

CAREER CASE STUDY:

WORKING IN POINT-TO-POINT RACING

Point-to-Point racing is a popular sport with centuries of tradition in Britain and continues to provide an important foundation for the wider Jump racing industry. Over half of the professional jockeys riding today including Richard Johnson, Sam Twiston-Davies and Tom Scudamore began their careers riding in Point-to-Point races and some of the country's best known equine stars also began their careers in Point-to-Points.

Attended by over 750,000 spectators each year, there are 104 Point-to-Point courses dotted all over the country with over 15,000 employed in either a voluntary or paid capacity. Point-to-points provide a great career opportunity for jockeys and former jockeys who are interested in continuing their career within racing and want to gain experience working in racecourse and raceday operations.

Former jockeys working at Point-to-Points include Dave Mustoe, Clerk of the Course at Whitfield, Colin Tizzard who acts as a Starter at his local track and Phil Kinsella who was Clerk of the Scales this season. Michael Naughton is a Steward.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTARY ROLES:

- Stewards
- Stewards Assistant
- Fixtures Secretary
- Clerk of the Course
- Clerk of the Scales
- Judge
- Assistant Judge
- Declarations Clerk
- Starter/Starters Assistants
- Announcer/Commentator



PAID ROLES:

- Race Reader

- Local Course Inspector
- Public Relations Officer (PRO)

Descriptions of each of these roles can be found below:

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

STEWARDING TEAM

Stewards are appointed by the Point-to-Point Committee and are the eyes and the ears of the Regulator. They are in place to ensure racing is conducted properly and through them, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) regulate the sport on a race-day.

Stewards hold enquiries when a possible breach of Regulations takes place and these enquiries form the foundation of all decisions. Where possible, six Stewards are required per meeting



including one Chairman. Two members of a panel of six can be 'newcomers'. Although not a requirement, it is advantageous to have had race-riding experience either under Rules or in Point-to-Points. With the exception of newcomers, all Stewards must attend a Stewards Seminar within the last three years and have officiated twice in one season.

The Chairman will deploy Stewards on a rota of duty basis.

A **Stewards Assistant** is in charge of briefing Stewards on Stewards Enquiries which have occurred earlier in the season, and for providing details of the odds for each horse including details of significant moves in the betting market.

FIXTURE SECRETARY

The **fixture secretary** is the lynch-pin of the meeting. They are in charge of ensuring all is in the order for the smooth running of the meeting.

CLERK OF THE COURSE/CLERKS TEAM

A **Clerk of the Course**, is appointed by the Point-to-Point Organising Committee and is responsible for the racing related arrangements of the meeting. They ensure the course is fit for racing on the day, and work with a **skilled supporting team** whose duties include the construction of fences in line with BHA Regulations and Instructions. In addition, they are responsible for confirming accurate going reports and for briefing those on the day on various procedures.

CLERK OF THE SCALES

The **Clerk of the Scales** weigh's the riders in and out, ensuring the horse's number and rider name is exhibited on the numbers Board, in addition to variations to race card information. They ensure announcements are made to the public regarding withdrawals and send a return at the close of each day's racing.

JUDGES & ASSISTANT JUDGES

The **Judge** is responsible for placing the first four horses past the winning post and giving the distances between the placed horses. They sign and present a report at the end of racing.

DECLARATIONS CLERK

The **Declarations Clerk** accepts declarations to run noting extras to be carried such as blinkers, visors and tongue straps. They ensure that Medical Record Books (MRB's) and Riders Qualification Certificates (RQC's) are checked and retain MRBs until riders are finished riding for the day and do not need to be passed fit by the Doctor. Declarations Clerks also deal with the division of races.

THE STARTING TEAM

The **Starter** is responsible for starting the race by flag or starting gate at the correct time and for effecting a fair start at a walk or jig-jog. They must keep control of riders and horses in order to implement a fair start.

The **Starters Assistant** duty is to check and tighten girths and adjust equipment when requested in addition to assisting any rider in difficulties.

The '**recall flag person**' should stand with their back to the first fence. When the starter raises his flag prior to the starting the race the 'Recall flag person' raises their flag above their head until the Starter lowers the flag to start the race.

Announcer/Commentator



Announcements are made to convey information to the general public. The commentator gives a running commentary of the race in real time.

Fence Attendants

Fence attendants are in charge of implementing the bypass procedure and planting Direction Markers in the top of the fence opposite an obstruction, the deployment of warning flags and flags to gain the attention of medics and vets.

RACE READER

A team of on-course race readers provide information from all Point-to-Points throughout the season; they complete a list of tasks as set out below:

- Gauge the strength of the market (betting ring), and provide a starting price (SP) for every runner, including significant market moves.
- Provide details of what articles of gear/tack (i.e. blinkers etc) each horse was wearing.
- Provide an accurate and in-depth assessment of how each horse ran, including distances between all finishers, and the fates of the non-finishers.
- Provide details of all official announcements regarding the result, and of all Stewards Enquiries.
- Assess (through walking the course and/or talking to an experienced jockey) the going description and whether it changes through the course of the day.
- Inform the Point-to-Point Racing Company of the details of the first three, their SP and who rode them as soon as the meeting is completed.
- Provide (through the means of an answerphone system) two sets of comments-in-running, one for the National website, and one for the Loose-leaf Form Book.

LOCAL COURSE INSPECTOR

The role of a local Course Inspector:

- To ensure compliance with the British Horseracing Authority Regulations and Instructions for Point-to-Point Steeple Chases.
- To inspect relevant areas of each Point-to-Point course on an ongoing basis to check for compliance with the British Horseracing Authority standards relating to the racing surface, running rails, fences etc, as laid down in the British Horseracing Authority Instructions. Inspections will include walking the course to determine the condition on the racing surface, alignment of running rails and noting completion of agreed remedial work if applicable, e.g., drainage work, remedial work on the racing surface, fence repairs etc.
- To establish effective working relationships with the Point-to-Point course Committee [and Clerk of the Course] so that requirements and guidance on all aspects of course facilities is acted upon without the need to resort to sanctions.
- To prepare and submit to the BHA Point-to-Point Executive comprehensive reports on all courses inspected.
- In conjunction with the BHA Inspectorate ensure compliance with the standards laid down by the British Horseracing Authority in the regulations and instructions.



NB. In carrying out inspections, Sports Grounds Act compliance does not come under the jurisdiction or responsibility of an Inspector of Courses at either

Racecourses or Point to Point Courses and are the sole responsibility of the operating venues in conjunction with the local authorities.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER (PRO)

The role of the PRO is to write previews and reviews of meetings within an area.

Previews fulfil the important role of creating interest in the meeting, among both regular and casual racegoers, and should be shared with the Point-to-Point Racing Company at Weatherbys, and the local press in time for publication deadlines. They should also be posted on relevant websites and social media channels. A typical preview would include information from trainers and jockeys on likely runners on the day.

Reviews should be an informative account of the day's events (post-race comments from owners, trainers and jockeys are always welcome), and are shared with supporting images from an official photographer if possible.

A good PRO will develop relationships with the officials - especially the meeting secretaries and clerks of the course - trainers and jockeys in their area, using the information provided to update social media and websites where relevant (e.g. going reports and admission prices) leading up to a meeting. While the main (and paid) role of the PRO is previews, updates and reviews, additional features (e.g. trainer and jockey interviews, area round-ups) are always welcomed by readers and digital and print editors - who are often short of content.



HOW TO START

Qualifications & Training

No formal qualifications are required, however in many of these roles (eg Stewarding), it is advantageous to have had race riding experience either under rules or in point-to-points. Stewarding seminars are held every 3 years which staff must attend. There are opportunities to shadow Officials under Rules.

INTERESTED IN WORKING AT POINT-TO-POINTS?

If you would like to find out more about what roles are available now, please contact The Point-to-Point Authority who will put you in touch with local fixtures.

FIND OUT MORE...

<https://www.pointtopoint.co.uk/> Twitter: Follow @Point2PointAuth @GoPointing

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