

Sunday, April 12, 2020

When racing returns, a new normal would be a welcome change

by Brett Sturman

BETWEEN THE LINES



with **BRETT STURMAN**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, all the talk these days is that of a “new normal” in our daily lives. I, for one, am skeptical and would be reluctant to embrace whatever a new normal is supposed to mean, but in terms of harness racing it’s a different matter. If a new normal in harness racing means a leveling of the playing field for when horses return to the track, that would undeniably be a good thing.

On March 9, the industry was rocked by the announcement of prominent harness racing trainers as the subject of federal indictments for among other things, doping. Then, just one day later on March 10, Yonkers announced the cancellation of their race cards and immediately thereafter the dominos began to fall for all other tracks to the point now where there is no racing for an indefinite period of time. After these two events, the racing landscape will look much different for both horsepeople and bettors alike whenever racing does resume.

The one track that will be transformed entirely will be Freehold. Over the past few years, Nick Surick has turned Freehold into a mockery, making the track his own personal playground. At the track which typically features smaller

In today's HRU

Former USTA president Phil Langley dead at 83	page 10
Jimmy Freight's book now full and closed	page 11
Star trotters begin to race in Sweden	page 13
Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020	page 14
Answering nine questions	page 24
Hoofprints in Fog - Scene 2	page 26
Meadowlands hopes for May 1 return to racing	page 28



Photo: Dave Landry

The best is yet to come...

SUNSHINE BEACH
p, 2, 1:52.1s, 3, 1:47.4f, | (\$977,438)

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- SUNNY DEE**
p, 3, 1:49.4s -'19 (\$601,617)
- TEMAGAMI SEELSTER**
p, 2, 1:52s -'19 (\$180,297)
- MOONSHINE KISSES**
p, 3, 1:50s -'19 (\$117,659)
- OCEAN WIND**
p, 2, 1:56.3f, 3, 1:54.2f -'19 (\$112,409)
- DENALI SEELSTER**
p, 2, 1:52.3s -'19 (\$108,820)

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named trainers and slower horses, Surick has compiled 214 wins since January of last year. How big a number is that? The next closest trainer after Surick has just 31 wins. With Surick out of the picture, it'll be a completely different ballgame at Freehold. Other trainers will actually have a chance now, and bettors won't have to pick between playing Surick's 2-5 entry in an optional \$6,000 claimer or sitting out the race. I'd expect that handle should improve.

At Yonkers, two of the top three trainers since Jan. 1, 2019 certainly won't be racing at the Hilltop when racing resumes and in all likelihood will never race there again, period. In that time period, Rene Allard and Richard Banca amassed 194 wins and 188 wins, respectively. They trailed only Scott Di Domenico by a narrow margin, while leading Ron Burke and Jennifer Bongiorno by more comfortable margins. Where will those combined 382 wins between the two of them get distributed to?

In Pennsylvania, Pocono and Chester will undoubtedly show a different composition of top trainers. Not only is Allard gone, but also gone is Chris Oakes who is perennially at the top of the Pocono trainer standings. Oakes sported a trainer UDR .437 at Pocono since January of last year which was only bested by – wait for it – 21-year-old family member Hunter Oakes who has a UDR of .452. If there's any integrity at all, there won't be an Oakes name in the program when racing starts back.

Those named in the indictments that won't be racing are just the beginning of how racing will be different. There are countless other trainers who will continue to race, but whose normal methods of operation will change. Just as bettors, race participants and anyone who even half follows harness racing had long assumed those named in the indictments were cheating to begin with, it's still widely assumed who the barns with an edge are. They're at every track – even the Meadowlands – and one would think that their operations will be scaled back not knowing if they are the current subject of wiretaps or if they will be the next to fall as federal investigators acquire more information from those subjects already facing trial.

When racing starts back, it'll initially be very difficult to lean on who the most bet-able trainers are because their records may not resemble their accustomed success based on changes in their methods. What else will make the races challenging to handicap aside from the barns of where the horses come from, are the horses themselves.


Bettors in harness racing are used to assessing a horse's form on a near week-to-week basis. If horses don't start racing again until the summer, three months or more may have passed since they last raced. Form from earlier in the year will be meaningless, and it will take at least a couple of starts for bettors to be able to gauge what type of condition a horse is returning in. The uncertainty of it all could lead to lower handle at first, but with everyone not having a solid idea of what to expect, it could make for a lot of unpredictable race payouts.

It'll be anyone's guess at first who the trainers are to bet and who the horses are to bet, and that is something harness racing hasn't seen for a long time. It will be a positive change.

Phoning it in...

I agree with Ray Schnittker's conclusion regarding the scrapping of qualifiers from Friday's Harness Racing Update ([full story here](#)), although for different reasons than what were stated.

Schnittker referenced the thoroughbreds where according to him, trainers can work a horse privately and call in the workout time. Most workout times are recorded more formally than that, but I agree with the question of how useful the time is anyway.



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Fuel Cell, 1:54.2f (\$306,453)
Utopia, 1:52.2s (\$270,280)
Mutinyonthebounty, 1:56f -'18 (\$230,385)
Frenchmen, 1:54.4f (\$219,112)
- Sire of **Mets Inn**, 1:56.4s (\$184,034), dam of **Met's Hall**, 3, 1:51.2 -'18 (\$1,295,306)

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In harness racing, the main idea of a qualifier to make sure a horse is fast enough to race at a track. The problem is that qualifying standards are about 50 years out of date. At the Meadowlands for example, the qualifying time for a 3-year-old pacer is 1:59. Does anyone really think that if not for qualifying, there would be 3-year-olds at the Meadowlands that can't break 1:59? It might be one thing to have a 2-year-old qualify in order to show that they are ready to compete in a race, but for proven horses that pace in 1:50 and trot in 1:52, what are they actually qualifying against?

It's similar from a handicapping standpoint. In theory it would be nice to see how fast a horse qualifies and use that information in handicapping a real race, but qualifying performances aren't always indicators of race performances. I've seen horses that qualify evenly in 1:55 and then go down the road first out in 1:50.

The time and cost associated with qualifying for both owners and trainers isn't worth it.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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29	30	31					29	30	31				

March							April						
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26	27	28	29	30	31		26	27	28	29	30		



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HRU Dream Trot

THE HARNESS RACING UPDATE DREAM TROT @ THE RED MILE, LEXINGTON KY

1	BEE A MAGICIAN	David Miller	6-1
2	HANNELORE HANOVER	Yannick Gingras	8-1
3	ATLANTA	Scott Zeron	8-1
4	SEBASTIAN K S	Åke Svanstedt	8-1
5	INTIMIDATE	Sylvain Filion	15-1
6	MUSCLE HILL	Brian Sears	3-1
7	MR MUSCLEMAN	John Campbell	10-1
8	GREENSHOE	TBA	6-1
9	CHAPTER SEVEN	Tim Tetrick	10-1
10	DONATO HANOVER	Ron Pierce	5-1

Field of Dreams - trotting edition

Carding a field of the greatest trotters to race in the last 20 years for the HRU Dream Trot... and handicapping who would win and how.

by Jerry Connors

Last week's HRU Dream Pace ([full story here](#)), a race among our selection of 10 top competitors of the last 20 years, certainly produced a classic, with Always B Miki and driver



Dave Landry

#2 Hannelore Hanover.

David Miller rallying to be up in the last strides over a game Somebeachsomewhere in 1:45.4, a clocking which is better than the current 1:46 world record.

Today, 10 of our greatest trotters of the last 20 years are gathered together to put on what should be an exciting, and perhaps another record-breaking, spectacle. We hope that you will enjoy this contest, and that it can both take away the sting of a delayed stakes season brought about by COVID-19, as well as ignite some fond memories, and perhaps even passionate and well-reasoned discussion.

Note: If you read last week's Dream Pace, you know the basics about how this race came about, and our methodology



Claus Andersen

#1 Bee A Magician.



Claus Andersen

#3 Atlanta.



Michael Lisa

#4 Sebastian K.

in putting the horses and drivers together and racing them. It bears repeating this week.

In the early 1970s, Bob Marks, then working as a writer/editor/handicapper in New York City, created a story called “The Race Of The Decade.” He evaluated the top horses of the 1960’s pacing free-for-all scene, picked eight to race over the half-miler in New York City, drew post positions – and then put them behind the gate and turned them loose, doing one of the earliest “simulations” based on their form, to guide him on how they would race. He said in the introduction, “I didn’t know who was going to win until the horses went under the wire.” (The winner of the Race Of The Decade was Cardigan Bay, who was always one of my favorites because we shared two characteristics: we were both foals of 1956.)

We used this idea in an early ‘90s column in *Hoof Beats* with horses of the preceding decade, and since we are now



New Image Media

#5 Intimidate.

faced with the unprecedented situation of working with our horses and not knowing how and when they will prove themselves on the racetrack, it seemed like a good idea to revive the idea – two *fast*-class races to keep us in mind of what we are going to achieve with those in training.

I remembered that it was difficult to limit the field for the one-decade race, and then HRU editor Dave Briggs said, “Make these races for the horses that have raced in the last two decades.” So, we widened our focus to include the top horses whose major accomplishments came within the last 20 years. It was about twice as hard to come down to the final fields, but we have done our best to come up with “the best of the best.”

Here’s the guiding principle we used in putting together the fields for these HRU Dream Races:

We picked the horses who, over a significant amount of time, showed that, on their best miles and without being in a crippling race position, they could win or be very close



Dave Landry

#6 Muscle Hill.



New Image Media

#7 Mr. Muscleman.



Dave Landry

#8 Greenshoe.

consistently with the very best horses in competition, both at that time and with champions of nearby years.

Many very good horses – Horses of the Year, world champions, rich earners – went under consideration, but eventually we had to bring it down to ten for each gait. If your favorite horse didn't make the field, we are sorry. If a horse with whom you were/are connected didn't make the field, we are doubly sorry. To be in consideration for this kind of race reflects of the quality of the final field – and of your horse's achievements.

(Remember, all of this is being done outside of a world of calendar time, where retired horses and horsepeople, and years of breed and equipment evolution, can be dealt with as wished).

In picking the "host racetracks," we decided that with this type of quality horseflesh, there would be a good chance of

**#9 Chapter Seven.**

Dave Landry

#10 Donato Hanover.

beating the existing world records – 1:46 on the pace, 1:48.4 on the trot – so we wanted ovals which have produced records in the past.

The key to a "fast oval" is the largeness and gradualness of the turns – horses do not have to slow down as much to negotiate them. So we picked what we think were the two fastest mile racetracks over this 20-year period: Springfield (IL) last week for the pace, and this week for the trot the historic Red Mile in Lexington KY, which is similarly configured to Springfield, with rounder turns than most mile ovals.

Post positions were drawn through a random number generator in the computer. (And it was just a piece of total randomness that finds the three mares in this field starting in posts one, two, and three – no "mares draw inside" condition exited). I did not give serious thought to how the race would be conducted until the posts were drawn, so

THE RED MILE		1	6	3	8	5	12	7	10	9	10
81o FAST		2	8	4	8	6	3	8	6	10	5

evenly-matched were these fields, and how position and luck might be so strong a determining factor.

Here is a brief introduction to the 10 champions who will compete in the HRU Dream Trot. Listed is the horse, year of foaling (and if a mare), any Dan Patch Awards the horse may have received, whether the horse set a world record (world champion), lifetime mark, and earnings.

If you start on lineage, it'd be hard to ever stop, so we won't start. Since there were ownership and trainership changes during the careers of some horses, and because it would be very difficult to determine who accomplished how much of their lifetime output for each "unit," the sponsorship is not listed – but most of you fans know who they are, and everybody associated with these horses know their greatness, and your contribution to it.

Because some drivers were the "regulars" behind a couple of horses, we explain how the driver in the Dream Race arrived in the sulky for today's race.

After much hard deliberation, Mission Brief is listed as AE1, and Market Share is listed as AE2.

#1 is BEE A MAGICIAN (2010, mare), the 2013 Horse of the Year at three and Older Trotting Mare champion in 2015, and a world champion. She earned \$4.1 million in her career, and took a mark of 1:51. Brian Sears was first call on several horses in this race and chose to drive Muscle Hill, so David Miller, who had success when he drove Bee A Magician, gets the call to handle her today.

#2 is HANNELORE HANOVER (2012, mare), the 2017 Horse of the Year, the 2016 Older Trotting Mare in 2016, and a world champion. She had a bankroll of \$3.1 million and a mark of 1:49.2. Yannick Gingras will be in his accustomed perch behind Hannelore Hanover.

#3 is ATLANTA (2015, mare), the 2018 Trotter of the Year at three and the 2019 Older Trotting Mare champion. She too was a world champion, with \$1.9 million in earnings and a mark of 1:49.1. Scott Zeron will be driving Atlanta.

#4 is SEBASTIAN K S (2006), who was the Older Trotting Male of the Year in 2014 and a world champion. He earned \$3 million combined on both sides of the Atlantic, and posted a 1:49 mile.

Åke Svanstedt will be in the sulky behind Sebastian K S.

#5 is INTIMIDATE (2009), an earner of \$1.4 million in a career which saw him take a mark of 1:51. (Author: Perhaps not among the first horses you'd think of, but possessor of perhaps the fastest "pass everybody" 3/16-mile burst in modern times – watch his two 2012 Breeders Crown races). Sylvain Filion gets the call to handle Intimidate in the Dream Trot.

#6 is MUSCLE HILL (2006), the 2009 Horse of the Year at three after winning divisional honors at two. He is a world champion, took a mark of 1:50.1, and earned \$3.3 million. Muscle Hill was Brian Sears's choice to drive among several in here.

#7 is MR MUSCLEMAN (2000), the 2005 Trotter of the Year after taking down divisional honors at both three and four. He earned \$3.6 million and took a mark of 1:51.1. Ron Pierce elected to go with Donato Hanover, so another Hall of Fame horseman having experience with the horse, John Campbell, will be driving here.

#8 is GREENSHOE (2016), the 2019 Trotter of the Year as a 3-year-old. He earned \$1.9 million while taking a mark of 1:49.4. This is one of several horses Brian Sears usually drove, and Greenshoe's team reached out – all the way across the Atlantic to Björn Goop, son of Olle and one of Europe's top drivers including taking this year's Prix d'Amerique with Face Time Bourbon.

#9 is CHAPTER SEVEN (2008), the Horse of the Year in 2012 as a 4-year-old and a world champion. He took a mark of 1:50.1 and earned \$2 million. Tim Tetrick will as usual be at the reins behind Chapter Seven.

#10 is DONATO HANOVER (2004), the Horse of the Year in 2007 as a 3-year-old after taking divisional honors at two, and a world champion. He put up a mark of 1:50.1, and earned \$3 million. Ron Pierce didn't go back to the mountains this week and chose Donato Hanover; we're sorry his post luck hasn't changed.

That's a look at our field for the HRU Dream Trot – and here's a look at the morning line odds for the field:

Obviously you won't be able to "see" this race. That's why the description will run a little longer than if an actual

announcer were calling the race live – we have to fill in some of the “hidden” detail.

A great assemblage of 10 world-class trotters from the last 20 years – a group that has earned over \$27 million – will be looking at the world record of 1:48.4 as they pick up speed behind the Red Mile gate approaching the start of the HRU Dream Trot ... here they come ...

And they're off and trotting... Atlanta shows her excellent gate speed from the inside, and from the outside Chapter Seven moves up while alongside Donato Hanover is flying three-wide into the first turn... Bee A Magician stays close from the rail, while Muscle Hill floated out and is midpack while two-wide... Hannelore Hanover is sixth, ahead of Sebastian K S, with Greenshoe dangling outside of Intimidate, and Mr Musclemann is last going around the first turn.

3	1	2	4	5	7
	9	6		8	
	10				

Going through the initial bend and coming up to the quarter, Donato Hanover is trotting up smartly to challenge Atlanta for command, and it looks like that mare will yield the front to Donato Hanover... but not until after an opening quarter of 26.3... Chapter Seven tucked behind Atlanta on the first turn and now is third, while Sears now asks for more from the favored Muscle Hill and has now gone to third while still outside... Bee Magician, Hannelore Hanover and Sebastian K S are the next three on the inside, with Greenshoe still outside near the back, joined outside now by Mr Musclemann as Intimidate is still 10th and last heading down the backside.

3	9	1	2	4	5
10	6			8	7

Nearing the half, Muscle Hill goes up to take over the throttle from Donato Hanover, with Chapter Seven and Atlanta next behind... Svanstedt now has Sebastian K S on the move and going first-over, with Greenshoe and Mr Musclemann latching on to the cover as Muscle Hill passes by the half – in 53.2. That's FAST, even for this kind of field.

Into the far turn, Muscle Hill retains 1¼ lengths over Donato Hanover, with Sebastian K S third on the grind and

6	10	3	9	1	2
	4	8	7		5

Atlanta in fourth... Greenshoe is fi... --- BUT NOT FOR LONG AS BJÖRN GOOP SENDS HIM THREE-WIDE RIGHT NOW, AND HE IS REALLY SMOKING – now fifth, now fourth, now third, now second and moving alongside pacesetting Muscle Hill... and Greenshoe keeps right on going and is BY Muscle Hill ... Greenshoe with a huge power move to sweep to the lead on the far bend, ahead of Muscle Hill, and the field hits the three-quarters in... 1:21. We're still on course for a world record...

8	6	10	3	1
	4	9	2	
	7			
		5		

Coming out of the far turn and into the stretch, Greenshoe, after that huge move, and Muscle Hill are one-two... Sears, behind Muscle Hill, who is up on the bit, keeps looking to his right to gauge Sebastian K S, who might be starting to show the effects of his first-over journey... Donato Hanover is also full of trot but has nowhere to go at the moment – he may follow Muscle Hill if that one can get clear... Mr Musclemann is moving strongly on the far outside, and Campbell has angled Chapter Seven way wide looking for a lane... On the extreme outside, Intimidate might be moving fastest of all.

Past the tunnel, and Muscle Hill has come clear and trots right up to Greenshoe, but that one fights on... Donato Hanover still looking for clearance... A lot of horses still with trot, but either way wide or stuck along the inside.

Coming to deep stretch, Muscle Hill FINALLY gets by the game Greenshoe... Donato Hanover keeps angling trying to find a path... Chapter Seven and Intimidate continue to gain, but it looks like they're going to be a little late.

To the wire, and Muscle Hill gets the job done by about three-quarters of a length... IN 1:48.3 – the FASTEST TROTTERING MILE EVER... Greenshoe thrilled his fans and holds for second. Looks like a three-way picture between maybe Donato Hanover midtrack and the Chapter Seven / Intimidate late-rushing pair ... But it's MUSCLE HILL in the HRU Dream Trot – WORLD RECORD 1:48.3!

	PP	1/4	1/2	3/4	STR	FIN	DRIVER
MUSCLE HILL	6	4o 2	1 1Q	2 1Q	2 nk	1 T	Dv. Miller
GREENSHOE	8	8o 5T	6o 4H	1 1Q	1 nk	2 T	P. MacDonell
DONATO HANOVER	10	1o H	2 1Q	4 2T	5 2T	3 2	Jo. Campbell
INTIMIDATE	5	10 7H	10 7T	10oo 6	7 3Q	4 2	Ti. Tetrack
CHAPTER SEVEN	9	3 1H	5 4	5o 3Q	6 3	5 2	M. Teague
MR MUSCLEMAN	7	9 7	8o 6	7oo 4Q	3 2	6 3	B. Sears
HANNELORE HANOVER	2	6 4Q	9 7	9 6	9 4	7 3T	M. Lachance
BEE A MAGICIAN	1	5 3	7 5H	8o 5H	10 4T	8 3T	Y. Gingras
ATLANTA	3	2 H	3 2T	6 4	8 3T	9 4Q	L. P., Roy
SEBASTIAN K S	4	7 4H	4o 3Q	3o 2Q	4 2H	10 6	R. Pierce
		26.3	53.2	1:21	1:48.3		

QUOTES

Brian Sears (Muscle Hill) – “My horse showed he was a champion today. Got parked to a :53.2 half, then came back in a stretch and went in a world record 1:48.3 mile. I’m very proud of him.

“The time to the half was fast, but I thought I’d be able to give him a breather around the turn, as the outer tier wasn’t coming up really strongly. Then WHOOSH! – here came Greenshoe, and I have to give Björn Goop a lot of credit, because even among the top-level drivers there aren’t too many who would take a big chance like that. I know what kind of speed Greenshoe has, but it was still a bit of a surprise, and it must have caused excitement to the people watching the race.

“I didn’t try to keep them parked out, because we could have gotten to the ¾ in 1:20 and something and run ourselves both down, and I was confident that Muscle Hill could come back at him in the stretch – he was still right up on the bit. I finally got the clearance, and my horse got the job done. I’m very thankful to be associated with this horse.”

Björn Goop (Greenshoe) – “How do you say in American English – it was “do or die” – isn’t that the phrase?

“My horse’s people, whom I must thank because they gave me this tremendous opportunity today – they also gave me a lot of insight into this horse, not to rush him away, how much quick speed he could have, and so forth. It worked out well to be second-over, but with Muscle Hill likely to back the speed down on the far turn, I didn’t think I could catch him if I waited to move off cover coming to the top of the stretch. So it just came to me to try to make the big move – and I was wondering about it myself even as we went up. Fortunately, the horse was able to get to the lead.

“In the stretch, I knew I had a champion horse behind me, but I thought I was in the best place I could be with the way things turned out. My horse battled against Muscle Hill right to the wire, and he equaled the world record time despite

being parked past the half and making that big move. We were right with a star horse at the wire. It’s a day I won’t forget.”

Ron Pierce (Donato Hanover) – “Going into the far turn, I really thought I had a chance to win it all.

“Donato warmed up really well, and I looked over at the start and there didn’t seem to be too many busting away, so I sent him – we had to go wide around Chapter Seven half the first turn, but we did get to the lead. I knew Muscle Hill would be coming, and I thought I couldn’t be in any better position than in the pocket behind him.

“Then Greenshoe came flying up early on the turn – and it was a smart move by Goop – and got around Muscle Hill, and then all of a sudden I wasn’t in the pocket but third on the rail, and I’d have to wait for clearance. I was able to edge out behind Muscle Hill, and I was trying to find room to the inside, between them, or to the outside, but I had two chances – slim and none, and Slim was out of town.

“My horse stayed right with the top two – what were we, third over two horses on the far outside? I was pleased with my horse after the trip we had – all I have to learn now is how to draw a good post in races like this.”

FEEDBACK

Thoughts on the field? Thoughts on the outcome? In your mind, who would win and how?

Some reader feedback on last week’s Dream Pace is found in this week’s Feedback section starting on pg. 34.

Your feedback on the Dream Trot is most welcome. We’ll publish some of your responses next week.

Email us at: editor@harnessracingupdate.com and please put: **HRU Dream Trot** in the subject line.

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Photos by Ann Mari Daley 201

JOHN "BROWNIE" BROWN

OUR FRIEND "BROWNIE" HAS PASSED. HE WAS A BELOVED, IRREPLACEABLE PART OF THE VERNON COMMUNITY FOR 50 YEARS AND HE WILL BE SORELY MISSED.

REST EASY, FRIEND.





USTA

Former USTA president Phil Langley.

Former USTA president Phil Langley dead at 83

by Dan Leary / USTA director of marketing and communications

Phil Langley, 83, president of the USTA for 13 years, died Saturday (April 11). He was elected as a USTA director in 1983 and became president in 2003 before resigning at the close of 2016.

His leadership at the USTA was characterized by great advances in technology, such as online entry for races at all levels and a social media presence that made it possible for people across the globe to follow racing's people and horses at any time, on any electronic device.

Mr. Langley, a native of Wisconsin, learned about racing from his father, who was a mailman, restaurant owner and in the 1930s, took over administration of the Elkhorn Fair and later the Wisconsin State Fair.

"I learned to read by helping my dad figure out which horses qualified for a race," Mr. Langley said.

As a boy, he saw the 1943 Hambletonian winner Volo Song race at Elkhorn, WI, where his father was race secretary. The trotter suffered a fatal broken bone and had to be euthanized, a memory that stayed with Mr. Langley throughout his life.

"My dad stayed with him at the vets until they gave up. Sad day in Elkhorn," he said decades later.

Mr. Langley graduated from Dartmouth University in 1959 with a history degree, a passion he continued as a racing official, with a standardbred library whose titles stretched back to the Civil War.

Mr. Langley's career as a race secretary and executive centered on the Chicago tracks, and he held management positions at Sportsman's Park and was director of racing at Balmoral and Maywood Park. He was part of the ownership group of both those tracks.

He was inducted into the Illinois Harness Horsemen's Hall of Fame in 1994 and into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in Goshen, NY, where he was also a trustee, in 2007.

Mr. Langley served as a member of the Illinois Department of Agriculture Advisory Committee and the Racing Industry Charitable Committee, which served the needs of backstretch employees.

Mr. Langley worked with both the Illinois and Du Quoin State Fairs on their harness racing meets for many years in an advisory capacity.

As a horse owner, his top performer was Thisbigdogwilfight p,5,1:49.1, a winner of \$978,789 lifetime.

Mr. Langley is survived by his wife, Margo; son, Dr. Pete; daughters, Kate and Meg; and five grandchildren.

HARNESS RACING UPDATE

About Harness Racing Update

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Jimmy Freight's book now full and closed

by Elizabeth Cheesman / Winbak Farms

"I am so happy to announce Jimmy Freight, full and closed," said Pat Woods, manager of Winbak Farm of Ontario where the pacer is standing his first year at stud in 2020. "He's a fan favorite and I loved to watch him race."

Jimmy Freight (p, 2, 1:52.3s; 3, 1:48.3s; 1:48.1s '19) earned just shy of \$1.5 million at the races.

"He could race from any post, on any track, against anyone," said Woods. "He competed every night and beat some of the nicest horses in North America. I am glad to see the breeders recognize the potential and support this horse."

Jimmy Freight's connections said they are grateful for the support the stallion has had in North America.

"It's fantastic to see the response he's had from breeders both in Canada and the US," said Adriano Sorella, Jimmy Freight's owner.

Sorella spearheaded a massive marketing plan to get Jimmy Freight attention amongst a competitive lineup of Ontario stallions. He introduced the \$100,000 Jimmy Freight Stakes that is going to be just for Jimmy Freight offspring. The plan included using social media and race simulcasting to his full advantage.

"The response to the marketing and advertising efforts were great. I was looking to do just a little more and add my experience as an online marketer to the racing side of it," said Sorella.

Woods said he looks forward to seeing Jimmy Freight's offspring race.

"I really like what Jimmy brings to the Ontario breeders, his slick gait and ability to carry his speed in the corners will allow his offspring to get around any size track," said Woods. "These traits should make his offspring competitive in Ontario Sire Stakes racing and beyond."

Sorella said he is excited to see what his own mares produce (that are being bred to Jimmy Freight) and to have the opportunity to buy future Jimmy Freight offspring from other breeders.

"I have personally bred a few to him and I am excited to see his foals go through the sales ring in the years to come."

Mares that are booked to Jimmy Freight for 2020 are highlighted by **fast and rich race mares including:**

- **Artimittateslife**, p, 3, 1:51.3s (**\$997,901**)
- **Barockey**, p, 1:50.2s (**\$619,301**)



John Watkins

Jimmy Freight's book is now full and closed. He is standing his first year at Winbak Farm of Ontario.

- **Dazzling Rockette**, p, 1:51s (**\$375,115**)
- **Dingle Bay**, p, 3, 1:52f (**\$341,798**)
- **Exhilarated**, p, 1:50.1s (**\$632,880**)
- **Fancy A Dream**, p, 1:51.3s (**\$342,145**)
 - o Dam of **Awesomeness**, p, 1:50s (**\$429,489**)
- **Lola Palooza**, p, 1:51.3 (**\$275,666**)
- **Love That Cut**, p, 1:53.3f (**\$301,062**)
 - o Half-sister to **Lather Up**, p, 1:46 (**\$1,917,935**)
- **Pacific Date**, p, 1:51s (**\$234,214**)
- **Sgt Molly Pitcher**, p, 1:51.2 (**\$244,574**)
- **Shadows Wonder**, p, 3, 1:53.2s (**\$205,760**)
- **The Assassinator**, p, 3, 1:51.1f (**\$304,029**)
- **Whats New Pussycat**, p, 3, 1:51.4f (**\$294,001**)
 - o Dam of **JK Willpower**, p, 1:49s (**\$782,442**)

Jimmy Freight's 2020 book also includes multiple sisters to millionaires including:

- **Ainteasybeingeasy**, a ½-sister to **Western Dreamer**, p, 1:49 (**\$1,812,176**)

- **Australia Hanover**, a ½-sister to **Dynamic Youth**, p, 1:48.1f (\$1,227,793)
- **Classic Rock**, a full-sister to **Blue Moon Stride**, p, 1:48.4s (\$1,244,786)
- **D Gs El Nina**, a ½-sister to **Southwind Tempo**, p, 1:48.2 (\$2,445,541), and **Hula's Z Tam**, p, 1:52.2h (\$1,076,610)
 - o Dam of **D Gs Pesquero**, p, 1:50.3s (\$485,837)
- **Light Of Day**, a ½-sister to **Bettor's Edge**, p, 1:48.1s (\$2,204,531)
- **Mowet Blue Chip**, a ½-sister to **Georgia Pacific**, p, 3, 1:49.1f (\$1,388,160)
- **Pacific Classic**, a ½-sister to **Pacific Fella**, p, 1:48.2 (\$1,064,631)
- **Panettone**, a ½-sister to **Symphony In Motion**, p, 1:49 (\$1,065,949)
- **Sand Gesture**, a full-sister to **Wakizashi Hanover**, p, 1:47.3 (\$1,602,724)
- **Sweet Otra**, ½-sister to **In The Arsenal**, p, 3, 1:49.1 (\$1,056,803)
- **Wishing Well**, a ½-sister to **Rare Jewel**, p, 1:49s (\$1,396,153)

Additional proven producers booked to Jimmy Freight include:

- **Pro Bowl Best**, dam of **Higher and Higher**, p, 1:49.1f (\$944,224), & **Santanna One**, p, 3, 1:51.4s (\$549,747)
- **Rising Sun**, dam of **Nefertiti Bluechip**, p, 3, 1:52.2s (\$320,177)
- **Shellys Delight**, dam of **Sports Bettor**, p, 1:50.3f (\$506,542)
- **Tampa Town**, dam of **With Anticipation**, p, 1:47.2 (\$497,383), & **Mach Lady**, p, 1:51.3f (\$344,634)

The farm thanks Adriano Sorella for allowing Jimmy Freight to stand at Winbak Farm of Ontario.

"It has been a pleasure working with Adriano, once the deal was made to stand Jimmy," said Woods. "Adriano's passion for the sport can only lead to more great ideas that will benefit the breeders and owners of Jimmy Freight offspring."

Limited syndicate opportunities are still available. Call 905.838.2145 for more information. More information on Jimmy Freight can be found at www.winbakfarm.com and on his very own website at www.jimmyfreightstakes.com.

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Star trotters begin to race in Sweden

by Thomas Hedlund

Easter time is traditionally the beginning of the big race season in Sweden and it was no exception this year.

On Wednesday night, Hambletonian winner Perfect Spirit (Andover Hall) took a safe wire-to-wire win for driver Örjan Kihlström at Solvalla. The 6-year-old Andover Hall son was making his second start this season and showed that he's capable of fighting the elite during the spring. The mile rate in the 1.3 mile race was 1:55.1 and the purse was \$20,500.

In the \$50,500 Prins Carl Philips Jubileumspokal race for 5-year-olds at Färjestad racetrack on Friday afternoon, Muscle Hill son Missile Hill impressed in a 1:53.2 mile win for Örjan Kihlström. Missile Hill had several great performances as a 4-year-old in Sweden and it seems like the American-bred trotter has adapted even better to Swedish conditions this season. Zarenne Fas, trained by Jerry Riordan, claimed a couple of stakes races last year, for example the big 4-year-old race \$161,000 Grosser Preis von Deutschland in Hamburg, Germany and finished a promising second to Missile Hill on Friday afternoon.

The 5-year-old race for mares over 1.3 miles wasn't dramatic since first choice Vivacious Allie (Muscle Hill) easily kept the lead from post two. When in front, the Daniel Redé-trained mare was too tough to catch for her chasers.

[Perfect Spirit replay.](#)

[Missile Hill replay.](#)

[Vivacious Allie replay.](#)

Romme racetrack features the V75 and elimination for

Paralympiatravet today (April 12) and all the fans that follow the races on television or via [atg.se](https://www.atg.se) will most certainly see a spectacular race when several top trotters try to claim their ticket for the final on April 25 at Åby.

Milliondollarrhyme (Ready Cash), Milligan's School (Yankee Glide), Makethemark (Maharajah) and Sorbet (Super Photo Kosmos) were all contenders in Elitloppet 2019 and now they all chase a spot in Paralympiatravet.

Milliondollarrhyme makes his first start for the year, while Milligan's School tried his luck in Paris in January and February, so it's like a comeback event for him. Makethemark looked splendid in his first performance in 2020 and Sorbet has the season best mark in Sweden since he began 2020 with a brilliant first over win in 1:52.2.

Åby racetrack has succeeded in capturing a trotter from abroad for the final. Looking Superb (Orlando Vici) is ready for the Paralympiatravet via wild card and will be an attraction in the race. French champion Jean-Michel Bazire is normally not so keen on racing with his horses in Sweden, but in this case he has made an exception, just as he did in Elitloppet last year when both Looking Superb and Aubrion du Gers were in the race.

Denmark open up for racing

Racing in Denmark can resume on April 23. Billund racetrack will be the first station that put the Danish harness racing program on roll again after the COVID-19 break. Obviously, the races will be held without spectators.

Green Manalishi has landed in Sweden

Green Manalishi (Muscle Hill) arrived at Stefan Melander's farm in Enköping, Sweden Saturday morning. The trip from Marcus Melander's farm started on Tuesday morning and the flight from U.S. lifted off the day after. From Liège in Belgium, the 4-year-old top trotter was transported by truck. Soon it will be time to think of what races he should enter this season. On April 24, the eliminations for \$201,500 Kungapokalen are scheduled and that is one of the main objectives for Green Manalishi this year.

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JIMMY FREIGHT

p,2,1:52.3s; 3,1:48.3s, 1:50.3h; 4,1:48.1s (\$1,457,405)

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THANK YOU!

\$100,000 Jimmy Freight Stakes ~ \$20,000 Breeders Bonuses



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Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020



Ben Wallace

by Chris Lomon

It's a call Ben Wallace is still trying to process.

When he answered the phone and heard the words, "Congratulations, you've been inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame," the long-time standardbred trainer was an equal measure of elated and overwhelmed.

It was a call he had one day hoped to receive, and now that he had, Wallace soon found himself looking back on a stellar career that is approaching 50 years.

And when he did, it wasn't the many talented horses he campaigned that first came to mind.

"I think it was around eight or nine at night when I got the call," started the 71-year-old Ontario native. "I never thought it would affect me as significantly as it did. I thought I had a chance... but when I found out, I was just awash with memories. The next couple of hours were very transcending. Horses weren't the initial focal point. It was people, the ones who struggled along with me. Fifty years of doing this, 50 years of training – that can really run you ragged. You come across such a gamut of individuals, and that's what struck me most."

All of the emotion was enough to keep Wallace awake well into the early hours of the morning.

Not that he was complaining.

Wallace was just as sentimental in the days after his Hall of Fame nod.

"To be honest... I don't know if I ever went to sleep," he said with a laugh. "I know I definitely didn't get a good, solid eight hours of sleep. I was wrapped up in it pretty good. Memories can be funny things because one leads to another. Being in the business so long, you have plenty of them. Where do you stop, really? It was less to do to with any type



Dave Landry

Trainer Ben Wallace.

of wins or big moments, it (his thoughts) was more to do with everyone you met along the way."

Several of those people – some Wallace regularly speaks to and others he hasn't had any recent conversations with – reached out to congratulate him.

"I received so many calls and messages from people you've lost track of. It's funny. The horses are there, and I certainly have tremendous memories of them, but I just kept thinking of people who I ran into over the years, people I hung out with."

Eventually, though, Wallace, who once worked for the legendary Bill Wellwood, recalled some of the pacing and trotting greats that helped boost his hall of fame credentials.

There was, of course, 1999 Pacing Triple Crown winner and Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame inductee Blissfull Hall, Breeders Crown winners Totally Western (2002), Pans Culottes (2003), as well as an impressive lineup of seven-figure winners including Apprentice Hanover, Zooka,

Cam Swifty, Camotion and Lookout Victory.

But there was also Cliff Time.

Wallace, in a story featured on the Ontario Racing website in July 2016, chose the unheralded pacing son of Post Time as “The Horse That Changed My Life.”

In the early 1970s, just out of the University of Windsor and armed with a degree in geography, a then 21-year-old Wallace gave serious thought to heading back to school to pursue a career in urban planning. He took a year to work with horses at Buffalo Raceway before heading back to work for harness racing icon Keith Waples at Mohawk Racetrack.

“My family had friends that were in the business and they had a yearling that they tried with someone else, a \$250 yearling, I think he was,” recalled Wallace, in the Ontario Racing piece. “He was no good. At least he didn’t turn out. He was by a stallion called Post Time. He was out of an unproven mare named Donna Barnes. I’ll never forget this because he changed my life. He was ill-bred, big and wooden-headed. He was the prototypical jughead — he had a head that only his mother could like.”

Cliff Time was also the first horse Wallace trained under his name.

“He worked his way right up to the highest claimer on the grounds, which was a \$9,000-\$11,000 pace. If I recall properly, I think the horse was sold and I think he was sold for around \$12,000 or \$15,000, which was outstanding. I thought, ‘Why would I go back to school?’ As they say, the rest is history.”

Named Canada’s Trainer of the Year in 1999, Wallace, who grew up in Guelph, ON, has recorded 1,947 wins and more than \$38 million in purses, surpassing the million-dollar mark in 18 consecutive seasons (1996-2013).

There have been trying times, too. None more difficult than in January 2016 when Wallace lost 17 horses in the devastating fire at Classy Lane Stables.

Yet, like he’s always done, Wallace persevered, fully committed to an industry that at one point in time was a question mark for a full-time career.

Soon enough (details about the 2020 Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will be announced) the trainer will take his rightful place beside some of the greatest names in standardbred and thoroughbred racing.

“(Fellow standardbred Hall of Fame inductee) Ian Fleming called me after this year’s class was announced, and told he me he was the same way when he went into the Hall of Fame last year, that you end up looking back on everything that’s happened. Ian’s another one who has been full-bore horse racing his whole life, as well. He said, ‘You’ll be like that for a while. Then it will slip away and you’ll revisit it quite often.’”

During a reflective time where he’s spent hours looking back upon his decades in racing, Wallace can add something different into the mix – an opportunity to look forward.

He’s humbled in knowing the plaque with his name on it will stand alongside legends of the game, both humans and horses.

“I’m 71... I’m not a spring chicken,” said Wallace, whose first job was delivering newspapers. “I’ve seen everything. I’m glad they hadn’t forgotten the ‘80s and ‘90s for me, to be honest. Those were my stellar times. And I’m very proud of those days. The only comparison (between himself and those already enshrined) is we’re all in the Hall of Fame together. We’re all under the same roof, and I’m happy where I am.”

Until the official ceremonies take place for the 2020 Hall of Fame class, Wallace will happily take the time to revisit the halcyon days of his harness racing life.

“Nobody gets into this industry as a kid thinking you’re going to end up in the Hall of Fame. I wasn’t even cognizant of what the Hall of Fame meant 50 years ago. I had no idea. I just knew that I liked what I was doing, and where we ended up was fine with me. As you grow older, you understand there are achievement levels or situations where you are rewarded. And those are great moments. In the back of your mind, you eventually think, ‘I wonder if the holy grail is possible.’”

It’s a question Ben Wallace no longer needs to ask.

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One list and one check keeps your horses eligible to these top events.

TWO-YEAR-OLDS

BREEDERS CROWN® No. 34

\$600,000 in 2020

-3rd Sustaining Payment: \$500-

To race Friday, October 30, at Harrah's Hoosier Park, Anderson, Indiana

Elimination heats, if necessary, will be raced Friday, October 23

Final Sustaining Payment - \$600 -- due May 15

Entrance Fee: \$5,000

THE ELEVATION

-\$125,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$500-

Open. To be raced Friday, September 25 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Final Sustaining Payment - \$500 - Due May 15

Entrance Fee: \$750

KENTUCKIANA STALLION

MANAGEMENT PACE & TROT 2020

2-Year-Old Filly Pace & Trot -- Open To The World.

-\$200,000 Est. each in 2020-

To race Friday, September 25 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

-\$500-

Final Sustaining Payment - \$1,000 -- due May 15

Entrance Fee: \$1,500

MADISON COUNTY (for 2-year-olds)

-\$70,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$300-

Colt & Gelding pace to be raced Friday, October 30 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Filly events and the Colt & Gelding trot to be raced Thursday, October 29 at Harrah's

Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$300

MATRON SERIES 2020 (for 2-year-olds)

-\$400-

To be raced Thursday, November 5 at Dover Downs

Top 8 format.

Final Sustaining Fee - \$500 -- due May 15

Entrance Fee: \$1,000

THREE-YEAR-OLDS

BREEDERS CROWN® No. 33

Each of the four 3-year-old finals will be guaranteed \$500,000 in 2020

-\$900 (all payments in US Funds)-

To race Saturday, October 31, at Harrah's Hoosier Park, Anderson, Indiana

Elimination heats, if necessary, will be raced Friday, Oct. 23 (fillies) and Saturday, Oct. 24 (colts)

(A March 15th 3-year-old payment was necessary)

For more information about supplements and regular entries, please contact the office

Entrance Fee: \$7,500

CARL ERSKINE 2020

-\$200,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$1,000-

Open. To race Friday, November 6 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$2,000

JENNA'S BEACH BOY 2020

Early Closer For 3-year-old Colt and Gelding Pacers

-\$150,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$750-

To race Friday, September 25 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$1,500

MATRON SERIES 2020 (for 3-year-olds)

\$692,200 Total 3-Year-Old Purses in 2019

-\$750-

To be raced at Dover Downs Thursday, November 12

Top 8 format

Entrance Fee: \$1,500

MONUMENT CIRCLE 2020

-\$200,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$1,000-

Colts & Geldings only. To race Friday, November 6 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$2,000

THREE-YEAR-OLDS & UP

BREEDERS CROWN® No. 32

For 3-Year-Old & Older Pacers & Trotters - \$500,000

To race Saturday, October 31, at Harrah's Hoosier Park, Anderson, Indiana

Elimination heats, if necessary, will be raced Saturday, October 24

-\$1,500-

Entrance Fee: \$10,000

CAESAR'S TROTTING CLASSIC 2020

-\$200,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$2,000-

To race Friday, September 25 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$2,000

DAN PATCH 2020

-\$300,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$2,000-

To race Friday, August 14 at Harrah's Hoosier Park

Entrance Fee: \$2,500

DAYTON TROTTING AND PACING DERBY 2020

-\$175,000 Guaranteed each in 2020-

-\$1,250-

To race Saturday, October 3 at Hollywood Gaming at Dayton Raceway

Entrance Fee: \$2,500

DAYTON DISTAFF PACING DERBY 2020 (New in 2020)

-\$175,000 Guaranteed in 2020-

-\$1,250-

To race Saturday, October 3 at Hollywood Gaming at Dayton Raceway

Entrance Fee: \$2,500

Make checks payable and send all entries to: **THE HAMBLETONIAN SOCIETY**
109 South Main St., Suite 18, Cranbury, NJ 08512-3174

Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020



Paul MacDonell

by Dave Briggs

Ask Paul MacDonell how he helped Somebeachsomewhere become one of the greatest standardbreds in history and the soft spoken, good guy driver is stumped at first — or is way too classy to take much credit.

“That’s a tough one. I don’t know. That horse was so great, let’s face it, there are a lot of drivers that can step up and drive a horse like that. He didn’t need much from me,” said MacDonell, who was announced this week as the driver inductee into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame’s class of 2020.

Push MacDonell a little and the modest man will admit to something about his handling of Beach that is at the heart of why he is being elected to the Hall of Fame in his first year on the ballot.

“I kept him out of trouble the best I could. We made our way through his 2-year-old year and he was unhurt and I think that was a big thing. He won six races and we never really got to the bottom of him. That helped him more as a stepping stone into his 3-year-old year. He was put away right and did all the right things.”

Somebeachsomewhere’s trainer and part-owner Brent MacGrath agreed MacDonell’s handling is a key reason the late Hall of Fame pacer became a superstar.

“Every time (MacDonell) brought Beach back to us after the race, (the horse) was so happy and sharp and feeling good,” said MacGrath, who nominated MacDonell for the Hall of Fame. “There’s lots of drivers out there, lots of good drivers, and probably he could have had a faster record with some of those guys. Paul brought him to the wire with the bit in his mouth many nights with Paul on cruise control and there’s lots of drivers that wouldn’t have done that. I’m not saying that they are bad, I’m just saying that I prefer the way Paul does it and I think Beach preferred the way Paul did it.

“When I nominated him, I listed the great horses that he not only drove, but he was also instrumental in the



Dave Landry

Paul MacDonell has been a popular fixture at Woodbine Mohawk Park for most of his career.

management of them. Whether Beach is the greatest horse of all time or not, that’s not for me to say, but he’s up there, and I do know that when I cut Paul loose with him every time I was confident that the horse was coming back unhurt. No matter how much money we were going for, he was going to protect him and look after him and bring him back as the horse that I sent him out there with. That’s hard to do, especially when you’re going for big money like he was. There was a lot of pressure on him every week and he put the horse first. I can name 10 horses that he’s done that with, not only drove them, but he was big in the management side of it, too, and looking out for them.”

MacDonell, who lives in Guelph, ON, said he’s proud to have the reputation as a driver instrumental in developing young horses for the long-term.

“I think that’s why a lot of people put a lot of trust in me over the years with their young horses because they were



Dave Landry

MacDonell has driven a long list of champions, but is most synonymous with the late, great Hall of Fame pacer Somebeachsomewhere (shown setting a 1:46.4 world record at Red Mile).

thinking long-term. I've always kind of been that way, basically from watching people that were successful, just watching how they do it. I always thought that if you could save a horse as long as you can and not hurt them that you're going to be better off down the road and make a better horse out of them," MacDonell said.

His driving career is highlighted by both consistency and superstars, with earnings surpassing \$1 million for 33 consecutive years. Apart from Somebeachsomewhere, he also was the regular pilot for Hall of Fame horses Admirals Express and Invitro, as well as millionaires Village Jiffy, Village Connection, Elusive Desire, Bigtime Ball and Laddie. He even drove Ontario-sired Elitlopp winner Billyjojimbob a few times on Canadian soil.

His major stakes victories include a North America Cup, three Metro Paces, five Confederation Cups and eight Breeders Crowns. He also has a record 16 Ontario Sires Stakes Super Finals to his credit. He was voted the winner of the O'Brien Award as the 2008 Canadian Driver of the Year and to date has chalked up more than 15,000 top three

finishes, 5,623 wins and has driven horses to purse earnings in excess of \$122 million by Standardbred Canada accounting.

MacDonell once was a second trainer for Hall of Famer Doug Brown and has also been the regular driver for a number of top Canadian trainers, most notably John Bax and the late Hall of Famer Bill Wellwood.

One of MacDonell's favorite memories of Wellwood is one about the trainer's habit of scuffing up rental cars when travelling on the stakes circuit. Wellwood's wife, Jean, would regularly get a bill in the mail for some scratch or dent, which led her to call MacDonell and insist that he drive the rental car when the two horsemen traveled together.

"I can remember Jean calling and telling me, 'You drive. Don't let him drive the car. You get in that driver's seat!' So, you can imagine me having to talk my way into the driver's seat once we got to the counter and telling him that I'm going to be doing the driving," MacDonell said, laughing. "That wasn't an easy conversation...He'd give me that look, you know, like, 'What are you talking about? *You're* driving the

car?”

As much as MacDonell is forever associated with Brown, Wellwood, Bax, Somebeachsomewhere, Admirals Express and many other horses and people, he said the horse that he owes the most to is Bays Fella, who won the 1990 Breeders Crown for open pacers at Pompano Park at record Crown odds of 69-1. MacDonell was just 27 at the time.

“Bays Fella was definitely a stepping stone for me. He vaulted me right up into the North American scene, for sure. It was really quite a thing to go down (to Pompano). We were longshots, obviously, and for him to pull it off, it’s surreal even today when you think of it,” MacDonell said.

“There was a lot of shock in people’s faces going back to the winner’s circle. I was basically just going to Florida because they were going to pay my way and I was just excited to go down there and be a part of the Breeders Crown. I knew he was coming into the race in good form and I knew we’d have a shot to get a good check, but to pull it off was something else.”

MacDonell has deep Maritime roots, but was born in Oshawa, ON in 1963. After graduating high school, he got his start at Kawartha Downs near Peterborough, ON working with his father, Blaise. A local trainer named Gary Gassien also helped MacDonell get started.

“He started using me as a catch driver very early on. He’s passed on now. He’s Reg Gassien’s brother. He was his older brother and he was one of the very first guys and we became friends and he used me quite a bit at Kawartha Downs and got me going... along with my father, obviously, but outside of my family, he was very instrumental.

“When I got up to the Greenwood, Mohawk, OJC circuit, I started out with Doug Brown and was his second trainer for a while and I was able to use that stable as a stepping stone. I got to drive some of his horses when he went to the Meadowlands that winter and that really helped me. That vaulted me. I guess my next phase would have been the Wellwood era, for most of the ‘90s and the 2000s and continued on after Bill passed away with Paula and Jean.”

The Bax era followed and, “then Beach came along. Brent MacGrath, I’ve known him since the Greenwood days. He wasn’t a guy that operated a big stable, but we had a relationship that was beyond work. We were friends more than colleagues. He always had just a few horses and we kept in touch even when he moved back to the east coast. So, he’s a guy that’s been very instrumental in my career as well.”

All along, MacDonell’s parents have remained his biggest fans.



New Image Media

MacDonell was also linked with fan favorite and Hall of Famer Admirals Express.

“I don’t think they miss a race even today. They’ll call me up when I’m not there at Mohawk and they’ll say, ‘Did you see so-and-so race in the ninth race last night?’ and I’ll say ‘No, mom, I was sleeping,’” MacDonell said, laughing.

Beyond great talent and impeccable integrity, MacDonell is an all-around good guy that is extremely popular with his peers.

“He’s one guy I’ve never heard anybody say anything negative about,” MacGrath said of MacDonell.

It explains the deluge of congratulatory messages MacDonell received this week when the Hall of Fame announcement was made:

“It’s been kind of nostalgic, really, with people talking about horses I drove for them or ones I started out with.... Sending me pictures of horses from years ago. It’s kind of cool, really. With social media it allows people to do that,” MacDonell said.

“The texts and calls and messages on social media were just over the top, it’s hard to believe people actually take time out to send you a note. It’s rather humbling, to tell you the truth.”

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Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020



Amour Angus

by Paul Delean

In a week of predominantly grim news, 87-year-old Pierre Levesque got a welcome pick-me-up at his home south of Montreal in Quebec's Eastern Townships.

Amour Angus, the most celebrated horse ever produced by his now-defunct standardbred breeding operation Angus Farm, soon would be joining him in the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame, elected as part of the class of 2020.

"I'm proud, naturally. It showed what we were capable of here in Quebec," said Levesque, inducted himself in 2008 for his pivotal role in the sport during its heyday in the province from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Bred and foaled at the farm he once owned in Bedford, QC, Amour Angus was an ordinary racehorse transformed into an extraordinary broodmare when matched with stallion Garland Lobell, producing an all-star roster of trotting siblings that included filly Emilie Cas El (Canada's Horse of the Year in 1994 and dam of 2014 Hambletonian champion Trixton) and stakes-winning colts Conway Hall, Angus Hall and Andover Hall, all of whom became successful and impactful sires. Angus Hall also is in the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame.

Amour Angus, who died in 2009 at age 22 after fracturing a hind leg, has been in the U.S. Hall of Fame since 2008. Despite her distinctly Canadian roots, it took another decade for similar recognition to be bestowed in her native land.

Levesque, who'll be 88 on April 17, has no hard feelings.

He's not even regretful for selling Amour Angus, in foal, for \$50,000 (U.S.) to Walnut Hall Farm of Lexington, KY in 1995, just as her legend was beginning to form.

"It wasn't the money, it was how I viewed the future. When I saw the casinos come into Quebec (in 1993), it was obvious who the government favored. We had a viable industry, with great horsemen and 2,000 broodmares, but my dad used to tell me, 'You can't fight city hall,' and I could see the trouble coming. They didn't want competition. It was not going to work. And the horsemen were indeed left impoverished."

At one time, Angus Farm had as many as five stallions and



Amour Angus is one of the greatest broodmares Canada has ever produced.

80 broodmares.

Magna Force, the sire of Amour Angus, wasn't one of the big names. Levesque stood the former Billy Haughton trainee under a lease arrangement and decided to try him with one of his mares, Kenwood Scamper, a \$20,000 (U.S.) yearling purchase in Harrisburg who'd been injured in a fall before making it to the races.

The resulting filly, born in 1987, had some talent and actually won a Quebec Sires Stake at the former Blue Bonnets racetrack for Levesque as a 2-year-old. But an injury limited her effectiveness and she was retired after her 3-year-old season with \$21,355 in career earnings and five wins in 16 starts.

Bred to stallion Garland Lobell, a future Hall-of-Famer then based in Quebec as well, Amour Angus produced a filly that would sell at auction and race for trainer Dustin Jones under the name Emilie Cas El and go undefeated in 13 starts at 2, earning Canadian Horse of the Year honors.

"Dustin used to buy quite a lot from me. He'd told me he wasn't really interested in trotters that year, but he ended up getting her. It helps when they go to good trainers," Levesque said.

Alan Leavitt of Walnut Hall Farm called Levesque the next year, asking whether Amour Angus might be available.

"The morning he called, my mother had just died. I said it wasn't a good day. He said he understood and would get back to me in a month. And he did," Levesque said.

Leavitt has described Amour Angus as "perfectly proportioned" but he purchased her sight unseen, Levesque said.

The foal beside her wasn't part of the initial deal, but Leavitt persevered and the colt was included by the time the truck arrived to take her to her new Kentucky home. The baby – her fourth – would be renamed Conway Hall. The foal Amour Angus was carrying turned out to be Angus Hall. Andover Hall, her seventh foal, came along three years later.

In all, Amour Angus produced 14 offspring. Eleven raced, earning more than \$3.5 million in total, and they in turn produced trotting titans such as Peaceful Way, Majestic Son,

Donato Hanover, Windsong's Legacy and Pampered Princess.'

Levesque remembers telling his accountant at the time of the sale, "we've just sold the best broodmare in Canada." In hindsight, he could have said one the best anywhere, ever.

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Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020



McWicked

by Sandra Snyder

Grit, determination and raw talent propelled McWicked through a seven-year racing career that saw him earn \$5.1 million, make 40 appearances in the winner's circle and take a record of 1:46.2 over The Red Mile. With those statistics, the son of McArdle and Western Sahara joins an elite group of horses elected into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame just months after their last appearance on a racetrack.

"There was never once that I ever went to the track not thinking that horse had a chance to win and there was never once I was ever disappointed with him. Every single time that horse went to the track he gave it all he had," said Casie Coleman, who trained McWicked through his three, four, six, seven and eight-year-old campaigns. "He definitely deserves it and we're very thankful to the voters that voted him in."

Bred by Andray Farm, McWicked was purchased for \$35,000 out of the 2012 Harrisburg Yearling Sale by the Andy Miller Stable, Paymaq Racing and Hannah Miller. At two, racing under the tutelage of trainer Julie Miller, he would amass three wins and \$179,617 in 10 starts before being entered in the Harrisburg Mixed Sale.

Based on the recommendations of his long-time advisers, pedigree expert Norman Hall and trainer Jimmy McDonald, Ed James would ante up \$210,000 for McWicked, which, in spite of his then wife's initial doubts, would prove to be a wise investment.



Dave Landry

McWicked (Brian Sears) setting his career mark of 1:46.2 at Lexington's Red Mile in 2018.

"Most investments that people come up with and make money with they tell you how they figured it out, but nine times out of 10 it was just a wild-assed guess," said James, adding that the team around McWicked was the key to the horse's success. "Good people, good people that figured out what was wrong with the horse after I bought him and turned him into the horse he is."

After wintering in Florida with McDonald, McWicked made the move to Coleman's barn and proceeded to light up the sophomore pacing colt ranks, never finishing worse than fifth and banking \$1,482,447 in 23 starts. McWicked triumphed in the finals of the Max Hempt Memorial (in a world record 1:47.3), Delvin Miller Adios, Progress Pace, Pennsylvania Sires Stakes and Breeders Crown and was honoured with the O'Brien and Dan Patch Awards for top three-year-old pacing colt.

At four and five McWicked would make just 14 starts, without recording a win, and undergo surgery following his 4-year-old campaign and again in the summer of his 5-year-old season. Trainer Steve Elliott guided the pacer

through his 5-year-old season and started him up in 2017, but James sent him back to Coleman in June. After winning his first start back in Coleman's barn, McWicked picked up his first stakes win since December 2014 in the June 17 Mohawk Gold Cup. The horse would record just two more wins in 2017, but he would hit the board in 16 of 27 starts and bank \$598,335.

Jimmy McDonald winter trained McWicked throughout his career and the Florida resident qualified McWicked once at Pompano Park before returning him to Coleman in the spring of 2018. That 10-length romp would prove a harbinger for what was to come. By November, the horse had captured the elimination and final of the Ben Franklin, William R. Haughton Memorial, Canadian Pacing Derby final, Allerage Farms Open, Dan Rooney Invitational, Breeders Crown Final and TVG Open. His record of 12 wins, three seconds, two thirds and \$1,662,094 in 19 starts saw him sweep Aged Pacing Horse and Horse of the Year honors at both the O'Brien and Dan Patch Awards.

"My number one favorite was when he won the Canadian Pacing Derby in Toronto," said Coleman. "Nobody was really talking about Wicked at all. Everything was all Lazarus, Lazarus, and I'm like, 'Man did everybody forget who McWicked was?' and then he just comes and destroys him. That was definitely my favorite win for him.

"And second favorite is pretty easy too, at the Red Mile when he went in 1:46.2, that was a pretty special race, too."

Coleman firmly believes that 1:46.2 could have been even faster had McWicked been racing on four good feet.

"It was always a problem and it'd be crazy to know what he could have done if he had a good foot. For instance, the race that he went in 1:46.2 he actually had one bar shoe on," the trainer said. "In my mind a bar shoe 100 per cent slows a horse down, no question about it, and I had no choice. It was either bar shoe or we don't race, because I had to take all the pressure off of his quarter crack."

The grit and determination to overcome obstacles, whether a bad foot or a bad trip, are the things Coleman loved most about McWicked, although the trainer admits it is hard to come up with anything she didn't like about the horse.

"I honestly can't even think of anything. He's gorgeous, he's perfect gaited. If I was going to change anything I don't even know what the hell it would be, because he pretty much was the perfect horse," said Coleman.

"His lungs and his heart were just unreal. There have been many times where coming up to the three-quarter pole and

he's first-over and some wicked fast fractions and you're thinking, 'Man, he's got to get tired, like he's obviously going to be giving up here any time,' and next thing you know he hits another gear that you don't even know where the hell that gear come from."

McWicked started his 8-year-old campaign in high gear last May, clocking a preferred win in his first start, and added five more stakes titles and \$1,053,576 to his resume before he was retired in November. His third million dollar season garnered McWicked a second Aged Pacing Horse of the Year title at both the O'Brien and Dan Patch Awards.

It may also have been that grit and determination which inspired harness racing fans across North America. Coleman regularly received good wishes on social media and in person, fielded requests to meet the horse and handed out more of his horseshoes than she can count.

"I've won a lot of big races with a lot of nice horses, but Wicked, when I post something it's crazy how many messages I'd get," said Coleman. "It just, to me it felt like other people really thought that they had something to do with him too."

Coleman and the horse's key caregivers, who included Tyler Schlatman, Jeff Kemp and Ben Hollingsworth through his career, along with second trainer Mark "Bubbles" McKinnon, are definitely going to miss the fiery pacer, who started his second career at Winbak Farm of Ontario in February, serving a full book of mares.

"He's a real cool horse. I've had many times where I'm in a different part in the paddock and Wicked has shipped in later in the night and you'll hear somebody else in the paddock say, 'Oh here comes McWicked', because he just comes in roaring and screaming and prancing," said the trainer. "He definitely knew that he was a good horse and demanded to be treated that way. He was a lot of fun. It's going to suck not having him in the barn."

For his part James, who turns 89 this year, felt McWicked had accomplished everything he needed to on the racetrack and is looking forward to seeing his progeny race. The Aurora, ON resident will not have to wait long. He has a 3-year-old and a 2s-year-old from limited test breedings undertaken in 2015 and 2016.

"I've had a bunch of good horses in the last probably 60, 70 years – 1956 when I bought my first horse – he's what you call a home run," said the owner.

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Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Class of 2020



Rambling Willie

by Dean A. Hoffman

The Canadian Pacing Derby was first contested in 1936 and in the ensuing decades, it's gained status as a classic prize for the best older pacers in training.

But only one horse has won the Canadian Pacing Derby three consecutive years and that's Rambling Willie.

(NOTE: One of Willie's victories was a dead-heat with Pickwick Baron. Also, The Count B, a legend in Canadian pacing annals, won the Canadian Pacing Derby four times in the 1940s, but never three in a row).

That's just one of the reasons why Rambling Willie, "The Horse That God Loved," will be enshrined in the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame this year.

The gelding from humble origins overcame myriad physical woes to enjoy a career that saw him become a living legend. Rambling Willie retired in 1983 with winnings of \$2,038,219.

Willie won 128 times in 305 tries and 69 seconds and 43 third-place finishes. That's 240 times that he hit the board racing often against the best pacers in North America.

Rambling Willie wasn't born to be a star. His pedigree ran to the bushes quickly. His sire Rambling Fury and his paternal grandsire Ensign Lad really have no other bragging rights than Rambling Willie.

He was foaled near Monroeville in northeast Indiana in 1970. He didn't race as a freshman but showed enough potential the following season that trainer-/driver Bob Farrington put up \$15,000 to buy him.

A native Ohioan, Farrington was the leading dash-winning driver from 1964-68 and he pioneered the concept of the year-round stable to maximize his stable's earnings.

Rambling Willie raced in the name of Farrington's wife Vivian and Ohioan Paul Siebert. Mrs. Farrington's father was a minister and she regularly tithed her share of Willie's earnings to churches. That's how Rambling Willie became



USTA

Bob Farrington and Rambling Willie.

known as "The horse that God loved."

For all of his success in The Canadian Pacing Derby, Willie was unable to match that in the Provincial Cup, another big Canadian prize for older pacers, contested at Windsor Raceway. Bob Farrington took the Provincial Cup off Willie's schedule.

"Bob was a guy who wouldn't go back to a track if he didn't have luck there," says Dean Collins, then the caretaker of Rambling Willie and now a trainer/driver at The Meadows in western Pennsylvania. "Bob was sharp in picking his spots to race Willie. After he raced against the top pacers a few times, Bob would find a softer spot for Willie."

Rambling Willie often spent time in Ontario as the late Dr. Lloyd McKibbin ministered to his many ailments. Collins and others who watched Dr. McKibbin work sing the praises of the veterinarian.

One vet wanted to removed Willie's aching splint bones, but McKibbin said he preferred simply to freeze them.

"He'll be as good as new," McKibbin assured Collins. And Willie was.

Collins sung the praises of McKibbin's horse intuition, saying, "He was years ahead of his time. He'd make the best vets today look dumb."

Collins said that McKibbin would apply pressure to Willie's nostril in an effort to stimulate a nerve. Collins tried it but never achieved quite the same results.

When Rambling Willie was in Ontario getting McKibbin's attention, Collins based him at trainer Doug McIntosh's farm for jogging and training.

"Willie was a very nice horse to jog and train, but a bit on the lazy side," recalls McIntosh. "I don't believe Bob ever trained him too hard."

One time, Farrington called and asked McIntosh how the horse was and Doug reported "seems good."

Farrington was aiming to race Willie in an upcoming feature at Sportsman's Park in Chicago and asked McIntosh to train the old horse to a jog cart, get to the half-mile in 1:05 or 1:06, then come the final half as fast as Willie could pace.

"I was pumped up," recalled McIntosh. "I got him to the half in 1:06, then started asking him. He had nothing. I pushed him hard. Nothing. I snapped the whip. Nothing."

McIntosh knew that Farrington would be calling to ask how Willie trained.

"Bob called at 9 o'clock sharp," he said. "I was really nervous."

Farrington asked McIntosh how Willie had trained and McIntosh said, "Not that good, Bob. He only went to 2:12."

Farrington just laughed and said, "Willie's ready. I'll order a truck."

McIntosh was taken aback, but he recalls that two weeks

later Willie won the feature in Chicago in a swift 1:58.3.

"What a horse Willie was," said McIntosh

The bay gelding became the richest standardbred in history in a 1979 race at Scioto Downs in Ohio, not far from the Bob Farrington's original home in nearby Richwood. He ended that season with \$1.6 million in career earnings, easily surpassing the trotter Savoir.

That was quite an accomplishment for a gelding with such humble origins. He held the money title for only one season as the wunderkind colt Niatross displaced him during the 1980 season.

During the latter stages of his career, Rambling Willie embarked on a promotional tour that took him to tracks across the continent. This was organized by the US Trotting Association in cooperation with local tracks. Copies of the book "Rambling Willie: The Horse That God Loved" were available for purchase and Willie obliged in personalizing books by putting an inked hoofprint for each customer.

Willie retired from racing in 1983 and lived out his life as a celebrity standardbred at the Kentucky Horse Park. He died there at age 25.

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Answering nine questions

by Murray Brown

Thanks to a suggestion from a friend, I intend to occasionally use this space to profile people who have been great assets to the sport, but their stories both inside and outside of harness racing aren't as well known.

Before I turn the questions on other people, I thought it was only fair that I be the first test subject.

So here goes. If you like it, let me know. If you hate it, let me know. If there are some questions you think should be added please tell me. If you think the whole concept is trash let me know.

How did you get into the business?

I was 15. Blue Bonnets Raceway used to allow people into the track free after the seventh race. I'd go with some friends and we'd share a \$2 bet. The first bet I remember making by myself was on a horse named The Monarch C that Duncan MacTavish told me he thought he could win with. He did and I was hooked.

What made you decide that was what you wanted to do with the rest of your life?

I was at Richelieu Park on a summer's Saturday evening. It might have been the first year that the Canadian Juvenile Circuit for 2-year-old pacing fillies was contested. Each division had a filly sired by Adios, trained by Harold McKinley for the Armstrong Brothers in it. One of the fillies was Rosemary Frost. I forget the name of the other. Both fillies won. I asked myself why. From that point on I became a student of bloodlines. I subscribed to *The Harness Horse*. Then I found *Hoof Beats*. I read both from cover to cover. My epiphany was finding that the USTA published a huge book called the Sires and Dams. Each February, I'd look forward to receiving it. I read it literally from cover to cover at least

twice. There was a time when I could tell you the sire, dam and dam sire of at least 80 per cent of the mares in it. I thought I knew it all. Little did I know how much I didn't know and how much I would never know.

What was your first job in the business?

I made pedigree charts of horses for people on a part-time basis while I was going to school. My first job of any consequence was with the Miron Brothers racing and breeding enterprise. Marcel Dostie, who was their head trainer and driver told Mr. Adrien Miron that there was this kid who hung around the racetrack who knew "everything about breeding". The truth was that I knew more than those who were racing in the Montreal area at the time. Nevertheless, Mr. Miron listened to Marcel and hired me. The two years that I worked for them might have been the two best of my youth. My official title was as consultant. But it was more, a lot more. I'd travel with Marcel and usually Mr. Adrien to most of the biggest events in the sport. I met all of my idols — people with the name Haughton, Dancer, O'Brien, Sholty, Insko, Bell, Waples, Filion and numerous others.

What do you like the most about the business?

The first is, of course, the horse itself. As Mr. Churchill was fond of saying, "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." I just loved them all, old pluggers, babies, mares, foals and especially 2-year-olds beginning their careers. The second is the people and the sense of camaraderie it has spawned. I've been fortunate enough to have met literally those from prince to pauper and everybody in between.

What do you like least about the business?

The sometimes well-earned terrible reputation that we have. As with most things in this life of ours, the reality is neither as bad as our reputation says it is, nor as good as pollyannas like me would like to think it is. The second thing is that so few people even know anything of our existence.

What has been your biggest thrill in the sport?

Being a part-owner with one of the finest people it has been my pleasure to have known "Mr. Ed", Ed Mullinax, but most particularly with the filly Up Front Annika, the night she won the Goldsmith Maid at Woodbine. The filly was named after my granddaughter Annika and she and her dad John were in the winner's circle celebrating with us.

Which person in the business has had the biggest effect on you?

Without a doubt John Simpson, Sr. He felt that I had more talent and ability than I in my wildest dreams would ever have believed I had. He was the closest thing to a father I ever had. My own father passed when I was two years old and I never knew him. Mr. Simpson was everything that most good fathers have been. He was fair, but also very capable of being tough. To those he liked, he was kind and generous. Trust me, you did not want him to not like you.

What was the dumbest thing you've ever done in the business?

It wasn't so much something what I did, but rather something that I didn't do. When Donato Hanover was a yearling, I loved him beyond all the others in our consignment. Some friends of mine bought him for \$90,000. I am certain that if I wanted in, they would have allowed me to participate in his ownership. I was in the financial position where 10 percent for \$9,000 would not have imposed any financial hardship on me. Instead my brain was hiding somewhere in my rear end. Less than a year later, I ended up buying less than one per cent of him for \$50,000. I still ended up making money on the deal.

What was your favorite horse?

Without a doubt, Super Bowl. He was everything one would look for in a horse, handsome, smart, great disposition kind and a real character.

To be continued.

Have a question for The Curmudgeon?

Reach him by email at: hofmurray@aol.com.

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Foal of the Week

Kathy Jones photo

This royally-bred filly arrived at Cameo Hills Farm in New York on April 3. The daughter of \$800,000 earner Tactical Landing is out of Check Me Out, a winner of just shy of \$2 million on the track for Cameo Hills' Steve Jones and the mare's trainer and part-owner Ray Schnittker. Check Me Out had a mark of 1:51.2 and won 27 of 42 career races, including the 2011 Breeders Crown for freshman trotting fillies, the Merrie Annabelle, the Elegantimage and the Delvin Miller. This is Check Me Out's fifth foal.



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BREAKING STRIDE

with TREY NOSRAC

Hoofprints in Fog

Scene 1 (Courtship)

by Trey Nosrac

It is late afternoon in a small room in the Alzheimer's wing of an assisted living facility. 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. Ryan, his great-grandson, and Mandy, Ryan's girlfriend, are visiting.

(Intro music)

(Very light hospital ambient sounds)

MANDY: How long does his shower take?

RYAN: Not long, they want him on his feet, moving around, so he doesn't get bedsores.

MANDY: For a guy in his nineties, he's frail but physically okay.

RYAN: Yeah, his brain is the problem, in and out (sound of ruffling papers). Looking at his enlistment papers, photos, postcards, newspaper clippings, all this stuff in his box...they're proof that the things he says are not crazy dreams. They happened, **he was in calvary charges shooting at airplanes from a horse for God's sake!**

MANDY: (sighs) And he was handsome and young. This is all surreal, trying to hold the past and the present in your head at the same time.

RYAN: (Pause) And one day he will be gone, and we will be old.

MANDY: Looking at him now, doesn't it make you feel sad?

RYAN: Yeah. (sound of shaking a small box) Do you know what else is sad? When Martin dies, this box will be all that's left. Nobody wrote down his life and his adventures. I'm telling you, Mandy, when his mind is right, the stories he tells are amazing. I enjoy listening to them. Sometimes, he says funny things.

MANDY: Nothing in this place is funny.

RYAN: Remember yesterday I read you the story with the guy from the army, Edward Ramsey, his heroic Calvary commander?

MANDY: Yes.

RYAN: I looked him up. At the time of the battles, Ramsey was 24 years old.

MANDY: Younger than us.

RYAN: One day, they are doing their horse things; a few months later, they are galloping into machine-gun bullets. Isn't that wild?

MANDY: Unbelievable.

RYAN: Edwin Ramsey was a kid from Indiana. He was a polo junky, a huge fan. A recruiter told Ramsey that the Army had a polo club, so the kid volunteered for the 26th calvary. Martin shod horses in Michigan. The others came from horse racetracks or farms.

(suddenly, quick knock, the sound of a door opening)

NURSE: (southern drawl) Martin had a nice shower, he's ready to sit a spell.

RYAN: Thanks, I'll push him over here by the window.

NURSE: Push the button if you need me.

(sound of door shutting)

RYAN: (pause) Do you remember who I am?

MARTIN: Cecil?

RYAN: (pause) No, I'm Ryan, this is my friend, Mandy.

MANDY: Nice to meet you, Martin.

MARTIN: You smell like a flower.

MANDY: Thank you, Ryan tells me you are quite the ladies' man.

MARTIN: (voice stronger) There was only one lady in my life, at least only one that mattered. I met her when I was fifteen years old. She was the prettiest girl in Eaton County. She was also the nicest and the richest, and it just didn't seem possible that she ended up choosing ME.

MANDY: Well, she must have been quite a catch.

MARTIN: Her daddy, Wilson J. Wilson, ain't that the silliest name you ever heard of, was a fat man who always wore a bowtie. He owned the bank, and he owned horses — racehorses, plow horses, draft horses, buggy horses. Hell, he owned half the horses in the county. Wilson J. had three daughters, Meredith, Mildred, and his baby, Mercy.

MANDY: Let me guess, Mercy was your sweetheart.

MARTIN: Yes she was. We first met on a hot summer day in the summer of 1939 when I worked for Mister Fairmont, the top farrier in Eaton County. Her daddy had a big house across the line in Clinton County, and one day he sent Seth, his one-armed deaf man, over in his best two-seater pulled by his top buggy horse, a trotting horse named Big Bay. Seth lost his arm, his hearing, and some of his mind in Belgium when a bomb went off in a trench during the First



Listen to this story here



World War.

MANDY: Oh my.

MARTIN: Driving a buggy with one-arm is a chore, so setting next to Seth, holding the lines that day was the prettiest girl I'd ever laid eyes on. She had long black hair under a yellow bonnet, and when she got close enough, I could see she had a sprinkle of freckles, now you don't often see a girl with black hair and freckles, but then you never seen a sight as pretty as Mercy.

MANDY: Didn't you know her from school?

MARTIN: I'd heard her name and knew about her and her sisters, but we lived in different counties, so we went to different schools. Besides, her kin were city rich, and my kin were farmers. (pause) She hopped off that buggy, walked up to me like a princess walking out of a fairy story, said her name, and told me that Big Bay needed a fresh set of shoes. She riled me so that I could hardly remember what my name was, but I got it out. I told her Mister Fairmont was over in Feasterville, visiting his sister. I told her I was working the forge while he was gone.

MANDY: And you nailed on the horseshoes, fell in love with the girl in the buggy, and she fell in love with you. How sweet. And you two got hitched?

MARTIN: Her daddy made a fuss, but Mercy had steel in her little backbone. The main thing was that Wilson J. Wilson did not have a son. I must have passed inspection, so he went along if we promised to finish schooling.

(Pause here, insert slow, low music and hoof trotting sounds to underscore Martin reverting to deep in his memory)

MARTIN: (Martin makes a click-click sound, shakes hands as if driving a horse) Now Mercy, I'm as torn up as you, half of me wants to stay, half of me knows I gotta go. (slap of rein) Get on Big Bay.

(Pauses as he listens to the response only he can hear)

MARTIN: I agree, it isn't fair that we have to be apart a week after we got hitched, but I'm just glad your daddy and momma can keep you in the big house till I get back and we build our place.

(Pause)

MARTIN: Now, now, don't cry, the fighting might be done before I get there. Maybe before summer's over I'll be home and working for Mister Fairmont... Whoa there Big Bay. (Slight pause, tugs horse to stop, clopping stops) Now Mercy, Close your eyes and open your hand, the one with your ring on it.

(Pause)

MARTIN: That watch is one of a matching pair. I wound them up and set them to the exact same time. Now here's what I want you to do. Every day, every...single.. day, at six o'clock in the evening, you and Seth are gonna sit in this buggy behind Big Bay, just like you and me are sitting right now. I want you to imagine that it's me

sitting next to you. Drive Big Bay right through town, drive him slow out to the bridge. (insert horse snorting) We done it a hundred times, we had our first kiss when we was courting in this buggy. Remember Big Bay was kind enough to look at the river running under that bridge and give us some privacy. If the weather is bad, sit in the buggy INSIDE the barn at six o'clock.

(Pause)

MARTIN: Yes, yes you can Mercy. You can do it, and you have to do it, because every day, no matter where I am, at six o'clock I will look at my watch. I will close my eyes and be here with you. My heart will be full just like it is now. Being in that buggy will get us through whatever we need to get through, and then we can turn our seven days into seventy years.

(Pause)

MARTIN: Now, now, wipe those tears off your pretty face. Rest your head on my shoulder. Practice for the rides ahead. Remember how we feel right now, remember the smell of Big Bay, dream about all we will have, and remember that nobody every loved anybody the way that I love you.

(All is still for a full ten seconds, then soft snoring. Background music stops, ambient hospital sounds to signal a return to present day)

MANDY: (in a whisper) How many years did they have?

RYAN: (pause) Not a year, not even a day. After all the bombs, the Calvary charges on Pep, the carnage of War, Martin shipped home in one piece and boarded the train in Chicago to Clinton County. While Martin was on that train, Mercy died of influenza, surrounded by her father, her mother, and her sisters.

MANDY: Oh my god! (sniffle) Oh my god, you call this a happy story!

RYAN: The thing is, he never talks about her death. When Martin tells this story, they are courting, or they are in that buggy behind Big Bay. I've heard Martin talk about Mercy many times, but he never gets off the train station in Clinton County. He never ever loses his smile when he talks about Mercy, and Big Bay, and Heavens Rein.

MANDY: Heavens Rein?

RYAN: A trotting racehorse, a filly. She was the other love of his life. She will be around shorty.

Fade to Music

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Meadowlands hopes for May 1 return to racing

Given the current situation The Meadowlands and Tioga and Vernon Downs are doing whatever can be done to look after our employees and be a good neighbor in the community.

We also realize the plight of the horsemen that race at our tracks and the anxiety of not knowing what the near future might hold.

It is in this spirit that we try to shed a little light on what may be possible.

It is our hope that we may be able to resume live racing at The Meadowlands on May 1, 2020. That is of course contingent on many things, most of which we do not control.

Tioga and Vernon Downs will set to preparing for live racing as soon as the casinos are cleared to open.

Fortunately, our stakes at The Meadowlands would have barely begun on the original calendar. The only casualty thus far is the new 4-year-old NJSS Maturity stakes that were scheduled for March and April. We'll look to race those later in the season.

The first open stake scheduled is Leg #1 of the Graduate Series for pacers on May 2. If we get open, we would likely delay that race for a bit to give those horses a chance to get a start while looking for a logical spot to race it. The NJSS for 3-year-olds were to begin on May 15 and we might move them back a few weeks.

These ideas are contingent upon whether stakes at other tracks are raced when originally scheduled.

We are cautiously optimistic that as a result of the delay to the opening of their live meet that Monmouth Park will race a turf only meet at The Meadowlands in 2020 and not convert the main track. This potential development may give us some flexibility so far as making up live race dates in October and November.

" We are working to get the tracks open, but only when it's

safe," said Meadowlands President Jeff Gural. "I get that guys need to race, I'd like to race too. We must adhere to the guidelines set forth by Governors Murphy and Cuomo and we will follow their direction."

— Meadowlands media relations

First legs of 2020 Buckeye Stallion Series postponed

Due to the Ohio State Racing Commission order cancelling all racing in Ohio through May 15, the first legs of the Buckeye Stallion Series have been postponed with the intent to reschedule at a later date.

This includes the 3-Year-Old Filly Trot and the 3-Year-Old Filly Pace which was scheduled for April 30 at Miami Valley Gaming and Raceway and the 3-Year-Old Colt Trot and the 3-Year-Old Colt Pace scheduled for May 2 at Miami Valley.

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association will continue to monitor the situation regarding the COVID-19 virus and when racing will resume in the state of Ohio to determine when the first leg of the series can be rescheduled.

Please check the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association website at www.OHHA.com for information and updates.

—Frank Fraas / OHHA

Ohio Sires Stakes races postponed

The Ohio Sires Stakes races for 3-year-old colt and filly pacers and trotters originally scheduled to take place at Miami Valley Raceway on May 1 and May 3, 2020 have been postponed due to the COVID-19 virus situation. They will be rescheduled at a later date.

Please check the Ohio State Racing Commission's website at www.racingohio.net for information and updates.

For information on the COVID-19 virus, please visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-427-5634.

—Kimberly Rinker, Ohio Standardbred Development Administrator

Grooms grant money mailed in New York

The SOA of NY completed mailing out 155 checks in the amount of \$400 to those grooms who participated at Yonkers Raceway over an extended period of time and on a regular basis. The total cost of today's aid for our most dedicated caretakers amounted to \$62,000.

Joe Faraldo, president of the SOA of NY, said that “these worthy individuals should be receiving their checks in a few days. We are glad to have managed the SOA’s assets in a way that affords us the opportunity to help.”

We suggest to all trainers that grooms doing a paddock make sure that they sign in and show their current groom’s license as in the future the SOA of NY will use that data for eligibility for medical and retirement benefits. Failure to accurately report that information could adversely affect a groom’s eligibility for those important benefits.

—*SOA of New York*

Meadowlands sustaining payments due April 15

The Meadowlands reminds those who have nominated horses to our Grand Circuit stakes that the next sustaining payment is due (postmarked by) April 15.

All pertinent information on our stakes including current [lists of eligible horses](#) through the March 15 payment and the [upcoming sustaining payments](#) may be accessed on The Meadowlands website.

—*Meadowlands media relations*

USTA announces support for SAFE Act of 2019

The United States Trotting Association announced Friday (April 10) that it has endorsed the passage of the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act of 2019 (H. R. 961), which states that “the knowing sale or transport of equines or equine parts in interstate or foreign commerce for purposes of human consumption is hereby prohibited.”

This matter was discussed and approved during the USTA’s Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday (April 7) and made official upon the conclusion of the Association’s closing general session of its Board of Directors annual meeting Thursday (April 9).

The passage of the legislation effectively would ban horse slaughter in the United States by making it illegal for the transportation and export of horses for slaughter domestically or in other countries. The bill emphasizes that, unlike other livestock, horses are not raised for human consumption.

The USTA is a strong advocate for horse aftercare.

Two years ago at the Board of Directors meeting, USTA Executive Vice President and CEO Mike Tanner proposed and

the directors supported the creation of the Standardbred Transition Alliance, an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with the mission to: “accredit, inspect, and award grants to approved organizations that acquire, rehabilitate, train and re-home Standardbreds, using industry funding.” The USTA also provided some of the initial funding for the organization, which is now established, operational, and governed by an independent board of directors composed of key industry stakeholders, including two USTA directors.

In addition, the USTA has a longstanding history of programs that provide assistance to retired Standardbred racehorses.

Support Our Standardbreds is a USTA program that provides financial assistance to public agencies and 501(c)(3) charitable organizations caring for registered Standardbreds that have been abandoned or subject to removal due to legal intervention.

Full Circle is an initiative that connects two or more people with a shared concern for a horse with the purpose of assisting that horse if or when it is ever needed. Anyone who wants to be contacted if a registered Standardbred needs help at any time in their life can enroll.

The USTA’s Pleasure Horse program allows a horse owner to designate and protect a horse that they are selling or giving away for non-racing purposes with their intention that the horse will no longer be raced and/or bred. Pleasure Registration is final and irreversible.

To read more on the USTA’s Life After Racing programs, click [here](#).

The Safe Act of 2019 was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 4, 2020, by Representative Janice Schakowsky (D-IL).

To read the complete text of the SAFE Act of 2019, click [here](#).

—*USTA communications department*



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RE: Canada's new Clenbuterol rules

My opinion on this ruling ([full story here](#)) is that it is not disappointing at all. I thought Mark Casse's story about how Clenbuterol is being abused was very compelling. I believe that most trainers including myself agree with Bob McIntosh and Anthony (MacDonald) and haven't used it in years for fear of getting a positive test. We have been getting along fine without it so if we can eliminate the abuse to our horses and our sport that is going on its well worth it. I also have to question the wisdom of writing and putting forward this opinion especially after the ruling has been made.

HEADLINE-Harness horse trainers want to keep using banned drug that is suspected of being abused to enhance horses performance. Not the kind of publicity we need!!

—*Jack Darling / Cambridge, ON*

Fingerprinting needs to be abolished

With COVID-19 paralyzing the racing industry, it would be appropriate to examine one standard used by every state: fingerprinting. Please tell me who at this time wants to be touched to get finger printed? The answer is no one, especially with social distancing because of the Covid-19.. I also would like to know why is finger printing necessary? We use drivers licences and social security numbers for identification, is it is because horse owners and trainers are bank robbers or felons? It would be nice to hear what the racing commissions wants other than money for finger printing. What has fingerprinting accomplished?

I hope at this time common sense will prevail.

—*John M Stonack / Allenwood, NJ*

No qualifiers? No harness racing

Ray Schnittker ([full story here](#)) shows once again how little he cares about the customers who enable him to make a living racing standardbreds. The qualifiers he loathes are what separates harness racing fans from thoroughbreds fans.

If he wants our game to be like thoroughbred racing, I see no reason why there should be harness racing at all. Then he tries to sell the notion that the reason harness racing in America is less popular than in France is because they don't waste time with qualifiers. Anyone else think that this is our problem? Plus, anybody who thinks thoroughbred workout times are accurate needs a check-up from the neck up. I know I play harness racing a lot less since we see horses racing with layoffs of over a month. Players are clueless as to their readiness to race. In fact, I would like to see harness racing go in a different direction. I would like to see qualifiers from all tracks available online. All that is needed is for the Harness Racing Commission's office to...

Silly me. I tried to slip the Harness Racing Commission Office by you guys as if harness racing was an actual business.

—*Gil Winston / Manalapan, NJ*

Feedback on the Dream Pace

Don't know how my esteemed colleague Jerry Connors did his "dream race" ([full story here](#)) but my race of the decade was done this way:

I simply drew post positions then lined them up card like around an oval table and let each horse move the way their style and positioning dictated. As it was, Cardigan Bay wound up with the perfect second over trip and was along in a three horse photo.

Romeo Hanover fastest out of the gate got the lead but was pressured by Tarquinius into the second quarter. Meadow Skipper of course got parked the mile from his outside post while pocket sitting Bret Hanover shook loose inside Romeo in deep stretch as third over Overtrick was flying on the far outside.

Change the positioning and most likely a different result.

In the one I did for *Hub Rail Magazine*, I had to make them finish as the voting dictated and there were some horses that unfortunately had been omitted while one or two were not quite at the level at the omitted.

In this case, I assigned post positions and ran the race multiple times until I could arrive at a plausible outcome in terms of the actual finish.

I don't remember who won that one!

Kudos to Jerry Collins for a dream race well done!

—*Bob Marks / Florida*

More feedback on the Dream Pace

From our readers on the Dream Pace:

Wiggle It Jiggle It getting a Yannick trip and nipping Somebeachsomewhere, with John Campbell giving Real Desire a perfect drive for third.

—Mike Sentiwany

Won The West better than most of those.

—Jeff Kantzer

I would not argue with anything except the finish. The Beach wins in my opinion! Fun to think about though!

—Fred Noiles

How could anyone leave Shartin N out of this dream race? The only mare in history to win Horse of the year, at 7 years old no less. A lifetime mark of 1:46.4 that tops five of the boys in your dream race. Common sense says she deserves to be in there. The only reason she didn't rank up there in earnings is because the girls purses aren't as big. I'd stack Shartin N up against all of these great champions. You missed the boat on this one.

—Gary Coggins

You leave out FOILED AGAIN ??? Wow !!!

You get the flash in the pan Roy to drive McWicked when Magic Man set a then 1:46 1/5 WR with CAMBEST at this track - fubar!!

Also, if not Magic Man, why not PALONE, DUNN, MCCARTHY, or HENNESSEY / ANDY MILLER ?

I did like your race call & A B Miki a great horse, but ask Campbell, Pierce, D. Miller, and Gingras if they could choose "Beach" Would they?

—Bryan Boughton

This was so great. The breakdown of the horses, the thrilling calls at each quarter, the stirring stretch duel, the amazing finish. Then the interviews with the drivers. The best line was Ron Pierce could go back to the mountains. HaHa.

—“Jim”

Lather up was given too much credit. He was never better than Wiggle It Jiggleit. There cannot be a great race the last two decades without Foiled Again. They did not give him \$7 million. The way you ran the race was wrong with Yannick driving Wiggle, would have the front.

—Robin Roll

How much did the trifecta pay?

—Don Neuwirth

Come on, how can Foiled be an AE? Real Desire over Foiled? Captaintreacherous over Foiled? Am surprised you guys would even consider this race without him in it. I would have assigned posts to make the race more evenly matched. Would have been more interesting to have an announcer call the race.

—Phil Collura

Fantastic job, and when I glanced through the field, my eyes went to the horse who I always thought had the biggest turn of foot and the most impressive to me. That's right, I had \$50 win and place on the 6, Always be Mikki. :)

Was a very good read, nice job with the race call. During these tough times, put a smile on my face. Now if my all-time favorite, the iron horse, Hot Lead (1996? Meadowlands Pace winner with Georgie Brennan) had been in the race, I'd have probably ripped up my tickets but would have loved hearing "here comes the iron horse, Hot Lead, charging down the center of the track" one more time!

—Jim Krally

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