



Organizing Jack Russell Racing

Article by Bob Franklin, CT

Jack Russell Racing is one of the most popular events at a Jack Russell Trial. It is an excellent money-maker for trial organizers and an enthusiastic cadre of JRT owners who go from trial to trial racing their dogs. In spite of this, many trial organizers complain about racing. Problems with race organization can cause participant discontent because of resulting equipment malfunctions and general confusions over race placements, fouls, caught lures, etc. Racing can also run beyond its time allotted, which infringes on starting times for other trial events. The purpose of this article is to pass along some hard learned lessons in racing organization that will help make racing a truly enjoyable experience for all concerned.

Pre Race Day Preparations

1) RACE TRACK CONSTRUCTION

A well-designed race track can eliminate problems before they occur. An earlier article dealt with some parts of race track construction and safety (especially jump construction and handling of finish line hay bales or foam finish barrier) so I will avoid repetition here. A summary list of necessary race track materials is presented at the end of this article.

Race Track Location

If possible, allow participant cars to park alongside the race track (back 20-30 feet from the track of course). This allows participants racing several dogs to have quick access and reduces delay time in between races while handlers collect other dogs. Also, try to locate racing in an area that allows minimum of 100 yards (75 yards for the race track, 10 yards for collection area and 5 to 8 yards for catch area with enough room at each end of the track to allow people and dog passage). Area of race track should be mowed with short grass, but hopefully the mowing is constant to avoid having sharp stubble to injure the dogs' feet. Be sure to check the race track itself carefully and eliminate any rocks, ditches, holes such as a horse's hoof makes, stubble from mowed off bushes, etc.. Race track should be horizontal across it's width so one side is not appreciably lower than the other side. If the area slopes lengthwise of track, that is okay, but ALWAYS RUN DIRECTION OF RACES UPHILL. IMPORTANT - always consider safety of the terriers in choosing race track location.

Race Track Design

Make race track 8 to 10 feet wide. Design jumps to exactly fit in track to avoid necessity for wings on the jumps. Make side walls for track quite sturdy and straight using stiff plastic fencing to prevent dogs from escaping under the sides. Keep posts no more than 10 feet apart to support sides. Fasten track sides securely to posts using cable ties, but be certain any edges of tracking face away from direction of racing and keep sharp ends of ties on outside of track to prevent any sharp points on inside of track that could poke a dog's eye.

TYPICAL JACK RUSSELL RACE TRACK LAYOUT

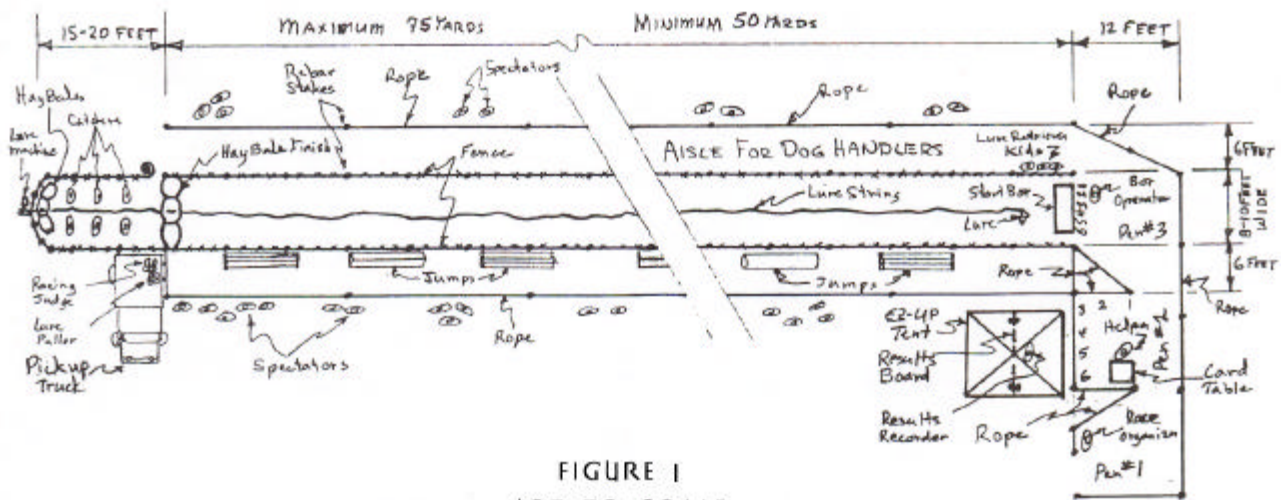


FIGURE 1
NOT TO SCALE

Traffic Control Roping

Install roping barriers on both sides of race track about 6 feet from side of race track making a lane full length of track, but stop both sides just before catch area. Using same roping, continue barrier at start end of track (may be straight out in same direction as track or can be bent at 90 degrees) to make 3 connected areas or pens approximately 12' X 12'. The pen furthest from the starting box has an opening to the outside and serves as participant entry to race track.

At opening between first pen and second pen, have a small table on which racing collars and a set of sic dominoes or cards with numbers 1 through 6 can be kept. On sides of second pen, large paper numbers again 1 through 6 are taped to the side roping. The final pen encompasses racing start box. On one side of track, keep the 6 foot lane open to start box pen so handlers can proceed down this lane to finish after loading their terriers. Keep this handler-traffic lane on side of track least apt to draw spectators so handlers do not block spectator viewing. During flat races, keep race jumps next to track in the other lane that does not receive handler traffic. Close this unused side lane (except for jump storage) at both ends and do not block spectator viewing. This open lane also provides an unobstructed view full length of the track for person handling lure puller and/or for racing judge. See Figure #1 for typical race track layout.

Place the numbers in the second pen in such an order that each handler can wait with his terrier, proceed one at a time in numerical order to the racing box and then file unobstructed into the handler's lane. This single file procedure avoids handler collisions and confusions in the starting area. The numbers correspond to numbers taped to the underside or inside of the dog compartment lids on the starting box depending on whether top or back load box is being used. The important point here is that when the lids are open to receive dogs, the numbers must be visible.

Results Board

Use a 4' X 8' sheet of 1/2" plywood to post racing heat sheets. Post these sheets at least 15 minutes prior to start of racing. Four 1/2" rebars about 6 feet long serve to hold plywood vertical. Drive stakes in ground in pairs about 7 feet apart and slide plywood between each pair of vertical bars. A couple of cinder blocks placed underneath the plywood will raise this "bulletin board" enough to make subsequent entry of racing results easier. It helps if an EZ-Up tent can be place over Results Board to

keep sun and/or rain off. Keep this Results Board right next to the starting area with clear view toward the finish.

Racing Judge and Lure Puller Locations

Arrange hay bales or foam finish barrier at finish area as described in my earlier article. Some racing judges like to sit in the bed of a pick-up truck just behind the finish barrier to make finish viewing easier, but others prefer to stand immediately behind the finish barrier. The person operating the lure puller should always be even with the hay bales or in the pick-up bed so as to be able to see the ENTIRE length of the race track.

I prefer to locate the puller motor itself behind the catch area with bales of hay in front to keep dogs from going through the back fence trying to reach the lure. Some race track designers prefer the lure puller half way down the track, but this way necessitates the lure string being spooled around the back of catch area and along the side of the track to reach the puller. Unfortunately spectators and handlers may step on or trip over the string occasionally thus disrupting a race. If the lure puller is located properly, the operation button will require an extension cord to allow the puller operator to stand by the hay bales. Do not locate puller machine beside the lure-puller-operator up close to the hay bales finish as noise from the puller will attract some dogs to the side instead of them going through the finish hole. If available, use a starter motor with a good strong battery. I like to have another puller and battery as a back-up or at the very least a set of jumper cables to use if the battery dies and a vehicle battery must be used to power the lure puller.

Bicycle pullers are not good. This type of puller must be located behind the catching area and the puller operator cannot see the last 30 feet of the track because of the hay bale finish barrier. Thus the lure may be caught because the puller operator cannot see the lure in front of the hay bale finish.

The starting box is a very important piece of equipment for successful racing. Sturdiness of design is paramount because starting box failures are a major cause of racing delays. Also, careful box design can reduce or eliminate injuries that often occur such as cuts on feet or heads from sharp points or edges inside the box or from torn wire on the box's front. I prefer top load boxes that are at least fifteen inches high in the interior with a front closure gate that is activated by door opening cylinders that swing the bottom of the front gate outward and upward until the gate is pointing forward in a horizontal position. Such opening gates are activated by tripping a lever and few early openings or escaped dogs result. The front "windows" or viewing openings in the opening gates of starting boxes should be kept low (only 6" before the door opens thus reducing the chance of toenails or teeth being caught in the front grate and raising the dog with the gate when it opens. Some people are experimenting with plexiglass fronts, but care must be taken to insure inadequate air availability. If a plexiglass front is used, paint the top 2/3 of the plexiglass so that the dogs must keep low to the ground in order to see out the front. Dogs cannot differentiate between clear plexiglass and an open front and many will ram the front trying to reach the lure that is lying just in front of their noses. I also prefer that there be no floor in the boxes so dogs can push off from the ground instead of a slippery floor that also causes the dogs to stumble on exiting by not expecting a couple of inch drop caused by the false floor.

2. PREPARATION OF RACING HEAT SHEETS

In most trials, racing entries are closed a couple of days before the trial. This enables the Heat Sheets to be prepared ahead of time so they can be posted 15 minutes before the start of racing. Some trials may allow last minute racing entries, and if this is to be the case, it is necessary to leave spaces in heats to accommodate the late entries. Often this delays the start of racing and can require extra heats if no late entries are experienced - all of which makes racing last longer. The Racing Heat Sheets included in the JRTCA Trial Packet are adequate for this purpose but a different version is shown below. List Kennel Prefix in the left hand column of this sheet as there are often several dogs with the same call name and Kennel prefixes help identify individuals. The dogs trial number usually does not help much because owners do not have them memorized.

Heat # 1			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Heat # 2			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Heat # 3			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Heat # 4			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Heat # 5			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Heat # 6			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Semi-Final # 1			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

Semi-Final # 2			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

FINAL			
No.	Name	Color	
		RED	
		BLUE	
		YELLOW	
		GREEN	
		PINK	
		ORANGE	

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In making up heat sheets, try whenever possible to separate dogs with the same owner or with the same kennel prefix. It is difficult to handle several dogs at once and most kennels or owners dislike the possibility of one of their dogs eliminating another of their dogs in an early heat. Spacing of same owner dogs in widely separated heats further speeds up racing since the handler has time to get second or third dogs between heats. Be aware of makeup of the heats in flat races and put different dogs together for steeplechase races as opposed to flat races because it is entirely possible to get the best dogs together in a heat, thus eliminating a top racer. It is a shame to do this twice by using identical heat makeup for both flat and steeplechase racers and experienced handlers appreciate the race organizer mixing up steeplechase heats compared to flat race heats. In fact, since I know most of the racing dogs in New England, I "seed" heats to avoid eliminating top racers. Place numbers of participants evenly in heats to avoid having only 2-3 dogs in the last heat. This happens too much. Provide space on Racing Sheets to indicate collar color for each participant by using appropriately colored Magic Marker or writing the color name in the space provided. Encourage handlers to look for their terrier's color before each race. Plan heats and semi-finals (or quarter finals if needed given numbers of entries) so 3 dogs ALWAYS come back for the next semi-final or final race. It is faster to run a few extra races to accommodate bringing 3 dogs back than it is to have to locate a handler confused by only 2 coming back some of the time. Instruct catchers to tell handler's their dog's placement so the first 3 placers know they are to come right back for the next level of that race.

IMPORTANT - Make two sets of the class heat sheets. Unless you have a color copier or printer duplicate the black and white copy before any coloring is done with a Magic Marker because some colors (ie. red) come out black on regular copiers. I write the word for each color in these spaces on my sheets and then I only need to color in one set - the set that is posted. Coloring is important because I also color semi-final and final places where additional races will take place. If there is only a final race

(6 or less dogs entered) I write this race in the space provided for Finals and if there are 12 dogs or less these "heats" are entered in the Semi-final places. This helps participants understand how many races there are in their classes. In addition to the master set of race sheets posted on the bulletin board, the Racing Organizer gets a complete set on a clip board.

3. RACING COLORS

Please use WIDE colored collars for racing terriers. Some trials use ribbon with velcro pieces attached to each end of the ribbon. The velcro is difficult to successfully attach around the neck of a wiggling terrier. More importantly, ribbon collars are narrow and hard for the racing judge to see when the terriers explode out the back of the finish barrier opening.

I much prefer wide (2" to 3") garter type of collars, which expand, and slip over a terriers head. This type of collar is less apt to come off during a race, which sometimes happens with improperly attached velcro ribbons. Color selection is very important. Choose colors that are easily distinguished from natural terrier colors. Use loud colors, ie: light pink, yellow, red, lime green, light blue, rainbow, etc. Avoid black, brown, gray and white since these colors exist in terriers. Also avoid using dark blue or purple since these two colors closely resemble the colors used in muzzles on racers. Encourage handlers to take off all other collars that may confuse judges. Have at least 3 complete sets of these racing collars.

4. OTHER RACING FORMS

Two other forms are needed for racing. These are - Racing Judge forms for the Racing Judge to record race results and a Championship Runoff form for recording dogs that qualified for Championship Runoffs.

Racing Results Forms - Single sheet forms for each individual race can be used, but I much prefer a form developed by Bob Miller, which is a single sheet for each class. This form resembles a pedigree form in reverse or it looks like the left half of forms to keep track of winners in a tennis tournament or the Final Four tournament in college basketball. Use each box to record results of each heat in the left hand column of squares, the next row of boxes for quarter-finals, the next for semi-finals, and the single box on the right for the finals race. Each judge decides the abbreviations he wants to use, ie Y for Yellow, R for Red, P for Pink, etc. and these are written in each square left to right in order of that race's results. A final needs 6 places recorded. Be certain Racing Judge is provided with enough of these Racing Results forms with a few extras. Give the Racing Judge a clip-board with his Racing Results forms attached transmitting individual race results in between keeping Racing Judge apprised as to what race is being run and how many places need to be counted. The Judge is in constant walkie-talkie contact with Result's Board Keeper during racing. Figure #2 is a sample of Racing Results Form.

RACING RESULTS			
Class # _____	Class Name _____		
Heat #1			
<input type="text"/>	Qtr 1		
Heat #2	<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>	Qtr 2		
Heat #3	<input type="text"/>	Semi 1	
<input type="text"/>	Qtr 3	<input type="text"/>	Final
Heat #4	<input type="text"/>	Semi 2	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Qtr 4	<input type="text"/>	
Heat #5	<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>			
Heat #6			
<input type="text"/>			

FIGURE 2

Designed by Bob Franklin

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5. SUMMARY OF RACE TRACK MATERIALS NEEDED

This list can be used a check-list by trial organizers to be certain they have all equipment needed for successful racing.

- a) 500 linear feel of stiff plastic fencing, 3 feet wide
- b) 100 rebar 1/2" diameter, 4 feet long
- c) 100 rebar protection caps, (available at construction supply outlets)
- d) 300 plastic cable ties, 8" long
- e) 800 feet of yellow or white roping on spools
- f) 15 bungee cords to tie fencing and rebar poles into bundles for transportation and storage
- g) 1 starting box with six stalls - some boxes now in use are not good construction. There are people making excellent boxes now and Farmcliff would be glad to recommend.
- h) 1 sheet plywood 4' X 8' X 1/2" thick
- i) 4 to 6 jumps (see article on racing safety)
- k) 1 pipe post driver (much easier to use than a sledge hammer for driving fence posts)
- l) 4 rebar posts, 1/2" diameter 6 feet long (to hold up results board).
- m) 2 cinder blocks or similar sized blocks of wood
- n) 1 EZ-Up Tent (optional)
- o) 1 staple gun with plenty of staples to fasten race heat sheets to board
- p) 1 tape measure (minimum 25' long)
- q) 1 lure puller with plenty of string + back up puller (Farmcliff can recommend good lure pullers for purchase)
- r) 1 car battery, 12 volt, Deep Cell, marine type + backup battery
- s) 1 crescent wrench, hammer and battery post cleaner
- t) 8 long thin spikes, to hold lure puller in place
- u) 15 bales of hay (or if foam finish barrier is used - only 8 bales of hay)
- v) 2 clip boards
- w) 4 good quality writing pens that will write upside down
- x) 2 good quality walkie-talkies (a third one can be used for the announcer)
- y) 1 bull horn

- z) 1 through 6 dominoes or a set of stiff cardboard numbers, 1-6 -- be careful with cardboard numbers as they can be marked for identification if someone wants to cheat in lane selection.
- aa) 1 through 6 numbers to hang on the side of the collection pen.
- bb) 1 roll of duct tape
- cc) 6 pair of leather gloves in case catchers want them and/or workers helping to set up the track.
- dd) 50 to 100 Racing Heat Sheets (about 10 more than anticipated total races that will be run)
- ee) 25 Racing Results Forms
- ff) 1 Championship Runoff Form
- gg) 1 Lure - HOPEFULLY A REAL TAIL OF SOME SORT
- hh) Lots of soda and other drinks in cooler chests for workers during track construction and during race day.

If you have completed all of these pre-race-day preparations, your race day is ready to begin promptly at 8:00 am. At most trials, we can usually complete racing by 11:30 or at the latest 12:00 noon - early enough so not other events are delayed.

