Injuries come with the job

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The backside or backstretch of a Kentucky racetrack is a bawdy fiefdom of manure and money, ruled by trainers who decide who gets to ride or a free ride — to a tack room or a dorm room with fewer amenities than a jail cell — and who doesn't.

Many backstretchers are trainers’ kinfolk or clerks, and they are subject to workplace injuries that aren’t covered by workers’ compensation. If you are hurt, you are left to pony up on your own.

At Their Own Risk

What is workers’ comp?

Workers’ compensation insurance is to protect employers and employees in the event of disabling injuries sustained on the job. Workers are covered for lost wages and medical expenses from liability lawsuits.

In May, Bramble said, he was thrown off a horse and caught on one of the poles holding up the track. He was lucky to be alive.

Workers’ compensation insurance excludes any training or racing on the backside of a racetrack, but it covers injuries on the track, such as on the backstretch.

In November, Bramble sued Turfway, alleging negligence.

Turfway President Bob Elliston said he couldn’t discuss the accident because of the lawsuit.

“I can say I think that Turfway did everything possible in an appropriate way to get them the care that occurred,” Elliston said.

Trainer Jason Dillion, who also was named in the suit, declined to comment on Bramble’s accident — or on the question of workers’ compensation.

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Learning to compensate

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Learning to compensate

Bramble figures he’ll pay it.

That’s what Clyde Bramble was doing on the morning of March 29.

Just trying to stay fit

A Kentucky native, Bramble, 56, had spent 42 years bouncing around small tracks in Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia and Delaware, first as a jockey and then as a trainer.

He'd buy horses for $1,000 or so, win a bit for them and sell them. For 20 years, he had 120 winners out of 1,625 starts.

Bramble also worked as a groom in the industry, picking up one of his first jobs on the backside after he was thrown from a horse.

Bramble’s accident — or on the question of workers’ compensation.

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