

SPOTLIGHT ON HOLLY WATSON

APPRENTICE JOCKEY, PERTH



Just like her host trainer Simon A. Miller – head of one of the largest and most successful racing entities in Perth – Holly started out by working as a part-time stable hand and fell in love with the incredible power and athleticism of racehorses. Now, with almost 130 wins to her name, she's making good ground towards qualifying as a senior jockey.

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Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

I'm currently on a four-year jockey apprenticeship working for one of WA's leading racehorse trainers, Simon A. Miller. But I don't just ride horses in races six days a week. I start work at the stables around 3.30am and I'll be track riding until 8am, then do the stable work until 9.30am. Races run five days a week, Wednesday to Sunday, so if I've got races on those days, I usually don't finish until 5.30pm. It's long days and hard work, but you're pretty much your own boss once you've qualified!

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

As a kid, I was a regular at my local pony club and I knew I wanted to work with horses, but I didn't really know how I could build that into a full-time career. After leaving school I was working two part-time jobs, in the mornings I'd be caring for the horses at the stables and in the evenings I'd be serving kebabs at a local fast-food place.

So, how did you get into horse racing?

Being short with a small frame, I was the ideal size to be a jockey and someone at the stables introduced me to trainer Darren Tailor. When he started teaching me and I had my first gallop on a racehorse, I thought wow, this is the best feeling ever!

I got in touch with RWWA (Racing and Wagering Western Australia) to find a host trainer I could do my apprenticeship with and complete Cert IV in Racing (Jockey). In the first year with Campbell McCallum, training was focused on jump-outs – practising how to jump horses out of the starting barriers and doing trials to get my race licence. Then I switched to working under Simon Miller to start my race training.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm quiet, patient and calm around the horses but have an outgoing and bubbly personality around people. I'm comfortable talking to everyone, including the trainers, which is really important.

What do you love most about the industry?

The people. My host trainer and the crew that I work with are all fantastic. When you work with each other six days a week, often 12 or more hours a day, it's important that you all get along and we've got a really great team here that's so supportive. They help me tackle the serious challenges of working with different racehorses and trainers and we have lots of laughs together too.

What's the best part of your job?

Obviously, I love winning races and have a lot of high points in my career so far. Winning my first listed race at The Pinjarra Cup riding Jadarvi was an incredible feeling. I also really love riding Simon Miller's sprinter called It'sarayday. He's my heart horse.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

If you're small in size, confident around horses, passionate about working with them and good with people too, then training to be a jockey might be a perfect career pathway for you. When you're starting out, it's really important to find a host trainer that you're comfortable working with and will support you in making a name for yourself in the industry.

And what's next for you?

When you start an apprenticeship, you begin with a four-kilo claim (a four-kilo weight advantage over the senior jockeys) and you need to ride 20 winners to drop your claim to three kilos. I've now worked my way to a two-kilo claim and I'm aiming to outride my claim, qualify as a senior jockey in the next 18 months and start riding the top winners.

Find Holly online

[racing.com/jockeys/holly-watson](https://www.racing.com/jockeys/holly-watson)