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* WHAT IS A GATE? WHAT IS A GATE KEEPER?

A “gate” is the imaginary line connecting the points where a pair of gate poles enters the snow. In a slalom (SL) gate, the ends of the gate line are marked by two single poles. In giant slalom (GS), the ends of the gate line are marked by two sets of double poles with a cloth panel suspended between them. (The paneling improves the visibility of gates at higher GS racing speeds.) In this case, the “gate” is the imaginary line between the innermost pole of each set of double poles.

The poles and panels in a single gate will be one color, either red or blue. The race course is comprised of a series of gates in a sequence of alternating red/blue color. Each gate is assigned a number for identification purposes, counting up from the first gate after the start line to the last gate before the finish. The start and finish lines are not “gates”.

A gate keeper (GK), or gate judge, is an on-course official who observes a section of the race course and determines whether racers pass through it correctly. As a GK, you will be assigned several gates to watch by the chief gate keeper.

* CLEARING AND MISSING GATES

A racer successfully negotiates a gate by crossing the imaginary line between the gate poles with both ski tips and both feet (boots), on mounted skis. There are no points for style! The racer could be skiing forward, backward, sideways, or falling through upside-down. As long as both ski tips and both feet cross the gate line, the passage is legal. Additionally, gates can be crossed in any order or in any direction (uphill or downhill). The minimum requirement is that all gates each be legally crossed once. Naturally, racers will attempt to take the most direct route through the gates to save time.

If a racer fails to cross a gate legally, this is a gate fault. The racer may recover from a gate fault by stopping and correctly crossing the gate, usually by hiking. If a faulted gate is recovered, it is as if the original fault never occurred. Otherwise, a missed gate leads to a disqualification (DQ).

One specific way of missing a gate is called “straddling”. This happens when a gate pole goes between the legs of the racer. In this case, only one ski tip and boot would have crossed the gate line. The other would be outside of it. The racer can also recover from this fault, if able, by stopping and hiking back across the gate line.

* BINDING RELEASE (LOSS OF SKI)

In some ski leagues and racing organizations, a ski binding release while racing means automatic disqualification. In Oregon high school ski racing, a racer is allowed loss of ski(s), up to certain limits, without being disqualified. This section discusses the rule limitations for loss-of-ski (“binding releases”) for Metro Ski League. At the state level, and for other high school leagues in the state, the binding release rule limits may be different.

Varsity racers are allowed one binding release event (of one or both skis) without being disqualified. A second binding release on the same run occurring more than two gates before the finish line is an automatic disqualification.

Varsity 2+ racers are allowed two binding release events without disqualification. A third binding release on the same run occurring more than two gates before the finish line is an automatic disqualification.

Subject to these limits, the competitor has the opportunity to continue racing, if able, after remounting the lost ski (or skis). All aforementioned gate passage rules must be observed.

The binding release limits are expressed with respect to the 2nd to last gate due to the last gate having its own gate passage rule. At the last gate, if a racer loses a ski (just one) without committing a gate fault (e.g. not caused by straddling a gate pole or hooking a tip), that gate is considered legally passed as long as the still-mounted ski tip and boot cross the gate line. A single ski lost in this fashion at the last gate is not counted against the previously described binding release limits. It does not matter where the lost ski ends up, and the racer would not have to remount it to finish out the race from that point. Again, this applies only to the last gate, and represents the sole exception to the fundamental gate passage requirement of both tips/both feet. It is important for the gate keeper positioned at the end of the course to be cognizant of this.

The racers are aware of the binding release rules and are expected to remove themselves from the course if they exceed the allowed number of releases. As a gate judge, you could easily be unaware of prior binding releases that might have occurred earlier on the racer's run. If a binding release takes place at one of your gates, you should note it on your gate card (the procedure for this is covered later in the gate card section) and mention it to the chief gate keeper.

*** THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN RACERS FALL OR MISS GATES**

If a racer misses a gate, you can assist them by pointing to the first gate missed and yelling **BACK!** followed by the color of the missed gate. Be sure to just yell **BACK!** and not **GO BACK!** The racer might key off the word **GO** and take off before they should. Repeatedly yell **BACK!** until the racer would no longer be disqualified, the moment the missed gate(s) has been successfully crossed. Then immediately yell **GO!** While all of this is transpiring, make sure that you, the gate keeper, have a good view of the gate in question, so you can clearly judge when the gate line has been correctly crossed. Approach the gate and adjust your position to get a good angle on it.

Often a racer will miss a gate as part of a fall and will not know whether they missed it. They may look to the nearest gate keeper for help. If necessary, approach the racer to make yourself more apparent. Always wear your orange gate keeper vest to help identify you. (The gate keeper bucket is also a well known landmark indicating that you are a gate keeper.) Give loud, clear and concise instructions as described above. Pointing is helpful. Be sure to take charge! The racer should be getting direction from you and not from spectators! Keep your commands simple: **BACK! &GO!**

If a racer falls and is attempting to continue the race, they are disqualified if you, or anyone else, touches them or any of their equipment. The reason is that this can be construed as assistance. A logical exception to this would be removing a piece of equipment (or clothing) that has been left behind, in order to clear the course for the next racer. For example, if a racer drops a ski pole while racing, you should pick it up and toss it off the course.

A common gate keeping mistake is to forget that gates can be legally crossed in any direction and in any order. For instance, if a racer misses a gate by going around instead of through it, they may commonly recover from this by stopping, then sidestepping back through it until feet and ski tips cross the gate line. (Again, you would be yelling **BACK! BACK!** until the moment the line is crossed. Then immediately yell **GO!** The racer will be listening for this.) **NOTE:** It is OK for the racer to cross the line in a "backwards" or uphill direction! The racer does not need to go around the pole and cross the gate in the "normal", downhill direction. Also note: When a gate is being recovered in this fashion, it is not required for the feet and ski tips to cross the gate line together at the same time. It could be feet first, then ski tips, or vice versa. The only thing that matters is that both feet and both ski tips ultimately cross the gate line in the end.

Continuing with common gate keeping mistakes, a racer could miss a gate, and then legally cross one below it due to continuation of motion. To recover the missed gate, it is sufficient for the racer to stop and hike through only the missed gate. Whether or not the racer skis through the next gate again is up to the racer. It is not required to re-cross gates that have already been legally crossed! Be sure to watch racer passages carefully to avoid yelling out incorrect instructions.

It is easily possible for a racer to bypass a tricky gate and have no idea that they missed it. The racer may go by so fast that you have no time to yell out anything, and all you will be able to do is record a disqualification. Make sure you record it clearly and correctly! This is especially important in this case, since the disqualification could likely be unexpected by the racer and coach.

A gate infraction usually happens quickly and it is sometimes difficult to see exactly what happened. It helps to focus on the point where the turning pole enters the snow, as the racer passes. Most of the time, that's where the center of action is. Start looking for the racer's bib number as soon as he/she approaches. The racer may be in a tuck and it will be hard to see. Be aware that the racers sometimes come down the course out of numerical order.

As a gate judge, you are counted on to watch your section of the course in an attentive and professional manner. Be careful not to be distracted by conversation or by spectators. There's nothing worse than having something happen at your gates while your back is turned! The Metro League also asks all gate keepers to refrain from operating cameras or video recorders

during the race, since it could cause you to miss a gate fault call. Have a friend or family member take care of this. Also, please do not use your cell phone or 2-way radio when racing is in progress.

In a close gate fault decision, the benefit of the doubt goes to the racer. If you are confident that an infraction occurred, you should call it that way.

*** INTERFERENCE**

If a racer has perceived trouble on or with the course, he/she may elect to not continue on with the run. This is usually caused by “interference” from another racer, official, spectator or equipment. In cases of interference, racers are trained to immediately ski off the course and make their claim known to the nearest course official, which could be a gate keeper. In this instance, you should instruct the racer to bring the interference claim directly to the finish line referee and remind the racer to not cross the finish line. As gate keeper, you should record on your gate card only your own observations about anything that happened, and not anyone else’s (unless requested to add notes from a course official). You should not agree or disagree with a racer regarding an interference claim, nor should you engage in any lengthy dialogue with a racer. Make sure you give clear GO! and BACK! instructions as needed.

*** OVERTAKING & COURSE CLEARANCE**

To keep the race moving, the next racer is often started before the preceding one has finished the course. If the first racer is slow or falls, there is a chance of being overtaken by the following racer. The uphill racer always has the racing right of way. If an overtake situation develops near your gates, you should loudly yell COURSE! to the racer being overtaken. This instruction tells them to Get Off The Course! An overtaken racer is automatically disqualified.

Whenever a slow or fallen racer happens in your gate area, be very watchful for a potential overtake and be ready to take charge of the situation! An overtaken racer is not only a safety concern, but can also lead to an interference claim from the uphill racer. Your ability to clear the course quickly can avoid an interference claim and a potential rerun. If you see that a fallen racer will not have time to get skis back on and continue racing, your job is to make sure he/she gets off the course and out of the way immediately!

The gate keeper should yell out COURSE! any time necessary to keep the race course clear for racers. In between racers, workers do course maintenance and oftentimes they are preoccupied with this. Yelling COURSE! warns them of an oncoming racer. You should also always warn away any errant spectators, skiers or snowboarders. COURSE! is a command that wants to be yelled loudly! So be loud, yell in the direction that it needs to go and make sure you are being heard.

Be effective with your warnings! Yell out COURSE! as the oncoming racer is approaching your area, rather than simply in response to hearing COURSE! from somewhere up the hill. It serves no purpose to “telegraph” the COURSE! warning all the way down to the finish line when the racer is still in the upper sections.

At some race venues, we may have two courses set up side by side on the same run, and the simple yelling of COURSE! can be confusing. This usually happens when we run boys and girls slalom. The confusion can be eliminated by yelling out BOYS COURSE! & GIRLS COURSE!

*** SAFETY**

If a racer has fallen, perhaps with loss of skis, and is at risk of being overtaken by the next racer, you can and should help to remove their equipment from the course, but only when it is obvious they cannot continue the race. Be watchful for these hazardous overtake situations! If a racer goes down and cannot be moved or otherwise get out of the way of the next racer in time, you should wave off the uphill racer if needed to prevent a potential collision. Although the uphill racer has the right of way, safety always comes first!

If a racer goes down with what appears to be a serious or immobilizing injury, best advice is not to touch them. The ski patrol is not far away. Notify a course official (they are carrying radios) or send word by skier to the finish line. Again, wave off any oncoming racer to avoid endangering a fallen and injured skier.

If you are at or near a blind spot on the course, and in other cases of poor visibility, it is important to loudly yell COURSE for every racer passage, to warn those in the blind spot of oncoming racers. This is a good practice even when sight lines and visibility are adequate.

Your placement on the course:

-- Make sure you have a good view of your gates and are in best position to quickly fix any of them. However, do not place yourself where you might be in the potential path of a falling racer!

- Be sure you have a line of sight to the gate keepers above and below you. On a long GS course, it may take some special placement to accomplish this. The chief gate keeper can help situate you in a good spot to watch your assigned gates.
- Be sure to set your own skis well off the course, out of the potential path of a falling racer.
- Protect yourself! Whenever you enter the course yourself, for example to fix a gate, always look uphill. Racers are not always spaced evenly apart.

* RECORDING RACER PASSAGES ON GATE CARD

Your clipboard holds a “gate card” to be used for recording racer passages. There is a separate card for each run (usually two runs are planned). Be sure to fill out or circle the information asked for on the card, such as your name, gate numbers, and the type of race (SL or GS). Do not start filling out the second card until the first run is over and any course resetting has been completed. It is possible that your assigned location or gate numbers and pole positions may be different for the second run.

The front side of the card is a chart for listing bib numbers of racers with disqualifications or other infractions. These should be recorded under the Observation column, using the codes described on the card. For example, if the racer misses gate #5, enter “MG-5”. If the racer straddles gate #11, enter “S-11”. If the racer has a binding release at gate 22, enter BR-22. If a racer skis off the course in the area of your gates, it is appropriate to enter DNF, for Did Not Finish. (The lower right of the gate card chart has some examples of DQ & Infraction entries for reference.)

In Metro League, we use what are referred to as “fault-only” gate cards. Do not record anything on your gate card for racers who correctly pass through your gates with no other infractions! Remember, if a racer misses a gate, but stops and corrects the miss, it is as if the miss never happened. There would be no need to write down anything for this.

As suggested in previous text, it is possible for a given racer to make more than one pass down the course (for example, a rerun resulting from an interference claim). If you observe a DQ or other infraction for a racer, and you are aware that it is for a rerun, please make note of this on your card and mention it to the chief GK. Likewise, if you have recorded a DQ or infraction on your card for a given racer, and you observe that same racer making a rerun later on in the same run, please make a note that your existing record is for that racer’s initial run. These are uncommon cases, but they can happen.

* GATE CARD PICTURES

The backside of the gate card includes panels for drawing diagrams that help embellish what happened during a gate fault (there are examples in the “Sample Gate Card Diagrams” section, later). Use the symbols defined on the card to map the relative position of your red and blue gates (show the actual placement of the poles) and also your position with respect to the gates. Please indicate the gate numbers on the drawing. The upper left panel is reserved for making a reference drawing of your gates and indicating a normal or typical passage (do this by drawing an arrow showing the expected path through the gates). NOTE: The passage you draw may not be the only legal way for the gates to be traversed, but it is useful as an aid to help interpret your gate fault diagrams.

Prior to the race, after drawing the reference diagram showing a “Normal” racer passage, you should prepare several “template” diagrams in the other blank panels, showing only the gates and your position. In the event of a missed gate, you can then quickly draw an arrow on one of your pre-prepared template gate diagrams to show the path of the miss. Write the racer number at the top of the diagram box. Note: At a given set of gates, it is common for racers to miss them in the same fashion. When this happens, you can re-use the applicable diagram and write multiple racer numbers on it. By re-using diagrams in this way, it should be possible to record all gate fault events in the three available panels. Get an extra card from the chief gate keeper if you need one.

All missed-gate and straddling disqualifications need to be accompanied by a diagram! Those that are not usually get dismissed and thrown out when results are tabulated, so please remember the picture!

Remember, if there is a gate fault, but the racer recovers from it by stopping and legally crossing the gate, there is no DQ and nothing needs to be recorded for this!

* OTHER DISQUALIFICATIONS

There are other ways for racers to be disqualified that involve behavior rather than skiing. As appropriate, enter “UC” to indicate unsportsmanlike conduct. Write down a brief description of what happened (example: throwing equipment). If profanity is involved (in your opinion), write down enough to capture what was said. This information is for the coach.

Another non-racing infraction to watch for is shadowing the course. Racers are not allowed to ski the pattern of the gates alongside the course at any time prior to or during the race. If you observe this, note it on your gate card.

*** COURSE MAINTENANCE**

If gate poles you are watching get knocked out or loose, you should reset or straighten them. If necessary, use a wedge to secure them (ask an official if you don't know how or don't have one). The consistent replacement of the turning pole is critical. The point where the turning pole enters the snow is usually marked with dye to aid in resetting it in its original spot.

Speed is of the essence when replacing knocked out poles during the race, in order to put the gate back in place for the next racer. If the next racer is approaching too quickly and there is not enough time to fully replace the pole, make sure there is no danger to you or the racer. Lay the pole down off of the course and get out of the way! Don't get caught out in the course or standing there holding up the pole when the racer skis by! This is too dangerous.

In the case of a racer encountering a previously dislodged gate pole, it is the decision of that racer to make an interference claim on his/her own behalf. A racer may decide they can figure out a gate despite a missing pole and continue through without it. As gate keeper, you would need to judge whether they correctly crossed the original gate line or not. If you call a fault at a dislodged gate, notify the chief GK or other jury official.

If a gate gets knocked far out of place and you know it's going to take awhile to reposition it, send word up or down the course through the gate keeper chain to get the next racer held up, if possible, until the gates are resituated. If an official is nearby, this can be done by radio.

GS gate poles will have cloth panels on them. Please pull the panels back onto the poles if they get knocked off. The rulebook states that the bottom of the panels should be at least one meter above the snow surface.

If a gate pole gets broken or needs replacement, or if you think any other course maintenance is needed at your gate(s), pass word up or down the course, or to the nearest official with a radio. Maintenance crews also migrate down the course throughout the race. When they come by, notify them of any gates that need attention.

*** AFTER EACH RUN**

Gate cards will be collected by the chief gate keeper, or designated assistant, after each run of the race. Please make sure your card is ready to go, with the "METRO SKI LEAGUE" side showing face up and all requested information filled in. Indicate on the front of the card whether or not you recorded any disqualifications for that run (Circle yes or no).

If you record a disqualification or some other unusual situation, please let the chief gate keeper know when he/she comes by during the run. The chief gate keeper will be moving down (or up!) the course throughout the race and will be available to answer any questions.

Please have your card ready and stay at your position until your card has been picked up. This gets the cards gathered up and into the lodge as quickly as possible for tabulation. Do not bring the gate card into the lodge yourself.

If there is to be a second run, you will be given a time to return to your position. If you fail to return on time, the start of the run will be delayed, which inconveniences everyone. Do not be late!

*** AFTER THE RACE**

Immediately after the race, take your bucket, clipboard and vest back where you first checked them out, unless otherwise instructed. Please also bring back any unused wedges that you may have. You will be given a voucher towards a future full or partial lift ticket when you turn in your equipment.

After the race, your presence may be needed at a post-race jury meeting if a DQ recorded by you is protested. If this applies to you, please check-in with the chief gate keeper once back inside the lodge so we know your whereabouts.

*** STAYING COMFORTABLE**

Gatekeeping can involve lengthy hours of standing (or sitting) in any kind of weather. Make the most out of your gate keeping experience by being prepared!

- > You will be issued a five gallon plastic bucket, with lid, to carry things in and to sit on if you like.
- > Assuming we have enough volunteers, roving gate keepers will be designated. They will be able to substitute in your spot for bathroom or warm-up breaks.
- > Dress in layers. A wind and rain resistant shell (over your ski jacket) is recommended.
- > Experienced gate keepers have been known to bring small sections of rug or foam to stand or sit on.
- > Regular winter boots can be worth packing in if your feet get cold easily (better than standing in ski boots).
- > Weather can change rapidly. Be ready with sun screen, sun glasses, goggles and hand warmers.

> Change of clothes for end of the day (just in case).

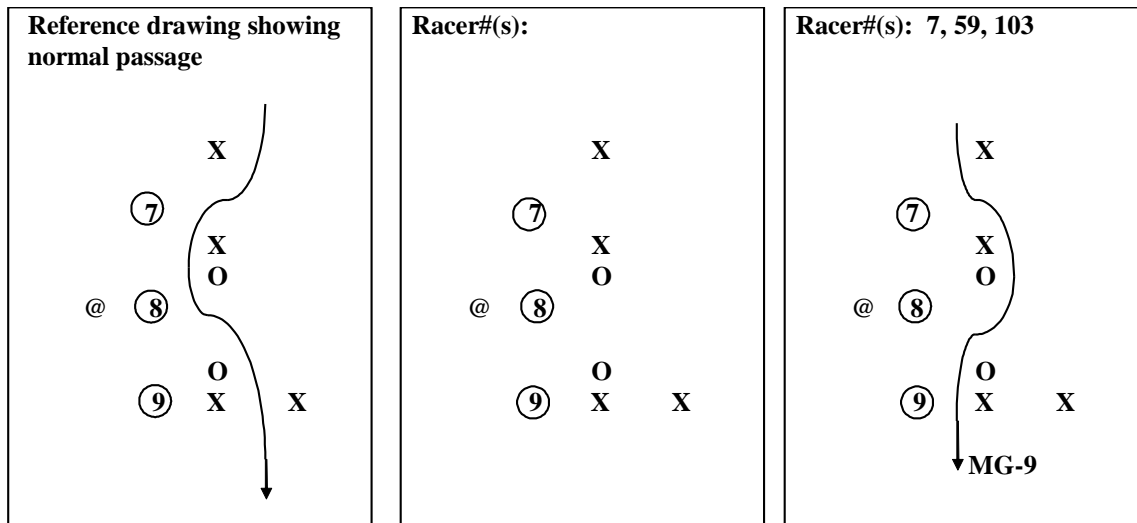
Note: You do not need to be a skier to be a gate keeper. Gate keepers-on-foot will be assigned positions on the course that are closest to the lodge, but you should be prepared for some amount of uphill and downhill walking.

*** SAMPLE GATE CARD DIAGRAMS**

The left frame shows a possible red-blue-red gate sequence for a slalom course, along with the relative position of the gate keeper (@). In this example, the gate numbers are 7, 8 and 9. The first pair of X's represents the poles for red gate #7. The pair of O's shows the poles for blue gate #8. The second pair of X's is red gate #9. The normal, expected racer passage has been indicated with an arrow. This is your reference diagram.

The middle frame is an example of a pre-prepared diagram for the same gates, ready for recording any disqualifications. Make several frames like this ahead of time, so you don't have to worry about doing it during the race.

The third frame records disqualifications for racers 7, 59 and 103, who have all missed gate #9 ("MG-9") in the same manner. The same picture can be used for all three racers. In this case, note that the racers legally crossed the first two gates, but in a disadvantageous direction, which led to missing the third gate.



The following two frames illustrate two more examples of gate faults on the same pattern of gates. Racers 42 & 63 legally crossed gates 7 and 9, but missed gate 8 ("MG-8"). Racer 99 straddled the lower pole of gate 7 ("S-7") and did not continue racing.

