

FIRST TIMER'S GUIDE

MBNA America® Quarter Horse Racing Challenge

American Quarter Horse Racing's Richest Program

The MBNA America Quarter Horse Racing Challenge is a purse and bonus awards program developed by AQHA to increase racing opportunities for older horses. In 1993, the MBNA Challenge debuted and marked the first major program in horse racing to begin running races within a year of inception.

After 13 years of operation, the MBNA American Racing Challenge has become the industry's premier program, having distributed over \$39 million in purses to owners and bonus awards to nominators and stallion owners. Of this amount, more than 60% has been contributed by corporate sponsors.

Debuted in 1993, the MBNA America Quarter Horse Racing Challenge is a \$5 million series of 58 races run in 10 regions at racetracks across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The winner of each of these regional events earns a starting position to the MBNA America Challenge Championships to compete in the final of that particular race. The MBNA Challenge is racing's only series with a Championship finale. On MBNA Challenge Championship night a total of six championship races, six additional undercard races and the AQHYA Claiming Stakes are run.

The MBNA Challenge is to American Quarter Horse racing what the NCAA "Road to the Final Four" is to basketball. Sixty-four teams square off in four regions in college basketball's famous tournament, while the MBNA Challenge involves 564 horses in 10 regions in direct competition. These horses compete in races depending on their age and their ability.

The program assesses no administrative or advertising fees and obtains the majority of its money from corporate sponsors and host racetracks.

MBNA America is AQHA's official financial services company and offers designer or racing credit cards. Members also can finance trailers or take advantage of preferred CD rates.

MBNA America Challenge Championships

Professional's Choice Challenge Championship - For older 3 & up claiming horses

Ford Challenge Championship (G1) - For fillies and mares at 3-years-old and up

American Airlines Challenge Championship (G1) - For 2-year-olds

Bayer Legend Challenge Championship (G1) – For 3-year-olds

MCI Challenge Championship (G1) - For 870-yard specialists

MBNA America Challenge Championship (G1) - For the sport's finest older horses

Regional races receive coverage on "Racehorse Digest " and "NTRA2DAY at the Races" espn2.

To learn more about American Quarter Horse racing's most prestigious program call (800) 831-4447 or visit aqharacing.com.

Understanding The Sales Catalog

Buying horses through an auction is one of the most popular avenues of purchasing. It also is one of the most exhilarating aspects of the horse business. Imagine a horse race where bets are taken up to the finish line. A fictitious race of that type is similar to an auction where prospective bidders duel with one another over the horse of their choice.

Several thousand horses are sold each year through auctions. Various types of auctions are held, the most popular of which are yearling sales and mixed stock sales. Yearling sales are exclusively for horses which are one year of age, while mixed stock sales feature broodmares and other horses of various ages.

For individuals in the horse industry, particularly persons just entering the sport, an auction can be the best source from which to purchase. Normally the choices of horses are plentiful and are available for a wide range of prices. However, like any business venture, a sound game plan based on much research and preparation is essential. Some helpful guidelines are as follows:

Do Your Homework

Begin educating yourself about the horse business. Structured avenues exist in the industry through which to study husbandry, nutrition, genetics and breeding management, but the true aspects of this business are basically self-taught.

Various trade publications will provide you with much of the information you need to get started. These trade journals publish upcoming sale dates in their calendar of events. Various sale companies also advertise their upcoming sales in the publications, describing the type of sale and posting sale dates.

Check Out The Sale Company

Seek an auction company that holds a valued place in public trust. Industry advertisers and specialists can guide you to these reputable companies. Some of the companies include [Heritage Place](#), [Ruidoso Horse Sales](#), [Pacific Coast Quarter Horse Racing Association](#), [Louisiana Quarter Horse Breeders Association](#), [Schvaneveldt/Andreini Sales](#) and [Texas Quarter Horse Association](#). These and a handful of other companies are the blue chip firms of the auction industry and set the standard for customer service.

Study The Catalog

The sales catalog is considered the “Bible” for all prospective bidders attending an auction. Contained in each catalog are the sale conditions, the legal terms that govern purchases. In addition, a page is published for each horse offered. This page is much like the provenance on a painting or a prospectus on a stock offering. It identifies the animal, the consignor and provides extensive details about the relatives of each horse offered.

Seek The Advice Of Experts

Choose an adviser who will focus on the goals you have established for your horse business. A reputable adviser will help to avoid costly mistakes that a novice often makes. A veterinarian with knowledge of the horse business as well as equine medical expertise is an ideal adviser. Depending on the size of your operation, having a team of advisers to help properly guide you may be beneficial.

Attend An Auction And Observe

It is essential to get a sense of how the market is behaving. The auction is in effect the most reliable barometer, charting the highs and lows of current conditions. Reading the price list will tell you the final results. However, it will not reflect the competition, interest and demand for a particular lot.

Get Familiar With Auction Terms And Conditions

The fever of a good auction can bring out the high roller lurking in all of us. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with the terms and conditions of an auction prior to bidding. These terms and conditions dictate the rule “you bid for it, you pay for it.” The successful bid is irrevocable and legally binding. So, if you are the first-time buyer whose arm seems to have a mind of its own, your purchases might be costly ones, if you have not done your homework. As all successful people in business realize, you must look before you leap.

What is surprising to most newcomers to the auction scene is not the astronomical sums that some people are willing and able to pay, but the extraordinary buys that are available. Many All American Futurity winners, such as **Noblesse Six, A Classic Dash, Dash Thru Traffic, Royal Quick Dash, Refrigerator, Strawberry Silk, Teller Cartel, Ausual Suspect and Merganser** were offered at public auction. When considering the price for which each could have been purchased, the margin of return on investment is astounding.

Many other shrewd investments have been purchased through the auction ring. Of course, there have been some lucky buys, but many of the best have been the result of thorough research and foresight. The broodmare **Harems Choice**, with her seven-day-old foal at side, proved to be an outstanding find for \$20,000. Her foal, later named **Royal Quick Dash**, went on to win the 1991 All American Futurity, thus increasing **Harems Choice's** value considerably. Another great buy was the broodmare **Five Super Sounds**, for \$3,100.

Within six months following her purchase, she gained notoriety as the dam of stakes winner **Sound Dash**. The 1999 three-year-old champion **Old Habits** was purchased as a yearling for \$18,500 and by the completion of his second year of racing he had earned more than \$672,000. Perhaps the greatest return on investment was the mere \$3,800 purchase price for **Refrigerator**, who retired with earnings in excess of \$2.1 million.

Tax Tips

The [American Horse Council](#) can provide you with tax tips for horse owners. Contact the AHC for your copy or to purchase a copy of the Horse Owners and Breeders Tax Handbook.

What To Look For When Studying Bloodlines

As with many aspects of the game and business of racehorse ownership, it pays to play the percentages when considering the pedigree of a prospective purchase. While certain individuals might be able to play the obviously high-percentage gamble of buying a prospective runner with championship-caliber parentage on both sides, most of us hope to find a future superstar with a small price tag. Certainly, American Quarter Horse lore is filled with such true stories.

Several principles should be applied in searching sales catalogs for future stakes-class runners. Remember, though, to enlist the help of a professional who can help you spot conformation flaws that can completely negate a horse's exciting appearance "on paper."

Look For Consistent Production In The Female Family

Even if the dam herself has had limited chance to produce, check the produce records of her sisters and of her dam and second dam. Consistent production of winners among the females of the first three generations indicates a probability that top-quality runners will continue to come from this line.

Look For Soundness In Pedigree

A prospect by a stallion which raced for several seasons would seem to be a pedigree of soundness. A professional adviser can tell you if any of the bloodlines are predisposed toward certain kinds of ailments, and will be able to inspect the specific prospect for flaws that could lead to soundness problems.

Look For Proven "Nicks"

This is especially important and is much easier in this computerized age than ever before. Certain bloodlines cross especially well together, resulting in more superior runners. Just as important is the fact that there are popular bloodlines which, when crossed with each other, result in far fewer superior runners.

"Unproven" Sires And Producers Can Be The Key To Bargain Purchases

By the time a given sire or broodmare has been absolutely proven to be capable of producing champions, the offspring of those individuals are going to be expensive. Although purchasing offspring of young "unproven" parents might be more of a gamble, the prices ordinarily paid for such offspring are considerably lower.

Winners Are Winners Wherever They Race

While there is no denying the quality of horses which race successfully at major tracks, do not overlook the winning tendencies of horses which have won frequently at smaller tracks. The fact is that horses which have what it takes to win many races are usually capable of passing along that quality to their offspring.

Don't Look Too Far

Even if a horse has world champion great grandparents, buyers should find some real racing success in the first two generations before latching onto a prospect. While it frequently happens that solid performance “skips” a single generation, it is rare that such performance returns to the bloodline after an absence of multiple generations.

When studying bloodlines, visit AQHA Online at aqhamembers.com. Members receive \$10 worth of AQHA Internet records free every month.

Purchasing A Horse At The Track

Like any athlete, horses compete at different levels. The racing secretary at a track will write races with varying conditions, which are eligibility requirements for races. One type of race is the **claiming race**, in which all horses entered are eligible to be purchased by a licensed owner or indirectly through a trainer (most states do require the owner to be licensed prior to claiming a horse). Claiming races are an easy way for a new owner to get involved.

Claiming races also test a horse's ability. Better quality claiming horses might run “for a tag” (the purchase price) for as much as \$25,000. Other, less talented horses will run for a lower price. The dream of many owners is to claim a horse inexpensively in the hopes that in the right hands, he will be an outstanding runner.

Claiming a horse out of a race is almost like buying a used car. Sometimes you buy a real jewel, and other times, you get a lemon. In essence, you have to know what you're doing when purchasing a horse at a track.

When a trainer enters a horse in a claiming race, he is putting a price on his horse and offering him for sale. He also might be testing the ability of that horse. If the horse wins at that level, the trainer might decide to move him to a higher level, or if he loses, drop him in class.

Turning In A Claim

Should you choose to get involved through the claiming process, there are some important steps you still need to know.

Before a claim can be turned in, the person buying the horse must be approved by the stewards to ensure the buyer is able to accept the financial responsibility.

Once approved, the owner will deposit a copy of the claim certificate with the appropriate person.

The necessary money must be in an account at the racetrack prior to the claim certificate being submitted. Depending on the state, claims must be turned in at least 15 minutes prior to post time. All claims deposited after the deadline are voided.

Be accurate on your claim certificate. It is a binding contract, and errors, such as misspelled words or incorrect prices, will void the claim.

If two or more people claim a horse, a “shake” will determine who gets the horse.

Once the gates open, the person claiming the horse owns him - win, lose or injury. However, the former owner keeps any purse earnings.

Related Expenses To Consider

Owning a racing American Quarter Horse can be a rewarding experience. After acquiring your athlete and following his progress through training and morning workouts, the goal is to join your friends for the magical moment in the winner’s circle.

Like any sport, there are certain fixed expenses associated with getting your horse to the winner’s circle. And like any business investment, you should take some time to acquaint yourself with these costs.

Licensing

Every state requires an owner to be licensed before conducting business in that state. The owner’s license is issued by the state racing commission and can be renewed annually or might be good for as long as three years. On the average, the owner’s license will cost \$50 to \$75 annually.

Insurance

Before any work begins to prepare your athlete for his racing career, or after you claim a horse and continue his racing campaign, you might want to consider purchasing insurance on the horse. These policies, called mortality insurance, reimburse you for the value of the horse should it die as a result of an accident, sickness or disease. The cost of this insurance runs approximately 5 1/2 percent to 7 1/2 percent of the horse's value. This percentage remains fairly constant regardless of the state in which you are racing.

Daily Training Costs

Your next step is to find a trainer for your racehorse. Trainers charge "day money" to cover the costs of training and caring for your horse. In the Southwest, the daily cost of training can run between \$25 and \$35. On the West Coast, trainers charge between \$35 and \$45 per day. While these costs vary considerably, they are directly related to the trainer's cost of doing business (i.e., cost of feed, hay, bedding, etc).

Veterinary/Farrier Costs

Like any athlete, racehorses require special care. While your horse is in training, you can expect veterinary bills to run between \$200 and \$300 a month for routine care.

You can learn more about veterinary care or locate a vet in your area by contacting AQHA Corporate Partner Bayer Animal Health at (800) GET-A-DVM or by visiting getadvn.com.

Footwear has become highly specialized for all sports. These days, you can buy walking, running, hiking and climbing shoes. Your horse will need special racing shoes to be competitive. A farrier can charge anywhere from \$50 to \$70 to fit these shoes, which generally are changed once a month.

Lay-ups/Turn Outs

After a long, hard campaign, or if your horse is injured, he will need to take a break from racing to freshen up or recuperate from his injury. If you don't have a facility to accommodate him, he will be "turned out" at a ranch or farm. The costs for **turn outs** range between \$10 to \$15 a day depending on where the facility is located.

Jockey Fees

As an owner, you will receive all of the money that your horse earns after paying 10 percent of the earnings to your trainer. The jockey who rides your horse also gets a “**mount fee,**” and also might be entitled to 5 percent to 10 percent of the purse money depending on the size of the purse, the type of race and where the horse finished.

Many horse enthusiasts enter into partnerships with other racing fans to offset the costs of owning a horse. But whether you’re a single owner or a partner, plan on spending some time at the racetrack to learn the game.

Unlike many other sports, American Quarter Horse racing gives you the opportunity to recoup your investment through the purse money your horse earns at the racetrack. Like the costs associated with racing your horse, purse money varies at different tracks.

As an investor in the game of racing, it is important that you become familiar with the costs of racing an American Quarter Horse. A good racehorse handled by a good trainer (see “Choosing A Trainer, pg. 13) can bring years of enjoyment and hopefully produce some profits.

When all the elements come together, you can bank on having a rewarding experience owning “*Everyone’s All-American!*”

Members of AQHA enjoy advantages offered through various [Corporate Partners](#). Products, barns, fences to sports medicine products, and trucks and trailers. We encourage you to check out our list of Corporate Partners at aqha.com or by reading [The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal](#).

GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW WHEN SEEKING A PROFESSIONAL

The Comfort Factor

As an owner, you should feel comfortable speaking with the person who trains your horse. Chances are if you’re uncomfortable for one reason or another, the friction could lead to an uneasy working relationship.

Visit The Barn

Few people would purchase a house without seeing it beforehand. That same rule should apply when seeking a place where your horse will live. After your preliminary discussions with a trainer, ask if there is a convenient time that you might be able to visit his stable. While at the barn, take note of the way the facility and equipment is maintained. By observing the stable area, you should be able to walk away with a good indication of the care a trainer will provide.

Sometimes More Is Not Better

Simply because a trainer has a high number of winners at a racetrack does not mean he is the best candidate to train for you. One way to judge a trainer's success is to look at his win or in-the-money percentages. It could be that a trainer who consistently dominates the standings has more horses under his care. The overall size of his stable could account for his high number of wins. However, a closer look at this trainer's percentages might reveal that his success, when comparing number of wins to number of starters, is less than impressive. A consistent trainer normally wins 20 percent of his races and finishes with at least 50 percent of his starters in-the-money. In addition, a trainer with dozens of horses under his care, might not be able to provide you with the personal attention you need when starting out in racing.

Study A Trainer's Trends

When looking over a trainer's overall success at a racetrack, you should also study his training trends. For instance, look for trainers who have proven they can qualify their horses for futurities, derbies and graded races. Also, pay particular attention to trainers who claim horses and improve their performance. Trainers who have this knack should receive your consideration.

Looks Often Count

While at the racetrack, most handicappers advise visiting the paddock and watching the post parade. The same should hold true for potential owners seeking a trainer. Study the horses at a racetrack and get to know which trainers consistently bring their starters to the track looking race ready. Sometimes, horses from a particular stable might show up in the paddock with dull coats or lethargic appearances. This could be an indication of the quality of care they're receiving.

Attend Seminars

In most areas, new owner seminars are presented by racetracks or affiliates of the American Quarter Horse Association. These forums can provide you with a number of opportunities to speak with trainers, other owners or racing officials. Additionally, numerous racetracks hold morning workout programs. These programs routinely feature knowledgeable veterans of the racing business who speak on a variety of subjects. By attending, you could learn a lot about the industry. For information on new owner seminars or programs held at racetracks, call your American Quarter Horse racing affiliate or local racetrack.

Professional Horseman

AQHA can give you free referrals to members of the Association. These members must meet certain guidelines and adhere to a code of ethics. Call 806-376-4811 to request a list of professionals in your area.

Owning a racing American Quarter Horse is a fun and exciting adventure. However, it also is a business, the rewards of which can be tremendous. By taking a few precautions when selecting the proper trainer as your professional, you should be able to enjoy all the advantages that owning a racehorse can bring.

Protecting Yourself And Your Investment

Just as you wouldn't think of purchasing a new automobile and driving without insurance coverage, when you make the decision to own a racing American Quarter Horse you also need to make sure that you and your investment are insured. When looking to purchase insurance, there are three primary considerations: liability insurance, mortality insurance and workers' compensation.

Liability Insurance

Ownership of a horse can cause an increase in your personal liability exposure for injury to others or property damage to others due to the activities of the horse. As the owner, you might be held liable for injury to others due to the activities while riding, or for the actions of the animal when you have it stabled or pastured.

For example, if you or your trainer is leading your horse in a crowded area and a loud noise spooks the horse and it kicks a patron, you could be held accountable for that action.

The actions of the horse or your actions with the horse causing injury to another person can lead to legal action against you. If you are found liable, your insurance will cover any judgements against you. To protect yourself against claims of negligence or wrongdoing, you need general liability coverage for horse-related occurrences.

In most cases, personal homeowners, tenants or farm owners liability policies will not provide coverage for your personal liability for horse related accidents. Consult your agent to see if your coverage could be extended to cover your equine exposures.

Most homeowners and tenants liability policies might exclude business pursuits. Therefore, if there is an intent to do business (i.e. owning a racehorse under a sub-chapter "S" corporation or partnership), then your policy might not cover you. Farm or ranch policies naming you personally and your corporation or partnership as insureds should extend to cover both you and your corporate liability. Again, check with your agent to be sure your policy specifically does not exclude racing.

Mortality Coverage

Whether you decide to insure your horse for death is an individual decision. Most mortality policies cost anywhere from 5.5 percent to 7.5 percent of the animal's value while racing and 3.7 percent while the horse is used for breeding or not at the track or in race training. There are two types of mortality insurance.

1. Full Mortality - Also known as "All Risk," this type of policy covers the death of the animal by accident, sickness or disease. This is the most expensive, but covers such things as death by colic or other illness, as well as any accidents.

2. Named Peril Accident - This type of coverage would only apply to the death of the animal by specifically named perils such as fire, lightning, windstorm or accident during transport. Any other causes of death would need to be specifically named on the policy.

In nearly all cases, mortality coverage is paid at actual cash value. Therefore, you should keep accurate records of your horse's performance to substantiate the value in case of loss.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' Compensation insurance covers you should you be required by law to make payments to an employee who is injured in the course of work. This form of insurance varies from state to state, and you should become familiar with the workers' compensation requirements of the state in which you are racing.

At the racetrack, some employees might be independent contractors and not considered your employees for workers' compensation purposes. Again, check with that particular state or better yet seek the advice of an attorney for guidance on who might be considered your employee.

AQHA Corporate Partner Markel Insurance offers a variety of insurance plans for horses and owners. You can call Markel toll-free at (877) 818-AQHA or visit their Web site at horseinsurance.com.

Determining Class And Competitive Level

You've purchased a horse, you've registered him, had him geno-typed, parentage verified and tattooed. He's with a trainer that you carefully selected and feel comfortable teaming with. Now comes the day that you and your trainer need to sit down and decide at what level your horse will compete.

While we all hope that we own the next All American Futurity winner, the reality is that equine athletes are like human athletes: some are simply more talented than others.

In American Quarter Horse racing, different types of races are written to allow each runner to compete with others of his own class. To help you and your trainer make decisions, racetracks print condition books that specify eligibility requirements for most races. At any given racetrack, there are six basic types of races that might be listed in a condition book. In some circles, this is known as the "class ladder." As you move up the ladder, you also move up in the level and quality of competition.

Maiden Races

Maiden races are limited to horses which have never won a race. All American Quarter Horses are called maidens until they win a race.

Claiming Races

Claiming races are the most common type of race, constituting approximately 70 percent of all races run. In these races, horses are entered for a specific price and can be purchased or "claimed" by any licensed owner at the track for that price. This tends to equalize the class or competition in these races. It is within the claiming ranks that many horses find their niche. Claiming races might be written for horses worth anywhere from as little as \$1,500 to upwards of \$25,000 to \$50,000. Most American Quarter Horses can compete somewhere between these two figures and bring a check home to their owners.

Trial Races

Trials are designed to determine the qualifiers for finals in stakes races (futures, derbies and maturities), based on the fastest qualifying times or order of finish.

Allowance Races

Allowance races are non-claiming races for better quality horses. These races generally offer higher purses than claiming races. Eligibility requirements and conditions are similar to those of claiming races, and the weights that each horse will carry are given based on winnings and/or number or type of wins within a specified time.

Stakes Races

Stakes races are “jackpots” in which the purse consists of nomination, entry and starting fees, plus significant money added by the track or other sponsor. These races are for the highest quality horses. **Graded stakes races** are the premier stakes races, which by a grade one (G1), grade two (G2) or grade three (G3), designate the class of horses participating. The size of purse, amount of added monies and the historical significance of the race also are determining factors in the grade status. Grade One (G1) is the highest designation.

Handicap Races

Like stakes races, handicap races also are written for the highest quality horses. In handicap races, the racing secretary will assign weights designed to equalize the winning chances of entrants. Those horses the racing secretary feels are of better quality in the race will carry more weight.

When a horse is beginning his racing career, generally his pedigree and purchase price or value of his dam or sire determine the level at which he will start. However, once a horse has a few races under his belt, regardless of how well he was bred, form becomes the major factor to consider when planning his next races.

While it might take a few races before you're able to determine the quality of runner you have, many trainers and owners currently in the business contend that it's not a good idea to let a horse lose too many races before evaluating his program. Hurting your horse's confidence will only undue all the preparation you've put into getting him ready for his racing career.

In most instances, after a horse has had several works and a schooling race, determining his class level should be fairly easy.

Online Information

The Internet is filled with information for both the prospective and current owner. The better informed you are as an owner, the more success you are likely to have.

For prospective owners, the Internet is a useful tool to research pedigrees and race records, as well as check out horses available for sale. [*AQHA*](#) and [*The Jockey Club Information Systems*](#) offer American Quarter Horse pedigree information and complete race records. AQHA also provides dam and sire produce records. This information can be valuable when you are trying to evaluate a potential racing prospect, especially a yearling or two-year-old. If you are planning to buy a horse at auction, most of the major sales companies maintain Web sites where you can find out more about their auction procedures and view a list of horses prior to the sale.

For a new owner, the Internet can be used for a number of things. Many racetracks put their condition books (a listing of all races at the track) on their Web site. Your trainer will know the condition book well, but you can browse it to see all the options available for your horse. If you happen to have a stakes-caliber horse, you can also use the Internet to check out stakes races across the country. [*The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal Online*](#) maintains a list of major stakes and MBNA America Challenge races online, as well as links to other racetrack sites.

Internet Directory of Racing Information

RACETRACK WEB SITES, RACE DATES AND STAKES RACE LISTINGS

The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal Online
[*aqharacing.com*](http://aqharacing.com)

SALES

Heritage Place - Oklahoma City, OK
[*heritageplace.com*](http://heritageplace.com)

Ruidoso Select Yearling Sale – Ruidoso, NM
[*ruidosodownsracing.com/page18.html*](http://ruidosodownsracing.com/page18.html)

Texas Quarter Horse Association Sale - Houston, TX
[*tqha.com/racing*](http://tqha.com/racing)

Schvaneveldt/Andreini Sale - Cypress, CA
[*schvaneveldtandreinisale.com*](http://schvaneveldtandreinisale.com)

Los Alamitos Equine Sale - Pomona, CA
[*pcqhra.org/sale.asp*](http://pcqhra.org/sale.asp)

AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE RACING AFFILIATES

aqha.com

ESPN.com

RACING COMMISSIONERS AND REGULATORS

Association of Racing Commissioners International

arci.com

North American Pari-Mutuel Regulators Associations

napraonline.com

PEDIGREES AND RACE RECORDS

American Quarter Horse Association

aqha.com

The Jockey Club Information Systems

equineline.com

ENTRIES, RESULTS AND HANDICAPPING INFORMATION

Daily Racing Form

drf.com

Equibase Company

equibase.com

Axcis Information Network

axcis.com

More to Consider

- Select a trainer that suits your partnership group and who will be helpful and patient with new owners.
- Use your local racing commission, American Quarter Horse racing affiliate and AQHA as a source of information for finding a trainer or horse, licensing requirements and costs, and other questions you may have.
- Be sure that you are comfortable dealing with the other people involved. If possible, try to have at least one experienced owner in the partnership.
- Make sure that all partners, especially new owners, fully understand the risks (as well as the rewards) associated with racehorse ownership.

- Even if the partnership is between friends, get a signed agreement before you buy a horse. The agreement should clarify what percentage each partner owns and how expenses and earnings will be divided.
- Establish a voting and decision making procedure. Also, determine who will be the managing partner and be responsible for keeping in contact with the trainer. When major decisions need to be made, some type of voting procedure should be in place.
- Consult with a tax advisor prior to entering into a partnership. There are many ways to form partnerships and each may have different tax implications.
- Consider opening a separate bank account for the partnership so that tax and accounting records are easier to keep.

AQHA Recognizes Racehorses For Accomplishments In Regional Competition

Around AQHA, when someone mentions hauling for a high-point award, it is assumed the conversation concerns show competition. One of the best-kept secrets in American Quarter Horse circles might be that AQHA also honors racehorses that have earned the most points in regional race competition.

Eighty awards are given to racehorses that compete at racetracks in 10 regions: California; Canada; Central (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota and North Dakota); East (Louisiana); Mexico; New Mexico; Northwest (Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington); Oklahoma; Texas; and West/Southwest (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming). Each region has eight categories: three-year-old colt, filly and gelding; aged stallion, mare and gelding; distance horse; and claiming horse.

The idea of regional race competition surfaced at the 1987 AQHA Racing Conference. The conference dealt with several other weighty topics, including attempts to lessen the sport's emphasis on two-year-old racing and encourage international competition. Both areas would later benefit from the evolution of high-point competition.

Paul Knapper, an AQHA Director from Minnesota and member of the AQHA Racing Committee, chaired the 1987 discussion. He theorized a regional program could draw local sponsors to races, which in turn would increase purses, attract better horses and prompt fan interest.

He also favored giving horses an opportunity to win year-end awards, without necessarily competing against champions. Knapper envisioned a national championship in which all regional winners would meet for a final showdown. In the next decade, elements of Knapper's concept came to light through the MBNA America® Quarter Horse Racing Challenge. At the 1988 AQHA Convention, the regional program was approved.

Today, AQHA Executive Director of Racing Dan Fick calls the point-based system the best evaluation of a horse's performance and an added incentive for owners to race their horses more often.

Points and Awards

The current scale awards points based on type of race, purses, and order of finish.

AQHA recognizes 10 regions, the same 10 regions used in the Challenge.

Technical aspects of the program are detailed in the AQHA Official Handbook of Rules and Regulations: Rule 102 (f)(3) — membership; Rule 301 (b) — racing points; and Rule 306 (d) — regional high point champions.

Owners can race their horses in any region, and points are noted on each horse's record. Owners also can race in more than one region, but point totals count in each region separately.

To receive the high-point award, a silver-plated champagne bucket, the owner must be an AQHA Member and be the owner of the horse as recorded on December 31 of the competition year.

Begun in 2000, AQHA will award an engraved silver belt buckle to the jockey, trainer, owner and breeder earning the most points in each region.

High-point standings appear on AQHA's Web site, updated daily, and in each issue of The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal, with final results published in the March "Annual Review" issue. The top five finishers in each category are listed, and the pedigree, breeder, owner and trainer for the leaders in each category is included.

Superior Race Horse

When a horse accumulates a total of 200 points in his career, regardless of the regional point total, he is named a superior racehorse. Owners and breeders of superior racehorses receive engraved, silver-plated brandy snifters from AQHA recognizing the accomplishment.

Supreme Champion

The AQHA Supreme Champion honor will be awarded to any American Quarter Horse which meets specific requirements including earning two official Speed Index Ratings of 90 or higher in races and earning points and honors in specific halter and performance events.

Many Racehorses Go On To Successful Second Careers

All athletes, human or animal, eventually must face the question: “What happens when the cheering stops?” Many human athletes are able to walk away from the spotlight and lead productive lives in nonathletic endeavors. Others, however, find the going a little tougher - witness the much-publicized post-career difficulties of NFL Hall of Fame linebacker Lawrence Taylor.

The American Quarter Horse is the most versatile of all the breeds of horses and as such allows a former racing American Quarter Horse many other opportunities upon the completion of his racing career. During the 1999 Symposium on Racing at the University of Arizona, AQHA Senior Director of Racing Dan Fick told the story of how he tried to turn a three-year-old racing American Quarter Horse he'd owned as a student into a hunter-jumper.

“Twenty years ago, when I was a student, we didn't have retirement programs like these for horses,” he said. “When their racing careers were over, they were left to fend for themselves.

“Most racing American Quarter Horses don't want to retire from athletic competition,” he added. “They want to go on to do something else, so at AQHA, we take a different approach regarding this issue. We try to create programs where people can use their horses.”

Fick gave examples of retired racehorses that have moved on to other athletic disciplines. In 1995, Gotum Gone - which won one race in 21 tries and earned \$4,349 - became the first horse to earn the title of AQHA Supreme Champion in 20 years. In 1998, Bad Motorscooter, which earned \$4,432 during his undistinguished 28-race career, was named the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association's bulldogging horse of the year.

“In the American Quarter Horse industry, there is always a need for good athletic horses,” said Fick. “I've talked to trainers about this, and a lot of them tell me they constantly get calls from barrel racers and ropers looking for horses that can no longer make it on the track.”