



## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: THE HAZARD/OBSTACLE OBSERVER

By Dr. Erika Matulich, PhD, PCM, email: [ematulich@ut.edu](mailto:ematulich@ut.edu)

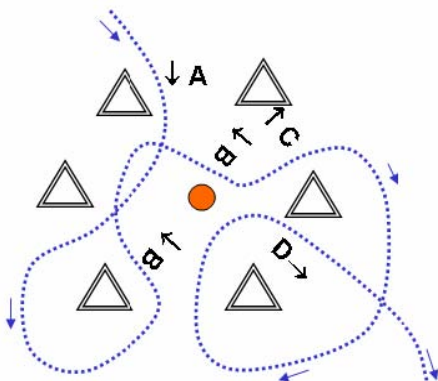
Volunteers are an extremely important component for any carriage driving show, and an internationally-rated competition such as Live Oak will require the services of over 100 volunteers! Many people have expressed doubts about their ability to volunteer, but anyone can do it! This document describes the duties of the Hazard Observer (formerly called Hazard "Judge"). Hazard observers are critically important at any events with Hazards/Obstacles, which include CDEs, HDTs, and ADTs.

**Equipment Needed:** You will need pencils, clipboard, whistle, and radio, but all equipment should be provided by the show management (though just in case, I always bring my own equipment). To make yourself comfortable, also bring along a cooler with water (no alcohol!), sunscreen, raingear, bug spray, snacks, and a chair. Depending on the hazard, a pair of binoculars may also be helpful.

**Obstacle/Hazard Observer Duties:** You have two sets of duties. One is that you are the "head" official at the hazard, and you need to manage your timers, backups, holdup timers, crowd control personnel, and any other volunteers at your hazard. For this reason, you are required to be at the briefing to receive information from the Technical Delegate, President of the Jury, and/or Judge before the event begins, and you are also required to be at the debriefing when the event concludes. Your second set of duties relates to the actual evaluation of how a competitor drives a hazard. This involves "diagramming" or recording the route of how the driver goes through each gate and recording any possible penalties. You will keep records on a hazard score sheet (one per competitor), as well as a summary back-up sheet.

You should arrive at your hazard at least 15 minutes before the first competitor is due to start Section E. Familiarize yourself with the hazard, including the positions of all the lettered gates (noting direction of entry as red on right), and the entrance and exit of the hazard. Find a good spot from which to view the hazard (outside the driving zone). You should have an unobstructed view of the entire route. You should also have a list of competitors and the order and time they are expected to appear at your hazard. For each competitor, you should have an "Obstacle/Hazard Score Sheet." These are usually colored pieces of paper. Write in your name and the competitor number at the top. There is a large list of Driving Penalties listed in a box. Please familiarize yourself with these penalties. Also be sure the Obstacle Diagram matches what you are seeing. Locate any "knockdowns" that may be part of your hazard. You may also need to observe gates near your hazard to make sure competitors have successfully passed through the gates before or after entering your hazard.

When a driver enters an obstacle, it is your job to keep your eye on the driver and note exactly which gates, in which order, and what direction the driver takes. Your Score Sheet has a series of boxes in which you (or your scribe) will write the letters of the gates as they are driven (writing down gates driven backwards in parentheses). It is very helpful to say the gates out loud as the competitor passes through, for both yourself and your scribe. If the competitor does something unusual, make a note of it on the score sheet after you have recorded the completion time of the driver. Note any penalties and describe them. One penalty in particular is how the competitor exits the hazard – they have five seconds (NOT strides) to return to a trot. Count "one hippopotamus, two hippopotamus..." for seconds and note the distance a competitor can canter in that time. If there are possible penalties, affix a "red dot" sticker to the designated place on the form. Do NOT actually add up the penalty points put them in the Total Box – that is up to the scorer and judge.



A
B
(B)
C
D

There are several methods for recording the route of the competitor. The first method (recording gate letters in the vertical boxes) is ALWAYS used, and other methods (arrows or lines indicating path taken) can also be used if desired by the TD. Record the path with a line *after* the competitor has left the hazard; record gate letters as each gate is completed.

Before turning over your Score Sheet to the runner, be sure you have recorded the competitor on your Backup Sheet. You will need this sheet at the debriefing. Remember you cannot leave the competition until you are released by the judge or TD. Hazard observing is an important job -- your recordkeeping will be responsible for the final scores of the competitors. Be sure you don't get distracted by chatting with friends or spectators. Try not to get so excited about watching the

competitor that you forget to record your gates! Although this is an important job, you can also have fun!