

What is a CDE?

“CDE” is short for a Combined Driving Event, and is one of the newest and fastest growing equestrian sports in Canada, the United States and around the world. The sport, an adaptation of the ridden three-day event, is a competition which tests the versatility of horse and driver.

A Combined Driving Competition consists of three parts:

Competition A - Presentation and Driven Dressage - where a horse and driver are judged on overall appearance and impression of the turnout and the level of training, style, and movement exhibited while driving a predetermined test;

Competition B - Marathon - which tests the stamina, endurance and agility of horses, drivers and crew over a cross country drive of up to 22 kilometers; and

Competition C - Obstacles - where the horse and driver's ability to respond to changes of direction and speed is seen while vehicles wind through a course of obstacles set just centimeters wider than the carriage's wheel track. This is commonly called the Cones Course.

Although carriage driving has been a sport, as well as a way of life, for many centuries, the rules of the game were not adopted internationally until 1969. The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), acting upon a suggestion from Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and other prominent drivers, drafted a set of international rules to standardize driving competitions. These rules were approved by the FEI in 1970, and the first recognized international competition was held in Lucerne, Switzerland. In 1985, a biennial World Championship for pairs was added, followed by Single horse

in 1998 and a Combined Championship for Ponies in 2003. This sport continues to grow steadily.

Presentation

Judged at the Halt, each turnout is judged individually on the “General Impression of the Driver and Grooms, and the cleanliness, fitness, matching and condition of the horses, harness and vehicle.”

In his book *Competition Carriage Driving*, H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh states: “In practice, Presentation serves a very useful purpose, particularly considering the whole art of driving, and the managing of carriage horses, had virtually died out by the time the rules for combined driving came to be written.

“Presentation has had the effect of raising the standard of turnout and has made owners and coachmen go back to the classic books about driving to find out exactly how everything should be done, from the clothing of grooms to the details of harness and the art of making the most of horses.”

Driven Dressage

This competition is arduous and exacting, demanding harmony between the whip (driver) and the horse(s). The shortening and lengthening of stride and balance, suppleness and responsiveness are demonstrated. Being adept at these movements is very important for good results in the Marathon and Cones competitions. The obedience and discipline required for Driven Dressage establishes the communication necessary for the whip to properly rate and pace his horse(s) for the remainder of the event.

Dressage presents the competitors at their formal best. Superbly trained and conditioned equine athletes, fresh from the spit and polish of Presentation are the epitome of “harnessed” energy. It

is the whip's task to channel this vibrancy into an honest and energetic, elegant and accurate Dressage Test.

The Dressage test must be driven from memory (except for the Training level where a test may be called from ringside). Errors of course and/or pace are penalized by the judges. The standards for movements and general impression are awarded scores on the judge's cards ranging from 0 to 10. The total marks for all the judges are averaged together, the remaining good marks are then multiplied by a factor set by the Dressage Committee to weight this competition in line with the Marathon and Cones, to follow. This factored mark is then subtracted from the maximum possible, the penalties for errors are deducted expressing the final score in penalty points. Winner of Competition A is determined by the competitor with the lowest combined penalties for both Presentation and Driven Dressage.

Marathon

The Marathon is divided into three sections, up to a total of 22 kilometers, testing the stamina of the horse(s) and the whip's (driver's) judgement, with the key being the proper pacing over the course. The whip's goal is to cover the pre-measured distances on the course within a precise time frame, using only a stopwatch, the kilometer markers on the course, and his horse's natural cadence at the walk and trot as guides. Whips risk elimination for failure to pass through each marked compulsory turning flag, and each section must be covered at a given pace (walk or trot). Penalty points are added for being off the optimum time, or for any break in pace more than five seconds in length.

The Marathon is the culmination of months of training for horse and driver. Equally as important as endurance over the cross-country course is the trust, which has been built between the horse and driver, enabling them to

count on one another to perform at the peak of their abilities. Instinct and experience tell a driver how to negotiate a marathon course.

Each course is different and presents a series of problems to be solved, and new challenges to overcome, often on a split second basis. Again, the “home-work” of driving for miles and miles on roads and trails, and establishing an honest working relationship with the horse(s) is the whip’s greatest asset.

Prior to the marathon the horses are checked for respiration, temperature and pulse by a veterinarian. Entries are uniformly spaced about five minutes apart at the start line. For example, in the Preliminary Division, the first section time is based upon a horse trotting at 14 km/hour, but can be accomplished at any pace. Ponies use slightly slower speeds, based upon their size. The object is to arrive at the end of this section not earlier than two minutes less, but not over the allowed time. Arrival outside this “window” incurs penalty points. After a compulsory 10 minute rest, the competitor is counted down for Section B which must be done at the walk. This section is approximately 1 km. Once again there is a calculated window, this time based on 6 km/hour for horses.

The competitor is greeted by the veterinarian once again, and the horse(s) are checked before allowing to proceed to the final section where extra effort is required of the already taxed horses and whips. Using natural or constructed obstacles, the course designer has added “obstacles” to the Marathon. These areas are detours on the course, and each has a series of lettered gates. Once the nose of the horse passes through the “in gate” the entry is being timed. Each gate must be passed in the correct (alphabetical) order. You will notice each gate has a red or white marker at the side. The

proper direction has the red marker on the right side of the carriage. Once a gate has been navigated in the proper sequence and direction, it is considered “dead” and then is open to passage in either direction. After all the gates have been completed, and the horse’s nose crosses the “out gate”, the clock is stopped.

In a given event there may be several obstacles. The total time taken in all the Obstacles is added together with any times over the time allowed for each Section and converted to penalty points at 0.2 penalties per second.

Additional penalties may be incurred for a variety of reasons such as the driver failing to carry his whip, a groom putting both feet down off the carriage, or the entry getting outside assistance.

The distance in this final section is measured throughout all the gates on the course and the most direct, legal, driveable route through the Obstacles as depicted by the Course Designer. Entries must trot from start to finish (unless the driver determines it is unsafe to do so for a valid reason such as rough terrain, or passing vehicles), except in the Obstacles, which may be at any pace. The whole section is calculated at 14 km/hour (for horses), and has a three minute time window allowing the competitor to arrive up to three minutes early. An earlier or later arrival will incur additional penalty points. The entry with the lowest number of total penalty points wins this competition.

Obstacles

In two day events, the competitors usually drive the third and final competition, the Obstacle Course, shortly after completing the Driven Dressage test. There is great skill required in driving the obstacle course well, as the course demands precision

coupled with speed. The whip must have a sharp eye to accurately judge the distance and his or her approach to the cones in order to avoid tipping a cone or dislodging a ball balanced on its top. The horse(s), must be responsive, attentive and quick to change speed or direction.

Obstacles are also referred to as “Cones” which are narrowly spaced pairs of traffic-type cones which comprise the majority of obstacles. One may also encounter wooden bridges, L-shaped or U-shaped obstacles and serpentine or zig-zags. Each obstacle is numbered, and the entry must pass each obstacle in numerical order.

Layouts of the course are posted on the “Official Notice Board”, and you may notice competitors “walking the course” prior to the competition to familiarize themselves with the footing, preferred routing and approaches to each pair of cones.

The competition begins with a salute to the judge, and then a whistle is sounded to begin, after which the competitor has 60 seconds to cross the start line. Once the nose of the horse crosses the start line, the timer starts running until the horse’s nose crosses the finish line. There is a prescribed time for this competition, based on a preliminary horse travelling at 200 metres per minute, or faster in the advanced divisions. Penalties are added to the total time taken by the competitor for every second over the allotted time, and for each ball down which incurs a penalty. The winner of this competition is once again the competitor with the lowest number of penalty points.

Overall Competition

Winner of the Combined Driving Event is determined by combining the penalty points of all three competitions. The lowest numerical total is declared the winner.