

NIE

Age is no barrier for Irish import

For all that, Willie Mullins' assistant trainer David Casey remains upbeat about Wexlow Horse's prospects. "He seems in good form."



Wordy news

Barrier – (in horse-racing) a gate which keeps horses in line before the start of a race.



Did you know?

THE first horses arrived in Australia in January 1788.

Racing horses trackside

HORSE racing is an ancient sport with chariot races and mounted races held at the ancient Greek Olympic Games (700 – 40 BC) and organised as public entertainment during the times of the Roman Empire.

Since then the basic concept of horse racing as a sport has undergone little change. It is still a contest of speed and stamina between horses and their riders for the amusement of spectators with the first horse across the finish line declared the winner.

Horse racing in Australia began in the early years of European settlement when horses were revered beyond their practical use of transportation and labour.

The first official race was held at

Sydney's Hyde Park in October 1810 and marked the beginning of Australian's fascination with these animals.

It is a sport of cultural and social significance and an important part of Australia's history and folklore.

Stories of legendary horses, jockeys, trainers, breeders and owners are vast, with many books and films depicting the "sport of kings" in our country.

The races

In Australia the style of racing, the distances and the type of events vary.

Most of the racing is done on a flat surface of turf (grass), sand, dirt or the new synthetic Polytrack

which consists of sand, synthetic fibres and recycled rubber.

The races range from 800m to 3200m for flat racing, and anything up to 5000m+ for jumps races.

A Flat race is where horses race on a flat surface with no planned obstacles in the way.

A Hurdle race is an event where horses are required to jump over a series of hurdles.

A Steeplechase event is a race where horses are required to jump over a series of obstacles called fences.

Harness racing is conducted with horses racing at a specific gait – a trot or a pace – around a track while pulling a driver in a two-wheeled cart called a sulky.

FAST FACTS

- Thoroughbred horses can reach speeds of 65 kilometres per hour, with 8-metre strides.
- Horse racing is the third most attended spectator sport after AFL and NRL.
- The horse racing industry in Australia is among the top three leading thoroughbred racing nations of the world and can claim the distinction of having the most tracks.
- The biggest racing carnival is the Melbourne spring racing carnival, home to Australia's most famous race, the Melbourne Cup.

IN THE NEWS

The outback race

FOR 135 years people have descended on a racing outpost with a welcome sign that says: "Birdsville population 100, except for one weekend of the year."

This year, on September 1 and 2, the usually tiny town swelled when an influx of people came from everywhere to experience the famous Birdsville Races.

The only two occasions when the races have not taken place were in 2007 during a nationwide lockdown on horses and in 2010 when the track was under water.

The two-day carnival included a 13-race program and other events during the carnival to help raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

CHECK IT OUT

Racing terms

- TRACKSIDE lingo can be hard to understand. Listed are a few terms used at a racecourse.
- Length** - a measurement, approximately the length of a horse.
 - Field** - the horses entered in a race.
 - Handicap** - a race where each horse is given a set weight to be carried.
 - Nose** - the smallest advantage a horse can win by.
 - Silks** - jacket and cap worn by riders to designate owner of the horse.
 - Rail** - the barrier on either side of the racing strip sometimes referred to as the fence.
 - Weigh in** - Before and after a race a jockey must weigh in with the saddle to ensure they are the correct weight for the handicapped race.
 - Photo finish** - A result so close that it is necessary to use a finishing post camera to determine the winner.



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