RODEO - The sport of the west

Rodeo is to America what bull-fighting is to Spain or horse-racing is to Britain: the nation's most popular animal sport, and a very popular sport at that. Paul Denman recently spent a day at the Deschutes County Fair, in Redmond Oregon, and joined hundreds of Oregonians to watch the highlight of the fair, the annual Deschutes Rodeo.

A) Open cloze. Write only one word per blank.



Bull riding - a uniquely Wild-West sport.

At 1 p.m. the air is still, heavy with a confusion of smells that drifts among the stalls and the barbeques, the animal enclosures and the ice-cream vendors. In the hot midday sun, the fair throngs with visitors, but there's _____ shade to sit in, just narrow strips of shadow alongside the buildings and the tents. All around, the music is _____ while kids ***run riot*** and stall-holders ***beckon*** passing visitors with their colorful displays.

Then, as the time moves towards 2.30, there is a new sense of excitement in the air: people are _____ longer moving round ***randomly***, but heading in the same direction, towards the dusty arena to the south of the showground.

Here at last there is shade for everyone: the grandstand, with its ***tiered*** seating, rapidly fills _____, as thousands of fair-goers pile in, eager for a good view of the excitement that is soon to begin.

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. Microlight kids on minuscule ponies are ***cavorting*** round the empty arena, while a handful of cowboys, astride impeccably trained horses, walk or trot ***sedately*** round the ring. Suddenly a little blonde girl, hardly four feet tall, careers into view, riding bareback at the _____ of light on a bright white pony. . The folk in the stands are too busy talking about horses and rodeo-riders, discussing the last rodeo, predicting the winners of the next. Somehow, as someone who has not been brought _____ in the company of horses, I feel slightly out of place, as _____ everyone here except me knows everything about what is going on.

I had been to a couple of rodeos _____, including the biggest of them all, Canada's *Calgary Stampede*; but the other rodeos I had been to were put on for the tourists. . Rodeos here are for the locals, people who know them and understand them; most of the folk round me are from Redmond, or Prineville or Madras or Bend, certainly _____ from Europe!

Then action: suddenly the gates at the end of the arena burst _____, and a posse of flag-carrying girls erupts into view, circling the arena in formation on shining dark ponies. Dressed _____ patriotic red white and blue, courtesy of Pepsi-Cola, the girls come to a stop in the middle of the ring, as the crowd rise to their _____, the men take off their stetson hats, and everyone joins in the singing of God Bless America. The rodeo has begun!

The rodeo has begun! For the next couple of hours, spectators watch with excitement as local heroes perform ***feats*** of ***dexterity*** on the backs of ***bucking*** animals! While some show their skills at calf roping — catching a running calf with a lasso and tying it up in just a few seconds — _____ demonstrate their ***daredevil*** skills by riding untamed broncos or ***bounding*** round on the backs of enormous raging bulls. As intrepid riders master or fall off their wild mounts, the crowd cheer wildly or aah in apprehension, then burst into laughter as the obligatory clown, the matador of the rodeo, distracts the attention of the raging animals while mounted cowboys round them up, calm them _____, and coax them away into the pens from which they originally emerged, their day's work over. Katie Sharpe, 21, the local Rodeo Queen, does a ***lap*** of honour, then participates in the



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ladies' events; but in this macho part of the world, the ladies do not get to ***pit themselves*** against untamed bulls and broncs! [ ] Katie and the other young ladies show their skills at "barrel racing", ***hurling*** their horses at breakneck speed round a triangular shaped race-course, marked out with barrels, in the middle of the arena. It's not as dramatic as bull-riding, but it's exciting, and the crowd roar _____ approval.

As the sun falls lower in the sky and the shadows begin to lengthen, the final rounds of calf-roping and saddle-bronc riding bring another half hour of thrills and spills before the commentator finally announces that the Rodeo is drawing to an end. The last prizes are handed _____, the last riders leave the arena, and the show is over. As the spectators pick up their belongings and move slowly _____ the exits, the kids on their ponies come back again for another few minutes as imaginary champions, tomorrow's local heroes in the arena of the stars. [ ].

WORDS

run riot: *run without control* - **beckon:** *call* - **random:** *without any order* - **grandstand:** *covered area where spectators sit at a stadium* - **tiered:** *rising up in steps* - **cavort:** *run excitedly* - **sedate:** *calm* - **feat:** *act, achievement* - **dexterity:** *skill, something difficult* - **buck:** *jump up and down* - **daredevil:** *intrepid* - **bound:** *jump* - **lap:** *circuit* - **pit oneself:** *struggle* - **hurl:** *throw*

B) Some sentences have been removed from the text above. Choose from sentences A-G the one that best fits into each gap. There is an extra letter which you do not need to use.

A For some people it has already begun

B That's men's stuff!

C Both locals and tourists are expectant for this annual event

D Here, it seems, if rodeo does not flow in the blood, at least it's all in the family

E It's almost time for the rodeo!

F Not this one; in central Oregon, there are few tourists

G No-one pays much attention



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