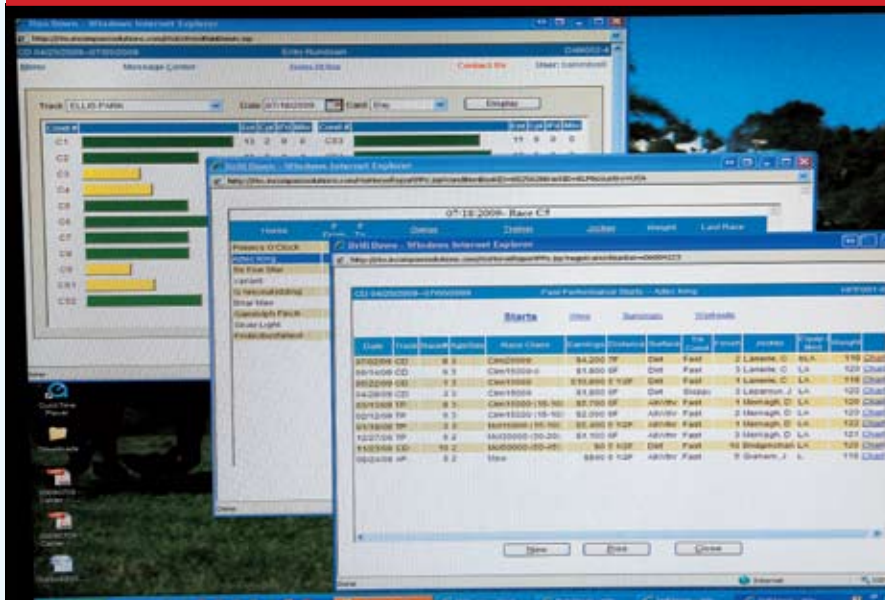


Online Ontrack

BY ESTHER MARR



InCompass directs horsemen to many applications



InCompass doesn't own information; the company, a subsidiary of The Jockey Club, provides software tools to racetracks to help them manage their data

Before computers became commercially available in the 1980s, Louisiana Thoroughbred owner Brad McKinnie remembers walking into racing offices and seeing the disarray and confusion of hundreds of card files, stacks of papers, and posted race charts.

With a background in technology, McKinnie decided something needed to change to make the management of racetrack information easier and that he could, in fact, help make that change possible.

Initially engaged in designing specialized personal computer systems for individual racetracks to manage their data, McKinnie's company, McKinnie Systems, grew and flourished as the industry expanded. But it wasn't until The Jockey Club purchased McKinnie Systems in the 1990s that the idea of having a centralized database was conceived.

Now, instead of having to update computers individuals at more than 100 racetracks around the country with new information, the database, which was renamed InCompass, has the capability of instantaneously bringing the industry up to date with a few clicks of a mouse.

"In 2001 we came up with a concept that we ought to rewrite and re-engineer (McKinnie Systems)," said David Haydon, president of InCompass, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of The Jockey Club. "We decided we were going to do it in a central database environment via the Internet with Web-based, browser-based screen applications. Now we have one set of software, so that when we need to roll out a new platform, we can do so one time instead of 100 times."

InCompass doesn't actually own any information; it just provides software tools to the racetracks to help them manage their data. After collaborating with The Jockey Club and Equibase on programming and software development and seeking input from racetrack personnel that tested the system, InCompass was officially launched to the commercial market in 2003.

Starting with the ability to handle the inventory at racetracks by taking entries, publishing programs and results, and controlling purse accounts, InCompass' services have expanded in recent years to offer other services to the industry, such as the Equine Injury Database and Jockey Health Information System.

"With all the lists the racing offices have to maintain—bleeders' lists, stewards' lists, vets lists, etc.—we built the system so if you wanted to, you could share all that information (with other tracks)," said Haydon,

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adding that it is up to each track whether to publicize its information. Also, some state privacy laws prevent tracks from sharing some of their data. "Our goal is for more to be more willing to share," he said.

"Sometimes (unwillingness to share data) is because of regulations that are probably outdated, and that needs to be changed. Some won't allow a state to share medical information on a horse with another state," he said. In spite of some reluctance, however, Haydon said the number of states that report their data to InCompass has risen to about 75% since the system was formed.

After the basic centralized functions of InCompass had been established, which are collectively called the Race Track Operations (RTO) system, Haydon and his team began to ask various racetrack management staffs and racing offices what other applications and functions would help them do their jobs more efficiently. They also took note of discussions at conferences such as the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit, to help craft proposals for new applications that would be beneficial to the industry.

Over time, they began adding additional services to the system, such as pre-race veterinary exams; data delivery, which is a way for racetracks to get volumes of information and sort reports by their own methods; stall billing; starting gate crew reports; and InCompass Financial Services, where horsemen can manage and transfer funds from their racetrack-based accounts.

"We have a finite set of customers," said Brad Kimbrell, executive vice president of InCompass. "I would say every Thoroughbred racetrack in the country knows what our system is. But they probably don't all know every feature it can perform."

In his role, Kimbrell is involved with selling the InCompass system to racetracks,



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DAVID HAYDON



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BRAD KIMBRELL

quoting prices, handling office administration, and making sure the project is running smoothly. The expense for tracks to use InCompass depends on the number of days each facility runs races, he explained. There are both monthly and daily rates for taking advantage of the system.

InCompass, which is an Internet-based application, requires only a standard Win-

dows PC computer with Internet Explorer and Adobe so that PDF files can be downloaded.

"Once you have a user ID, password, and a connection to the Internet, you can access (InCompass) from the racetrack and from home," said Haydon, adding that before races, some veterinarians now walk around with wireless tablet PCs and air card modems to do pre-race inspections via InCompass.

When individuals access InCompass through a secure log in, they are able to view only the information to which they have access. For example, a racing office staff is able to see other racing office and horsemen's bookkeeper applications, but not the horsemen's financial information or veterinary reports.

Horsemen don't have access to the RTO system, but they do have complimentary admission to an IFS account, which allows them to move money from their racetrack accounts to their own personal bank fund or to another track to make a claim or fulfill a financial obligation.

The IFS account system is available at 45 tracks across the country with InCompass capabilities; all horsemen need to do is be assigned a pin number from the bookkeeper. InCompass is still working to get more states on board with the system, as not every jurisdiction allows racetrack money transfers.

Haydon hopes racetracks will better educate their horsemen about the IFS account services in the future so they will complete more of their transactions online instead of waiting in line at the horsemen's bookkeeper to take care of their financial needs.

"They are starting to learn to take ad-

InCompass Programs

Central System

InCompass' Race Track Operations (RTO) system provides a unified approach to the management of data and technology at the racetrack.

Racing Office

Entries are qualified and weights assigned at time of entry; a condition book template system allows racing office officials to write a race in a matter of seconds. Horse lists can be shared nationally, and horsemen's names and silk descriptions are stored in the system for easy identification.

Stall Management

System allows racetrack management to track all arrivals and departures of trainers and horses from the stable area. Racing history of all trainers is also available.

Hustling Horses

By using past performance reports, this application can generate lists of horses in a given area that are eligible for particular races.

Live Program Production

After the overnight sheet is finalized, program proof and final copy are produced along with statistics pages for distribution.

McWeb Internet Content Provider

All documents created in the racing office are pushed to a track's Web provider as soon as they are marked final. These include condition and stakes books; stakes nomination past performances; overnight sheets; statistics pages for top 10 owners, trainers, jockeys, and horses; facts and figures statistics; and post position statistics.

Media Dissemination

Entries and results are sent to newspapers and media outlets in their custom format as soon as these items are final.

Horsemen's Bookkeeper

This feature takes all race setup information from the racing department so no manual transfer or entry is required.

IFS Web Checks, Account Access, and Funds Transfer

This program has the ability to accept requests for checks via the Internet directly into

the RTO HB system; allows horsemen to login to a secure site where they can check their balances and/or initiate a transfer from their racetrack account to either their own personal bank account or to another track.

Pre-Race Veterinary Exam

Software allows examining vets to track the progress of a horse throughout its racing career.

Master Calendar

Race dates, complete with post times for every Thoroughbred track, are now maintained by InCompass, including cancellations and changes.

Jockey Health Information System

Stores jockeys' updated medical histories and enables medical personnel at participating racetracks to access that information quickly in the event a jockey is involved in an emergency on the track.

Equine Injury Database

Assists in building a database of injuries, both fatal and non-fatal, to be analyzed later in an attempt to learn what factors may lead to injuries in racehorses.

vantage of (the IFS account services), but it's a slow process," said Michelle Penna, business support manager of InCompass. Penna does a little bit of everything at InCompass—billing, training vets on the Jockey Health Information System, keeping track of financial transfers, managing account access, financial transfers, and training new customers.

One of the most useful InCompass services created in recent years is a racing charts application, or "hustle list."

"Now (the racing office) doesn't have to clip charts anymore to figure out who is eligible for a race or the weights," said Haydon. He explained how since InCompass has access to every past performance on every registered horse in North America, it has the electronic ability to take a race condition book and return horses in a given area that are eligible for specific races. This gives the track's racing office the ability to recruit horses, or "hustle," for races that may be challenging to fill or to look at "what-if" scenarios to determine if a condition should be offered.

Another new application came about when InCompass worked with The Jockey Club to develop the Equine Injury Database system, which was created in its original form by Dr. Mary Scollay and launched last July.

"It's updated by each track's commissioned vets or association vets," said Penna. "Most of (the vets) will handwrite the information, then go back and key it into the system, and that updates the central database. Then we can pull reports."

In the future, Penna said she would like to see more tracks utilize the Equine Injury Database. Eighty-one facilities so far have adopted the system.

Penna said InCompass has been collecting data from the Equine Injury Database since it was launched, and the scientific advisory committee associated with the program is in the process of organizing the information.

"We're trying to determine when a track can start to look at their data and say, 'Now I have enough statistically valid information where I can see where my injuries are occurring and see where my fatalities are occurring,'" she said.

The Jockey Health Information System, which is available at no cost for racetracks and jockeys, allows racetrack medical personnel to access a jockey's medical history in the event of an emergency. The system provides quick information when a jockey

is injured to the point where communication is hindered, or when there is a language barrier.

Another application, the pre-race veterinary exam software, allows veterinarians to track the progress and injuries of a horse throughout its racing career. Previously, this information was kept in card system file format at individual racetracks, which made it difficult for veterinarians around the country to determine the health issues of horses as they traveled to different racing circuits.



With a few clicks of the mouse, databases can be updated quickly to aid racetracks with their management

Now, if a veterinarian chooses to share his or her information with other jurisdictions via InCompass, as the horses move from track to track, their exam details will follow them.

An additional useful InCompass feature is the starting gate application, where starters can record notes on the behavior of horses at the gate.

"Every starter across the United States has a little notebook where they keep their notes on different horses, so we decided to computerize that," said Haydon. "So now when a horse ships from New York to Maryland, the starter doesn't need to find the trainer (to see how a horse acts in the gate); he just looks in the system."

Looking toward the future of InCompass, Haydon has been examining how to leverage the online market to a larger capacity. Eventually he would like to see race entries being completed via a hand-held computer, and stall applications submitted via the Internet.

As the electronic world continues to progress at a rapid pace, InCompass is striving to help horsemen better leverage

the advancement of data development, while at the same time not having to be tied to their computers.

"Our customer is really the racetrack indirectly, and then their customer is the horseman," Haydon said. "Even though we are providing solutions and applications to the horsemen, it's on behalf of the racetrack so they can improve their relationship and services with their direct customer."

While the older generation of horsemen is sometimes known for their tendency to

cling to tradition and resist change, Haydon hopes more racetracks will learn to re-engineer their business processes to leverage the InCompass applications better and make good use of the information it offers.

"If they would use our expertise—and we have a very experienced team that goes out and meets with the tracks, trains, and sits down with them—they would be able to run a little bit more of an efficient operation," said Haydon.

Ironically, the current state of the economy has had, in a way, a positive effect on InCompass, Haydon added. With staff cuts and fewer race dates, tracks have had to learn to accomplish the same tasks with fewer people and are, therefore, using the tools and benefits of InCompass more so than before. Even still, much more progress can be made.

"The racetracks have got to re-engineer their business processes and make use of the tools they have, and in doing that, they've got to learn how to serve their customers better," Haydon said. "We are working with the tracks to be able to reach out to those customers." 