

Stanley Dancer Prances to Fame the Hard Way

Ace Driver-Trainer Works 16-Hour Day in Harness Sport

By FRANK M. BLUNK

Stanley Dancer, who'll be 28 years old in July, is now rated on the income tax rolls as an upper-bracket man. His net earnings as a driver-trainer in the harness horse racing business last year were close to \$30,000. Only a few of his colleagues in the rapidly expanding sport made more. Those who did got it easier—winning big stakes events.

There were no Hambletonian or Little Brown Jug caliber trotters or pacers in Stanley Dancer's barns. But he had some good "every-day" horses and he drove them to first, second or third place often enough to collect more than \$286,000.

Ten per cent of that went into the Dancer bank account. That was only a part of his work. He was paid, in addition, for training and caring for the horses.

The harness horse business is big business on all levels, whether it is breeding, training and driving or operating tracks. And in Dancer's sphere it means hard work, too. During the racing season he is a sixteen-hour-a-day man six days a week, with only a few hours off Sunday for church and the family.

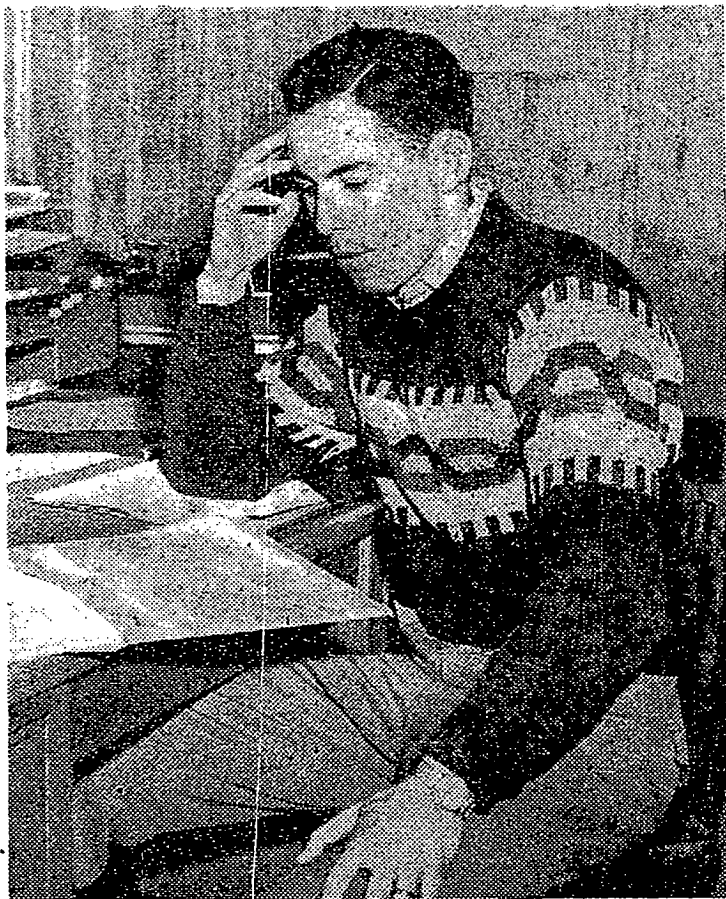
Dancer may be found at Roosevelt Raceway from 7 to 11 any morning, supervising the training of his horses. He now has forty-six in his barns. Forty-four are owned by twenty-one other individuals. Only two belong to Stanley. Eight are 2-year-olds and of those few will be raced this year. They are being schooled for 1956.

21 Grooms on Payroll

Dancer has two assistant trainers and twenty-one caretakers, or grooms, on his payroll. There also are a blacksmith and a veterinarian on a part-time basis.

Harness horses in training need shoes all-around about once a week. The cost is \$3 a shoe. The veterinarian is called frequently to make blood tests and to prescribe vitamins to correct deficiencies. Some of the vitamins are mixed in the feed. Others are injected in the horses.

The office in Dancer's main barn is notable, not only for its neatness and its filing systems for payroll and cost accounts, but also for its charts. The walls are filled with them. One chart lists each horse under his care,



Stanley Dancer at desk in stable office at Westbury track

with spaces for noting the time for workouts, the kind of workout and the clockings.

The tasks to be done each day by the grooms and assistant trainers are marked on another chart. There is a list of horses with their current classifications as figured by the racing secretary. And there is a daily directive on the feeding of each horse.

Dancer himself keeps all the charts up-to-the-minute. It is his first chore of the day.

Equipment Is Checked

After the workouts he returns to the office and checks with his assistants on all of the equipment—harness, the racing sulkeys (ten of them), and the training charts (there are twenty-one). If there is a sick horse or a lame one, Dancer and his brother Vernon supervise the treatments.

After lunch Stanley gets a lists of races and conditions from the secretary's office and fills out entries. That must be done three days in advance.

He may have as many as

seven horses starting in one night, as he did when the Roosevelt meeting opened April 1. When he gets the secretary's report on acceptances, he must set up a new schedule of training for the horses that are to start.

He may rest an hour or so, have dinner and prepare for the evening's work—the driving. He has had a strenuous day, this 135-pounder who stands 5 feet 8 inches in his boots. But he has been hardened to it through the years. He never knows real fatigue.

Born on a farm in New Jersey, not so many miles from his present acreage at New Egypt, Stanley Dancer grew up with harness horses. His father, James, who has one good one in action today—First Discovery—has been a harness man all his life. He had a couple that raced at county fairs in the Nineteen Thirties.

First Winner at 16

Stanley was 6 years old when he first climbed to the seat of a training cart with his dad.

He became a "harness man"

Now 27, He Started Racing at 15, Hit Big Time at 20

when he was graduated from grammar school at 14. He was 15 when he drove in his first race at Freehold, N. J. It was on that track a year later that he brought in his first winner. He remembers well the little pacer, David Guy D., who won for him that day.

Stanley raced on the Jersey-Pennsylvania state and county fair circuit until he was 20. Then he decided to try the "big time." He went to Roosevelt Raceway with a string of nine horses. He called on the racing secretary, then Walter Gibbons, whose son, Glenn, now occupies the post.

Gibbons looked over the slim youth with wavy brown hair. He studied the list of horses he had brought. He patted Stanley on the shoulder and gave him some advice:

"Son, you're too young and too inexperienced to compete with these horses against the top trainers and drivers of the nation who are racing here. Why don't you go back to the fair circuit for a year or two more?"

"No, Mr. Gibbons," Stanley said, "I think I am ready now. Let me stay here for two weeks. Then if I haven't shown enough I'll go back willingly."

Favorite of Fans

Gibbons agreed. Stanley Dancer has been "big time" ever since. He has been among the leading drivers and money winners. He has become a favorite of harness racing fans. He has put some \$110,000 into improvements at the New Egypt farm.

When he and his schoolyard sweetheart, Rachel, were married, they lived in a trailer there. They put their first earnings into enlarging the barns. Then they built a home. A half-mile training track followed, then more stalls. Now the farm is winter headquarters for the strings trained by Dancer. A big house has been built for the grooms and other employees.

There may be as many as fifty horses wintering at New Egypt. The overhead costs are broken down to a per-horse basis, about \$225 a month. That is in contrast to the \$400 a month per horse during the racing season in New York.

In addition to the 10 per cent of all purses he receives, Stanley charges \$5 per day per horse for training and care in New York. In New Egypt his daily fee is \$1.50.

It's a big, complicated and risky business. But Stanley Dancer is doing all right in it.