

Welcome to Frontier Western Shop's resource of training advice from professional horse trainers! Each month we will post a new article from one of our accredited trainers in different disciplines of competition and horsemanship.

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The Importance of Scoring a Timed Event Horse

with Levi Simpson

Levi uses Pro Equine Boots, Cactus Ropes and rides Frontier 20X Saddles

Scoring (a timed-event horse) is one of the most important steps involved in producing a successful run. Getting a bad start will take you out of the money at any competition. Whether you are competing at a jackpot or a rodeo, to have the best chance at winning you must "push the line".

There are two types of timed-event barriers that you may come into contact with in competition. Electric eyes are used at most roping jackpots to help speed things along. An electric eye is more difficult to score on because you can't push the line at all (it's invisible). Your horse has to be just behind the line when the steer trips the laser beam of light. A rope barrier is used at most rodeos. This rope line is easier for a header to judge distance on because you can physically see it. The best start on a rope line is to time it so that your horse's chest is pushing against the line as the steer trips the pin.

Scoring is something that needs to be mastered at home in the practice pen before applying it to a competition setting. There are many different ways to teach a horse to stay calm and flat in the box. I find that the best way for me to get my horses scoring well is through repetition. Visualize your start on every single run, whether it is short or long, but make sure your horse is standing still until you ask him to go. At home I use an 'S' alley as my main training tool. This is a section of alley placed in front of the chute, which makes the steer travel through two slight corners before being free in the arena. This alley allows you to see the steer a long way without the steer running away. It keeps the steers moving slow for an extra 10-15 feet past the chute. A horse that will leave the box off your hand and run through the line will improve your odds at any competition.

Having your horse relaxed in the box is the easiest way to begin scoring well. A horse that moves around or jumps in the corner will make it harder on you to judge an appropriate start. Make the box a comfortable place for your horse; have him stand in there without the pressure of performing a run. After your practice, walk into the box and dismount. Loosen the cinch, take the boots off and show your horse that the box is a comfortable place to be.

Take the time at home to practice for your horse. Set a goal for each practice; whether it is having your horse score off of your hand or to keep your horse calm in the corner. The extra work you put into scoring at home will make it easier to push the line (at jackpots and rodeos) and set your runs up for success every time.