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TIP SHEET #2

Introduction to Rodeo: Basic Information and Overview of Professional Rodeos

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1. Rodeo Background

The word “rodeo” comes from the Spanish word “rodear” (to surround).¹ According to the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) website, the first rodeo occurred in 1864 “when two groups of cowboys from neighboring ranches met in Deer Trail, [Colorado], to settle an argument over who was the best at performing everyday ranching tasks.” The PRCA originated from a strike organized by rodeo cowboys in the 1930s against unfair practices by a rodeo promoter. The group called themselves the Cowboys’ Turtle Association, which later became what is now known as the PRCA.²

2. Rodeo Terminology

There is a terminology unique to the sport. For example, a stock contractor is a person or group that provides the livestock used at rodeos. For a glossary of rodeo terms, see *Words and Terms Common to the Sport of Rodeo* on “Cowboy Ted” Hallisey’s website at <http://www.cowboyted.com/rodeo101.html>

3. Rodeo events fall into one of two categories.³

- Rough stock events, or judged events, involve riding wild horses and bulls: bareback riding, saddle bronc riding, and bull riding. The cowboy, while using only one hand, must stay aboard a bucking horse or bull for eight seconds. The cowboy’s score is equally dependent upon the performances of the contestant and the animal.
- Timed events include calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping, steer roping, and barrel racing (a women’s timed event). A contestant’s goal is to post the fastest time in his/her event.

4. Animal Rights

Animal rights activists have become vocal and visible at rodeos. Many of the rodeo associations mentioned below are concerned about the activities of animal rights groups and how they may affect rodeo events.

- Identify your group as being pro-rodeo and pro-family by issuing a position statement and including it in all your program materials. For example, rodeo groups have sometimes misunderstood Buck Tobacco’s message as anti-rodeo rather than anti-tobacco. In order to clarify that Buck Tobacco seeks to make rodeos healthier and more family-friendly, NOT to shut them down, the project posted a statement in support of rodeo on the Buck Tobacco website at <http://www.bucktobacco.org/about.html>.

5. Rodeo Sanctioning Groups

Tobacco companies sponsor rodeos not only at the local level, but also nationally through rodeo sanctioning organizations. Sanctioning organizations provide local rodeos with access to prize purses, publicity, rodeo programs, top stock contractors, famous cowboys, and other services critical to running a successful rodeo event. Major rodeo sanctioning organizations sponsored by the US Smokeless Tobacco Company (USSTC) include:

- *The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA)*, which is the largest and oldest rodeo organization in the world. The PRCA holds hundreds of rodeos across the country every year and has annual audience numbers in the millions. Local rodeos are organized by local volunteer boards. <http://prorodeo.org>
- *Professional Bull Riders, Inc. (PBR)*, an invitation-only association for the world’s elite bull riders. According to the PBR website, the group “was created in 1992 when a group of 20 bull riders broke away from the traditional rodeo scene and decided to start a circuit for bull riders only.” Riders must win at least \$2,500 in prize

money annually to join and maintain membership. The PBR sanctions over 100 events per year. There are no local organizing committees for PBR rodeos; event locations vary from year to year. <http://www.pbrnow.com>

- The *Women's Professional Rodeo Association (WPRA)*, founded in the late 1940s to promote the sport of professional rodeo for the female competitor. The over 2,000 members compete primarily in barrel racing at PRCA-sanctioned rodeos. <http://www.wpra.com>
- The *National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA)*, which sanctions college rodeos. It is divided into 11 regions with over 3,500 student members participating annually and 137 member schools and universities. <http://www.collegerodeo.com>
- Links to other rodeo associations are available on the Buck Tobacco website at <http://www.bucktobacco.org>

¹ Diana Rowe Martinez, "The History of Rodeo." http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/rodeo_and_cowboys/37092

² Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) website, history section at <http://www.prorodeo.org/history>.

³ Ralph Clark's "Basics of rodeo in general" on the about.com website. <http://rodeo.about.com/cs/rodeobasics/a/generalinfo.htm>