



What Does a Steward Do?

In the aftermath of the 2019 Grade 1 Kentucky Derby, the spotlight shone on race stewards a little more than usual, with many people asking what exactly is a racing steward, and what do they do? At Indiana Grand Racing & Casino, there are three stewards tasked with a variety of duties to perform each day of the race meet. Responsibilities are divided amongst the three stewards daily, and it is recommended that each steward is familiar with each task and that he/she is able to handle multiple duties at any given time.

The following are many of the stewards' stand duties on race day:

- Checking to make sure the human and horse ambulances, para-medics, racing officials, track and state vets, photo-finish, chart caller, announcer, timer and any other essential equipment and personnel are in place before the first race comes to the paddock.
- Checking and monitoring the radios, normally two channels, one for racing officials and one for security.
- Checking and answering the phones.
- Checking the tote board each race for the correct scratches, post times, track condition, etc.
- Checking the TV monitor for scratches, over-weights, late changes to the program.
- Approving all notifications of a claim from the Claims Clerk making sure the appropriate funds are in the claimant's Horsemen's Bookkeeper account, everything is correct on the claim slip, the claimant is properly licensed, and the claim was dropped before the deadline. The Claims Clerk then normally notifies the Clerk of Scales, Announcer, AV and Bookkeeper so the claim can be announced after the race.
- Checking horse coat colors against the program as the horses come to the paddock.
- If the horse identifier reports that a horse listed in the program as an intact stallion (colt or horse) is now a gelding, having the announcer tell the public and AV run a the program change on the TV monitors.
- Monitoring the identification, saddling and riders up in the paddock. A Steward will generally go to the paddock during before one or more races, especially the first and stakes races to observe the identification, and saddling and riders up.
- Checking for blinkers on or off in the paddock and post parade.
- Checking that the gate is set at the right distance; verifying the back-up tow truck/tractor is in place for route races; and the postpositions are correct for coupled entries or scratches, especially late scratches.
- A late scratch in the paddock, during the post parade or at the starting gate requires immediate notification of mutuels, announcer, AV, starting gate, etc.; and telling the Clerk of Scales to pay the jockey mount fee.
- Checking the racing surfaces for birds, animals, people, debris, equipment, deep tire or harrow marks, etc. before the horses come on the track.

- Watching the horses, jockeys and pony persons during the post parade, warm up and loading into the starting gate.
- Noting the odds on each horse just prior to start.
- Pre-locking the stop betting button, and subsequently initiating the stop betting command by pushing a button or flipping a switch at the prescribed time, normally as the starting gate stall doors open.
- Closely observing the running of the race for interference, injuries, incidences and issues.
- Notifying the outriders, track vets, horse ambulance crew and para-medics if a horse or rider are down, or loose horse; and posting the inquiry sign.
- Checking to make sure the starting gate has been moved from the main track long before the horses come back around.
- Placing the horses in the order of finish as they cross the finish line.
- Check to make sure all horses and riders pull-up okay after the race.
- Alert the track and state veterinarian if any horses appear to be unsound.
- Receive the OK from the outriders that no jockey wishes to claim foul.
- In case of interference in the race:
 - Telling the placing judges, AV and the announcer to post and announce the inquiry and/or objection (claim of foul) on the tote board and TV monitors.
 - Indicate which horses are in question or are involved in an objection to the announcer, AV and placing judges on the tote board and TV monitors
 - Review the running of the race, and the incident or incidents on the TV monitors.
 - Check with the Patrol Judges and perhaps the Starter to determine what they saw and heard from their perspective.
 - Checking to see if the winner is involved, or is clear of any infractions so the win picture can be taken and the horse sent to the test barn.
 - Talking to jockeys involved with the interference.
 - Making a decision to disqualify and if so, determine the new order of finish.
 - Alert mutuels and tote as to the order of finish and determine how long they need to calculate the payouts before the Stewards call the race official.
 - Telling the announcer and AV what happened and why the horse or horses were or were not disqualified.
- When there are no obvious inquiries and/or no objections, the Stewards still review the entire running of the race often beginning with a slow motion of the starting gate to make sure all of the stall doors are opening simultaneously. They are also looking for interference, incidents, failure to preserve by a jockey, and other issues that might lead to the posting of the inquiry sign.
- Monitor the unsaddling of the horses.
- Checking the time to make sure it is reasonable for the field of horses and track conditions; and have new or tied track records announced and placed on the monitor.
- Making the test barn selections of the winner and specials as determined by state rules such as, horses that stakes place, claims, longshots that light the board, badly beaten favorites without an obvious excuse, reasonable cause that a horse might have been administered a prohibited substance, or random selections.
- Determine finale order of finish with the placing judges giving close scrutiny to photo finishes.
- Call the race official.
- Check the mutual payoffs for late odds changes and suspicious pay-offs.
- Note the post time for the next race, and after a brief respite, begin the process all over again.

Stewards may do more or less depending on the rules of their state; the duties that may be assumed by other racing officials and track employees, and their preferred way of conducting their duties are assigned so there are no duplications of effort. Most certainly, however, the Stewards do a whole lot more than most people think.