

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST USDAA TRIAL



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preparing For Your First Trial	Page 3
Entering A USDAA Trial	Page 3
Selecting Your Classes	Page 4
Tips To Make Your 1 st USDAA Trial A Success	Page 5
Ready. . . Steady. . . Pack To Go!	Page 6
On The Day Of The Trial	Page 7
Getting Ready To Run	Page 8
The Standard Agility Course	Page 10
The Jumpers Agility Course	Page 11
The Gamblers Agility Course	Page 12
The Snooker Agility Course	Page 13
Volunteering At An Agility Trial	Page 15

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PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST TRIAL

Welcome to your first USDAA Agility Trial! There is no better way to celebrate your training achievements than by signing up for your first show. As you prepare for this important milestone, it is natural to feel both excited and nervous at the same time. This guide has been assembled by the Bay Team together with USDAA to provide you with information to answer questions as well as help you and your dog prepare to showcase your hard work with confidence!



Entering a USDAA Trial

Visit the USDAA.com [event calendar](#) to download an entry form, referred to as an “Agility Test Schedule.” This document may also be referred to as a “Premium.” They are one and the same.

- 🐾 **Register your dog with USDAA.** There are two ways to get your USDAA Dog Registration Number:

Register [online](#) at USDAA.com

or

Fill out the registration form that appears as the last page of the Agility Test Schedule and submit it with your entry form.

- 🐾 **Select your jump height and program.** The competitive programs include:

Championship

A similar distinction to “Regular” in AKC and UKI, but cutoff heights differ.

Measurement at Withers (shoulders)	Minimum Jump Height*
12” or under	10”
Above 12” to 14”	14”
Above 14” to 17”	16”
Above 17” to 19”	20”
Above 19” to 21”	22”
Above 21”	24”

If you are not comfortable with the height your dog measures into in the Championship program, you have the option to enter the Performance program (same courses, but with a lower jump height and no 'spread' jumps).

Performance

A similar distinction to "Preferred" in AKC, and "Select" in UKI, but cutoff heights differ.

Measurement at Withers (shoulders)	Minimum Jump Height*
12" or under	8"
Above 12" to 16"	12"
Above 16" to 19"	14"
Above 19" to 21"	16"
Above 21"	20"

*Note: USDAA allows handlers to choose to jump *higher* than the jump heights listed in the above tables, which is why the jump heights are listed as *Minimum Jump Height*.

 **Selecting Your "Classes."** Dogs new to USDAA are automatically eligible to compete in:

Check one Level for each of the classes you want to enter:

Starters (Championship) or **P1 (Performance)**

Standard Agility

Includes all obstacles, including 12 weave poles at all levels.

Jumpers

Unlike AKC or UKI, this class does not include weave poles at any level.

Gamblers

During the opening period, handlers choose their own course to accumulate points. At the buzzer/horn, proceed to the "Gamble" where obstacles must be handled from behind a line. The dog may cross and re-enter the gamble area, the handler may not.

Similar to AKC FAST, but with a prescribed opening and closing period during which the gamble must be completed. Unlike AKC FAST, Gamble obstacles can be completed TWICE for points. [Visit this helpful article for more information.](#)

Snooker

Similar to UKI Snooker. [Visit this helpful article for more information.](#)

Pairs Relay

A class where two teams each complete half of a course (9-11 obstacles each) with a baton exchange in between. You can have a fault and still Qualify in Pairs with Time+Faults. Be sure your **dog will be under control with another dog running** in the ring at the same time if you enter this class. It can be helpful to Pair with a friend and a known dog for your first Pairs Relay runs. [Learn more about pairs in this helpful article.](#)

Tournament Classes: *Links to the 2019 tournament rules are provided in each heading below.*

Steeplechase/Performance Speed Jumping

A speed course designed to include jumps, tunnels, A-Frame and Weave Poles. Similar to AKC Time to Beat or UKI Speedstakes. Either the weaves or the A-Frame will be done twice on course. The dog-walk, teeter, and table, are not used in Steeplechase. No refusals are faulted in this tournament. An off-course is an Elimination. [Visit this helpful article for more information.](#)

Grand Prix/Performance Grand Prix

A fast and technical Standard course without a table. Masters rules are used to judge performance criteria regardless of a competitor's titling level.

Masters/Performance/Masters Challenge Biathlon (Standard & Jumpers)

Similar to AKC Premier and UKI Masters Series, these classes are at the Masters level+. When run as a Biathlon Tournament, the combined score of the two rounds (MC Standard and MC Jumpers) will equal a final ranking. In the Biathlon tournament, faulted rounds are eligible for cumulative tournament qualification purposes, except in the case of an off-course resulting in an Elimination.

Dog Agility Masters Team/Performance Versatility Pairs

A tournament featuring cumulative scoring across 5 rounds: Standard, Jumpers, Snooker, Gamblers, and Relay. In Performance, there are 2 dogs on each team, and in Championship there are 3 dogs. All dogs and handlers compete in each class type in the tournament to accumulate the team's final score.

- 🐾 **Mail your entry to the Event Secretary** noted on the top of the entry form along with your payment before the closing date.
- 🐾 **The Event Secretary will email a confirmation** when your entry has been processed. There also may be additional information updates sent prior to the event. These also may appear on the host club's website. Make note of the check-in time to plan your arrival.

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR 1ST USDAA TRIAL A SUCCESS

If possible, come to a trial without your dog before you compete. Volunteer for ring jobs. Ask questions.

On your first trialing day, come early.

A mentor can walk you around the trial grounds and show you where everything is.

Remember the basics: your dog needs water, a chance to potty, a chance to stretch his legs and, probably, some stress-relieving play with you.

The agility ring is an intense environment for even the friendliest, calmest dogs. Don't pet or feed a competitor's dog without permission, and don't be offended if a competitor asks you to give their dog more space.

Reward your dog and let them know how much you enjoy playing this game with them!

READY...STEADY... PACK to GO!

In addition to you and your dog, here is a list of important items to pack for your first trial:

- 🐾 Kennel, crate or enclosure for your dog
- 🐾 Water & food/snacks for you
- 🐾 Water & bowl for your dog
- 🐾 Treats & toys for your dog
- 🐾 Poop bags
- 🐾 Chair & Shade (such as a canopy)
- 🐾 Ground cover/mat
- 🐾 USDAA Temporary Height Card
- 🐾 A fun attitude!

**WHOO HOO!
A CHECK LIST!**



Optional Items:

- 🐾 Sunscreen
- 🐾 Hat and/or extra jacket or t-shirt
- 🐾 Clipboard & pen/pencil for Course Maps
- 🐾 Phone or tablet for videotaping your runs

Some tips to help with those pre-trial jitters...Everyone has them!

Rather than limiting your celebrations to just Qualifying runs, keep your training goals in mind. Celebrate the small “wins” within each run as your dog demonstrates their good training. Be prepared to mark and reward when something great happens, and let your dog know how happy you are!

Smile at the start line and keep those spirits up throughout your run. If something does not go as planned, or if you get lost, remember that EVERYONE at the trial was once a “newbie” and even experienced competitors make mistakes (regularly!) that they can learn from.

Remember, Agility is a team sport, and you and your dog are here to have fun! Once you have learned your course, take the time to play, relax, and enjoy your time together while you wait.

Don't be worried about the judge. Judges want you to be successful and enjoy your run.

Volunteer! This keeps you busy and gives you a look at the layout of the course by helping with course building or bar setting.

We are all there to help you. If you have any questions (big or small), ASK!

ON THE DAY OF THE TRIAL:

🐾 Plan to arrive by the check-in time.

Please note check-in times on your emailed confirmation from the secretary; it is always a good idea to arrive early. If you are unsure of the times you can email the trial secretary or trial chair listed on the test schedule.

🐾 Present your blue temporary dog registration card, often called a “height card” to the measuring judge so your dog’s height can be recorded.

*All dogs new to USDAA will need to be measured by the judge prior to check-in. If you do not know where the measuring is occurring, please ask the check-in table. At the time listed on your confirmation from the event secretary, a line will usually form near a measuring table. The judge will measure each dog in line until they are all done. Treats can be used to help your dog stay calm and focused. Present your blue **temporary dog registration card**, often called a “height card” to the measuring judge so your dog’s height can be recorded. USDAA mails this card once your registration is processed. If you did not receive it prior to the trial, you should still be measured as part of the check-in process.*

Before your first trial, it can be helpful to acclimate your dog to the measuring table. This is especially important if your dog is sensitive about being handled.

🐾 Once you are measured, show your height card to the volunteer at the check-in table.

🐾 Pick up your course maps and prepare for your walk-throughs.

Course maps will be available on a table typically by check-in or at the Starters/P1 ring. There will also be a board by the ring with a run order prior to each class. Please check off your dog’s name on the run order before walking your course. Please be aware of announcements.

🐾 There will be a general briefing prior to walk throughs where the trial chair will introduce the judges and share any important reminders and instructions about the site or event.

***Put me in,
coach!***

***I’m ready
to PLAY!***



GETTING READY TO RUN:

- 🐾 Listen for announcements about **judges' briefings** for each class.
- 🐾 **Course walk-throughs** are 8 minutes and will follow the briefing under most circumstances.
- 🐾 Check yourself in on the running order available outside the start gate at each ring before your walk-thru.
- 🐾 Potty your dog prior to every run. (If your dog eliminates in the ring, you are disqualified and must leave the ring immediately.)
- 🐾 Arrive at the entry gate of the ring with your dog a **minimum of 5 dogs ahead of your turn** so the Gate Steward knows you are ready.

The area around the “gate” can be physically crowded with handlers and dogs waiting to go into the ring, so be aware of *your* dog’s space needs and the needs of the dogs around you.

- 🐾 Place any food or toys in a safe location away from the ring. Food is not permitted in the ring at any time.

ENTERING THE RING:

- 🐾 Enter the ring when instructed by the Gate Steward.
- 🐾 Dogs in USDAA **run without collars** for safety purposes. If you enter the ring with a collar on, make sure to remove it (along with your leash) before leaving the start line. Crossing the start line with a collar on will result in an Elimination (E).
- 🐾 Before you start the course, wait for the **GO or Ready** from the timer before leaving your dog in position on the start line.

DURING YOUR RUN:

Smile, laugh, and enjoy every moment!

AFTER YOUR RUN:

- 🐾 Once your run is complete, attach your leash and exit the ring safely.
- 🐾 If you have a question about your score or think there has been an error, it is important to raise concerns with the judge as soon as possible following your run.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA REMINDERS:

The equipment listed below is judged at USDAA events according to the following criteria:

Pause Table Position (DOWN):

- 🐾 In Standard, The dog must lie down on the table until the judge completes their 5 second countdown and says GO. (5 and 4 and 3 and 2 and 1 and GO!)
- 🐾 If your dog gets up from the down position before the count is complete: In the **Starters/P1** Level, the judge will restart the count from 5. In Advanced/P2 and Masters/P3, the count is consecutive and the judge will continue where they left off once your dog returns to the down.

Contact Obstacles (Teeter, A-Frame, Dog Walk):

- 🐾 Both the up-contact zone and down-contact zones are judged at all levels.
- 🐾 In the **Starters/P1** Level you have 3 attempts to successfully complete a contact obstacle before being asked to move on. A 4th attempt will result in a fault.
- 🐾 In Advanced and Masters refusals are called at the contact obstacles if the first attempt is missed or avoided.

Weave Poles:

- 🐾 In **Starters/P1** Level the weave poles simply must be completed. The weave poles will not be penalized with a fault unless you do not complete them with correct performance. If your dog misses the entry or skips a pole, go back and try again. There is not an attempt limit on weaves.
- 🐾 In Advanced/P2, there are no refusals called if the dog enters the weaves incorrectly on an attempt. Once the weaves ARE entered correctly, if the dog does not complete the poles in one attempt it is a standard fault.

Jumps, Tunnels, Tire:

- 🐾 Refusals are not faulted in **Starters/P1**.
- 🐾 If the tire "breaks" or a bar is dropped, it is a standard fault at all levels.

At All Levels:

- 🐾 No collars, treats, toys, leashes on course.
- 🐾 You may not touch your dog or the obstacles while running a course.
- 🐾 Handlers cannot jump, run through, or run under obstacles.

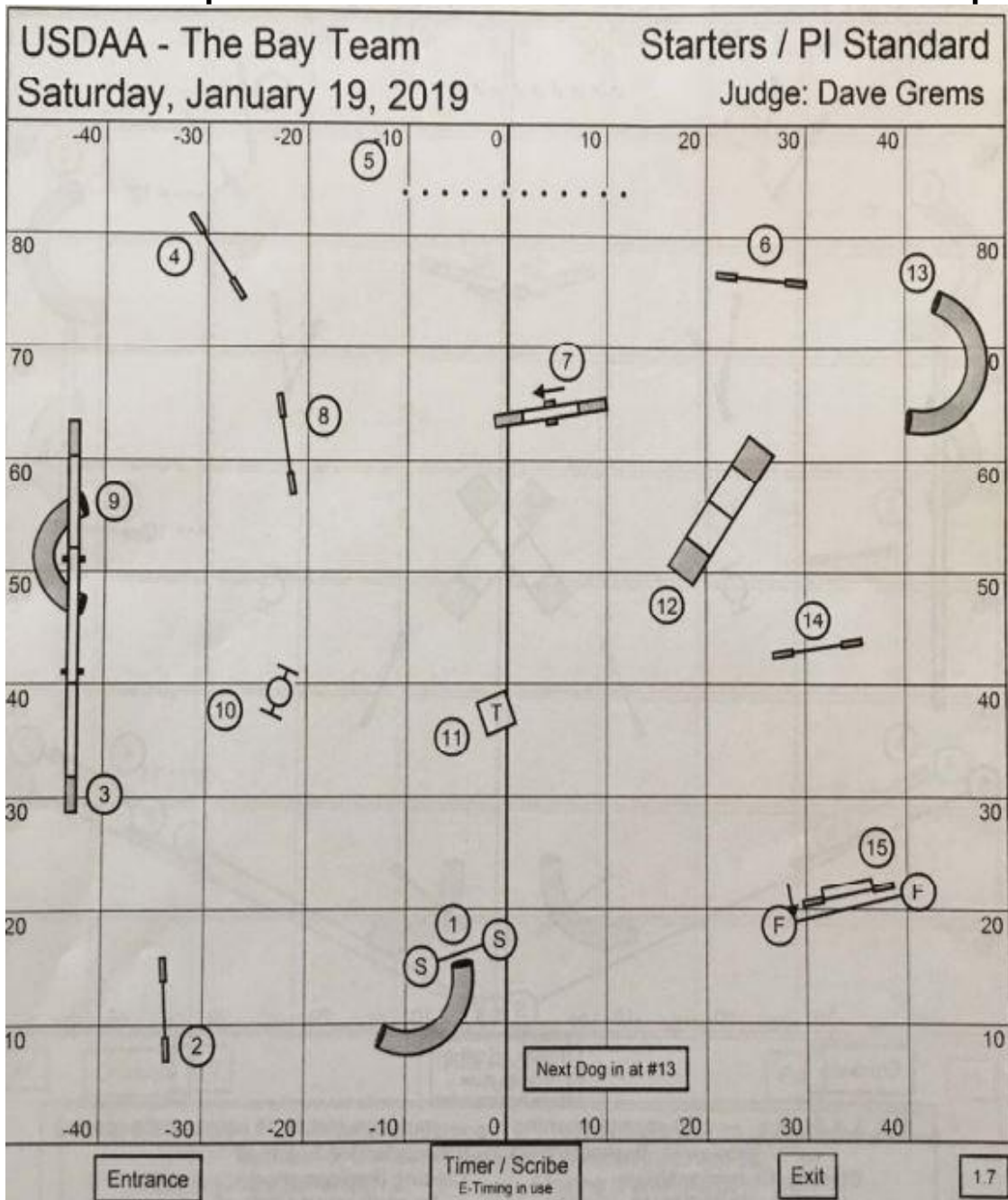
Fix and Continue:

- 🐾 Take advantage of the Fix & Continue option if you or your dog makes a mistake on course. This option allows you to repeat an obstacle once in any Standard, Jumpers, or Relay class (including tournament classes). You must continue working the course in flow, while "fixing" and "continuing" on the course. [A briefing document about this useful tool is available here.](#)

The Standard Agility Course

The Standard course shall include all obstacles, including three contact obstacles - A-frame, Dog Walk and See-Saw - tunnels – always 12 weave poles, table, tire jump and a variety of other hurdles and jumps, all of which are set in a sequence designed by the judge. The pause table requires a mandatory DOWN for a count of 5. Up contacts on the A-frame and Dogwalk are judged. Refusals are not called in Starters/P1. A handler shall execute a course as numbered to receive a qualifying score.

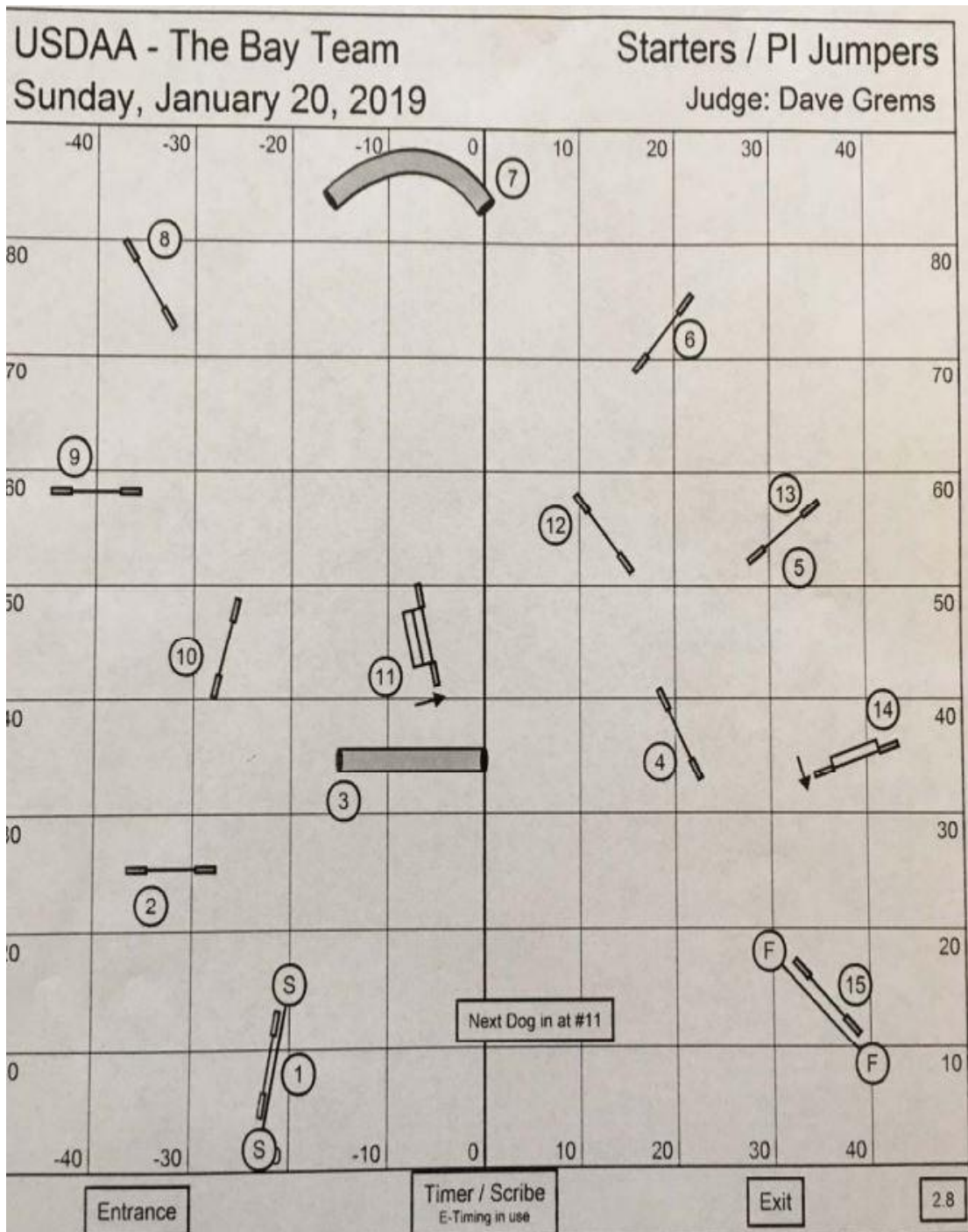
Example of a USDAA Starters/P1 Standard course map



The Jumpers Agility Course

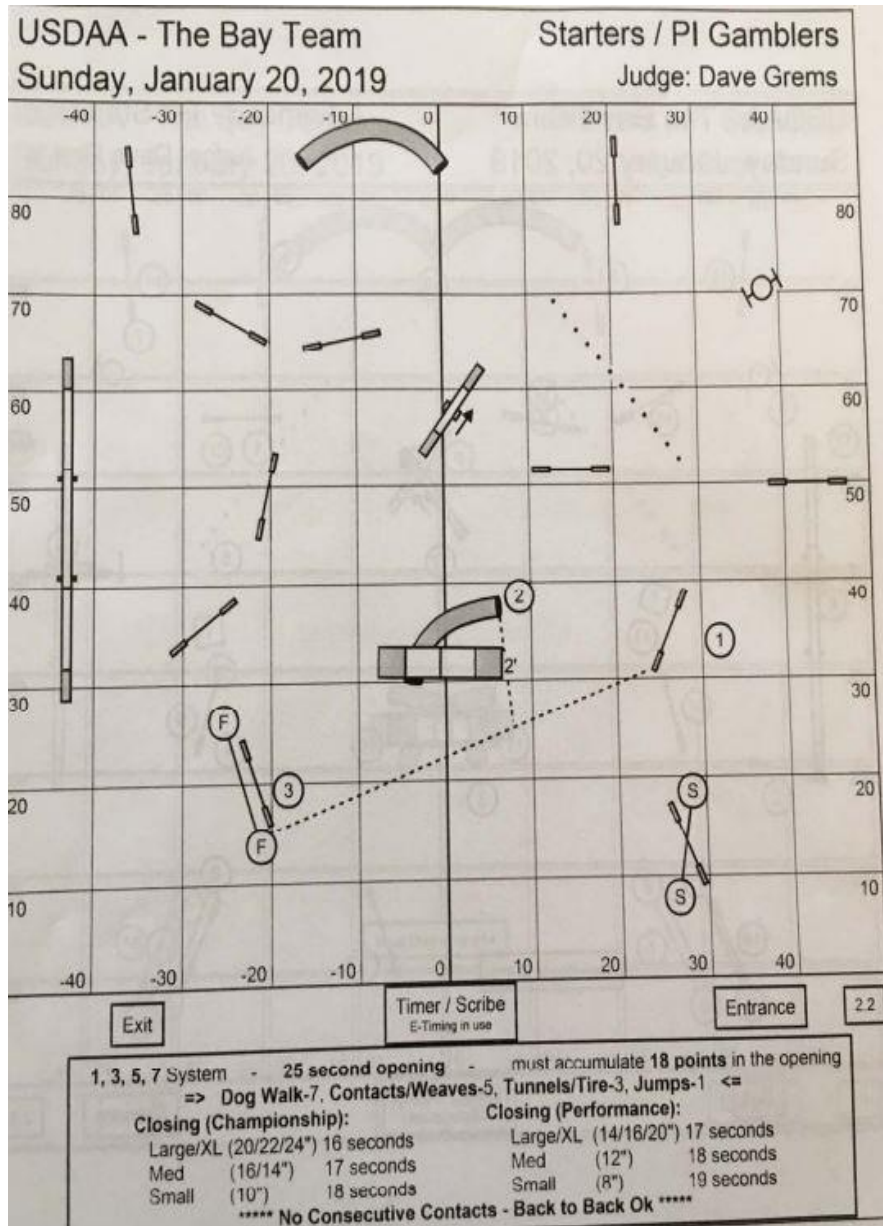
The Jumpers agility course shall consist of **only** jumps and tunnels, excludes all contact obstacles. Unlike AKC or UKI, this class does not include weave poles at any level. Refusals are not called in Starters/P1. If your dog goes around an obstacle, try to get them back to that obstacle *without* them taking anything else or taking it backward!

Example of a USDAA Starters/P1 Jumpers course map



The Gamblers Agility Course

The gamblers course consists of an opening component and a closing component. The opening component is point based and you create your own course in order to accumulate as many points as possible in the opening time. The closing is a distance challenge which must be completed (similar to AKC FAST). The distance between the handler and the gamble shall be no less than 5 feet and no greater than 10 feet. The allotted time will be indicated on the course map. The points possible for each obstacle will be on the course map.



During the **opening** of a gamblers course, you may not do *any* two gamble obstacles (obstacles in the gamble sequence). If you do two gamble obstacles in the opening, forward or backward, your gamble is negated. You may, however, do the *same* gamble obstacle twice (unless prohibited by the judge). Any obstacle you choose to take for points in the **opening** can only earn you points twice. If you choose to take the same obstacle a third time, you will receive zero points on the third attempt, but you may continue the course. Once the opening time concludes a horn will sound and you should proceed to the **closing** or **gamble** portion, sometimes referred to as the "Joker". You cannot step on, or cross the distance challenge line without negating your gamble but your dog can.

You have a set time to complete the gamble. That time will also be indicated on the course map. If your dog will not go out to complete the gamble, you may choose to cross the line and complete the gamble sequence for no gamble points and thus not qualify.

The Snooker Agility Course

Snooker is a point-basis class where you develop your strategy for accumulating as many points as possible during the allotted time by performing the obstacles in "Snooker" sequence, which is defined by color. Click on the following link for a thorough overview and a great cut out Snooker Scoring card. <http://www.usdaa.com/binary/files/SnookerHanson.pdf> The Snooker courses may include weaves, contacts, jumps, and tunnels. There will be 3 reds and a closing of 2 through 7. You need a total of 37 points to qualify in Snooker. The closing (2 through 7) is 27 points if successfully completed in time. So, you really only need 10 additional points in your opening plan in order to qualify if you make a plan that helps you get through all the closing obstacles under course time! Each red is worth 1 point, so that leaves only 7 more points needed. The strategy of Snooker is trying to come up with a plan that allows you to get as many points as possible with your 3 reds, but still make it all the way through 7 before you run out of time.

How to Play the Game

You are given a set amount of time by the judge. This time will be indicated on your course map. During this pre-set time you need to perform an opening sequence that you design that incorporates 3 or 4 "reds," each followed by a "color" with a point value of 2 – 7, followed by the "closing" where you perform the sequence of obstacles 2 – 7 in flow, all before the time runs out.

Still Confused?

Here's a simple way to remember the game:

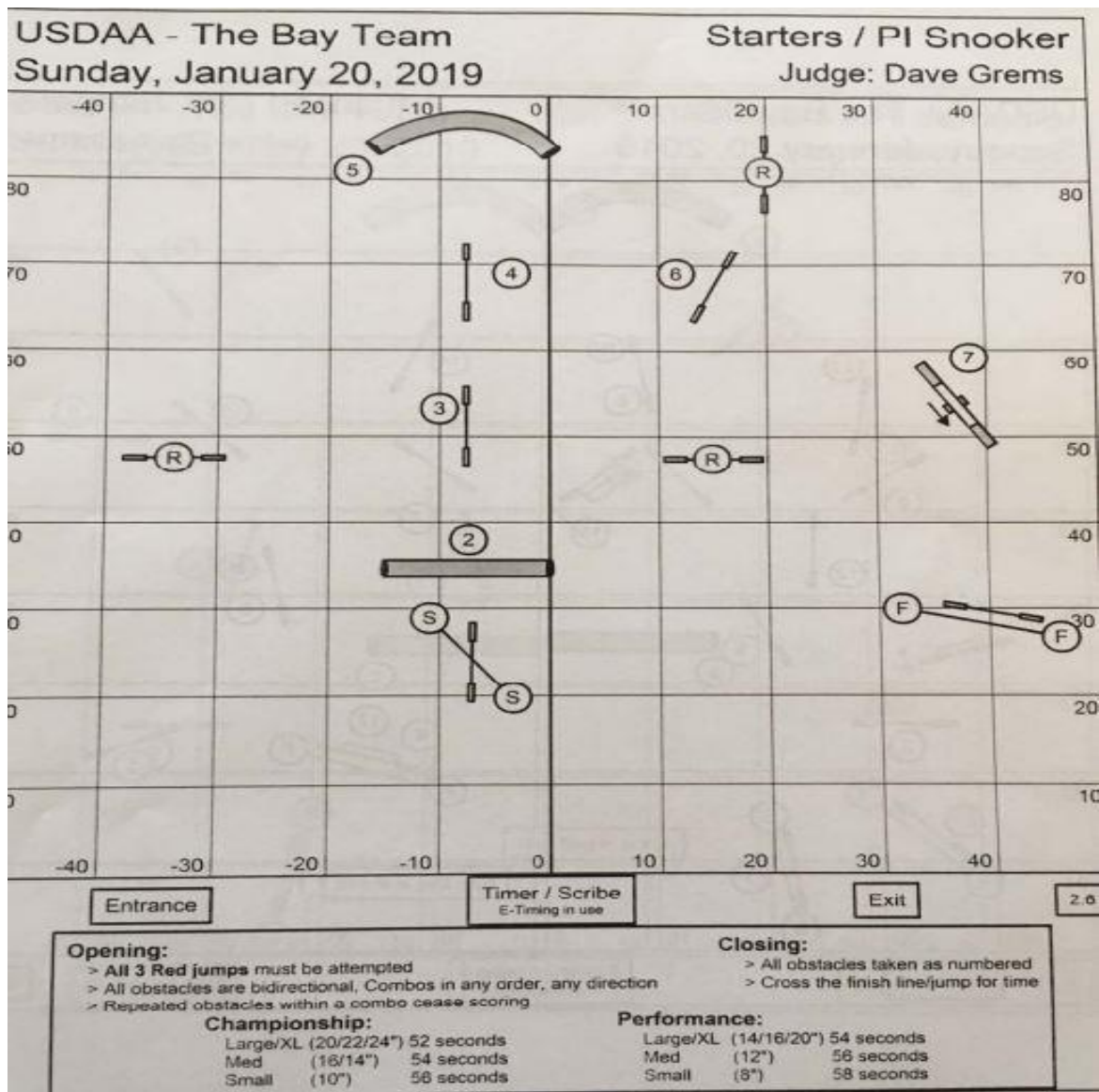


Imagine the reds are ATMS, numbers 2–7 are stores, and the close 2– 7 is your drive home. You **MUST** go to an ATM (a red) and successfully withdraw money before you go shopping. Once you've gone to an ATM, you can only pick one store (2–7) to spend your money. After you've spent your money, you must go to another ATM. The ATM you already visited is now out of money, so it **MUST** be a new ATM. Once you've visited a new ATM you can visit the same store, or you can go to a different store. But, again, you can only go to **ONE** store per ATM. If you drop a bar on a red, then that ATM is out of order and you must go to a new ATM. If your last ATM is out of order, or you just completed your last ATM and went shopping, now you need to drive home (take the closing sequence as numbered, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7).

What about A & B combinations? If the judge set a combination in your snooker (example: 5a & 5b) you must take both 5a & 5b when you're shopping AND on your drive home. If you do not complete both parts of the combination, then the judge will whistle and your chance to accumulate Snooker points is over. If you complete both parts, but one part is faulted (example: your dog drops a bar), you get 0 points, but you are allowed to continue playing Snooker (*however* if the combination gets faulted in the **closing**, you will get a whistle, and no longer be able to accumulate points). Remember, though, you just went shopping...so go to a new ATM before shopping again! If that was your last ATM and last store, drive home!

In a USDAA trial if you hear the whistle you are **NOT** allowed to continue on for the remainder of your course time. If you are not sure why you received the whistle just ask the judge on your way out of the ring.

Example of a USDAA Starters/P1 Snookers course map



Agility Trials Need Volunteers

Without volunteers agility trials would cease to exist. We need you! Volunteering is not a one-way street. There are many benefits to volunteering. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together.

Some other important things to consider when volunteering at agility trials:

- ★ Understanding what it takes to put on agility trials helps you be a better competitor by giving you a complete picture of the sport.
- ★ It's an energizing escape from the day to day routine.
- ★ You stay busy so you don't have time to get nervous about you own agility runs.
- ★ You earn self-pride and group respect for participating in the tasks needed to make competing in agility a fun and enjoyable experience for others.
- ★ Volunteering at agility trials strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network. Volunteering in a ring gives you an opportunity to see how each course is handled by others and is a fabulous learning opportunity to see handlers of all kinds up close.

Please consider having even more fun at agility trials and volunteer! You won't regret it.

