**TRINITY HORSES & LONG EARS**

**TRAIL TRIAL CHALLENGE RULES**

**SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

**Description:**

A Trail Trial Challenge (TT) is an event that encourages you and your equine to develop a trail partnership based on trust, and measures your horsemanship skills. Riders are judged on their skills and abilities to guide their equines through an obstacle course that is designed to mimic a trail ride where there are natural obstacles to navigate such as walking over logs, opening a gate, or maneuvering through a creek. You may also encounter “urban” obstacles such as birthday parties, family BBQ’s, volleyball games and mountain bikes.

This is not a timed event, but is casual in nature. Although not timed, riders may be given a time limit to ride through a particular obstacle so that riders behind them don’t get held back. Riders are judged individually and on how well they negotiate their equine through an obstacle with an emphasis on calmness and safety.

**Purpose:**

This event will give you the opportunity to set goals, measure your progress, gain confidence, expose your equine to new things, and compete. The TT is about having fun, building confidence, promoting good horsemanship and challenging you and your equine to new levels.

**Horse Eligibility:**

The TT is open to any breed of equine and riding discipline. Equines may be entered in the class once. However, a rider may enter multiple equines.

**Safety:**

* Obstacles are designed with safety in mind. However, if you feel an obstacle is beyond the abilities of you and/or your equine, you may skip that obstacle. You will receive a zero for that obstacle but will still receive a score for the course.
* Helmets are required for anyone under the age of 18 years. Helmets for adults are optional but encouraged.
* Competitors and parent/legal guardians of youth assume all responsibility when on the grounds and participating in the event.

**NOTE:**

A course walk-through for competitors is held prior to each event. It is the competitor’s responsibility to fully understand the course and rules at this time. Obstacles must be completed in the designated order. It is acceptable to ask the judges where to go next or have someone ask for you.

**Obstacles:**

Most obstacles will come from this list; however, event managers have the right to be creative:

* **Gate:** Opening, passing through and closing gate.
* **Crossing obstacle:** poles, logs, bridge, water, ditch, or tarp.
* **Dragging obstacle:** log, tire, tarp, pallet, etc.
* **Loading into a trailer.**
* **Remove, carry and replace an item:** slicker, bucket, ball, flag, saddlebag, etc.
* **Mailbox:** Approaching the object and handling an item.
* **Back:** back through and/or around obstacles, or up and down a hill.
* **Side pass:** over a single pole or poles
* **Jump:** Lope or trot over a small jump.
* **Through:** such as cowboy curtains, tunnel, etc.
* **Natural terrain:** brush, sticks, downfall areas, ravines, hill, debris.
* **Mounting:** from ground, off-side, fence, block, log, etc.
* **Circles or straight line:** trot, lope, lead changes, slow, fast
* **Campsite:** tents, campfire, cook area, people, dogs, etc.
* **Water:** entering or crossing (may be natural, or artificial), carrying (as in a bucket).
* **Loud or strange noises.**
* **Maze or tight fit.**
* **Pony a horse (advanced).**
* **Maneuvers:** pivots, rollbacks, stops, weaving or pattern.

**SECTION 2 – RULES**

**General Rules:**

1. Open to any discipline of riding and breed of equine.
2. An equine can go through the course only once. A rider may exhibit multiple horses.
3. All riders must sign a release form. Riders under 18 years of age must have parent/guardian signature on release form; and must also wear an approved safety helmet.
4. The day of the event no equines will be allowed on the course before their turn.
5. Riders may not consume alcoholic beverages before or during their ride. A rider will be disqualified if it appears that the rider is using drugs or alcohol.
6. Equines must be serviceably sound and in good condition as determined by the judge(s).
7. Each equine shall be treated humanely with kindness and respect at all times. Equines should have the opportunity to display their great natural ability not hindered by drugs, surgical alterations or inhumane treatment.
8. The judge always has the option of disqualifying an exhibitor for safety reasons, disrespect or misconduct.
9. Rider must acknowledge the judge at each obstacle and wait for their signal to proceed through the obstacle.
10. Voice cues are permitted. Aids such as crops and spurs are permitted, but excessive use may cause penalties.
11. If a rider chooses to lead their equine through an obstacle, the rider must remount before moving toward the next obstacle.
12. If a rider happens to fall off their equine, and they can regain control without assistance, and then remount, they may do so. If their equine leaves the course, they are disqualified.
13. Failure to complete an obstacle will result in a zero score for that obstacle, not a disqualification.
14. It is permissible to change rein hands to work at an obstacle.
15. No coaching will be allowed at any obstacle.
16. The judge will advise the competitor of TIME and ask the contestant to move on to the next obstacle upon the third refusal or after 30 seconds of not completing an obstacle. The rider MUST MOVE ON TO THE NEXT OBSTACLE. Riders who do not move on will be disqualified.
17. No foals at side or dogs are allowed in the course area. No riding double during competition.
18. Stallions are not recommended, but may be approved by ride management. No one under 18 may ride a stallion.
19. Management has the right to add additional rules if necessary. Rule additions will be posted at the registration table. Riders will be required to initial that they know of the addition(s).

**Tack and Attire:**

**Attire:** Boots with a heel are mandatory. Any clothing normally worn for trail riding is acceptable. Show clothing is not required. Helmets are required for anyone under the age of 18. Helmets for adults are optional but recommended.

**Tack:** Must be safe, humane and in good working condition. If management determines an item to be unsafe or not humane, the exhibitor has 10 minutes to correct the problem and return to the course.

**Snaffle bits, hackamores, bosals and shank bits**: Allowed.

**Discouraged equipment**: Mechanical hackamores, tie-downs, draw reins, martingales, and wire chinstraps.

**SECTION 3 – JUDGING and SCORING:**

**Judging:**

Each contestant will perform the required trail pattern individually. The best trail equine will be willfully guided with no apparent resistance. Any movement made by the equine on its own or deviation from the pattern must be considered a lack of control. Credit will be given for horsemanship, smoothness, calmness, finesse, forward motion, control, attitude, quickness and authority in performing the various obstacles. This event is intended to display the versatile working ability of an equine. A good horseman will never endanger themselves or their equine. A good working relationship between equine and rider should be rewarded. Riders will abide by the ruling of the judge. All judges’ decisions are FINAL.

**Classes:**

**Novice –** Equine and rider combination have not won a buckle in this event*. (NOTE: A Novice equine and rider combination that have not won a buckle but have competed together for 5 years in a row will be moved up to the Advanced Class.)*

**Advanced –** Equine and rider combination has won previous buckle in this event. (or has competed together as Novice for 5 years in a row – see NOTE above)

**Scoring:**

To be eligible for the Bob Shaeffer Trail Challenge Events Buckle, the same equine and rider combination must compete in the three events sanctioned for the year. The buckle will be awarded based on cumulative points for the three events. Each obstacle will be worth 5 points. Points will be given in whole increments (no ½ points). No Score (NS) will be given if for any reason a competitor quits or does not complete the challenge.

**Point system:**

0 – Not attempted

1 – Attempt made, uncooperative horse. One, two or three refusals\* within the 30 second time-frame to start the obstacle.

2 -- Obstacle completed with hesitation, rough but done.

3 -- Obstacle completed with slight deviation or hesitation.

4 -- Obstacle completed smoothly and willingly.

5 -- Obstacle completed willingly with a higher degree of difficulty and extreme finesse.

**No Score:**

Should a rider quit a challenge due to injury to the horse or rider, or for any reason, a score of **NS** will be entered in the obstacle score on the Official Score Sheet and the total score for the rider shall indicate **NS**. Credit for the ride will not be given when the ride is not completed.

\*The definition of a refusal is a horse that moves their feet away from the obstacle in any direction. Looking and snorting are not considered refusals.

**Tie Breaker:**

In the event of a Tie, the best scores from preselected obstacles will be used to find the winner. The preselected obstacles will only be known to ride management, but will be posted after all participants have gone through the course.

**COURSE JUDGES**

NOTE: It is important to remember that the people doing the judging at the Trail Trial events are volunteers following this rule book and are doing the best they can. They are not paid professionals. It must be understood that these rules are guidelines subject to various interpretations by (sometimes) inexperienced judges.

Judges are to be provided with enough judging sheets to accommodate the maximum expected riders. Encourage judges to write comments when needed to help management make any needed decisions later in the day.

Judges are encouraged to judge stringently using the same criteria on each rider from first to last. This will eliminate many ties and too many perfect scores.

Judges will not change obstacles without consent from the management. No changes to an obstacle can be made after the first rider has completed the obstacle.

Judges shall not penalize the natural gait of different breeds or schools of riding (i.e. western, English, saddle seat, etc.).

Judges cannot assist any rider to stay on course.

Judges guidelines for scoring: See Appendix A

**COURSE PATTERN**

The course pattern and directions are provided to the riders during the rider walk through. Different patterns may be assigned to specific classes. Riders are strongly encouraged to memorize the pattern before starting the competition. Rider may carry map and directions during competition. NO HORSES WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE COURSE PRIOR TO OR AFTER THEIR CLASS. After completion of your run, please exit the course.

An Order of Go for each horse entered in the competition will be posted prior to the start.

**APPENDIX A**

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| POINTS | DESCRIPTION | EXAMPLES |
| **0**  Skills not there | Made an effort, several obvious mistakes, did not complete entire obstacle, could not begin obstacle | Missed the obstacle, out of order, refused 3 times, bypassed, erratic, incorrect rope management (i.e.: no hard dally allowed), asked to move on for safety reasons |
| **1**  Made an effort, need skill development | Several obvious mistakes, skills need development | Rushing/hurrying, uneven cadence, breaks gait, needs continual guidance, easily distracted, moved/knocked over object |
| **2**  Obvious mistakes | Needs improvement, obvious mistake(s) | Unable to keep equine straight in entering obstacle, rushing through, excessive micro -managing, lack of obstacle ownership by equine |
| **3**  Average, adequate | Marginal but satisfactory, made several minor errors | Not entering straight, setting up incorrectly, slightly distracted, hits obstacles, |
| **4**  Above average, minor mistakes | Good with only couple minor mistakes | Entered and exited straight, little to no guidance, carried head low to see path, loose rein, looks toward next obstacle with curiosity, no hesitation, willing attitude |
| **5** No mistakes | Perfect | Approached obstacle with mild curiosity, took exact path, smooth cadence, no missed steps, rider cool and confident, horse attentive but calm, places feet clearly and confidently, acknowledges scary obstacle with curiosity and relaxed attitude w/o losing its calm and a forward motion |