

A TO ZILCO GUIDE

P = Pickaxe Team

A Pickaxe team consists of five horses. Two horses are hitched as wheelers, with three horses harnessed abreast in the lead. It is a combination more often seen at big European shows, where multiple hitches are more commonly seen to demonstrate horsemanship and showmanship. The harness required comprises a regular team harness, plus an additional leader set. The only specific harness component that is unique to a pickaxe team, is the leader reins. A standard set of leader reins can be adapted by adding an additional set of coupling reins. These usually need to be slightly longer than standard couplings, as they need to span the additional horse. Careful measuring and set up of the leader reins is very important so that all three leaders have a correct rein contact with the driver. The team bars to accommodate three leaders can be made up from regular team bars with the addition of three bars in front.

Q = Quarter Sheets

There are times when a warm horse needs to stand in harness. He will need protection to prevent chilling off, especially if he is sweaty after activity and the temperature is cold, wet or windy. They will most commonly be used at rest stops on a rally, waiting for one's time at winter driving competitions, and standing in line at shows. Quarter sheets for driving horses are designed to cover the horse's hindquarters while it is still in harness, without impeding the function of the harness. For some clipped horses who are sensitive to the cold, they can also be used during light exercise or until the horse has warmed up. Zilco quarter sheets are designed with this in mind, being easy to put on and take off. They fit behind the saddle and attach with lightweight snaps at the sides and middle. Warm polar fleece linings maintain the horse's body heat, and 600 denier waterproof and breathable polypropylene outer protects from wind and rain. A reflective strip helps visibility and is especially useful when driving on the roads.



R = Reins

For smooth communication of direction and pace, reins represent the only physical contact between horse and driver. Zilco rein materials are varied to suit personal taste. Drivers should choose materials that suit their hand size and strength, and not assume that all reins work the same. Part of the art of horsemanship is to understand how harness can be selected to find the best solution for both driver and horse. For pairs and teams, the art of horsemanship becomes more challenging, because the adjustment of the coupling reins can make the difference between harmonious communication or no communication at all. A good driver will always be vigilant and check that rein settings are correct for the task in hand.



S = Shafts



Shaft styles are dictated by the purpose of the vehicle. Many marathon vehicles have shafts which end on, or just in front of the saddle to avoid obstructing the horse's shoulder on tight turns. The shafts on modern marathon and pleasure driving vehicles may be either independent, or fixed, depending on the individual design of the carriage. Independent shafts move independently of each other, which requires a fixed backband and tugs in order to hold the shafts are level each side. Some four wheeled vehicles have fixed shafts, this type of shaft usually works better with a sliding backband. However due to variations in shaft weight and design, horse size and activity, it could acceptable to limit the amount of slide by using stoppers on each side of the backband so that it can slide only as far as required. The golden rule is to observe how the shafts affect the horse when in action, and make a judgement that ensures the most comfortable and efficient set up, so that the fixed shafts cannot bounce or wobble from side to side. It is usually more efficient and acceptable to keep the traces outside the backband, allowing the backband to fit more snugly, making use of the square fitting at the bottom of the saddle if necessary. For pleasure driving, shafts may be longer and follow more traditional curves. Two wheeled vehicles present a different challenge, and need to be carefully balanced to enable the shafts to lightly "float" in the tugs. It is an art make adjustments to find the perfect balance, but once achieved, the ride can be delightful.

T = Tugs

Tug styles vary to suit the wide variety of shaft designs. Shafts with a closed loop end, require quick release tugs that can be easily opened and closed when putting to and unharnessing. This style of tug is also suitable for most other shaft styles too, which makes it a versatile and practical choice for a wide range of carriages, both four wheeled or two wheeled. Tilbury tugs fit tightly around the shafts, and are suitable for shafts that need to be buckled tightly to the saddle sides, without movement up or down. Being of a more traditional style, Tilburys are sometimes seen in use for the dressage arena. Telescopic shafts also operate best when buckled in close to the saddle, and require tugs that limit their movement forwards and backwards so the telescopic mechanism can do its job. Zilco Quick Release Marathon tugs combine quick release buckles with extra straps to hold the telescopic shaft end firmly to the saddle sides, so it cannot swing forwards or backwards.



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