



Horse Driving Trials

“So you want to do an event”

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**With additions and amendments for the GWHC
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‘Mike Watts wrote the original version of this document. Ray & Penny Bragg of the Great Western Harness Group have produced this version’

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1.1 Background

This document has been written to broadly cover events that are run by the British Horse Driving Trials Association (BHDTA) or by its affiliated Clubs, of which the Great Western Harness Club (GWHC) is one. It aims to explain what types of events there are and what some of the basic rules are.

The term 'He' has been used though out. It can be freely replaced with 'She' as appropriate. Likewise the term 'Horse' could equally be replaced with 'Pony'. As a matter of interest, the BHDTA defines a Pony as:

“an animal not exceeding 148 cms (14.23h) without shoes or 149 cms (14.27h) with shoes. The minimum height for a single pony is 11.3h without shoes. [911.2]:

2 Types of event


2.1 From Club to National and beyond

2.1.1 Club Events

As with most activities, 'we all have to start somewhere' and if it's competition carriage driving, then most of us start at Club Events as a Club 'Pre- Novice' or 'Novice'. The difference between the two is that Pre-Novice classes offer the simplest dressage tests and allow more time around the marathon and cones courses. The GWHC runs the occasional 'pre-novice' class, but more normally it is just 'novice' and 'open' classes. The term 'novice' can vary from Club to Club but at the GWHC, as with the vast majority, a novice is defined in the Club rules as:

“Any Driver will be considered novice until they have competed in a National Event and or National Novice qualifier or been placed first twice, in any GWHC or other affiliated club one or two day, three phase event (not including a fun day) Any driver having competed without retirement or elimination in three affiliated club events may, if they wish upgrade to Open Classes”.

So, in common with almost all other Clubs, the GWHC defines a 'Novice' based on the experience of the driver only, regardless of the experience of the horse

 **HINT:** There is no such thing as a 'Novice Multiple' Even if you start out by driving a multiple you are deemed to be experienced, on the basis that driving a multiple is more difficult than driving a single.

Some club events may also be a qualifier for the Inter Club Regional Championship and if you do well enough in your class you will qualify for the Inter Club Regional Championships which are organised between the Clubs in the South and South West of England. The Championships are usually held at the end of August or in September

2.1.2 Progression through the sport

2007 saw the introduction of a cohesive structure for progression through the sport of carriage driving, from the tentative first steps of the beginner, right through to International Standard competitor. The newly introduced progressive steps are:

PRE-NOVICE SINGLES

These classes are held at Club Events and incorporate a number of broad rules to define the classes and to protect the welfare of the horse and driver

Inspection & Safety Check	At the halt for fit, safety and cleanliness of harness and vehicle, also turnout of horse, driver and groom. Lamps are not required and marathon harness and 3 phase vehicles are acceptable. Marks will only be deducted, if an acceptable standard is not attained.
Dressage	<u>BHDTA Pre-Novice test A 2007</u> or <u>BHDTA Pre-Novice test B 2007</u>
Marathon	1 or 3 Sections, 8 to 12 km, 4 to 6 obstacles, gates max. to E.
Cones	Max. 15 gates, speed 210 m/min, width 165 cm.

PROGRESSION to Club Novice Singles (Level 1)

- You must progress after 10 events.
- You may progress after 3 events at the discretion of the club.

CLUB NOVICE SINGLES (Level 1)

These classes will be held at Club Events and BHDTA recommend that in the interest of creating a uniform structure, clubs should consider adopting the class rules.

Inspection & Safety Check	At the halt for fit, safety and cleanliness of harness and vehicle also turnout of horse, driver and groom. Lamps are not required and marathon harness and 3 phase vehicles are acceptable. Marks will only be deducted, if an acceptable standard is not attained.
Dressage	<u>BHDTA Novice Test 2007</u>
Marathon	3 sections, min. 12 km, 6 obstacles, gates max. to E.
Cones	18 gates, speed 220 m/min, width 165 cm.

PROGRESSION to National Novice Singles (Level 2)

- You must progress at the end of the season after winning this class on TWO occasions, either to National Novice Singles (Level 2) or the appropriate class at Club Events.
- You may progress after completing three events without elimination, at the discretion of the club.
- Competitors wishing to enter National Novice Single (Level 2) qualifying events

must have BHDTA competence certificates signed at three events with a 3 section marathon, either in the current or the two previous seasons.

NATIONAL NOVICE SINGLES (Level 2)

These classes will be held at Approved Club Events and they **must** adopt these rules.

- Presentation** At the halt for fit, safety and cleanliness of harness and vehicle and also turnout of horse, driver and groom. Lamps are not required and marathon harness and 3 phase vehicles are acceptable. Marks will only be deducted, if an acceptable standard is not attained. (See Article 942.6)
- Dressage** BHDTA Novice Test 2007
- Marathon** 3 sections, min. 12 km, 6 or 7 obstacles, gates max. to E.
- Cones** 20 gates, speed 220 m/min, width 165 cm.
- Qualification** Qualification for the National Championships: If 6 or more in the class, the highest two will qualify, disregarding those already qualified, from the first eight places. 3 to 5 in the class - the highest place, disregarding those already qualified. 1 or 2 in the class - the higher place, disregarding those already qualified, provided the driver's dressage score is 65 or less.

PROGRESSION to Intermediate Singles (Level 3)

- You must progress at the end of the season after winning this class on TWO occasions or finishing in the top 50% at the National Championships.
- You may progress at any time after qualifying for the National Novice (Level 2) Championship or finishing in the top three at an approved qualifying event on 3 occasions with a minimum of 4 in the class, either in the current or the two previous seasons.
- All competitors who have qualified in 2006 or in previous years for the Novice National Championships and who have not yet competed in the Open Class at National Events must progress to the Intermediate Class or the appropriate class at club events.

INTERMEDIATE SINGLES (Level 3)

These classes will be held at National Events

- Presentation** On the move.
- Dressage** BHDTA Intermediate Test 2007
- Marathon** 3 or 5 sections, 6 to 8 obstacles, gates max. to F

- Cones** 20 gates, speed 230 m/min, width 165 cm.
- Qualification** Qualification for the National Championships: If 6 or more in the class, the highest two will qualify, disregarding those already qualified, from the first eight places. 3 to 5 in the class - the highest place, disregarding those already qualified. 1 or 2 in the class - the higher place, disregarding those already qualified, provided the driver's dressage score is 65 or less.

PROGRESSION to Open Singles (Level 4)

- You must progress to Open Singles at the end of the season after winning this class on two occasions or finishing in the top 50% at the National Championships.
- You may progress at any time after qualifying for the National Intermediate (Level 3) Championships or finishing in the top 3 in the Intermediate Class on 3 occasions with a minimum of 4 in the class, either in the current or the two previous seasons.

Note! A competitor from the Advanced or Open Single classes with a Novice horse or pony may compete in this class, but will not be eligible for qualification to the Intermediate class at the National Championships and must return to the Open Class after one win

OPEN SINGLES (Level 4)

- Presentation** On the move
- Dressage** Ponies: FEI Test 6a, Horses: FEI Test 7a
- Marathon** 3 or 5 sections, 6 to 8 obstacles, gates max. to F,
- Cones** 20 gates, speed 240 m/min, width 160 cm.
- Qualification** Qualification for the National Championships: If 6 or more in the class, the highest two will qualify, disregarding those already qualified, from the first eight places. 3 to 5 in the class - the highest place, disregarding those already qualified. 1 or 2 in the class - the higher place, disregarding those already qualified, provided the driver's dressage score is 65 or less.

PROGRESSION to Advanced Singles (Level 5)

- You must progress after winning this class on TWO occasions with the same horse or pony, with a Dressage score of 60 or less at one of these events.

Note! This is the only route to advanced singles (Level 5). Competitors from the Advanced Class cannot voluntarily return to the Open Class and compete with same Horse or Pony used to qualify for the Advanced Class.

Open competitors who register their intention to compete for selection to the 2007 Pony World Championship team and the 2008 Single Horse World Championship team may compete in the Advanced Class at the discretion of the council.

ADVANCED SINGLES (Level 5)

Presentation	On the move
Dressage	Ponies: <u>FEI Test 7a</u> , Horses: <u>FEI test 9</u>
Marathon	3 or 5 sections, 6 to 8 obstacles, gates max. to F,
Cones	20 gates, speed 250 m/min, width 160 cm.
Qualification	Qualification for the National Championships: If 6 or more in the class, the highest two will qualify, disregarding those already qualified, from the first eight places. 3 to 5 in the class - the highest place, disregarding those already qualified. 1 or 2 in the class - the higher place, disregarding those already qualified, provided the driver's dressage score is 65 or less. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A competitor who has not finished above the last two places in the class during the season, (when there are 5 or more competitors in the class) MUST return to the Open Class.• A competitor must only compete in this class with Horse/Pony used to qualify for the Advanced Class.• An Advanced competitor who does not compete in this class during two consecutive seasons MUST return to the Open Class and re-qualify.



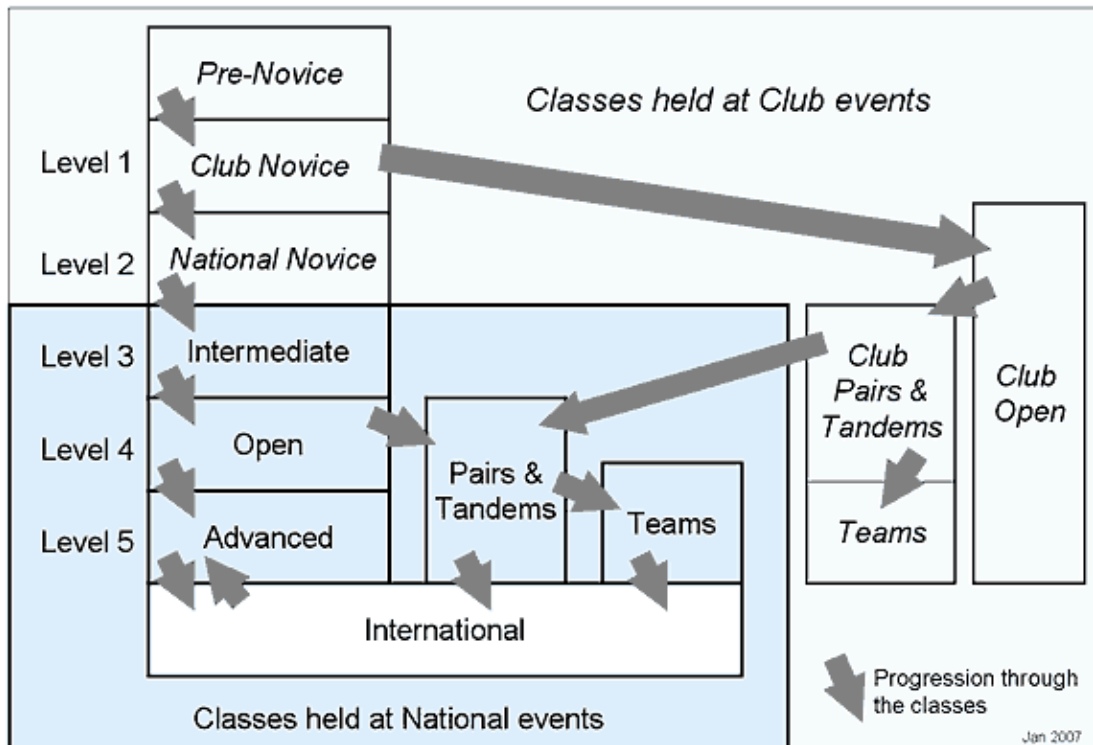
HINT: As mentioned above, there is no such thing as a 'Novice Multiple' so if you drive a multiple, National Novice Qualifiers (level 2) and Intermediate singles (level 3) are not for you

The diagram on page 9 shows the progression in a pictorial form.



NOTE: Members can compete at clubs throughout their entire carriage driving career, there is no pressure to move up the progression into National Carriage driving events.

Class structure - 2007



2.1.3 National Events

National Events are held throughout the season at venues across the country. (dates are available from the BHDTA www.horsedrivingtrials.co.uk/)

To qualify, if you drive a **single**:

Follow the progression described earlier

To qualify, if you drive a **multiple**:

*“must have completed a marathon with a minimum of three sections without retirement or elimination with a **single** in a minimum of three National Intermediate Events, **or** with a **pair or tandem** at three Affiliated Club events”*

In order to compete at National event you must be a member of the BHDTA and your horse must be registered with the BHDTA.

2.1.4 International Events

National event competitors may compete at International events – if a) they can afford it! with the exception of International championship events. Selection for these from amongst the ‘Advanced competitors’ takes place during the preceding year according to an ever-changing set of criteria!

3 A question of age

For HDT, people's ages are measured much like horses – your age in a calendar year is the age you get to at your birthday that year. So if you'll be 14 in August (or any month) in 2003, you're 14 all through 2003.

For international events, a groom can compete from 14 (*“the beginning of the calendar year in which they reach 14”*). All drivers must be at least 18 for horses, horse teams, horse pairs and horse tandems, 16 for single horse and anything pony.

The National rules are more complicated, with the groom's minimum age depending on the age of the driver and whether you're in horse or pony, team or pair etc. Curiously, in some cases this is more restrictive than the international rules, in some case less.

	National		International	
Category	Driver	Groom	Driver	Groom
Horse team	18	14	18	14
Horse tandem	16	18	18	14
Horse pair	16	18	18	14
Horse single	18	14	18	14
Horse single	16	16	-	
Horse single	14	18	-	
Pony team	16	18	16	14
Pony tandem	16	18	16	14
Pony pair	16	18	16	14
Pony single	18	14	16	14
Pony single	16	16	-	
Pony single	14	18	-	

In affiliated UK club events the BHDTA (and GWHC) rules say that a child from 10 upwards (age on the day of the event in this case) is allowed to drive in *any* class provided they are accompanied by a competent adult aged 18 or over. Some adults consider this to be too young, particularly if they have just been thrashed by a ten year old!

4 So what is a driving event?

A driving trial event essentially consists of three parts:

4.1 Dressage (“Competition A”)

A test of driving accuracy and horse's paces, driven from memory and scored by judges' opinion.

4.2 Marathon (“Competition B”)

A test over a number of lengthy sections at different paces ending with “Section E”, a few kilometres of course including timed obstacles. This is scored by time in the

obstacles and any excess over the prescribed times for the sections, or below the minimum time where this is set.

4.3 Cones (“Competition C”)

A test of accuracy driven round a course between closely spaced cones with knockdowns and with a time limit, scored by knockdowns and any excess over the prescribed time.

5 One, two, three day “ the choice is yours”

One day events: in a one day event, the order is normally Dressage, Cones, Marathon.

Two day events:

Saturday: Dressage then Cones

Sunday: Marathon

Three day events (usually restricted to National and International events):

Friday: Dressage

Saturday: Marathon

Sunday: Cones

(International events usually hold a vet inspection on Thursday, or even Wednesday if there are two days of Dressage)

6 The Rules

If you want to compete, you need some knowledge of the rules – it’s no good having a great horse and expert driver if you get eliminated for breaking a rule. All the rules are based on an international set of rules produced by the FEI (Federation Equestrian International). In 2005 the FEI produced a completely new set of rules. You can get them free online at <http://www.horsedrivingtrials.co.uk/reference/forms>. For those who are excited by such things, the FEI will produce a complete revision in 2009



HINT: If you use a PC, it’s useful having the rules on your PC because you can search the rules for a particular word (like “whip” or “width”) if you need to find out about something

The British Horse Driving Trials Association (BHDTA) produces and updates its rules based on the FEI rules and updates. The BHDTA rules consist of the international rules with alterations added in italics for UK events. The alterations mainly relax the FEI rules somewhat.



HINT: You have to buy these UK rules from the BHDTA www.horsedrivingtrials.co.uk if you want them they’re not published on the net – yet, although it is understood that this will probably change in 2007.

Finally, the GWHC has its own rules. In the main the GWHC adopt, the majority of the BHDTA rules but has a few variations to suite the local club requirements. A copy of the GWHC rules and constitution is available at www.gwhc.co.uk.

The GWHC generally runs events that are ‘affiliated’ events and as such, follow the BHDTA rules. Some events run as ‘un-affiliated’ events and adapt the rules to suit.



HINT: In 2005 the GWHC overhauled it’s rule book such that most GWHC rules now fully reflect those of the BHDTA

6.1.1 ‘Not all rules are equal’!

You will find that different people have different ideas of the rules. This may be because they aren’t very clear to read and because the rules have changed over time. Be sure that you work from an up to date copy.

Some judging takes place against unwritten criteria for example, candles in lamps should have been lit – the wick should have been burnt - a judge may mark you down for a brand new candle. The logic may be that new candles are supposedly harder to light.

The rules are not written in a way that is easy to understand – for instance the phrase “obstacle” is used to refer to parts of the cones course (“Competition C”), and “obstacle” is also used to mean the obstacles (“hazards”) in the marathon (“Competition B”).



HINT: Many people refer to “hazards” – The insurance industry hate this as it implies they might be inherently dangerous, so stick to ‘obstacle’ when chatting to your friendly broker.

Also, organisers of events habitually ignore some of the rules and enforce others. For example, even at National events, you might turn up to inspect Section E of the marathon course 42 hours before the start – the whole of Section E must be open for inspection from then) but find the obstacles are actually closed and be threatened with elimination if you walk them and have no easy way of finding out when you *can* inspect them. Such is the world of horse driving trials – usually you’ll find GWHC club events more friendly and the people organising and competing helpful and supportive




HINT: Before you take time off work to go to an event early, find out when the obstacles will actually be open for inspection.


Another rule says you can’t “*have a person at an obstacle for the purpose of encouraging, by any means whatsoever.*” You might think that your friends can’t clap to encourage you, or even be there to encourage you by solidarity, but they seem to be accepted. In fact at international events it is not unusual to find spectators sporting bells, cow horns and rattles – rather more reminiscent of a football match!

When you walk the obstacles, you may sometimes find that the obstacle differs from the sketch map (gates may be swapped or go in the opposite direction to that shown on the map). In theory the organisers will not change the obstacles once they have been opened for inspection so you should alter your map. However they may change either

the map or the obstacles in practice. You need to go back and check. It is worth noting that organisers only have to display one map (individual maps are a luxury).

 **HINT:** When the obstacle is actually driven, it **must** be driven as flagged; if the map differs from the obstacle, ignore the map.

At any one event, a groom can groom for as many different drivers as they like in cones and dressage, but they can only go round the marathon once. The secret is ASK!

 **HINT:** In many Clubs the rule restricting grooms to one marathon only, is often relaxed when a junior driver is involved. This is to allow an experienced driver to groom for a junior and also take part in the competition in his own right.

Only the driver can use the reins, whip or brakes during an actual competition (cones, dressage, and marathon). Each time this rule is broken, even to avoid an accident, you get 20 penalties – or in the case of the cones, elimination. However, between competitions the groom is free to drive, brake, whip or whatever – for example, a groom can warm up the horse and turnout if competent to do so.

7 So what is a groom for if not for beating?

The groom must be “*fit and capable of rendering speedy and efficacious assistance at any time*”. This is a minimum safety requirement – if something goes wrong, the groom must be able to get down quickly and hold the horse(s) effectively.

8 Taking Part at an event

8.1 Before the event

There is a lot to take for an event, particularly if it involves an overnight stay. You will need to:

- Have exercised your horse and tried to get him fit.
- Make lists of the things that you will need both for yourself and for your horse. Arriving at an event with no food is no joke!
- Make sure that your harness and carriage are clean and safe. Check both for wear and tear. Remember that safety is paramount
- Check the schedule to make sure what time the event is starting
- Learn the correct dressage test – the name of the dressage test will be printed in the entry schedule. A description of the test itself and the layout of the arena, can be downloaded from the GWHC web site at www.gwhc.co.uk.htm
- For a GWHC event, ring up prior to the event, according to the schedule, for your dressage time. (Note that dressage times at National events are not available until you have arrived)
- Check that your motor vehicles are ready for the trip

8.2 On arrival

Your first point of call should be the stable manager. He will direct you to where you can safely park.

- Do not park too close to your neighbour however much you like them! This presents a hazard
- Do keep your dogs on a lead at all times
- Do have a 1Kg fire extinguisher with you – it is a GWHC club requirement and is useful if the BBQ burst into flames!
- Do make sure that the stabling is secure; at GWHC events it is fine to use electric fencing, but ensure that it is correctly set up.
- Do check where the water and toilets are located otherwise you may be in for a long walk!
- Do close any gates you may have come through.
- Do not get worried if you seem to take ages to find the ‘right’ spot and even longer to set up. Everyone else is watching because they have just gone through the same thing and they are thinking ‘wow that was quick!’
- Do have a cup of tea and a ‘sit down’ once all that work is over.



HINT: Electric fencing is NOT allowed at National events, nor at some regional and affiliated club events.

8.3 Getting information

With luck you will have received a competitor’s pack upon arrival, however sometimes it is a case of ‘find out for yourself’.

Look for the event organiser / secretary / scoring position. There will probably be some notice boards – you should be able to get

- your dressage time
- a plan of the course (if available)
- plans of the obstacles
- plan of the cones course
- details of where presentation and dressage are to be held
- Score sheets as and when available
- Health & Safety information
- Information about the site
- A large competitor number (for the Marathon) and a small competitor number (for the dressage & cones)

Keep checking the notice boards for any other information.

At two-day events, there will probably be a competitor’s briefing when the course builder, event organiser and technical delegate (sometimes the same person!) will go over details for the marathon and answer any questions. Check when and where it will be held.

If in doubt ASK ASK ASK ASK ASK ASK!

8.4 Each Phase – step by step

8.4.1 Presentation

This is different for novice and open classes. Typically novices have presentation judged at the halt between half an hour and one hour before their dressage time. Open classes have presentation judged on the move as part of the dressage score/test. Generally GWHC club events all have presentation ‘on the move’ but all National Novice Qualifiers and many affiliated clubs have standing presentation

The rules are brief on the subject of presentation:

“Appearance of driver and grooms, cleanliness, fitness, matching and condition of horses/ponies, vehicle and harness”.

However in the latest BHDTA rules, it also says that:

“For Novice classes the Judge should not expect the standard achievable by more experienced competitors and should accept Marathon Harness and Three Phase vehicle without penalty”

The scoring categories for standing presentation are:

Driver, Groom and Passengers*	Position, dress, hat, gloves, holding the whip, handling of horses.
Horses	Condition, turnout, cleanliness, matching, condition of shoeing
Harness	Condition, proper fit, cleanliness
Vehicle	Condition, cleanliness
General Impression	Whole turnout

(*However, *“passengers are not permitted”*, The table refers to a groom dressed like a passenger.)

- The judge will score each category above out of 10 (10 means “Excellent”, 1 means “Very Bad” and 0 means “Not executed”).
- The scorer adds these up, subtracts them from 50 and divides by 5 (!).
- This means you’d get 2 penalties for each row in the table above if the judge gave you zero, or a total of 10 penalties if you scored zero for every category in presentation [unheard of].

In the open dressage tests there is also a score for presentation (so called ‘presentation on the move’) - 10 penalties max


In practice further rules are applied and scored regardless of the published rule book, so you’d better comply:-

- You need to carry a spares kit. It should be in a small box, basket or leather bag, fixed to the carriage, an old Tesco bag is not really suitable. Its existence and contents are not laid down but tradition suggests it contains:

Spare trace [the right length for your turnout!]

Rein splice
Hole punch
Spare candle for lamp
Matches
Coin for phone
Tape
Knife


- Traditionally, harness straps are not done up to the last hole (neither nearest the point nor furthest from the point) The theory is to allow adjustment and to allow the strap still to be fastened if it breaks at the hole. Straps are polished on the side away from the horse and cleaned on the side touching the horse.

 **HINT:** A *heresy*, the maximum number of penalties you can get for poor standing presentation of your turnout is 2 (=10/5). Typically you'll get between 0.6 and 1.6. (Out of say 100-200 for the whole competition). So, clean the vehicle and get everything together for the pleasure and enjoyment of seeing it, but don't fret about it - it's not going to affect your score much!

8.4.1.1 Correct dress

You should try to wear something that is smart and appropriate for the type of carriage you are driving (easier said than done). However you should not dress in a way that overshadows the rest of the turnout, but rather complements it. So that hat from Ascot depicting the Sydney opera house is out, whereas the neat country hat with some understated trimming may be in.

If the driver is a man, then he should wear a dark suite, black or brown lace up shoes and a trilby or black or brown bowler. If the driver is a lady then dress in a matching shirt and jacket, which complements the turnout, with a plain walking shoe. The driver always wears an apron, which should complement your outfit, and carries a whip. The driver may also wear a buttonhole, the groom never does.

 **HINT:** There is one Golden rule of dress. The driver must wear **BROWN** leather gloves regardless of the rest of the outfit. *Why brown?, we don't know.*

If the groom is a man he should also wear a (preferably) dark suit with a bowler, and lace up shoes. Alternatively, he can wear full riding kit.

If the groom is a lady then she can wear a skirt and jacket or a skirt and trousers with a trilby – style hat, or white riding breeches, white shirt, stock and black jacket riding hat or black bowler

In either case the groom should wear gloves, which can be brown or black!

8.4.1.2 So what happens?

You should drive to the presentation, with the small competitor number on the back of the vehicle, your spares kit stored on the vehicle and groom and driver wearing their smart clothes, smart hats and gloves and smile! The groom should be seated. When you get to the presentation area the judge will usually ask the driver to stand the horse. The driver asks the groom to get down, and the groom gets down smartly (nearside of the vehicle) and goes to stand at the horse's head, only holding it if needed. The judge

may ask the groom to pick up a horse's foot for inspection (so these should be well picked out, perhaps greased underneath). The judge may ask the groom to display the spares kit, or may delve around for himself. The groom must laugh at the judge's jokes (if any) and otherwise keep quiet, resisting any urge to chat nervously.

When the judge's inspection is done, the groom gets back on his seat on the vehicle and the driver sets off.

8.4.2 Dressage (Competition A)

If there is a standing presentation, the dressage time should be 30 minutes after this. This gives you a chance to warm up the horse. There should be a designated warm up area. You should be there and let the dressage steward know you're there 10 minutes before your time.

8.4.2.1 The rules of Competition A

8.4.2.1.1 Object of the competition

“The object of the Dressage Test, Competition A, is to judge the freedom, regularity of paces, harmony, impulsion, suppleness, lightness, ease of movement and correct bending of the horses/ponies on the move. Competitors will also be judged on style, accuracy, and general control of their horses/ponies, and also on their dress, condition of their harness and vehicle and the presentation of their whole turnout (refer to Article 936.3.,5).

8.4.2.1.2 Competitors dress

The dress of Competitors and grooms must conform to the style of the vehicle and harness

Driving aprons, hats and gloves are obligatory for drivers. Grooms must wear hats and gloves where these are a recognised part of their uniform.

The driver must carry a whip of a suitable style and the lash must be long enough to reach all the horses/ponies. The lash may be tied to the stick.

8.4.2.1.3 Number of Passengers

Passengers are not permitted. The number and position of grooms is shown below:


Class	Number of Grooms	Position: Seated
Horse Teams	2	Behind the driver
Pony Teams	2	Behind the driver
Horse Pairs	1	Behind the driver
Pony Pairs	1	Behind the driver
Horse Tandems	1	Behind or beside the driver
Pony Tandems	1	Behind or beside the driver

Horse Singles	1	Behind or beside the driver
Pony Singles	1	Behind or beside the driver

8.4.2.1.4 Vehicle

You must use the same vehicle for dressage and cones. The track width of the vehicle must be the same for both the dressage (Competition A) and the cones (Competition C). The minimum track widths are:

Class	Track Width
Horse Teams	158 cm
Horse Pairs	148 cm
Horse Tandem	138 cm
Horse and Pony Singles	138 cm
Pony Pairs	138 cm
Pony Tandem	138 cm
Pony Teams	138 cm

 **HINT:** Note that at club events, the above minimum track widths do not apply to Novice classes, only to Club Open and Novice qualifier classes.

8.4.2.1.5 Penalties in dressage:

Early or late entry	possible elimination
Entering the arena without a whip or losing or putting down a whip	5 penalties
Competitor entering the arena without apron, hat or gloves	Up to max 5 penalties at judges discretion
A groom entering the arena without hat or gloves, when appropriate	Up to max 5 penalties at judges discretion
Entering the arena without lamps or rear lights or reflectors on the carriage	Up to max 5 penalties at judges discretion
Error of Course	
First occasion	5 penalties
Second occasion	10 penalties
Third occasion	elimination
If any part of the turnout leaves the arena during a movement, the Competitor should be marked down for inaccuracy.	
The whole turnout leaving the arena	elimination
Groom or grooms dismounting	
1st incident	5 penalties per groom
2nd incident	10 penalties per groom
3rd incident	Elimination
Competitor dismounting	30 penalties
Use of brushing boots or bandages	10 penalties

Lame horse/pony:	elimination
Vehicle overturning:	elimination

8.4.2.1.6 Other dressage advice

- No bandages or brushing boots are allowed (10- penalties) check you haven't fitted these for dressage or presentation!
- The groom must be seated between entering and leaving the arena.
- The groom must not handle the reins or whip or speak unless dismounted.
- On no account must the groom tell the driver where to go or remind him of the test – you will be eliminated.
- There doesn't seem to be any rule against nudging the driver, but don't. I suspect the judges would apply such a rule anyway – the driver has to drive the test from memory.
- If, for example, the driver's hat blows off, wait until you have finished the test and left the arena before going back to get it (otherwise you get penalty points). Only get down if asked to fix something by the driver.
- In National events, you need lamps fitted to the vehicle for presentation and dressage [but not for cones 960.5.2]. However lamps are not required for National Novice Qualifiers or for any GWHC event, although some members have them and so use them.


8.4.3 Marathon (Competition B)

A marathon consists of up to five sections, although more usually it is run as three sections. The sections are:

- A. Any pace, timed cross-country there is a maximum and a minimum time, which are 2 minutes apart. Penalties are incurred for arriving outside the maximum and minimum times
- B. A timed walk section on generally flat or slightly sloping ground (walk only no jogging allowed!) There is just a maximum time allowed, times outside the maximum incur penalties
- C. A timed fast trot section. (trot only). This is usually on reasonably flat ground, although it may be cross-country. There is a maximum and a minimum time, which are 1 minute apart. Penalties are incurred for arriving outside the maximum and minimum times
- D. A second timed walk section on generally flat or slightly sloping ground (walk only no jogging allowed!) There is just a maximum time allowed, times outside the maximum incur penalties
- E. Any pace, timed cross-country section incorporating a number of timed obstacles along the way. (Maximum 8, minimum 5 at National competitions, although the GWHC may run less than this) There is no set time for the obstacles. You incur penalties based on the number of seconds you are inside the obstacle between the start and finish gates. At National competitions Section E has a maximum overall time and a minimum time which is 3 min less than the maximum time.

In three section marathons, sections A, B and E are used.

So why have several different sections? The aim is to test the horse during the cross-country sections for speed and stamina, likewise the fast trot section. The walks are designed to give the horse some rest and to allow it to relax and cool down in a controlled manner, non-the less the walk is very active and the times are often tight.

 **HINT:** At National events it is not unheard for the driver, particularly of a team, to carry a pocket of small stones to throw at the leaders of the team to keep their attention and make them walk! This is not to be recommended!

In the marathon a good groom can make a big difference. The groom navigates, ensures that each section is completed on time and balances the vehicle through the obstacles.

All this requires preparation;

- Work out the timings beforehand
- Know how to use the stopwatch
- Know the routes on the sections and the obstacles
- Have an agreed set of what means what between the groom and driver and visa versa
- Have some idea of what you will do if things go wrong – a ‘B’ plan for:
 - error of course in an obstacle
 - horse refuses to go through water
 - something breaks
- Check vehicle and spares
- Mount maps and timings on the vehicle
- Put the large competition number in a marathon number bib (obtainable from the GWHC Club shop)
- Fix a large sponge to the carriage (the rests will probably have water to cool down your horse, but probably not a sponge)
- Make sure that you know where each competition (Dressage, Marathon, Cones) is being held, especially where the start of the Marathon (section A) is, as it quite often seems to be cunningly hidden
- Find out how many compulsory flags there are in each section (if the course builder can remember!)
- Attend the competitors briefing
- ASK!

8.4.4 Rules for the marathon

8.4.4.1 Is your vehicle suitable?

The rules for the vehicle’s weight and track width [outermost point of base of rear wheels] are specific for the marathon:

Class	Wheels	Minimum Track Width	Minimum Weight
Horse Teams	4 & brakes	125 cm	600 kg
Horse Pairs	4 & brakes	125 cm	350 kg

Horse Tandems	2 or 4	125 cm	150 kg
Horse Singles	4	125 cm	150 kg
Pony Teams	4 & brakes	125 cm	300 kg
Pony Pairs	4 & brakes	125 cm	225 kg
Pony Tandems	2 or 4	125 cm	90 kg
Pony Singles	4	125 cm	90 kg

AT GWHC EVENTS AND MANY CLUB EVENTS THE TRACK WIDTH AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS MAY BE RELAXED, HOWEVER WIDER TRACK WIDTHS SHOULD BE AVOIDED AS THE COURSE WILL HAVE BEEN DESIGNED WITH 125CM IN MIND.

8.4.4.2 Marathon Penalties

8.4.4.2.1 Whips

1.1. Competitors must carry a whip on the carriage at all times while on the course. The penalty for not having a whip on the carriage in Sections A, B, C and D and outside the obstacles in E is 5 penalties per section.

1.2. Not having a whip in hand on entering an obstacle entails 5 penalties.

1.3. Not having a whip in hand on leaving an obstacle entails 5 penalties.

1.4. Intentionally putting down a whip in an obstacle entails 5 penalties.

1.5. In the event of a Competitor dropping or breaking a whip at any time in an obstacle, a groom may hand him the spare whip without incurring any penalties.

8.4.4.2.2 Specific Penalties

Contravening the Rules	elimination
Contravening the advertising rules	Fine of CHF 1,000
Vehicles below weight and/or width at end of E	elimination
Horses/ponies unfit to continue at end of Section D	elimination
Displacing a dislodge-able element	2 penalties
Preventing an element being dislodged	10 penalties
Motorised vehicles or bicycles in obstacles	fine
Exceeding the Time Limit in any Section	elimination
For every second over Time Allowed in all phases	0.2 penalties
For every second under Minimum Time in A, C & E	0.1 penalties
For every second in obstacles	0.2 penalties
Failing to carry a whip on the carriage in any Section	5 penalties
Putting down a whip in an obstacle	5 penalties
Failing to pass through compulsory turning flags	elimination
Groom or competitor wearing shorts in the competition	5 penalties
Failure to wear a Hard Hat	5 penalties
Failing to pass through compulsory turning flags	elimination
Each deviation from course after last obstacle (Note – You cannot stop for any reason in the last 500metres of section E. Harness repairs MUST take place “immediately outside the last	10 penalties

obstacle”	
Incorrect pace, for every 5 seconds	1 penalty
Intentional break of pace in B, C or D	elimination
Dismounting while moving	20 penalties
For every commenced 10 seconds for remaining stopped for no reason	1 penalty
The competitor is the only person who may handle the reins and use the whip or brake unless the vehicle is stationary	20 penalties
Damaged vehicle at end of E	elimination
Failing to pass through entry flags of an obstacle	elimination
Failing to pass through exit flags of an obstacle	elimination
Passing a gate in wrong sequence or direction	elimination
For correcting error of course in an obstacle	20 penalties
Passing exit flags before completing obstacle	elimination
Groom dismounting in an obstacle, each occasion	10 penalties
Competitor dismounting in an obstacle (Both feet on ground – note one foot on ground is not deemed to be dismounting)	20 penalties
For a vehicle turning over in an obstacle	60 penalties
Disconnecting and leading through an obstacle	elimination
Exceeding Time Limit in an obstacle (5 min.)	elimination

8.4.4.3 Marathon Times

The organisers use the following figures to set up the times for a marathon.

Note that:

- The table is given as an indication of the likely speeds however they are **maximum** speeds and there are now also recommended speeds for each class as detailed at **section 2.12**
- You need to find the actual times that have been set for each event. These are usually provided with the paperwork, or published on a notice board. Once again if in doubt, ASK.

Section	Typical length	Pace	Max speed km/hr	
			Horse	Pony
A	7 km	Any	15	14
B	900 m	Walk	7	6
Rest	10 mins			
C	4 km	Trot	19	17
D	900 m	Walk	7	6
Rest 2	10 mins			
E	9 km	any*	14	13

THE TIME ALLOWED FOR EACH SECTION IS CALCULATED ACCORDING


to the average speed selected for that Section

The Minimum Time in Section A is two minutes less than the Time Allowed.

The Minimum Time in Section C is one minute less than the Time Allowed.

The Minimum Time for Section E is three minutes less than the Time Allowed.

There is no Minimum Time in Sections B and D.

 **HINT:** The last 500m of Section E must be walk or trot – the rest is any pace. So you can't canter the last 500m to make up lost time – if you need to, canter before then. If the final obstacle is closer than 500m then you must revert to a trot or walk on leaving the final obstacle. Also you cannot stop in the final 500m, nor deviate excessively from the marked track. You are free, however, to swap between walk and trot.

8.4.4.4 Kilometre Markers

Each section will normally have some distance markers in it. Sections A, C and E usually have a marker every Kilometre. Beware; whilst these are supposed to be accurately positioned, it is not unknown for them not to be. Sections B & D (the walk) have a distance marker 500m *from the end*.

8.4.4.5 How do you control the time for each section?

The organisers will publish the lengths of the sections (which may not be exact numbers of kilometres, e.g. 7.6 km) and the times for each section. They may publish the maximum and minimum time for Section A or they may just publish the “time allowed” and then it's up to you to realize that the minimum time is two minutes less than the time allowed and Section E is three minutes less than the time allowed.

Either way; Work out the maximum and minimum time for Section A and the maximum time for each of the other sections.

It is important that you keep track of the time for Section A (and E if appropriate) extremely carefully. We calculate the time to each kilometre marker based on the overall ‘middle’ time between the maximum and minimum times e.g.

If section A is 5 km long and has a minimum time of 19 min. and a maximum time of 21 min. then we take the section time as 20 min.

Hence the 1 Km should take 4 min, 2k 8min, 3k 12min, 4k 16min and we should arrive at 20 min. This gives us a 1-minute buffer either side. As we get to each marker, the groom indicates whether we are ahead of time (and need to slow down a bit) or behind time (and need to speed up) Obviously the groom also needs to take note of the steepness and roughness of the ground and uses a bit of common sense. This method ensures that the horse hopefully goes at a fairly even pace without becoming exhausted too soon.

However there are many other ways to do it, an alternative approach follows:

“We calculate the maximum and minimum time to arrive at each kilometre marker and try to stay near the fastest time for most of the course (in case there is a difficult part near the end of A), then we slow near the end of A, walking for a period if necessary, and try to come in exactly in the middle of the two minute time window allowed. We do this to allow for errors in our timing or the stewards' timing. It's perfectly legal for the horse to walk to the end of A if you want. However, don't stop unless you need to adjust something (1 penalty for every 10 seconds you remain stopped for no reason [952.7.2])”

If you go really slowly or have to stop, you may get up to what is called the Time Limit (much longer than the Time Allowed) and if you exceed this limit you'll be eliminated.

“2.6. The Time Limit for Section A, B, C and D is the Time Allowed plus 20%. The Time Limit for Section E is twice the Time Allowed. A Competitor who exceeds the Time Limit in any section is eliminated.”

You can use a ready reckoner to work out your target time at each km marker.

	Speed km/hr											
Km	12	12.5	13	13.5	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	17	18	19
1	5:00	4:48	4:37	4:27	4:17	4:08	4:00	3:52	3:45	3:32	3:20	3:09
2	10:00	9:36	9:14	8:53	8:34	8:17	8:00	7:45	7:30	7:04	6:40	6:19
3	15:00	14:24	13:51	13:20	12:51	12:25	12:00	11:37	11:15	10:35	10:00	9:28
4	20:00	19:12	18:28	17:47	17:09	16:33	16:00	15:29	15:00	14:07	13:20	12:38
5	25:00	24:00	23:05	22:13	21:26	20:41	20:00	19:21	18:45	17:39	16:40	15:47
5.5	27:30	26:24	25:23	24:27	23:34	22:46	22:00	21:17	20:37	19:25	18:20	17:22
6	30:00	28:48	27:42	26:40	25:43	24:50	24:00	23:14	22:30	21:11	20:00	18:57
6.5	32:30	31:12	30:00	28:53	27:51	26:54	26:00	25:10	24:22	22:56	21:40	20:32
7	35:00	33:36	32:18	31:07	30:00	28:58	28:00	27:06	26:15	24:42	23:20	22:06
7.5	37:30	36:00	34:37	33:20	32:09	31:02	30:00	29:02	28:07	26:28	25:00	23:41
8	40:00	38:24	36:55	35:33	34:17	33:06	32:00	30:58	30:00	28:14	26:40	25:16
8.5	42:30	40:48	39:14	37:47	36:26	35:10	34:00	32:54	31:52	30:00	28:20	26:51
9	45:00	43:12	41:32	40:00	38:34	37:14	36:00	34:50	33:45	31:46	30:00	28:25
9.5	47:30	45:36	43:51	42:13	40:43	39:19	38:00	36:46	35:37	33:32	31:40	30:00
10	50:00	48:00	46:09	44:27	42:51	41:23	40:00	38:43	37:30	35:18	33:20	31:35

8.4.4.5.1 Ready Reckoner – how to use

Given your marathon length and the time allowed, for each section, see which speed is the nearest fit and copy down the times per km to take with you on the marathon.

For example, if you have a 6.5km Section A and 28 minutes Time Allowed, calculate the mid time: (Time Allowed – 1 minute) and just write down the mid times for each km, try to stay close to those. In this example, Time Allowed is 28 minutes, so the mid time is 27 minutes. The best matching column to 27 min for 6.5 km is the 14.5 kph column, so you would copy out the kilometre times from this column for your mid times.


Using the alternative Maximum / minimum time approach, use the column for 14 km/hr for your maximum times. Your minimum time for Section A will be 2 minutes less, 26 minutes in this example, so use the 15 km/hr column to find your minimum times for each kilometre. Remember – these are just guides to use on the course – it’s only your time at the end of each section, which matters.

In section E, each obstacle has a path of around 200m (250m max) and these distances are included in the overall distance indicated. You might feel you go faster or slower through the obstacles than your standard pace and make allowance for that in working out your times per km in section E – we simply record the maximum times from the ready reckoner, the obstacles don’t seem to make much difference.


8.4.4.6 What happens at the start of each section?


You should report to the start of section 'A', at least 10 minutes before your scheduled Start time. It helps enormously if you have previously found out where the start of section A actually is.

At the start of Section A you will be given a 'green' card (although these days it may be white) with your start time marked on it and initialled by the steward. The steward will (sometimes) warn you two minutes before you're due, then one minute, then 30 seconds, and then count you down from 10 seconds. It's supposed to be a standing start, so at 0, the driver starts and the groom starts the stopwatch – without falling off.

 **HINT:** You can walk your horse around up until just before the start time if this helps – and if there is room.

At the end of each section and the beginning of each subsequent section, the driver stops and the groom hands the card to the steward who enters the start or finish time and initials it. Make sure you get this card at the start of A and take it all the way round to give in at the finish fully completed and initialled by each start and end steward. In some events you will be given two copies of the card – one to keep for your records (protests). In this case, both cards must have the time filled in (identically) and initialled by a steward at each start and finish.


 **HINT:** Wear an accurate watch. (digital is ideal) Check it against 'event time' and make sure your time is properly recorded by the steward before you leave them – any problem with the time, bring it up straight away, you can't get it corrected later.

 **HINT:** If your stopwatch fails and if you're quick at sums, you can check your progress by comparing your scheduled finish time with the time on your watch. Or better still, carry two stop watches.

8.4.4.7 Gates and route

Each obstacle has a Start and an Exit gate and a series of lettered gates A, B, C, D sometimes up to E or F. Each gate has a red flag on the right (Red Right) and a white flag on the left. You go through the Start gate, through the lettered gates in order and out through the Exit gate. Often the start and exit gate will be the same opening, sometimes they'll be separate.

 **HINT:** Be very sure which is the Start and Finish gate, check if they're separate or combined.

 **HINT:** Check and make a note of which way you need to turn once you leave the Finish gate – it's too easy to forget in the excitement and speed.

You need to go through all the lettered gates in the correct order and in the correct direction (red on the right). Once you've been through a gate, you can go through it again, backwards or forwards, if you think this will give you an easier route to your next gate.

8.4.4.7.1 Corrected and Uncorrected Errors of course

If you go through a gate in the wrong order or in the wrong direction, e.g. A, B, D, just ignore it and make sure you keep going in the correct order – in this case, A, B, D (error – continue), C, D, E. You lose 20 points for each error like this – so try not to!

Example

Suppose an obstacle has gates A-F

The correct course is: ABCDEF

Some possible corrected errors of course: - 20 Penalties (the errors are underlined)

ABDCDEF – went through D before C – corrected – 20 points

ABDEDCDEF = went through D before C, got lost, went through E, D, got back on course - 20 points

Some uncorrected errors (Penalty - elimination!)

BCDEF - omitted A

ABDEF – omitted C

ABDCEF – uncorrected “error of course”

ABC(backwards)DEF – C backwards, uncorrected

If you fail to correct your course before you leave the obstacle you’ll be eliminated, so go back and complete the gates if you can.

You may find an obstacle with unlettered gates, often known as a ‘Pick your own line’ obstacle. You can drive these gates in any sequence, it’s up to you to decide the quickest route for you which will take you through all the gates in the correct direction (Red on the Right) at least once.

Your time in the obstacle is determined by your time from the nose of your (first) horse crossing the start until the nose of the (first) horse crosses the finish. You get 0.2 penalties for each second in the obstacle, i.e. your score is your time divided by 5, plus any penalties.

If you take more than 5 minutes in an obstacle you’ll be eliminated – the judge should blow two blasts on a whistle and you should leave the obstacle at once.

Sometimes a gate is quite wide and you may loop through it and back – remember that you are considered to have passed through a gate in an obstacle when your rear axle passes between the flags, so make sure your rear axle goes right through. The groom can help here by calling once you are through.

Usually a gate consists of a simple opening with a red flag on the right and a white flag on the left. Sometimes, however, you may find a line of three posts or trees with the flags on the outside two. In this case you can go either side of the central post/tree. In

some other cases there may be two gates in line with the same letter. You can go through either gate to have 'passed through'.

You can go any pace in obstacles – walk, trot, canter, gallop. Mostly a brisk trot is best, with perhaps a canter in and out, and a canter in any wide circles.

You may also find knockdowns (“dislodge-able elements”) in an obstacle. You get two penalties for each one of these you knock over. Since two penalties is equivalent to ten seconds, it's worth steering carefully, perhaps more slowly, around knock downs and it can be worth choosing a route to avoid risking the knock downs if this is practical. Don't try to prevent the knockdowns from being dislodged – except, presumably, by steering clear of them – that costs 2 penalties. Knockdowns should be marked on sketch plans of obstacles, often as “KD”. They may be a small cylinder or ball balanced on part of an obstacle, or a small block fixed with Velcro to a pillar.

Don't knock over the Start or Finish gates – you're likely to be eliminated.

8.4.4.8 Problems?

If you get stuck in an obstacle, for example if your horse won't go through some water, your groom can get down and lead the horse through. This costs you 10 points – *each time* the groom dismounts and puts both feet on the ground in an obstacle, so once the groom is down, he should stay down until you're sure your horse will get through - and back if necessary. The groom does NOT have to follow the path of the vehicle.

If you get slightly stuck, lodged sideways against a tree say, the groom may be able to jump the vehicle away from it, or put one foot down [no penalties!] and push the [stationary] vehicle clear. Try it in practice.

If you are on course to hit a post, the groom may be able to jump the back of the vehicle clear – again, try it in practice first.

8.4.4.9 How to walk the obstacles

The purpose of walking the obstacles is to choose the route you'll take and to memorise it. Further, you should ideally work out what to do if things go wrong (for example you miss a gate and need to circle back). As you get more experienced, at least work out the route to take if you miss a difficult or tight turn.


Ideally, the driver and groom should work closely together to choose the route; two heads are better than one. You can also watch the routes others are working, but remember, their horses may have different strengths and weaknesses from yours, especially the aptitude to turn more or less sharply.

Learn what radius of turn your horse is comfortable with. Be aware of distractions to the horse – spooky items on obstacles, or tempting straight lines he might take where he is supposed to turn.

George Bowman showed us how he walks obstacles and we now use his method. What we do is:

The driver (in our case) stands at the start gate of the obstacle and the groom then finds the first gate 'A'. We then look at all the ways possible to get from the start to 'A' and one is selected. The driver then moves to gate 'A' and the Groom finds 'B', and so on. Obviously the route may have to be modified to minimize impossible turns, but this method has the added advantage that it helps the groom to look for alternative routes should something go wrong


At national events we generally walk each obstacle a minimum of six times, trying to speed up each time and not to pause as we recite the route to each other. Once we are word perfect, we hope we have learnt it! We always walk the obstacles first thing on the morning of the marathon even if we are the first to start! – 5am can be very beautiful!

 **HINT:** Make sure that you find out at what time, on the morning of the marathon, the obstacles will be closed for walking.

Having decided the route together, the way we work is that:

- The groom is responsible for the route and balance of the vehicle and the carriage rear wheels.
- The driver is responsible for driving the horse and the front wheels of the carriage, on the basis that if the driver can get the front wheels through, the groom should be able to 'ease' the rear wheels through.

This works and makes sense – the driver has plenty to think about handling the horse(s) and getting the line right. In practice the driver has to know in principle where he is going but also means the groom gives clear instructions on the route – in advance of each gate. The driver has to concentrate on following the best line. The groom and driver need to make sure they have an agreed unambiguous vocabulary, and need to practice to get the communication and timing right. Remember the driver needs to anticipate the turns and line up and bend the horse.

 **HINT:** Beware, the driver will invariably seem to know exactly where to go, appearing to make the groom's instructions superfluous. However the moment the groom stops the stream of directions, the driver will become inexplicably lost, despite knowing exactly where he was going less than a second previously.

Initially, you will tend to describe routes by the gates you have to go through, "turn left after A, then right into B". Once you get faster and more experienced you will find that this is not the best way. It is far better to describe the route as a series of linked shapes that take you to and through each gate. This means that you do not look for the gates themselves but for landmarks that form part of a turn and come naturally. This stops you pausing, as you go through a gate, to find the next one and helps you to keep up your speed and momentum as you 'flow' through the obstacle. Get it right and there is nothing quite like it!

You can practice around a layout of road cones, with the groom choosing the route as you go. When you can do this at speed, your communication works. Barry Capstick's advice to a driver – "You stop yakking and go where he says".

The groom must not give instructions to the horse while the driver is driving– you need only one driver!

However, the groom should be familiar with the horse and be able to lead, halt and walk it and handle it in an accident.

8.4.4.10 Vocabulary

We choose landmarks and words we both recognize and avoid the commands the driver uses to the horse:

“Left circle the red barrel”

“360” to circle all the way round

“big right circle”

“little circle to left”

“second left”

“slow” – for a technical part

“left light bulb” – if you come out of a gate, make a left circle and come back through it

“tight right”

“going to do a U” – to indicate 180° turn

Remember you need to be prompting the driver in advance of the turns – he needs time to get the horse ready, and the horse is always a few metres in front (hopefully!).

8.4.4.11 What else should you look for in the obstacles?

Look out for hazards; tree stumps, concrete blocks, sharp edges, overhanging branches, adverse camber on bends (where the slope encourages the vehicle to tip over).

As well as the gates themselves, look at how you will approach the Start and exit the Finish. You can take a loop round if you need to approach the Start at a particular angle - the time outside the Start/Finish is less critical (sometimes course builders put Starts at peculiar angles to the direction from which you'll arrive). Look to see where you'll end up if you canter out through the Finish – you need space to slow down, preferably not on a concrete apron. Sometimes this can mean going the wrong way for a few yards then looping back onto the track – plan it.

8.4.4.12 Accidents

Plan what to do if you have one! Safety first – if at all unsure, stop, the groom should get straight down and go to the horse's head, check. Train your horse to expect the unexpected – especially practice stopping 'for no reason', including in the middle of obstacles, so if something breaks you *can* stop. Practice backing up. We hear of one competitor whose horses are so well trained that, if they fall over, they won't get up until told to (rather than struggle up, tangled up, get frightened, kick out ...). In any case, if the horse falls over, the groom must get to its head quickly and hold it down until it's safe to get up.

Remember that although it might be a competition safety is far more important than winning

8.4.4.13 Do you take the short tight way or the longer smoother path round an obstacle?

It depends on your horse's agility, preference and training. If your horse can do tight or long turns, the trade-off is between maintaining a good speed round the long way or doing a shorter distance by taking the tight route. A rule of thumb used by Barry Capstick is to pace out the two routes the way the horse will go and take the long smooth route provided it's no more than 10 paces (m) longer than the short route. However as we drive ponies, small ponies at that, we tend to use about 5m as our rule of thumb

You will also want to look at how each route fits in with the way from the previous gate and to the next gate – each change of rein can slow you and risk errors.


8.4.5 Cones (Competition C)

8.4.5.1 Rules for cones

You're allowed to replace defective parts between dressage and cones. You also don't have to use the same harness, though you'd probably only have times to change this at a three-day event.

You must use the same vehicle for cones and dressage. The track width of the vehicle must now be the same for both the dressage (Competition A) and the cones (Competition C). The minimum track widths are:

Class	Track Width
Horse Teams	158 cm
Horse Pairs	148 cm
Horse Tandem	138 cm
Horse and Pony Singles	138 cm
Pony Pairs	138 cm
Pony Tandem	138 cm
Pony Teams	138 cm

 **HINT:** Note that the above minimum track widths at club events apply to OPEN classes only. Novice classes (but not Novice Qualifier classes) are run to accommodate the range of novice vehicle widths.

The organisers can choose how much wider the cones are spaced. As an example, BHDTA guidance is that in Novice Qualifiers the cones will be set at least 25 cm wider than the track width.

8.4.5.1.1 Should the groom walk the cones course with the driver?

Strictly speaking, only “drivers, chefs d’equipe and trainers neatly dressed are allowed to inspect the cones course on foot” – not grooms – so you can only inspect if you are the driver or your role is also trainer.

At national events grooms do not walk the course and this is often extended to club events, however at most club events a lenient view is taken, particularly with regard to novice drivers and grooms

8.4.5.2 Scoring for cones:

There are 3 (three) penalties for each ball knocked off and 0.5 penalties for every second over the prescribed time. There is no penalty for being too fast (unlike indoor competitions).

There are plenty of other ways to get penalties. Here's the full list:

Article 965 SUMMARY OF PENALTIES

Starting before the bell is rung	10 penalties and a re-start
Failing to start within 60 seconds after the bell is rung	Possible 5 penalties
Failing to pass through the Starting or Finishing Lines	Elimination
Incomplete Presentation: Entering the arena without lamps or rear lights or reflectors on the carriage (internationals only)	Maximum 5 penalties in total
A competitor or Groom entering the arena without hat, gloves, whip or apron	Maximum 5 penalties in total each
For passing an obstacle without a whip in hand	5 penalties
For dislodging one or two balls in the same single obstacle (a knock-down)	3 penalties
For knocking down an element (and/or a ball) of a multiple obstacle	3 penalties
For knocking down any part of an obstacle after it has already been driven	3 penalties
If any part of an obstacle in advance of the one being driven is knocked down, the bell will be rung for the obstacle to be re-built	3 penalties & add 10 seconds
Uncorrected error of course	Elimination
For causing an obstacle, or part of a multiple, to be re-built	3 penalties & add 10 seconds
First Disobedience (of the horse!)	5 penalties
Second Disobedience	10 penalties
Third Disobedience	Elimination
Competitors dismounting	30 penalties
Groom or grooms dismounting 1st incident	5 penalties per groom
2nd incident	10 penalties per groom
3rd incident	Elimination
A groom interfering on the course	
A groom interfering on the course: Should a groom use the reins, the brake or the whip before the Competitor has crossed the finish line	Elimination
Should a groom stand behind the Competitor or	Elimination

indicate the course to the Competitor	
Should a groom talk to the competitor when the vehicle is in motion <i>Except when advising the groom when the whistle or bell has been sounded</i>	Elimination
Illegal Outside Assistance	Elimination
Should a carriage turn over	Elimination
For every commenced second over the Time Allowed	0.5 penalty
Exceeding the Time Limit	Elimination

9 Safety – the most important thing at an event

- Check your equipment – vehicle and harness – condition and fitting
- A horse harnessed to a vehicle must always have a driver at the reins or a reliable person at his head.
- Always remove the horse from the turnout before removing his bridle.
- The groom must stay on the vehicle all the time the driver is on it - until asked to get off
- The groom must not be on a vehicle without a driver (unless taking the reins as a competent driver).
- In an overturning accident, the groom must get to the horse's head immediately
- The groom must know how to release the horse from the vehicle quickly.
- Think about what to do in different situations; a turnover, the driver falling out, horse's leg over a trace, broken trace, broken rein, runaway. Then try to avoid ever getting into these situations.
- Wear appropriate safety gear. hard hats are mandatory for driver and groom in the Marathon (Competition B)
- Be aware of others.
- Remember that most accidents at events take place in and around the lorry park, not in the competition.

9.1.1 Adjusting a vehicle's balance

This applies only to two wheeled vehicles – four-wheel vehicles are balanced by their wheels.

Two wheeled vehicles need to be balanced so that with the groom and driver in their normal position the shafts just push down gently onto the tugs. Vehicles may have a screwed adjustment to move the seat back and forward or the seat may need to be bolted in the correct position. It's important for safety and welfare of the horse that this adjustment is right. Be sure to check it – it will need adjustment if the groom changes from sitting alongside the driver to going on the back step, or if grooms of different weight swap.

9.1.2 Checking the harness

Harness should fit the horse. If you are in any doubt about the fit of a harness contact your saddle maker or a competent person.

If the groom harnesses up, it's essential he know how to check the fit. The groom and driver should both check over key features (like an aircraft's pre-flight checks?); everything fastened, especially a final check on girth (has someone tightened it - firm, not loose or too tight) and reins (properly buckled to the correct part on the bit, through the terrets etc). The worst situation is when the driver thinks the groom has tightened/fitted something and vice versa, so no one has. Both check every time.

When the groom has put to, he should:

- Push the vehicle gently forward against the horse to check the breeching, that the traces don't hang too low
- Check the fit for braking and the clearance between horses legs and swingletree.
- Check that when the vehicle is pushed backward, the traces should be straight (not pulled aside or up and down by any other straps) and should clear the bottom of any trace carriers by a couple of inches (so the horse is not pulled downwards over unlevelled ground). You should be able to get a fist (4") loosely between the breeching and the horses backside.

9.1.3 Spare whip

Consider carrying a spare whip on the vehicle for cones and marathon – if the driver drops the whip you can hand her the spare whip without penalty if you can do this before the next cone [964.6.2], or in the marathon promptly and certainly before going through an exit or start gate of an obstacle [952.1].



HINT: We don't carry a spare whip, so just like for the rest of this article, do as we say, not as we do!

10 And Finally

Take care and above all, enjoy the sport – that's what it's for.