

Frequently Asked Questions

December 10, 2009 Webinar
Navigator 101

1. Please review the five (5) responsibilities of the navigator mentioned in the webinar, Navigating 101.

ANSWER:

Gathering course information, learn the course, have carriage knowledge, know the rules and know how to communicate with your driver.

2. In number 5 it says that the competitor must remain stationary in the event of a hold. We have had multiple holds at a single obstacle where all competitors were allowed to circle and stay out of the way of those coming in and going out of the obstacle. Why does the rule say: "stay stationary?"

ANSWER:

The person, being a volunteer or official, needs to stop you to tell you that you are being held. The hold should be timed from the moment you stop hopefully 50 meters from the start from the obstacle.

3. In the event of a hold and the horse needing to be stationary, will there be a penalty if the navigator dismounts to hold the horse stationary?

ANSWER:

No. You have stopped

4. While in a hold can you continue to walk or circle?

ANSWER:

In some unfortunate instances, there might be a long hold, involving more competitors than you. At the discretion of those in charge, you may be allowed to walk around when the hold is longer than a couple of minutes.

5. If held up, does your horse have to stand still; or, can you circle at a walk while waiting for a restart allowed?

ANSWER:

If the person in charge of your hold allows you to walk. You do need to stay close enough to the point of your hold to be restarted as soon as possible. There is nothing worse than having to run after a competitor to get them restarted.

6. If the navigator comes off or gets off, does the carriage have to stationary before mounting again?

ANSWER:

Assuming you are on course, and your navigator fell off, for some reason, I would advise you to stop to get your navigator back on, If your navigator got off intentionally while you were still moving, you already have potential penalties if an official saw it.

Do you have to be stationary in a hazard for the navigator to get back on (if off) without additional penalty?

ANSWER:

No

7. Can your navigator head the horse when you have to stop for a time delay?

ANSWER:

Yes

8. Can a navigator head the horse at a hold?

ANSWER:

Yes

9. Do you have to be stationary in the vet check before stepping off the carriage?

ANSWER:

Once your rear axel has crossed the finish line of Section D (walk section), you are no longer on course until you start Section E.

10. You cannot "hop on one foot"; please clarify further with an example.

ANSWER:

The idea of hopping on one foot was talked about in that you are penalized in an obstacle when the second foot touches down or two feet are used to push off an element of the obstacle

11. Must the vehicle be stopped in and out of the hazard for the nav. to get off?

ANSWER:

In the obstacle, no. Outside the obstacle, yes.

12. Please show us the position for a navigator if the training level is on a slope.

ANSWER:

Training level course have no significant slope, and cantering is not allowed in the obstacles, so generally keep your weight on the uphill side of the carriage.

13. Do you have to finish the marathon with your navigator; for example if the navigator is incapacitated, are you eliminated?

ANSWER:

You must finish with the same navigator you crossed the start line with. No substitutions are allowed and you will be eliminated.

14. Do you have any tips for remembering the course? We seem to forget each obstacle after entering it in the excitement of the competition. I have seen navigators call out right, left, right, etc.

ANSWER:

Calling out left and right can work for some, but distracting to most. I use a running dialogue of where we are heading with important but simple description of the obstacle. To help with the forgetful problem, try running into the obstacle to have a better feel for the speed you will be driving at, so the real pace doesn't distract or surprise you.

15. What was meant by Section A, Section D and Section E?

ANSWER:

Competition B, in a Combined Driving Event (CDE) is made up of three sections. In the past, all CDE's had five sections in Competition B, or as we often call it, the marathon. In more recent years, we mostly run CDE's with three sections on the marathon. When this happened, rather than Sections A,B,C,D & E, the three sections retained were A,D & E.

16. If we want to make an obstacle at home, where do we locate the official required measurements?

ANSWER:

The required measurements are in the rule book within Article 942 on page 211 and 212. It takes many years for experience to understand what is drivable, so asking for some additional ideas from an experienced Technical Delegate or Course Designer before you spend time and money would be advised. There is hope to have a future webinar on Obstacle Building in the future.

17. I know you can go to CDE's and volunteer to be a navigator for random drivers at lower levels. Is this a good way to get experience or a good way to put yourself at risk?

ANSWER:

It is a good idea to know who's carriage you're getting on. If you have the time to get to know the driver, horse and equipment, it may be a good way to gain experience. I would look to control the risk by knowing what you're getting into.

18. What is the best way to find the fastest route through an obstacle?

ANSWER:

Find as many possibilities through the obstacle and look for the shortest "smooth" way through. Smooth is fast. Also look for a route that requires fewer rein changes.

19. How do you handle being held up by a slow competitor?

ANSWER:

This is often difficult and sometimes a Ground Jury is able to help you on Section E by holding the slower competitor for you to pass. On Sections A & D, you could negotiate a pass, but be polite and pick a safe place to do so. Remember to tell the Finish Timer on that section that you passed, so your competitor number gets on the official back up sheet in the correct order. You will also have to dispel confusion as you go to the start of the next section. Remember, once you are finishing in a different order, you are open to a possible scoring problem.

20. Isn't it illegal to mark the course in any way; for example, marking the meter marks in walk?

ANSWER:

Most often, you can find landmarks to remember the exact distances around a walk section. Blatant marking of the course would be frowned upon. Besides...you wouldn't want to be too helpful to the others you might want to beat!

21. How far in advance of the competition is one allowed to walk the course?

ANSWER:

Casual walking of the course can be allowed by the competition management at any time. However, sometimes the tracks are on land with limited access and require instructions from the officials. It is best to ask at the show office when different parts of the course are available and when they will be "official."

22. Are we allowed to walk horse in hazards?

ANSWER:

No

23. How do you mark the course with your own marking?

ANSWER:

Discretely. I only would choose landmarks like trees, rocks or sometimes telephone poles. Most experienced course designers give you a 500 meter sign on the walk.

What is the penalty for passing a turning marker on the wrong side?

ANSWER:

Elimination. I'm guessing if you were on the wrong side, you either didn't go through it or maybe you went through it backwards. Mistakes with Compulsory Turn Flags are not correctable like Gates in an Obstacle.

24. Please review how to calculate for "optimal" time.

ANSWER:

My "Optimum Time" calculation is slightly faster than the allowed time. Perhaps 1KPH faster, depending on the course terrain. If your course speed is 14 KPH, the allowed time would be 4:17 per kilometer. If you shoot for a 4:00 to 4:05 average kilometer, being about 15KPH, you would have a good chance of finishing a Section E in the middle of the three minute time window between the Minimum time and the Allowed time.

Is there any harm in preparing for a turn early? For example; if you are on a straightaway at 100 yards before the turn on flat ground, is there any harm in leaning to one side well in advance?

ANSWER:

No real harm if if you're not going too fast.

25. When talking about marathon speeds, you commented that Training and Preliminary couldn't walk. That applies for Section A only, right? It does not the last 500 m of Sec E?

ANSWER:

Only the last 500 meters of Section E may be walked. No where else.

26. Does the navigator have to be on the carriage for multiples?

ANSWER:

Yes

27. Can you discuss navigator's use of weight to balance the carriage?

ANSWER:

Assuming we are talking about weighting a four wheel carriage, the navigator's weight has to be forward for climbing hills. Going downhill, your weight needs to be low and as far behind the rear axel as possible. This adds stability and also puts more weight on the braking system. Leaning from side to side, you need to put weight on the uphill side or the inside of a turn, according to the speed and incline. If you are on fairly level ground, not a terrific speed, leaning from a standing position with both feet on the leaning side of the floor should get the job done. At a faster speed of incline, sitting and possibly leaning out over the side of the carriage might be required to keep the wheels on the ground.

28. Can you talk through how you would handle the two obstacles on the screen, please?

ANSWER:

These were discussed during the webinar...find the shortest possible smooth route with the least possible rein changes.

29. You mentioned leading a horse with a lead rope. Is this just for convenience? Does it still get a penalty?

ANSWER:

It would not incur a penalty other than the 10 points for being on the ground. Penalties are incurred for handling the reins.

30. Where do we get the quick reference guide?

ANSWER:

The Quick Reference Guide is found on pages 259 through 262 in the 2010 Rule Book.

31. Please review marker colors.

ANSWER:

Training has Black numbers on White or White on Black in the shape of a diamond. Preliminary has a green square, Intermediate a red circle, Advanced a blue triangle and VSE's have a purple hexagon.

32. If you are handicapped and cannot walk, can you be driven in a golf cart around the hazard course and cone course so you can learn them?

ANSWER:

Yes, you may be driven by someone else with permission from the management with your golf cart clearly marked accordingly as handicapped.

33. Can you explain the use of the fifth wheel brake?

ANSWER:

The fifth wheel brake is used to slow down fishtailing on slippery or loose footing. Different carriages have different systems for adjusting the pressure applied to dampen the fifth wheel. Most of the time, only a little pressure is needed to aid in the control of this condition. We wouldn't want to make it difficult for the animals to turn the carriage, so less pressure is generally a good thing. A driver might speculate that a certain turn might require more and it is the responsibility of the driver to instruct on how much pressure to add and for how long to help in the control of the carriage.

34. We say; "upside, inside". What if the upside is the outside?

ANSWER:

In some cases, the upside is the outside. Depending on the slope, the centrifugal force will allow the navigator to stay more to the middle of the carriage, but as this is a problem in an Intermediate or Advanced obstacle, the navigator should have enough experience to feel his or her way around the turn. At high speeds, you can get a nasty surprise with some lift from the downhill side, so keeping weight on the uphill side can cause you to flip up hill!

35. What are rules or suggestions regarding how long you stay in "Training" or "Preliminary"; particularly if you have won in many preliminary CDE's?

ANSWER:

None, unless stipulated by a "Limit" class.

36. Is it the horses' nose or the back of the carriage that sets the end time on the exit of a hazard?

ANSWER:

We use the nose for timing and the axel for most other rules.

37. Are you disqualified if your helmet comes off in a hazard?

ANSWER:

No, but I expect that will come in the future. Some people are using badly fitted helmets that make this sort of thing possible.

38. Can you lead by the cheek piece?

ANSWER:

Not a good idea. It's easy to have an animal pull back and take the bridle off.

39. How do you time your holds?

ANSWER:

Carry an extra stop watch. Just in case there are more competitors than you being held, sometimes the officials and volunteers don't have enough watches to keep track of everyone.

40. Are the times calculated only during a hazard or are they calculated between the hazards?

ANSWER:

Times are calculated for the entire length of the course including the Obstacles.

41. Can you recommend a good stopwatch for the marathon? Any particular brand?

ANSWER:

One that has good size numbers is a good idea. If you want to mount it on the frame of the carriage, there are watches available that have specific mounting brackets or you may buy a universal mount and velcrow any watch to it.

42. What is a good way to protect watches?

ANSWER:

First, mount the watch where it is visible but not in the way. Smaller carriages are harder to mount them on. In any case, I have had good luck by using a section of a plastic beer cup taped around a watch leaving a ¼ inch rim above the face. That keeps arms and stray fingers from hitting the stop button.

43. Are GPS enabled watches allowed, if not in GPS mode?

ANSWER:

Allowed.

44. Should you stop your other watch when you start your hold watch or keep it running?

ANSWER:

Keep your main watch running. I should match the uncorrected time of the official ground timing equipment. The hold time will be verified and subtracted by the debriefing judge at the finish of Section E.

48. How do you calculate your times to the markers to see if you're going the correct speed?

ANSWER:

Guessing that we are talking about Section D, or the walk section...If you have a clear distance mark, say at 205 meters and your walk speed is 6KPH, each 100 meters takes 1 minute or 1.66 meters per second. Divide the 205 meters by 1.66 and you get 123.49 seconds or 2:03:49 on your stop watch.

49. Why not keep your halter on your horse while on course?

ANSWER:

You may purchase a thin halter to fit under your bridle. Many people do

50. Can you sign your card, but say there is a question as to the accuracy of time?

ANSWER:

Yes. Do your best to politely help the officials resolve the discrepancy.

51. Why are the front wheels bigger?

ANSWER:

Large front wheels roll over bumps better and the smaller wheels behind can allow the grooms floor and the overall center of gravity to be lower.

52. What's a compulsory turn flag?

ANSWER:

Compulsory Turn Flags mark the track of the sections. They are red on the right and white on the left with sequential numbers. At a multilevel competition, these red and white markers will possibly be posted with division specific signs with each division's numbering. These flags allow the course designer to keep the competitor on the planned route in the correct order. It also allows the designer to deviate different divisions to add or subtract obstacles or distance accordingly.

53. Can you explain the safety rope thing? Are you holding the driver around the hips with that rope?
The "rope thing" is actually my preference of what I hold onto. It is attached to a leather safty belt that has one end attached to the frame of the carriage seat.
54. How do you wrap the tails? Is that vet wrap too?
ANSWER:
Braid the tail first; fold it up so the hair is only the length of the tail bone and then wrap it up with vet wrap. You may also carefully use vinyl tape to help secure it without cutting off circulation. This should be done by someone with lots of experience. Tail wrapping can be very dangerous if done incorrectly. Ask for help!
55. Why put electrical tape on the quick release after vet check?
ANSWER:
The quick releases can inadvertently open when struck by a foot or rubbing an element of an obstacle. The simple wrap of electrical tape makes them that much more dependable. I installed the first snap shackles on a carriage 1980, and found them to open occasionally. Taping solved the problem.
56. Do you say anything as you go through gates to verify that you passed through each gate?
ANSWER:
Some drivers find this helpful. Sometimes calling out the letters helps the Obstacle Observers keep track of where you are.
57. If the horse goes down in an obstacle (you said " don't touch the reins"), is this when you use the lead rope attached by a hook?
ANSWER:
Accidents are not really part of the rules. Chances are, someone should be more worried about keeping the animal's head down to immobilize him or her until it has been determined that the poor things legs aren't caught in the harness or vehicle. Your rope and halter will come in handy once you have disconnected the animal and only put too again after it has been determined he or she is sound and well to go on. You might be leading your horse back to the stable.
58. I see the use of the electrical tape ... have you had problems with quick releases popping open?
ANSWER:
Yes, occasionally...
59. You mentioned the Tidaholm, what did you have to be concerned about with that lightweight of a vehicle?
ANSWER:
Lighter vehicles with powerful horses can be tossed around like a toy. The concern Sterling Graburn had was that he had a navigator strong enough to counter the power of Quincy. I only just managed to hang on, helping him to be fourth out of 75 on the marathon at the 2006 World Singles Championship in Italy.
60. What is your impression of the various breast collars that are available?
ANSWER:
Not that this has much to do with navigation...different collars are better with different animals. Some of the more shaped collars don't come in enough sizes to make them viable for all animals, particularly ponies.

61. What do you use to help with your grip on the vehicle, e.g. "gator grip", which I don't think you can get any more?
ANSWER:
 Fresh vet wrap is most widely used.
62. What do you use as a safety vest?
ANSWER:
 Apparently all advanced drivers and navigators are required to wear them now. I have only worn one occasionally. Drivers need to be careful that they are not too long to sit in a seat with. They are a great idea and I expect that we will all be required to wear them soon, as the FEI has added that this year.
63. Is a 4-wheeled marathon carriage more stable than a two-wheeled vehicle?
ANSWER:
 Yes...the navigator has the ability to influence a four wheel carriage a lot more.
64. Please explain the lead rein to lead a horse. Will that cause a penalty of 20 points?
ANSWER:
 It is explained in detail in the rule book. Leading by the bridle end of the reins will cause a penalty.
65. Please define "contravening the rules"?
ANSWER:
 Contravening means to go against or violate. This is there for general
65. What about the navigator having the end of the reins at advanced?
ANSWER:
 Assuming this refers to the end behind the driver's hand. If it's controlling the rein to keep it off the floor or out of the wheels, that's not a problem. It is a good idea to tie that end to the seat frame with some yarn to keep the reins up.
66. Single VSE does need not have a groom on carriage. Is small or medium pony required on marathon? Is there an age limit for this person? Weight limit?
ANSWER:
 In the rulebook, it tells us what is required for all entries. Small and medium ponies need navigators. Navigators must be 14 years of age at a CDE and 12 at an HDT.
67. Can a navigator get out of carriage during a hold to hold the horse?
ANSWER:
 Yes
68. Is the card filled out when you pick up your card upon arrival for minimum and maximum times?
ANSWER:
 The green card should have minimum and "allowed" times when you arrive at the start of Section A.
69. Is a trail cart better with which to start a young horse?
ANSWER:
 This is a training issue, not navigation.