

## #1 LAND MINES

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to **improve accuracy and ability to plan a track** by negotiating obstacles without touching "mines" scattered throughout the course.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 1 GROUND POLE.
- 3 BARRELS.
- 3 CONES.
- 1 FLAG CONE.
- 1 JOUSTING LANCE.
- MINIMUM OF 10 TENNIS BALLS. We recommend using as many tennis balls as possible. OLD SOCKS or PLASTIC CUPS can be used as a substitute (but balls that roll are preferred!).
- 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

**DIRECTIONS:**

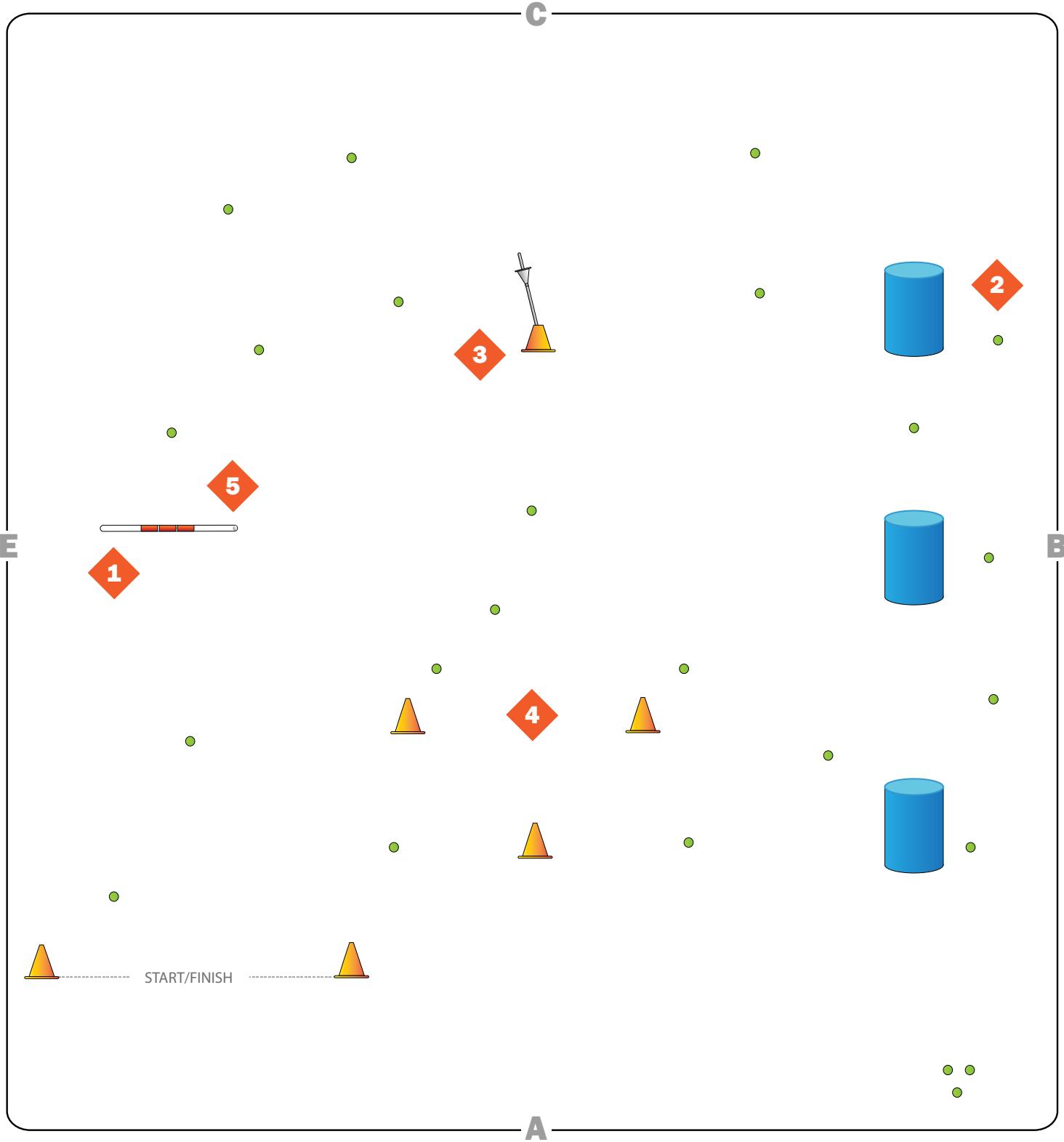
- 🐴 #1, ride over the ground pole.
- 🐴 #2, weave through barrels, turn around third and weave back. (Texas Barrels style.)
- 🐴 #3, retrieve jousting lance from cone.
- 🐴 #4, use jousting lance to knock down all 3 cones on triangle before returning lance to flag cone.
- 🐴 #5, return to ground pole and ask horse to halt with forelegs in front of pole and hind legs behind. Stand 3 seconds before riding across finish line.
- 🐴 **If at any point the horse steps on or kicks a tennis ball, game over!** He has stepped on a mine and must return to the start line.

**NOTES:**

**This game was inspired by an arena at a local barn where dogs played after hours.**

"Don't step on the dog toy" became a valuable steering exercise in which students learned to remain aware of their horse's feet - great preparation for coursework and advanced flatwork!

The exact obstacles used are not as important as the concept. Once your students have the idea down, try adding "mines" to your dressage arena, trail pattern or show jumping course. **For safety's sake, avoid placing tennis balls within the landing stride of poles or jumps!**



## Obstacle Course - Orange Level #1 - Land Mines

## #2 NO-STIRRUP SURVIVOR

---

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to **demonstrate ability to drop and regain stirrups** while negotiating a **trail-style course** of obstacles.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 6 CONES.
  - 3 POLES to create BOX.
  - 2 POLES to create BACK-UP BRIDGE.
  - 2 JUMP STANDARDS. Tie snap-free end of 10' ROPE to one standard.
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
- 

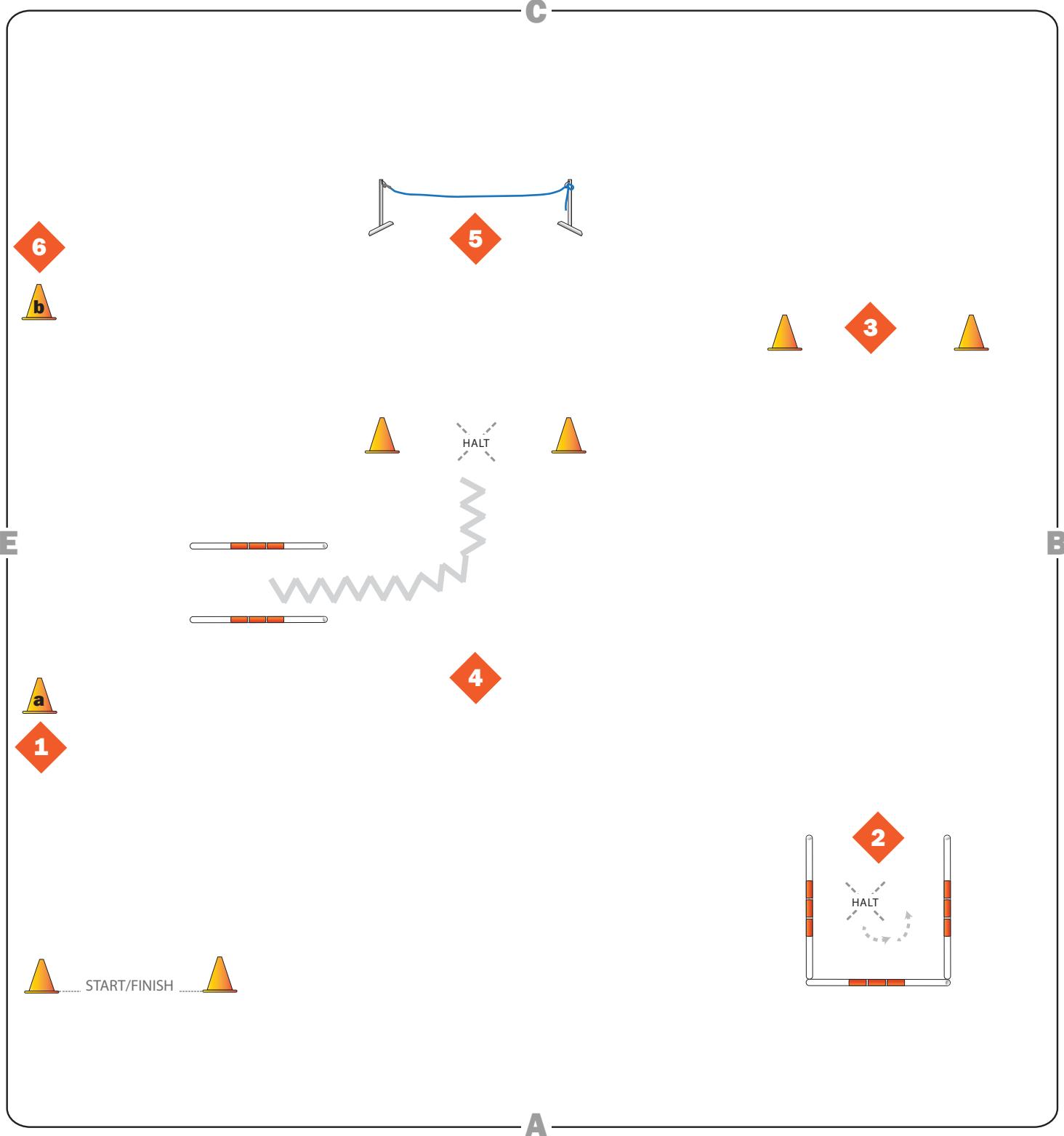
**DIRECTIONS:**

- 🐴 #1, drop stirrups at **Cone A** and continue in posting trot. Retrieve stirrups at **Cone B**. Transition to right lead canter.
  - 🐴 #2, canter to box and halt inside box. Pivot 180°.
  - 🐴 #3, transition to left lead canter and ride back to no-stirrup cones. Drop stirrups at **Cone B** and retrieve stirrups at **Cone A**.
  - 🐴 #4, turn down centerline and halt in between narrow cones. Back horse through a 90° turn onto bridge.
  - 🐴 #5, ride forward to "gate." Unsnap "gate latch," maneuver horse through, and refasten snap.
  - 🐴 #6, return to finish line in sitting trot. Drop stirrups at **Cone B** and retrieve at **Cone A**.
- 

**NOTES:**

This challenging course tests the rider's ability to prepare for quick transitions and controlled turns, mixing in halts and obstacles requiring turn on the forehand. Make sure that both horses and riders are practiced at dropping and retrieving stirrups on the go - a maneuver that can easily startle a horse, especially if the rider's leg is unsteady.

We like to create our "gate" using a loop of baling twine run through the upper holes on a jump standard. The snap end of a cotton lead rope can easily be fastened and unfastened from this loop, and dropped in the event of a spooky horse. Tie the other end of the rope to a similar loop of twine to ensure the rope will break away if it gets tangled with the horse's legs. Alternatively, set a jump in place of the gate.



## Obstacle Course - Orange Level #2 - No-Stirrup Survivor

## #3 BOW TIE POLES

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to **ride accurate lines and serpentines** over a pole formation designed be ridden at the **trot and canter**.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 6 POLES to form BOW TIE.
- 4 POLES OR CAVALETTI.
- 4 CONES.
- 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

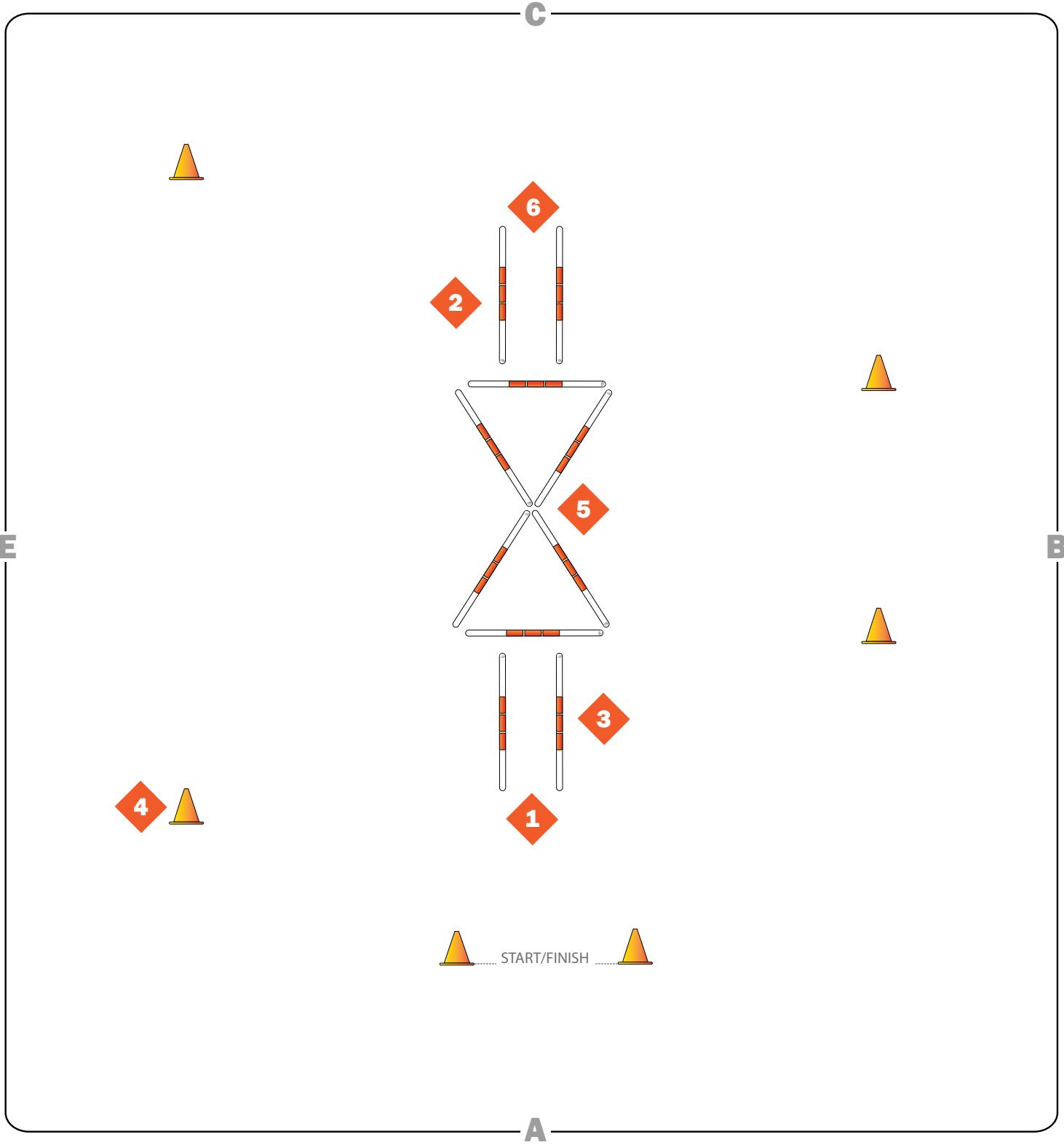
**DIRECTIONS:**

- 🐴 #1, trot down centerline, through both trot pole grids and over length of bow tie.
- 🐴 #2, track left around cone and over first set of trot poles.
- 🐴 #3, track right around two cones and over second set of trot poles.
- 🐴 #4, track left around final cone and transition to left lead canter.
- 🐴 #5, track left through cones and canter over center of bow tie. Change lead on landing if necessary.
- 🐴 #6, canter up centerline, through both trot pole grids and over length of bow tie before crossing finish line.

**NOTES:**

We love this deceptively simple pole setup for students learning to canter around a course. To flow around the course smoothly, they'll need to master bending and straightening before the approach; quickly identifying leads on landing; and maintaining a steady, impulsive canter that will allow them to negotiate the bounce poles in the finale. Practice the course at the walk and trot before adding in the canter to set students up for success.

4' in between trot poles is a comfortable distance for most horses, but be prepared to make adjustments to suit individual horses and ponies. We find that using 10' poles to create the triangles of the bow tie creates a bounce that works for the majority of our herd. If your poles are much longer or shorter, tinker with your triangles to create an optimal bounce distance (anywhere from 9' to 12' depending on your horses).



## Obstacle Course - Orange Level #3 - Bow Tie Poles

## #4 FOR LOVE OF THE GAME

---

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to **combine fast-paced mounted games skills** into an individual course.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 5 BENDING POLES.
  - 4 FLAG CONES.
  - 2 FLAGS.
  - 6 STEPPING STONES.
  - 1 18" CONE. Place 1 TENNIS BALL on top of the cone.
  - 1 HI-LO NET.
  - 3 CONES to mark start/finish line.
- 

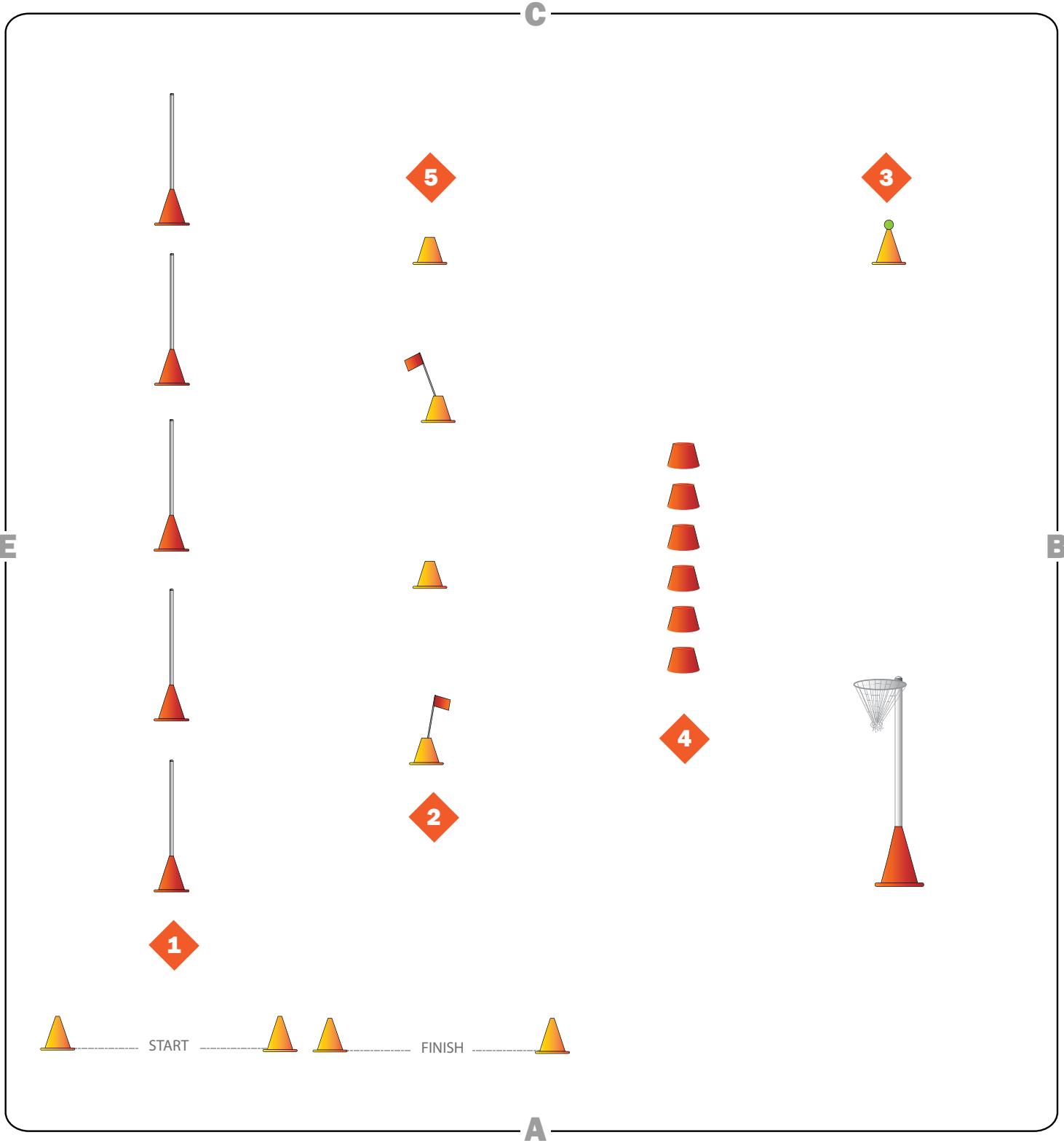
**DIRECTIONS:**

- 🐴 **#1**, weave through bending poles, turning around the final pole and weaving back to start/finish line.
  - 🐴 **#2**, pick up the flag in first cone and move to second cone. Repeat, moving flag in third cone to fourth cone.
  - 🐴 **#3**, retrieve tennis ball from 18" cone. Place ball in Hi-Lo net.
  - 🐴 **#4**, dismount. Lead horse by reins while crossing stepping stones on foot. Remount.
  - 🐴 **#5**, shuffle flags back to original position, moving each flag down one cone before crossing finish line.
- 

**NOTES:**

This fast, challenging course can be enjoyed by any rider capable of mounting and dismounting independently, and teaches that accuracy beats speed every time. The flag shuffle is surprisingly technical, especially after the adrenaline rush of weaving poles at speed. Students will need their half-halts in good working order!

You can make the tasks more beginner-friendly by substituting the 18" cone with a taller cone, a bending pole, or a barrel. If using a barrel, place a bucket of balls on top to eliminate the need to reset equipment. Offer students a leg-up after successfully completing the stepping stones, or place a mounting block on the landing side.



## Obstacle Course - Orange Level #4 - For Love of the Game

#5 WAGON WHEEL

---

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to **improve bend and balance** by riding a pattern of tight turns around cones placed in a circle.

- EQUIPMENT:**
- 8 CONES. Jump standards or bending poles may also be used.
  - OPTIONAL, 8 TENNIS BALLS placed on top of cones.
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
- 

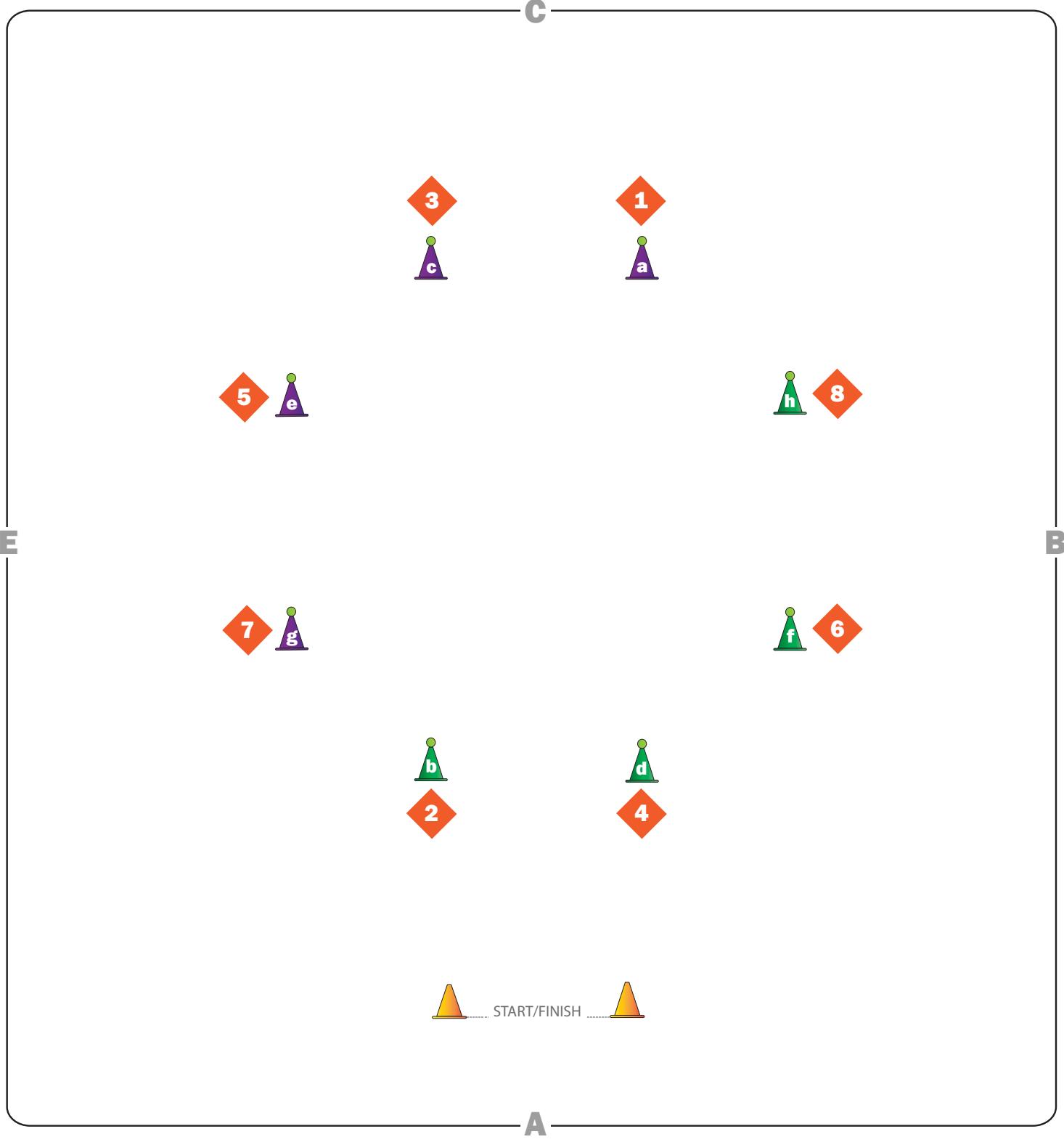
- DIRECTIONS:**
-  **#1**, ride straight through center of circle. Turn *right* around Cone A.
  -  **#2**, cross circle and turn *left* around Cone B.
  -  **#3**, cross circle and turn *right* around Cone C.
  -  **#4**, cross circle and turn *left* around Cone D.
  -  **#5**, cross circle and turn *right* around Cone E.
  -  **#6**, cross circle and turn *left* around Cone F.
  -  **#7**, cross circle and turn *right* around Cone G.
  -  **#8**, cross circle and turn *left* around Cone H. Return to finish line.
- 

**NOTES:**

**Don't let the complicated alternating turns of this pattern intimidate you.** The secret to this course - a popular training exercise for speed event horses - is that **it doesn't really matter how you order the cones**, as long as you loop around all eight, turning equally to the left and right to form the spokes of the wheel.

This is a fun course to run as a time trial, especially if you **increase the challenge by placing tennis balls on top of each cone**. If a tennis ball falls, penalty or game over!

We strongly **recommend using marked or colored cones** to help students keep their turns straight, especially if they are young children or have difficulty with left and right. Try setting four cones of two different colors - one means left, one means right. Or use four facing pairs in different colors. A set of dressage letters works, too. Call out the letters as each student rides, and followed by the direction you wish them to turn.



## Obstacle Course - Orange Level #5 - Wagon Wheel