



College Rodeo: From Show to Sport (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A&M University)

Sylvia Gann Mahoney

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Guts and glory, bulls and barrel racing, spurs and scars are all part of rodeo, a sport of epic legends. Cowboys and cowgirls use brain and brawn to contend for prizes and placement, but more often than not, it is the prestige of honorable competition that spurs them on. *College Rodeo* covers the history of the sport on college campuses from the first organized contest in 1920 to the national championship of 2003.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a growing number of kids from farms and ranches attended college, many choosing the land grant institutions that allowed them to prepare for agricultural careers back home. They brought with them a love for the skills, challenges, and competition they had known—a taste for rodeo. The first-ever college rodeo was held at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. It offered bronco busting, goat roping, saddle racing, polo, a greased pig contest, and country ballads from a quartet. The rodeo was a fund-raising effort that grew enormously popular; by its third year, the rodeo at Texas A&M drew some fifteen hundred people. The idea spread to other campuses, and nineteen years later, the first intercollegiate rodeo with eleven colleges and universities competing was held in 1939 at the ranch arena of an entrepreneur near Victorville, California.

Seldom does a college sport exist for eighty years without having a book written about it, but college rodeo has. Sylvia Gann Mahoney has written the first history of the sport, tracing its growth parallel to the development of professional rodeo and the growth of the organizational structure that governs college rodeo. Mahoney draws on personal interviews as well as the archives of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association and newspaper accounts from participating schools and their hometowns.

Mahoney chronicles the events, profiles winners, and analyzes the organizational efforts that have contributed to the colorful history of college rodeo. She traces the changing role of women, noting their victories that were ignored by much of the contemporary press in the early days of the sport. *College Rodeo* highlights outstanding individuals through extensive interviews, giving credit to the pioneers of college rodeo. This book includes rare photographs of rodeo teams, champions, and rodeo queens, blended with the true life details of sweat and tears that make intercollegiate rodeo such a popular sport.

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