Club back in the saddle; horse lovers welcomed

By Gail Bushman
Lantern staff writer

The Ohio State Harness Racing Club is coming back after a two-year lapse.

"Anyone can join the club, not just horsemen, but people who want to learn about the industry," said John Cogan, a senior from Kettering, and treasurer for the club.

Harness racing began in the United States in 1806, after a number of trotting and pacing horses were born from the breeding of female thoroughbreds and a thoroughbred stallion in England named Messenger.

Most roots of harness racing horses today can be traced back to Messenger, said Bill Aldrich, a senior from Kettering and a member of the club.

The United States Trotting Association works closely with the club.

"They have offered us services for seminars, given us access to speakers, and really helped us out," said Anne Drake, a sophomore from Columbus and secretary of the club.

"Any sport thrives on young people," said Dean Hoffman, executive editor of Hoofbeats magazine, the official publication of the U.S. Trotting Association. "They represent the future."

The club members plan to work closely with horses owned by Charlie Neff, a trainer at Scioto Downs racetrack. A few members of the club have their own horses as well, Drake said.

"The goal of the club is to help its members learn about the racing industry," Cogan said.

Plans for the club to go to Hill Farms, a horse breeding farm, are in progress.

Since the club's reformation, it has been under the advisement of William Tyznik, professor of animal science for the College of Agriculture. Tyznik writes his own column for Hoofbeats, Drake said.

These harness racing enthusiasts hope to attract a large number of underclassmen to the club. Drake said.

"The old club died when the graduating officers left," he said. "We would like to see the club carried on year to year by having freshmen and sophomores join."

Jerry Conners, publicity director for Northfield Park, and a national expert on handicapping, a type of betting procedure with horse racing, will lecture at the next meeting at 6 p.m Thursday April 9, in Ohio Union Buckeye Rooms F & G.

For more information about the Ohio State Harness Racing Club, call Anne Drake at 291-5441.