

I am from Germany, but was first introduced to harness racing last year in Ontario. One of the first things that stood out while watching the races here, was the use of the whip. Originally I was attracted to harness racing, because I started working with Standardbred horses and I liked them. Seeing these horses being whipped on wasn't exactly what I wanted to see while watching the creatures I grew so fond of. Some of the drivers seemed to go completely crazy on them, hitting horses who have earned half a million dollars and have ended up in cheap claimers in their older years.

When I went back to Germany for a visit, I drove to the closest racetrack and watched harness racing. The impression I got there was very different. Amongst things like more women drivers, no headpoles, various distances and so on, there was almost no use of the whip. At one point a driver did get more serious with the whip on the stretch and the crowd just started yelling. It was a really nice feeling to stand amongst people, who seemed to appreciate the effort of the horse. They do not race for the same money and they do not have the same speed, which has more to do with the breeding than the whip, in my opinion, but they do seem to have a fairly good fanbase.

Also if you look at other European countries, they have much stricter rules regarding the whip, and yet they are making harness racing a success in their part of the world.

It should be outstanding to anybody, to see the amount of work these racehorses are actually doing. Most of them I think are trying, and from what I've seen, I'd say there is no proper relation between the cause and effect, as far as whipping goes. Working with sound would be somewhat more efficient as far as I can see.

Last I would like to say that I appreciate the ORC taking the time to reassess the use of the whip in harness racing and hope that you succeed in making the sport more enjoyable for new people and for the horses.

Sincerely,

Melanie Pfeffer