



Instructions for Obstacle Observers and Timers

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING TO BE AN OBSTACLE OBSERVER OR TIMER. Your work is important because the times and driving patterns you record will determine the competitor's score on the marathon. Do plan to attend the briefing so your responsibilities can be explained under the supervision of the Technical Delegate or Head Obstacle Judge.

THE OBJECT OF THE MARATHON OBSTACLES is to drive through the prescribed "gates" (colored sets of lettered markers) in the fastest time. Gates must be driven in order – A, B, C etc. – and when going through a gate the first time, the red marker must always be on the right.

OBSTACLE OBSERVER INSTRUCTIONS:

- Please remember your main objective is to **observe and record correctly**. Throughout the day, remain consistent - do the same for all competitors. Discuss between team members, what was observed and in the case of contentious points please make sure all are prepared to report what they saw. It may be advisable to call for the T.D. or a member of the ground jury if you have concerns. You do not need to worry about levying or calculating penalties. Simply report accurately what you observe.
- The competitor is under your control from the moment the **nose of the leading horse** crosses the plane of the entry gate, until the **entire turnout** crosses the plane of the exit gate.
- Obstacle Observers should not write down a competitor's number until **they see and confirm that the competitor has entered the obstacle**. Please do not pre-number your obstacle sheets based on the order of go you have been given. Things may change.
- Please give all the **Obstacle Observer Reports** to the score collector, but retain your **Back-Up Sheet**. At the end of the day, you will return all of your equipment, including the back-up sheet, to the show office, or whomever you are directed to return it to.
- To drive the obstacle correctly the competitor must pass through **each pair of lettered gates** in the correct sequence and direction. The **whole turnout** must pass between the red and white markers. A competitor who drives part way into the gate, stops and reverses out has not officially passed through that gate.
- If a gate is driven out of sequence, the competitor may correct the mistake. Simply write down exactly what you see the competitor do.
 - Thus: A, B, D, E, F is a **wrong course** (missed C)
 - A, B, D, C, D, E, F is a **corrected course** (after missing C at first, drove C correctly and then continued in sequence to finish the obstacle correctly)
- **Record on the Obstacle Observer Report the sequence of gates** driven INCLUDING gates driven in reverse. On your report sheet, simply write down the gates as they are driven, including the gates driven in reverse. Please put brackets or parentheses around the letters for gates driven in reverse. **DO NOT** draw the track on the diagram.

- Once a gate has been negotiated correctly it is considered “free” or “dead” and may be driven again in either direction.
- Once the **entire turnout** has passed out through the “out” gate, the competitor is deemed to have left the obstacle, but **grooms may re-enter** the obstacle on foot without incurring penalties, provided it is safe to do so.
- Should a competitor remain within the obstacle for more than 5 minutes, the obstacle observer **MUST** blow his whistle twice. The competitor must leave the obstacle immediately, with help if necessary, may not continue any further on the course as he has been eliminated.
- The only person to handle the reins, whip or brake is the driver. Any assistance given in this respect by the grooms must be recorded. Failure to comply even to prevent an accident incurs a penalty. But grooms may handle the reins if the vehicle is stationary. Grooms may give assistance to a driver to prevent him from falling off the vehicle.
- A competitor must stop immediately whenever a **horse has its leg over a pole, lead bar or trace**, and must rectify the problem. If the driver does not stop on his own (he might not have seen that a leader stepped over a trace) then the obstacle observer should tell him to stop and fix the problem. If the driver does not obey the command, this must be reported immediately to a member of the jury and marked on your report sheet.
- Obstacle observers should report any **outside assistance**, which includes being followed or accompanied by any vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian or horseman and any advice from friends or spectators, solicited or not.
- Outside assistance is allowed to right an overturned vehicle or help as a **result of an accident**, providing the grooms are dismounted. Maintain control of the situation until the TD arrives and takes over.
- Obstacle observers should report on the sheet any **deliberate acts of cruelty** such as excessive use of the whip or pressing of exhausted horses taking place at their obstacle. Report this **IMMEDIATELY** to a member of the ground jury.
- After leaving the final obstacle, competitors **may only stop to make repairs just outside the obstacle**. Thereafter they may not stop without incurring penalties: they may walk or trot only or to the finish. Record the time of any cantering or galloping, whatever the duration, between the exit flag of the final obstacle (or the last 500m) and the finish. Also record any stops, circles or deviations from the marked course. Intentional cantering in the last 500 meters **MUST** be reported immediately to the jury and incurs elimination.
- Advanced and Intermediate competitors may use any pace on the course and in the obstacles. Preliminary competitors may canter in the obstacles, but must trot on the course. Training competitors may only trot on course; they may walk or trot in the obstacles. Each break of pace for Preliminary and Training competitors is penalized 1 penalty point for each **COMMENCED** 5 seconds. Therefore, you must be aware of the duration of the break and record how many seconds the break lasts and where it occurred.
- At the Intermediate, Preliminary and Training levels, the competitor must carry a whip in hand. Failure to do so should be reported to the ground jury.

- Usually, as part of your equipment, you will find a page of “red dots.” Put one on any score sheet where any driving penalties have been recorded, other than for time, or on any sheet that you want the judge and/or scorer to look at carefully. Be alert and listen carefully at the briefing; you may be instructed to “hold” any sheet with a “red dot” at your obstacle and call for a jury member to look at it BEFORE it goes to the score runner, and subsequently to the scorer.

EXPLANATION OF DRIVING ERRORS:

- **Groom down:** If a groom leaves the carriage (both feet on the ground), intentionally or not, penalties are assessed each time. Usually once a groom is down, he will stay down until the driver finishes the obstacle when he will jump on once the driver leaves the obstacle zone. If he gets back on and has to get off again, record this each time.
- **Driver dismounted:** If this happens, be alert for a problem, but do not offer assistance or let anyone other than the grooms offer assistance unless the driver or his grooms ask, unless it is clearly a serious accident. Even then, the driver may have things under control without assistance. If they are in trouble, assistance should be promptly given and will not cause elimination.
- **Dislodgeable elements:** These "knockdowns" are specially designed elements of the obstacle that can easily be disturbed or "knocked down." If a dislodgeable element is dislodged, check this on the score sheet.
- **Holding a dislodgeable element:** If the driver or groom makes an attempt to prevent the dislodgeable element from falling, record this in the appropriate space on the score sheet.
- **Turning over:** While this is often a serious problem, wait for the driver to ask for assistance. Very often the carriage can be righted and the driver can continue in the obstacle. If 5 minutes have elapsed, the driver should be notified by 2 blasts with the whistle that he should leave the obstacle as quickly as possible.

TIMING PROCEDURE:

- One timer should be at the entrance to the obstacle, the other at the exit. One timer should be designated as the official timer, and the second should keep time as well, but only to be used if the official timepiece fails. The second timer signals to the official timer by dropping his arm if he is in a different location from the official timer.
- Start your stopwatch as soon as the nose of the leading horse crosses the plane of the “IN” gate.
- Stop your stopwatch as soon as the nose of the leading horse crosses the plane of the “OUT” gate.
- Record time on each competitor’s score sheet and on your running back-up sheet.
- Each competitor’s time should be recorded in **minutes, seconds and hundredths of seconds** exactly as it appears on the stopwatch or the electronic timing device. **DO NOT ROUND** any numbers. Thus, if your stopwatch reads 01:57:07 (1 minute, 57 seconds and 07 hundredths), record exactly that, without rounding.
- Write clearly, as your numbers become points! The scorer or a judge will actually assign the points - all you must do is write down the time in the obstacle.

- Clear your watch and be ready for the next competitor.
- If a competitor leaves the obstacle without going through the "out" gate, keep the watch running for five minutes total time in case he comes back to correctly exit. Once the competitor passes through the next compulsory turning flag on course (the next pair of red and white markers on course with numbers on it) he may not return to the obstacle. If the competitor does return, you may need to hold him if another competitor has come in the meantime, and use a back-up watch for keeping times for both. (See below.)

OTHER SITUATIONS THAT MAY OCCUR:

- **Hold-ups or delays:** If another competitor arrives at your obstacle while a competitor is in the obstacle, the second competitor must not enter the obstacle until it is clear. Tell the overtaking competitor to wait. The overtaking competitor is to be held at a point on the course approximately 50 meters from the entry flags. He or his groom may time the delay, but you are to **time his delay** as well. Once the obstacle is clear and you have scored the previous competitor, restart the next competitor from his place approximately 50 meters from the entry flags. In the box indicated on the score sheet, write down the duration of the delay. You should tell the competitor the length of the hold and you should restart him by counting him down from 10 seconds.
- **Imperative! All hold-ups must be in whole minutes!**
- **Two competitors arrive at your obstacle at the same time:** Allow the faster of the two to go first. The second may circle or stand and wait approximately 50 meters from the entry flags until the obstacle is clear to be restarted. **Again, this must be done in whole minutes!** Record the delay on your score sheet. You should tell the competitor the length of the hold and you should count him down from 10 seconds.
- **Serious accident: REMAIN CALM**
 - The organizer and TD will have agreed upon a central call station for emergencies. Call this central "control" and advise them as concisely as possible of the situation, and wait for instructions. Upon instructions from the organizer and TD, this central "control" will disburse whoever is needed, whether it be EMT or vet or both.
 - Once an incident is reported to Control, there should be complete radio silence from all other personnel on course.
 - Keep the area clear of spectators.