



2020 DEVELOPING ATHLETE PROGRAM FOR COMBINED DRIVING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The purpose of the USEF Developing Athlete Program for Combined Driving is to provide guidance and resources to cultivate selected athlete/horse combinations who display the potential to contribute to a medal winning Team score at Driving World Championships in the current and next quadrennial. Athletes wishing to be part of the Program will need to apply. Following application, eligible athletes will be assessed by an appointed evaluator and if accepted into the Program, athletes will be recognized as Developing group “A” or Developing group “B”, with “A” requiring a higher standard for competition results. Athletes in both groups will set performance and training targets agreed upon and re-assessed on a 6-month basis. Athletes’ personal trainers are encouraged to attend all training sessions and collaborate with the Program. 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 in order to remain in the program. The USEF Developing Athlete Working Group oversees this program.

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

The Program is not designed to provide training for all athletes seeking to compete abroad. The Program is part of the Driving Pathway which seeks to assist athletes move to the next level of competition and performance if that is what their aim is.

A. Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

1. Athlete must be a **U.S. Citizen** & maintain an active membership with the USEF
2. Results achieved at US competitions must be with horses/ponies that are **recorded with USEF**
3. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations must have completed a CDE at the **Preliminary level**

B. Criteria given Preference

(note: criteria may be earned at multiple events)

The Developing Athlete Program members will be recognized in two levels: Developing group “A” and Developing group “B”, with “A” requiring a higher standard for competition results. *Competing at the USEF Advanced or CAI 2* level does not determine or guarantee the “A” status.*

Developing Group “A”

1. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have earned a Dressage score of **55 or better** in a USEF Advanced or CAI 2* class.
2. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have achieved a Cones result with **10 penalties or less** (for Singles) or **15 penalties or less** (for Pairs/Four-in-hands) in a USEF Advanced or CAI 2* class.
3. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have competed in **at least two (2) CAI 2* events**



4. Athlete/horse combinations showing consistent performance and competition results (*with the quality of competition considered*)
5. Athlete/horse combinations committed to seeking out **additional training opportunities**

Developing Group “B”

6. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have earned one of the following Dressage scores at a Combined Driving Event:
 - ✓ **45** points or less in Preliminary
 - ✓ **50** points or less in Intermediate
 - ✓ **60** points or less in USEF Advanced or FEI CAI 1*/2*
7. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have incurred one of the following Cones results at a Combined Driving Event:
 - ✓ **10 penalty points** or less at Preliminary or Intermediate
 - ✓ **15 penalty points** or less at Advanced or FEI CAI 1*/2*
8. **Within the last year**, athlete/horse combinations that have competed in **at least two (2) CDEs** at Preliminary or above
9. Athlete/horse combinations committed to seeking out **additional training opportunities**

C. Application and Selection Process

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

Eligible athlete/horse combinations may apply via the ‘My USEF’ portal on www.usef.org. **Eligibility and application to the program does not guarantee admittance.** Accepted eligible applicants will receive one observation training session with an appointed evaluator at either a Developing Athlete clinic or a USEF recognized event. Observation training arrangements must be made through the Director of Driving, upon acceptance of an application.

Observation Training Session:

An evaluator appointed by the Developing Athlete Working Group will evaluate an athlete/horse combination during an observation training session for at least 45 minutes to determine if they possess the perceived ability to contribute to a medal winning Team score in the future. If an observation training session is taking place at a USEF event, the athlete’s competition performance may also be considered in the evaluation. Personal trainers are strongly encouraged to attend with their athletes.

The following factors will contribute to the evaluation of the athlete/horse combination:

1. Demonstrated ability and trainability during the observation training session
2. Results and the trajectory of results over the past year (*results from USEF licensed events will receive preference*)
3. The athlete’s preceding commitment to the sport, including competition schedule and seeking out additional training/lessons



4. 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

D. Membership to the Development Program

Following the observation training session, the appointed evaluator will consult with the Director of Driving & the USEF Developing Athlete Working Group, which will determine membership and recognition of a developing group, either “A” or “B”. Athletes will be notified of their acceptance into the Program and which group they are appointed to. Names of athletes accepted on to the Program 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: short term and long term goals for the athlete and horse(s)
2. Training with a variety of appointed clinicians (athlete’s personal trainers are encouraged to attend these sessions)
3. Ability to audit other training sessions, including the Elite Athlete Program sessions
4. Access to educational opportunities which will enhance the athlete’s competition performance
5. Exposure to mentors in the Elite Athlete Program
6. Develop camaraderie athletes also seeking to improve their performance and be competitive on the world stage
7. Support at identified USEF competitions

Benefits exclusive to Developing group “A”:

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

Maintaining Membership:

Membership selection allows for 2 years (subject to achieving KPIs) and may be extended to a maximum of 4 years if progress is continual. In order to maintain membership in the Developing Athlete program, athlete/horse combinations must meet the following requirements:

- i. Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and target goal markers with an appointed clinician or evaluator, in collaboration with the athlete’s personal trainer
- ii. Undergo a minimum of two annual reviews by an appointed evaluator, the Director of Driving and/or representation from the USEF Developing Athlete Working Group
- iii. Attend clinics as agreed with the Director of Driving



- iv. Submit results from USEF competitions twice annually, to include the division/class and horse information, as well as clinics attended thus far
- v. Participate in auditing all lessons when possible, and attending all educational seminars / courses
- vi. Demonstrate a commitment to improvement through seeking out additional training opportunities
- vii. Demonstrate a commitment to the program and learning opportunities
- viii. Volunteer at driving events and support the growth of the sport
- ix. Follow the USEF Code of Conduct & Safe Sport policy
- x. 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

E. Auditing

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

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Approved by the Driving Sport Committee on January 9, 2020