

Combined Driving Event (CDE) at Three G Farms

by Mary Winter, 3G Farms

The annual Combined Driving Event (CDE) camp, held every April at Three G Farms, is an opportunity for people new to the sport to learn the ropes of this type of event before entering ADS (American Driving Society) competitions throughout the Midwest in the summer and fall. And it is a chance for more experienced drivers to improve their skills in driving dressage, cones, and hazards under the watchful tutelage of a clinician.

The 2007 CDE camp began on Thursday, April 19, with the first dressage lessons for the 16 camp participants. Each 45-minute lesson, held in a 40 x 80 meter outdoor arena,



Edna Oakley, Clear Lake, with navigator Hannah Schriever, Mason City, as her navigator, drove her Morgan, Jake, to fourth place in the CDE camp Driving Trial. Photo by Jenny Kim, used with permission.

began with the driver performing a dressage test. Then the clinician, Kathy Palmer, of Plattsmouth, Nebraska, worked with the driver and pony on individual elements of the test, usually done by riding along with the driver in the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the driver and horse performed their test again. Each test was scored, so the camp participant received early feedback on his or her performance.

After a walk through the 14 pairs of cones on Saturday morning, with the clinician explaining principles of driving a cones course, each participant had the opportunity to drive the course several times to perfect their skills. Saturday afternoon began with everyone walking the 2-kilometer marathon course, to locate each of the three hazards. Then participants practiced driving the three hazards under the watchful eye of the clinician, with different routes through each hazard tested and timed, so participants could figure out which route worked best for their horses.



Winning the prize for coming the farthest for the camp was Tracey Jenkins from Ulen, Minnesota, which is northeast of Fargo. Tracey is driving her gray mini stallion, Jazzes Starlight Sparkle, on the marathon. Photo by Jenny Kim, used with permission.

Sunday, the 22nd, we put it all together with a Horse Driving Trial that began with each competitor performing the dressage test again, also for a score. Immediately after the dressage test, participants drove the cones course again, with cones set at the correct clearance. After a short break, horse, driver, and navigator drove the 2-kilometer marathon. Although the event was conducted and scored like an official Driving Trial, some of the rules were relaxed to permit participants to navigate for each other in the marathon.

This year's Combined Driving Event Camp had good news and bad news. The good news:

- Seven of the 16 people participating were new to Combined Driving Events, further indication of the growing interest in driving in Iowa;
- We missed the really cold weather of the week before, and the rainy weather of the week after (by *minutes* on Sunday; it began to mist as the last competitor completed the marathon course, so people were loading up to head home in the rain);
- The dressage tests of all participants improved significantly over the weekend, thanks to lessons with the clinician;
- Getting to drive the cones course and the hazards several times, trying different routes, was REALLY fun. Because of the practice, everybody made the time easily in the cones on Sunday, and almost everybody did the same in the marathon. The cones were a lot tighter in the Driving Trial on Sunday, of course, so only three competitors had double clean runs in the Driving Trial.

The bad news? We had our first accidents

in the seven years we've been holding events at Three G Farms. We had loose horses (without a carriage, fortunately) and a turnover on the marathon that resulted in a driverless horse and carriage streaking to the barn. The good news about the accidents was that, although the people and horses were bruised and shaken up, there were no broken bones. And, of course, all humans were wearing helmets. The major casualty was a Meadowbrook carriage, which may never drive again.

When the dust settled, and the scores were calculated, Christie Loiacono, of Boone, driving her Welsh pony, SL Rey, posted the lowest dressage score of the day, a 42. With only one ball down in her cones run, she held her first place finish through the rest of the event. Two first-time participants in the camp (and in CDE-type events), Jo Arrowsmith of Boone, and Nikki Thummel of Des Moines, placed second and third, helped considerably by their double clear cones drives: no balls down and within the time allowed. They were two of only three competitors who managed double clear cones drives on Sunday. In fourth place was Edna Oakley from Mason City, driving her Morgan, Jake. Fifth was Jim Block from Minong, Wisconsin, driving a pair of Morgans. Jim spends his summers in northern Wisconsin and his winters in northeast Oklahoma. He stopped at the camp on his way home for the summer. Jada Neubauer, driving Droste, a Hackney pony, had the third double clear cones run, which helped her place sixth in the event.

All in all, it was a great camp—the most participants—some of the best weather. And may it be seven (or more) additional years before we have another accident!



Jo Arrowsmith and son Jake, Ames, driving their pony, Jane. Jo had one of the three double clear cones drives, to place second in the CDE camp Driving Trial among the training level participants. Photo by Jenny Kim, used with permission.

