



2023 DEVELOPING ATHLETE PROGRAM FOR COMBINED DRIVING

Approved by the Driving Sport Committee on December 14, 2022.

The purpose of the USEF Developing Athlete Program for Combined Driving (“DAP”) is to provide guidance and educational resources to cultivate selected athlete/horse combinations who display the potential to improve the national standard of the sport and eventually contribute to a U.S. Team score at Driving World Championships. Athletes wishing to be part of the DAP must apply. If accepted into the DAP, athletes will be recognized as Developing group “A” or Developing group “B”, with group “A” requiring a higher standard for competition results. Athletes in both groups will set performance and training targets agreed upon and re-assessed on an annual basis with the Athlete Advisor. Athletes’ personal trainers are encouraged to attend training sessions and collaborate with the DAP. Accepted Developing Athletes will be expected to attend identified training and education sessions and must show continual improvement towards their targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) at their appropriate level to remain in the DAP. The USEF Developing Athlete Working Group oversees this program.

Membership of the DAP is in no way connected to selection or qualification for Championships or Nations Cup competitions.

The DAP is not designed to provide training for all athletes seeking to compete abroad. The DAP is part of the Driving Pathway which seeks to assist athletes wishing to move to the next level of competition and performance.

A. Minimum Requirements for Eligibility for Qualification

Prior to earning qualifications as described below, the athletes and horses/ponies must meet the requirements enumerated herein:

1. Athletes must be a **U.S. Citizen** & maintain an active competing membership with the USEF in good standing.
2. All horses/ponies must be **recorded with USEF**.
3. Athletes must have completed and signed the **USEF Code of Conduct**.
4. Athletes must comply with all requirements of the **USEF Safe Sport Policy**.
5. Athletes must comply with the **Clean Sport** and **Equine Drugs & Medications** policies.
6. **Within the last two (2) years** from the date of application, athlete/horse combinations must have completed **at least three (3) CDEs** at the **Preliminary level or above**.

B. Application & Selection Process

Applications will be open twice a year, in January and again in June, with a 30-day application deadline.

Eligible athlete’s may apply via their ‘Athlete Dashboard’ on www.usef.org. Eligibility and application to the DAP does **not guarantee admittance**. Submission must include a **video** of the athlete’s current division level **Dressage test** and at least **part of a Cones or Marathon course**.

The Developing Athlete Program members will be recognized in two levels: Developing group “A” and Developing group “B”, with Group “A” requiring an objective criteria of competition results. *Competing at the USEF Advanced or CAI 2*or 3* level does not determine or guarantee the “A” status.*

Para-Drivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis in comparison to the applicable level.

1. The following **factors** will contribute to the **evaluation** of the **athlete/horse combination**:
 - a. **Competition results** and the trajectory of results over the **last two (2) years**, including a complete class comparison (*results from USEF licensed events will receive preference*).
 - b. The athlete’s preceding commitment to the sport, including **competition schedule** and various participation opportunities.
 - c. Athlete/horse combinations committed to seeking out **additional training opportunities**
 - d. Athlete/horse combinations showing **consistency in performance**, reviewed via video submission.
 - e. **Behavior** of the athlete and people associated with the athlete (including, but not limited to horse/pony owners, coaches, grooms & partners) that may have an impact on creating a positive group environment.

Developing Group “A”

1. Within the **last calendar year**, athlete/horse combinations must have achieved at least **two (2) of the following competition phase results** (i.e. dressage & cones; cones & marathon; etc.) within the **overall result criteria** from at least one (1) USEF Novice/Open Advanced or CAI 2*-3* event in the applicable class:

Single Horse criteria:

At least two (2) phases & within the overall			
Dressage	Marathon*	Cones	Overall*
59 penalties or better	85 penalties or better	5 penalties or better	150 penalties or better

**Relevant marathon scores were converted to an average of seven obstacles*

Single Pony criteria:

At least two (2) phases & within the overall			
Dressage	Marathon*	Cones	Overall*
57 penalties or better	88 penalties or better	3 penalties or better	152 penalties or better

**Relevant marathon scores were converted to an average of seven obstacles*

Horse/Pony Multiples criteria:

At least two (2) phases & within the overall			
Dressage	Marathon*	Cones	Overall*
55 penalties or better	97 penalties or better	8 penalties or better	163 penalties or better

**Relevant marathon scores were converted to an average of seven obstacles*

This criteria is determined by results from recent World Championships. Results are averaged from the past three Championships from the top 30% of each competition phase as well as the top 30% overall score. Marathon scores are all converted to an average of seven obstacles.

Developing Group “B”

1. Based on the consideration of **complete class results** with the athlete/horse combination from **three (3) Combined Driving Events** at Prelim or above **within the last two (2) years** of the application date.

C. Membership to the Developing Athlete Program

The USEF Developing Athlete Working Group will determine membership and Athletes will be notified of their acceptance into the DAP. Names of athletes and equines accepted on to the DAP will be published on www.usef.org, on the combined driving Developing Athlete Program page, as well as in an annual USEF Press Release.

Benefits to Membership:

1. Competition planning and goal setting with the Athlete Advisor: short term and long-term goals for the athlete and horse(s)/pony(ies).
2. Training with a variety of appointed clinicians (athlete’s personal trainers are encouraged to attend).
3. Access to all educational opportunities which will enhance the athlete’s competition performance.
4. Exposure to mentors in the Elite Athlete Program.
5. Develop camaraderie athletes also seeking to improve their performance and eventually aim to be competitive on the world stage.
6. Support at identified USEF competitions.
7. Possible team challenge opportunities.

Additional benefits exclusive to Developing group “A”:

8. Given preference for competition support and for clinics
9. Potential access to additional benefits and travel grants – see DAP Addendum A

Maintaining Membership:

Athletes are subject to reapplication each year. In order to maintain membership in the Developing Athlete program, athlete/horse combinations must meet the following requirements:

1. Maintain Minimum Eligibility requirements A.1-5.
2. **Minimum attendance**: Athletes must attend at least **one (1) DAP clinic** and **two (2) competitions** per calendar year; waivers for this requirement or some of this requirement can be approved by the DAP Working Group for unforeseen or extreme circumstances that prevent athletes from meeting these minimum requirements.

3. **Results:** Athletes must show **consistent improvement** in the **results** for at least **one (1) competition phase** (dressage, marathon, or cones) over the course of **two (2) years**. If no improvement is evident in competition results after two (2) years, athletes will be removed from the DAP after an annual review at the end of the calendar year. Athletes can reapply in the future with a new application.
4. Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and target goal markers with the Athlete Advisor, in collaboration with the athlete's personal trainer.
5. Undergo an annual review with the Athlete Advisor.
6. Participate in auditing clinic lessons as much as possible and attend educational seminars / courses.
7. Demonstrate a commitment to improvement through seeking out additional training opportunities.
8. Demonstrate a commitment to the DAP and learning opportunities.
9. Volunteer at driving events and support the growth of the sport.
10. Positive behavior of the athlete and people associated with the athlete (including, but not limited to horse owners, coaches, grooms & partners) that may have an impact on creating a positive group environment.

Failure to comply with the above, may result in the athlete being removed from the Developing Athlete Program and revocation of program benefits.

Horse/Pony policy

DAP members may submit an online application to substitute horses/ponies to be approved by the Working Group; on extreme short-term notice, the Chair can approve use of an alternate horse/pony in a DAP event until the Working Group can review. To permanently switch a horse/pony, an applicant must re-apply with the new animal in the next application cycle.

Single drivers are allowed up to 2 alternate equines in the DAP at a time.

The intention is to allow drivers to continue their development in the DAP despite temporary changes or lameness issues in horses/ponies, but not to permit a constant rotation of horses/ponies.

E. Auditing

Active USEF Members are welcome to audit the USEF Developing Athlete Clinics and Events, with the permission of the host facility, if each auditor's behavior supports a positive learning environment. Auditors who are not adhering to the USEF's Code of Conduct or are not contributing to a positive learning environment will be excused.

Questions can be addressed to the Interim Director of Driving: 859-225-2052 | SMorrissey@usef.org