

# How Horse Racing and Betting Became So Deeply Linked

Horse racing is one of the most popular sports in the UK, with ITV's coverage of the 2019 Grand National drawing in 9.6m viewers. This was a 12% increase from 2018, and an estimated 600m people tuned in across the globe. It also remains the most bet-upon sport in the UK.

Aside from viewing figures, the 2018 Grand National saw £250m being bet on the race. But it's not just for dedicated equestrians either. You can easily find guides to horse racing betting for beginner's on <https://www.onlinesportbettingsites.co.uk/>, for instance.

So how did horse racing and betting become almost synonymous?



## When did horse racing start?

Horse racing goes back much further than you would think. During the Roman era people take part in horse-pulled chariot races. These races even formed part of the Greek Olympic Games. There's some evidence to suggest that horse racing could go back even further in Asian countries. In terms of UK horse racing, the sport became known in the 12th century.

The oldest horse race still going today is the Kiplingcotes Derby. This race goes back to 1519 and took place in East Riding, Yorkshire. Horse racing caught England's attention during the reign of Charles II, and the king held races from 1660. Newmarket was the first location officially used for such races, during which two horses would compete on private courses or open fields. This race became the Newmarket Town Plate horse race and Charles II remains the only king to have ever won a horse race – back in 1671.

In 1750, the Jockey Club was formed to lay down the rules and regulations of horse racing. They operated out of Newmarket Racecourse and continued to oversee all UK horse racing rules until 2006. From this point until present day, the British Horse Racing Authority has been the regulatory body.



## What about horse racing betting?

Betting and horse racing have seemingly always gone hand in hand. Even in the Roman era, people would bet on the horse-pulled chariot races. [According to the Encyclopedia Britannica](#), the first known UK bet of £40 was offered for a 3-mile race during Richard the Lionheart's reign. Knights were used as riders, and their horses had been brought back from the Crusades. These horses were bred with English horses and led to the Thoroughbred breed which is used in racing today.

Though betting and horse racing has been part of the UK's history for hundreds of years, that doesn't fully explain why we love it so much. Some may have grown up watching an older relative placing bets on horses and got involved with the tradition.

## A social sport

Another reason that the UK loves betting on horse racing is for the social aspect and the sense of community that the races have become famous for. Around 6 million people attend horse races every year, with many going for the social aspect alone.

In the past, racing was associated with official lords and ladies. However, the [Grand National](#) and Cheltenham Festival have become a stomping ground for professional footballers, TV personalities and celebrities. Events like Ladies Day are now well-known for attracting people from all walks of life. There's now a mixture of long-time fans of the races and those who just love the thrill of a winning horse.

## Cultural and social influences

While some people place a bet once a year on the Grand National, others will do so on a daily basis. The mixture of social and cultural influences has made horse racing and betting deeply linked, which looks as if it will continue for years to come.