

# Agility Without Jumps? Speedway!

By Christy Gammage  
Practice Makes Pawfect

There are many national and international organizations that sanction dog 'agility' events. People are familiar with dogs flying over jumps, running up ramps and over teeter totters from televised events. But there are also 'agility' events that do not have jumps or 'contact' equipment like A-Frames, Dog Walks, Teeters or Tables. One such organization is Canine Performance Events (CPE) and, in addition to their regular Agility events, they have recently introduced a new division they call "Speedway". The Speedway classes use hoops, tunnels, barrels and a straight-line lure course where the dog chases a lure on a string. As you might have guessed, each class has a racing theme and speed is the goal.

One of the most popular classes is PitStop, consisting of all tunnels. The dog and handler have up to a maximum time of 60 seconds to complete the 100-yard tunnel course which may consist of eight (8) to twelve (12) tunnel entrances. Most dogs love tunnels and the handler has to direct the dog into the correct tunnel for the pattern. The North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC) organization has a similar game called "Tunnelers".

In SlingShot you maneuver the dog through a course of hoops and tunnels with the potential to show off your dog's ability to work at a distance. The course is typically in the shape of an M with tunnels at each of the turns and hoops or more tunnels along the straight lines. The course will have 2 gamble lines marked which can earn you bonus multipliers. The gamble lines could test sending your dog ahead of you or away from you laterally. Stay behind the nearer line as you send your dog across it to perform the obstacles and you get 1.5 times your earned points. Send your dog while staying behind the farthest line and you get 3 times the points! To earn the multiplier, the team must complete the course without any corrections to the dog's path and the handler staying behind the lines. Have a velcro dog? Run right over the line and you still get the points, just no multiplier.

Like barrel racing? Then CPE's Pole Position is your game. Pole Position is a course where the dog navigates around barrels in response to the handler's commands, with accuracy and speed.

There is a start and end hoop and a pattern using five (5) barrels. The barrels will be numbered and the direction to circle them will be shown on the course map. Got a nervous dog? The handler can even go around the barrels with the dog. There is a Solo class for one handler/dog combo and a Team class where 2 dog/handler combos run



as a relay, each doing a part of a course.

Another CPE Speedway class for a pair of dog/handler teams is Hairpin. Hairpin Teams is a relay race in which each dog will complete a 50-yard hairpin shaped course using hoops and either through a tunnel or around barrel. The first dog's path is through their start hoop, 2 hoops up the middle, then either through a tunnel or around a barrel and back through the hoops the way they came. Once the first dog goes through their finish hoop, the second dog can go through their start hoop and run through the hoops to the tunnel or barrel and back. The timer runs continuously from the first start hoop to the second dog's finish hoop. The barrel or tunnel at the top of the pattern may be bi-directional or may have a specific entrance for each dog.

Drag Race 50 and Drag Race 100 are the lure course classes. (Picture something like greyhound racing, only one at a time.) The 50 and 100 indicate how many yards the dog is timed over. The lure machine used is a continuous string running along the ground which has a simple plastic bag as the lure for the dog to chase. The sight of the bag zipping away from the dog can really kick their prey drive into gear and many dogs get extremely excited to chase the 'bunny'. Each dog running should have one handler to release the dog and one handler to catch the dog after the finish line. Because of the expense of a lure machine, this class is rare in Speedway. But AKC has a similar event called FASTCAT that has really grown in Florida.

CPE Speedway is a lot like agility but with some important differences.

1. No jumping, weaves or contacts, so great for all dogs, young and old, that still want to play.

2. Dogs are scored in each class according to the Miles per Hour (MPH) of their runs and a height multiplier. The

dog's wither height determines what multiplier they will get on their score. There are 3 groupings: Mini (3x), Midi (2.5x), Maxi (2x). Team events (Hairpin and Pole Position Team) use the shortest dog's multiplier. Slingshot has additional multipliers for the distance lines.

3. No "off-courses". As long as you get the dog back on track and complete all the obstacles in the correct order and direction, you only lose some time.

4. There isn't a judge. Volunteer Course Marshalls watch the runs for completeness, gamble lines, and calling any other infractions like the handler touching the dog or equipment, food in the ring, the second dog starting before the first dog finishes in the team events, etc.

5. Titles are based on overall points of all the classes.

The similarities to Agility? Handlers still must guide their dogs through the obstacles in the correct order and test their distance skills. Lots of fun with our dogs. Better Practice!

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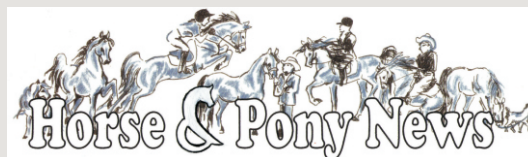
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