



The UKPA Multi-Horse Trial 2021

Background

During the 2019 Open Forum, a discussion point was submitted to consider allowing players to use more than one horse at tournament that would be a replacement of our existing multi-horse approach. The proposal created was to allow only A Grade teams being able to use a combination of 12 horses. Following the Open Forum, further work was done on the proposal however there was concern around the operational aspect of this and significant complexity and impact to making this approach work so further options were being considered.

In 2020, as a result of COVID and a disrupted season, the UKPA Executive agreed that the three grass tournaments that ran could allow players to use any number of horses during the tournament as we were dealing with changing timescales and requirements and recognised the additional flexibility multi-horse gave them at that current time.

There are clearly lots of positives to allowing members to use as many horses as they like during a tournament however there will also be some concerns about what this means to our sport more broadly and is something we wish to discuss with clubs and their members in more detail before making any further changes to this.

The early tournaments of 2021 (Kent, Limemere and Rugby) have used a variety of different approaches and following a discussion with Club Chairs and Secretaries on the 14 June, we have agreed to formalise a trial for the remainder of the season.

Proposal

From the 15 June, we will trial a change to our existing multi-horse rule for the grass tournaments and the A grade only.

Each tournament organiser has been consulted and the following have agreed to participate in this trial, at the following events.

- UKPA Event (10-11 July)
- Highlanders Tournament (17-18 July)
- Arden Tournament (7-8 August)
- UKPA Nationals (28-29 August)
- Late Season (18-19 September)

For all other divisions, the regular rule of one horse per tournament will now be followed for the remainder of the grass season.



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Multi-Horse Guidance change

The changes in red are the amendments to our existing multi horse guidance and will be used during the trial for the A grade division only.

2. Multi Horse Tournaments

2.1. With prior agreement from the UKPA Executive Committee **any** tournament may **request or** be designated as a Multi-horse Tournament by the **UKPA Executive Committee** under the following conditions:

- a. Players may use **any number of horses**.
- b. **Players may change horses between chukkas. This change must be registered with the table and noted on the scoresheet. This change should not interfere with the game and therefore should take place in the allotted eight-minute break between the player's chukkas.**
- c. More than one player may use a horse in different games up to a maximum of 54 minutes of play per day per horse.
- d. The Tournament Organiser has the right to withdraw a horse if they believe the rules are being abused.



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Justification for a change

The main justification for this is the following potential benefit from a horse welfare perspective.

Currently we ask our horses to play 3-4 matches over a weekend, which can total 54-72 minutes of play which puts our sport at the top end of the spectrum in regards to physical demands for a horse.

Bringing in a young or new horse to the sport can be difficult outside of the start or end of a Polocrosse season as they would currently be asked to play a full tournament without the ability to swap.

In communication with other countries who have adopted similar multi horse rules they have seen an increase in the ages of horses who are able to continue to compete as they are not being asked as much over a tournament.

Allowing people to play more horses may also lead to having more horses within the sport. This increase could mean more available Polocrosse horses in later years for those who are starting to play, rather than us looking to retrain from Polo or Racing for new members.

Concerns against the change

There are a number of areas of concern that this change could impact.

Horse welfare, for those who own one horse or hire horses to play this may cause more strain on that one horse. During a game if the one horse is playing against several fresh horses this could increase the speed and physical demands of the game.

Accessibility, if multi-horse was to be brought in for a longer term the perceived view would be that you require multiple horses to play Polocrosse. This can make our sport more expensive as people try to buy, keep and travel multiple horses.

Increase in number of horses at events can put extra strain on campsites and penning spaces.

Fairness, by allowing this change are we creating a less equal competition during a match.



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Some more details of positives and concerns already captured are:

Positives	Concerns
• We know horse welfare is a very strong driver in all equine sports. • To play consistently A grade players already have look at having more than one horse. • A high grade players horse is expected to play up to 4 matches of 18 mins each over two days. No other equine sport puts that amount of fast playing strenuous demand on every competition. • High grade horses take years to produce and we should consider all options to conserve their playing careers. • At this level it is very mentally demanding to introduce new horses in and it would help to spread the pressure on them. • Not everyone has the talent or ambition to want to play at this level so it is only a portion of the sport that would be affected if restricted to higher grades. • Older horses in their later teens can be great for helping young riders into higher grades and it would mean they would not necessarily have to play every match over the weekend. • Our summers are starting to regularly have us playing in high temperatures making it harder for horses to adequately recover between chukkas. • Horses travelling long hours on a Friday night and having to travel back tired on Sunday for many players.	• Multi horse is not possible for all to afford. • We will be moving to a polo type image • We would be stepping away from the IPC and the one horse value of playing the sport that pervades the rest of the world. • It puts more pressure on travel costs with additional space on lorries needed. • Our venues would need to accommodate more penning space • If you are competing unevenly then the fairness and fun will be affected. • How would this work for the people who are hiring horses in the sport? • Would it go down through to Juniors and PJs pressuring parents • It puts extra strain on the horses that are having to play full games and weekends.



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What happens next

The trial will be closely monitored by a small working group over the summer. This small group of people will include a combination of Executive and Appointed Officers (e.g. Horse Welfare, Chief Umpire) as well as players from all levels and grades.

The whole membership will have the opportunity to provide their own comments on the trial via a survey over the summer and we will continue to keep club chairs and secretaries informed of the trial progress.

This working group will answer the following questions.

1. Do we change our multi-horse guidance, if so to what?
2. When should the multi-horse guidance be used (i.e. should we use this for more than the current first three grass tournaments of the year) ?
3. If there was to be a change of when multi-horse is used would this be for all divisions or just for some?

The outcome of the trial and the review will be communicated to the membership over the close season and ahead of the 2022 season.

If you have any concerns or thoughts regarding this there will be a survey published to the membership during the trial or you may contact Chris Milburn who will be helping within this working group.

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