

United States Refined Horsemanship Association, Inc.

Refined Horse Versatility Competition

Classes are designed to promote the developing and competing of horses who are willing partners... prepared for life...refined in their responsiveness and confident of their abilities...in and out of the arena.

Refined Horse Versatility Classes

Competition is offered for the following divisions: **Sport Horses, Stock Horses and Soft-Gaited Horses**. Shows may offer classes to one or all divisions. Exhibitors should check show listing, on calendar page, to see divisions and classes offered.

Riders may enter more than one Versatility class (e.g. Versatility Two-Phase and In-Hand Obstacle Class) at the discretion of show management. If cross entering is permitted, it is suggested that each obstacle course have modifications.

Within each of the divisions offered at competitions, Sport Horse, Stock Horse and Soft-Gaited Horse, the same type of classes will be offered. For example if a show offers Sport Horse and Stock Horse divisions, the same type of Versatility classes will be offered for both.

Example: <u>Versatility Two-Phase</u>	<u>Versatility In-Hand</u>
Sport Horse	Sport Horse
Stock Horse	Stock Horse

Show management is permitted to combine or split classes as entries warrant.

Versatility Two-Phase consists of two phases: a *Refined Riding Phase* and an *Obstacle Phase*.

Refined Riding Phase

The Refined Riding phase is a ridden test appropriate to the horse's current state of development. It is designed to showcase refinement in communication between horse and rider, resulting in a display of a high degree of collection. It is this development of collection that allows the horse to perform movements of significant difficulty with ease while expressing confidence and joy.

Refined Riding Phase will be a dressage test from a nationally recognized equestrian association. A show may elect to allow competitors to ride a 'Test of Choice' or follow Versatility recommendations. Check show entry form for tests offered.

When multiple judges are officiating at a show, it is recommended that the show organizer select certain dressage tests for Versatility competition in order to allow for all riders to compete under the same judge.

Obstacle Phase

The Obstacle Phase is to show the rider's ability to direct the horse through a series of obstacles designed to highlight the horse's willingness and readiness. The obstacle course will consist of 6-9 obstacles that can include functional tasks from the following list:

Stand to be mounted from a block or similar object	Walk over a bridge
Walk onto a bridge, stop and stand with a loose rein before walking off	Walk/trot over poles
Walk over a foreign surface, e.g. tarp, brush, etc.	Open/close a gate
Back through and around objects, e.g. poles, cones, barrels, etc.	Turn in a small space, e.g. a small box created with poles
Pick up and carrying an object from one location to another	Weave thru's, e.g. cones, barrels, etc.
Sidepass, can include sidepass over a pole	Water obstacle
Stop at a precise point	Put on a rain slicker or coat
Put a specified hoof in a particular place, e.g. over a pole, in the center of a circle, on an 'X' or target	Narrow corridors - rider must pass through a narrow corridor
	Walk through a maze of poles

Versatility Suitability Classes

This is a two phase test comprised of Rideability Phase (similar to an under saddle class on the flat) and an Obstacle Phase which is an obstacle course. See Versatility Obstacle Phase for more detail. Two classes will be offered:

Class 1 will exhibit at a walk and trot only.

Class 2 will exhibit at a walk, trot and canter.

In the Rideability Phase, riders will collectively present their horses at the specified gaits. Judging will be on general way of going, smoothness of transitions, manners and quietness. Riders may be asked to individually rein back or perform simple movements.

These classes are designed for horses in the initial stages of refined development. An emphasis will be placed on horse working in a biomechanically correct manner. Horse should exhibit a forward, stretching frame with a subtle softening of the jaw and poll. Horses ridden behind the vertical, short in the neck and stiff in the jaw will be penalized accordingly.

Versatility In-Hand Obstacle Class

Exhibitors will show their horses in-hand over 6-9 obstacles at a walk and trot. Exhibitors may be asked lead their horse from the left or right side. Exhibitors may use a leather, nylon or rope halter. No stud chains. Obstacles will be the same as in the Obstacle Phase of Versatility Two-Phase with the exception of mounting.

Obstacle Course Inspection

Competitors may inspect the obstacle course, on foot, prior to the beginning of the obstacle judging, during a specified time period, in which the course arena will be open. Course walk time will be posted by the obstacle pattern board near the obstacle course in gate.

Obstacle Course Schooling

At the discretion of show management, the obstacle course can be opened for schooling, to competitors and interested riders, after the last judged ride. This is to give riders the opportunity for further practice or “get their feet wet” by trying it for the first time.

Scoring

The emphasis, at the **Introductory Level**, is the correctness of the foundation of a harmonious, refined partnership. With a correct foundation, the horse will develop into a willing partner who is confident, calm, capable and dependable in all areas of life.

The scoring for both the *Refined Riding Phase*, *Obstacle Phase* and *In-Hand Obstacle Class* will use the scale of 0-10 with 10 being the highest mark.

Versatility Two-Phase - Total points from the *Refined Riding Phase* and the *Obstacle Phase* will be combined for the final placement in the competition.

In the *Refined Riding Phase*, the scoring will primarily follow the guidelines set forth in the USDF rules for dressage. Any exceptions will be noted.

In the *Obstacle Phase*, the obstacles are marked individually with collective marks at the end.

Versatility Suitability Class – Total points from the *Rideability Phase* and the *Obstacle Phase* will be combined for the final placement in the competition.

In the *Rideability Phase*, riders will be given a separate score for work on the rail and for additional movements that are performed.

In the *Obstacle Phase*, obstacles are marked individually with collective marks at the end.

Versatility In-Hand Obstacle Class - The obstacles are marked individually with collective marks at the end.

Obstacle Phase Collective Marks will be as follows:

Rider (Handler in an In-Hand class) – leading intention, clarity and effective application of the aids, supportive manner, use of hands.

Refinement – confidence, willingness, responsiveness, softness, comprehension of aids.

Harmonious acceptance of the aids – relaxation of mouth and tail, use of ears, facial expression.

Presentation – overall smoothness of working through obstacles and transitions between obstacles, turn-out.

Faults/Errors

It is considered a fault when the horse hits a pole. Care should be taken to avoid this. It is considered an error to circle an obstacle. This will incur a -2 deducted from the total score for each occurrence.

Circling in front of an obstacle will be considered a refusal (see below). The use of voice is considered a fault.

Refusals – Obstacle Phase

Refusals or other resistances to working the obstacle, on the part of the horse, will be taken in context. It is the intent of the judging to encourage refined and supportive riding/handling on the part of the rider over promptness of working an obstacle if it is at the expense of the emotional and physical well-being of the horse.

It is at the judge's discretion how long a horse should be allowed to work at an obstacle. Generally after three refusals or for safety concerns, the judge may ask for the rider to move to the next obstacle. If this happens, horse will receive a "0" for that obstacle.

A horse will not be eliminated for failing to work an obstacle before being asked to move on by the judge. However, the obstacle must be presented to the horse in an attempt to build the 'try' in the horse. Failure to do so will result in elimination.

If a horse is presented at an obstacle but never begins the task at hand, the score for that obstacle will start at '0.' It is at the judge's discretion if any points should be awarded for the quality of the leadership and support offered forth by the rider.

Judge will encourage rider to leave refused obstacle on a 'forward try' from the horse. Leaving an obstacle with the horse thinking backwards is detrimental to the development of the horse.

Upon completion of the course, at **Introductory Level**, if time allows, judge may assist rider in completing missed obstacles in order to, again, leave horse in a 'positive mental place.' This is at the discretion of the show management and judge.

Additional Notes on Obstacle Scoring

For ease of language, from here on, the term **rider** will be interchangeable with **handler** (In-Hand exhibitor).

In the Obstacle Phase, the scoring will reflect the horse's ability to negotiate obstacles in a clean, correct, smooth and prompt manner.

Fundamental qualities that a rider should seek to build in the horse:

'Try' – the desire of the horse to work with and trust that the rider will support and provide fair and adequate direction. This is especially important in challenging moments. A horse who chooses to balk, bolt, rear and buck or display other defensive behaviors is not exhibiting 'try.'

Confidence - the belief a horse has that he can do anything that is asked of him.

Calmness – the state of being in which the horse views life in a positive, relaxed and confident manner.

Direction from the rider is essential to building try or discouraging it. For example, in a moment when the horse is scared of an obstacle, the rider needs to encourage the horse to think 'forward' to the spooky object and release the aids in that moment. This will build try. For the rider to apply aids until the horse becomes backward thinking and more resistant is counterproductive to building try.

Scoring will favor riders who support their horses in moments when the horse is afraid, unsure of the situation or lacking in understanding over riders who make or force their horses in attempting to work an obstacle.

The idea is to encourage and build the harmonious teamwork of the horse and rider with an eye to the future of the partnership and not with shortsightedness that only sees the 'doingness' of today.

The ideal is a horse who negotiates an obstacle promptly, cleanly and smoothly with biomechanical correctness appropriate for that Versatility level of refinement.

Saluting

In all classes, exhibitor should wait for the judge to indicate that she/he is ready before beginning competitive round. This indication may be a verbal or in the sound of a bell, etc.

Versatility Two-Phase class - Obstacle Phase

Course layout may require riders to enter the competitive arena mounted or unmounted. Regardless, rider should salute the judge at the entrance of the competitive arena prior to starting on course.

Salute should be similar to that of a dressage salute.

A final halt and salute should be made after the last obstacle.

Versatility In-Hand Obstacle Class

Handler should salute the judge at the entrance of the competitive area prior to starting on course.

Salute should be similar to that of a dressage salute. Handler should place all of the lead shank/rope in the hand closest to the horse. The free hand should be used for the salute.

A final halt and salute should be made after the last obstacle.

Versatility Suitability Class – Obstacle Phase

Course layout may require riders to enter the competitive arena mounted or unmounted. Regardless, rider should salute the judge at the entrance of the competitive arena prior to starting on course.

Salute should be similar to that of a dressage salute. A final halt and salute should be made after the last obstacle.

Mounting

It is extremely important that a rider works to have horse's focus before mounting. It is dangerous to get on a horse who is not focused on the rider.

Horse should stand quietly to allow rider to pick up stirrups and reins. Gathering the reins should NOT be the signal to go.

Reins should be off the horse's head anytime the horse is being lead.

Judges

Judges are selected by their high credentials, commitment to refined horsemanship and the local horse community. The Judge's decisions are final and must be accepted in a sportsmanlike manner. Poor sportsmanship may cause disqualification.

Attire

Schooling show - neat and tidy schooling attire is acceptable. Approved helmet and boots, with riding heel, are mandatory when riding. Gloves are optional. Dress appropriately for the weather. In extreme cold or heat, dress for comfort.

In the *In-Hand* classes, slacks are an option instead of breeches. Helmet and gloves are optional.

