



Clean Run

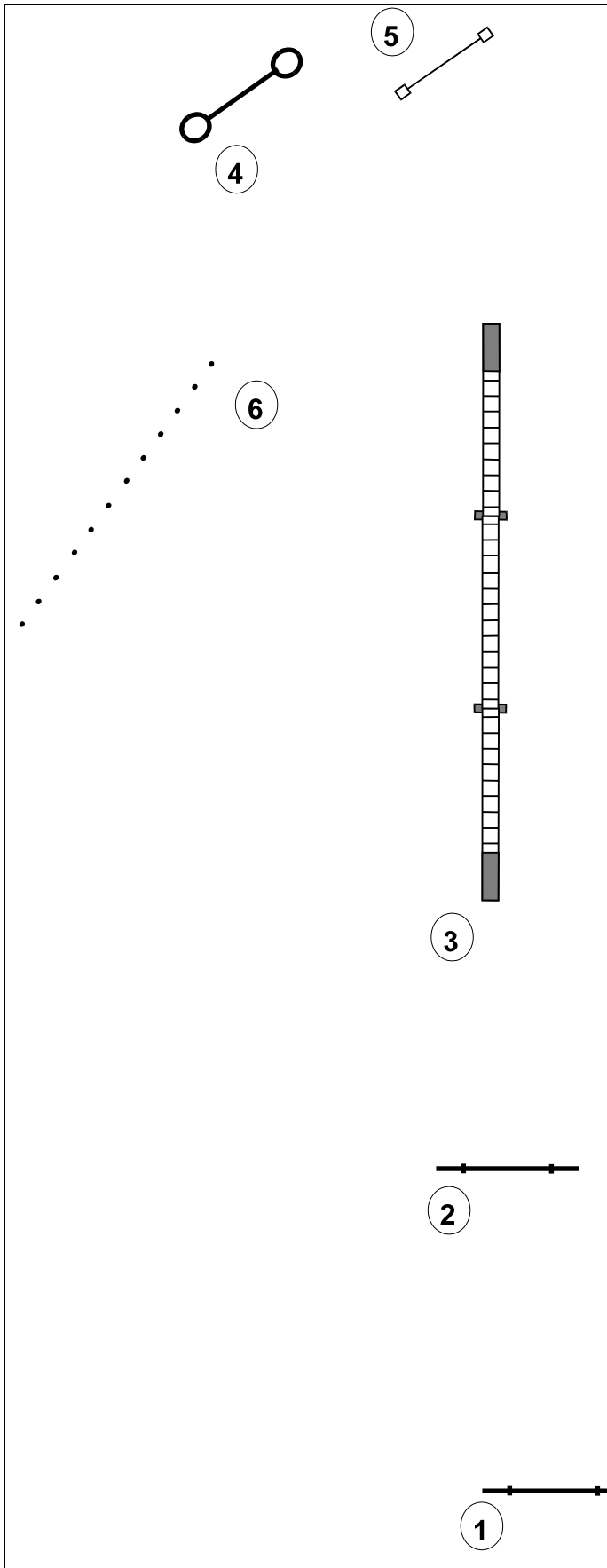
Here's a quick and dirty look at the World Cup sequences that were giving handlers problems. The difficulties that people experienced with some of the sequences were due primarily to the surface. Turns were generally wider and more arcing than what might be seen on grass. This made the other obstacles more attractive to the dogs due to the closer proximity than what would be seen normally in American style agility. The dogs were turning wide mainly due to slipping on the surface.

Also, the dogs were generally faster than the average dogs in the U.S. Coupling a fast speed with slippage on the surface results in a discontinuity of the handler's timing with the dog. This forced, even required, a change of handling style. This was the impression I also got from the British team, who eventually won the competition. Just to mention, the majority of faults incurred by the competitors were refusals and runouts.

Finally, dogs that had a more vertical movement of running and jumping (Belgian Tervs, Malinois, and GDSs) generally did much better than the dogs that were more horizontal in movement (Border Collies).

-- Stuart Mah

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World Cup #1

The sequence is fairly straight-forward up to the end of the dog walk. From there the handler has to help the dog to the barrel jump as the wall jump is very close and draws the dog's attention off the dogwalk.

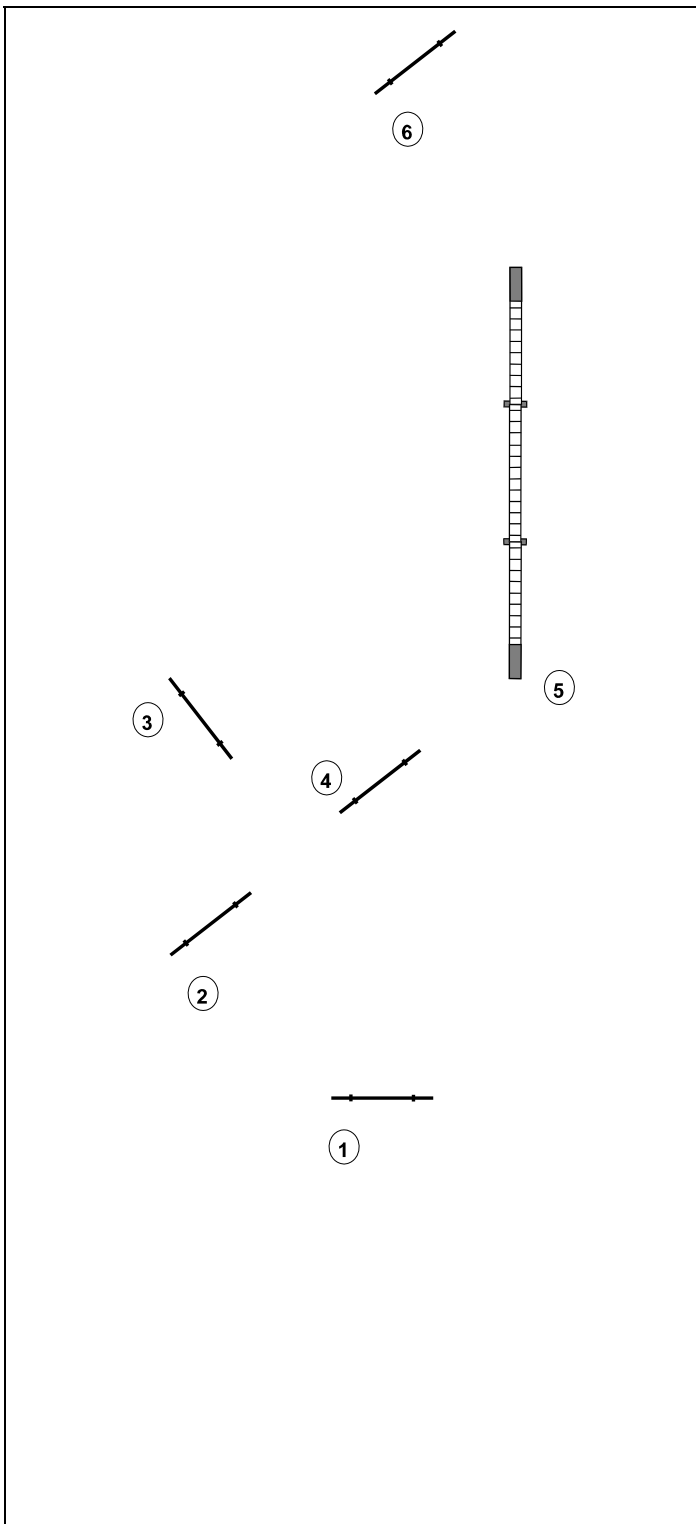
In addition, the barrel jump is a push out jump and the handler must take care to push the dog out far enough to take the correct jump.

Once the 180 turn is made over the wall jump, the handler must get the dog to turn sharply to:

- 1) avoid the dogwalk,
- 2) get a straight entrance to the weave poles.

This is much more difficult than it appears as most handlers needed to go out at least part way to get the dog to the barrel jump. Upon reversing the turn the handler had to move forward slightly to bring the dog over the wall and not between the barrel and the wall. This created a squaring of the dog on the wall jump forcing the dog to land wide to the poles. A straight entrance is now made into a dirty side entrance. (Providing the dog did not take the off course with the dog walk.

Some successful handlers went ahead and crossed as the dog turned to the right off the wall jump and were able to push the dog into a tighter turn as the dog came over the wall. (Several people also got nailed for the bump.) Handling between the jumps required that the handler stay tucked into the wall jump until the dog made the turn before proceeding forward toward the poles. A handler's motion forward resulted in a wide turn and a more difficult entrance to the poles



World Cup #2

This opening sequence created problems due to both the depressed angle jump at #3, and the 180 degree turn to the long jump. The depressed angle jump at three caused the handler to push into the pinwheel to avoid the refusal at three. The handler then has a tendency to get pinned in the turn and has to wait for the dog to take jump four before crossing to the dog walk. This resulted in several dogs turning inside the dog walk and getting called for a refusal.

The more successful handlers did one of the two options.

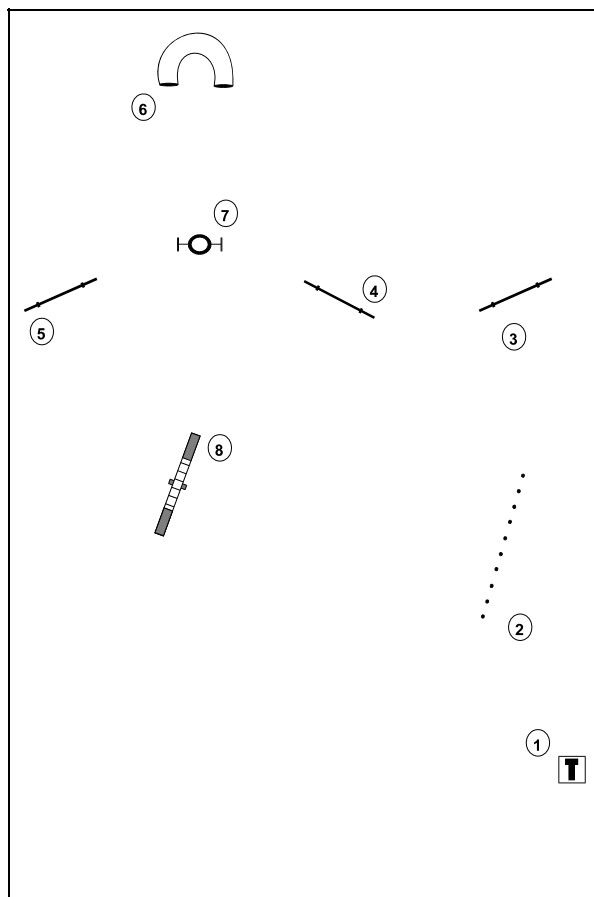
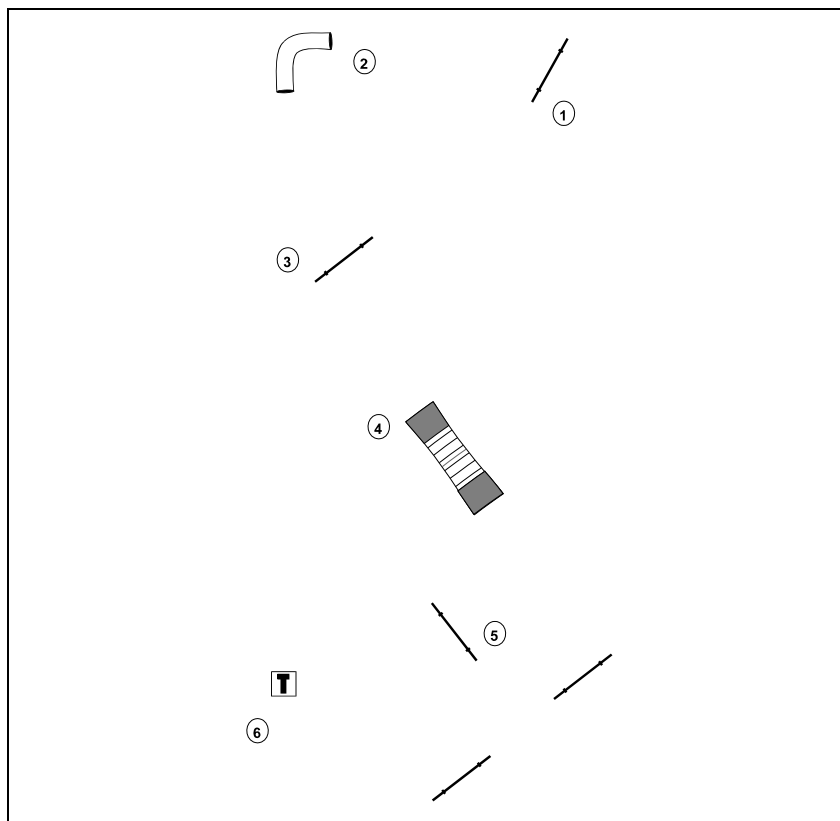
- 1) AS the handler pushed into the pinwheel to get the dog to take jump three, the handler allowed the dog to get in front and take the jump at four without the handler moving towards jump four. As the dog passed the handler to jump four, the handler then slid across perpendicular to the dog walk so that their position was several feet from the up ramp. This forced the dog into a wide turn to take the dog walk.
- 2) As the handler pushed the dog over jump three, the handler reversed their motion to pull back in front of jump four and called the dog towards them.

They then either:

- 1) Made a front cross so that the dog ended up on the handler's right side, allowing the handler to sweep the dog into the 180 degree turn to the dog walk, the smoothest way, or
- 2) Called the dog to them then pushed the dog out back towards the dogwalk.

World Cup #3

This is a straight-forward sequence. The difficulty lies in the turn off the A-frame to jump five. The jump in front of the dogwalk will pull the dog off the A-frame straight. The handler must now pull to the right to get the dog to take jump five. If the handler pushes too far forward off the A-frame, the dog may get a runout as he is already drawn forward by the jump in front of the A-frame. Thus, the handler should lay back once the dog comes off the A-frame so that the dog gets into the turn to the right. Once the dog has turned to the right, the handler can then push forward to get the dog to the jump # 5.



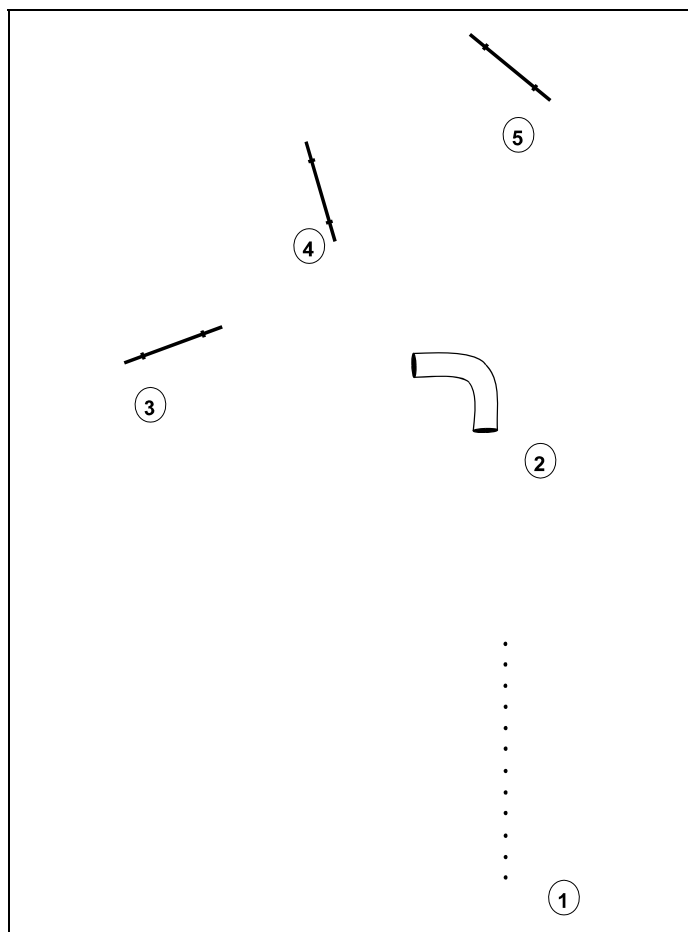
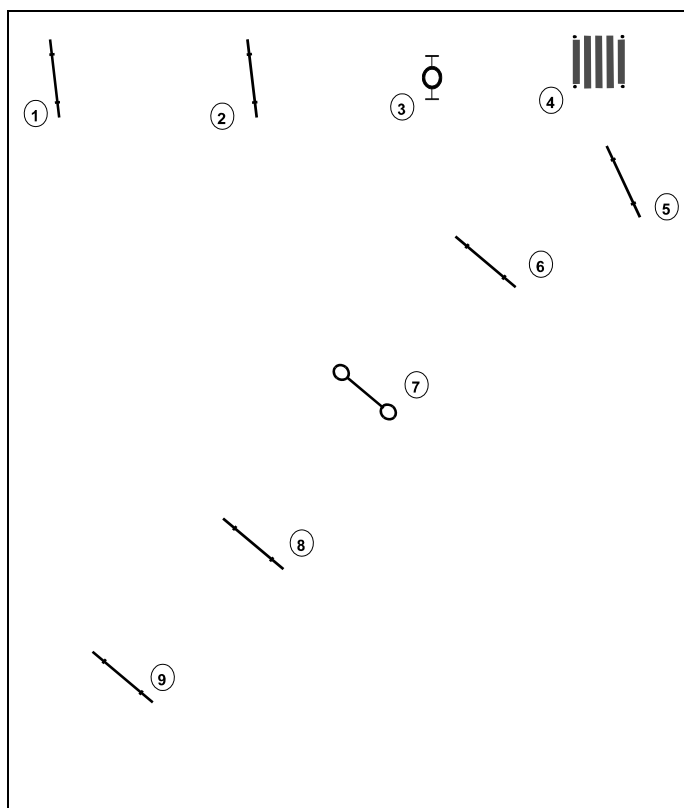
World Cup #4

The difficulty of this set lies in the approach from the weave to jump #3. Handlers on the right side of the weave poles had to time their cross so that they did not push the dog off of jump #3. Handlers on the left side have an easier time with this approach. Also, a difficulty lies in the sequence from jump 3 to 5. If the dog took jump 4 squarely, there was a tendency for all the dogs to swing wide to the teeter. While only one or two off courses were seen, there were many wide turns off jump 4. If the dog took an angled approach to jump 4, then the wide turn was lessened. To get the angled approach to jump 4, the approach to jump 4 had to be set while actually getting the dog to jump 3. If the dog jumped 3 squarely, there was a tendency for the dog to take jump 4 also squarely. If the dog took 3 at an angle, the dog was set to take jump 4 more obliquely. This resulted in a tighter turn from 4 to 5. Handlers that set up the dog for an oblique jump at 3 accomplished this more readily. Thus, they took the time penalty in setting the dog at jump 3 properly to actually gain an advantage in time over jumps 3 to 5 due to less distance having to be covered.

World Cup #5

The difficulty of this exercise lies in the transition from 4 to 5. The dog has a large amount of speed to the long straight line of jumps. Then after taking the long jump where the dog is really extended, the handler has to ask that the dog take a hard 180 turn to take jump 5.

In addition, some of the handlers wanted to get a side change before the dog took jump 5, so that they could run down the line of jumps from 6 to 9 on the left side of the jumps. Both the speed and the side change resulted in substantially wide turns often resulting in a refusal at 5. This was especially the case if the handler was running hard to keep up with the dog in the opening sequence. The handlers ideally should pull back as the dog takes jump 4 so that the turn to jump 5 can be tightened. Once the dog comes into the turn over 5, the handler can cross side if desired.

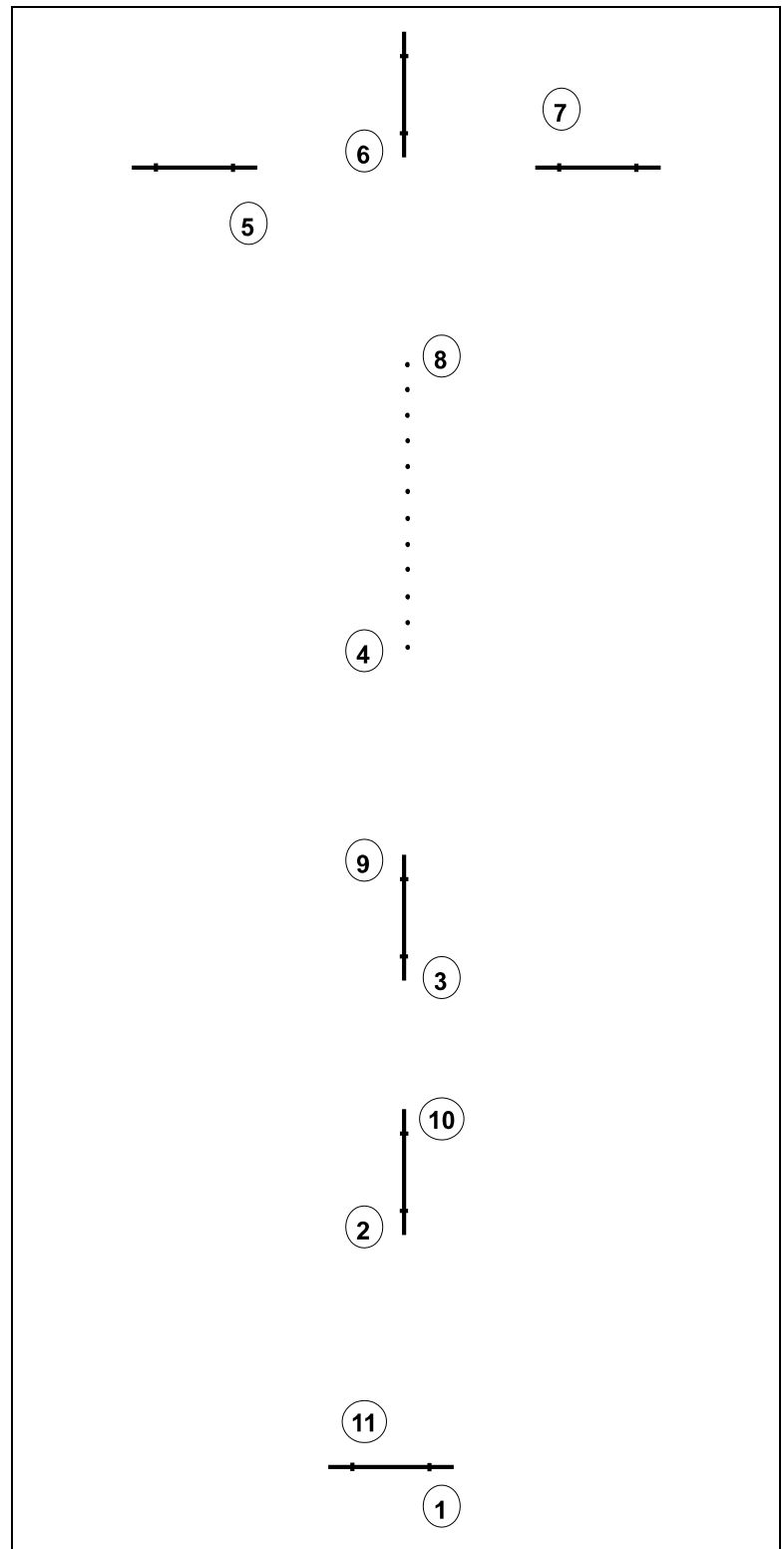


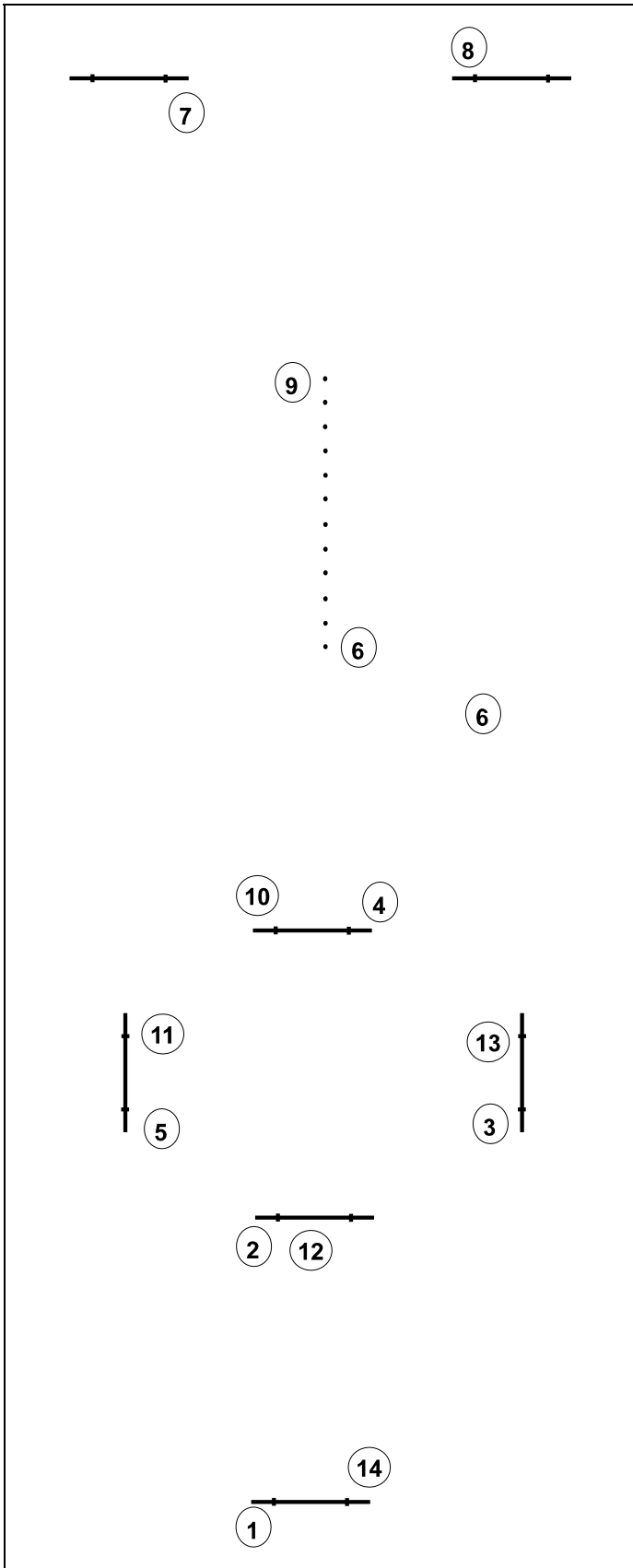
World Cup #7

The difficulty of this set lies in the dog coming off the tunnel and having to take a depressed angle jump at #3. Handlers had a tendency to push too quickly as the dog came out of the tunnel, resulting in the dog turning inside jump #3 and incurring a refusal. Also, as the jump at #5 is pushed out away from #4, several dogs had a tendency to pull inside of the jump at #5. The handler needed to continue pushing out to #5 from the jump at #4 to avoid the runout.

World Cup #8

Basically a knockout variation on training exercises by Ruth Hobday. The difficult handling points were from 1 to 2 where the handler was leading off from the heel side. The handler had to push the dog away to get the dog around the wing and make the proper approach to #2. If they did not, the dog turned inside the wing and back jumped #2. Additional problems were at 5 to 8. The flattened pinwheel at 5 to 7 gave the dogs an oblique approach at #7 resulting in the dog going away from the weave poles. The handler had to then pull hard to get the dog to come in the direction of the weave poles. Successful handlers either stood still until the dog came off jump 7 and changed directions, or changed sides prior to the dog taking jump #7 so that they could push the dog into the turn to get to the weave poles.



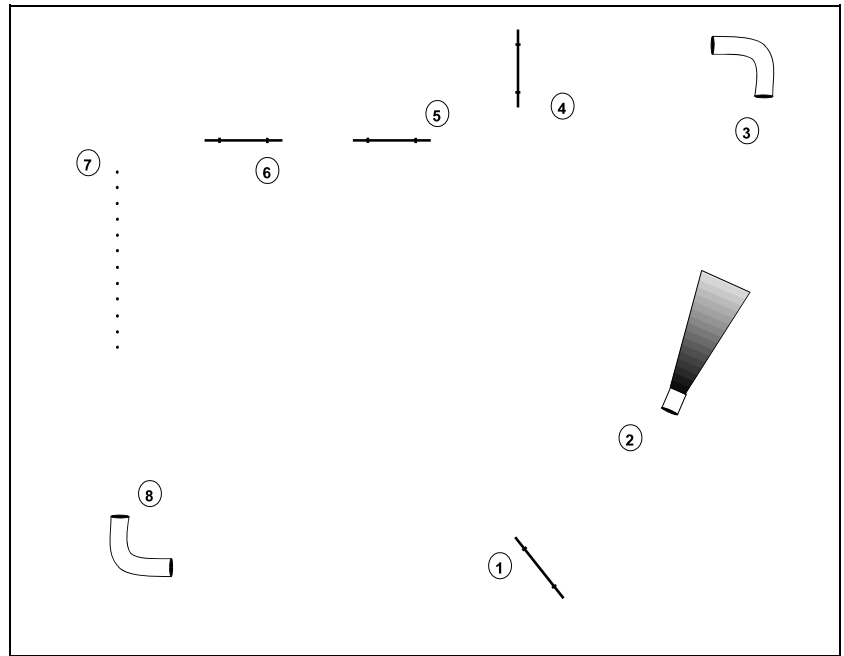


World Cup #9

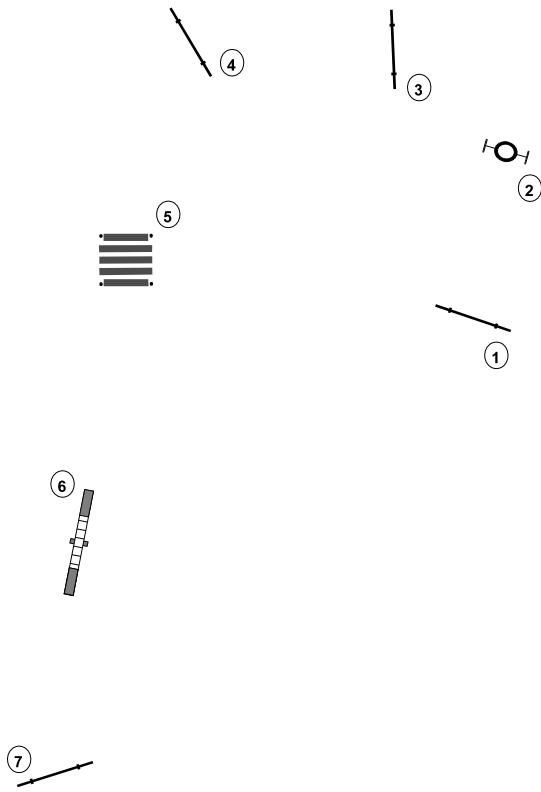
Again, a variation of a Ruth Hobday jumping exercise. The difficulty here is that very few of us practice 270 degree turns. Since the dog has no focus on an obstacle in a 270 degree turn, the dog has a tendency to come close to the handler as the dog comes around to the second jump. This results in a tougher approach from the 270 degree turn to the next jump. The handler needs to be aware that they must stay out in the center of the dog's turn longer so that the dog will rotate around and out to the second jump of the 270.

World Cup #10

In this sequence, the dog is taking speed to the jump at #4. Then the handler must slow the dog sufficiently so that they can take the short approach at #5. The handler must then take the serpentine of 5 and 6. The result of the serpentine allows a flattened approach to the weave poles at #7. The dog must turn quickly to get in the weave as to avoid over-running the weave poles entrance. This was a common problem in the competition.



To handle the sequence more effectively, the dog should enter jump 6 more squarely so that the dog's momentum is carried forward rather than sideways toward the poles. This can be done by crossing behind at jump 5. As the dog turns to jump 6, they will turn to the right as the handler will be on the right and behind the dog. This will square the dog more off on jump 6 so that they can make a more straight approach to the weave poles.

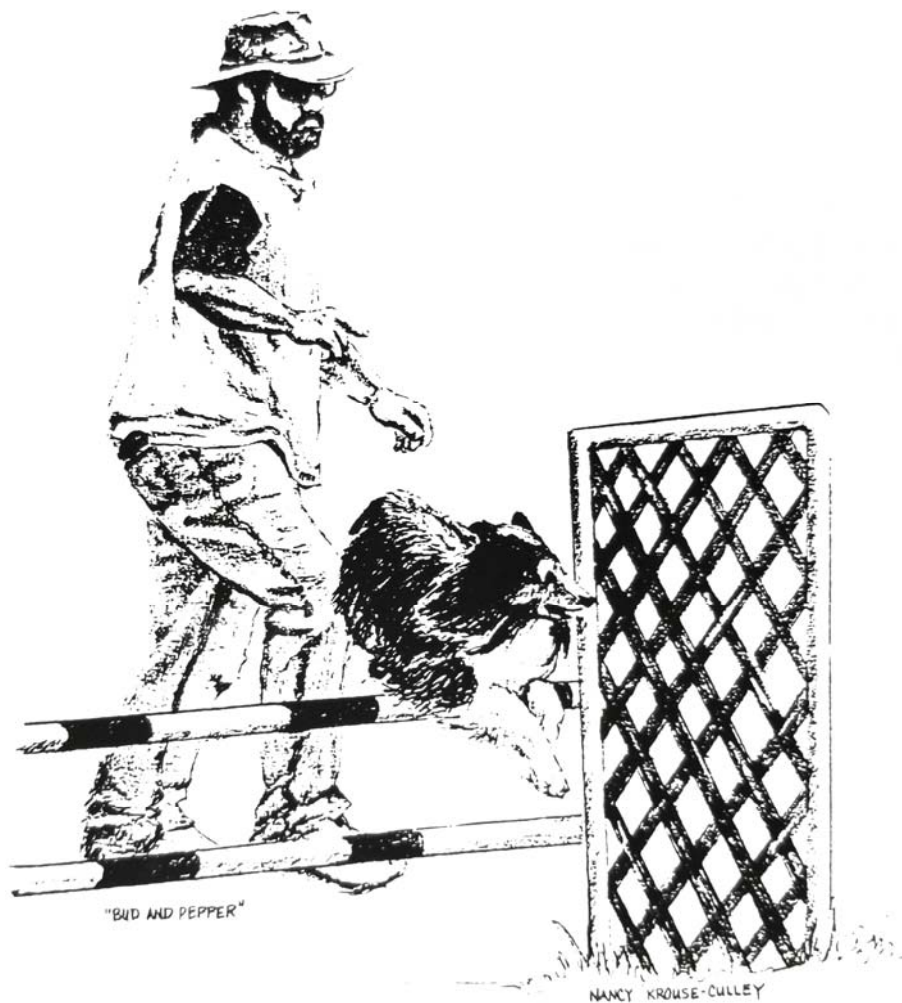


World Cup #11

The difficulty of this sequence is near the end where the dog comes off jump #4 to the long jump. The left sweep from #1 to #4 generates speed. This results in the dog turning wide off the #four jump. The handler must get the dog not only to turn right, but also turn right hard enough to pick up the long jump.

The next point of handler concentration is the teeter. As the teeter is pushed out away from the long jump, the natural tendency is to push in a diagonal line from four to six. This creates an increased momentum for the dog to take the turn wide and get hit for a refusal on the long jump.

The key to a more successful run in this sequence is for the handler to slow his turn into jump four and to slightly slow forward motion from jump four to the long jump to get the dog to turn inwards toward the long jump. Once this happens the handler can push forward toward the teeter without problem.



Clean Run

This week our magazine features course design elements from the World Cup competition with an analysis by Linda Mecklenburg.

Our guess is that we are going to see some of this good stuff in the USDAA Grand Prix competition in San Antonio at the end of the month. But, you should realistically know, you might not see anything like this. Ken Tatsch has had a propensity over the last several years to shamelessly purloin things he's seen in the World Cup competition to introduce to us in the Finals.

However, this is kind of a game of outguessing the fox. We have a decided advantage in the analysis of Linda this week, and Stuart Mah's analysis last week. They were both at the competition in Belgium, and can provide us with a competitor's viewpoint of the course challenges.

However, it's still only a guess as to what Ken Tatsch will do. Whether or not you see anything like what's in these pages doesn't matter too much. These are all solid training sets, and you'll probably still be trying to sort them out long after the USDAA Grand Prix is history.

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The Magic Carpet Ride

-- Linda Mecklenburg

The 1995 Pedigree Grand Prix of Dog Agility will have a new twist: the competition surface will be carpeting. Having recently competed on carpeting at the World Dog Show, I am very aware that a dog's performance may be affected by the footing. The US Agility Team experienced numerous problems that we felt were related to the arena surface. As the competition progressed we learned to adapt our handling styles and strategy accordingly. Although a considerable effort has been made to assure that the surface in San Antonio will be satisfactory, it will remain unproved until the competition begins. I would like to share some of the observations I made while attending the agility competition at the World Dog Show:

- The dogs had difficulty "cornering"--when they landed off a jump their forward momentum carried them much further beyond the jump than one would normally expect and once they were able to turn they had difficulty getting enough traction to begin moving again.
- Some of the dogs "sucked back" in front of the jumps (a term borrowed from horse show jumping that refers to hesitation before the obstacle, a "stuck-in-the-mud" sensation).
- Some of the dogs had difficulty adjusting themselves for a proper entry to the weave poles; others had a hard time continuing the weave pattern without skipping past a pole.
- Some of the dogs experienced problems at the start, presumably from the inability to "dig in" resulting in a flattened stride and a bar down
- The performances of the faster dogs that have a more horizontal trajectory to their jumping style were the most affected.

Handlers should pay particular attention to their dog's responsiveness and ability to react during the Time Gamble class Thursday evening. This class will provide an excellent opportunity for dogs and handlers to accustom themselves to the footing and if your dog's responses are not the norm you will have to be prepared to adapt. I would not be surprised if some of the dogs seem to respond faster on this surface as well as slower, depending on the dog's usual working style.

Some things to consider

- Dogs that are having difficulty cornering benefit from the handler *hanging back* away from the dog to encourage to it turn. The European handlers demonstrated this technique very nicely on the tapes from last year's World Dog Show competition; it is not apparent *why* they are doing it, however until you find that *your* dog is landing with too much forward momentum and can't make the turn
- Dogs that hesitate in front of the jumps may benefit from some thoughtful course planning, electing to change sides in *front* of the dog where possible to avoid inducing a run-out or refusal when attempting to cross behind.
- Give careful thought to the approach to the weave poles, a little conservatism may save you faults here

- Give careful thought to where the dog is lined up before the first jump. Many of the European handlers, obviously experienced on carpeting, set their dogs up very *close* to the first jump which forced the dog to lift up and *arc* over, rather than having them flatten out after not being able to get adequate traction off the start line.
- Consider utilizing products that are made for the dog's paws to improve traction. The US Team tried several different products and did not see a noticeable change in our dogs' performances. However, the Europeans never failed to apply it to the pads prior to competing so my feeling is that they must feel there is some benefit.

Another factor, unrelated to the surface, that the dogs and handlers will have to deal with is large wings on the hurdles. The Pedigree equipment is of excellent quality however the wings are constructed in such a way that they can obstruct the dog's view of the handler and the handler of the dog for brief moments. This can result in a mis-timed signal or miscommunication. I would recommend that handlers keep this in mind when practicing for the upcoming event.

I anticipate none of these problems in San Antonio. I expect that the surface will be excellent. Thoughtful course planning and design should help to circumvent most of the difficulties described. If handlers do find that their dogs' performance is affected by the surface, I hope that this information is helpful. My best wishes to all for a successful 1995 Pedigree Grand Prix of Dog Agility!!

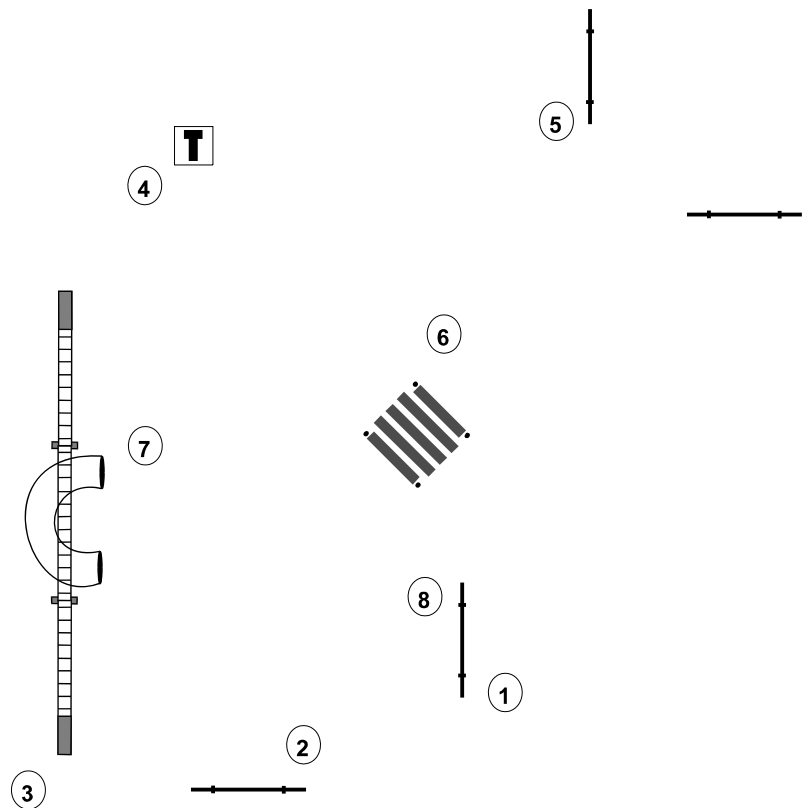
Set #1

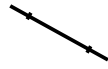
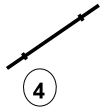
The challenges in this set include:

- Approach to the dogwalk
- Avoiding the dummy jump in the transition from #5 to #6
- Avoiding the side-entry refusal at #6
- Correct entrance to the tunnel at #7

Try the opening sequence, #1 and #2 only, with your dog on the left, then with your dog on the right. How does the handling position effect the approach to the dogwalk?

Try the transition from #5 to #6 also with the dog on left and again on the right. How does position affect the call off? Try the same sequence positioning yourself to the right of #5 while your dog is on the table.

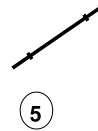




Set #2

<==== Sequence A

In this set the challenge is in the approach to the A-frame. Does the challenge change if a right turn to jump off of the A-frame were required instead of a left turn to jump?



3



4

Sequence B ==>

How does the handling challenge differ if we change the opening sequence by adding a jump?



2



1



3



2



1



Set #3

The challenges in this set include:

- depressed angle approach to jump #3, and the tunnel at #4
- the dog's line of sight (dotted line) does not allow a view of the tunnel

If the handler handles the A-frame off the left, it requires a cross behind at #3. If performed on near side there is a risk of pushing the dog off 3. If performed on the far side of 3, the risk is pushing the dog wide beyond the tunnel opening.

If the handler handles the A-frame off the right it will require precise timing of the command to get the dog to turn right to the tunnel; too soon and the dog misses #3, too late and the dog lands wide beyond the tunnel opening).

Now, **reverse the order of the obstacles**. Now the jump at #3 and the A-frame present a depressed angle approach. If the handler tries to push the dog out to straighten the approach to 3, he risks pushing the dog too far and missing the jump (difficult for the dog to see the jump). The more the handler pushes his dog out to straighten the approach to #3, the sharper the right turn to the A-frame, increasing the chance of a runout.

If the handler tries to call the dog directly over the jump, then send to the A-frame, there is a risk of the dog cutting inside of jump #3. Because the dog can't see the A-frame until airborne, the risk of runout remains unless the dog is very responsive to a 'Right' or an 'Out' command. It is difficult to cue the dog to turn with body signals in this exercise.



3



2



1

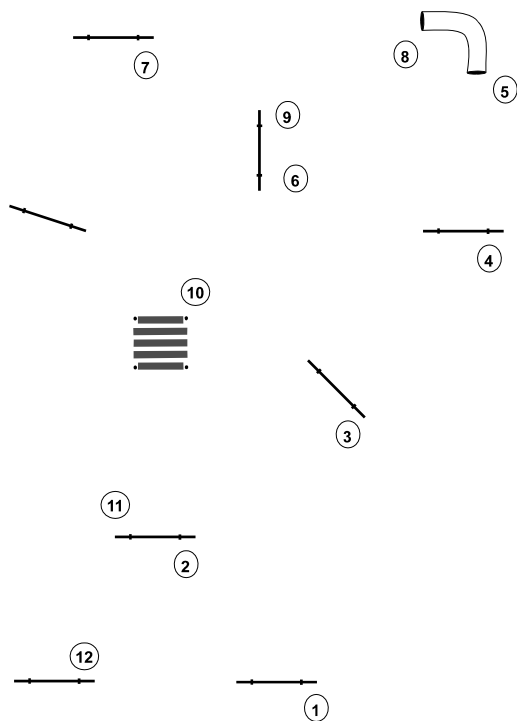
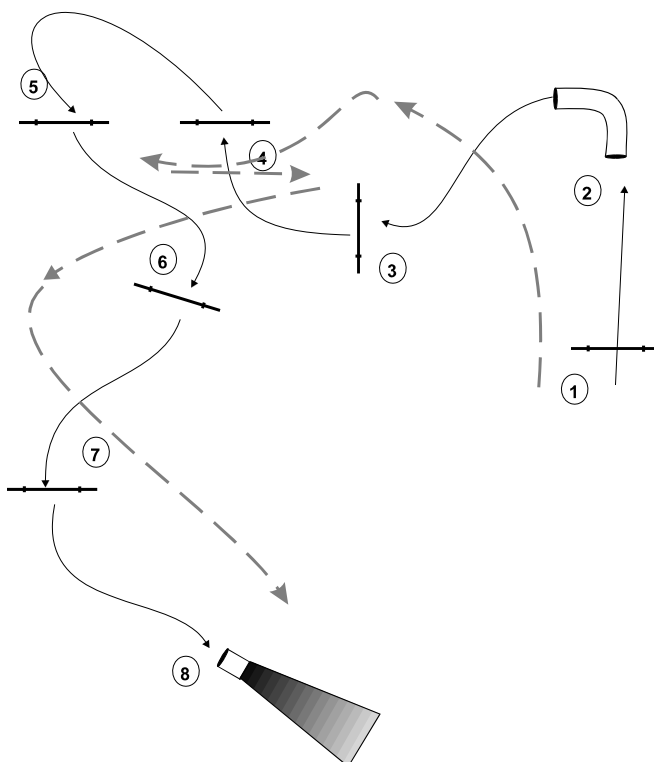
Set #4

The challenges in this set include:

- A 90° turn with an angled speed approach in which the dog will be tempted by #6
- A 180° turn back to 5
- approaches from #5 to #6, #6 to #7, #7 to #8

Problems: Dogs will have difficulty making the 135° turn back from #3 to #4. Dogs will be pushing wide to the right of jump #6 in the transition from #5 to #6. And dogs will be pushing wide to the right of the collapsed tunnel in the transition from #7 to #8.

Most successful handling of this sequence involved the handler either crossing in front of or behind their dogs in order to pull the dog to the right, and over #4, then crossing behind the dog to pull it around to the left, to #5, then backtracking to pull the dog in before sending on to #6. The farther the handler pulled back the better the approach from #6 to #7. Cross behind the dog over #6 to pull to #7, cross again to pull the dog left to the tunnel.



Set #5

The challenges in this set include:

- Approaches to #2, #12, and the finish
- Avoidance of #10, the dummy in the 9 to 10 transition
- Possible side-entry refusal at #10; possible refusal at #5.

At the World Dog Show there were electronic timers that were activated when the beam was broken. The dog had to pass through them, the handler couldn't. Placement of the timers affects the ability to line a dog up from 1 to 2, and encourages the handler to cross behind the dog at 12 to pull the dog through the finish, if the handlers on the right at #11.

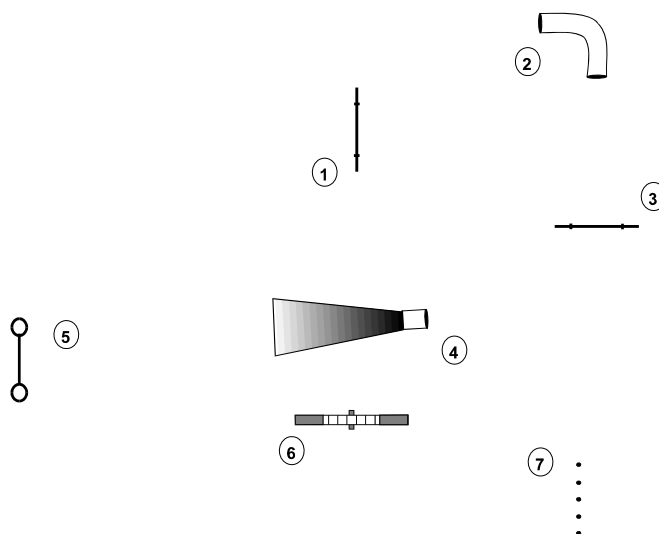
There is a chance that these timers will be purchased by the USDAA. Therefore, everyone should be thinking about it. The run hasn't begun or finished until those timers are crossed.

Set #6

The challenges in this set include:

- 90° turn from #3 to #4, avoiding the weaves
- 180° turn to #6, avoiding the dummy
- 90° turn to #7

Many dogs had a problem with the weave pole entry. Is it best to handle #6 from right to left to set the dog up? What's the best way to get there? If the handler crosses behind his dog at #5 there is a risk of pushing the dog over the dummy.



Set #7

The challenges in this set include:

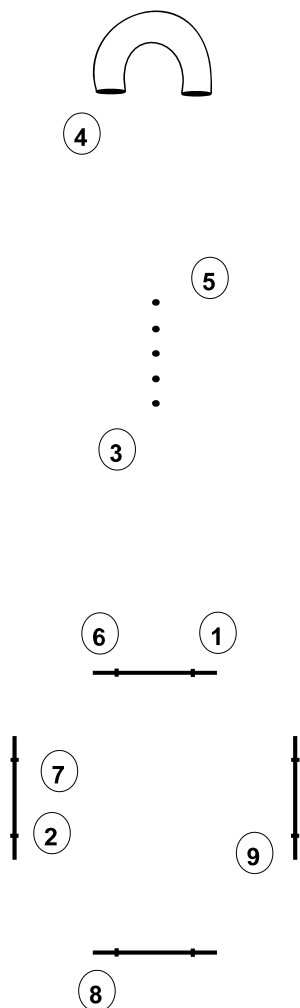
- A 180° turn back from #2 to #3.
- How does one ensure a safe entry to the weave poles?
- A 270° turn from #7 to #8.

Problems will include, entry to poles at #3. Most dogs will turn wide after #2. The handler needs to stay near jump #1 and call the dog before sending.

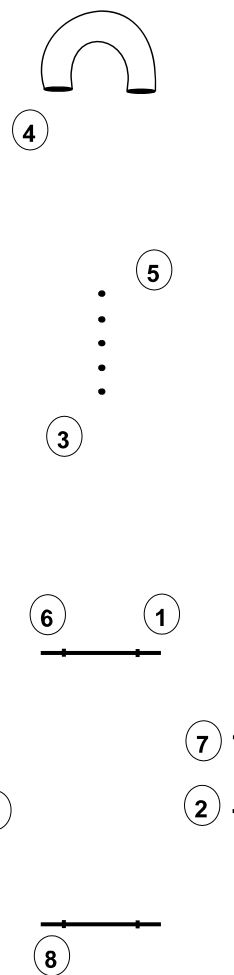
Try this set numbered in each of these ways:

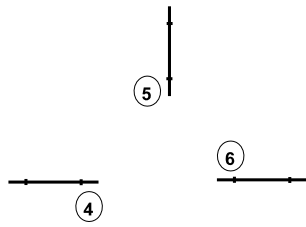
<=== Sequence 1

Sequence 2 ==>



Note: There will be a weave pole knockout in San Antonio. It's a fair bet that it won't be a down and back kind of knockout, something that requires more handling, as demonstrated by this set.



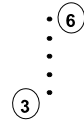
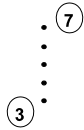


Set #8

Do this exercise with no lead-out. Try it with the handler on the left, and on the right. Which works best? Try both sequences:

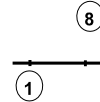
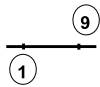
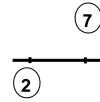
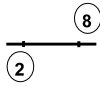
<==== Sequence 1

Sequence 2 ==>

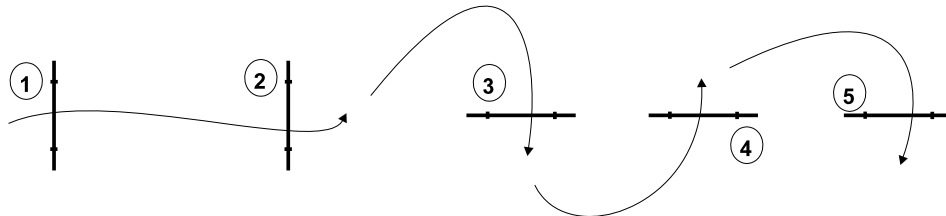


Challenges in this set include:

- Weave pole entry on a straight approach with the dog at speed.
- Weave pole entry with an angled approach (6 to 7 in Set 1, 5 to 6 in Set 2)



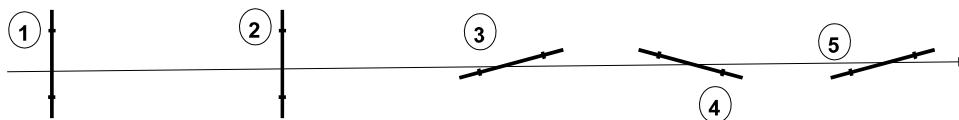
Vary the exercise by changing to a set of six or eight poles. Try switching reversing the flow 4-6 in Set 1, and reversing the flow 4-5 in Set 2.



Do this exercise with no lead-out. Try in with the dog on the right and on the left. After running the set as pictured above, run the set as pictured below.

The challenges in this set include: • Transition #2 to #3 (it is better to push the dog out and then pull in, with the handler on the right) • Transition #3 to #4 (if the handler started on the right, a change of sides behind the dog is required) • Transition from #4 to #5 (if the handler started on the left it will be difficult to get the dog to bend right)

The most common problem with the above set is that the dog will bypass one of the jumps, 3, 4, or 5; usually because the dog has difficulty seeing the jump from end-on. Most handlers will exaggerate the handling so that the dog makes time-wasting, sweeping turns. To help dogs recognize the jumps and handlers recognize the wasted motion, change the set slightly, as shown below.



Special Thanks

I'd like to thank Stuart Mah and Linda Mecklenburg for the hard work they put into the analysis published in the Clean Run over the past two weeks. It's not easy work. And certainly, it doesn't pay very much. It demonstrates a commitment to the sport by both of these terrific competitors that goes above and beyond.

On the Cover

Ouch. Who is this rather gnomely looking fellow? And exactly what kind of image is he trying to cultivate? Makes you wonder. Do you remember the nice picture Nancy Culley did of Mike and Tika a few weeks ago? Certainly you do. Nancy drew Mike in almost angelic terms. But *this* picture really borders on the butt-ugly side. I asked Nancy about this last time I saw her, pointing out that her subject is a whole lot prettier than Mike (so how come he turns out like this for cover art?). Nancy explained to me, "I don't design 'em, I only draw 'em."

At any rate. Thanks to Nancy for giving us a very interesting run of cover art. She's quite a gifted artist.