



Night Latch — Grab and Hold!

A night latch is a safety strap attached to a saddle to help the rider hold on and stay on a contrary horse. This contraption was used as part of old-time traditional cowboy bronc gear and can still come in handy.

Here is one method used to rig a traditional night latch: Use a four foot length of catch rope. Some type of rope is easier to hold than leather, which can be slippery (hence the braiding above).

1. Double the rope.
2. Run the looped end of the rope through the gullet of the saddle from the front.
3. Run both free ends through the loop. Leave enough room to slip your hand between the saddle and the rope.
4. Twist the ends around the loop and back through themselves, as shown. Contrary to what you might think, the free ends are **not** the handhold to grab in case of emergency. Your hand could slip off. You are using the rope to form a loop to grab like a suitcase handle (or bareback rigging.) Maybe you are wondering why use a night latch, when the saddle horn is so handy. With a night latch, you can pull yourself down into the saddle, which gives you greater security than holding the horn. You can try an experiment, next time you are sitting in your saddle. First hold the horn, then grab the rope strap or front saddle strings and pull yourself down, imagining the feeling if your horse were acting up. You should feel more secure. But remember: the rope strap or saddle strings are too light to serve the real purpose.

From: http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/cowboy_night_latch.htm

(This site has lots of other very cool cowboy gear, photos, stories etc.)

Steve Johnson suggests using a piece of hose with the rope through it. It is handy to have the night latch 'stand up' a little away from the saddle so that it is easy to grab in an emergency.

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