

COSEQUIN PRESENTS AFTERCARE SPOTLIGHT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PASSING ON THE PAPERS

by **Jen Roytz**

Courtesy PaulickReport.com



There are several reasons to obtain a ex-racehorse's Jockey Club papers

What exactly is a birth certificate? It's so much more than just a piece of paper. It's the official record of you ó your age, nationality, heritage and existence. It allows you to receive healthcare, be enrolled in school, get married, get a driver's license, obtain a passport ô and if you misplace it (which many of us probably have at one time or another), getting it replaced is both necessary and a pain in the you-know-what.

For Thoroughbreds, birth certificates are their Jockey Club Certificate of Registration, or òJockey Club papers.ö A horse's Jockey Club papers allow them, among other things, to be sold at public auction, race in sanctioned events, and be bred to other Thoroughbreds to produce the next generation of the breed.

Why is it, then, that while humans would never intentionally part ways with that precious piece of paper, Thoroughbreds are routinely sold, adopted out or given away after racing sans papers?

Included in The Jockey Club's American Stud Book Principal Rules and Requirements is the following regarding transfer of ownership of a Thoroughbred:

òIt is advisable that no one complete the purchase of a Thoroughbred until the Certificate of Foal Registration (i.e., "the papers") has been transferred by the previous owner. Before

completing the sale, the new owner should compare the description on the Certificate of Foal Registration with the actual markings, including cowlicks, found on the horse.”

While at one time many owners or trainers retiring horses to second careers purposely held onto the papers rather than passing them onto the horse's new owner in an effort to protect the horse, today that practice can have a negative impact on a horse's off-track potential and ultimately its value.

The most common reason for owners declining to give a horse's Jockey Club papers to a post-racing buyer or adopter is to ensure the horse will not end up back on the track and racing, as a horse's papers must be on file in the racing office of a track at which they compete.

However, there are several reasons that sending the papers on with a horse into his off-track career might actually be the best thing for both the horse and its new connections.

In an effort to protect the best interests of retiring racehorses and to alleviate racehorse owners' fears of retiring their horse to a non-racing home, only to have that horse show back up on the work tab or in a race, the Jockey Club created a protocol to officially and permanently retire a racehorse.

By both parties (buyer and seller) completing, having notarized and submitted the **Permanently Retired from Racing Form**, the horse can, under no circumstances, compete on the racetrack again.

“We certainly do think it's best that a Jockey Club certificate is transferred with a Thoroughbred during any sale transaction, as its purpose is as an identification document for that animal throughout its life,” said Rick Bailey, Jockey Club registrar.

Why a Non-Racing Thoroughbred's Jockey Club Papers Still Matter

These days, there are numerous opportunities for Thoroughbreds to have added value after the track, but only if it can be proven who they are.

The Jockey Club's Thoroughbred Incentive Program (T.I.P.) was created to increase opportunities for retired racehorses by offering sponsorships for Thoroughbred-only classes, divisions and high-point Thoroughbred awards at open shows and competitions. To be eligible, horses simply need a T.I.P. number, which requires owners to know their horse's basic biographical information.

A Thoroughbred's tattoo number, which can be found on the inside of an ex-racehorse's upper lip, or the horse's official Jockey Club name, is all that's needed to register for a T.I.P. number.

All too often, however, the tattoos become illegible or their racing names are forgotten, making them significantly harder to identify, and thus ineligible for T.I.P. winnings and the increasingly popular Thoroughbred-only shows and competitions popping up around the country.

This, in turn, limits a horse's potential and can limit their value.

“The Jockey Club has several free tools online ó free tattoo look-up and research, for example ó that can help horse owners identify an individual they think is a registered Thoroughbred or a horse they perhaps have been given the name or pedigree information about, but don't have any official documentation to corroborate that information,” said Bailey.

Another reason some owners of off-track Thoroughbreds are interested in procuring their horse's Jockey Club papers is for breeding purposes, even if not breeding to race.

“There are certain things you can't do without a horse's papers,” said Thoroughbred ex-racehorse owner Christine Siegel. “Depending on how far my mare goes in dressage, I plan to breed her to a warmblood down the road. You have to have papers to get certain inspections and be accepted into certain breed books.”

Just as in the Thoroughbred breed, other breed registries and individual stallion owners are quite restrictive as to which mares they will allow to reproduce within their breed.

“The goal of Warmblood registries is to try to preserve the breed, so in order for the foal to be registered within that breed, its dam must be papered ó with papers and pedigree in-hand,” said Kait Schultz, owner of Thunder Crest Performance Horses. “In order for a foal to be accepted by an Oldenburg or Hanoverian registry, for example, the mare owner needs to be able to prove the mare's pedigree and have her performance tested.”

Simply a Matter of Pride

Sometimes, wanting a horse's Jockey Club registration papers is as simple as a horse owner having pride in their horse's lineage and the breed's history.

I recently posed to the open Facebook group, OTTB Connect, an online forum of nearly 35,000 Thoroughbred owners, trainers, riders and enthusiasts, the following question: "Do you feel if a Thoroughbred is retired from racing and sold, given or adopted out, it should come with papers?" In addition to the numerous responses centered on professional reasons (competition awards, breeding approval, etc. listed above), many simply want to have the papers to pay homage to their retired racehorse's heritage.

"I just like having them," said Monica Postma. "All my horses have a section of the wall in my office where I have some of their win pics, their framed pedigrees and current photos."

Several others who commented on the thread agreed and said that while they don't "need" their horses' papers for business purposes, they have them framed and hanging in their home, office or barn as an extension of an animal they hold dear.

"I have my horse's papers," commented Janis Smit. "Even though he will never be raced again and they really don't mean anything it made me feel like everything was 'official' when he was given to me."

To many in this day in age, taking the proper steps to officially retire the horse from racing and sign the papers over to the horse's non-racing owner is simply another way owners can do right by their horses.

"Foal papers are like their birth certificate," commented Jacqueline Erler. "By not forwarding the papers with the horse, you are limiting the horse's opportunities."

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