



Editors Note: Werner Malinka's total of 265 racecourses puts him atop the leaderboard in the TDN's competition for most tracks visited for live Thoroughbred racing. He has easily Eclipsed the previous leader, Terry Bjork from Chicago, who has tallied 91. Malinka also keeps a spreadsheet of tracks visited, which can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

COLLECTING RACECOURSES AROUND THE WORLD by Werner Malinka

My hobby is traveling around the world and "collecting" racecourses. At the moment I have visited 265 Thoroughbred racecourses in 45 countries, and I count only those I have visited for an official race day. If I also included racecourses I visited for just a short photo stop, as well as Standardbred racing, the number would be 550.

I was born in 1959 and grew up in Leipzig, in former Eastern Germany. I studied chemistry at the Leipzig University, and now work in research and development in the electroplating industry. I live in Langenfeld, near Cologne and Dusseldorf. I am not married and have no children, otherwise I would not be able to make so many trips.

My first raceday was on May 1, 1975. After a short time I realized that betting alone does not make me happy, so I traveled to all seven racecourses in East Germany first. The number of racecourses I visited increased slowly at first, because traveling for East Germans was very restricted. After the German reunification, however, it was possible for me to travel anywhere in the world. I have six weeks holidays--as most Germans do--and so I have enough time for traveling. In most cases I combine a guided trip through a country with an individual tour to racecourses, and I also spend extended weekends in France or the UK.

There are more than 1000 racecourses worldwide.

This number includes harness tracks and very small courses, which in Germany we call C-class racetracks, and in Australia they call picnic meetings. In the UK and Ireland they have point-to-point races--steeplechases ridden by amateur riders under special rules--and in the Netherlands



Malinka's favorite course: Meran in Italy

they have match races for trotters that take place in the streets of small towns.



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In France there are nearly 250 racecourses, and I have seen only 59 of them. So I still have a lot to do. France is my favorite country, and I especially like the mid-size courses such as Pompadour, Aix-les-Bains and Vichy. But my favorite racecourse is Meran in Italy, situated in the amazing surroundings of the South side of the Alps. My favorite German racecourses are Berlin-Hoppegarten and Duesseldorf. I had an opportunity to stay in New Zealand for three months in 2002, and that was the best time of my life. I switched jobs but stayed in the same company, and for my new position I needed to improve my English. I was allowed to take two months of unpaid holiday, so together with the four weeks of my regular holiday, I had three months to travel. I spent six weeks in English training, and for five weeks rented a car and traveled the country from North to South. I hope a similar opportunity will come in my life to go to Australia, the one important country for horse racing missing from my collection.

You may wonder why I have not visited many racecourses in the UK. I have never been to the world-famous Ascot, and never to the most important jumps tracks, Cheltenham and Aintree. England is the motherland of racing and not far from Germany, but I do not really like it for a few reasons. **Cont. p9**



Epsom Downs *Racing Post Photo*



Writer's Up--Malinka cont.

The entrance fees are the highest in the world, and the service is sometimes poor. On a small raceday in Chepstow last year, the entrance fee was £20 (US\$31), and that didn't include grandstand seats. At Epsom some years ago I had to pay extra for access to the parade ring. I also find the dress code a bit extreme, especially at Ascot. The races there are somewhat old fashioned. They will describe a race as being over one mile, two furlongs and 45 yards. Why not use the decimal system of 1.28 miles? For weights, they use stones plus pounds. At auctions, the price is given in Guineas, a non-existing currency. And if the odds are 11/4, how much will I win if I bet £5? This is a long-winded and non customer friendly calculation. On the other hand, racing in the UK is well organized, and I will extend my racecourse collection there.

It would be nearly impossible for people in the U.S. to visit the number of racecourses I have, because they don't have as many holidays and the distances are farther between racecourses. From Germany, one can get to France, the UK, Ireland or Italy in a maximum of two hours by plane. There are also high speed trains that will go from Cologne to Paris in under four hours.

My next goal will be my 400th racecourse--hopefully in 2014--and 50th country. For more information and photos of the racecourses I have visited, visit my website, www.globalturf.de.

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Darley Flying Start

From Start to Finish...

with Darley Flying Start's Sophie Ignarski

Since the beginning of January, fellow Darley Flying Start trainee Madoka Kamei (from Japan) and I have been working at Dubai's International Stables, a quarantine facility at Meydan housing many of the international runners competing in the Dubai World Cup Carnival (DWCC). Here, over 200 horses from up to 20 different countries ship in with around 30 additional horses flying in for Dubai World Cup day itself Mar. 30.

As the central hub for all of the many trainers, owners and stable staff arriving in Dubai, International Stables serves as a kind of 'Olympic Village,' as horses from across the globe congregate to compete in one of racing's most prestigious events. Manager Feargal Cooper and his team began final preparations for the Carnival several months ago, from organising visas and accommodation for the visiting connections to ordering bedding and feed for the horses. As Jim Cornes (DWCC co-ordinator) said to us recently, "We do as much preparation in advance as we can. The main challenge for us is to take care of the horses' needs, so the trainers can do their job without worry. The horses always come first."

This focus on providing the highest standards of management starts from the word go, as new arrivals are met at the airport and transferred as efficiently as possible to the stables. For the next 48 hours, they are quarantined within their barn, giving them a chance to settle in and be kept under close supervision by the stable staff and quarantine vet. During this time, blood samples are drawn and temperatures checked twice daily in order to ensure that any signs of illness are picked up as quickly as possible. Horses are kept in isolation for a further six days, until bloodwork results are returned and they receive the all-clear.

Each day, the morning routine begins with training at one of four of Meydan's tracks, with the international contingent scheduled to go out earlier than the local horses to ensure that they don't mix and break quarantine restrictions. One of the unique aspects to Dubai is the high level of staffing in the barns, with 62 dedicated staff on hand to carry out all of the basic mucking out and grooming work, many of whom have worked here since the Carnival's inception in 2004. In addition, trainers have access to an 80-meter equine swimming pool, grazing area and a trotting ring, helping to create a 'home away from home' where trainers have access to every type of facility they might have at their normal base. It is widely agreed that horses generally settle very well in their new surroundings; in fact during the Carnival so far, several have been known to run (and win), 'off the plane' (i.e. within a week of landing in Dubai). For those landing from countries in the depths of mid-winter, the warm sunshine and 80-degree weather can't fail to help, either! **Cont. p10**

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