

How to pick a Professional Horse Trainer

Do your homework first.

BY DR. JIM MORGAN, NRHA NON PRO COMMITTEE CHAIR

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO ADVANCE your skills as a non pro reiner is to work with an NRHA Professional trainer. Whether you want to keep a horse in training full time or just haul in for lessons, choosing the best trainer for you can not only up your score, but also your level of enjoyment.

If you are new to the sport and looking for a trainer, a great way to get started is to log on to www.NRHA.com (click on Programs, then NRHA Professionals, then Find A Trainer) and www.ReiningPros.com.

trainer who helps you excel as a rider. Just because they are an excellent open rider doesn't mean they are a similarly stellar coach. In fact, some of the best non pro trainers are not at the top of the open list. But they have made a commitment to work with non pros, and, as a result, their non pro clients excel in the show pen and have a good time doing so.

When discussing your goals with a perspective trainer, here are some questions to ask:

1. Do you take non pros?

Not all trainers take non pro clients, so this

are handled. A trainer who's really on the ball will likely have a hand-out or something he or she can e-mail you with all of this information.

In addition to the items listed above, it's important to also consider a trainer's personality. We all have different strengths and weaknesses, and, in the same sense, each trainer has a different coaching style. You want a trainer who can effectively communicate with you in an efficient and effective manner.

On the flip-side, we as non pros need to take responsibility for our actions. It re-



Both of these Web sites list NRHA Professional trainers by state along with their contact info. In order to become an NRHA Professional, trainers must be in good standing with the NRHA, agree to abide by a Code of Ethics, and pay a yearly fee of \$50. Once you find a trainer in your area who you're interested in working with, it's a good idea to ask around for references and then contact that trainer directly.

While it would seem that picking a good non pro trainer would involve simply picking the best open rider, that isn't always the case. The objective is to find the trainer who fits you best in terms of personality and coaching style. You want the

is the important first question.

2. Are non pro riders a major part of your business?

Get a read on how much experience a trainer has coaching, and if he or she actually enjoys that part of the business.

3. How many shows a year do you go to?

Some trainers haul to many regional shows, while others just focus on a few national events, so make sure their typical show schedule is a good fit for your goals.

4. What is your fee structure?

Ask this question so you understand when invoices are due, if the trainer has day charges at shows, what hauling costs are, and how vet and shoeing fees

ally boils down to being considerate of a professional trainer's time. A trainer can ride only so many horses in a day, and he or she can very likely have family and a life outside of the horse world. So show up for your appointments on time and take responsibility for saddling your own horse. Get out there, pay attention, and participate instead of being a debutante and waiting for them to do everything for you. Trainers are an extremely important part of this business, and being considerate of them makes you a better client. In the long run, being a better client will pay off in spades because your trainer will want to help you. ♦