

Revised AMA Trials Rules
1st Draft July 17, 2006
Dan Brown

U. Observed Trials

1. Definition

An observed trials is a test of balance and control on a motorcycle which emphasizes the rider's skill and ability to control the bike in a technically challenging off-road environment. The competition takes place on a course made up of a series of observed sections. Each section along the course contains obstacles to challenge the rider such as turns, hills, rocks, and logs within the boundaries of the marked section. At each section an "observer" or course official judges the ride and assigns penalty marks for infractions such as "footing" for balance or other failures to successfully negotiate the obstacles within that section. Although the competition typically has a time limit, it is not a test of speed.

2. Course Requirements. The course layout and marking is the responsibility of a person designated as the "Clerk of the Course" who may be assisted by other course marshals. The clerk should endeavor to establish a course which will be fun and challenging for all skill levels and which will not contain impossible obstacles or extreme hazards. It is especially important that riders of beginner or novice skill level enjoy a competition which is not excessively difficult or discouraging.

- a. *The Loop.* The "loop" or trail which comprises the course connecting the sections must be clearly marked and riders must follow the course in a single direction. There must be no riding backwards on the loop.
- b. *The Sections.* Each observed section must be marked by a pair of each "Section Start" and "Section End" signs which clearly delineate a gate comprising the beginning and end of the section. Each gate has a minimum width of 4 feet.
- c. *Section Boundaries.* Each section shall be bounded by natural obstacles and strong, easily visible waterproof tape (such as surveyor's tape) securely fastened to stakes or trees. The taps should be at a minimum height of 4 inches and a maximum height of 12 inches.
- d. *Class Gates.* Interior gates within the section may be marked to reduce the width of a section or to define the different routes for riders competing in different skill classes (see section U.5). Each gate has a minimum width of 4 feet. A rider must pass through the gates of his or her class. If a rider passes, in either direction, between the gates of another class it will be consider as a failure.
- e. *Observer Position.* The section layout should be in such a way that the observer can place himself in a position to clearly see the entire section from a position near the end gate.

- f. *Riding the Course.* The number of observed sections and the number of laps are announced before the meet begins. If a time limit is to be enforced, this must be announced and the penalties associated with failure to finish on time must be indicated. Riders must ride the sections in numerical order, and a section may be attempted just once per lap. Riders are responsible for their own scorecard, and must carry their scorecard and present it to the section observer for marking at the completion of their ride in that section. Any sections not marked on the scorecard are considered missed sections. If the missed sections exceed 10% of the designated rides, the rider will be considered a non-finisher. In some trials, the clerk of the course may designate a “shotgun start” in which riders in different classes start at different sections in order to spread out the riders at the start.
 - g. *Section Inspection and Practice.* Riders may inspect the sections by walking the section prior to riding, but may not practice in the sections and may not alter the section by moving rocks or other obstacles.
3. Machine Requirements.
 - a. *Motorcycle.* The motorcycle may typically be of any engine displacement, except in youth or specially designated classes where the engine size may be limited. The motorcycle must rear wheel drive only and be equipped with a working engine kill switch, working brakes, ball ends on all handlebar mounted levers, and a number plate designating the rider’s class in 3 inch minimum letters. As an alternate to a number plate, rider bibs or other systems may be used to identify the rider’s class to the section observers.
 - b. *Tires.* The motorcycle must be equipped with trials-type tires having rectangular tread blocks with the sides parallel to or at right angles to the tire axis. The space across the tread cannot extend completely across the tire at right angles to the wall of the tire without interruption by a block. Tire width may not exceed 4.5 inches, tread depth may not exceed ½ inch, and the space between the blocks may not exceed 3/8 inch across the tire or ½ inch in a circumferential direction.
 - c. *Trailbike class.* An exception may be made for tires in a specially designated “trailbike” class, which may be included as an entry level class for non-trials motorcycles.
4. Scoring. The scoring method outlined below is the standard method of scoring used in AMA sanctioned trials and is generally consistent with the scoring rules used in the AMA/NATC National Championship events and in the FIM Trials World Championship events, although simplified to eliminate time limits in the section and other requirements specifically associated with high levels of competition. Supplemental rules specifically for the AMA/NATC National Championship are available at www.natctrials.org and sporting rules for FIM international trials competitions are available in English at www.fim.ch/en/.

- a. *Sections and Observers.* The rider will be scored only within the observed sections. Scoring begins when the rider's front axle passes through the start gate and ends when the front axle passes through the end gate. The rider must have a number plate clearly indicating the class to be ridden within the section, or announce to the observer the class to be ridden. The rider must enter the section only after receiving a signal from the observer; the observer shall show a raised, balled fist and announce "rider" in a loud voice to authorize a rider to enter the section. A rider may choose not to attempt a section and have the observer mark their scorecard with 5 points corresponding to a failure.
- b. *Section Penalties.* Penalties are assessed by the observer in each section as follows:
- 1 fault: 1 point
 - 2 faults: 2 points
 - More than 2 faults: 3 points
 - Failure: 5 points
- c. *Definition of a Fault.* A fault is defined as each contact of any part of the rider or his machine (with the exception of the tires, footrest, and engine skidplate) with the ground or an obstacle (tree, rock, etc.).
- d. *Definition of a Failure.* A failure is defined by one of the following:
- The machine is moving backwards.
 - The machine touches the ground with either tire outside a boundary.
 - The rider or machine breaks, displaces or riders over or above a marker or marker support with either wheel while in the section.
 - The rider dismounts from the machine and has both feet on the ground on the same side or behind the axle of the back wheel of the machine.
 - The rider does not have both hands on the handlebar during a fault, while stationary.
 - The rider receives outside assistance.
 - The engine stops while the machine is without forward motion and the rider is leaning or footing or any part of the machine with the exception of the tires touches the ground.
 - The handlebar of the motorcycle touches the ground.
 - The motorcycle does a complete loop, crossing its own track with both wheels.
- e. *Additional Penalties.*
- Missing a section: 10 points
- f. *Obstruction or Balk.* If, while riding a section, a rider is hindered by the presence of another rider standing in the section, the rider may request that the observer permit a re-ride of the section. Any penalties incurred prior to the hindrance are retained.
- g. *Protests.* A rider may protest a score in a section, by making a specific protest in writing to the clerk of the course within 10 minutes after the end of the event. The clerk of the course will decide on the merits of the protest, after conferring with the observer in question. A rider may not protest another rider's score. Decisions of the clerk of the course are final.

- h. *Overall Scoring and Ties.* In each class, the order of finish is determined by the low score. In the event of ties, the rider with the lowest score on observation (independent of any time penalties, if those are used) will prevail. If the riders are tied on observation, the rider with the most cleans will prevail, and if still tied then the rider prevails who has most ones, twos, or threes, in succession. If riders are tied on all points, then the rider prevails who rode farthest into the trial before the first one, or two, three, etc. If still tied on all points, the clerk of the course will organize a “ride-off” in which a special section is designated and the riders ride one time each in turn, repeating the process until one rider has a lower score. A coin flip will be used to determine which rider goes first in the ride-off.
- i. *Alternative Scoring.* Some clubs may choose to utilize an alternative scoring system at some events. Alternative scoring rules should be announced and clearly explained prior to the competition. Some examples are:
- *No-stop rules.* This system is often used with vintage trials or classic “English” trials, and requires that the machine maintains constant forward motion without stopping, under penalty of failure.
 - *Indoor rules.* This system is popular with “indoor” or stadium trials which include manmade obstacles of various types such as pipes, timber structures, inverted dumpsters, car bodies, teeter-totter planks, etc. Typical indoor rules allow the rider to move the machine backwards. The rider may also be required to ride several sections continuously with additional penalties for exceeding a specific time limit. Indoor stadium trials sometimes include a side by side race over a series of obstacles with the loser receiving additional penalty points.
 - *Gate Trials.* This system incorporates a series of gates within each section with points associated with each gate. Gates with more difficult obstacles are given a greater point value. The object is to ride the section clean (no faults or failures) while passing through as many gates as the rider is capable of riding. No gate is required for passage, all are optional. The rider accumulates points for all the gates successfully attempted in each section, so long as the section is ridden cleanly from start to end. Any fault or failure within the section results in 0 points for the rider in that section. This system also works well as a team competition, with riders in each team accumulating points for the team with successful rides.

5. Trials Meets, Clubs and Rider Classification

- a. A trial competition will be organized by an AMA sanctioned club. Each such club may add supplemental rules and rider classifications according to local interests. In order to promote similar rider classes across the U.S., the following skill levels are recommended:
- AA: The highest skill level classification at the local club level, comparable to the Expert level at the AMA/NATC National Championship competitions. Some clubs may use a designation

as “Master” or “Champ” and use this class as to determine a club champion for an annual series; some clubs may not have a competition class at this high level and may use the next lower class to determine a club champion.

- A: A rider at this skill level can readily compete in the AMA/NATC national support classes. The rider should have skills at maneuvering the bike by hopping, climbing undercut rock ledges, lofting the front end for “wheelie drops” and other similar techniques that demonstrate expertise in the sport. Often referred as “Expert” skill level.
 - B: A rider at this skill level is competent to participate in the AMA/NATC national support classes. The rider should have skills to include an ability to precisely place the front wheel so as to negotiate obstacles at an angle to the path, even on a steep descent. Often referred to as an “Advanced” skill level.
 - C: A rider at this skill level is competent to negotiate steep hills and off-camber turns, can use “unweighting” techniques to clear logs higher than the skidplate, and can climb obstacles of a moderate height so long as a steep drop-off does not immediately follow. Often referred to as an “Intermediate” or “Sportsman” or “Clubman” skill level.
 - D: A rider at this skill level has the ability to attempt the most basic obstacles including logs, rocky terrain, hills of moderate difficulty, and tight turns. Most riders at this level can overcome logs or small rock ledges by lofting the front of the bike but cannot precisely place the front wheel. Sometimes referred to as an “Intermediate” or “Amateur” skill level.
 - E: A novice level rider at the entry level to the sport. Obstacles should be small and generally capable of being ridden over without the ability to loft the front wheel. The emphasis for section layout for this level rider should be on basic turns, simple hills and cambers, and control of the bike. Generally referred to as “Novice” skill level.
 - Youth or Beginner: In order to promote the sport to young riders, it is desirable to have some very simple sections available that can be ridden by beginning riders on small wheeled bikes. Many clubs have youth sections that are on a totally separate and easy loop from the regular trial loop.
 - Other Classifications: Some clubs may include classes specifically for riders of a certain minimum age, or for vintage machines of a certain period.
- b. *Annual Club Championship Series.* In order to promote a season long club championship, it is common to have a series of competitions with championship points accumulated in each rider class. The points system outlined below is consistent with the AMA/NATC National series for support classes and is recommended for AMA club championships:

- Ranking of riders is determined by counting their best rides in the competitions represented by $\frac{1}{2}$ the total number of events plus one. For example, in a 12 round series the best 7 rides would count. For an odd number, round down, i.e. best 6 rides of an 11 round series.
 - Championship points are awarded as follows:
 - Position 1: 30 points
 - Position 2: 25 points
 - Position 3: 21 points
 - Position 4: 18 points
 - Position 5: 16 points
 - Position 6-20: decreases 1 point per position
 - Position 21-29: decreases 0.1 point per position
 - Position 30-39: decreases 0.01 point per position
- c. *Club Work Rules.* It is recommended that clubs include some means of encouraging club members to host events or to work as observers at select events to help promote events. This not only helps clubs to have well-organized events, but it also helps to encourage club members to participate in the organization and activities of the club. It may be required that each rider competing in the championship series should help to organize and observe at least one or more event during the season. Some clubs use the system of awarding additional first place bonus points as an incentive for observing at least one competition event.
- d. *Alternative Systems for Observing and Event Organization.* Many small clubs or local groups have alternative methods for organizing a competition and observing.
- Morning/Afternoon riding. Some clubs break up the groups into morning and afternoon sessions, with some rider classes observing in the morning and riding in the afternoon and vice versa.
 - Group scoring. Some clubs may break into traveling groups of one or more riding classes who ride together with an individual observer accompanying the group to score all the riders in the group.
 - Peer scoring. Small clubs may ride in one or more groups, with the riders of each group scoring each other.
- e. *Non Competitive Trials Meets.* Motorcycle trials offers a great opportunity for non-competitive events to include riding for fun, practice, and social activities. A trials “fun ride” may include designated practice areas with participants offering coaching in riding techniques and practice in specific skills areas. Adventure rides can also be organized, as trials motorcycles are particularly suited to exploring trails in steep, rocky or very technical terrain, and trials tires are easy on the land.
- f. *U.S. Trials Clubs.* A listing of clubs promoting trials competitions in the U.S. is available at <http://www.usmotorcycletrials.com/>.

- end -