

What's new in 2010

The USTRC Hits One Out of the Park

By Ben Clements

The USTRC is evolving with the times with some new and exciting changes on the horizon for 2010. These changes bring the sport of team roping into a new era and now more than ever there's reason for ropers to experience USTRC at its best. The USTRC is continually looking for ways to improve the roping experience for everyone. This year ropers can prepare for fair competition and more opportunity to win than ever before, all in one package. The USTRC is proud to announce that for 2010 it will implement the payout structure ropers have been asking for. A new payout structure also requires new event formats. These new formats will create better opportunities for ropers to find competitive partners as they vie for larger checks. Last but not least, after five years of fine-tuning the TRIAD (Team Roping Information and Data) System, in 2010 USTRC will once again raise the bar in Classifications!

2010 USTRC Payout

To understand the changes to the payout, we first need to step back and review the old structure. The previous payout was meant to be all things to all ropers. The purse was divided in several ways to accommodate old formats while allowing more ropers a chance to win a check. Though not a bad

thing, spreading the money out made it more difficult for ropers to "do the math." It also made for smaller checks.

The three things that reduced the check sizes, and frankly made the payout hard to understand, were the Incentive Average payout, the Rotation Fast Time payout and the Extended payout, which was based on a multiple of an entry fee and paid out to teams placing way down in the main average.

At one time ropers wanted USTRC to pay more places even though it meant smaller checks. Today ropers are asking USTRC for bigger checks and fewer places. We hear you loud and clear! USTRC will eliminate the extended payout, and change the fast time pay from rotations to overall. These changes will leave more money in the average purse. Addressing the issue of Incentive pay is a more delicate matter. For many ropers the Incentive option gave them another place to enter when they couldn't find a partner to "max the roping." This is one of the reasons the Incentive option became part of the formats several years ago. Having said that, USTRC now feels that by handicapping the divisions the Incentive option can be eliminated because with "seconds off" ropers giving up a division are no

longer at a disadvantage. An additional benefit is that ropers will now be able to choose from a larger pool of competitive partners. The money that was being paid out in the Incentive is added to the Average. Now all ropers become more competitive for larger payouts with just as many options to enter, if not more. (It should be noted that the Incentive Option will remain in the Open and Gold Plus Divisions. Look for a more detailed explanation about the new formats later on in this article.)

What ropers have been asking USTRC for is a payout structure that is easy to understand and one that pays more to the Average winners. Well, you asked and USTRC listened. Effective November 2, 2009 USTRC will implement a new payout that will apply 95% of the purse to the Average and the remaining 5% to the fast time overall. So, there you have it, a payout structure that is completely transparent and one that pays more money to the Average winners.

Wow! That is exciting. Ropers can rope for 95% of the purse money in the average. This will make the USTRC payouts even bigger, giving ropers what they want...more money!

For obvious reasons USTRC has left the Incentive option in the Open and the Gold Plus divisions. In fact, the payout in the incentive of the Gold Plus has worked so well USTRC plans to use it in the Open Division. The incentive

payout will be based on the percentage of Incentive teams entered in the roping and will not exceed 30% of the Average purse. Like the Gold Plus division, the Open relies heavily on the Incentive teams to boost team counts. Since it's not possible to create more Open teams, USTRC feels that by paying more money to the Incentive teams more Incentive teams will enter and that will ultimately help the Open ropers.

Team ropers of all levels get ready for larger payouts at USTRC events! USTRC wants you to understand the new payout structure. If you have any questions please call the USTRC National Office. Your input and feedback is always appreciated.

2010 Formats

The USTRC will implement some new formats for the 2010 season. These changes are sure to create a better roping experience for all ropers. A few years ago the USTRC implemented the handicap format in the #15 Division. The change was successful because with "seconds off" more teams felt competitive. This year the USTRC is incorporating that same logic into the #13, #12, #11, #10, and #9 Divisions. Each of these divisions will be handicapped one division down. The handicap format will allow ropers more opportunity to find better partners and provide more entry options than ever before. The bottom line is that more ropers will now be

competitive for larger payouts.

All divisions, including the #15, will be based on a 4 steer average. Following are the divisions and their respective handicaps:

- ü #15 Handicap - #14 team will receive a 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round
- ü #13 Handicap - #12 and below team will receive 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round
- ü #12 Handicap - #11 and below team will receive 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round
- ü #11 Handicap - #10 and below team will receive 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round
- ü #10 Handicap - #9 and below team will receive 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round
- ü #9 Handicap - #8 and below team will receive 1.5 second handicap subtracted after the 3rd round

The USTRC has analyzed thousands of runs and in the process looked at every team combination in every division and has determined that 1.5 seconds subtracted after three steers makes it fair for every one. The “seconds off” concept isn't meant to give any team an advantage or

disadvantage. If applied properly the handicap simply levels the playing field and thus allows each team to rope within their ability.

In order to better satisfy the Open ropers, the Open division will change to a four-steer average and be progressive after one steer. The Incentive average will be determined after the first three rounds.

The #8 Division and the #12 Gold Plus with a #10 Incentive will remain the same and will continue to offer ropers the great unique format of each.

TRIAD or should we say **Elite** TRIAD

No one will argue that Classifications is the sports most controversial topic. The TRIAD system has been in place for five years and although it has worked well, behind the scenes USTRC has continued its quest for perfection. Through extensive research and data mining, over 2 million runs have been analyzed from over 6100 events and more than 31,000 ropings. As impressive as that may sound, having the data was only the first step in search of team ropings Holy Grail.

The ability to interpret this vast amount of data is far more important than the data itself. Everyone involved in classifications has always known WHAT to do. The real problems since classifications began are the HOW, the WHO and the WHEN. That's been USTRC's mission for the past five years.

The data has enabled USTRC to identify competition patterns and therefore calculate how each roper will compete under all conditions. The TRIAD analysis considers every aspect of a team roping competition including external factors such as, setup of events, arena conditions and cattle to name a few. In part, these factors determine a ropers speed and consistency and as a result TRIAD is able to determine the ropers overall ability to compete...the **HOW**. Now USTRC is able to identify ropers with either a competitive advantage or disadvantage based solely on their individual performance...the **WHO**. The evolution of TRIAD has produced an impartial, objective and consistent method of assigning classifications. Reaching this milestone now enables USTRC to unveil the new **Elite** TRIAD system...the **WHEN**.

“A ropers experience at an event has everything to do with how competitive they feel among their peers. They expect the classification system to level the playing field,” said Kirk Bray, president of the USTRC. “The Elite TRIAD system will even further improve the roping experience for USTRC members.”

“The goal of the USTRC is to make the journey through classifications as comfortable as possible,” added Gary Poythress, founder of Rodeo Computer Services (RCS).

“We are doing everything possible to turn a negative into a positive. An even classification playing field gives every roper their best chance to compete.”

By definition Elite ropers are those that show a competitive advantage in their classification, but are not a full classification adjustment off. That said, it is important to identify who the Elite ropers are to further level the playing field.

Ropers demonstrating a competitive advantage would move to Elite status. Ropers demonstrating a competitive disadvantage would also move to Elite status, but with a lower classification. For example, everyone knows the good #5 header who is always at the top of his game and therefore always gets the best partners, but would struggle as a #6. Likewise, everyone knows the struggling #5 header who has trouble finding partners and therefore spends more time watching than competing, but would dominate as a #4. Both are Elite ropers. One is an Elite #5 and the other an Elite #4.

The vast majority of ropers will not receive an Elite classification, but will benefit from the Elite TRIAD System nonetheless due to increased access to Elite ropers as partners.

Effective January 4, 2010, the TRIAD number scale will include the following classification levels: Headers - #1, #2, #3, #4, Elite #4, #5, Elite #5, #6, Elite #6, #7, #8 and #9, Heelers - #1, #2, #3, #4,

Elite #4, #5, Elite #5, #6, Elite #6, #7, Elite #7, #8, Elite #8, #9 and #10. Two ropers with Elite status may enter together, but must give up a division to do so. For example an Elite #5 and an Elite #6 would not be eligible to enter the #11 Division, but could compete in the #12 Division. An Elite #5 and a #6 would however be eligible to compete in the #11 Division. In addition, the #10 Division will be capped at an Elite #6 and the #9 Division will be capped at an Elite #5. The #8 Division will remain capped at a #4, meaning Elite #4 ropers will not be allowed to enter.

The Elite TRIAD System provides the performance based mechanism that finally eliminates the compression problem that has haunted classifications since the beginning. The ability to recognize data patterns allows USTRC to be more exact in its grouping of competitors.

“Classifications are more about how you compete than how you rope,” added Poythress. “Taking this approach removes the guess work from classifications. It is finally down to the nuts of bolts of things. We now know what happens when ropers compete. We have actually put a scientific spin on classifications and now recognize competitive patterns.”

“Ropers have wanted to be classified by their performance and not by the opinion of others,” continued

Bray. “TRIAD was the first step in being able to accomplish that goal. Elite TRIAD is the next step. We now have new tools to make classifications even more fair for everyone.”

Through the years the problem with determining classifications has been the method not the messenger.

“USTRC readily admits theres no such thing a perfect classification system. The subjective “coffee shop” method of determining classifications works fairly well with a small group of personal acquaintances,” said Bray. “As the group becomes larger the mistakes mount and ropers become disenfranchised. Five years ago USTRC addressed this issue by incorporating an objective performance based analysis into the decision process. The implementation of TRIAD was the first step toward changing the decision method from opinion to performance. The Elite TRIAD System is even more refined.”

A large concern of any classification system seems to be the younger generation of ropers or the kids to put it bluntly.

“The trend today is for everyone to avoid the kids and not let them to enter,” said Bray. “We have found a way to include, not exclude those ropers. They are the future of the sport

and should be shown the same consideration as everyone else.”

The Elite TRIAD system will be a benefit for everyone and will work in favor of all ropers. “We are here to help everyone,” added Poythress. “Not just working for our own benefit. It is a service to the sport and to the betterment of competition.”

The Elite TRIAD system is also designed not to take ropers out of a division.

“We are not trying to take ropers out of a division or out of competition,” said Bray. “We are just keeping them from being a dominating factor. We are also not taking away their chance to win. We are making everyone as comfortable and competitive as possible. This way its more fair for everyone.”

“This is exactly right,” Poythress agreed. “This system gives the roper options. Today if they receive a classification adjustment they have to switch divisions. With the new Elite TRIAD system ropers can stay in the division and switch partners or they can stay with their partner and move up a division, all the while staying competitive.”

As you can see the new Elite TRIAD system is making classifications more interactive and transparent.

Ropers will soon be able to see all the information that the USTRC Classification Department considers when determining their classification. In addition, they will be able to see where they rank within their respective classification group. Your personal record will be available for you to view after December 15, 2009 on the member services page of USTRC website at www.ustrc.com.

The USTRC is serious about improving the sport and making things better for everyone. USTRC is the official home of Americas Cowboy Sport and we invite you to be part of the growth and excitement. Put yourself in a position to take part in the greatest team roping organization in the world, the United States Team Roping Championships.