

Reining began on the working cattle ranches, where a cowboy or vaquero used their horses to gather, move and hold cattle on the open range. These horses had to be athletic, quick and agile. They had to be extremely responsive to a very light rein. In years gone by, cowboys and vaqueros took pride in their hard working, well-trained horses. Challenges often arose as to who had the best horse. The most talented riders would put their horses through a series of stops and turns, letting the watching crowd determine which rider and horse were the best. These displays are the forerunners of today's reining competitions.

Today's reining competitions provide a venue for hundreds of riders to demonstrate the skills of their highly trained and conditioned horses. Trained judges score the reining horse based on its execution of the maneuver groups required in a specific **pattern**. All **patterns** are divided into seven or eight maneuvers.

The Maneuvers

Circles are maneuvers at the lope, of designated size and speed, which demonstrate control, willingness to guide, and degree of difficulty in speed and speed changes. Circles, performed at a lope, are run in a designated location at a defined speed and size and with a common center point. All large, fast circles should be of a consistent speed and size. All small, slow circles should also be of a consistent speed and size.

Lead Changes are the act of changing the leading (or inside) front and rear pair of legs when changing the direction traveled. To be considered correct, this maneuver must be performed at a lope with no change of gait or speed, be performed at the exact location as specified by the pattern and the change must take place on both the front and rear legs in the same stride.

The **Spins** are a thrilling maneuver both to watch and ride. The horse is asked to turn his front end around in a series of 360-degree turns, executed while his inside back foot remains in one spot. Correctly done, the horse will cross the outside front leg over the inside front leg, effortlessly moving his front end around in a smooth, flowing manner. Higher marks are given to the horse that shows no resistance, a high degree of speed and the ability to stop spinning on a specified mark.

In a **Sliding Stop**, the rider, while loping, cues the horse to stop. The horse brings his back legs up underneath in a locked position that will cause it to begin sliding on his back feet. The horse maintains forward movement by continuing to run with the front feet and using his head and neck for balance. Throughout the stop, the horse continues in a straight line while his back feet slide over the ground. When done properly, this has the effect of causing the horse to slide anywhere from 10 to 30 feet or further.

In a **Rollback** the horse runs to a stop, rolls the shoulders back in the opposite direction completing a 180 degree reversal of forward motion and departs in a canter, all performed in one continuous motion.

A **Backup** is a maneuver requiring the horse to move backwards in a straight line at least 10 feet.

Today, Reining is gaining popularity at lightning speed. There are now over 30 countries in the world that have Reining Associations and hold competitions. The first international competition was held in June, 2000 in Gladstone, New Jersey with teams from the US, Canada, Japan, Italy and Venezuela.

The sport of Reining is attracting riders of all ages and skill levels. Reining has set the equestrian world on fire with its thrilling maneuvers and excellence in horsemanship.