

Trials Tales

Observing

The task of observing is a thankless one and there is much to learn for the novice observer. Riders without exception will try to pull the wool over an observer's eyes. To get savvier an observer needs street smarts. To facilitate this I will outline some tricks of the trade. These are not the ones you were taught at trials school.

Disputes – Dispute resolution should take one of two forms.

One: the observer must at all times completely ignore the desperate heartfelt pleas of the rider. Being deaf (and dumb) helps here. However persistent the entreaty, indifference is the most effective weapon in the observer's armory.

Two: if the rider is a particularly attractive member of the opposite sex, the observer may choose ask for a phone number and offer a candle-lit supper as a way of settling a dispute.

Boundary tapes – Sections are bounded by bunting or tapes, *or is that bunted by bounding tapes*. Any road, these tapes cannot be broken, which will incur a 5 point penalty. That is unless a rider, whilst balancing and not footing, can locate the broken ends of the tape, tie a double over-handed reef knot, thereby joining the tape. Upon rejoining of the tape, the rider must remain motionless and on the pegs allowing the observer to inspect the quality of the knot. The observer will not add points to the riders score only if satisfied the tape has been well knotted, assessed restoration of it's breaking strain and seen a re-positioning as near as possible to it's original state.

Section markers – These too cannot be broken or tampered with. A rider must ride from the *Start Section* sign through to the *End Section* sign. Riders who cannot understand the start to end sequence need more than observing; they most likely require management for the moonstruck. An observer must also remember that from time to time a rider may wish to jump through a section. This is fine as long as the rider whilst airborne passes through or over the appropriate splits (see next paragraph). Backflips are allowed, and Superman Seat Grabs are great for any spectators and to be encouraged with applause of an appropriate duration.

Split markers – The purpose of the split marker is to direct a rider over or through an obstacle in accordance with his or her riding grade. As with section markers a rider may choose to clear these whilst airborne. Upside down is OK as long as the rider's feet remain on the pegs. Riders who choose not to ride the splits are to be penalised 5 points, unless they can show due cause, backed up by a statutory declaration, double signed and sighted by a Clerk of the Federal Court or Notary Public. An observer may choose to accept this Notice of Due Cause if the rider completes the required 100 point ID check and on presentation of the \$87.00 administration fee.

Gardening – Gardening is not allowed. From time to time riders or their minders might seek to make a line easy by removing or replacing rocks, logs and other stuff. If however, a rider or his minding crew upon request from the observer beautifies a dull section by adding a petunia border, gazebo and lily pond for the observer's sole happiness, points need not be added to the said rider's score.

Accidents – Mishaps are common in trials and injured riders must be removed from the section forthwith. In a particularly difficult section, injured riders might clutter up a riding line and also obstruct the observer's view. From time-to-time riders may sustain injury while still on the pegs and in an upright position. In these instances the observer must allow the rider the opportunity to seek medical assistance before exiting the section. Sometimes quite intricate surgery has been completed without adding to a rider's score although surgeons need to be made aware of possible penalties for footing. Oxygen bottles and colostomy bags, well secured, are allowable if used for medical purposes only.

I have tried with other writings to assist the trials community and I trust that this particular piece will be used as an educational tool for all new observers and as a refresher to some of our more experienced observers. By the provision of such useful and practical information, I hope to make the trials world a happier, and safer, world in which to ride.

