



HARNES RACING 101

An educational primer

**Welcome to the wonderful world
of harness racing!**

**This primer should help you get started
enjoying the racing experience,
but the real thrill comes from actually
paying a visit to the track nearest you!**

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UNITED STATES TROTting ASSOCIATION**

THE STANDARDBRED

The horses used in harness racing are Standardbreds, and only a registered Standardbred may compete in a sanctioned harness race.

The origins of the Standardbred trace back to Messenger, an English Thoroughbred

foaled in 1780, and later exported to the United States.

Messenger was the great-grand-sire of Hambletonian

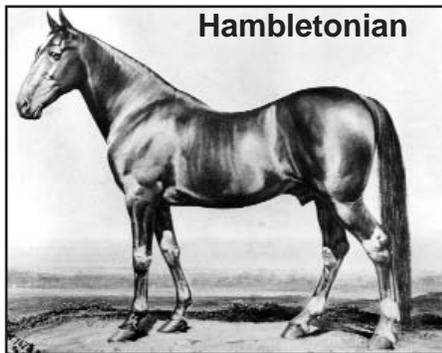
10, to whom every Standardbred can trace its heritage. Standardbreds are a relatively new breed, dating back just over 200 years, but it is a true American breed.

The name "Standardbred" originated because the early trotters (pacers would not come into the picture until much later) were required to reach a certain standard for the mile distance in order to be registered as part of the new breed. The mile is still the standard distance covered in nearly every harness race.

While Thoroughbred racing has long been known as the sport of kings, the dependable, athletic Standardbred brought racing to the common man, first

between neighbors on community roads, and later at state-of-the-art race-tracks.

Standardbred racing has long been known as the sport of the people, and both the sport and the breed are as much a part of



our American landscape as cowboys and apple pie.

As it evolved it gave the United States some of its first "sports heroes," including the great Dan Patch, the legendary Adios and the great grey ghost, Greyhound.

In many respects, the Standardbred resembles the Thoroughbred. However, it is often more muscled and longer in body, and does not stand as tall, averaging between 15 and 16 hands. The head is bigger and may even sport a Roman nose.

This breed appears in varying colors, although bay and brown are predominant. It weighs between 800 and 1,000 pounds. Standardbreds are known for their docile personalities and willing temperaments.

GAITS

Standardbred racing is contested on



two gaits, the trot and the pace. Trotters move with a diagonal gait; the left front and right rear legs

move in unison, as do the right front and left rear. It requires much skill by the trainer to get a trotter to move perfectly at high speeds, even though the trotting gait is a natural one in the animal world.

Pacers, on the other hand, move the legs on one side of their body in tandem: left front and rear,



and right front and rear. This action shows why pacers are often called "side-wheelers." Pacers, which account for about 80 percent of the performers in harness racing and are the faster of the two gaits, are aided in maintaining their gait by plastic loops called hobbles, which keep their legs moving in synchronization.

Any trotter or pacer who "breaks" into a canter or gallop during a race must be pulled back to its correct gait and lose ground to its competitors or be disqualified from the race.

THE RACING

Most Standardbreds start racing as 2- or 3-year-olds. Trotters race only trotters and pacers race only pacers. Racing takes place at numerous tracks and fairs across North America, although harness racing is most popular in the Midwest and the



Malabar Man winning the 1997 HAMBLETONIAN.

East. Some of North America's top trotting races are the Peter Haughton Memorial for 2-year-olds, and the World Trotting Derby, Yonkers Trot, Hambletonian, and Kentucky Futurity for 3-year-olds. The latter three races make up the trotting Triple Crown.

For pacers, top races include the Woodrow Wilson and Metro Stake for 2-year-olds, and the Little Brown Jug, Meadowlands Pace, North American Cup and the Adios for 3-year-olds. The Pacing Triple Crown is made up of the Little Brown Jug, the Messenger Stake and the Cane Pace.

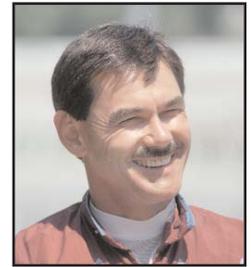
DRIVERS AND TRAINERS

When racing first started, most participants drove, trained and owned their own horses. In the last two decades, the sport

has become much more specialized, and like Thoroughbreds, harness racing now has separate drivers and trainers.

Drivers who are hired on a per-race basis are known as catch-drivers. This distinguishes them from trainer-drivers--trainers who also drive their horses.

The best driver in harness racing is John Campbell, who has earned almost \$250 million in purses. He was inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame at the age of 35—the youngest-ever inductee.



JOHN CAMPBELL

Drivers and trainers each have their own "colors"—a special suit in a style, pattern and color that they must have approved by and registered with the USTA. These colors are individual to each racing participant. Unlike Thoroughbred racing, where jockeys wear an owner's "silks," each driver wears his or her own colors no matter by which owner or trainer he is hired.

WHO IS AT THE TRACK

Some other people you will see/hear at the track helping to put on the races include:

Announcer: He sits in a booth on the roof and is the voice you hear calling the race.



The Meadows ANNOUNCER Roger Huston.

Mutuel Clerk: The person who sells you a betting ticket.

Outrider: Seated on horseback, he or she leads the horses out for the race and helps with any on-track problems that may arise.

Photographer: He or she takes a picture of every winning horse and their connections in the winner's circle, and the owners, trainers, drivers and fans then purchase those photos as souvenirs.

Starter: He rides in the starting car from behind which the horses start the race.

GENERAL TERMS

BOXED IN: A horse that is racing on the rails (or fence) and is surrounded by other horses in front, outside and behind it. A horse that is boxed in is held up and unable to gain a clear passage.



CATCH-DRIVER Eddie Davis in his COLORS.

BREAK: To start galloping and lose natural trotting or pacing rhythm. It occurs more with trotters than pacers.

BROODMARE: A female horse, generally retired from racing, used for breeding purposes.

CARD: Another term for program of racing. For example, a person may refer to there being eight races on the card, which simply means eight races will be staged on that particular day.

CATCH-DRIVER: A driver which doesn't train his or her own horses, and is engaged by other trainers and owners to drive their horses.

CLAIMING RACE: A race where any of the entrants may be claimed (purchased) for a specified amount.

CLASS: The category of racing in which which a horse a horse competes, such as a claimer, conditioned event, stake race, etc.

COLORS: The special colorful jacket worn by drivers when in a race. Unlike Thoroughbred racing, drivers register their own colors and wear them every time they race.

COLT: A male horse 3 years of age or less.

CONDITIONED RACE: A race where eligibility is based on age, sex, money won, or races won. For example, "3-year-old fillies, non-winners of \$10,000 or 4 races."

COVER: A horse that races with another horse in front of him is said to race with cover, as the leading horse cuts the wind resistance.

CROSS FIRE: When a horse's hind foot strikes the opposite front foot or leg.

DAM: The female parent, or mother, of a horse.

DEAD HEAT: A situation in which the judges, using a photograph, cannot separate two or more horses when judging the outcome of a race.

DISTANCED: A horse that is out of touch with the rest of the field at the end of the race. This is often referred to as finished distanced.

DRIVER: The person holding a license or permit to drive harness horses. There are different types of licenses, which correspond to differing levels of experience.

EARLY/LATE CLOSER: A race requiring payments which start much closer to the actual race date than a stake. "Early" and "Late" involve specified periods of time.

FILLY: A female horse 3 years of age or less.

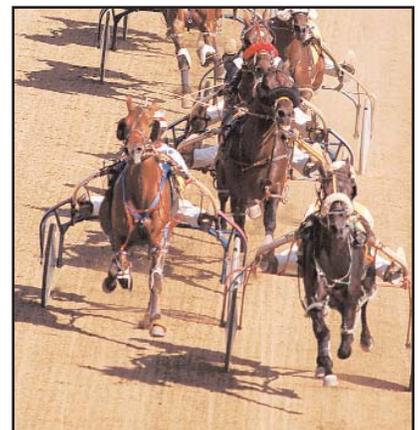
FIRST-OVER: The first horse to make a move on the leader in a race, moving up on the outside.

FOAL: A newly born horse. Also describes the act of a mare giving birth.

FREE-LEGGED: A pacer which races without wearing hobbles.

GELDING: A castrated male horse of any age.

HANDICAPPING: The first step in successfully picking a



The horse on the left is going FIRST-OVER to try and take the lead.

winner (or "handicapping") is becoming familiar with reading the racing program. Each program has a section explaining the information format used at that particular track. Probably the best place to start when handicapping Standardbreds is time. Since over 99 percent of all harness races are conducted at the one-mile distance, valid comparisons can be made among horses.



HOBBLER on a pacer.

HARNESS: The gear which is used to attach the sulky to a horse, to carry the hobbles and to enable the driver to steer the horse.

HOME STRETCH: The straight length of the track, nearest the spectators, where the finish line is situated. It is called this because it is the final part of the track a horse travels down during a race -- on its run 'home' (or to the finish line).

HOBBLER: The straps which connect the front and rear legs on the same side of a horse. Most pacers wear hobbles to help balance their stride and maintain a pacing gait. The length of hobbles is adjustable, and a trainer registers the length that best suits his or her horse. There are also trotting hobbles that work through a pulley system to help trotters maintain their gait.



This horse is using a JOG CART and pacing FREE-LEGGED.

HORSE: A male 4 years of age or older.

INQUIRY: Stewards may conduct an inquiry as a result of any incident which may have occurred during a race, to determine whether or not certain drivers and/or horses were responsible for the incident and whether they should receive due punishment.

JAN. 1: All Standardbreds share this date as their birthday.

JOG CART: A cart that is attached to the harness and carries the trainer, and which the horse pulls. Used when horses are training or warming up for a race. It is larger, longer and heavier than a **SULKY**.



The number 3 horse is PARKED OUT, while number 1 is THREE-WIDE.

INVITATIONAL: A race for the top horses in the area. Also known as an Open or Free-For-All.

LAME: The term used to describe a horse which is limping or has difficulty walking properly.

LEASING: As opposed to buying a harness horse, people have the option of leasing one. Just like some people lease a car instead of paying the money up-front, leasing a horse gives people use of a horse without large capital outlay. An agreement or contract must be drawn up between the two parties, and the lease must be registered with the relevant controlling body.

MAIDEN: A horse which has not yet won a race.

MARE: A female 4 years of age or more.

PARI-MUTUEL RACE: A race in which wagering is allowed, held at a track licensed by a state's racing commission. Pari-mutuel races are held at licensed pari-mutuel race-tracks or fairs.



Racing down the STRETCH at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair.

ly on smaller tracks), the better is its chance of winning. At the start, horses must either "leave" (start quickly) to get a good position, or else find a place on the rail to avoid racing on the outside of other horses. When racing on the outside the horse is said to be "parked out," and loses ground on every turn. A horse on the inside has a better chance to get to the rail or quickly get a good position.

QUALIFIER: A race in which a horse must go a mile below an established time standard to prove itself capable of competing in pari-mutuel races.

SCRATCH: A horse that is withdrawn (or scratched) from a race before the start.

SIRE: The male parent, or father, of a horse.

SIRE STAKE: Stake races designed to promote Standardbred breeding and racing within a state. Different states have different rules regulating eligibility to that state's sire stakes program. Rules include: a horse must be the offspring of a stallion standing in the state or a mare living in that state, owned by a resident of that state, or the horse was born in that state.

STAKE RACE: A race where owners make a series of payments, starting well in advance, to keep a horse eligible. If an owner misses a payment to a stakes race, the horse becomes ineligible.

STARTER: The person responsible for starting a harness race. The starter controls the start of the race from the back of the mobile vehicle.

SULKY: Also known as the racebike, the sulky is attached to the harness, pulled by the horse, and carries the driver. It is lighter and more streamlined than a **JOG CART**.

THREE-WIDE: When a horse is two horses out from the rail.

TIME TRIAL: An attempt to have a horse beat its own best time in a non-competitive event. A time trial is not a race. Galloping horses hitched to sulkies, called prompters, are used to push a horse to its best effort.

TOTE BOARD: An electronic board, usually in the infield of a track, which posts the odds, amount of money bet, results of a race and the wagering pay-offs.

WEANLING: A baby horse, up to its first birthday.

YEARLING: Any horse between its first and second birthday.

PARKED: A horse racing on the outside, with at least one horse between it and the inside rail.

PHOTO FINISH: When two horses cross the finish too closely to identify a winner, officials call for a photograph of the race, taken exactly at the finish line, to help them determine who was ahead.

POCKET: A horse in a pocket is unable to obtain a clear run because it has other horses situated in front, behind and to the side of it.

POST POSITION: Generally, the closer a horse starts to the inside rail or barrier of the track (especial-



Albatross was one of the sport's best SIREs.

WANNA MAKE A BET?

How easy is it to pick a horse on which to wager?

Try this:

- Number a slip of paper for each horse in a race.
 - Place the numbers in a hat.
 - Close your eyes and pick one.
 - Place your bet on that horse.
- Congratulations! You're a handicapper.

You'd be surprised how many people use a method like this to pick winners. If you leave your bet entirely to chance, you're as likely to hit a winner as not, even without knowing anything about horses. Betting horses can be that simple.

You don't have to use slips of paper. You can throw darts or draw straws. Try numerology or your lucky number. The favorite of our betting guide, Bob T. Nag, is to count the stars and divide by your age, or bet the horse's name that appeals to you most, or your favorite color. Picking horses at random can be fun, and it can produce winners. Or you can try and improve your chances by using these tools:

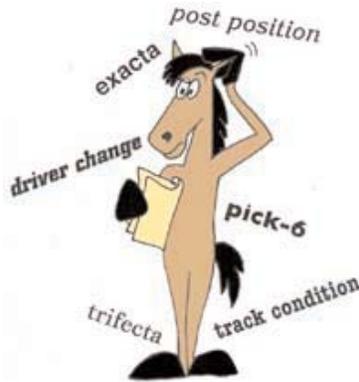
INTUITION

Sometimes you're feeling lucky. Go for it! There's no way to predict the odds of success by this method. It's up to you and your lucky stars.

Want better odds? Move on.

PICK THE FAVORITES

About one of every three races is won by 'the favorite.' This is the horse on which the crowd bets the most money. By simply betting on favorites, Bob says you increase your odds of picking winners. Eighty to 90 horses will race in nine or 10 races each night, and there's only one favorite per race. Just knowing this gives you an advantage and should help you to pick about three winners a night. This is the easy method. To single out the six or



BOB T. NAG

seven winning horses in an evening that are not favorites, you'll need further study, a hot tip, or a nod from Lady Luck.

ASK THE EXPERTS

If you don't want to study the horses yourself, there are plenty of folks willing to give you a little advice—for a price. It's only natural that the more an expert studies the horses and drivers, the truer the tips will run.

Bob recommends the tip sheets sold by hawkers as you enter each track, or to look in your local newspaper for tips. You may want to do some figuring of your own.

Good books, such as Jerry Connor's *Handicapping Beyond the Basics*, as well



as the USTA Web site's handicapping section could help, as might the publications on harness racing found through the USTA. Or hang out and listen to the locals.

Obviously, the more you know and learn, the more success you might expect to have at the betting windows.

HOW DO YOU HANDICAP A RACE?

Although it may seem difficult at first, handicapping need not be a long and involved process. The first step is to purchase a daily program and look at each horse's past performance record. All the information you'll need is right there: where they raced, their times, who drove them and how they finished. Of course, none of this information will make any sense unless you read the page of the program that explains "How to Read The Program." Soon the numbers and the symbols will be easy to understand.

Now that you understand the program, Bob recommends a few things to look for:

THE DRIVER FACTOR



LUC OUELLETTE

Drivers, much as other athletes, possess varying amounts of ability. Anyone in the sport knows that Luc Ouellette is among harness racing's greatest drivers, and many people bet the horses he drives just for that reason.

The top drivers are easy to spot. Besides being listed among the leaders in the standings in the program, these are the reinsmen who are in the winner's circle the most often. They know how to best plan out a race, and know how and when to get their horse to give his all. Racetracks keep track of how a driver is doing for you.

Right next to his name, they list his statistics at this track. For example, near a horse Ouellette drives, you might see some thing like this:

**LUC OUELLETTE (155) (07/22/65)
red-blk-wht (1269-261-194-161-.333)**

This says Ouellette, who weighs 155 pounds and was born July 17, 1965, wears red, black and white colors. At this meet he has driven in 1,269 races, winning 261 of them, finishing second 194 times and finishing third 161 times. His "Universal Driver Rating," a number calculated like a batting average, is .333. Any number over .300 is considered excellent.

Check the drivers in the race you're

handicapping; find the horses being driven by drivers whose average is .300 and make note of them.

THE CONSISTENCY FACTOR

Consistency is perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the harness horse. Good horses are able to perform well week after week. Here in our program, we keep track of that, too.

In the upper left-hand portion of each horse's past performances, we list the track where he won his fastest mile of the year (and its size—5/8 of a mile, 1/2-mile etc.), the time of the fastest winning mile of the year, number of starts, wins, seconds, thirds, and money won for this year and last. When Moni Maker raced in the 1998 Nat Ray, hers looked like this:

**M1 1:52.3 1998 12 7 3 2 \$869,918
M1 1:52.2 1997 19 9 5 3 \$942,999**

The top line says that at The Meadowlands, a one-mile track, Moni Maker won in 1:52.3 in 1998. In the same year she has 12 starts, seven victories, three seconds and two thirds, for earnings of \$869,918. In 1997 she took a 1:52.2 mark at The Meadowlands. During the year she raced 19 times, with nine victories, five seconds and three thirds, and won \$942,999.

If a horse has been 1-2-3 at least half of the time this year, that is the mark of a consistently strong horse.

Bob says to take note of that horse. Also take note if he's won at least one-third of his races this year.

Remember, picking a horse that breaks

HOW ARE THE RACES CLASSIFIED?

Conditioned Race:

A race where eligibility is based on age, sex, money won or races won.

Claiming Race:

A race where any of the entrants may be claimed (purchased) for a specified amount.

Invitational, Preferred or Open:

A race for the fastest horses on the

grounds. In Invitational and Preferred events, the racing secretary invites the top horses he wants for a particular race.

Breeders and Sires Stakes:

A race where horses are nominated to compete a year before the year of racing. The owners pay a nominating fee, along with a series of regular payments, to keep the horse eligible.

stride often could be risky. Breaks are noted in the program with an "X" in the section marking the horse's position during the race.

THE CLASS FACTOR

Class, as the term is applied to horses, comes from one thing and one thing only: horses who can go faster and earn more money are said to be "classy." Better horses race for more money. That's why some races have higher purses. Thus, the purse will be our key to class. The purse for each race is shown on each past performance line.

If tonight's purse is less than what a horse raced for last time, he's "dropping" in class; conversely, if the purse tonight is greater than he raced for last time, he's "moving up" in class.

Horses dropping in class have an advantage, so Bob says to find those horses in the program and add them to your list of ones to watch.

THE POST POSITION FACTOR

While it's true that "It's not where you start, but where you finish" applies to harness racing, post position is of great importance.

Horses starting from the inside simply have less distance to travel. The key to post positions is identifying the horses who will benefit from being inside. Pay attention to horses in posts one through five, and Bob says to pay special attention to the horses in posts one through five (inside post positions) who had been in higher post positions (six, seven, etc.) in their last start—they're going to have an easier time of it!

THE TIME FACTOR

Since almost all harness races are conducted at a distance of one mile, Standardbreds can be compared by time. However, it is important to remember that there are many other factors involved, such as post position, the particular track and its condition, and whether the horse stayed on stride for the entire trip.

Just because a horse won in 1:58 last

week, he may have raced against classier (and thus faster) horses. In general, though, a horse who recently won a mile race in 1:58 should post a similar time tonight.

Bob says it will help your handicapping to identify the three horses that posted the fastest final times in their most recent races.

THE FORM FACTOR

Sharpness or current form is a term used to describe how well a horse has been performing.

Watch the past performance records for trends. A horse that once was a star on the local circuit may show a series of poor outings. He may be worn out. On the other hand, a horse on the rise may be able to handle competition that was once far out of his reach.

Sharpness can also be spotted on the track. Signs that a horse is indeed one to keep an eye on include his ability to overcome racing on the outside (a "parked out" trip), the skill to survive a tough battle on the lead, and the making up of much ground in the stretch.

The parked-out symbol (°), which appears in the program when a horse raced "outside" (with other horses between him and the rail), might tell us even more. Such parked-out symbols, especially where they appear in winning or close efforts, are mighty signs of fitness.

Horses who were parked-out in their last race, if they won or were within a length of the winner at the finish, may put forth a better showing next time.

SUMMING UP

It's that simple. After identifying these factors, it should be obvious that we'll want to bet on the horse who passes the majority of these "tests." After devoting a few moments to the most important handicapping factors, we've learned a lot.

Soon, you'll become more familiar with the horses and drivers; come to know more about the importance of the factors at your track; and be able to better figure times and class.

WHAT TO SAY AT THE BETTING WINDOW

After you make your selection, go to any betting window to place your wager. Here's the usual method of stating your bet:

Give the **AMOUNT** of the wager (\$2 minimum), the **TYPE** of bet, and the **NUMBER** or numbers of your selections. For example- \$3 to win on number 5; \$6 to show on number 7; \$4 exacta, 3-2.

Remember, if you are betting a race simulcasted to your track, start off your wager by saying which track you are playing and the race number (For example, "In the fifth at The Meadows, I'll take \$5 to win on number 2.")! And ALWAYS check your tickets before leaving the window. Even the best mutuel clerk can make a mistake.

Here is a quick look at types of bets.

Win: Collect if your horse finished 1st.

Place: Collect if your horse finishes 1st or 2nd.

Show: Collect if your horse finishes 1st, 2nd or 3rd.

Daily Double: Collect if you select the winners of two consecutive specified races.

Exacta: Collect if you select the first two finishers in exact order.

Trifecta: Collect if you select the first three finishers in exact order.

Pick Six: Collect if you pick the winners of the six designated races included in the "Pick Six" program. You may win a consolation prize for selecting winners in five of the six designated races.

The best part: Ca\$hing in!

If your horses came in—if you're a WINNER—you can take your ticket to any mutuel window. You can collect all of your winnings, and you can even bet some of your money back on the next race or future races. Hand your ticket back to the cashier and he or she will provide the payout.

UNDERSTANDING THE ODDS

On the infield tote board, you will see the "win" odds for each horse in the race. These are updated frequently—every 45 seconds—to reflect the amount of money wagered on each horse in relation to all

money wagered in the entire win pool.

That section of the tote board might look something like this:

1	20	2	7	3	5-2
4	11	5	5	6	70
7	9-2	8	6-5	9	7-2

If you see a single number next to your horse on the odds board, for example, "5," then the horse is 5 to 1. This means that, for every dollar wagered on that horse to win, the winning ticket holder would win about \$5 and receive about \$6 back. (Don't forget, you always get the amount of your bet back!)

So, for a \$2 winning ticket on a 5 to 1 horse, you would receive about \$12. (\$5 + \$5 + your \$2 bet = \$12.)

Sometimes, when a horse is below the odds of 5 to 1, you might see two numbers with a "-" between them. The odds of 9-2 or 8-5 are typical examples. In the case of 9-2 odds, this means that, for every \$2 bet, you would win about \$9 and get \$11 back (maybe some change, too).

To figure out your approximate payoff when the odds are 9-2, 7-2, 5-2, 3-2 or 1-2, simply add the two numbers and you'll know your \$2 payoff.

When a horse is under 2-1, you will most likely see a further refinement in odds—examples are 9-5 and 8-5, among others.

Using 8-5 as an example, this means that, for every \$5 bet, one would win about \$8 and get \$13 back. For a \$2 bet on a horse that is 8-5, the winner would receive about \$5.20.

Once in a great while, you will see odds of 1-9 on the odds board. That is the lowest price a horse can appear on the tote board, although in actuality his price may be even lower., Similarly, when you see a horse at odds of "99," it means that the odds are 99 to 1 OR HIGHER. There aren't enough spaces on the tote board to go higher than "99."



WHAT NOW?

Remember, picking a winner in each race is like solving a puzzle. What's the reward for all the hard work leading to our solution? A visit to the cashier!

Now there's only one thing left to do: Head out to the tracks and start picking winners!

Bob and the USTA wish you the best of luck!

For more information on harness racing, contact the U.S. Trotting Association at (614) 224-2291, or visit our Web site at www.ustrotting.com.