



DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CONES VOLUNTEERS

By Dr. Erika Matulich, PhD, PCM, email: ematulich@ut.edu and John H. Porter

Volunteers are an extremely important component for any carriage driving show, and an internationally-rated competition such as Live Oak will require the services of over 100 volunteers! Many people have expressed doubts about their ability to volunteer, but anyone can do it! This document describes the duties of the Cones Volunteers. Most of these duties will be about Cones Setters, sometimes called Cones Pushers.

Cones Volunteer Positions: Cones (or “Obstacles”) require quite a few volunteers, especially at the training and preliminary levels of a CDE and at Pleasure shows. Before the competition occurs, carriage measurements must take place. During the competition, timers and/or backup timers will be needed, as well as many people to reset cones and balls that are dislodged. A good volunteer will be familiar with the rules of this competition, so as to better understand what is going on and allow the event to run smoothly.

Before the Cones Competition: The first thing that has to happen is that every carriage competing must have its wheels measured. At Training and Preliminary levels, or at any level at a Pleasure Show, there are no standards for wheel widths, so a variety of carriages are used. Because cones are set a certain number of centimeters wider than the wheel width of the carriage, measurements must be taken. Wheel measurements are often taken at a safety check or at Presentation prior to dressage. In any case, wheel measurements must be accomplished before the show, and certainly long before competing in cones! All wheel measurements must be recorded and given to the Judge and Technical Delegate (TD). Even at the advanced level, where all wheel widths are required to be a certain width (depending on singles, pairs, or multiples), a wheel check takes place to make sure all competitors meet the standard.

Before the competition, the course designer may need assistance in setting up the course. Once the course has been approved by the designer, TD, and judges, the position of each obstacle is “marked” so if it is dislodged during competition, it can be reset properly. Marking generally involves spray painting or sprinkling flour or chalk around the base of the red-side (right hand) cone. When the width of the cone pair is changed, only the white-side (left hand) cone is moved – the red side is stationary. In some cases, a set of perpendicular “tracks” will be marked across the base of the white-side cone so the angle of the cones pair stays the same, even if the width is changed. Do not ever use your own judgment to move a marker or cone to a “better” position. If you have a question about a position, inquire with the course designer or TD and allow them to determine if a change is needed.

During the Cones Competition: Most cones competitions use an electronic timer at the start/finish gate to score the time. However, these systems can fail, so a backup timer is needed with a stopwatch. If there is no electronic timer, a head timer with a stopwatch is also needed. Refer to the volunteer instructions for “Timers” for proper procedures.

Most volunteers will be needed for cones setting. You will be working with the Judge and TD, who will likely assign you to a “zone” of cone pairs (also called “gates” or “obstacles”) you will be responsible for in one section of the course. Be sure every gate is covered by a person, and then only concentrate on gates in your zone. A cones setter will need a radio (to receive measurement positions), and a cones measuring stick, which is a telescopic pole with centimeter measurements on it. You can also use a metric measuring tape, but this is more time consuming and could be less accurate (measuring tapes work best with two people, but that doubles the number of volunteers!) You may also need sunscreen, bug repellent, raingear, and a chair.

As you know, at different levels of competition, cones are set a certain number of centimeters wider than the premeasured wheel width of the carriage. For example, at Training level, cones are usually set 40-50 cm wider than the wheel track. At Prelim, the measurement can be between 35-40 cm wider, and at Intermediate 30-35 cm wider. At the advanced level, as all carriages within a division have the same wheel track, the measurement is preset for all competitors. The extra clearance measurement is not your problem! Don't worry about wheel width or what got added on – a total cones clearance measurement will be given to you over the radio or PA system. Set your measuring stick to that width as soon as the next wheel measurement is announced (typically while the previous competitor is still in the ring).

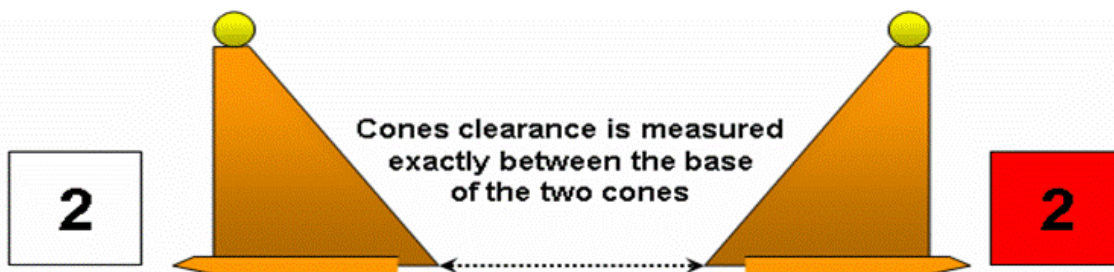
There are two methods for resetting a course to get it ready for the next competitor. The first way is that nobody but the driver is allowed on the course while the clock is running. As soon as the competitor goes through the exit gate, you can run onto the course and begin resetting the cones in your zone to the next measurement, moving

only the white (left) cone. This method is safe, but very time consuming. The second, faster method is to begin resetting as soon as the competitor has safely cleared that obstacle, or cleared your entire zone. As soon as the competitor is on another part of the course, you can carefully enter the course and begin resetting. Be absolutely sure that if a ball was dislodged, the penalty has been recorded. You can communicate this with your radio, or listen for the judge to call the penalty on the radio. Be extremely careful about resetting your zone, as the obstacles in your zone are usually not in numerical order. For example, you may have gates 1, 5, 12, and 15 in your zone, and you may get all excited about resetting gates 1 and 5, and while you are doing this you may be in the way of the competitor coming back for gates 12 and 15! Be extremely aware of where the competitor is on the course, and when it is safe to reset. The reset method (between or during competition) is not up to you – it is up to the TD and judge. Ask about the preferred procedure before the competition begins.

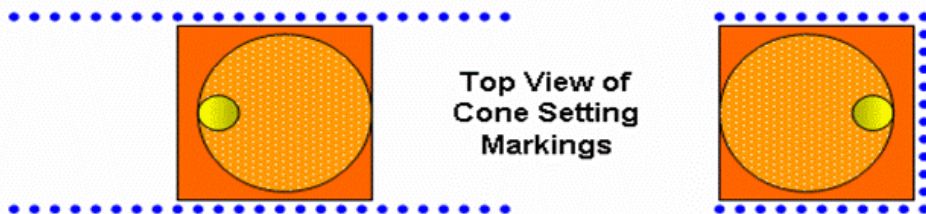
Along with setting cones for different wheel widths, replacing knocked down balls, correcting other dislodged obstacles, and replacing cones, you should also check to make sure that course markers (letters and numbers) are secure. Markers must be up for the next competitor and can't be blown over. Also be sure when changing the cones width that the angle of the original setting is maintained.

Etiquette on the Course: Remember that the cones event is a formal competition for both CDEs and Pleasure Driving (but informal for ADTs). Cutoffs and t-shirts are not appropriate attire for volunteers at a formal event. Certainly, you want to be comfortable and be protected from the weather, but also keep in mind the spirit of the event. A collared shirt, khakis, and a hat are appropriate attire (although baseball caps may not be good). Dressing similarly to other officials is your best bet. Do wear comfortable shoes, though, as you will be walking a lot. During the event, be as quiet as possible so as not to distract the driver and equines. Don't carry on conversations with other people while a competitor is on the course, and pay attention to the correct measurements and the obstacles in your zone. Conversations distract you from your job, and many a protest has been filed for a mismeasured obstacle, an obstacle that was not reset for the next measurement, or a ball not replaced. Ideally, you should not be standing on the course, but at times you may have to. If you are on the course, be very aware of where the driver has been and will be going next so you can stay out of the way.

After the Competition: Guess what? Now all those cones, balls, measuring sticks, and markers need to be taken down and stored away. Take a moment to assist with cleanup, as many hands make light work! You have the best seat in the house as a cones volunteer, but that seat comes with responsibilities. Know the rules, and pay close attention to each competitor, the course, and your job. If you are not competing at a show, you should volunteer, because it is one of the best ways to learn! Volunteers help make shows happen, so please contribute your time, so at the next show, you can drive!



White markers are always on the left. Red markers are always on the right.



White (left) side has tracks for changing wheel widths.
Red (right) side has box for keeping the same position.