



Rodeo Clown

A rodeo clown, also known as a bullfighter is a rodeo performer who works in bull riding competitions. Originally, the rodeo clown was a single job combining "bullfighting" - the protection of riders thrown from the bull, as well as being an individual who provided comic relief between events.

The primary job of the bullfighter is to protect a fallen rider from the bull by distracting the bull and providing an alternative target for the bull to attack. These individuals expose themselves to danger in order to protect the cowboy. They wear bright, loose-fitting clothes that are designed to tear away, with protective gear fitted underneath. Rodeo clowns require speed, agility, and the ability to anticipate a bull's next move. Working closely with very large, very powerful animals, rodeo clowns are often injured seriously, and, sometimes, fatally.

In some places rodeo bullfighters still wear clown makeup and some may also provide traditional clowning entertainment for the crowd between rodeo events. Most modern bullfighters no longer dress as clowns, though they still wear bright, loose-fitting clothing. At larger events in the United States, the job is split, a bullfighter (sometimes two or more) protects the riders from the bull, and a barrelman, who uses a large, well-padded steel barrel that he can jump in and out of easily, and the barrel helps to protect the rodeo clown from the bull, and clown (sometimes one person, sometimes two) provide comic humor. Some barrelmen provide both comedy and support to bullfighters, but the job of a bullfighter is generally distinct from that of the clown.

The rodeo clowns enter the rodeo arena on foot, before the bull is released from the chute. They stand on either side as the bull is released and work as a

team to distract the bull and thus protect the rider and each other. Their role is particularly important when a rider has been injured, in which case the rodeo clown places himself between the bull and the rider, or uses techniques such as running off at an angle, throwing a hat, or shouting, so that the injured rider can exit the ring. When a rider has been hung up, they face the extremely dangerous task of trying to free the rider, with one team member going to the bull's head and the other attempting to release the rider.

Typically, the clown carries a microphone and heckles the rodeo announcer, the crowd, and anyone else he recognizes. During the bull riding event, the clown supports the bullfighters, including taunting the bulls by calling them names and waving props at them, usually from within the safety of the barrel.

Show What You Know

1) What is the job of the bullfighter?

2) What is the job of the clown?

3) What is the job of the barrelman?

4) Why do you think the jobs of the three are split in larger events?

5) Is the rodeo clown, bullfighter, clown, and barrelman, important for the rodeo?
Why?
