

Extreme cowboy racing competition gaining popularity

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It's described as the fastest growing equine sport.

A multi-faceted event that showcases both horse and rider as they manoeuvre through a series of obstacles and challenges, demonstrating their horsemanship skills and speed.

It's the sport of extreme cowboy racing and it's a fan favourite at this year's Calgary Stampede with the Cowboy Up Challenge which takes place in the Saddledome. The final day of competition is Monday at 2:30 p.m.

Kateri Cowley, 28, from Exshaw, is one of the competitors with her horse Kokanee.

"I've been doing this since the very beginning when it came to Canada in 2010," said Cowley. "We just opened up the Extreme Cowboy Alberta edition which is an American-sanctioned event. So you can earn points to get to the World Finals (in Texas in October)."

The sport is sanctioned by the Texas-based Extreme Cowboy Association.

"(The Alberta edition) started their first winter series last winter and we're amongst the middle of the summer series," said Cowley. "It's such a fast growing sport and everyone's really getting into this. So I imagine that it's going to really pick up from here.

"It's the most fun you can have. There's something for everybody. It really caters to so many different levels. If you're a young, young child or if you're over 65 years old or anywhere in the middle, or just starting out riding, there's so much partnership with your horse and you have to kind of really test and



push your skills to get better and better every time.”Cowley said the competition is multi-faceted and combines all the horsemanship skills into one race. The horse and the rider work as a team.

“You might have to go roping. You might have to do jumps. You might have to do some reigning,” said Cowley. “Spin box. They always kind of try to put you in your place and really surprise you. You don’t really have any way to prepare for it because you don’t get the (course) until a couple of hours before, which also tests your memory. The intensity of the sport is so much fun. Once you try it, you’ll get hooked.”

Cowley’s 34-year-old brother David is also a competitor in the Stampede event.

“This is my second Stampede doing this,” he said. “Kateri got me into it ... She said it was a lot of fun. She suggested I put my name in to come.

“It’s really exciting. It’s challenging. Trying to remember the whole course. Where you’ve got to go. Just trusting your horse.”

David Cowley said competitors receive a different course each time they race with 13 different obstacles or challenges.

“And you never know what it’s going to be,” he said. “So you basically have to be prepared for anything and everything. And you have to do it as fast and as smooth as you can.”