

SLOVENSKÝ KLUB HOOPERS / SLOVAK HOOPERS CLUB: EXAMINATION RULES

Revision 01 | Effective from: March 26, 2026

1. PREAMBLE

Hoopers is a cynological sport based on teamwork between human and dog. Its primary goal is to build a positive, safe relationship. It is based on **fair play, safety, and ethics**. The purpose is to develop the dog's intelligence and achieve deep mutual understanding.

1.1. General Provisions

- **Scope:** These rules are the official national regulations of the Slovak Hoopers Club (CLUB) and are binding for all organizers, judges, and participants.
 - **Core Principles:**
 - **Independence:** The dog must navigate the course independently in the correct order.
 - **Remote Handling:** The handler leads the dog from a designated **Guiding Area** using voice and visual cues.
 - **No Jumps:** Designed to be gentle on the dog's joints; obstacles are either run through (hoops, tunnels) or circled (barrels, gates).
 - **Control & Willingness:** The dog must show willingness and joy while remaining under control.
 - **Ethics:** Any harsh treatment of a dog is strictly prohibited.
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2. CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

2.1. Team Requirements

- **Handler:** No age limit. Must act with sportsmanship.
- **Dog Origin:** Open to all breeds (with or without pedigree).
- **Identification:** Dogs must have a chip or tattoo (for foreign teams).
- **Registration:** A team (handler + dog) must compete under one name and one CLUB registration number.
- **Health:** Only healthy dogs may participate.

- **Hoopers Handicap (HH):** For dogs with visible impairments (wheelchairs, amputations, hearing/vision loss). Requires a **veterinary report** confirming the dog can safely perform the activity.

2.2. Age Limits

- **FUN & H0:** Minimum **15 months**.
- **H1, H2, H3 & HH:** Minimum **18 months**.
- **HV (Veteran):** Optional from **8 years**.

2.3. Ethics and Conduct

- **Responsibility:** The handler is legally liable for any damage or injury caused by their dog throughout the event.
- **Supervision:** Dogs must be under direct supervision at all times (except during the run).
- **Harsh Treatment:** Physical or verbal abuse (hitting, kicking, leash yanking, intimidation) results in **immediate disqualification** and potential club sanctions.

2.4. Bitches in Heat, Pregnancy, and Docking

- **Docked Dogs:** Participation follows Slovak legislation (rescue dogs/medical reasons allowed with documentation).
- **Bitches in Heat:** Permitted to start, but must be reported at registration. They usually start at the end of the day.
- **Pregnancy:** Strictly prohibited from the **21st day** of confirmed or suspected pregnancy.
- **Lactation:** May not start until the **52nd day** after giving birth.

3. REGISTRATION AND ELECTRONIC RECORDS

The CLUB uses **only electronic records** on its website. No physical record books are issued.

- **Registration:**
 - **Members:** Automatic with membership.
 - **Non-members/Guests:** Must register and pay a fee to receive a unique registration number before their first official start.
- **FUN Category special Rules:**

- Handlers don't need club membership.
- Registration is free and valid for **24 months**.
- Discounted entry fees (at member rates).
- **Data in the Electronic record book:**
 - Date/Event Name, Judge, Category, Penalty Points (PP), Time, Rating (V0, V, etc.), and Placement.
- **Claims:** Errors in results must be reported within **14 days** with proof (e.g., photo of result board).

Reciprocity Principle

The Club fully recognizes results from other national organizations *if* those organizations recognize CLUB results in return. Otherwise, the Club Board decides on recognition individually.

4. DOCUMENTATION AND TEAM COMPOSITION

4.1. Required Docs

- **Electronic Record book (ERB)** (except for FUN).
- **Veterinary Records:** Valid rabies vaccination (Pet Passport).

4.2. Team Composition & Handler Changes

- **Definition:** One handler + one dog = one team for the duration of a competition day. A dog cannot start with two different handlers on the same day.
- **Run Limit:** Maximum **4 runs** per trial day (includes both trial and open runs).
- **Handler Change Rule:** If a dog has previously competed in high categories (H2, H3) with a different handler, the **new team must start at least one level lower** (e.g., from H3 down to H2) to verify their communication.

4.3. Participation of Guests and Foreign Teams

Within these rules, a **guest** is defined as any participant (handler) who is not a regular member of the club (including members of other cynological organizations and clubs operating within the Slovak Republic).

- **Participation Conditions:** Guests and foreign teams may participate in club events if they meet general veterinary requirements (for foreign participants, this includes entry requirements for animals into the SR) and specific

conditions stated in the event propositions. Participation is contingent upon respecting these Examination Rules.

- **Registration:** To participate in official competitive runs and trials, a guest or foreign participant must register in the club's electronic system (via the Club Board) and pay the registration fee according to the current price list.
- **Placements and Titles:** Guests and foreign participants may rank in individual open competitions and trials. However, they are **not eligible** for titles and awards in national championships, club championships, or pointed qualifications for national titles (e.g., Master of the Slovak Republic), which are reserved exclusively for regular club members, unless the specific event propositions state otherwise.
- **Financial Obligations:** Guest (non-member) status carries the obligation to pay entry and registration fees designated for non-members.

4.4. Financial Matters

- The organizer has the authority to set the entry fee for a specific event but is **obliged to respect and apply the club's pricing policy**, which significantly favors regular club members.
- Discounted entry fees apply to handlers with valid club membership at the time of the application deadline.

4.5. Reciprocity and Recognition of Trials

The recognition of trials and performance categories for teams that are not club members is conducted in one of the following two forms:

- **Reciprocity Agreement:** Results are recognized automatically in accordance with a valid agreement on the recognition of trials between the club and the handler's home cynological organization.
- **Individual Assessment:** In the absence of a reciprocity agreement, the Club Board decides on the recognition of results (both domestic and foreign) on an individual basis. The condition is a **written application** from the handler, supported by an extract from a results database or a performance record book with a clear description of the achieved results.

General Recognition Conditions:

- The content and technical difficulty of the completed trials must be comparable to the club's rules.
- The trials were judged by an official judge licensed by a national cynological authority.

Recognition of Slovak Hoopers Club Results Abroad: Upon request, the Club Board will confirm results achieved under its auspices for the needs of external organizations. The handler bears **full responsibility** for verifying whether the given organization accepts the club's results.

5. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND SPECIAL CATEGORIES

5.1. Equipment and Aids on the Course

- **Dog Safety:** During the run, the dog must not wear a collar, harness, scarf, or any other items. Exceptions are made for dogs in the **HH category** or dogs of **visually impaired handlers** (upon agreement with the judge).
- **Grooming and Protection:** For long-haired dogs, elastics or clips above the eyes are permitted. Orthopedic aids (bandages, braces) are allowed **only for the HH category** and only with a veterinary certificate confirming the necessity of the aid.

5.2. Hoopers Handicap (HH) Category and Dog Health Restrictions

This category is intended for dogs with permanent or temporary health impairments (dogs using wheelchairs, post-amputation, partially/fully deaf, partially/fully blind, or dogs with chronic conditions requiring special care).

- **Permitted Equipment and Aids in HH** In the HH category (unlike regular categories), the following aids are permitted:
 - **Orthopedic Aids:** Braces, bandages, prosthetics, or protective boots.
 - **Cold Protection:** Dog coats for dogs that must not get cold due to medical reasons.
 - **Handling Aids:** A collar or harness (without a leash attached) for better handler control of the dog before the start and after the finish.
 - **Hygiene Aids:** Incontinence diapers or belly bands (the dog must still be able to move without soiling the course).
 - **Goggles:** Protective goggles for dogs with vision impairment.
- **ERecial Guiding Aids**
 - **Hearing/Vision Impairment:** The handler is permitted to use sound aids (whistle, bell, clicker, clapping) or a **vibration collar** (strictly without electric impulses!) if the dog suffers from hearing loss.
 - **Silence on the Course:** During the run of a team with a visually or hearing-impaired dog, other participants are obliged to maintain

maximum calm and silence and avoid using sound toys near the course to prevent dog disorientation.

- **Technical Allowances and Course Adjustments**

- **Movement in the GA:** In the HH category, the handler leaving the **Guiding Area** is not penalized by disqualification.
- **Off-area Penalty:** Each obstacle completed by the dog while the handler is outside the GA is penalized as a fault (**5 penalty points**). Every missed obstacle during this time is penalized similarly.
- **Contact:** For dogs with hearing or vision impairments, physical contact between the handler and the dog on the course is not penalized, provided it does not serve as a physical push toward an obstacle.

5.3. Conditions for Disabled Handlers (Parahoopers)

If a handler has a disability that prevents full movement or communication, the following rules apply:

- **Wheelchair Handler**

- **Movement in the GA:** If a wheel or part of the wheelchair exits the GA, it is not penalized by disqualification.
- **Penalty:** Each obstacle (both completed and missed) while the handler is outside the GA is penalized as a fault (**5 PP**).

- **Handler with Compensatory Aids (Crutches, Sticks)**

- The handler using a single crutch or stick **must not** use it as an extended arm to guide the dog.
- **Exception:** A handler using two forearm (French) crutches may use one of them to guide the dog (as a directional aid) if it is necessary to maintain their stability.

5.4. Common Provisions for HH and Parahoopers

- **Veterinary Control:** The judge has the right to inspect used aids at any time to rule out their misuse for unnatural dog motivation (e.g., hidden stimuli to run against the dog's will).
- **Start Order:** Teams requiring course adjustments (wheelchair users) start either at the beginning or at the end of the starting list for the given category (by agreement with the judge and organizer).

- **Responsibility:** Participation is always at the full responsibility of the dog owner. The veterinary certificate of fitness for sport must not be older than **12 months**.

6. SIZE CLASSES AND PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES

6.1. Dog Size Classes

- **Mandatory Division:** All categories are strictly divided into two classes based on the dog's wither height:
 - **Small (S):** Dogs with a height up to and including **40.00 cm**.
 - **Large (L):** Dogs with a height from **40.01 cm**.
- The classification is based on an official measurement recorded in the **Electronic Record book (ERB)**. See the section "Dog Measurement" for details.

Dog Measurement:

- **Conducting the Measurement:** The wither height measurement is performed by a judge.
- **Recognition of Measurements:** If the handler presents an official document (e.g., Agility performance record, breeding assessment, or show report), the dog's height may be recognized and recorded without re-measuring.
- **Handling Fearful Dogs:** For dogs showing obvious fear of the measuring device, the handler is permitted to measure the dog under the direct supervision of the judge.

6.2. Category Overview by Type and Difficulty

Categories in the club are divided into three main branches (A, B, and C), each targeting a different objective (development, competition, inclusion, and senior health).

A. Preparatory and Motivational Categories (FUN and H0) These categories are **optional** and **non-progression-based**. Results are not recorded in the ERB for the purpose of advancing to higher levels; however, they are officially announced and evaluated at events.

6.2. Category Overview by Type and Difficulty (Continued)

A. Preparatory and Motivational Categories (Continued)

- **FUN:** This category is open to any team participating in a trial where the FUN category is listed. If a handler from any performance category chooses to enter this category, they cannot enter another category on that same day.

Even a team from a competitive (H) category may enter FUN (e.g., due to returning to the sport after a long break, a dog's illness, or loss of form). Such a start is considered a voluntary downgrade for that day, and the team competes for placement according to regular FUN rules. Participation in FUN is not considered a permanent downgrade to a lower competitive category.

- **Organizer Competencies:** *The method of judging (e.g., run without a judge, run with trainer assistance) and the evaluation system (e.g., time measurement only or "pass/fail" rating) are fully within the organizer's discretion and must be specified in the event propositions. The Examination Rules (ER) only define the safety minimum (see sections 7. COURSE and 8. GUIDING AREA (GA)).*
- **H0:** Verification of basic dog and handler competence before entering H1.
- The H0 category is intended exclusively for beginner teams that have not yet started in any of the competitive categories (H1, H2, H3). **Once a team makes its first start in the H1 category, it loses the right to return to the H0 category.**

Parameter	FUN	H0
Dog Age	min. 15 months	min. 15 months
Guiding Area (GA)	5 x 5 meters	5 x 5 meters
Distances between obstacles Small / Large	3 – 6 meters	4 – 7 meters
Max. distance from GA	up to 10 meters	up to 12 meters
Number of obstacles	10 – 12	12 – 15

Parameter	FUN	H0
Stepping out of the GA	0 Penalty Points	0 Penalty Points

B. Competitive Categories (H1, H2, H3)

Standard progression categories where results are recorded in the ERB and serve the team's performance growth. A team begins competing at the H1 level.

- **H1: Beginners** – basic technical lines.
- **H2: Advanced** – more complex courses and larger distances.
- **H3: Masters** – high level of dog independence and technical difficulty.

Parameter	H1	H2	H3
Dog Age	min. 18 months	min. 18 months	min. 18 months
Guiding Area (GA)	2 x 2 m, Ø 2m	2 x 2 m, Ø 2m	2 x 2 m, Ø 2m
Distances between obstacles Small / Large	5 – 8 meters	6 – 10 meters	7 – 12 meters
Max. distance from GA	S up to 12 m L up to 15 m	S up to 18 m L up to 20 m	S up to 25 m L up to 30 m
Number of obstacles	12 – 18	16 – 22	20 – 26

Parameter	H1	H2	H3
Stepping out of the GA	DIS	DIS	DIS

C. Special Categories (Hoopers Handicap and Hoopers Veteran)

- Designed for teams with specific needs. The technical difficulty of the courses corresponds to competitive levels, but specific judging rules and technical course modifications are applied to allow handicapped and veteran dogs to navigate the course smoothly.
- **Hoopers Handicap HH (non-progression):** Teams with a handicapped dog enter this category. See section 5.2.
- **Hoopers Veteran HV (non-progression):** Category for older dogs.
 - **Transfer rule:** A dog may enter the HV category at the age of 8, reached no later than the day of the trial. Return to a competitive category from HV is not possible.
 - **Technical allowances (HH and HV):** 5 x 5 meter GA, adjusted time limit, elimination of sharp directional changes on the course, circling barrels, or extreme distances, and other modifications the judge deems necessary for maximum safety.

Parameter	HH	HV
Dog Age	min. 18 months	may enter at the age of 8
Guiding Area (GA)	5 x 5 m	5 x 5 m
Distances between obstacles Small / Large	5 – 8 meters	5 – 8 meters
Max. distance from GA	up to 12 m	up to 12 m

Parameter	HH	HV
Number of obstacles	12 – 18	12 – 18
Stepping out of the GA	0 Penalty Points	0 Penalty Points

The minimum criterion for HH and HV course design is the H1 level, with the judge accounting for necessary category allowances.

- When registering for an event in the HH and HV categories, the handler indicates the level (H1, H2, H3) they wish to complete their runs at. The organizer and judge are not required to accommodate this request.

D. Open Runs

- Open runs are open to all teams regardless of the competitive performance category they start in.
- Minimum dog age for participation in an Open run is 18 months.
- Courses for Open runs are at the H2 performance difficulty level. For categories H0, HH, and HV, the judge may, upon agreement with the organizer, design an Open run with H1 difficulty.
- Teams starting in the FUN category are excluded from participating in Open runs.
- Open run results are not recorded in the electronic ERB.

6.3. Category Transfer System

Progression to a higher category is based on the **principle of eligibility**, not obligation. The decision to transfer is entirely at the discretion of the handler.

- **Conditions for Transfer Eligibility**

A qualifying trial consists of a **single run**.

A team may transfer to a higher category (e.g., H1 → H2) after meeting these conditions:

- **H1 → H2:** Minimum of **5 completed H1 trials** with an **"Excellent" (V)** rating (max 5 PP per run).
- **H2 → H3:** Minimum of **6 completed H2 trials** with an **"Excellent 0" (V0)** rating (0 PP per run).
- The required number of qualifying trials must be confirmed by **at least two different judges**.
- A team may remain in its current category indefinitely, even after meeting the eligibility requirements for a transfer.

Transfers between performance categories (H1, H2, H3), transitions to special categories (HH, HV), or downgrades to a lower category are governed by the **Completed Event Principle**.

The Completed Event Principle

- **Single-day events:** If multiple trials or competitive runs take place within one calendar day, the team **cannot transfer** to a higher category during that day, even if they meet all qualifying conditions in the first run.
- **Multi-day events:** For events spanning several consecutive days (e.g., two-day trials), transfers between categories during the event are **not permitted**. The team must complete the entire event in the category they entered.
- **Transfer timing:** A team may only transfer to a higher competitive category at the **next independent event** for which they register after fulfilling the necessary qualifications.
- **Downgrades and Special Categories:** The same rules prohibiting mid-event transfers apply to voluntary or mandatory downgrades and transitions to **Hoopers Handicap (HH)** and **Hoopers Veteran (HV)**.
- **FUN Category Exception:** The only exception is a transfer into the **FUN category**, which follows the specific conditions defined in section 6.2. A.

6.4. Voluntary Downgrade and Change of Team Status

A team has the right to request a voluntary downgrade to any lower competitive category at any time, but no lower than **H1** (direct downgrade from H3 to H1 is permitted). Returning to the preparatory category **H0** is **not possible** after the team has made its first start in any competitive category (H1, H2, or H3).

- **Consequences and Conditions of Downgrade:**
 - **Result Nullification:** Upon the first start in a lower category, all previously achieved qualifying results in the original higher category are **annulled**.
 - **Re-progression:** To return to a higher category, the team must again fulfill the complete progression requirements set for that level.
 - **Non-competitive Status:** If a handler prefers to return to non-competitive running without the goal of performance growth, they may use the **FUN** category or the special **HV** (Veteran) or **HH** (Handicap) categories, provided they meet their specific conditions.

6.5. Titles and Awards

The Slovak Hoopers Club grants prestigious titles for long-term and stable performance in the highest category, **H3**. Only results achieved at official trials and events organized under the club's auspices count toward these titles.

- **Champion of the Slovak Hoopers Club**

This title confirms a high technical level and team stability.

- **Requirements:** Obtaining **10 trials** with a **V0** rating.
- **Diversity:** Trials must be achieved under at least **3 different judges at 3 different events**.

- **Grand Champion of the Slovak Hoopers Club**

- The highest club award, following the Champion title.
- **Requirements:** Obtaining **20 trials** with a **V0** rating (achieved only after the Champion title has been granted).
- **Diversity:** Trials must be achieved under at least **3 different judges at 6 different events** over a minimum period of **24 months**.

Application: The handler must apply for titles in writing to the Club Board after meeting the prescribed conditions.

7. COURSE

7.1. General Information and Course Design

A Hoopers course is a sequence of obstacles arranged to test teamwork, distance handling, and the dog's fluidity of movement (the so-called "flow").

- **Judge's Responsibility:** The course layout depends solely on the judge's professional judgment and imagination. The judge designs the course to be technically appropriate for the given performance category and balanced in terms of handling, speed, and error prevention.
- **Safety and Control:** Before the competition begins, the judge inspects the available obstacles. If they meet the standards, the judge, with the help of the organizer, sets up the course, numbers it, and measures its length (if necessary). No obstacles that are not part of the specific run are allowed on the course.
- **Movement on the Course:** During the competition, only the judge, helpers (ring party), the starting team, and the team leaving the ring are allowed on the course.

7.2. Technical Parameters of the Area and Surface

- **Course Dimensions:** The minimum course area is 600 m², with the shortest side being at least 20 meters. The recommended course dimensions are 20 x 40 m.
- **Enclosure:** The area must be clearly enclosed (tape, netting), and during the run, only the judge, helpers, and the starting team may be present on the course.
- **Surface:** It must be level, safe, and non-slip for both dog and handler (grass, sand, sand with geotextile, artificial turf). In case of adverse weather, the judge decides on the safety of the surface; they have the right to cancel the event due to force majeure.

Specifics for Indoor Venues and Halls

- **Safe Distance (Clearance):** Obstacles must be positioned at least **2 meters** away from the perimeter walls or the hall's barriers to prevent the dog from colliding with the wall.
- **Surface Quality:** The surface must be **non-slip and safe**. Surfaces such as concrete, linoleum, or other hard and slippery materials are strictly prohibited.
- **Exceptions:** If an event is held indoors due to adverse weather conditions (rain, extreme heat, snow, etc.) or logistical reasons, and the prescribed minimum course area cannot be met, it is at the **full discretion of the judge** to grant an exception. The condition for granting this exception is maintaining the minimum safety distances between obstacles and strictly adhering to the 2-meter clearance from perimeter walls.

7.3. Course Construction and Obstacle Arrangement

- **Obstacle Composition:** At least **50% of the obstacles** completed by the dog in the course must be hoops.
- **Flow:** The course must be designed to allow for the **fluid movement** of the dog in arcs, avoiding sharp changes of direction that could compromise safety.
- **Start and Finish:** Both the first and the last obstacles on the course **must always be a hoop**.
- **Distances Between Sequential Obstacles:** These are determined by the specific performance category.
- **Distances Between Non-sequential Obstacles:** Obstacles that do not follow each other in the course sequence must be at least **3 meters apart**. This rule ensures safety in case the dog deviates from the intended line.

- **Finish (Run-out):** The course must be designed to provide the dog with sufficient space after the final hoop for a **safe run-out**, without the risk of colliding with people, dogs, or barriers.
- **Timing:** The timer starts when the dog completes the first obstacle and stops when the dog completes the last obstacle or upon the team's disqualification.
- **Electronic Timing:** Both the start and finish lines are defined by the position of the timing sensors, which are placed in **close proximity** to the first and last hoop.

7.4. Distance Measurement and spacing specifications

- **Measurement Methodology:**
 - **Working Distance:** Measured from the center of the **Guiding Area** to the center of the furthest obstacle.
 - **Dog's Line:** The distance between obstacles is measured along the dog's **ideal running line** (through the center of the obstacles). The judge ensures that the spacing is at the **upper limit** of the interval specified for the given category.
- **Guiding Area (GA) and Obstacles**
 - **Competitive Categories (H1, H2, H3):** No obstacle may be placed within the GA. The nearest obstacle must be at least 2 meters away from the outer perimeter of the GA (measured to the closest edge of the obstacle). No ideal running line of the dog may pass through the GA.
 - **Other Categories (FUN, H0, HH, HV):** A maximum of one obstacle is permitted within the GA. The 2-meter distance rule from the GA perimeter does not apply.

7.5. Course Walkthrough and Organization

- **Course Walkthrough:** Handlers have the right to a walkthrough without dogs lasting 8–10 minutes. A handler with multiple dogs is entitled to a maximum of two walkthroughs of the same course. In case of a high number of participants, the organizer may divide the competitors into groups and shorten the walkthrough time to a minimum of 6 minutes per group.
- **Assistance:** During the walkthrough, the handler may be accompanied by a third person (e.g., a coach). During the walkthrough, the judge shall only answer questions regarding the course route and technical specifications.

Logistics and Preparation

- **Entrance/Exit:** The course must have a clearly marked entrance and exit, as well as a designated area for the judge's assistants (ring party) and scribes.

- **Assembly Area:** It is recommended that the organizer designates a zone for teams preparing for their start, where warm-up obstacles may be provided.
- **Concurrent Courses:** If trials are held on multiple courses simultaneously, they must be separated by an opaque barrier or be positioned at least 10 meters apart.
- **Prohibited Activities:** It is forbidden to touch or manipulate obstacles or to train on the course. Violation of this rule results in the disqualification of the team from the specific run.

8. GUIDING AREA

Definition and Purpose

- **Definition:** The Guiding Area for the handler is a marked space on the course where the handler must remain during the dog's entire run (from the moment the dog completes the first obstacle until it completes the last obstacle).
- **Handling:** From this area, the handler leads the dog exclusively using voice and visual cues.
- **Quantity:** Only one GA must be placed on the course for each category.

GA Dimensions by Category

- **FUN, H0, HH, and HV:** A square measuring **5 x 5 meters**.
- **H1, H2, and H3:** A square measuring **2 x 2 meters** or a circle with a **2-meter diameter**.

Technical Parameters and Marking

- **Construction:** The GA (square/circle) may be marked with tension or folding tape. It must be designed to be firmly attached to the course surface.
- **Square specification:** The width of the colored strip (tape) must be 30–60 mm. The outer side length of the square is 5 meters or 2 meters (depending on the category).
- **Circle specification:** A circle with an outer diameter of 2 meters may be made of plastic pipe or hose with a diameter of 20–50 mm.
- **Visibility and Safety:** Markings must be clearly visible to both the handler and the judge and must not pose a trip hazard.

Evaluation of Stepping Out of the Guiding Area

- **Categories H1, H2, and H3:** Stepping out of the GA with at least one full foot (touching the ground outside the marked square) results in disqualification (DIS) for the team.
- **Categories FUN, H0, HH, and HV:** Stepping out of the GA with both feet is not penalized. However, each obstacle completed by the dog while the handler is outside the GA is penalized with 5 PP (Penalty Points).
- **GA Line:** Stepping on the marking (tape/line) or touching the GA line is permitted and is not considered stepping out.

9. OBSTACLES AND NUMBERING

Standard obstacles are used on the course; their number and placement are determined by the judge. All obstacles must be stable, safe, without sharp edges, and must meet current standards.

- **Recommended Obstacle Set:** 16 hoops, 6 barrels, 2 tunnels, 4 gates.

9.1. Obstacles

Hoop: The dog runs through this obstacle. It consists of uprights with a stable base and a circular arc. The supporting base has a maximum of 60 cm. **Dimensions:** Width 80–100 cm and height 90–120 cm. The pole diameter can be a maximum of 2.5 cm. **Safety:** The hoop must be made of safe material (plastic or aluminum), and the bottom half of the obstacle must have a contrasting color to the surroundings. The hoop must be without a base (no bottom crossbar).

Barrel: Barrels serve as guiding points for changing direction or for circling (wrapping). They must be stable and safe to prevent injuries during the circling maneuver. Their internal diameter is at least 40 cm, the external diameter is 45–70 cm, and the height is 65–110 cm. **Safety:** The barrel must be made of soft material (metal is not permitted). If the barrel does not have a contrasting color compared to the surroundings, it must be supplemented with contrasting stripes.

Tunnel: The tunnel is a solid, curved, arch-shaped obstacle. The dog runs through it. It must be safe, made of non-toxic material, with a diameter of 80 cm and a length of 100 cm. **Safety:** The tunnel must be bottomless (without a floor).

Gate: The gate has a height of 90–110 cm and a width of 90–130 cm; the supporting base is a maximum of 60 cm. The pole diameter can be a maximum of 2.5 cm. The gate must be made of safe material (plastic or aluminum) and have contrasting colors on at least two sections. **Safety:** The gate infill must be transparent; the mesh size must not exceed 5x5 cm. Solid infill is not permitted. The gap between the frame/net and the ground must be a maximum of 5 cm.

9.2. Course Numbering

Obstacles on the course must be numbered in the order in which they are to be completed. Number markers are placed so that they do not obstruct the dog's path but are clearly visible to the handler from the GA.

- **Marker properties:**
 - **Size:** Min. 12 x 12 cm.
 - **Digits:** Must be displayed in a large font so they are clearly legible from a distance.
 - **Color:** Black digits on a white or yellow background are recommended (high contrast).
 - **Placement:** The number marker is generally placed on, in front of, or next to the obstacle (on the side from which the dog is meant to approach it).
- Numbers must be positioned so they do not pose a risk of injury to the dog and do not affect the dog's running line.

10. COMPETITION PROCEEDINGS

10.1. Competition Structure

- **Course Composition:** Trials usually consist of multiple competitive runs (depending on the event propositions).
- **Evaluation:** Overall placement is determined by a combined score. Results from individual runs are summed, with **total penalty points (PP)** as the primary criterion, followed by the **sum of achieved times**. Open runs are evaluated separately from trial (qualifying) runs.

10.2. Entering the Course and Start Preparation

- **Entering the Course:** The handler and dog enter the course strictly upon the judge's signal. If the dog is on a leash, it must be led on a flat collar or harness (depending on the category and specific health exemptions).
- **Prohibitions:** The use of choke collars or prong collars is strictly prohibited. The use of motivational aids (toys, treats) in the starting area and on the course is strictly forbidden. Violation of this prohibition results in the team's **disqualification (DIS)** from the specific run.
- **Dog's Equipment During the Run:** The handler must unclip the leash and store it in a designated place (e.g., in a pocket or handed to a helper). The dog must not wear any equipment during the run (collar, harness, bandana, etc.), except for specified categories (see section 5.2).

10.3. Starting Sequence

- **Positioning the Dog:** The handler leaves the dog in a starting position before the first obstacle. At the start, the dog must not be located within the GA (except for FUN, H0, HH, and HV categories).

- **Handler's Movement:** After positioning the dog at the start, the handler moves to the GA.
- **Correction Before Entering the GA:** During the transition (as long as the handler has not yet entered the GA with both feet), the handler may return to the dog and adjust its position **without penalty**, provided the dog has not yet crossed the start line.
- **Correction After Entering the GA:** If the handler has already entered the GA with both feet and subsequently exits (steps out) to correct the dog, an **error (5 PP)** is assigned. A maximum of two such corrections are permitted (see the chapter on start errors).
- **Beginning the Run:** The run officially begins when the dog completes the first obstacle (triggering the timer).

10.4. Starting / Ending the Run and Time Limits

- **Starting the Timer:** The timer is triggered at the moment the dog completes the first obstacle. Completing the first obstacle is mandatory.
- **Ending the Measurement:** The run time measurement stops at the moment the dog completes the finish line (the last obstacle). Completing the last obstacle is mandatory.
- **Early Start:** If the dog starts and completes the first obstacle before the handler has positioned both feet within the **GA**, the team is disqualified (**DIS**) (except for FUN, H0, HH, and HV).
- **Maximum Course Time (MCT):** The maximum time allowed for each run is **3 minutes**. This limit begins to be measured from the moment the judge gives the team the signal to enter the course. If the team does not complete the last obstacle within this limit, the run is terminated and the team is rated as **DIS**.

10.5. Repeating a Run (Unforeseen Events)

- **Right to Repeat:** Upon the judge's instruction, a team may repeat a run in the event of an unforeseen incident (e.g., equipment failure, a foreign dog entering the course, an obstacle falling due to wind).
- **Rules for Repeating:** All errors and penalty points (**PP**) that the team acquired before the incident occurred remain in effect.
 - The team must restart with a new time measurement and complete the entire course in the prescribed order.
 - The judge begins re-judging (assigning new points) from the obstacle where the unforeseen incident occurred.

11. JUDGING

General Definition: The purpose of judging is to objectively evaluate the quality, accuracy, and **flow** of the team's performance on the course. The final rating is

derived from the number of **penalty points (PP)** awarded by the judge for technical deficiencies (**faults**). In the event of a serious rule violation, failure to meet limits, or unsportsmanlike conduct, a **disqualification (DIS)** is issued. A technically clean performance of the course always takes priority over speed.

The team's performance is evaluated in three primary areas:

- **Faults**
- **Disqualification**
- **Timing**

11.1. FAULTS

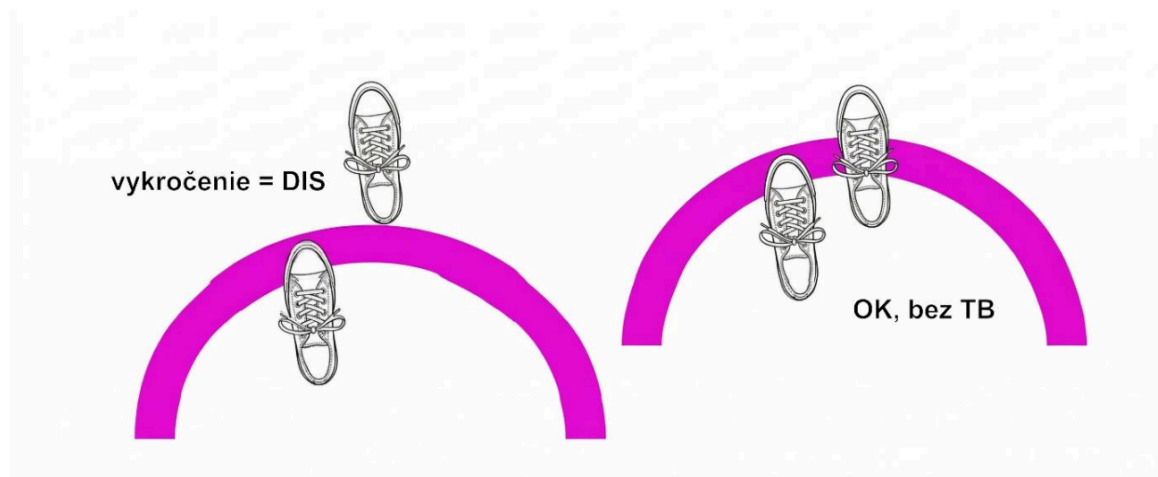
General Definition: A fault is a technical deficiency of the team or a breach of the flow of the run. Each fault is penalized with **5 penalty points (PP)**. Faults are cumulative during the run. In accordance with the **flow rule**, faults on the course are not corrected – if the dog skips an obstacle or fails to complete it correctly, the team continues fluidly to the next obstacle in the sequence.

Start Faults

- **Start Correction:** If the handler is already standing in the **GA (Guiding Area)** with both feet and steps out of it to correct the dog. A maximum of **2 corrections** is allowed per run, and a fault is awarded for each. Corrections count toward the **MCT (3 min.)**.
- **Note:** Corrections of the dog at the start while the handler is not yet standing in the GA with both feet are not penalized. The correction time counts toward the **MCT (3 min.)**.

Handler Faults and Faults in the Guiding Area

- **Prohibited contact:**
 - **Intentional:** Physical contact between the handler and the dog, or the handler and an obstacle, intended to assist the dog, physically guide it, or influence its path.
 - **Accidental with Advantage:** If the dog or the handler touches an obstacle in such a way that it makes it easier for the dog to complete the course (e.g., shortening the dog's path).
- **Recalling into the GA:** The handler attempts to lead the dog by recalling or guiding it directly through the internal space of the GA.
- **Working Outside the GA (FUN, H0, HH, HV only):** Every obstacle completed by the dog while the handler is outside the GA. (In categories H1–H3, stepping out results in DIS).



Technical Performance of Obstacles

- **General Rule:** An obstacle is successfully completed if the dog passes through or around it with its entire body (all four paws) in the correct sequence and direction.
- **Skipping / Missing / Wrong Sequence:** In the event of skipping an obstacle (5 PP) or taking the wrong obstacle (5 PP), the team must continue to the next obstacle in the sequence. Any attempt to correct the fault (re-approaching the same obstacle) is considered **unauthorized training** and is penalized with a **disqualification (DIS)**.
- **Displacing an Obstacle:** If the dog or handler knocks down, overturns, or significantly displaces an obstacle that is not used again later in the course.
- **Jumping Over:** If the dog jumps over an obstacle (hoop, gate, barrel, tunnel) instead of running through or around it.
- **Incomplete Performance (all obstacle types):**
 - **Hoop:** The dog enters the hoop but turns back before exiting with its entire body.
 - **Barrel / Gate:** The dog passes the plane of the obstacle (enters its working zone) but then turns and returns across the plane without circling/completing the obstacle.
 - **Tunnel (Backing out):** The dog enters the tunnel with at least part of its body but subsequently backs out or turns around and exits through the entrance side.

Dog-caused Faults and Flow

- **Stopping:** The dog comes to a complete halt (all four paws stationary) in front of an obstacle or on the course.
- **spinning:** The dog performs a 360° turn in front of an obstacle or on the course (lasting more than 2 seconds).

- **Interacting with the Handler:** The dog jumps on the handler in the GA or barks intensely at them (disrupting concentration).
- **Loss of Interest:** The dog clearly wanders off the course or stops working (unless it leaves the ring, which results in a **DIS**).

Other Faults and Unforeseen Events

- **Knocking down/Displacing an obstacle to be reused:** If the dog knocks down or displaces an obstacle that is to be navigated again later in the course, the team is penalized with a disqualification (**DIS**).
- **Force Majeure:** In the case of an unforeseen event (e.g., another dog entering the ring, strong wind), the judge may allow a re-run (previous faults remain in effect).

11.2. Disqualification (DIS)

General Definition: Disqualification represents the highest degree of penalty, leading to the immediate and definitive termination of the team's judging in the current competitive run. Its purpose is to identify a performance that fails to meet the minimum technical, safety, or ethical requirements of Hoopers.

Consequences of Disqualification:

- **Termination of Timing:** The judge interrupts the run (typically with a long whistle and crossed arms), and the timing stops.
- **Result Nullification:** The team earns no points, and the entry "DIS" is recorded in the official results and the performance record book. This run does not count toward the overall ranking or the qualifications required for progression to a higher category.
- **Leaving the Course:** After a disqualification is issued, the team must leave the course. The judge may (but is not required to) allow the team to complete the course as a training run if the schedule permits, but without further judging.

Disqualification is awarded in three main areas:

- **Technical Failure:** Exceeding fault limits or violating the rules of the Guiding Area.
- **Control and Safety:** Loss of control over the dog, leaving the ring, or hygiene incidents (soiling).
- **Ethics and Welfare:** Unsportsmanlike conduct, use of prohibited aids, or aggression.

Summary of Offences Resulting in Disqualification (DIS)

Area	Specific Offence
Start and Finish Sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering the ring before the judge's signal. • Uncorrected false start. • Third start correction or third false start. • Dog completes another obstacle on the way to the start hoop.
Running Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 consecutive faults (does not apply to H0, HH, HV categories). • Dog does not pass through the finish hoop. • Exceeding Maximum Course Time (MCT – 3 minutes). • Knocking down/displacing an obstacle that is to be reused later in the run.
Guiding Area (GA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H1 – H3: Handler stepping out of the GA with at least one full foot during the run. • Stepping out of the GA (stepping on the marking/line is permitted).
Control and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of control: Dog does not respond to the handler, running aimlessly around the course. • Leaving the ring: Dog has all four paws outside the course area and does not return on recall. • Fouling the ring (dog urinating or defecating within the course area).
Rewards and Aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly carrying rewards (treats, toys) or aids in the handler's hand. • Giving a reward during the run or actively throwing it on the course area after the run. • Food/treats dropped or scattered on the course area. • Dog wearing a collar or harness (in categories where not permitted).
Conduct and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh handling of the dog. • Unsportsmanlike conduct (insults toward the judge, helpers, or participants).

Area	Specific Offence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving or adjusting obstacles by the handler during the course walkthrough. • Social intolerance: Excessively aggressive behavior of the dog. • Double handling (targeted acoustic or visual guidance of the dog by another person outside the ring). • Voluntary withdrawal/disqualification by the handler if they perceive any discomfort on the dog's part (stress, injury, health deterioration, etc.).
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training or practicing on the course exceeding 3 obstacles (except for permitted completion after a DIS). • Re-approaching the same obstacle (attempting to correct a missed/skipped obstacle).

Important Notice: The judge always has the final say in assessing the degree of loss of control or unsportsmanlike conduct. In cases of dog aggression or harsh handling, the team may be excluded from the entire event, not just the current run.

11.3. Timing (Time Measurement)

The priority in Hoopers is the quality and accuracy of the dog's work—specifically, a run without technical faults or refusals. speed is a secondary criterion used to differentiate placement in the event of a tie in point scores. The achieved time reflects the flow of the team's cooperation and the dog's motivation.

- **Definitions of Time Limits**
 - **Maximum Course Time (MCT):**
 - Represents the absolute time limit for completing the course.
 - **Limit:** Set uniformly at **3 minutes** for all categories.
 - **Philosophy:** This limit ensures the smooth progression of the competition and considers the needs of all participants without penalizing them for their natural speed.
 - **Exception for HH, HV, and Parahoopers:** For these specific categories, or for a handler with a disability, the judge may individually extend this limit.
- **Technical Setup and Helpers**
 - **Timekeepers:** The organizer is required to provide at least two timekeepers (or a combination of an electronic timing system and manual timing).

- o **Primary and Backup Timing:** Before the competition begins, it must be determined which timing system is the **primary** and which is the **backup** (control). If both are functional, the time from the primary system is used. In the event of its failure, the time from the backup system is recorded. Under no circumstances should times be summed or averaged.
- o **Electronic Timing:** If an electronic timing system is used, sensors must be placed at the level of the first and last obstacles (start and finish). In this case, manual timing serves as the backup and is simultaneously used to measure the **Maximum Course Time (MCT)**.
- **Measuring Maximum Course Time (MCT)**
 - o **Start of MCT Measurement:** The timer for measuring the Maximum Course Time starts at the moment the judge gives the team the signal to enter the course.
 - o **End of MCT Measurement:**
 - At the moment the dog passes through the finish hoop.
 - Upon the judge's signal to terminate the run (e.g., in the event of a disqualification).
 - Upon exceeding the MCT limit (3 minutes).
- **Manual Timing Methodology (LAP/SPLIT Function)**

When timing manually using a stopwatch, a single timekeeper can record both the MCT and the net run time by utilizing the lap function:

 - **Start:** The timekeeper starts the stopwatch upon the judge's signal (commencement of the **MCT**).
 - **Start of Run:** When the dog completes the first obstacle (the start), the timekeeper records a lap time using the **LAP** button (the split time is saved, but the stopwatch continues to run).
 - **Finish:** After the dog completes the final obstacle, the timekeeper stops the stopwatch (end of the **MCT**).
 - **Calculation:** The **net run time** is calculated as the difference between the total elapsed time (at the finish) and the recorded lap time (at the start).
- **Time Penalties**
 - o **Exceeding the MCT:** If the dog does not complete the finish hoop before the **MCT** expires (3 minutes from the judge's signal), the run is terminated and rated as a **Disqualification (DIS)**.

12. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (RUN EVALUATION)

The rating achieved in a run is awarded in all categories based on the total number of penalty points as follows:

Penalty Points	Rating	Abbreviation
0	Excellent 0	V0
5	Excellent	V
10 – 15	Very Good	VD
20 – 25	Good	D
Over 25 / DIS	Disqualification	DIS
Over 25*	No Rating	BO

*Applies only to non-competitive categories (H0, HH, and HV).

13. PLACEMENT AND RANKINGS

The placement of teams at the event is determined by their performance in the **combined evaluation** (the sum of runs). **Open runs** are evaluated separately from **trial runs**.

- **Combined Results (Sum of Runs)** The organizer announces overall results based on multiple runs (cumulative results). Rankings are determined as follows:
 - **Total Penalty Points (PP):** The primary factor is the total sum of penalty points from all evaluated runs.
 - **Total Time:** In the event of a **tie in total penalty points**, the lower sum of **net run times** from all runs included in the combined evaluation is the deciding factor.

14. THE JUDGE

The judge is the highest authority on the course. Their role is to ensure objective, fair, and safe assessment of performances in accordance with the philosophy of Hoopers. The judge is responsible for the regularity of the event and the technical correctness of the courses.

14.1. Delegation and Approval of Judges

- **Selection of the Judge:** The event organizer has the right to select a judge from the club's list of licensed judges. After a preliminary agreement with a specific judge, the organizer is required to inform the **Club Committee** of this selection as part of the submission of event propositions.

- **Approval of Delegation:** The Club Committee takes note of the agreement between the organizer and the judge without further approval.
- **Judges from Other Clubs and Foreign Judges:** If the organizer wishes to invite a judge from another club operating within the Slovak Republic or a foreign judge, they are required to inform the Club Committee in writing in advance and request consent.
 - The Club Committee verifies and approves the participation of a judge from another club (Slovak or foreign) based on their license and professional competence and, in cooperation with the organizer, requests the relevant club to delegate the judge.
 - A **guest judge** is required to adhere to the currently valid **Club Trial Regulations** during judging, unless agreed otherwise in advance (e.g., for special international events).

14.2. General Principles and Ethics (Welfare)

- **Impartiality:** The judge must treat all participants equally, regardless of their club affiliation or personal relationships.
- **Dog Welfare:** The health and well-being of the dog take precedence over competitive results. The judge is required to immediately interrupt a run if they suspect an injury, extreme exhaustion, or if the handler treats the dog harshly or unethically.
- **Conduct:** The judge must act professionally and communicate their decisions clearly. After the run is completed, the judge may briefly explain the assigned penalties to the handler, provided the handler asks in a polite manner.

14.3. Course Construction and Approval

- **Safety:** The judge must not include sequences in the course that would force the dog into unnaturally sharp turns (circling a barrel **270°** or more) or that would jeopardize its safety (e.g., an obstacle placed too close to the course fencing).
- **Appropriate Difficulty:** The judge adjusts the complexity of the course (number of obstacles, technical passages) to the specific performance category.
- **Checking Distances:** The judge personally supervises compliance with the minimum and maximum distances between obstacles for the **Small** and **Large** size categories, in accordance with the club's technical specifications.

14.4. Judging Procedure

- **Judge's Position:** The judge chooses a position on the course that provides an unobstructed view of the obstacles being completed as well as the handler's actions within the **Guiding Area**. The judge must not cross the dog's path or cause any distraction.
- **Signaling Penalties:**
 - **Fault:** The judge signals a fault by raising one hand with an **open palm**.
 - **Disqualification (DIS):** The judge signals a DIS with an immediate and clear **whistle blast** and by **crossing both arms**. Timing stops at that exact moment.
- **Benefit of the Doubt:** If the judge cannot determine with certainty whether a fault occurred (e.g., a borderline crossing of a working zone line), the decision is made **in favor of the team** (e.g., the fault is not awarded).
- **Correcting the Handler Before the Start:** The judge may alert the handler to an error they are about to commit **before the run begins** (e.g., incorrect positioning in the GA, a collar, a toy, etc.). During the run itself, any coaching or advising of the handler is strictly prohibited.

15. ADMINISTRATION AND RECORDING OF RESULTS

- **Entry/Registration for Trials:** The competition calendar is published on the **Dogres** platform, which also serves as the portal for entries to individual trials. After completing and submitting an entry, the handler receives a confirmation email including payment details for the specific event. Event **propositions** (schedules) are also published on Dogres. The organizer may also announce the event on social media to provide additional information to interested parties.
- **Result List:** Results of individual trials are recorded in a table shared with all teams registered for the event. The organizer is responsible for delivering the final result list to the **Club Committee**.
- **Result Recording:** The Club Committee maintains records and archives of results from all trials held under the club's auspices and records the results into **Electronic Performance Record Books**.
- **Special Reports:** In the event of gross unsportsmanlike conduct, dog aggression, or any incident occurring on or off the course, the judge shall draft a **written report** to be delivered to the Club Committee.

- **Recognition of Foreign and Guest Licenses:** For foreign participants and participants from other clubs within the Slovak Republic, the Club Committee will verify entries in their home performance record books/systems to definitively confirm their eligibility to compete in a given category. Since guest teams do not have regularly updated Record Books in the club's system, they must provide proof of eligibility to the Club Committee when moving to a higher performance category.

16. FINAL PROVISIONS

These **Trial Regulations** are binding for all participants of events organized under the auspices of the **Slovak Hoopers Club (Slovenský klub hoopers)**.

The Trial Regulations come into effect on the day of approval by the **General Meeting**.