out of the box and a fast horse being important.

Like calf roping, team roping requires skill and yet good team work because two ropers have the chore in this sport of roping a steer around the horns and heels. One cowboy is called the header (and, as you might guess, he ropes the head as his specialty) and the other is the heeler. The header must first rope the steer's head before the heeler can get his shot at the heels. If the rope is too far up on the legs of the calf or back of the calf, or if the heeler ropes only one leg, then the cowboys are awarded no time. If the header hangs only one horn or his rope goes back past the calf's front legs then the team has no time.

Bareback bronc riding consists of only a cowboy, a bronc, and the cowboys bareback "rigging" (a smooth surcingle or band of leather with a handhold in the center). The cowboy has no reins, no stirrups — just the handle.

The rigging is cinched to the horse and the contestant is allowed to rub the handhold with resin to improve his grip. On the bronc's first jump out of the chute, the cowboy must "mark him out," that is to spur the horse over the points of the shoulders until the animal's front hooves hit the ground. If he fails to do this, he is disqualified. The rider is also disqualified if he bucks off before the signal sound, or if he touches the bronc with his free hand.

Both the horse and the rider are judged — the horse on how hard he bucks, and the rider on how well he keeps in spurring control. In this event, the cowboy gets credit only for spurring over the points of the shoulders. This is done by the jerking motion with the knees, leaning back off the handhold.

As in bareback bronc riding, in saddle bronc riding the cowboy and horse are judged separately, and the scores of the two are added together to get the score for the ride.

The cowboy earns his marking in saddle bronc riding for his command of the action and how well he spurs. In time with the leaps of the horse, he spurs forward against the horse's shoulders, then back to his saddle (looking as if he were spurring the back of the saddle). If he fails to keep his spurs over the point of the bronc's shoulders through the first jump out of the chute, he is disqualified. He is also disqualified if he

changes hands on the rein, loses a stirrup, or touches the horse, the rein, or the saddle with his free hand.

Because bull riding requires a matching of one cowboy against a ton of heaving dynamite, the bullriders have the simplest set of rules to follow. All the cowboy can have to help him hang on to the bull is a loose rope without knots or hitches, held around the bull simply by the pressure of the rider's grip. The rider is not required to spur the animal at all, but if he is able to spur it will earn him extra points on his ride. Thus the ride must be made with one hand; the other held free. The ride is a qualified one as long as the riding hand is on any part of the bull rope — and the cowboy hasn't hit the ground — when the whistle blows to stop the time.

Bulldogging or steer wrestling is done with a cowboy, his horse, a steer, and a hazer or another mounted cowboy who guides the steer against the side of the participant. The "dogger" leans to the side of his horse on which the steer is and grabs the horns of the steer while still mounted and at a fast pace. He slides off his horse, holding on to the steer, and stops the steer. The cowboy then twists the steer down with his own strength. The steer is considered down only when it is lying flat on its side on the ground with all four feet and head straight.

The women's barrel racing is a sport of timeliness and intricacy as the cowgirl races her horse around a cloverleaf pattern with three barrels outlining the pattern. The cowgirl must follow the set pattern and she is disqualified if she breaks the pattern. She is also disqualified if she knocks over one of the barrels. After completing the pattern the cowgirl "brings her horse home" by racing him to the end of the arena where she began her pattern.

In the sport of goat tying, a goat is tied around the neck with a rope and the rope is tied to a stake in the ground that is a minimum of 50 yards away from the starting point. The cowgirl rides her horse to a point near the goat, dismounts her horse, throws the goat to the ground by

hand, and ties any three feet of goat. A leather string or a piece of string (same as used to tie the feet in calf roping) may be used to tie the goat. The cowgirl must stand back three feet from the goat before the judge will start the second time limit in which the legs must remain crossed and in contact the goat or rope, the cowgirl will be fined ten seconds; if she should break away because of a fault of the horse, she will also be disqualified.

Break-away roping uses the same format as calf roping, but the girl's rope is not knotted to the dle horn. The rope is tied to the saddle horn with a string or rope and once the rope is around the head, the pull of the calf breaks the string and the rope is loose from the saddle horn. This allows the judge to stop the time that cowgirl.

These nine events aren't all that rodeo has to offer. Of course there are the ever-famous rodeos that serve a multi-purpose of entertaining but more importantly as a life saver to a potentially endangered bullrider who might help. There are also many other judges, announcers, secretaries, chute helpers (whose job is to break the steers and calves out of the might even be a country and western band winding out that good old country guitar and fiddle music. Oh, and anyone that's ever been to a rodeo remembers the way each rodeo traditionally begins — the grand display of all the contestants displaying their horses; the Pledge of their allegiance; and the silent arena "A Cowboys Prayer."

"...We don't ask any special favors; we don't ask to draw another chute-fightin' horse or to break a barrier. Help us, Lord, live our lives in such a manner that when we make that last ride to the grass grows lush, green and deep, and the water runs clear and deep, that You, our Lord and Judge, will tell us that our entries are paid."

## Rodeo riders rope first

By DANA McNABB

The Texas A&M Rodeo Club sponsored its annual National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) sanctioned rodeo April 29 - May 1 at 8 p.m. nightly in the Aggie Rodeo arena across from Kyle Field.

Fourteen teams and several individual entries from schools in the Southern Region of the NIRA participated in the rodeo. Besides being the final rodeo of the year for the Southern Region, the Aggie rodeo offered a total of \$10,000 in prize money and sterling silver belt buckles for the winners in each event and all-around winners in the men's and women's events.

Schools entered in the contest included Sam Houston State University, the current region leader for both men's and women's teams. These teams competed in the nine rodeo events of NIRA; bullriding,

bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, goat tying, and breakaway roping.

The Aggie men's team won team trophy in the men's division first place in this rodeo. The standings of both the men's and women's teams leaves A&M in second place in the Southern Region.

Johnny Powell and Darryl Atkins from Texas A&M won the average of the regular event. The average is figured by an average of the scores for all the performances during the rodeo of the particular cowboy.

The stock producer and his company for the rodeo was Simonton Company of Simonton, Texas.

The Aggie rodeo team's sponsor is Dr. Gary Potter of the Animal Science Department at A&M.

## 4 Marines charged

Associated Press  
SAN DIEGO — Four officials from the hometown of Marine Pvt. Lynn McClure say the Marine Corps never checked his background before he was enlisted and fatally injured in basic training.

Four Marines face court-martial charges in the March 13 death of the Lufkin, Tex. recruit, who was knocked unconscious in a close combat drill last December and never regained consciousness.

At a news conference yesterday, Judge David Cook of San Angelina County said McClure appeared before him five times, twice for throwing rocks, and twice spent 11 days in jail.

Lufkin Police Chief L. Latham, Chief Deputy Sheriff Hight and Dist. Atty. Gerald Groppi said the Marine Corps never contacted their offices with inquiries about McClure.

## Civil-rights activist, Groppi, marries

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Rev. James E. Groppi, a leader in the civil-rights and peace movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, says he has married a 30-year-old English composition teacher at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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<b>THURSDAY EVENING SPECIAL</b> Italian Candle Light Spaghetti Dinner SERVED WITH SPICED MEAT BALLS AND SAUCE Parmesan Cheese - Tossed Green Salad Choice of Salad Dressing - Hot Garlic Bread Tea or Coffee		
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