

LOVE  RACES



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ALL ABOUT
THE HORSE



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“ There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man. ”

Winston Churchill

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THE HORSE PART OF OUR HERITAGE

The horse has long been central to human activity – a partnership through the ages. We have worked together, fought together and travelled together. The horse has had a profound impact on human history.

The horse has long been revered by mankind – from Shakespeare's Richard III:



a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!



It's amazing how often they are referred to in our daily routine if you think about it:



...you get the idea!

THE ORIGINAL SPORT

We are good at creating sports...



...Golf, Football, Rugby, Cricket,
some would even argue Baseball!

Add Horseracing to that list



Around the middle of the 18th century, horseracing became the first regulated sport in Britain, thanks to the formation of the Jockey Club. Before this time, most races took the format of 'match races' (contested by just two horses), run over much longer distances than Flat racing today and often consisting of several heats before a final. There is still a role in the Jockey Club with the official title of "Keeper of the Matchbook".

We also do tradition well, and racing thrives on it, with the horse as the central attraction.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD RACEHORSE?

Speed, stamina, strength, a competitive nature, durability – there are many assets that make a good racehorse. Looking at the horses in the paddock before a race is part of the fun of a day at the races and a great deal can be learnt from how a horse looks before it is about to race.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD RACEHORSE?

Horseracing rewards the time spent on its detail. Following breeding lines to see the characteristics passed on from generation to generation; studying form, i.e assessing previous racing performance; visiting the races to get close to the horses to see them at first hand, assessing their fitness, temperament and other attributes. There are many elements of horseracing that you can immerse yourself in.



SOME TIPS ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Aside from the bloodlines, a good way to judge whether a horse will be any good as a racing animal is to simply look at its physique.

As with humans, some horses are just naturally better suited to running; some are built to be sprinters, with bulging muscles and a rapid stride, others are long distance athletes, lean and supple with an easy gait – not unlike the differences you would see between human sprinters and marathon runners.

It's an old racing adage that the perfect sprinting filly should have



**The head of a lady
and the backside of
a scullery maid!**



If you're looking for a winner in the paddock then a few things to watch out for might include:

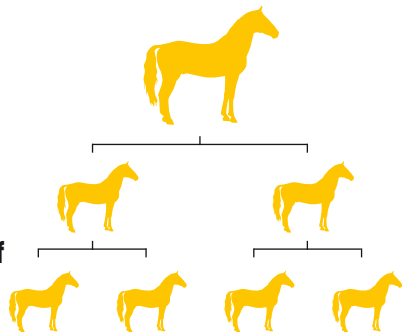
- + A sleek and shiny coat: that's normally an indication of a horse's wellbeing
- + A swagger or elegance; even at the walk a horse's athleticism is evident. Like human athletes, good horses display grace and suppleness at all paces
- + A relaxed horse is one that is not wasting nervous energy before the race, so if a horse is sweating or uneasy in the paddock, that's not usually a good sign

Well toned muscle and just a hint of rib showing is a sign that the horse is in peak physical condition; as with most human runners, sprinters tends to carry a little more muscle (and have quite big backsides!) compared to a horse that runs over longer distances, so bear that in mind.

THE FAMILY TREE

There are many different types of horse, but in this booklet we are concentrating on the Thoroughbred, the breed which is most commonly known as The Racehorse.

Most of us are hard pressed to trace our family tree beyond our great grandparents, but the direct bloodline of a thoroughbred horse can be traced back through tens of generations.



Nearly all of today's racehorses can be traced back to one of three '**founding father**' stallions – The Darley Arabian, The Godolphin Arabian and The Byerley Turk. These were Arabian horses, imported into England between the late 17th and early 18th century, which when mated with our native, heavier breeds, produced offspring with much increased speed, but little diminished stamina – the very first '**thoroughbred**' racehorses.

The first '**General Stud Book**' (a record of all official thoroughbred breeding) was published in 1791 and is still published every year. It formed the template which was copied by all other countries, and so we are able to record every thoroughbred born worldwide, and trace its ancestry back for many generations.

There is no need for a "Who Do You Think You Are" programme for racehorses!

PASSING ON THE GENES

One reason that the ancestry of a horse is so important is that most horses are sold as foals or yearlings – so before they have ever set foot on a racecourse.

The exploits of their parents and grandparents are the best guide that anyone has as to their likely ability – although thanks to the mysteries of genetics it's not uncommon for two relatively moderate horses to produce a superstar, and for two champion racehorses to produce something that wouldn't win a Donkey Derby!

Thoroughbred horses race either on the flat or over jumps.

Flat racing is over distances from 5 furlongs (1,000 meters) to around 2½ miles.

Jump racing is over both hurdles – smaller obstacles – and the larger steeplechase fences. The races range in distance from 2 miles to a little over 4½ miles.

Both sexes race, often against each other.

A horse that excels at 5 furlong races is unlikely to have the stamina for a race over 1½ miles. Breeders of racehorses therefore try to blend the talents of two horses to produce a horse that has the best attributes of its

parents – perhaps a blend of speed and determination; or stamina and enthusiasm. It is part science, part art – and a lot of luck!

Two extreme examples:

Snaafi Dancer – sold as a yearling (18 month old unraced horse) for \$10.2m. So slow he never ran – and at stud he turned out to be almost completely infertile!

Makfi – won the 2000 Guineas – the first “classic” of the flat race season. Initially bought for £27,300 and sold for a reputed £8m after his racing career – in which he won more than £600k.

A DAY AT THE RACES

FROM THE HORSE'S VIEWPOINT



An early start – as ever, though a road trip is on the agenda rather than the training gallops.

The aim is to be at the racecourse at least two hours before the race – leaving enough time to stretch my legs and have a drink of water after the journey. My lad or lass and I will then find a stable and begin preparations for the race. Part of this is grooming and making sure I look my best.

It is also important to be loose and relaxed, and walking around is a good way to ensure this happens.

About 45 minutes before the race we head to the pre-parade ring. This is the first opportunity for racegoers to look at us and make their judgments – we all try to look our best but the keen eye can spot which of us looks on song! With 25 minutes or so left before the off, it is time to get the saddle and number cloth on. This will be done by the trainer or one of their team and will usually be done in the stables surrounding the pre-parade ring.

From here, it is in to the parade ring itself, where the majority of racegoers get a look at us for the first time. Some of us will be getting **“on our toes”** – the tension is mounting at this stage. The different owners and trainers will be in the parade ring, waiting for the jockeys to appear and for last minute instructions to be given.

When the bell rings, it is time for the jockeys to get in the saddle – a couple more laps of the parade ring and then it is out on to the track for the race itself.

After the race, if we have run well and been placed then it is in to the winner's enclosure to be presented to the public. The winner's spot is obviously the most prominent but those in 2nd, 3rd and 4th also get a bit of the limelight.

After a good drink and a wash down, it is back to the stables for a rest before the journey home, with supper waiting in the stable.



THE MAGIC OF RACING

THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT A RACEHORSE

A racehorse weighs around 500kg; that's the same as twenty-five, eight-year-old children!

You can tell the age of a horse by looking at its teeth – that's where the saying "long in the tooth" comes from!

The average heart of a racehorse weighs the same as four bags of sugar. The biggest heart recorded was that of the Australian Champion racehorse, Phar Lap; his heart was a huge 13.5lb – equal to 38 cricket balls!

All racehorse foals have an official birthday of 1st January. This means that technically, a horse born on Christmas Day celebrates its first birthday a week later on New Year's Day. The aim is therefore to ensure foals are born in the months just after the New Year, to give them as much time as possible to mature before they start racing at the age of 2.

A racehorse drinks up to 10 gallons of water per day; that's the same as 137 cans of Coke (although a much healthier option!)

A horse uses more energy to lie down than stand up, which is why you often see horses sleeping while standing up. Horses have a unique system of interlocking ligaments and bones in their legs, acting as a sling to suspend their body weight without straining, while keeping their muscles fully relaxed. This means that horses don't have to use any energy to remain standing.

Horses communicate with facial expressions in the same way as humans – they use their ears, eyes and nostrils. Their ears usually point in the same direction that they are looking, so if a horse's ears are pointing in two directions, chances are they are looking in two directions at the same time! Watch out for a horse with its ears right back as this is a sign that the horse isn't very happy.

The top speed of the fastest racehorse is 44 miles per hour. Olympic champion Usain Bolt's top speed is 27 miles per hour, over 100m.

GLOSSARY

USEFUL RACING TERMINOLOGY

SIRE – the father of a horse

DAM – the mother of a horse

FOAL – newborn up to one year old

YEARLING – a one year old

COLT – a young male horse up to the age of four

FILLY – a young female horse up to the age of four

GELDING – a male horse that has been castrated

STALLION – a male used for breeding

MARE – a female aged five or older

GLOSSARY

COLOURS OF HORSES

Horses have subtle differences in the colour of their coat and there are 7 colour variants by which thoroughbreds are categorised:

GREY (GR) – ranging from bright white to steel-coloured grey.

BAY (B) – covers a huge range of the colour brown, from bright bay through to dark bay, which is basically black. Bay horses have black manes and tails.

CHESTNUT (CH) – a reddish or ginger coat colour, with a mane and tail to match.

ROAN (RO) – a Roan horse has an even mixture of white hairs mixed in with another colour.

BROWN (BR) – a horse registered as Brown will also have a brown mane and tail.

BLACK (BL) – stating the obvious, but black! This classification is rare.

WHITE (WH) – this classification is also very rare. The horse will have pink skin. Most horses that appear to be white will in fact be Grey, with black skin. Grey horses tend to get lighter in colour as they get older.

GLOSSARY

DISTANCES

Races in Great Britain are run in 'furlongs'. One furlong is 1/8 of a mile or around 200m.

The shortest races in Britain are run over 5f or 1,000 metres, and they take around a minute.

There are two types of obstacles in jump racing – hurdles and fences. Hurdles are smaller, and are designed to be knocked flat if a horse hits them with any more than a little force. Fences are much more solid, made of brush, and require a bit more effort to jump.

The shortest jump races are run over two miles, and the longest, the Grand National, is run over 4½ miles.

Generally, flat races can be categorised as follows:

SPRINT

5 to 7f or 1,400m

MILE

8f or 1,600m

MIDDLE DISTANCE

up to 12f or 2,400m

STAYING

beyond 12f

GLOSSARY

RACING AGE

Flat racehorses can start their racing career at just two years old – and some of them retire by the age of four, although many can go on racing much longer, until they are ten or older. Although some of the most prestigious races are confined to three year olds, generally flat racehorses tend to be at their peak aged four or five.

Jump racehorses generally don't start racing until they are four, and their careers tend to go on much longer, until they are twelve or sometimes older. Most jump racehorses are at the peak of their ability between the ages of six and nine.

THE POST-RACING LIFE

A racehorse can be involved in many after racing careers.

STALLION

The very best male flat racehorses go on to be stallions, hopefully passing on their best characteristics.

Speed, stamina, competitive nature and will to win combined with durability are the traits that future breeders, owners or punters will look for.

MARE

Many female horses go on to breed with the stallions to produce the next generation of racehorses. The gestation period is around 11 months.

RETRAINING

Many horses go on to active careers in other equestrian activities, such as eventing, dressage or showing. Others simply become pets, retired to a life of leisure in the field or as the phrase goes "put out to grass".

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

www.britishhorseracing.com

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