The process behind naming a racehorse

Marketplace Morning Report, [Thursday, June 9, 2011](http://marketplace.publicradio.org/episodes/show_rundown.php?show_id=15&start_date=06-09-2011)

From Seabiscuit to Secretariat, there are rules and rituals involved in naming a racehorse.

**Bob Moon: Heads up**, horse racing fans: A field of twelve 3-year-olds has just been entered for this Saturday's Belmont Stakes. The 2-for-1 favorite: A horse named Animal Kingdom. Wherever in the animal kingdom do these names come from, anyway?

That's what Chris Kaltenbach wondered. He's a writer for the Baltimore Sun, and he's been looking into how these famous horses get their names. Good morning, thanks for being with us.

**Chris Kaltenbach:** Good morning, Bob.

**Moon:** There's actually an official process for naming **thoroughbreds**?

**Kaltenbach:** There is. All names, all proposed names have to go through The Jockey Club. About 70 percent of all names that are submitted are approved, but that leaves about 30 percent that aren't. You can't have more than 18 letters in a name; you can't **name a horse after [ note the preposition used: you name someone after someone or mothing]** a racetrack -- so, you know, **regrettably**, we won't have a horse named "I Love Pimlico" anytime soon. You can't name a horse after a horse that's still alive. You can't name a horse after anybody who has won one of the Triple Crown races. So there are rules, and you have to be **tasteful**, which is the one I guess people tend **to run afoul** of sometimes.

**Moon:** Now is there anything to suggest that how they pick names has any effect on how betters pick horses?

**Kaltenbach:** I don't know if there have been any studies, but you know that anybody who bets the horses is always looking for something -- some **hint,** some **lucky charm** or whatever. So I suspect that there are people who look at names. You always hear the legends of somebody who wins $1 million because they saw a horse named after their grandfather and decided to bet the house on it.

**Moon:** Some of these are not so great when you're a track announcer, for example: Yakahickamickadola.

**Kaltenbach:** Yakahickamickadola: that's a name that will go down in history primarily because poor Tom Durkin, when he was calling a race, just could not wrap his mouth around that name. Each time he tried to pronounce it, it became worse, so by the end of the race, he was just "yakamakalikamakalooka" -- he just didn't even try anymore. So -- pretty **hilarious.**

**Moon:** Any rules about this? Is there a future for corporate **sponsorship** of horse names, maybe like race cars?

**Kaltenbach:** I don't know if we'll have a horse named Valvoline anytime soon. I'm not sure what The Jockey Club's position is on that, but I think they would **look down their nose at** it.

**Moon:** But Yakahickamickadola is just fine with them?

**Kaltenbach:** Yakahickamickadola and Flat Fleet Feet.

**Moon:** Easy for you to say. Chris Kaltenbach is a reporter with the Baltimore Sun. He's been looking into how these horses get their names. Thanks for joining us.

**Kaltenbach:** Thank you, Bob.