

Christina Villa

16 July 2021

Prompt 3

### Backstretch Community vs Sports Communities

Horse racing is an ancient sport which began as early as 4500 BC. In France the first documented horse race was in 1651 (Britannica editors, 2021). However, it wasn't until 1665 when horse racing began in the U.S. The sport of horse racing has truly created social opportunities for families, friends, colleagues, and even economic opportunities as well. The key aspects discussed in this essay will focus on how the backstretch community became about the sport of horse racing, what makes up the backstretch community, and how the backstretch community differs from others.

#### **History & Importance**

In the lens of horse racing, the backstretch merely means the side of the track that is parallel to the homestretch. In most sports, the homestretch refers to the finish line or approaching the end of a performance thus resulting in the backstretch to be the area on a track specifically, that represents the incline in performance and players consistency. What this also means is that when it comes to horse racing, the backstretch is an area adjacent to the racetrack where horses are stabled and the employees who train them, groom them, feed them, and wrap them up, live there as well either temporarily or permanently in order to tend to the horse(s). Out of all of the popular sports around the world, horse racing does not solely depend on the player's athletic abilities, but their abilities to connect with an animal—in this case a horse—and combine both the jockey's physical fitness and the horses in order to exert an extensive amount of force and race at 27-55 miles per hour.

### **Similarities & Differences**

In order for a horse and a jockey to be successful, it takes a team effort! Similar to the basketball communities, there are several different individuals that play a vital role in the performance of the horse. However, things are slightly different when it comes to horse racing. The first significant individual would be the owner of the horse, then follows the trainer who is hired by the owner. The trainer then delegates tasks to the workers in the backstretch. The workers in the backstretch are the glue that keeps everything in tacked. As previously mentioned, there will be a groomer for the horse, a medical examiner or an individual that will bandage the horse, an individual that feeds the horse the proper nutrients, as well as an exerciser who will work out the horse, a hot walker, who is someone who walks the horse in the morning and afternoon before and or after a race. Whereas in the basketball community, a player and their team will have a team athletic trainer, a strength and conditioning coach, their personal agent, player development coach, their head coach, and lastly their assistant coach, that helps the player perform better.

A major difference between the two sporting communities is that the significant figures in basketball are given days off and do not need to work 7 days a week for more than eight hours. For example, the average athletic trainer in the NBA works forty to fifty hours a week but no more than 12 hours in a day (Lockard, 2005), and their schedules vary based on the work setting or team. On the other hand, racehorse trainers work six to seven days a week for up to 12 hours and must be on call for any emergencies pertaining to any of the horses in their care (Kramer, 2019). Moreover, racehorse trainers often begin their days prior to sunrise in order to get things done in a timely manner. This also applies to groomers, nutritionists, and hot walkers. There is

too much to be done and essentially not enough hours in the day. Overall, horse racing is extremely time consuming, and the backstretch workers are the ones to thank.

Another essential point would be that all those within the backstretch community's lives revolve around horse racing, which means that wherever the next track is they have to adapt once again and live in a new setting and continue the same work requirements. Workers within the football, basketball, track, tennis, or even swimming community do not have to worry about constantly changing locations and finding somewhere else to live because wherever their contract states they are needed would be the city or state in which they reside. Regarding games, the entire coaching staff within the football, basketball, track, tennis, and swimming community will only be away from home temporarily and will be given the opportunity to stay in hotels or rental houses.

In brief, the backstretch community can be viewed as 'the magic behind the scenes'. Every worker a part of the backstretch community are like puzzle pieces in one huge masterpiece. The backstretch community is forever changing and cannot be compared to any other sporting community! Although every sport has their similarities, the backstretch community deals with constant relocation, early hours, long weeks, and success cannot be achieved without a big team.

Works Cited

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Horse racing". Encyclopedia Britannica, 24 Mar. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/sports/horse-racing>. Accessed 14 July 2021.

Kramer, Mary Hope. "Racehorse Trainer Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More." *The Balance Careers*, [www.thebalancecareers.com/racehorse-trainer-125758#work-schedule](http://www.thebalancecareers.com/racehorse-trainer-125758#work-schedule).

Lockard, C Brett. "Athletic Trainers Providing Healthcare for Athletes of All Kind." *U.S Bureau of Statistics*, 2005, [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2005/spring/art04.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2005/spring/art04.pdf).