

VIEW ABOVE



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WHAT IS RUS?

RUS is short for Racing Under Saddle, also known in Europe as Monté racing. Racing under saddle is a style of racing using standardbreds, the same breed of horses used in harness racing.

In fact, some horses race both ways; the traditional form of racing where the horse races in a sulky with a driver and RUS, where the horse races instead with a rider and no sulky. The fact standardbreds have the ability to race in both styles of racing is a testament to the versatility of the breed.

In traditional harness racing, horses who race on the pace (pacers) or the trot (trotters) compete against horses who race on the same gait with there being more pacing events than trotters.

While both gaits are acceptable for traditional harness racing, only horses who race 'on the trot' are allowed to race in sanctioned RUS events in the United States. In the United Kingdom, pacers are raced under saddle. Perhaps one day, pacers will race under saddle here.

DID YOU KNOW racing under saddle goes back to the 17th century when the first standardbred races were conducted under saddle? By the time the 18th century rolled around, standardbred races were conducted with high-wheel carriages, the forerunner of the modern sulky. Other than the occasional exhibition race, standardbreds racing under saddle all but ceased to exist in North America.

Then in the late 1990's there was a brief interest in bringing monté racing back when the USTA offered the Boots and Saddle series for both trotters and pacers. This culminated in world champion trotter Moni Maker, ridden by thoroughbred jockey Julie Krone, participating in a time-trial at The Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky, covering the mile in a world-record time of 1:54 1/5 as the daughter of Speedy Crown ended her racing career on a high note. Unfortunately, racing under saddle disappeared from the North American racing scene for roughly a decade. Since then, when RUS returned to the North American scene in the 2010's, it was limited to trotters.

Racing under saddle, called Monté racing in Europe, is a popular edition to harness racing throughout the continent. Among the European countries having monté races are Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom..

Newer players in the RUS scene are Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In Canada, racing under saddle returned roughly the same time it did in the United States but our neighbors to the North introduced pari-mutuel wagering in 2014. Currently, a circuit in the province of Ontario conducts a circuit of races under saddle. While a fledgling movement in Ontario, it is being received well by the punters (horseplayers) with some tracks now seeking to have two races on the card when the monté races come to their tracks.

Questions? Check out Rus MidAtlantic's website at <https://www.rus-midatlantic.org>.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the rules for RUS? Rules for racing under saddle have been established by the United States Trotting Association (USTA). While there are a few rules listed elsewhere in the USTA rules, the bulk of rules regarding the conduct of RUS may be found under Rule 19 - Racing Under Saddle. It should be noted while some state racing commissions use the USTA rules verbatim, others adopt and modify their own rules.

How are rules changed? USTA rule changes concerning under saddle racing are considered by a RUS Rules Committee which has the ability to make rule changes separate from the regular harness racing rules where changes are considered at the annual board meeting. RUS rules may not violate the association's rules. Of course, state racing commissions have the ability to apply their own rule changes.

Is RUS dangerous? Any sport involving speed has its inherent dangers. A horse can stumble or fall causing a rider to be dislodged, the saddle may shift, or there can be a racing accident. Riders wear safety vests and helmets to minimize the chance of injury.

Is there a weight limit in RUS? USTA rules mandate a weight of 140 pounds for riders. This weight includes the saddle pad, stirrups, and saddle. If a rider weighs under 140 pounds with their equipment, the shortage of weight will be made up with lead weights. A rider whose weight is over 140 may race, but the program will need to list the rider's weight. All riders must weigh in after the race before the race shall be official.

May a thoroughbred jockey race in RUS? A jockey may race in RUS provided they have membership in the USTA and has been issued a rider's license. Riders must also pass a written test as well. This does not include any licensing requirements of the state. It should be noted the style of racing thoroughbreds and standardbreds under saddle are different.

If I wanted to become a rider in RUS, what are the requirements? Rule 17.15.-17.19 goes over the requirements. In addition it takes a lot of physical strength and stamina to become a RUS rider. In Scandinavia, riders have physical test to pass which is challenging. While not a requirement at present in America, most riders strive to meet similar standards.

Why isn't there wagering on RUS races? While there is wagering on RUS worldwide, including the Canadian province of Ontario, wagering in America is at present not allowed. While wagering on harness racing is legal in many states, the laws and rules often define harness racing as racing standardbreds using a sulky, never foreseeing the day when trotters would be ridden by riders (not jockeys). RUS America's long term goal where harness racing is conducted is to have the law and/or racing commission rules refer to harness/standardbred racing as a sport where standardbreds race with a sulky or a rider. Once the necessary rules are changed, then wagering may be conducted.

What distance are RUS races and what type of surface do they race on? While in other countries RUS (monté in Europe) races are conducted at various distances and may be raced either on dirt or grass, North American RUS is conducted typically at the mile distance on the same surface as standardbreds racing with a sulky.

Can RUS be raced on a thoroughbred surface? Perhaps if the dirt track was rolled (compressed), races could be conducted over a thoroughbred oval though the time would be slower. Raced on a regular thoroughbred surface, the standardbred may get an injury due to the deep surface.

What is the American Record for RUS? The all-time race record of 1:56.3 was set by Modest Prince on November 5, 2016 at the Meadowlands. Back on October 6, 2000, the champion Moni Maker time-trialed in a time of 1:54.1 at the Red Mile.

How old may a horse be to participate in RUS? Unlike in traditional harness racing, two year olds may not race in monté events. As in harness racing, horses may race up to the age of fourteen at parimutuel tracks; older at fairs.