

CHAPTER 10 – CHIEF TIMER

The Chief Timer should be left to coordinate the overall timing effort and not occupy one of the timing assignments if at all possible.

Personnel Requirements

All timing personnel come under the direction of the Chief Timing Steward. There is a desired and a minimum number of people required to start and time events and horse trials,

as shown in the following table. What one must realize is that if you utilize fewer than the minimum personnel, your chances for errors and confusion increase dramatically.

ACTIVITY

TWO & THREE-DAY

EVENTS

HORSE TRIALS

DESIRED

MINIMUM

DESIRED

MINIMUM

Phase A Roads and Tracks

Start Timers

2

1

NA

NA

Finish Timers

2

1

NA

NA

Phase B Steeplechase

Start Timers

2

1

NA

NA

Finish Timers

2

1

NA

NA

Phase C Roads and Tracks

Finish Timers

2

1

NA

NA

Phase D Cross-country

Start Timers

2

1

2

1

Finish Timers

2

1

2

1

Show Jumping*

Timers

2

2

2

2

*These numbers presume that the same individuals can time the start and finish of the course. If the start and finish are so widely separated that this can not be done, it creates a requirement for additional personnel as well as a rather complex procedural adjustment. This situation is discussed later in this section under procedures.

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The numbers tabulated above are in addition to the Chief Timer. For maximum effectiveness, the Chief Timer should be left free to coordinate the overall effort and not occupy one of the timing assignments.

Equipment Needed

1. Two Official Event Time of Day Clocks; one for the warm-up and one to be placed at the Start Box. They **MUST BE** synchronized.
2. The location of your Start Box and Finish Line will determine how many Timing devices will be needed. Clocks that print the actual time of day are the most efficient and accurate way to time an event. They need to be capable of being synchronized to the Official Event Time of Day clock, for each Endurance Phase Starter/Timer and the Chief Timer. It is important to have spare timing devices on hand, synchronized to Official Event Time, should any of the devices in use malfunction.
3. All timing equipment should have batteries and printer paper checked with spares available.
4. One clipboard for each Starter/Timer and the Chief Timer.
5. Two pencils/pens for each Starter/Timer and the Chief Timer.
6. Clear plastic bag for each clipboard if inclement weather is anticipated.
7. Radios for roads and tracks, steeplechase and cross-country starters and for roads and track finish timers as appropriate. Radios are also required for the show jumping timers and the judge's stand.
8. Current start order for each clipboard with scratches/changes noted.
9. Time Sheets for the recording of start and finish times, available from the USEA website. Each timer must have a sufficient number of forms appropriate to his assignment.

Procedures

1. All starters, finishers and timers should receive a briefing well before the start of the competition. This is usually accomplished by the Chief Timer, but must be coordinated with the Technical Delegate. Assignments are made at this time and equipment distributed as appropriate. Timing devices should be synchronized to the Official Event Time prior to the briefing. Operation of the timing devices should be discussed and the starters/finishers/timers afforded an opportunity to practice

operating and reading them. The following items in this Procedures section should be discussed as appropriate to the particular competition.

2. There are two major categories of timing devices in common usage today; the printable time-of-day clocks and the electronic display clock both of which are digital for more accurate reading. Regardless of which type is used, all must be synchronized to a Master Clock, which represents the Official Event Time. The Chief Timer should make frequent checks to ensure that all start and finish-timing devices remain synchronized to the second. Official Event Time must be made available to the competitors. A large, easily read electric clock with a sweep second, placed near the warm-up area or first start area, is ideal. An alternate method is to have the Announcer or Control give frequent, accurate time checks.

Timing reliability will be enhanced with the digital display type; however, it also has some shortcomings. Unless protected properly, its synchronization can be destroyed by careless action. Much incorporate light emitting diode displays (LED's) which create a heavy drain on battery life. These are usually reliable for only about six to eight hours when in good order. The liquid crystal display (LCD) is much less demanding of the batteries, resulting in longer reliability.

3. Start timers are the ones who send the riders off. When two are available, one can communicate with the Warm-up Steward, handle the clipboard with start schedules, marshalling the riders as necessary, checking for proper numbers and fielding the inevitable questions, leaving the other start timer free to concentrate on his timing device. The start timer starts the rider on the published start time (or an adjusted start time in some circumstances) in the following manner, presuming a published threeminute interval:

"Rider number _____, you have three minutes before start."

"Rider number _____, you have two minutes."

"Rider number _____, you have one minute."

"Rider number _____, thirty seconds."

"Fifteen seconds."

"Ten seconds."

"Five, four, three, two, one - Go and good luck!"

The exact time of day (hour, minute, second) that the word "Go" was given is recorded for forwarding to the scorers, regardless of when the horse left the starting box.

4. The Cross-country start box is an enclosure approximately five meters square (16x16) with an open front through which horses will start and a gap in one or both sides through which the horses may enter. A groom may be used to help the horse into the start box. The groom must relinquish any control of the horse at the instant the "Go" signal is given. The horse is considered to be on course at that point and assistance is not permitted under penalty of elimination. There is no maximum or minimum time during the countdown by which the competitor must enter the start

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box; if the rider elects, he may enter the start box as soon as it is vacated by the previous competitor, or he may wait even until after the "Go" signal has been given.

5. You may not start a rider prior to his published start time without his concurrence. If a horse has been scratched and the competition is running on time, it will merely create a gap in the action. However, if delays have been incurred and you are behind schedule, this gap will automatically disappear, as each successive horse would be started at the stipulated time interval, e.g. three minutes. Frequently, because of scratches, it is possible to make up for delays and you will find yourself back on the original time schedule. It is important for the Starter to communicate with the Announcer and/or Control about whether or not the event is running on time, early or behind schedule. They will keep the riders informed which is much appreciated.

6. A false start is incurred if the horse's chest has passed the start line prior to "Go" and it proceeds on course. If a competitor starts early, his time will be recorded from the moment he crossed the start line and five seconds will be added as penalty. In the event of a false start in conjunction with speed faults, five seconds will be subtracted as a penalty. The horse may move about inside the start box and may even wander in and out of the start box, but must start from within the box and behind the start line when or after the "Go" signal is given.

7. Finish Timers record the exact time of day (hour, minute, second) at which the chest of each competitor's horse passes the finish line between the flags. If two finish timers are available, one should act as recorder and number checker. Checking the competitor's number is vitally important; competitors are seldom cooperative to the extent that they are all going to finish in numerical order. The second finish timer also checks that the horse passes between the flags. Times are always recorded as to hour, minute, second. Fractions of seconds are not used. If your timing device displays fractions of a second, the fractions are always rounded up to the next second. Example: a device displaying 90:14:23.6 would be recorded as 90:14:24. If the device displays 09:14:23.1 it would also be recorded as 09:14:24. Using the 24-hour clock makes life much simpler for the scorers. Start and finish times may be recorded by the timer on the forms supplied by USEA, or on locally produced forms such as the following, depending on individual needs and circumstances. These have proven to be helpful and less error prone.

8. Pay close attention to the job at hand. Try to avoid distractions. Try to avoid conversations with spectators and contestants. It is so easy to miss a scheduled start or fail to catch a finisher when you let yourself become distracted by extraneous conversations and activities.