



## Convert a Single Harness for a Marathon Vehicle

You just bought a marathon vehicle. How exciting!...until you go to hook it up and realize that your current harness isn't going to work with that vehicle. Good news! You shouldn't need an entirely new harness. What parts do you need to hook up that new vehicle?

The typical marathon vehicle has closed-end shafts with big circles on the ends. They are meant to be connected at the saddle, not end at the point of the horse's shoulders like regular straight shafts on a typical cart or carriage. Those big circles on the end of marathon shafts just don't fit through the regular sewn shut Open tugs (shaft loops). They are too big.



More good news is that you shouldn't need a new saddle. You just need to replace your Open tugs with tugs that open to hold up the circle on the shafts. This can be accomplished with three different styles of harness tugs. The most typical style of tugs used are called Quick Release



tugs. They have a specialized buckle through which the tug bearing strap (the strap on the saddle that holds the shaft tugs) slides and holds the tug closed after you put the shaft through it. They release with just an upwards pull of the tug bearing strap. The disadvantage of Quick Release tugs is that they can be harder to use if you have thick leather tug bearing straps (they are easier with synthetic harness), can be difficult to use for those people who have medical hand issues (i.e. arthritis, carpal tunnel, etc.) and are more expensive than the next option.



Another kind of shaft tugs you can use are called Wrap tugs. They buckle onto the tug bearing straps of the saddle, wrap through the marathon shaft, back through their own ring, and then buckle into the overgirth. They are easier to use with stiffer leather tug bearing straps, are the least expensive option, but they don't hold the shaft up as high on the saddle as the QR tugs because of the length of the construction and hardware. They also require you yourself to hold up the shaft while you wrap and buckle the tug (the tug won't hold up the shaft while you buckle it).



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The third and most expensive kind of tugs you can use are French tugs. French tugs are typically found on higher-end Gig harnesses. However, these work well for those people who would like the tug to hold up the shaft while they close and buckle the tug, and also have less strength in their hands to manipulate thick tug bearing straps with Quick Release tugs. French tugs have a metal cradle in which the shaft is placed while the strap is threaded down through the French tug hardware and finished being buckled into the overgirth. If you have a wrap strap girth, you will need to replace it to use any of these tugs mentioned, as the ends of the tugs have to buckled into the overgirth.



The other harness parts you may need for your new marathon vehicle are Ring-End traces so that the snap shackles on your singletree can connect to the traces. Again, this can be accomplished with a number of options. The best option is to get new traces that buckle into your breast collar. (If your breast collar has sewn-in traces, you may need to use another option we will discuss below.) Traces are available with either just Ring-Ends or Duel-Ends (rings as well as slots to use with a regular wood singletree). These traces would replace your typical Slot-End traces.



The least expensive albeit a little less safe option is to use Trace Converters. The reason we consider them less safe is because you are adding more hardware into your pulling system which has an additional risk of breaking. However, if you have sewn-in traces on your breast collar, this may be your only option unless you get a different breast collar and traces. The other challenge with Trace Converters is that they will add length to your traces, so if your traces are already on the verge of being too long, this may not work as well, either. The best option is to get Ring-End or Duel-End traces that are just the right length for your vehicle.



There are a couple of other parts you may need for your marathon vehicle. If you use a kick strap, you may need to get a longer one, as the shafts on a marathon vehicle are usually lower at the horse's hip than on a typical cart. You may also need longer holdbacks (breaching straps) depending on where the footman loops are welded onto the marathon shafts. Both of these parts are easily replaced on your harness. Contact us if you need help selecting just the right parts for you!

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