



Rodeo

By Karen Zhang



Rodeo来自西班牙语rodear，表示“四处转悠，走来走去（go around）”的意思。它的本义是形容圈牛的圆形场地或者畜栏，牛群被“圈”（rounded up）在一个地方接受清点或检查。大约在1834年，rodeo出现在美语里，表示“围场，把已拢的牛群围在一起的圈地”。直到1914年，才有了现代意义的“牛仔竞技”，即骑马或套牛等技巧的公开表演赛。1936年，专业的Rodeo诞生，1975年成为职业比赛。

Rodeo^[牛仔竞技比赛] is a brand new sport to me. I have a vague^[模糊的] memory about it from American movies. I've heard of American cowboys and cowgirls. They're such good athletes the way they control the wild horses and bulls. The tradition supposedly comes from western America. However, my first experience with a rodeo happened in the northeast of the country.

On a chilly, summer night I saw a live rodeo in upstate New York. I found a seat on a steep slope facing a sandy enclosure^[围场]. The closer you get to the action, the stinkier^[恶臭的] the horse poop^[粪便] is you can smell. Two dozen cowboys and cowgirls in distinctive outfits were behind the gates, busy preparing for the show.

I wondered if a rodeo was for kids. Many children,

from infants to teenagers, were present. They had a grand time somersaulting^[翻跟斗] on the grassy slope and jumping around on the benches. Some of them wore black or gray cowboy hats.

The host riding on a horse spoke with a heavy western accent. My friend said he was trying hard to speak like a Texan. It wasn't easy for me to understand his "Howdy y'all" cowboy English. Once he took control of the mike, he talked

throughout the show, non-stop.

Like I expected, the wild bulls and horses seemed to be less active in cool weather, which brought a challenge to the trainers.

Rodeo is a dangerous and cruel sport. The entire evening I was more nervous about the safety of the cowboys who fell off the wild horses and the bulls than about how fast they could catch and tie a lariat^[套索] around the animals. My heart ached when the cowboys beat and kick the livestock to enrage^[激怒] them. How could people seek entertainment from roping a lean and helpless calf? It seemed to be no problem for a couple of husky cowboys to tame the horses and succeed in calf roping. Whenever they accomplished a task, a peal of cheers erupted from the audience. However, a three-hour rodeo in a cold evening was a bit too long for me.

Americans' patriotism is fully rendered at sports events when the audience stands up and sings together the national anthem to start any given show. Since rodeo is a sport, you can't get away from singing the American national anthem. But it was at the end of the show. ④