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Category: Horsemanship

Rodeo Queen Horsemanship

Next to earning the title, the horsemanship award is the most coveted award to earn in a pageant. The horsemanship portion of the rodeo queen pageant is generally worth 1/3 to 1/4 of the overall score. It is what sets rodeo queen pageantry apart from traditional beauty pageants and is considered the "talent" portion of the competition. There are many aspects to this category and it is a category in which you can never stop learning whether it be about equine science, training techniques or enhancing your riding skills.

When judging a rodeo queen horsemanship pattern the judges are not looking for reining horses that could compete at the NRHA level. They are looking at the rider's overall balance and body position, use of aids, and her ability to complete the pattern as written. Judges are seeking a young lady who knows her leads, has a solid seat and quiet hands, is calm and confident and who has a good understanding of equine science. They are also looking for confidence and the ability to handle any situation that may arise. This is especially true when contestants are riding horses provided for them and not their own. Rodeo queen horsemanship is a combination of horse show horsemanship and ranch riding. Horses are freer in movement and the riders are a bit more "relaxed" in the pattern.

Don't get caught up in thinking that your horse is not good enough for the competition. If you are willing to put in the hours to ride and to put in the effort to seek out qualified help in training, you and your horse you can earn the points needed to earn titles and the horsemanship award. Too often contestants believe they must borrow a highly trained horse yet they have no idea on how to ride the horse when it comes to competition time. Also, it is always disappointing when a contestant earns a title on a borrowed horse that made her look like a much better rider than she really is.

Another mistake contestants make is believing they are horsemen because they are life-long riders. Many life-long riders have only ridden one or two horses and do not have the skills needed to ride other types of horses. If you have set your goals to win a state or national title you had better be prepared to spend hours upon hours riding many different types of horses. There is not a single rodeo queen contestant or titleholder who could not benefit from a day or more with a qualified trainer.

The Horsemanship Pattern

A horsemanship pattern is simply a set of skills put together in a specific order. Avoid practicing the pattern over and over and over again as your horse will begin to anticipate the next step. Instead, practice each aspect of the pattern individually and run the pattern in its entirety a few times. A good way to memorize patterns is to work them on foot yourself, and to visual you and your horse making the perfect lead change, stop, back, rollback, turn, etc..

While the pattern may call for sliding stops and spins pageant judges are not expecting NRHA quality patterns. They are looking for the following in a pattern:

1. Size and speed differences in circles
2. Circles, not trapezoids or some other unidentifiable shape
3. Correct leads and the knowledge to correct a missed lead
4. Straight stops with the rider having a solid seat and quiet hands
5. Rollbacks, turns and/or spins that are executed correctly
6. The use of the arena and markers as specified in the pattern
7. Completing the pattern as written

It is more appropriate to do slower, correct stops and turns than to attempt a sloppy sliding stop and out of control spins. Of course, working with your horse and a trainer can optimize your ability to perform correct sliding stops and spins, which will add more points to your overall score. Always remember though, not all horses are equally athletic and 15-foot sliding stop with fast spins may not be up your horse's alley. Do the very best you can with what you have and you will achieve a prize better than any pageant title or award - the prize of self pride and accomplishment.

