

The Continuous Driving Event

By Jeff Morse 10/2004

A Continuous Driving Event offers challenges for drivers and their horses, flexibility in structure that allows managers to tailor the event to their customers and their venues strengths. It requires far fewer volunteers to run than a Pleasure Show or a Combined Driving Event. It has a schedule that can allow competitors to compete in a day yet not have to leave home at 5 AM or get home after dark. Everyone will eat very well, have fun and want to come back for more!

Here's the basic structure: Section A is a marathon Pace. Competitors are required to finish as close to an ideal time as possible. The finish line for Section A brings the competitor to a Dressage Ring where they perform a test (Section B). Management can decide which test or tests to be driven. Management can hire an experienced ADS dressage judge or not. Immediately following the test, the competitor starts Section C, a second Marathon Pace. This Section can be completely different than Section A, partially the same or exactly the same as Section A, whatever fits best with the venue. After finishing Section C, competitors do a Timed Obstacle course (Section D.) After finishing the Timed Obstacles, the competitor is done for the day, puts up their horse(s) and proceeds to eat a pot luck meal contributed to by each of the competitors. During this social time, the scoring is calculated and the awards are eventually handed out.

Each competitor is assigned a start time and once they start, they complete all 4 Sections back to back. At my last Continuous Event, the first competitor went off at 10 am and the last one finished by about 2pm. The Awards were all handed out by 3:30 and everyone was on their way home by 4 pm. Obviously there is lots of flexibility but I wanted to give everyone a chance to get here comfortably and leave in time to feed their horses at home. Low stress is part of the attraction to this kind of event!

Ribbons are awarded in each Section and for each division within the Section (For instance, "Section A Single Horse", "Section A Ponies, etc) Ribbons are inexpensive and its great to be awarded for your accomplishments.

There is a champion in each division. (Single Horse Champion, Pony Champion, etc) This is the entry with the fewest total penalty points in all Sections.

As in Combined Driving, your dressage score should remain the most important score. In both Marathon Sections, I used ½ a point penalty per second for times over and under the ideal time because I wanted to place more emphasis on the dressage score and less of the finish times of the marathons. Since there are no official rules, the final decision on point structure remains with the management.

Section D at both events was a Timed Obstacle Course scored exactly like a Combined Driving Event for the overall championship but also scored as in a Pleasure Show where faults are converted to time penalties and the fastest time wins. The pleasure

show scoring was used to award Section D separately from the Overall Championship. This provided an interesting strategy for competitors: was it more important to go fast or to go clean?

There is great flexibility in this event which is part of its attraction. For instance, although I had to cancel my event in 2004 due to footing problems from too much rain, I was going to change Section D as follows: I would set up 10 pairs of cones. Right after the 10th pair of cones would be a Combined Driving type hazard. Competitors would complete the 10 pairs of cones at a trot and then go thru a start gate for the hazard. Once in the hazard, they could use any gait. They would exit the hazard and complete the same 10 pairs of cones in reverse order at a trot to a finish line. Again the scoring would be done 2 ways: low faults and fastest time in order to score it for the overall championship and separately for the Section Award. The beauty of this is that only a couple of volunteers are needed to manage the cones and the hazard and only one starter/timer is needed. It also doesn't have to take up a lot of room and spectators can watch a pretty exciting combination of events from one spot.

Another variation I considered for 2004 was to run the first marathon pace with stopwatches allowed and the second marathon pace with no clocks allowed. That would provide an interesting twist especially if both marathon routes were the same.

You'll note there is no Presentation Score! Dress is casual and 'polishing' is optional. It has been referred to as a "Dirty Harness Party". The point is to have fun, have a challenging driving competition, have it flexible enough to fit almost any venue, keep volunteer effort to minimum...and of course eat well!

You can find my rules for my Continuous Driving Event online at <http://www.green.meads.com/GMFCDE.html> . Remember, you can make up your own rules to fit your drivers, their horses and your venue. It is limited only by your imagination. Enjoy!

I m happy to answer any questions about Continuous Driving via email at green@meads.com

Jeff Morse
Green Meads Farm
Richmond, MA 01254
413.698.3804