

# Planning a Five-Eighths-Mile Track

## Simplified rules and tips on laying out a regulation course

**THE MINIMUM** acreage required for building a five-eighths-mile track is approximately 27 acres, compared to 17.5 acres for a half-mile track and 55 acres for a mile track. This includes the outer embankment but does not include land for buildings, parking, a road encircling the track, and other needs.

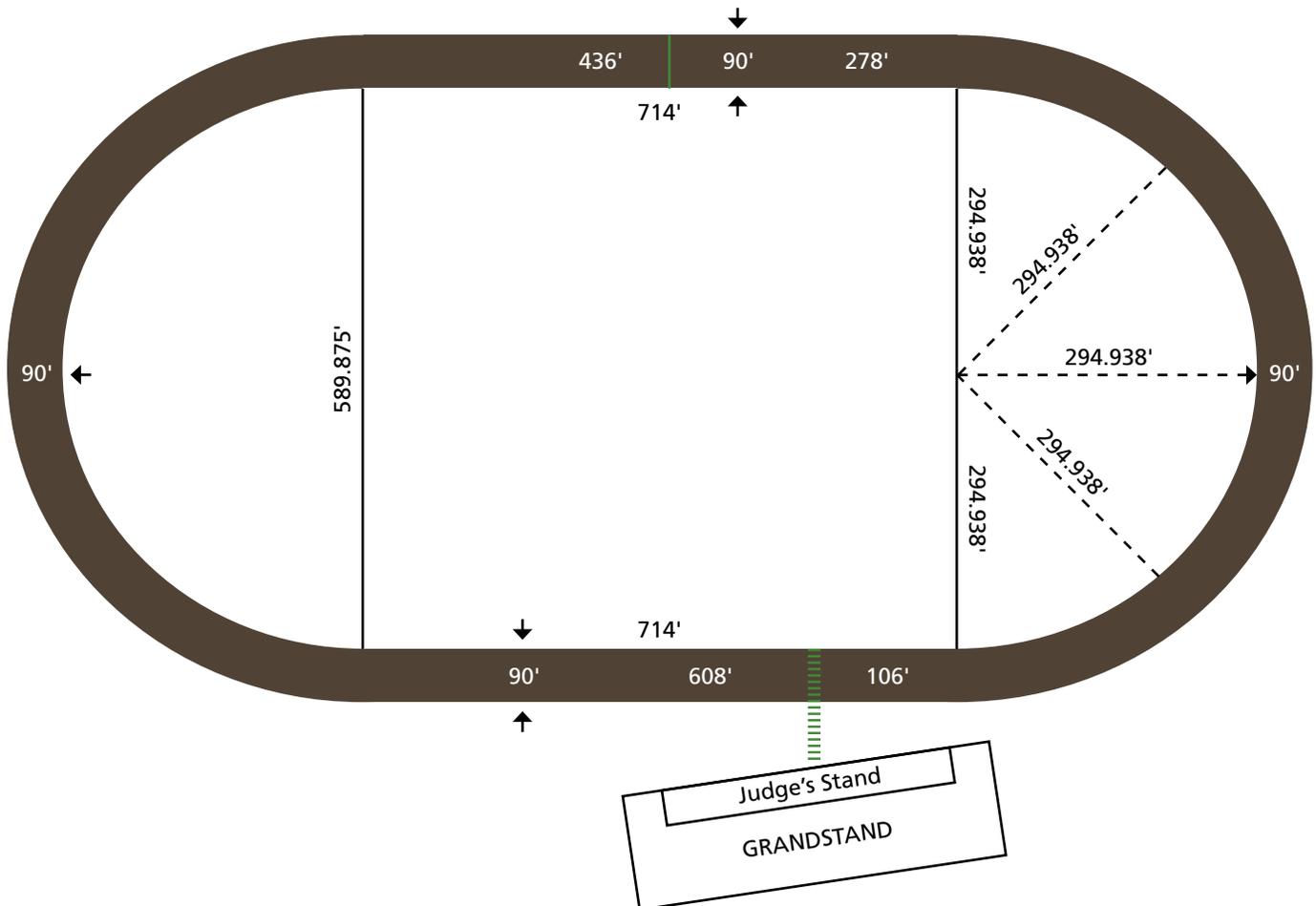
It is recommended that the track be 90 feet wide at all points. The starting gate will gather the horses in the stretch

and release them in the backstretch, with just the reverse procedure if short dashes are raced. Therefore, uniform track width is desirable.

Follow this simple procedure for laying out the track: Draw two lines, both 714 feet in length, exactly parallel and 589.875 feet apart. To ensure the lines are parallel, square the corners as shown by the dotted lines in the diagram below. For the turns, drive a stake exactly midway between the ends of the parallel lines. Attach a wire 294.938 long. This is the radius of the turn. Move the wire in a half-circle, placing stakes at various intervals so that the turn is completed when the wire reaches the opposite end of the parallel line. This measurement will give you the exact placement of the pylons. The track will measure five-eighths of a mile as required when the measurement is taken three feet out on the track from the pylons.

Place the finish line 106 feet from the start of the first turn and place the eighth poles 660 feet apart. Working clockwise, the starting point will fall in the backstretch 436 feet from the turn. Place the eighth poles at least six feet inside the pylons.

The turns should be banked .92 inch for every foot in track width. On a track 90 feet wide, the outer embankment



(continued from page 1)

will be 6.9 feet higher than the inside of the track. The rise of the turns should not be abrupt. Begin in the stretch approximately 175 feet from the turn and shape the rise gradually so that approximately one-third of the banking process has been accomplished by the time you reach the start of the turn. Failure to blend the stretch into the turn in this manner is one of the most serious errors in shaping a track.

Continue to bank the turn from the beginning of the radius until you have accomplished the maximum embankment half-way around the turn. Shape each turn in

this manner, blending the stretch into the turn.

For drainage purposes, a ditch several feet deep should be constructed just inside the pylons. Keep the shoulders smooth so that water will run off evenly and cause minimum erosion. On stretches, it's advisable to have a smaller drainage ditch on the outside as well. The stretches are constructed with the crown one foot higher than the inside down at the pylons. This crown is located approximately three-quarters of the distance from the pylons so that three-quarters of the drainage is to the inside of the track, and one-quarter to the outside.

## Advantages of a Five-Eighths-Mile Track (Compared to a Half-Mile Track)

- The five-eighths-mile track affords a better getaway, minimizes the post position handicap, and assures a good performance and effort regardless of post position.
- Fewer breaks occur because of the easier turns. Badly gaited horses have less difficulty, and the fields hold together better and produce better races.
- Park-outs affect a horse's performance to a lesser degree on a five-eighths-mile track. Drivers are less hesitant to pull out and there is less of a problem with slow quarters and single-file racing.
- There is a longer stretch drive, with the best horse prevailing with more frequency, and providing a "true" contest.
- Five-eighths-mile tracks are in a better position to obtain and present stake events not available to half-mile tracks.
- More horses can compete in a race without undue hazard. The rules permit 10 horses in overnight races on five-eighths-mile tracks and larger, but only eight horses on half-mile tracks.
- The racing is safer, and there are fewer drivers and horses involved in breaks and accidents, due to the easier turns of a five-eighths-mile track, and one less turn. Accidents on larger tracks generally aren't as damaging and do not involve as many people.
- The five-eighths-mile track will attract better horses for the same amount of purse money. This is demonstrated by the number of good stables that go to a five-eighths-mile track in preference to a half-mile track.
- All in all, the five-eighths-mile track improves the racing, will increase the wagering and revenue, and is beneficial to both the track and the horsemen.



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