

Sunday, March 29, 2020

Ontario Racing steps up with financial support package

Independent chair John Hayes provides further details about payments for standardbreds scheduled to race and the ongoing work to provide further assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

by Chris Lomon



Dave Landry

Ontario Racing independent chair John Hayes.

John Hayes, independent chair of Ontario Racing (OR), spoke with HRU about the current state of horse racing in Ontario, including the recent financial support package unveiled to support the province's standardbred horsepeople.

Hayes also discussed the efforts of the newly formed Ontario Racing task force, comprised of a cross section of participants in the industry who are proficient in dealing with the complexities and consequences of the sport's shutdown in Ontario.

The financial relief, a total of \$300 per horse, is being offered to those involved with standardbred racehorses that were in-to-race at operational racetracks from March 19 to March 24.

"Via our task force, we will continue to discuss with government the further financial support that might be available to Ontario horsepeople," said Hayes, in an Ontario Racing press release sent out on March 27.

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How is Ontario Racing playing a pivotal role during the COVID-19 pandemic?

“Ontario Racing was formed to be one single racing voice to government and given the current circumstances, government not being inundated with racetracks, three horse associations, breeders, etcetera, all at the door, is a plus for the industry. It lets racing’s united voice be heard. So, the fact that we are Ontario Racing has been an extremely positive force to present one voice to government.”

The pandemic has created numerous challenges for the racing industry. Why is it important for Ontario Racing to show its support to horsepeople during this time?

“We are an industry with anywhere from 30-50,000 individuals and 7,000-plus horses making their living from horse racing and supplying the industry with goods and services. We’re a little different from other industries, with more uncertainty right now than perhaps if we were a company that’s temporarily laid off its workers. Those workers, the bad news is they’re unemployed, but there is hope that when this clears in two, four, eight weeks, whatever that may be, they’ll be back to work. At the backbone of the industry, our workers are out on the farms and on the backstretch – most in the horse racing business are not wealthy and need that monthly income to feed their families. There’s a lot of concern among the individuals in the industry about their future if there is no support right now.”

In terms of the support package, what other considerations are being discussed by both Ontario Racing and the task force?

“The first step was to get horses that were entered to race at various tracks closed across the province compensation for cancellation fees. It’s not a lot of money, but it is a start

and we wanted to, as a group, get as much out as quickly as we can, while we’re working away at what we can do in the longer term, and the longer term being the next 60 days. We are working well beyond the \$300 initial payment. No one is going to get everything they want or need, but hopefully they get something that will help them stay in the business.”

How is OR dealing with the ever-changing world created by COVID-19?

“The task force has met four times. Katherine Curry (executive director Ontario Racing Management), Jonathan Zammit (vice-president, racing finance / associate executive director Ontario Racing Management) and Madia Jeddi (director of accounting and programs Ontario Racing Management) have been literally working around the clock to put this stuff together... a huge thanks for their efforts. I’m happy the task force has taken a big-picture approach with an unprecedented amount of cooperation working together for the good of the industry as a whole. Literally, at the end of the day, all three breeds (quarter horse, standardbred, thoroughbred) need each other.”

Any final thoughts you’d like to add?

“It’s kind of easy being an old retired guy, to say to everybody, ‘Take a deep breath, stay safe, and we’ll work through it.’ But when you’re faced with an uncertain situation like this, those words sort of ring hollow. Let’s work together.

“At our first meeting, I made the observation, ‘Guys, this is going to be a daunting task and whatever we can do, we’re going to be as fair and as equitable – given the various nuances of the business – as possible.’ We will be criticized for whatever decision we come to and all I can ask is that we work together and come up with a plan that we believe is most fair and most equitable to help racing survive.”

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Tapping parental wisdom in a pandemic

How I learned to stop worrying about the future of harness racing.

by Dave Briggs

My mother is fond of sage sayings — the kind of parents-only wisdom we always mocked or bristled at as kids. One of her favorites is “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” She also is fond of “We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.” Though, for some reason, I attribute the latter as much to my father who would get testy and drop that on me whenever I predicted impending doom.

My attitude in my impetuous youth was more like, “We’ll burn that bridge when we come to it.” But, 50 years on for me, with my academic parents still preaching the gospel of clear thinking, I appreciate “We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it” more each passing day. It serves as a kind of calming Tao of Patience I have now repeated to my own kids, of course — who undoubtedly bristle when hearing it, but have the good sense to mock me behind my back and out of earshot.

As for what post-COVID-19 future holds for harness racing — or anything else in our lives for that matter — it’s too early to know, so why stress yourself out further about it? The industry focus, for now, should be on immediate financial assistance and basic care for horses and people in the industry, that need it most, not bemoaning what the industry will be like later, whether we defer stakes payments or not.

Make no mistake, we will see the other side of this terrible tragedy at some point. Let’s hope it’s sooner rather than later.

In the meantime, wringing our hands and predicting the end of everything certainly does not help. There will be no gold stars for being right at the end of the apocalypse and, in the meantime, doom-saying only serves to further anxiety. So, why bother?

Everyone’s different, of course, and I can’t begin to fathom whether either of my parents’ favorite nuggets — more on “two wrongs don’t make a right” in a second — will be at all helpful to anyone else as the COVID-19 pandemic steals

lives, destroys economies and alters our way of life more than any event in my lifetime. I only share them in the hopes it will help some achieve clearer thinking, because it’s apparent the “now, now, NOW!” tenets of our instant culture isn’t helping us to navigate this mess.

Certainly, instant everything is depleting common sense, growing selfishness and robbing many of us of perspective.

And, oh could we all use greater perspective if only to stay safe, keep others safe and hope the vast majority of us come out of this with something tangible intact — our souls and sanity chief among them.

Side note that I find it ridiculous and a little sad that I even have to write this at this point, but... having perspective currently means that for a few weeks, maybe a few months, we all need to do our part to stay home as much as possible and limit exposure to people other than those we live with or absolutely have to work with — maintaining as much distance as reasonable when it comes to the latter. Also, wash your damn hands, thoroughly, with soap, for at least 20 seconds frequently throughout the day and, for sure, after touching anything outside your own home. Five-year-olds learn that in kindergarten for goodness sake. The fact most of us weren’t already doing that is pathetic and disgusting and I hope this is a cleanliness habit we all employ for the rest of our lives — pandemic or not.

The health advice is a widely-repeated message on which scores of global medical experts agree. It is not the work of

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The fact some people are continuing business as usual baffles me and speaks, again, to some people's selfishness or ignorance — neither are a good look.

As one popular meme goes: The Greatest Generation stepped up to sacrifice their lives and liberty to save the world from the Nazis. You're being asked to sit on the couch for a few weeks. Don't screw this up.

Perspective can help us cope here, if you've lived long enough to experience hardship of some kind and come through it. I'm sure your own personal challenges may have seemed like never-ending hell at the time. Years on, time and the resiliency of the human spirit has, for most of us, a wonderful way of making even the most difficult times seem insignificant. I profoundly believe this will, one day, feel like that, too.

"This too shall pass" also sounds like something my parents would say. They probably did. I don't remember for sure on that one. Either way, it has consistently proven to be true throughout history and is important to remember to help you cope now.

As far as pandemics go, history suggests COVID-19 is a once-in-a-century event in terms of severity. But compared to a litany of extreme human hardships, it's one of a number I can think of that seem to pop up about every decade, including, but not limited to: world wars, the Great Depression, 9/11, tsunamis, earthquakes, Chernobyl, extreme famine and wildfires.

Yes, there was an incredible human toll to all those things, but humans who maintain their composure and compassion and actually use the big brains they are blessed with, are remarkably resilient on the whole.

In many measures, the world has been trying to kill us off for aeons and we're still here. Humans will be here after COVID-19.

As for "two wrongs don't make a right" there's a lot to ponder here in terms of maintaining a strong moral compass.

First, just because you witness someone being a jackass doesn't give you the right to be a jackass, too.

To put this in the context of these troubled times: just because your neighbor is an asshole that returns from some foreign locale and, instead of going straight into self-isolation at home as instructed, goes to three stores and visits the grandkids first — possibly infecting hundreds of people with COVID-19 to score beer and chips — doesn't mean you get a green light to strap on your own asshole and head out.

Do better. Be better. Rise above other people's butthead tendencies for the sake of others.

Second, please remember people are already stressed to their limit and don't need to be further inflamed. Just because someone makes an asinine statement on social media, doesn't make it okay for you to do the same. We already live in incredibly divisive times. Do your part to either try to lower the discord or take the high road. Even better, just stay the hell off social media altogether. It's mostly a sewage cesspool of negativity, finger-pointing, partisanship and insanity on a good day.

The bottom line is this: Be kind. Be patient. Act in a way that takes others into consideration. Help where you can. Stay clean and at home as much as possible. Just get through the day as best you can and try to maintain a little long-term perspective. Life is supposed to be a marathon not a sprint.

Your health and the health of others supersedes everything right now — including the economy and, most assuredly, harness racing.

As for what the future holds for our great sport, let's get through COVID-19 first and then cross that bridge when we come to it.

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How Indiana is coping with COVID-19

This was supposed to be opening weekend at Hoosier Park until tracks and casinos were closed in the state.

by James Platz

Late March in Indiana is traditionally a time of excitement and optimism as a new racing season begins. Harrah's Hoosier Park would have raised the curtain on the 2020 campaign Friday and Saturday. Instead of the sound of thundering hooves over the Anderson oval, there is now silence. The grandstand, Homestretch Clubhouse and apron are barren. The COVID-19 pandemic has shuttered racing in the Hoosier State before the first condition sheet was printed. Now, the industry awaits amid uncertainty.

"It is unprecedented. We're all just trying to make the best decisions as we go," said Jessica Barnes, director of racing and breed development at the Indiana Horse Racing Commission (IHRC). "Right now everybody is kind of in limbo because we're all just waiting. You have the executive order out there that goes through the seventh. What happens after that, my guess is as good as yours. I have no idea."

Two weeks ago the Indiana Gaming Commission closed Hoosier Park, Indiana Grand and casinos across the state for a 14-day period beginning Monday, March 16 and running through March 30. Less than a week later, Governor Eric Holcomb issued a "stay at home" order shutting down nonessential travel and businesses. The executive order runs through April 7.

The governor's next moves will determine how much longer Hoosiers stay at home and racing continues in a holding pattern. Rick Moore, Hoosier Park's general manager of racing, said that while it was the right decision to delay the opening, there will be excitement once the track kicks off live racing.

"Right now, it's kind of an empty feeling, but you know it's the right thing we are not racing. There is no precedent. There is no playbook. We're all just taking it

day by day," Moore said. "Nonetheless, we were preparing to get off to a big start, and that will just have to be delayed at this point. There's going to be a lot of pent up enthusiasm when we do open."

Management were in the process of planning for the 160-day harness meet, which included a second go-round as Breeders Crown host. Moore said that Breeders Crown planning continues, but many of the final details for the track's 2020 meet were put on hold with no official start in sight.

"We were in the final preparations. We were talking to TVG and Twin Spires about marketing promotions on their ADW sites," he said. "Everything was at the three-quarter pole; we weren't quite at the finish line yet. We had to put everything on hold. It came to a grinding halt."

The reality is that the casinos at Hoosier Park and Indiana Grand are the lifeblood of the state racing industry, and the longer they are dormant, the greater damage to the bottom line. According to Barnes, casino revenue is deposited into stakeholder accounts on the 15th of the following month. On April 15, the first real impact will be felt as revenue from the month of March is received. With casinos operational for only 15 days, the expected revenue should be roughly half what a normal month would bring.

"In essence, with every month of shutdown, the breed development program is losing about \$1.3 to \$1.4 million in revenue," she explained.

Last December, the racing commission adopted a breed development plan with nearly \$13.3 million budgeted for racing, an increase of roughly \$1 million from what was spent in 2019. Some of the changes included boosting Super Final purses an additional \$50,000 to \$250,000, increasing the Indiana Sired Fair Circuit finals to \$25,000 each, and more purse money for late closers and mini-series. The increases were made knowing there would be new revenue from table games coming online beginning January 1. Barnes said conservative adjustments were made, leaving the door open to add further increases after a few months of table games revenue were realized. That conservative approach to the breed development program may help offset losses due to casino inactivity, but there are many factors at play.

"For every month we're losing that money, we are good that we have some reserve built up. But, with that said, we were already utilizing some of that in anticipation of

table game revenue,” Barnes said. “The biggest question is going to be how long are things shut down, and then how much of a recession are we going to see when things open back up. We’ll not only have the revenue that we lost, but we’ll also have the revenue we projected. If things decline quite a bit, then our projections are going to be off for the rest of the year.”

Tuesday the IHRC announced the postponement of nomination payments for some Indiana-sired late closers, as well as Indiana Sires Stakes and Indiana Sired Fair Circuit events for 2-year-olds, one month to May 15. That decision could result in fewer horses nominated, but that concern was secondary.

“When I talked to my board members, one of the things that made our decision was that we didn’t want people struggling to try to figure out how to buy groceries or make their stake payments,” said Barnes. “The downside is that we might not get as many horses staked. Many people may have figured out by May 15 that they don’t have a sires stakes horse. To us, that potential loss was worth it just to try to help the horsemen in this situation.”

Joe Putnam, president of the Indiana Standardbred Association, said that the hardest part of the delay is the nature of the circumstances. As states combat the spread of the coronavirus, industry is on hold with no imminent start date. That makes it difficult for any planning, whether it be on the part of stakeholders or stables.

“I feel like I’m in the same boat as everybody else right now. There are so many unknowns,” said Putnam, who is an owner and trainer with 35 horses in his barn. “I think if we could all pick a date out, whatever that date would be, we’d feel better about it, even if it’s not as soon as we would like. Unfortunately, there is no date. That’s what really keeps things up in the air here and keeps everyone guessing.”

The situation for Indiana horsemen is different from their peers in surrounding states. Hoosier Park was

ramping up to start the meet, where other jurisdictions suspended ongoing race meets. This weekend would have been the first opportunity to earn purse money for those not racing outside the state.

“This was supposed to be our opening weekend and everyone is excited to get the meet kicked off and going. I think the longer this lingers, the potential to have more horsemen and stables under stress will increase,” Putnam said. “I think perhaps the smaller independent stables that don’t have many owners, or have no owners, that’s where it’s going to get more financially troublesome.”

The veteran horseman said the situation calls for a different approach to stable management due to all the uncertainty. He wants to be ready once Hoosier Park is cleared to open, but the guessing game makes it difficult.

“We’ve kind of backed off a little bit on the racehorses and 3-year-olds, not training as hard because we don’t know when we’ll get going. The 2-year-olds are all on the same schedule that they would have been anyway,” Putnam said. “It’s something new for all of us. We had about 10 racing. They were in their normal form. We had 12 more that were three to four weeks from qualifying. Our plan was to have a majority qualified and racing by mid-April. For me, right now we are in that holding pattern. We’re keeping them fit. We’re still working, hoping that we get some good news in the near future.”

The racing industry is one small piece of a much larger puzzle impacted by COVID-19. Indiana horsepeople, like their counterparts across the country, await the opportunity to compete and return to some semblance of normalcy. When that happens, it will serve as a welcomed distraction.

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EUROPEAN REPORT



with **THOMAS HEDLUND**

Disco Volante impossible to beat

by Thomas Hedlund

Courant Stable in Sweden can look forward to the final of the \$302,000 Paralympiatriavet at Åby racetrack in Sweden on April 25 since their 7-year-old Scarlet Knight son Disco Volante took an impressive elimination win when Solvalla played host to V75-finals on Saturday afternoon.

Stefan Melander trained Disco Volante has developed incredibly well since last season where the Courant stable owned colt showed great capacity at several occasions. But the big step towards and against more merited trotters has been taken this winter and Disco Volante was the bettors' first choice when the first ticket for Paralympiatriavet was at stake.

Driver Ulf Ohlsson sent Disco Volante to the lead after 600 meters and the pace was high throughout the whole race, which led to a safe victory in strong mile rate of 1:54 over 1.3 miles.

The betting handle was once again strong when the V75 was on the agenda Saturday and there is no doubt that Swedish harness racing and its betting company ATG has a big advantage on the European betting market for the moment. Harness racing keeps going on in Sweden and government and health ministries in the country still allow the business to roll, pretty much as usual, at least for the active part of the industry. Horsepeople must follow severe restrictions, set by the health ministries in Sweden and as long as they follow the rules, racing can continue.

The V75's betting handle Saturday was over \$11.3 million in Sweden and when big upsets lined up in five out of seven races, the payout for three vouchers gave almost \$1 million each.

Four divisions of the \$60,500 Margareta's Unghästserie over 1.3 miles were held at Solvalla. Clockwork (Zola Boko) won in a mile rate of 1:59.4 in the division for 3-year-old mares, while Forever Melon (Infinitif) took a safe wire to wire win in 2:01.4 when the 3-year-old colts and geldings were



Dave Landry

Green Manalishi (Tim Tetrick, winning the 2019 Canadian Trotting Classic) will soon be on his way to Sweden to race.

gathered behind the car.

Adrian Kolgjini's 4-year-old Ultion Face (Joke Face) impressed a lot in a 1:57 win in the lead for colts and geldings and the divisions ended with another wire-to-wire winner in 4-year-old Trixton mare Alaska Kronos, who won in 1:59.

Disco Volante at Solvalla.

Green Manalishi to Sweden

Courant Stable's Green Manalishi (Muscle Hill), trained by Marcus Melander, will fly to Sweden next month. Marcus' uncle, Stefan Melander, will be in charge when Green Manalishi flies over the Atlantic ocean where several big stakes are awaiting this year. If the COVID-19 situation doesn't change anything in the schedule, he will contest eliminations for the \$201,000 Kungapokalen at Åby racetrack the night before the Paralympiatriavet. The final is scheduled for May 9.

Marcus Melander spoke to Swedish harness racing media sulkysport.se on Saturday afternoon.

"Green Manalishi will leave our farm on April 7 and flies the same night to Belgium, so I suppose he will be in Sweden on April 9 or 10. The horse is ready to race and we've been very satisfied with him in training. It seems like he's developed a lot during the winter and I think he's good enough for competing the Elitloppet already this year," Marcus said.

Green Manalishi in training.

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Remembering my neophyte days as GM of Standardbred Horse Sales Company

by Murray Brown

In early 1972, John Simpson called me into his office and in so many words told me "Brownie just quit, you are now the general manager of the sales company."

The sales company he was referencing was Standardbred Horse Sales Company, better known in the industry as the Harrisburg Sale.

The "Brownie" he was speaking of was Bowman Brown Jr., the son of the co-founder of the sale together with Lawrence B Sheppard.

Mr. Brown, Sr. was the founder and publisher of *The Harness Horse*, a weekly periodical of the sport.

Brownie inherited the sales company position after the passing of his father.

I've often told people that I held two positions during my tenure in Hanover, PA.

Working for Hanover Shoe Farms was not a job, it was a dream come true. It was fun. It was something that if my economic status would have allowed it, I would have done for free.

Working for Standardbred Horse Sales Company was a job which included long hours, lots of stress and hard work – some sense of accomplishment if the sale was a good one, utter despair if it wasn't.

My job at Hanover paid little in comparison to what I received for performing the duties at Standardbred.

Bear in mind, that I had never managed anything well, least of all, myself.

Now, all at once I was being TOLD, not asked, but TOLD that I was in charge of the industry's largest and arguably best sale.

What in hell did I know about running a horse sale?

NOTHING, maybe even less.

From that point forward all I could do was wing it.

I called all the company's consignors, introduced myself and asked them to bear with this neophyte's lack of experience. I told them that I was open to suggestions and corrections, especially if I screwed up.

All but two of the consignors elected to give this kid a chance and stay with the sale.

One of them leaving, disappointed me almost to the point of depression.

Not only did this person have some good horses to sell, but more importantly, I thought of him as a good friend. His abandonment opened up a great deal of cynicism which to some degree has never completely left me.

A few years later, he came back, but our relationship never came close to where it had once been.

I will try to limit this column to the yearling aspect of my first sale. The mixed portion is a totally different story.

So what does a sales manager do? I asked myself.

Well, the first priority was to get the horses that various consignors were entering.

Back then, there was no physical evaluation of yearlings. That was to come a few years later.

Actually the first entity to do it was the Canadian Standardbred Horse Society for the sale that they conducted at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds in the mid-to-late 1960s.

The next and probably most important function of the manager was to get a catalog out.

Back then, computer access was non-existent.

Pedigrees were assembled using the sires and dams book, previous years' pedigrees where the same dams were a part of them and weekly race results from *The Harness Horse* and *Horseman & Fair World* magazines.

They all were typed using the index finger of my left hand. I never learned to type properly, so anything that I've ever written, including this column, came from that one finger.

After the pedigrees were assembled, they were then sent to the consignors for approval and updates.

If you look at a pedigree from that era today, you would think that we were in the dark ages.

The emphasis to a great fault was on records, both race records and time trials. Money earnings were secondary and the mention of stakes wins was pretty much non-existent.

Our goal was to have catalogs available at Jug Week and to my knowledge, we never missed on that goal.

Before the catalog was printed, we went over the mailing list and both added to it and removed names of those receiving it.

In the interim, a very nasty lady made her presence felt. Her name was Agnes. She was the worst hurricane to ever strike the area. The Pennsylvania Farm Show Arena was flooded to a depth of eight feet.

There was a big question as to whether we could hold a sale or not. Thankfully we survived Agnes and things went on.

Paul Keim was the director of operations. His job was to assemble a crew to both set up and tear down the stalls and the layout of the various stables in which the horses were stabled.

Paul had been the director of racing at Buffalo Raceway. He brought with him a bunch of men from that area to work the time before, during and after the sale.

Amazingly, through the years, a crew from that area has continued to work the sale. I believe that there are even fourth generation folks from that original crew – certainly several third generation members.

Once everything was set up, I discovered a new duty that a sales manager has – I was in charge of granting credit.

Back then, the sale took place in the large arena. I was to be stationed in a tiny cubicle, which barely accommodated me, a small desk and another person, if that person wasn't too big. Back then I was the same height that I am today and weighed all of 120 pounds.

My job was to okay all checks and if credit was to be granted to okay it.

I didn't know anybody that wasn't credit worthy, so I okayed everybody.

At the end of the sale, Al "Apples" Thomas came into my tiny enclave with a whole bunch of slips representing the yearlings that his boss Billy Haughton had purchased.

He told me which people to bill for each horse. There were some that were unaccounted for.

With those, he told me to bill the W R Haughton stable until he had them sorted out.

Then came the kicker line that still haunts me to this day.

"When all the horses are paid for, you can send the registration (ownership) papers to me."

I must have turned three shades of purple.

I had to wait until the horses were paid in full before I released the registrations? **I HAD RELEASED THEM ALL!** Nobody had told me differently.

The great news is that not even one single person was delinquent in paying for their purchases.

I shudder to think what would have happened in the same situation 10 years later.

I waited day by day worrying about the unpaid bills. By day 17, all the bills were collected.

Thus marked my first year as a general manager.

Have a question for The Curmudgeon?

Reach him by email at: hofmurray@aol.com

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HARNESS RACING UPDATE

About Harness Racing Update

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Production: Brian Fuller

Graphic Design, Ads & Placement: Lisa Bihuniak

Advertising Sales: Wilma Van Vaerenbergh | [contact for ad sales/questions](#)

Results & Stats Editor: Lisa Duong

Founder: Bill Finley

Contributors: Claus Andersen, Garnet Barnsdale, Tim Bojarski, Jerry Connors, Frank Coto, The Curmudgeon, Paul Delean, Bill Finley, Joe FitzGerald, Dean Gillette, Ron Gurfein, Thomas Hedlund, Bill Heller, Bob Heyden, Dean Hoffman, Victoria Howard, Melissa Keith, Dave Landry, Lauren Lee, Dave Little, Chris Lomon, David Mattia, Trey Nosrac, Tom Pedulla, Andrea Pietrzak, James Platz, Bob Roberts, Sandra Snyder, Brett Sturman, Jay Wolf

Get in touch with HRU

PO Box 230 | Millwood, NY | 10546 | Telephone: (226) 374-9999

Editor/News Stories: editor@harnessracingupdate.com

Advertising: advertising@harnessracingupdate.com

Customer Service: customerservice@harnessracingupdate.com

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My buzzworthy favorite five

by Garnet Barnsdale

Everyone has their favorite races, but, seeing as this column is “Buzzworthy” I thought about the top five races that I have seen live that created a buzz for any number of reasons.

Topping the list is the 2015 Little Brown Jug, won in stunning fashion by indefatigable Wiggle It Jiggleit. To this day, I consider myself lucky to have been asked by HRU’s Editor at the time, Bill Finley, to cover this historic event.

[You can read my account of WIJ’s courageous win here.](#)

What made this race stand out was WIJ’s sheer will and refusal to lose despite looking beaten as they turned for home. It’s rare to see a horse come again after having a first-over bid repelled in any race at the Delaware, OH 1/2-mile oval. To do it in the iconic Jug was nothing short of special.

All the way down the lane, I had my phone’s camera trained on the leaders trying to capture a photo of the finish, and even through that smaller view I could see that race leader Lost For Words widened his advantage out to about a length and appeared an almost sure winner as the duo turned for home. When they hit the wire in unison and I could see that WIJ had poked his nose in front just in time, I

stood stunned. All I could ask rhetorically to Jug publicity director Jay Wolf was: “Did we just witness the greatest race ever?” To this day, this race still creates a buzz any time it is mentioned, and it would be hard to convince me that we didn’t watch the greatest race ever.

Number two on my list is the 2011 Breeders Crown Open Trot, won by the great Canadian trotter San Pail on his home turf at Woodbine Racetrack. What made this race buzzworthy was the international flavor provided by European standouts Rapide Lebel and Commander Crowe. But for me — at the time a devoted member of the San Pail Posse — this race always sticks out in my memory because of the vocal support the Posse brought to the event. You won’t find any harness race that was contested at Woodbine that had a louder crowd, cheering for their hero from start-to-finish. Have a listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8A36kzf21s>

Two other details stick out in my mind: the slick move by driver Randy Waples to make the split-second decision to drive on from between horses early which left Rapide Lebel hung the mile, and track announcer Ken Middleton’s call at the wire of: “San Pail...U DA MAN!” Amongst a throng of more than 300 in the winner’s circle following the iconic win I found Waples and commented on his early race tactics. “If I don’t make that move, I don’t think I win,” he said matter-of-factly. Considering the huge mile trotted by Rapide Lebel uncovered on the rim, I imagine many might agree.

Race number three on my list is the 2015 Breeders Crown Open Pace won by the irrepressible Always B Miki, which was buzzworthy for a few reasons. Always B Miki was a personal favorite of mine and an easy horse to root for considering he battled back several times from injuries and was racing with some serious hardware in his left hind pastern which he fractured the year before in a stall accident. The Always A Virgin stallion out of the Artsplace mare Artstopper had also overcome an injury to his right hind leg in the spring of 2015.

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There was a steady downpour that made it hard to see the field from the 5th floor Woodbine Racetrack press box, but through the raindrops that were continuously hitting the widow, I could see Always B Miki pull away from his foes with authority, pacing a :26.2 final quarter in less than ideal conditions to win the Breeders Crown Open Pace in 1:49.2. What made this gutsy win more buzzworthy was the milestones it set for Hall of Famers trainer Jimmy Takter and driver David Miller. This was the sixth Breeders Crown final win on the night for Takter and fifth for Miller, both Breeders Crown records for finals wins in one year.

"It's amazing the horse overcame all the obstacles he faced," Miller said in the winner's circle. "And to perform the way he did, you can't say enough about him."

Fourth on my list is the great Cam Fella's farewell race at Greenwood Raceway. To fully understand the buzz around this race you would need to have lived through it and felt the atmosphere at the lakeside 5/8ths mile oval. This was December, 1983 in Toronto. There were no Raptors and the Blue Jays weren't playing and even when they were, they hadn't been very good to that point. So the local sporting fabric was dominated by the Maple Leafs, but horse racing was still a big part of the scene. Cam was as close to a household name as there was in Canadian racing having been named Horse of the Year in North America the previous year, and the fans showed up to see their equine hero off to stud duty, fully expecting to see him easily record a 28th consecutive win to end his storied career.

Cam and regular driver Pat Crowe didn't disappoint the gathered throng and when Cam was paraded down the Greenwood stretch following the winner's circle presentation with a special tune playing that had been written specifically

for him and the occasion, my eyes filled with tears. I wasn't alone. That's what Cam Fella meant to us.

The final race on my list was also contested at Greenwood Raceway and it was thought at the time to be the sendoff race for arguably the sport's greatest pacer of all time, Niatross. The event was widely publicized and well received. When you consider that a crowd of 15,744 braved 21 degree Fahrenheit December weather to watch the great son of Albatross become the first harness horse in history to go over the \$2 million mark in earnings, you start to understand his popularity. The bettors also broke five track betting records and set a Canadian record for the overall handle. The Greenwood crowd wagered \$1,775,732, eclipsing the track mark by some \$200,000 and the former Canadian mark held by Montreal's Blue Bonnet's Raceway. A crowd there had wagered \$1,742,514 the day of that year's Prix d'Ete — at which Niatross set the all-time Canadian record for one mile of 1:53.4.

Ontario Jockey Club open pacer stalwarts Banker Fretz, Armbro Turk, Baron Reve, Aileens Tour and Holland were no match for the great champion who was steered to a 1:58.4 score by regular driver Clint Galbraith. At the wire, Greenwood announcer Earl Lennox bellowed: "It's Niatross, Niatross, Niatross," perhaps playing off the program cover that had that design. It didn't matter that Niatross would race again at Pompano Park later in December. The buzz generated by the first harness horse to break the 1:50 barrier is remembered by anyone who was there.

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HOLLYWOOD'S HITS



with BOB HEYDEN

O'Donnell's 22 top speedsters

by Bob Heyden

Bill O'Donnell became the first driver in Meadowlands history to drive 20 different horses to a 1:55 or better victory. In fact, he drove 22 horses to a sub-1:55 victory at the Big M.

1. **Ironstone Fella** - June 4 1981 1:55 \$25,000 open
2. **Midas Almahurst** - July 10, 1981 1:54.3 NW \$15,000
3. **Computer** - July 10, 1981 1:54.1 Meadowlands Pace elimination
4. **Genghis Khan** - May 20, 1982 1:53.1 World Cup; June 17, 1982 1:52.4 Alfred E. Driscoll (Track record); June 24, 1982 1:54.3 Alfred E. Driscoll; July 1, 1982, 1:53.4 Driscoll final \$164,000; July 9, 1982 1:53.4 invitational; July 16, 1982 1:54.2 invitational; July 24, 1982 1:53.4 invitational; Aug. 8, 1982 1:53 U S Pacing Championship; Aug. 13, 1982 1:51.4 world record invitational
5. **Lemrac** - June 18, 1982 1:54.3 4-5 YO open
6. **Muckalee Strike** - June 25, 1982 1:54.4 4-5 YO open
7. **Bo Scots Fella** - June 26, 1982 1:54.2 NW \$25,000
8. **Hilarion** - July 9, 1982 1:54.3 Meadowlands Pace elim
9. **Lemrac** - July 16, 1982 1:54 4-5 YO open
10. **Cunning Bunny** - May 23, 1983 1:54.4 NJSS \$100,000; June 25, 1983 1:55 3YO filly pace
11. **Slipstream** - May 28, 1983 1:54.4 WO \$15,000
12. **Jamuga** - May 28, 1983 1:55 Jersey Cup
13. **Ivan Hanover** - June 2, 1983 1:54.4 4 YO open
14. **Kelly Lobell** - June 9, 1983 1:54.4 Driscoll
15. **Allwin Steady** - June 24, 1983 1:54.4 NJ Classic elim; July 1, 1983 1:54.4 NJ Classic final \$537,000; Aug. 6, 1983 3YO open
16. **Champagne Happy** - July 2, 1983 1:55 NW \$7,000
17. **Elitist** - July 8, 1983 1:54.3 NW \$11,500
18. **Native Hap** - July 14, 1983 1:54.2 claiming \$25,000



USTA

"The Magic Man" Bill O'Donnell.

19. **Impressive Lad** - July 16, 1983 1:54.4 \$20,000 claiming handicap
20. **Raffi** - July 16, 1983 1:54.2 3YO open
21. **Savvy Almahurst** - April 20, 1984 1:54.1 4YO open
22. **Templar** - May 5, 1984 1:55 NW \$13,000

Wondering why he was called the Magic Man?

Four straight years O'Donnell drove to following pacing colts at age 2:

1984 — Nihilator winner of the richest contest ever, the \$2,161,000 Woodrow Wilson.

1985 — Barberry Spur winner of the first of two million-dollar Governor's Cups.

1986 — Redskin winner of the second of two million-dollar Governor's Cups and still the single season richest 2-year-old ever regardless of gait 33 years later at \$1.407 million in 1986 for owner trainer Jerry Smith.

1987 — Camtastic only he, Niatross and Captaintreacherous were freshman voted Pacer of the Year.

Talk about bad luck

How about Camtastic in 1987? He was the 2-Year-Old Pacing Colt of the Year and the Pacer of the Year in 1987. Despite the fact that he was scratched sick in the \$1,422,000 Woodrow Wilson. That was the year they decided to go two weeks between the elim and final. Camtastic had won his elim by two and three quarter lengths in 1:55 on Aug. 1. Then, just to keep sharp, he won a qualifier on Aug. 7 going away. Then, with the extra week, he scratched sick from the final won by Even Odds. Bob Bencal trained the special colt for Bob Boni and Bill O'Donnell drove.

Slapstick made amends

From the first crop of B Gs Bunny, Slapstick entered the sport's very first \$2 million race – the 1980 Woodrow Wilson (\$2,011,000) undefeated and the 4-5 betting choice for Jack Parker, Jr. and trainer Lee Broglio. He finished fifth. The race was won by Land Grant.

But when his first crop was ready to race, his son Grade One made the \$1,344,000 final of the Wilson in 1985. Ray Remmen drove the elimination winner who was totally dismissed for the final at 49-1. He won it and paid \$100.60 to win. That victory represented the largest ever win for Remmen during his Hall of Fame career.

How fitting

I came across a 1985 Liberty Bell program from their last year of operation. Carmine Fusco had been driving a horse there in July three times, including one win at 6-1 odds. The name? Tribute.

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Foal of the Week

Raymond Lance photo

This filly, from the first crop of Stay Hungry, was foaled on March 10 at Heritage Hill Farm in Ohio. She is out of Thesantafe Express and owned by Edward De Rosa of Carlsbad, CA. It is the fifth foal for Thesantafe Express, a daughter of Western Hanover out of Sundowner Lilly that

earned \$112,010 at the races. The mare's Bettors Delight colt Santafe's Coach has earned \$136,598 to date and sports a mark of 1:49.3.

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BREAKING STRIDE

with TREY NOSRAC

Green Lighting

by Trey Nosrac

A few weeks ago, before the world changed, my friend slid into the passenger seat of the Lexus and said, “One thing that I find truly great about your sport is that anyone can be an independent contractor. You don’t need permission to take a shot on the racetrack. Sure it’s a longshot, but in the real world of creative endeavors, and plenty of other worlds, the little guy never gets on the track.”

I nodded and agreed, “I’m CEO of Trey Inc. Every time I buy a yearling or try to raise a yearling to sell, even when I gamble on the horses, I call the shots. Despite my obvious fiscal debacles, each independent enterprise is very liberating.”

He nods, “In the real world, if you write a book, a screenplay, or paint a masterpiece, your odds are astronomically high of even getting a legitimate agent. Without an agent, getting the ear or the eye of an organization, or finding funding is extremely difficult. For the last 10 years, I worked in content at a massive conglomerate. I crushed dreams. My job often involved giving thumbs down on what I know were years of effort.”

“Dream crusher. No wonder you retired early.”

He tapped an index finger on his phone and then said, “I emailed you a file.”

I heard the ding in the cupholder as the file slipped into my phone. “File about what?” I asked.

“A pitch from a few years ago. I believe you will find it interesting. About half of the scenes involve harness racing from 50 years ago.”

“C’mon man. Seriously. Someone pitched a movie with harness racing?”

“Harness racing was one of several threads, and the pitch was for a series, not a movie.”

“Will it ever get made?”

He shrugged, “It has a faint heartbeat, but it’s swimming

upstream. Once upon a time, a quirky project like this might be greenlighted and sent out to create an audience. These days, they start with the market and create products to fit. The decisions are primarily about analytics. The people who pitched this did not have enough data, and data is king.”

“Kinda takes the fun out of things.”

“Social research and data mining are deadly. You watch a TV show, listen to music, tune into your news, choose a politician. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you get what they know you want, and they keep feeding you what you want. We are turning into a world of thousands of pre-packaged silos.”

I tapped my phone, “Give me a sneak preview.”

“The lead character is an old man who is suffering from Alzheimer’s. During his lucid periods, he reflects on his life and adventures to a young couple who visit him.”

“Alzheimer’s? Phew, that’s a rough subject for entertainment.”

“The project is historical fiction, about a man who spent his life with horses and on the racing circuit.”

“What did the people with the juice think about it?”

“We liked the idea that it was not one and done. Each chapter was a stand-alone with plenty of angles for audiences, romance with the modern couple, struggles of the Alzheimer’s patient, sports, horses, and history. There were a lot of footholds. The racetrack patient telling his recollections to the visiting couple was the entrance to each new story.”

I said, “Sounds as though the Alzheimer’s mind acts as Harry Potter’s Train to Hogwarts, or the DeLorean in Back to the Future, or the closet that leads to Narnia.”

“Whoa, you know your movies. Some episodes are in the present, in real-time. Others are when the patient describes his past adventures. One of the ideas was that the flashbacks appear in black and white.”

“How does it work? How does a big company decide if a script is a go or a no go?”

“A long road. You may be able to enter into the horse racing business tomorrow, but my world is an insular fortress. Since this project arrived at my level, it already had a few thumbs up along the way. Our legal department had a hold on the rights. I was part of a panel of four who sat in on a table reading.”

“How do you work? Ouija board?”

“The structure is flexible. We usually begin with a short introduction from the agent. Then, using professional actors, we listen to readings of scenes. We can have side chats

between scenes. We can take home summaries, and re-read the script. We can listen to the audio playback on files like I just sent you. Eventually, we each submit a checklist. A high enough score will send it to analytics."

I sighed, "Compare this to my last project. I got a free sales catalog, borrowed money, drove to Harrisburg, and raised my hand. Bingo. Greenlighted."

He said, "The file I sent you has a script, some photos, and an audio file. Different people absorb things differently. Some people like reading scripts, others don't. If you don't want to read a movie script, you can listen to the scenes on your phone or I pad. I usually do both at the same time."

Hoofprints in Fog

Writer – Theodore Nelson

Agent – Richard Murray (MCA)

Agency – Seven Seas Production Association

6/12/2016

11 AM - Cranberry Pod, Third Floor, Main Campus

Readers; John Buser, Cat Kenney, Michael Frye

*Originally written as a theatrical play. DJ Mortenson of MCA suggests the Alzheimer's segments beginning with

scene 2 filmed dramatically as a segue to historical events.

SCENE 1

Mandy and Ryan, an unmarried couple in their twenties, reside in the suburbs of Detroit. Ryan is a pharmacist, pleasant looking, and reflective. Despite growing up in a dysfunctional family, he has made good choices. Mandy, attractive, is constantly checking her cell phone. She is immature, moody, and currently working as a beautician assistant. She is pushing Ryan to allow her to move into his apartment. Ryan is resisting.

It is late afternoon in a small room in the Alzheimer's wing of an assisted living facility. Ryan sits in one of two matching green plastic chairs, a small table between them. Their chairs pinch inwards and face a hospital bed. In the bed is a sleeping patient. The frail patient, a former horse trainer, is levered to an angle halfway between laying and sitting.

Next week – Scene 1

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Ontario Racing announces COVID-19 aid package for horsepeople

Ontario Racing announced Friday financial support in line with existing race cancellation practices aimed at the province's standardbred horsepeople in light of the COVID-19 virus pandemic which has resulted in the cancellation of live standardbred horse racing in Ontario.

Financial relief, a total of \$300 per horse, is being offered to those involved with standardbred racehorses who were in-to-race at operational racetracks from March 19 to March 24.

"These funds are to assist owners in efforts to pay horse racing bills, specifically their trainer expenses, who must in turn pay their staff, including grooms and others," said John Hayes, independent chair, Ontario Racing. "Via our task force, we will continue to discuss with government the further financial support that might be available to Ontario horsepeople."

In order to facilitate payments that may be available to standardbred horsepeople through this program and beyond, Ontario Racing is reminding standardbred horsepeople to submit the names of all Ontario-based standardbred horses, 3-year-olds and up, in your care, currently in training to race in April 2020. Trainer name, horse name, owner(s) name, and training centre name, must also be included.

Details can be emailed or faxed to the Central Ontario Standardbred Association (COSA): cathy@cosaonline.org or 905-854-2644.

For transparency, the names of all standardbred horses and trainers will be posted on the Ontario Racing (ontarioracing.com) website and its affiliated social media channels.

The industry task force is made up of a cross section of participants in the industry well-versed in the intricacies and

ramifications of the sport's shutdown in Ontario.

Ontario Racing board members John Hayes (independent chair), Sue Leslie (thoroughbred horsepeople), Bill O'Donnell (standardbred horsepeople), Jessica Buckley (premier standardbred tracks), Ian Fleming (grassroots standardbred tracks), Bob Broadstock (quarter horse horsepeople and breeders), plus Ontario Racing management members Jonathan Zammit and Katherine Curry, comprise the group.

The task force is committed to keeping the industry informed of developments with respect to financial relief as they take place.

Visit ontarioracing.com for further updates from the Ontario Racing task force, and comprehensive coverage of horse racing in Ontario.

—*Ontario Racing*

Financial relief for Ohio horsemen

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association and Ohio Harness Horsemen's Health Insurance (O.H.H.H.I.T.) Trustees as administrators of the Harness Horsemen's Health Insurance Trust would like to announce financial relief for all Harness Horsemen's Health Insurance Plan Participants.

As-of the date of the first order cancelling racing (March 20, 2020), each Self-Pay Plan Participant will automatically receive a credit for two months of health insurance plan premiums at their existing coverage level.

For example, if a horseman has paid their April premium costs for family coverage, they will receive a credit for their May and June family coverage premiums. If the April family coverage premium has not been paid, the credit will apply to family coverage for their April and May premium costs. There is no need to do anything to receive the credit. It will automatically be applied to all self-pay coverage classes.

Note that if there are changes in coverage to a higher level of coverage (i.e., single to family coverage) during the credit time-period, the credit for the lower level of coverage will apply and the difference between the higher and lower premium cost will have to be paid.

In addition, during this time, existing Breeding Farm Employees and Racetrack Grooms that are employed and active in the Plan, will continue to receive their premium costs covered. Separation from any covered employer will be handled as-per the Plan's rules.

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association will provide updates regarding financial relief initiatives as they take place via www.ohha.com and social media outlets.

For immediate updates, please subscribe to the OHHA Emergency and Informational Text Blast system by texting "OHHA" to 1-888-808-1507.

—*Frank Fraas / outreach and PR coordinator Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association*

Safety of SRF horses affected by pandemic; help desperately needed

Standardbred Retirement Foundation,(SRF) has decided to cancel, not postpone, three of its very impactful fundraisers. It is also being slammed by the need for Americans to quarantine, keeping adopters away during the busiest time of the year for finding homes. More than 400 trotters and pacers are under the SRF's expense and care. What this means is that there will be no funds to feed every one of its horses. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

SRF desperately needs to reduce its expenses and the number of horses *now*.It has already reduced staffing by 80 per cent. This extremely productive, 31-year-old organization does not receive any regular funds from any source. Its support comes primarily from people who care about this beautiful and majestic animal that has given so much.

The following is needed as the first effort to be able to keep all 403 horses fed and to avoid drastic action:

- 1.SRF is asking for standardbred farms, and breeders with pasture to take in a one horse or more. It can be permanent or temporary.
- 2.It seeks pleasure farm owners who have room to help by either providing a home, foster home, or pasture. Please can you squeeze one in for any period of time.
- 3.Use of farms with grassy pasture for horses to graze help with the cost of feeding.
- 4.Foster homes are such a huge help. SRF has everything set up on the website for those who can help with foster homes. This is the perfect time to be a foster, the weather is good, and you can quarantine at your own farm.

Foster a horse

- 5.Horse sponsorship, this will keep a horse with SRF fed during this crisis; it can be in any amount for any period of time.

Sponsor a horse

6. Tax-deductible donations will make it possible to get through this crisis, feed the horses and provide emergency care, if needed.

Donate

7. More than 200 standardbreds are living out their lives with SRF, many had sizable earnings in the past, have lost their adopted homes, and are now considered too old to live a life under saddle in a new home. SRF is requesting all racing owners and breeders whose horses the non-profit is helping, to help SRF now by sponsoring their horse, even if it was years ago that their horse came into the program. Make a donation so care can continue.

8. To get this accomplished, SRF asks all to share its needs and encourage others to help.

Some horses just need a patch of grass, feed and general care, others require a little extra TLC, some are on the rebound from emaciated conditions and need more attention, some are already riding, others need a little training. Their ages range from 3 to aged, are mares and geldings, and are located in about 12 different states. They all have good brains, and great manners. Here is a [link](#) to a list of the horses in need, horses are being added until the list is complete.

These are desperate times that could never have been predicted. Every one of these horses is in imminent danger of SRF having to take other measures to get this manageable and must count on good people to reach out to help. On average, the cost per day just to feed the herd is approximately \$4,000.

The link below provides information on adoption, fostering, sponsoring, and how to make a tax-deductible donation to help these horses. Please email to offer help, calls are being taken at 609-738-3255, but responses may be slow so please be patient.

To adopt, foster, sponsor, or make a tax-deductible donation please go to AdoptaHorse.org, for questions please email SRFHorsesandkids@gmail.com, or call 609 738 3255. This an EMERGENCY.

— *Standardbred Retirement Foundation*

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To send us your feedback!



30 nominated to \$200,000 Prix d'Ete

A total of 30 4-year-old pacers have nominated to the \$200,000 Prix d'Ete at the Hippodrome 3R on Sunday, Aug. 23.

The Prix d'Ete, once the premier pacing event in all of Canada, will feature the top eight seasonal money winning entrants in the final and for the first time the race will also feature a \$50,000 consolation race on the same day for entrants that do not make it in the final.

Of the 30 horses nominated, five horses are in the top nine money winning three-year-olds in North America during 2019.

Headlining the list is Crawford Farm's American Mercury. The son of American Ideal has won \$708,000 and his major victory last season was in the \$500,000 Messenger Stake where he defeated the 2019 3YO Pacing Colt of the Year, Bettor's Wish.

Also nominated is \$660,000 winner Dancin Lou. This exceptional son of Sweet Lou captured last year's \$600,000 Breeders Crown, also defeating Bettor's Wish in the final.

Other standout horses nominated include \$624,000 winner Century Farroh, winner of the Jenna's Beach Boy, Simcoe and numerous Ontario Sire Stakes in 2019 and \$682,000 Meadowlands Pace winner, Best In Show, who has life earnings of \$572,000. Best In Show is by Bettor's Delight from the world champion mare, Put On A Show, and holds the fastest mark in the field at 1:48.

Another \$500,000 winner from last season is Hickfromfrenchlick. This son of So Surreal was the New York Sire Stakes Champion in 2019, winning 11 of his 15 starts in 2019 and is named after basketball star Larry Bird of French Link, Indiana. Rounding out the top money winners are Proof, who has earned \$476,000 for Adam Bowden's Diamond Creek Racing and \$404,000 winner, Blood Money, for trainer Nancy Takter.

Quebec owned and trained nominees include Captain Malicious and Legion Seelster.

Owners and trainers of a horse nominated to the Prix d'Ete must remember that they must also make the April 15 second payment of \$1,000 in order to remain eligible to the race.

For more information, visit www.hippodrome3R.ca.

— *Quebec Jockey Club*

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Stop bashing The Guru

Readers, enough of the Ron Gurfein bashing for protecting this guy or that guy who may or may not have been accused of cheating.

Gurfein has repeatedly made it clear that he abhors cheaters and that he is only urging due process for the accused, not supporting their alleged nefarious activity.

I have never met or spoken to Ron so have no personal reason for defending him. I only ask that the bashers go back and review his submissions and hopefully it will become clear that Ron, in keeping with the underpinnings of the US justice system, is supporting a policy of "innocent until proven guilty."

—Dave Lazar / Wayne, NJ

Love to know the backstory on FBI indictments

Thanks for giving me a voice. I firmly believe that harness racing's last best chance for survival is now in the hands of the FBI. The most important factor now is to keep "The Foot on The Gas Pedal". Obviously there is a back story of how we got to the indictments. I'd be extremely interested to learn how all the investigatory work got triggered and actions that were undertaken leading up to the indictments. There are, I'm sure, methods the FBI would like to keep private but I have to believe there are details they could share to act as deterrents which would give the bad guys pause in the future. When you knowingly speed down the highway you're aware that you might get ticketed. You also know that there might be a policeman with a radar gun in a place you might not see, that's a deterrent. So with only a little disclosed information the authorities have gotten you to adhere to the rules.

—David Perry / Dearborn, MI

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Condolences and appreciation

I know that I speak for our harness racing community sending our deepest and heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of our colleagues felled by this disease. Carmine, Vinny and John spent their careers contributing to our sport and supported industry efforts to address the integrity issues facing us today. With that in mind we must move forward.

A special note of thanks is necessary to the horsemen braving the pandemic to care for our equine athletes.

Burn Down the Mission if we are to stay alive.

Recall – this time do it right

Elton John's lyric has never been more apropos in defining the sad state of affairs we call American horse racing and what must be done to breathe life into a business we have worked so hard to destroy.

The recent independent investigations culminating in some 30 indictments are proof positive of what we have known and attempted to correct for decades: **Our regulatory business model is an abject failure.**

The arrest of these individuals most with long-term questionable reputations in concert with the devastating fall-out from the corona virus have accomplished what we have been incapable of doing for decades. The bad news... the horsemen and veterinarians indicted for manufacturing and administering performance enhancing drugs and designer compounds have brought horse racing to its knees.

The good news... these two events have offered us an opportunity that we would never have accomplished on our own.

An opportunity to start over and do it right.

The Horse Racing Integrity Act that will establish one entity to address inconsistent regulation, drug testing and penalties is well supported in Washington but will not be available for at least 18 months. A cure for this crisis without question is required immediately if we are to rebrand our business and recoup our public perception.

These horsemen and veterinarians along with others so inclined use Erythropoietin (EPO), Eprex, Aranesp or Mercera, all fortify a horse's blood. These can be administered anywhere from 48 to 12 hours out from post time. There are clandestine labs that concoct designer compounds that mimic established blood enhancers and pain killers. Additionally, there are equine, bovine and sheep growth hormones readily available. These medications are all difficult if not impossible to detect in post-race testing as

proven in the recent indictments. Horse racing depends too much on testing. Research and funding are a must, albeit jurisdictions are struggling to pay for their existing testing programs.

Tediously throwing words at our defective integrity issues without resolution, our *modus operandi* is no longer an option. The patch and pray approach to curtail the erosion of our integrity and public persona has historically failed. We are on a path toward irrelevance.

The miscreants willing to abuse a horse to cash a check need to be rooted out of horse racing, a task assigned by law to the racing commissions. These agencies have not met their obligation to fortify the public's appreciation and faith in our sport. Regrettably most commissioners are political appointments with little if any experience and as most politicians will admit the importance of perceived meaningful action is paramount versus complete appropriate resolution. Integrity and transparency are not measured attributes. They should be key tenets in a commissions culture. This inherent disfunction creates a difficult climate for Presiding Judges and Stewards never aware of when their commission support will be compromised by irrelevant factors. Recent integrity issues in Pennsylvania, California and New York manifest problematic decisions by regulators. Suspicious adjudications formulated behind closed doors along with conflict of interest issues cast a long shadow on any regulatory agency.

It should be noted that there are many commissioners diligent about their responsibility to regulate and promote racing. Albeit too many mortal sins occur inflicting irreparable damage that if not halted will ensure racing's demise.

There are major obstacles to conquer in rebuilding horse racing. The fractious nature of our industry with thirty plus jurisdictions (and rule books) and many more individual agendas make it impossible to adopt let alone implement a national policy on any issue.

The racetrack owners court tested "Right of Exclusion" is sacrosanct and is the most powerful tool we have. If implemented, it will have an immediate positive impact on our integrity and public perception. I initiated the program in 2006. Each horseman and owner must be approved by management to be granted the privilege of participating at the racetrack. The individual's background and record are independently reviewed and with the data in hand the track owners decide if it is in their best business interest for an individual to participate at their facility. If not approved she or he receives a letter stating that it has been determined

that is not in the best business interest of "Pegasus Downs" for the individual to participate at that facility. The exclusion also applies to any agent acting on their behalf. Due diligence must ensure that excluded individuals are not utilizing other trainers to circumvent a suspension or the track's decision. There can be no collusion between individual racetrack owners and state regulators, and **the program must be applied equitably.**

When approved a racetrack/stable application must be submitted and signed by both the individual and a track representative. The stable application will specify the racetrack policies. The signatures ensure that the individual is aware of and will abide by all policies. The commissions' actions will be independent of racetrack exclusions. The program is not going to replace the commissions but will utilize a right that commissioners do not have. Track owners and regulators share a common goal of maintaining a level playing field on the racetrack. They just have different equipment in their tack rooms and experienced racetrack management.

Recent FBI indictments indicate that our present regulating model is flawed beyond repair. This application program works, I have implemented it at several racetracks.

If we are interested in euthanizing horseracing, we can stay the course.

If salvation is the choice, we have our work cut out for us and little time to succeed.

—Art Gray / West Seneca NY

Let this be the last year we race 2-year-olds

The public perception of horse racing is that racing at the age of 2 is inhumane whether you agree or not. That said the harness and race horse industry should be open to the idea of this being the last year we race 2-year-olds.

Here is what I propose:

1. If possible, we race as much of this year's stakes season at 2 and 3.
2. Those same horses next year could then have a stake season for both 3- and 4-year-olds. An example would be in the state of Ohio they could have 3- and 4-year-old fair racing. State allocated money for stakes and breeder rewards has to be used.
3. We would then move all yearling (now 2yo) sales to around March/April 2021 since they are going to likely be way down in prices. Between the loss of money earned by

racing and the loss of money by owners in investments it almost guarantees this. Plus, buyers will not have the same need for 179 investment tax deductions this year making it an even more terrible year from the point of sales.

4. By moving to around April the breeders and new owners will share the cost of extra turnout time. From that point we then go with 3- and a 4-year-old stake program similar to what we have now but one year later.

What would we gain?

Sounder racehorses obviously. This helps in so many ways:

It allows for more yearling (now 2yo) horses to make it to the track and potentially make money increasing their value.

It allows horses to last longer for owners and not break down, increasing their value.

It allows for more horses for racetracks to fill their race cards in the future and the allowance of horses being five when stake season is over instead of four where many are not competitive with older horses. Again, it increases racehorse value. If you don't think so, look at Down Under horses.

It would produce a short term increase in yearling (now 2yo in 2021) sale prices as the economy hopefully improves.

It would produce a long-term increase in future 2-year-old sale prices as owners will increase over time. Horses would race longer and likely have more value.

It would provide very important help to the public perception of our sport going forward which is sorely needed if we want to survive as industry.

This crisis has given us not only an unprecedented health and economic crisis it gives us an opportunity to make something good from it for everyone involved in harness racing.

—*Dr. Adam Friedland / New York, NY*

Stakes payments

I would like to address the different approaches that have been taken both north and south of the border in relation to the April stake payments. If this were a debate I could easily argue either side and have valid arguments for both. Everyone knows when they buy yearlings the risks that are involved and the chance for success is small. Even if just our industry had hardships I would push that the April payments should go on as planned. But this time is different. Our two countries are in a state of panic and disarray. Our economies are at a virtual standstill. While it's true that many of the

yearlings purchased are by people that could afford to make them, there are still many purchased in groups where each "pony" up a small amount to have a shot at the dream. But, unfortunately, this dream has become a nightmare very quickly. Also, the legal argument doesn't hold up since it's very hard to conceive that in these times people would sue so they have to pay more, and especially for 2-year-olds, not knowing if they have a horse that will even be good enough to enter.

I propose a hybrid where we suspend the 2-year-old payments but go forward with the 3-year-old and aged since at least in that situation people have an idea what they have. The main point I will make is that if the plan to make April payments as scheduled comes to fruition, many of the races will be less competitive since there will be horses dropping out that in normal times would have stayed eligible and this fall at the sales we will be saying goodbye to some of the smaller purchasers that still enjoyed our game chasing their dream.

—*Eric Cherry / Boca Raton, FL*

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