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## Best Condition Scoring

### **Best Condition Requirements - Advice resulting from lessons learned.**

If you finish in the Top 10, you will be allowed to present for Best Condition. Sometimes a vet, at your 15 minute completion, may advise you to NOT present for Best condition. That's happened. Take the advice and take care of your horse.

To present for Best Condition, pretty your horse, get him/her calm, eating, drinking, brushed and cleaned top to bottom. Do that anyway, your horse deserves the best treatment even if he's last. And, you never know if something happens to one of the Top 10. If you're 11 or 12, you might be asked to come forward. Have you been taking care of your horse during that hour?

At the Vet, have your horse wear his best (or cleanest) halter and blanket. Arrive at the vet with a proud smile at your 1 hr mark. Your horse looks great. You look great. Ok, maybe you're tired, dirty and sore, but smile anyway. Even if your horse is lame, present him to the best of your knowledge and ability. If you are lame, have another rider, crew member, or someone you trust, to trot your horse while you are present. Practice trot outs at home before or after a training ride (125' down and back).

Even if you think you don't stand a chance, it's the **vet** that's doing the judging, not you. If you've gone through the Best Condition judging, finish the process by making sure you've weighed in. And make sure you have ALL the tack and clothing you wore during the ride. The vet score matters. The ride time matters. And your weight matters.

*by Linda Karius*

### **About Best Condition Scoring**

It is a common complaint of riders that they "don't understand" their BC score--they believe there is a discrepancy between the score they are given at different rides (and by different vets), and between their BC scores and the post-ride examination on their rider cards. Unfortunately, the variation from ride to ride is all too real; many veterinarians (even experienced ones) have the same misconceptions regarding BC judging as the rest of us.

To some extent, the problem lies in the way we all subconsciously view "a scale of 1 to 10". We tend to see such a scale as a "normal curve", with 5 in the middle. On a grade scale, the middle grade is "C", with "D and E" being 'failing grades' and "B and A" being very good grades. This is indeed the way the post-ride examination on the rider cards is recorded.

Best Condition scoring is completely different!

- The horse has already "passed" or it wouldn't receive a completion, let alone be judged for BC. So.... a "C" on your card is not a 5 on the vet score--it is a 1.

- Say pulse criteria for completing the ride is 68;
  - so a CRI of 68/68 at the 15 minute BC judging would be worth “1”.
  - a CRI of 68/72, while still passing completion criteria, would probably be a 0.
  - Even a very good 15 minute CRI (say for example 52/52) would be something like an “8” because there is still considerable room for recovery to resting level.
  - What would be a “10” for recovery? Why...a CRI of 36/36--that is resting pulse, or 100% (perfect) recovery.
  
- The same principle applies to all the rest of the parameters
  - A “B” on the card for gait might be only a 4 or 5 on the BC form.
  - A “C” on the card would be a bare pass and 1 or 2 on the BC form, not 5.

Using the full scale in this way enables the veterinarians to really sort out the horses in excellent shape from those merely in “good” or “pretty good” shape, and give a significantly higher vet score to the horse in the best condition, as is the intent of the award.

Speed and weight can make the difference in a close call, but are seldom enough to allow a tired or sore horse to win BC over a horse in better shape.

Veterinarians *should* be using the full scale (1 to 10) available to them for the judging; unfortunately many of them tend to fall into the same mental trap as the rest of us and score only from 5 to 10, which does not really separate the field. This is especially true of new vets, who tend to be so “blown away” by how good the horses look that they can’t bear to mark them hard.

Once you understand this system--that there are 10 possible marks between “pass” and “perfect”, not 5--you come to appreciate how well designed it is. You also come to admire even more the horses and horsemen/women who achieve high scores under the vets that use the whole scale--these are the real “stars” of our sport.

*(By Randy Eiland...) “The horse and rider who win BC have essentially negotiated the demands of the trail with the horse willing to give its all and the rider keeping it from giving everything.”*

And, in other words...

BC is out of a possible 800 points. Of these, 200 are for speed--you lose 1 pt for every minute you are slower than the winner. 100 are for weight--you lose 1/2 pt for every pound you are lighter than the heaviest TTer. The remaining 500 are the vet score. The vets assess 5 parameters with a value of between 1-10; the result (theoretical max 50) is multiplied by 10 to make a theoretical max of 500, ok? The point is: losing 5 pts in the vet score portion has the same effect on your BC score as losing 50 minutes (!) riding time! So, if BC is important to you, slowing down a little at the end may do you far more good than finishing early. Food for thought.