

Who's Who at the Track

Drivers, trainers and horses are the most prominent figures in the sport of harness racing. But there are many jobs in the industry that are essential to the success of any racehorse.

Trainer

A trainer is responsible for the conditioning and care of a horse. Trainers are hired by owners to get their horses ready to race, and to help them perform at their best. Trainers are also in charge of fitting the horses with the right equipment to maximize their racing potential, and making sure they stay healthy and strong throughout the season.



Driver

A driver sits behind the horse in a race bike, or sulky, and steers the horse around the track. A driver must have a special license from the United States Trotting Association that gives him or her permission to drive a horse in a race. Drivers have uniforms, specific to them, called "colors." Each driver's colors has a unique pattern and arrangement of colors and must be registered with the USTA. Unlike Thoroughbred racing, where each jockey wears the horse owner's "silks," drivers wear their individual colors regardless of the owner of the horse.

Owner

An owner is the person who purchases the horse, and pays the bills to feed and take care of it. An owner can be an individual or a partnership, which is a group of people that share the responsibilities and profits earned by a horse.

Caretaker/Groom

A caretaker, or groom, works for a trainer, and is the person responsible for harnessing the horse and taking care of its equipment, as well as keeping the horse and its stall clean.

Mutuel clerk

A mutuel clerk is the person at the mutuel window who takes wagers and presents the bettor with a betting ticket. He or she also pays out the money when a bettor has a winning ticket.

Judge

Judges are like the referees of harness racing. Their job is to make sure that all the rules of racing are being followed. They watch for rules infractions such as interference and breaks (which occur when a horse gallops instead of maintaining the trotting or pacing gait). Judges can assess fines or penalties, and they even have the power to overturn race results.

Outrider

Riding a horse, an outrider is responsible for leading the horses out onto the track and helping to corral them if they get loose. In the event of an accident, the outrider helps collect any horses that get away from their drivers and tries to keep them safe in the process.



Announcer

The announcer sits in a booth above the racetrack, with the best vantage point to see a race. He is the one who describes the race over the public address system.

Photographer

Track photographers take pictures of the winner at the finish line and after the race is over in the winner's circle, as the horse poses with the winning owner, trainer, driver and other connections.

Starter

The starter is the person who rides in the starting gate (a car or truck with a hinged gate behind it), and is responsible for getting the horses to the starting line in the right order. The starter calls the horses to follow the gate to the starting line. Once the horses reach the start, the starting car speeds up and pulls away.



Farrier

A farrier, or blacksmith, is a person who specializes in hoof care. He is responsible for putting on shoes and changing them when necessary. Horses wear shoes because it helps them grip the track and it keeps their hooves from wearing down.

Taken from USTA Website http://fanguide.ustrotting.com/whos_who.cfm