The info letter for NZ Agility JUDGES

Issue 10 November 2013

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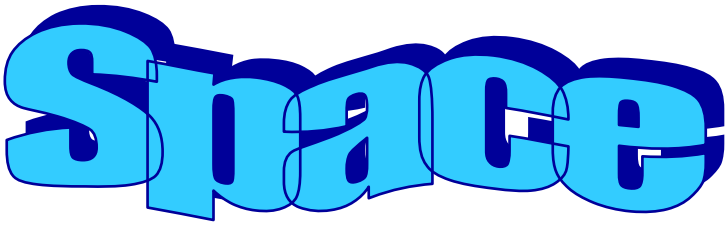
Hi there,

This is an information letters for Agility judges. The aim is to provide some information and stimulate some discussion, and any/all response will be welcomed!!
The info-letters are now on the website, so feel free to read them and to pass them on to anyone else who might be interested.
Also on the website are a range of quizzes and articles of interest to judges. Go take a look!!
We also have a few sets of short courses that you can complete as part of the requirements for going up a level and maintaining Senior Panel status.

Regards,
Karen de Wit
NZ Agility Committee (Judges)

NZ AGILITY JUDGES EMAIL LIST.

To subscribe to this group, send an email to:
AgilityJudgesNZ-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



Space Creates its own Problems: In Praise of Open style courses

Nick Chester

Competitors and judges alike often equate a “tight” or technical course as being difficult and an open course with more space as being easier. Tighter courses tend to leave less room for handlers to negotiate challenging sequences, so this is a pretty natural assumption to make, but open courses certainly have their own set of challenges as well.
As a judge who frequently sets more open style courses, I see a wide variety of mistakes made simply because there is more space for these to happen in. Anecdotally, I would say that open course don’t tend to gather as many D’s/E’s as tight courses, as when obstacles are close together, a wrong handling error is more likely to lead to an off-course. However, open courses often mean dogs moving at higher speeds, and the ability to make tight and accurate turns becomes more difficult. I have found my courses don’t attract a huge amount of D’s/E’s but I do get a lot of low faulting rounds, where handlers are forced to push themselves and their dogs to heir limit in order to achieve a fast and accurate clear round that will be competitive with others, and in doing so, make mistakes. My perspective is that this is a great thing – I want handlers to be attacking my courses rather than attempting to get round by whatever means necessary and perhaps not handling to their potential.

One very common mistake many handlers make on open courses is to underestimate them when walking them. An open course is viewed as easier, and the challenges that result in a dog moving quicker are often overlooked. When handlers walk my courses, I often see them planning to make overly ambitious front crosses that are unlikely to be successful when a dog opens up with a more spread out course.

Open courses also require handlers to really focus on accuracy with a dog moving at a higher speed. Whilst accuracy is important on any course, it can be somewhat more straightforward on a tight course where a dog has not built up a fast pace. Challenges change dramatically depending on the speed with which they are approached.

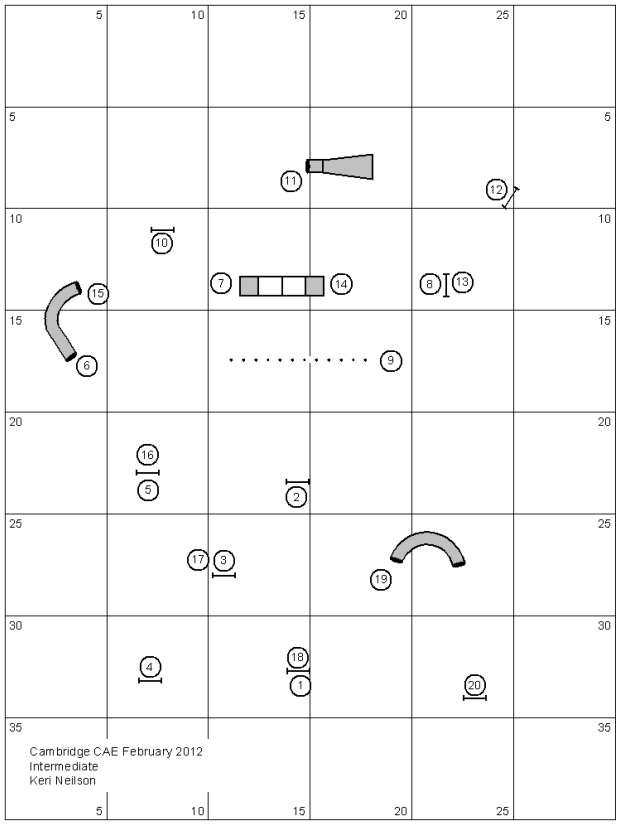
Here is an example of a relatively open course, thanks to Keri Neilson for the use of it.

The opening sequence of 5 jumps has a lot of space which requires dogs to be accurate and turn tight, something that becomes increasingly more difficult as their speed increases.

The course is not full of off-course traps, but focuses more on the handler's ability to get the dog around the course in an accurate way that doesn't waste a lot of time.

Many dogs that had otherwise nice runs were unsuccessful in getting placed on this course due to wide turns around these jumps costing them time.

The closing sequence is very similar. A large proportion of dogs took a wide turn after 18, losing them a lot of time. This is not surprising given the very fast approach onto this turn. Many handlers also struggled to get the correct timing on their front or rear cross here, causing the dog to flatten and knock the rail. Handlers who used some deceleration into this turn were more successful and getting a tight turn and subsequent placings. This ability to decelerate is perhaps not a skill commonly needed on tighter courses, as dogs don't build up as much speed.



Other handling manoeuvres such as front crosses can be much more difficult in open courses because handlers have to work much harder to get into the correct position. This makes walking courses and evaluating options just as important as it would be on a tight course. In fact, negotiating a serpentine with a 2-3m gap between each jump may be a lot more difficult than a 1m gap because it's harder for the handler to get into the correct position in time.

This is not to say that open courses are necessarily better but it also isn't correct to say that a tight course will be harder. There is certainly a place for tighter courses along with many other types of challenges that come with obstacles a lot closer to each other. But open courses do have their own challenges, which often go unnoticed. This makes them a very valuable addition to any weekend of agility.

Judges progression

Are you on the Trainee, Ribbon Trial or Agility Judges Panel?

Are you intending to apply to be promoted at the next intake in February?

The Agility Committee would like to hear from you to ensure that you are aware of all the requirements well in advance and we can provide the best support for your application.

Please contact Karen or Nick and let us know.

MENTOR JUDGES

Did you know that there are certain obligations you must meet according to our regulations?

Are you aware that you need to provide a report for any judge you are mentoring who is applying for a promotion? This needs to be provided to the Agility Committee by the application date of February 28 or August 31.

A Mentor report should provide feedback on the applicants

- course design,
- judging decisions,
- ability to receive constructive criticisms and make changes where requires.

It should also feature a recommendation to the Agility committee on the judge's application.

Touching on the Regulations.

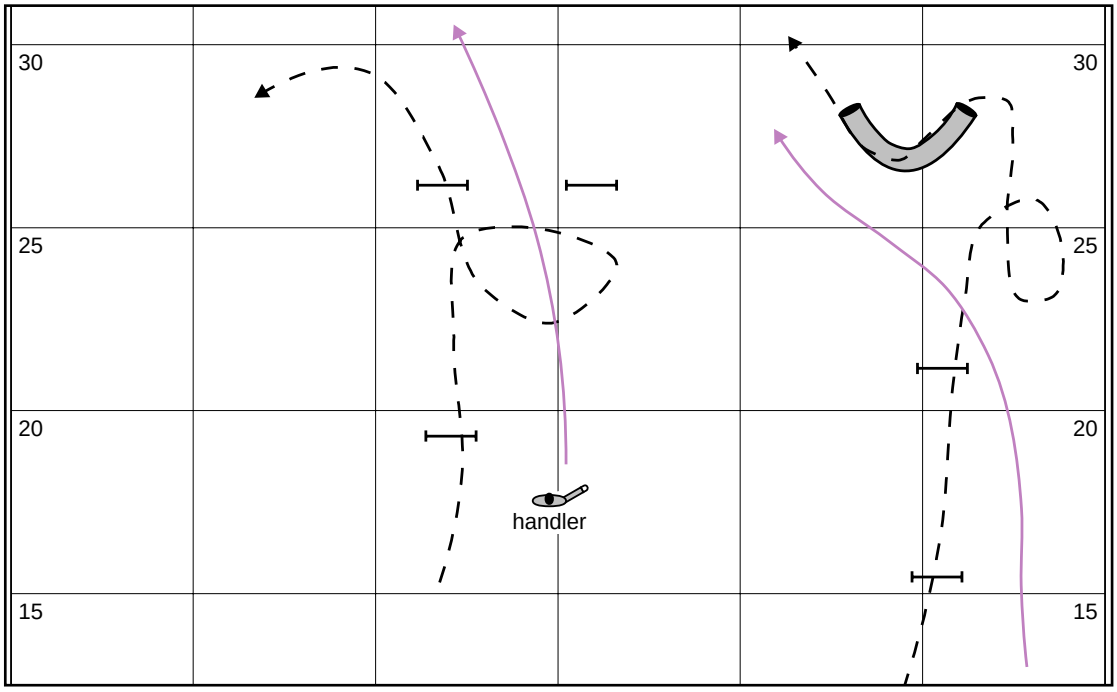
Refusals.

The general definition of a refusal is:-

13.5.3 General Definition of Refusal

When a dog once put at the obstacle then backs off or goes past and must be put at the obstacle again. If the dog refuses it must re-attempt that obstacle before it can go on (see "Disqualifications").

A dog does not have to go past an obstacle for it to be a refusal. See examples below where handler indicated dog was to "jump" or "go through" and dog turns back to the handler and has to be told again.



Making JUDGING easier.

Judging Games.

Whilst overseas Games classes such as Gamblers and Snooker, are a regular feature of competition weekends, up till now this has not been the case in NZ and most Judges have little awareness of what is required for a games course, and how to judge them. This article attempts to give Judges a start when they are asked to judge Games.

In NZ we have 3 levels in Games – C-B-A. Most competitors are still at C level at Ribbon trials, and no-one yet has competed at Championship level.

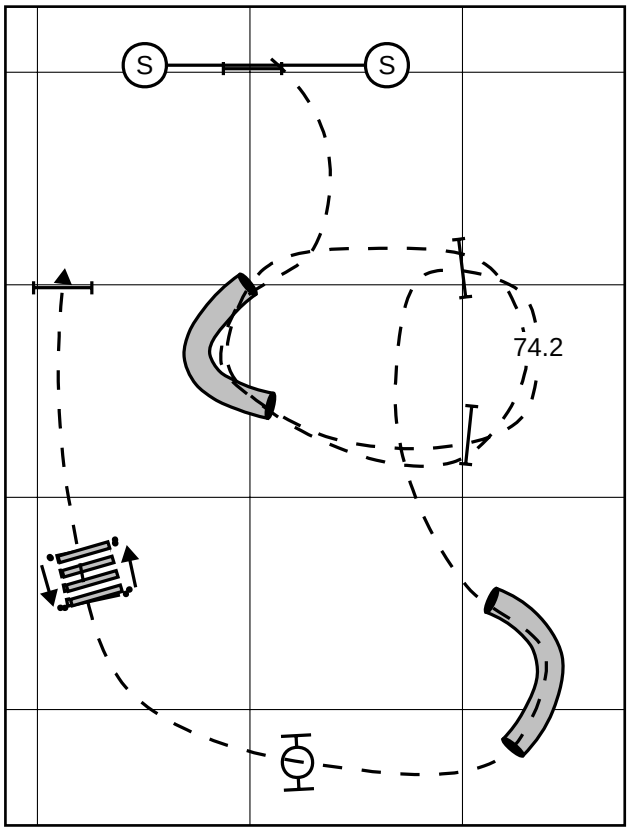
The qualification requirements for the games are clearly defined, and these form the basis for designing your games course.

GAMBLERS.

Qualification Table

Points Accumulation Period			Gamble			
Level	Time allowed for PAP (sec) Max	Points to be gained in PAP Min	Gamble distance max(m)	No. of obstacles max	'Gamble Period' max(sec)	Points to be gained in Gamble
Grade C	30	20	3	3	10	all
Grade B	30	25	5	4	10	all
Grade A	30	30	7	5	10	all

In Grade C Gamblers the qualification requires 20 points to be gained in the opening sequence (time of 30 seconds) and it defines the character of the gamble (3 obstacles maxm, with distance from gamble line to obstacles no further than 3m). In Grade C these gamble obstacles would be easy ones such as jumps and tunnels.



So, how do ensure your course is set so that this is achievable?
You need to know a rate of travel for that Grade. It is 2-2.5 m/s for Grade C (see table) . Therefore you need to set a course so that a dog can gain 20 points in 60m - 75m from the start line. In the diagram right the dog could gain 20 points in 74.2m.

The Gamble then needs to be close enough for the dog to get that in the required time (10 seconds) at

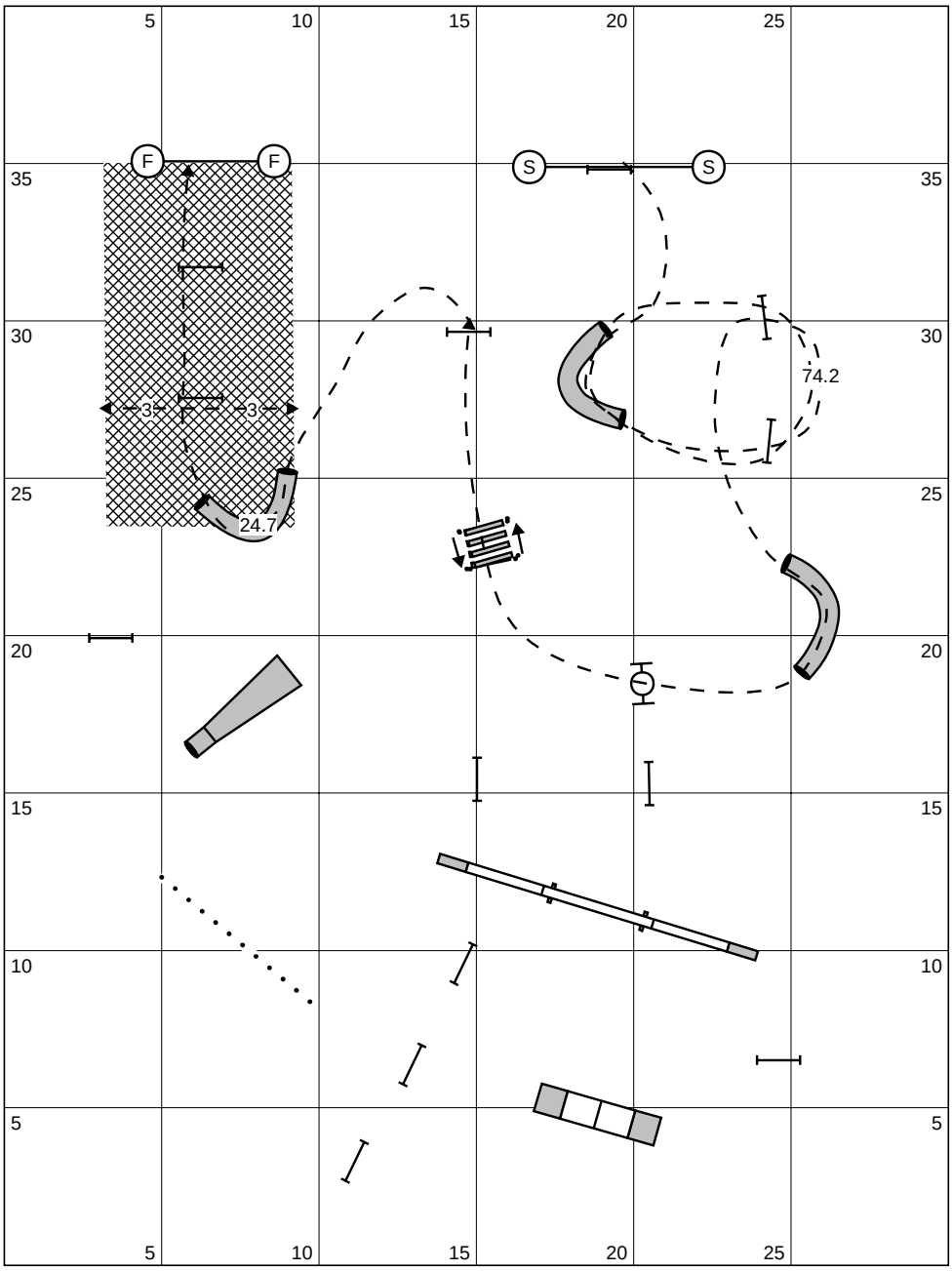
the rate of travel for that level. ie. 20-25m.

RATE OF TRAVEL FOR GAMES.

	Agility Games	Jumpers Games
Grade C	2.0 to 2.5 m/sec	2.75 to 3.25 m/sec
Grade B	2.5 to 3.0 m/sec	3.25 to 3.75 m/sec
Grade A	3.0 to 3.5 m/sec	3.75 to 4.25 m/sec

The highest scoring obstacles are usually placed further way from the start, and the gamble line, requiring handlers to work out a cunning plan to give them the most points and turn up to the Gamble in about 30 seconds!!

The course below meets the requirements for a Grade C Gamblers class, gives an achievable opening and Gamble option, and gives those who are quickest the opportunity to gain more points by going further afield. The Contacts and weave should be easy to judge as they are near each other



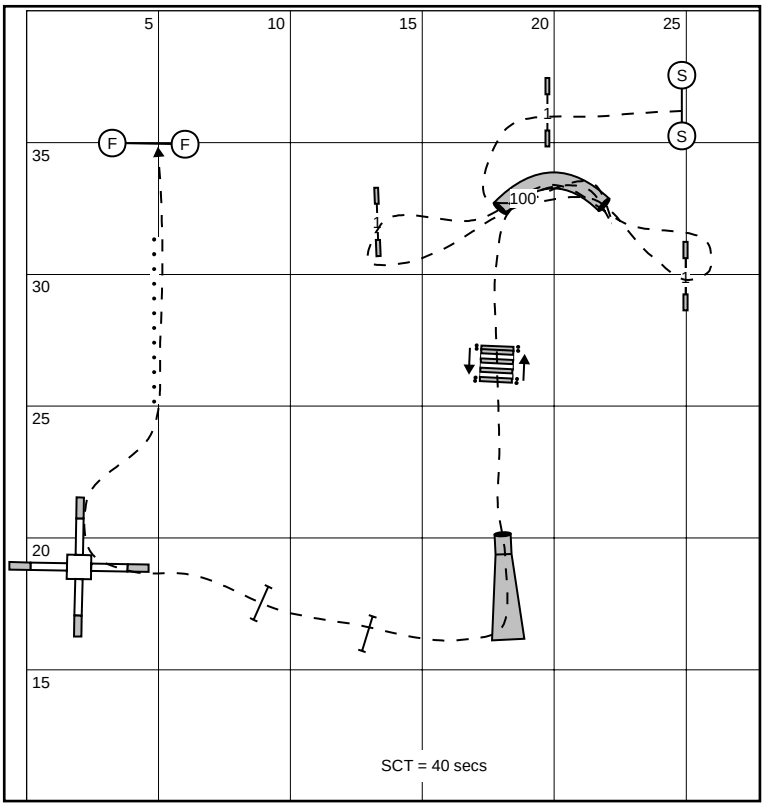
SNOOKER.

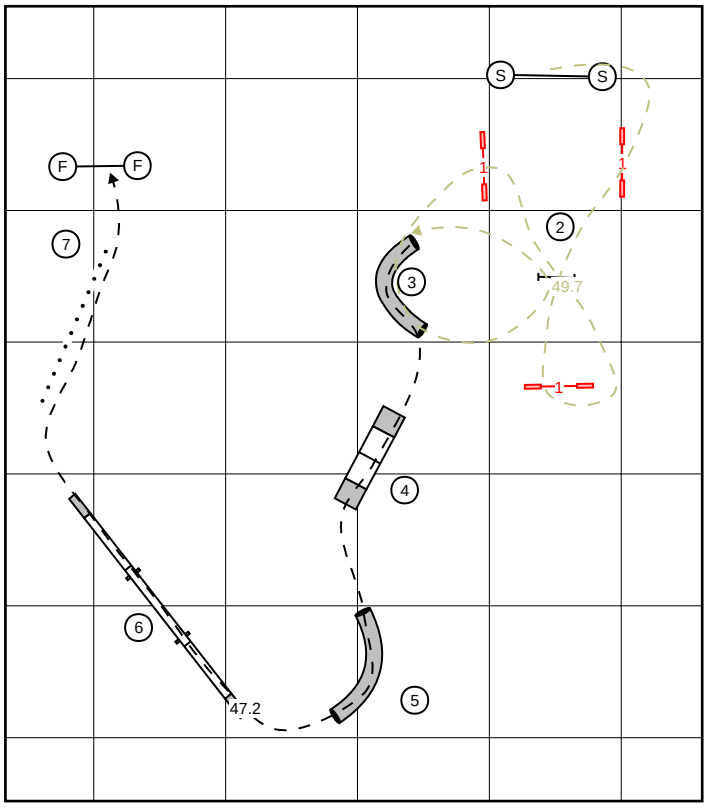
Qualification Table		
Level	Opening Sequence points	Closing Sequence points
Grade C	10	27
Grade B	15	27
Grade A	20	27

Given that 2-2.5m/s is the rate travel for Grade C, and the qualification requires 10 points in the opening plus all 27 closing sequence points, you need to design a course where this can be achieved in a reasonable time. A reasonable time would be in the range 30-40 seconds, which means 60- 100m.
Those wishing to gain higher points can attempt the #4 and #7 etc.

Both courses below met the criteria.

You have to be careful not to design a course that is so open eg. 150m because then you have to give everyone 60-75 seconds, which is really a bit too much when you are fitting a game into a busy schedule.





Comments and Questions to Karen de Wit
E: kpdewit@xtra.co.nz
Or on the Agility Judges list.