



Starting a Prince Philip Games Program

Revised 1998

FOREWORD

There are many facets to the Canadian Pony Club program. Prince Philip Games is but one enjoyable way for members to relax and enjoy a less formal environment.

Prince Philip Games are an excellent way to teach younger and less experienced riders independence while fostering team work and sportsmanship. Confidence and skills improve without the riders' realizing this is happening.

Prince Philip Games can provide a medium to rehabilitate a rider injured in a jumping accident or one who has been over faced. They can benefit a spoiled child through team play and peer pressure and they can teach an unruly or disobedient pony obedience and responsiveness to the rider. Most of all, Games can be enjoyed by every rider regardless of age or ability.

Games are also fun to watch and spectators need no schooling to understand the principles involved.

The benefits of a Prince Philip Games program carry over to other activities and parents and others involved with the players usually see this in many parts of life. Most who are involved in Prince Philip Games become staunch supporters because, besides all the positive learning experiences, they are FUN!

Lenora Shiels
National Prince Philip Games Chair
1998

GETTING STARTED

Starting a Prince Philip Games program will require just one sincerely interested coach/instructor, parent or older Pony Club member.

This person can familiarize themselves with the Games rules (available from National Supplies) and props. As the program progresses, each coach will develop many of their own techniques and their own style.

Games can become part of regular instruction time with the last half hour used for games. This is especially successful with unrated and "D" level members and is a perfect time to introduce this activity to members.

If there are children and/or mounts who detest Games, it is reasonable to provide them with another activity but usually after a few tries, members really enjoy the fun that Games provide.

In a Region where Prince Philip Games is already a competitive activity, a Branch new to Games can request aid from other active Prince Philip Games Branches or assistance from the Regional Prince Philip Games Chair. In Regions where Prince Philip Games isn't so active, the National Prince Philip Games Chair can arrange for help.

Some types of help in the form of demonstrations, clinics and camps can be arranged as can play days. All are enjoyed by those new to the program. Likely the most enjoyable are those where members take an active part.

Props for Games are inexpensive and easy to acquire or make. To get started, focus on races which require poles as part of the props and you are underway. Add to the props as time and finances allow.

PRINCE PHILIP GAMES OPPORTUNITIES

In Regions where Prince Philip Games are played competitively, the top teams in the "A" Division go on to compete in either the Western or Eastern Canadian Semi-Finals and the top two teams from each of these semi-finals meet in the Canadian Finals. Incentive and excitement run high and encourage all teams to practice and do their best at every level. If all Regions participated we could have East, Central and West Divisions. Personally, I don't think there is any nicer sound than the cheers of encouragement given to all team members and in fact, to all teams, by those waiting their turn or having finished a race.

For those in their last year of regular games (age 14 at January 1st) there is the opportunity to try out for the next year's International Team. Only five across the country are chosen and each Region makes its selection from those meeting the age requirement and having played at least three years at the Regional level. The candidates must also be able to vault. Besides superior skills in Prince Philip Games, the successful candidates will have excellent ambassadorial skills, be excellent team players and exemplify all that Pony Club stands for.

The Canadian Team is part of an Exchange between Britain, the United States and Australia. It is a wonderful opportunity for all who participate.

For those 15 and over at January 1st, there is the Masters Division which also goes to the National level. This level provides an opportunity for participants to continue using the skills they acquired in Prince Philip Games.

NOW TO WORK

Teams are made up of five riders and their mounts for official competition but for regular practice at branch level, teams can include any number. In the "A" Division, mounts must be 14.2 hh or under and a weight restriction is applied to smaller ponies (see Prince Philip Games Rules). Some Regions relax the height limitations for "B" and "C" levels, although weight restrictions for the small ponies **MUST** be maintained.

Before every practice check tack for safety. Girths should be tight. Long reins should be knotted and the buckle undone. Stitching on stirrup leathers, reins and bridle parts should be complete and the stirrup bar must be down. Of course hard hats with safety harness (done up and adjusted correctly) need to be worn at all times when mounted. As teams become proficient, many players find paddock boots to be the best foot wear, especially for races where vaulting is required.

Warm up exercises for ponies and riders are important and each coach will develop their own routine for this warm up.

Spurs and crops are not permitted, nor is any other object allowed to be used as a crop.

Start by introducing ponies to the equipment being used. Let them look at it, touch it and move around it. Instruct all riders to drop a prop immediately if their pony begins to buck or run away. With **PATIENCE** most will overcome their fear of any prop. It may take more than one session and riders can be encouraged to take objects home to work with around their ponies.

Young and inexperienced riders can be led through the games/races to help them learn what is expected. In the beginning, walk a new race. Riders can do this first unmounted and then **SLOWLY** while mounted. It takes time to develop good hand off skills but with all participants following the same bending pattern and always doing hand offs right hand to right hand, practice will make proficient.

Encourage incoming riders to circle behind the outgoing rider and to dismount quickly retrieving the object being handed off for the outgoing rider.

TEAMS ARE SUCCESSFUL OR UNSUCCESSFUL, NOT INDIVIDUALS!

Encourage all team members to line up behind the start box when not in active play. This makes it easier for the incoming rider and also helps everyone focus on the game at hand. It also helps prevent accidents if a rider comes in quickly or is out of control.

Quick dismounts in races where a dismount is a must, can be taught. Encourage riders to ride without stirrups in order to vault off quickly. With experience, riders can dismount while their ponies are moving.

Mounting is another place where time is saved as a result of practice. A quick stirrup mount saves time and vaulting is quicker yet. In the beginning practice on a standing pony. It is amazing how quickly even the smallest child can learn to vault. A tummy vault is the first step for successful vaulters. With experience and practice, riders learn to mount a moving pony. To start this phase of mounting, lead the pony so the child can concentrate on getting on without having to worry about the speed or direction of the pony.

Ponies must also learn to stop when asked. It takes a lot of time to get to the end of the ring and then have to turn back to complete a correction. Practice stops and starts.

ACTIVITIES TO USE FOR MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING:

- 1) Line ponies up side by side and see who can dismount quickest.
- 2) In the same line, use a stop watch and time each child through mounting and dismounting all ponies in the line. Eventually riders should be able to do this both ways. In the beginning it is exhausting work so limit the number of mounts and stick to the easiest mounts to encourage success.
- 3) Two or three at a time, move down the ring counting the number of times they can dismount and mount their pony. Ponies can be led when first trying and practicing this.

STOPS AND STARTS:

- 1) Starting from box with the drop of a flag.
- 2) Stops to set equipment knocked down by coach.
- 3) Red light, green light races ... if the pony does not stop on red, the rider must go back to start line.

OTHER HELPFUL HINTS:

- 1) The Coach, a parent or other volunteer with start flag, initiates the beginning of each race. Use the words "You are under Starter's Orders". Then, in your mind, "On your mark, get set" and drop the flag. Do not hesitate BUT do not start if first pony in the box is not settled and safe.
- 2) Use lime to mark the start box, start line and change over line. Some ponies unfamiliar with chalk lines will not cross them without practice at home.
- 3) Practice leading ponies at a trot.
- 4) Practice using different combinations of riders and ponies. Nothing will help a child critical of teammates quicker than finding out the problems another experiences with their mount. It leads to tolerance and also can help the team when the best rider/pony combinations are used in any race. This also helps riders gain confidence for the time they reach a level where pooled ponies are used. More experience = more confidence and ability.

PROGRESS:

Practice without an end is not nearly so rewarding as a goal. Invite another branch to a play day, or, if there are enough members in your own branch, hold your own. Racing against another team is fun. It is rewarding to see how the team is doing and find out what needs more work. I've discovered, particularly for younger members, the excitement of a play day is enough. Ribbons and prizes aren't necessary but there should be a social time at the end, with a drink and a snack or potluck meal. Encourage all players and their families to get to know one another and socialize. Coaches also exchange ideas and suggestions which will help with practices.

For further information see: "Coaching Prince Philip Games".

COMPETITIONS:

Each team in competition generally has team T-shirts, hard hat covers and saddle pads. Colours should be distinctive and not conflict with those of other branches/teams. This enables judges to easily identify each team. Start with T-shirts if funds are limited.

Each team also needs a "last rider band". Easiest is to make this from white elastic, 2" to 3" wide. It is then easy to put on and take off if the last rider changes from race to race.

Hat covers can be made from any material. Bathing suit material/spandex gives a nice tight fit and is easily washed. A pattern is easy to make.

Make all entries to the Prince Philip Games competition on time and include payment of fees and release waivers, as well as names and phone numbers of a contact person and any personnel requested for competition day.

RUNNING A COMPETITION:**PRIZE LIST**

Prize lists should be sent out with adequate time to allow entry forms to be completed and returned.

The prize list should include:

- date, time and location for competition
- map with directions to venue
- schedule and list of games to be played and divisions
- release waiver
- entry form to include the following:
 - name of branch & region
 - division of team
 - team colours
 - names, birth dates & levels of team members
 - names, ages and heights of ponies
 - name of captain
 - Coach's name, address, phone number and signature
 - District Commissioner's name, address, phone number and signature
 - entry fee cost and who to make the cheques payable to
 - names of volunteers to assist on day of competition
 - return address and phone number for queries

COMPETITION ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The competition will require a committee consisting of:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Steward(s)
- Scorer(s)
- 1 to 2 runners
- 1 to 2 judges per lane
- 2 judges for centre line
- 2 judges for change over line
- 2 judges for start/finish line
- Gate person
- Start line props person
- Ring crew (minimum 1 per lane)
- Starter
- Announcer
- First Aid Station
- Warm up area Safety Supervisor

Combine any jobs which can be reasonably combined. It can be as elaborate, or as simple, as you like.

Plan ahead by gathering all Prince Philip Games equipment, arranging food and facilities, P.A. system, etc. Pick the races and the order they will be played. Order ribbons (if using them).

- Prepare score sheets.
- Prepare diagrams of ring set up for each race
- Make copies of the P.P.G. Rules
- Don't forget to MARK the arena!

Familiarize all committee members with their job descriptions.

Enjoy!