

Ten Things to Know

1. A Standardbred starts its racing career at two years of age. A horse must be fed, housed and cared for two years prior to its owner knowing if it will race and if it does, if it will be a productive race horse.
2. The care itself of a horse requires the equivalent of 5 jobs and/or services: groom/care giver, trainer, veterinarian, blacksmith and related supplies from a vendor.
3. A sulky, or a bike, is the light two-wheeled cart that is attached to a horse where the driver sits to steer the horse.
4. There are two types of gait styles in harness racing: pacers and trotters.
5. A pacer's front legs move in perfect step with the hind pair. Most harness races are pacers. Pacers wear hobbles. These are plastic or leather hoops that encircle each leg with the hobble on the right hind leg being connected by a strap to the hobble on the right front. An identical arrangement keeps things secure on the left. Trotting becomes impossible and galloping is essentially impossible.
6. A trotter's front legs move in a symmetrical rolling motion with their hind legs. That is, the left front and right hind legs strike the ground almost simultaneously and then give way to right front and left hind legs.
7. Breaking into a gallop is a violation of the rules of harness racing and can be caused by a number of factors such as the horse is fatigued, stressed, bumped or has equipment failure. Trotters break more frequently than pacers.
8. Qualifying races are purse-less races that are required for horses that break stride too often, behave badly before or during races, that fail to produce speed up to the local standard or that have been sidelined by illness or injury. Essentially, qualifying races assure the public that a horse permitted to start in a betting event is fit for competition.
9. Most harness races are one mile. Harness horses are all assigned a "mark" which is their fastest winning time at that distance. The races start from behind a hinged gate mounted on a car which then takes them to the starting line. At the starting line the wings of the gate are folded up and the car accelerates away from the horses.
10. A purse (money won by racing) is divided among the first five horses across the finish line. First place gets 50%, second place gets 25%, third place 12%, fourth 8% and fifth 5%.