



Winning is in their blood.
What is in their joints?

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE](#)

Friday, April 24, 2020

Despite best efforts, Meadowlands will not return to racing on May 1

To make up for lost dates, The Big M may race in the fall.

by Bill Finley

The goal of re-opening the Meadowlands on May 1 is no longer feasible, track owner Jeff Gural admitted earlier this week. Gural said there is now no timeline as to when the track would re-open, but he hopes some of the dates lost to the COVID-19 pandemic can be made up later this year.

In an April 8 press release, the Meadowlands set May 1 as a target date for re-opening. No official statement has been made since regarding when the track can start racing again and Gural declined to give a new date, adding "I hope we can race again sometime in May."

The Meadowlands last raced March 14.

"It's up to the governor," Gural said of New Jersey governor Phil Murphy. "We have a plan in place that we think will follow all the rules out there about the virus. But we can't do anything until we get the governor's blessing. We are waiting to get some guidance from his office. I have talked to people in the governor's office and they are waiting for things to settle down before they make any decisions."

New Jersey has been one of the states hit hardest by COVID-19. On Thursday, Murphy reported that the state had recorded 98,989 cases of COVID-19 and that there had been 5,368 deaths.

"Yes, this has been frustrating," Gural said. "But it's important to keep things in perspective. People are dying."

The Meadowlands is scheduled to end its meet on Sept. 19, after which the track would play host to thoroughbred racing through Nov. 21. Harness racing would resume Nov. 27.

The thoroughbred meet was expected to include dirt

In today's HRU

Hambletonian Society nominations appear to be on par following April payment deadlines **page 3**

Remembering the days when PEDs were allowed, thoughts on whether some horsemen lack flair, a guess as to why thoroughbreds are still racing and explaining the success of GooGooGaga **page 5**

Top races at Aby today and Saturday **page 8**

Matt Bax on being at home with horses **page 9**



BEST BET
for your mare

ALL BETS OFF
p, 2, 1:50f, 3, 1:48.3f, 1:48, BT1:46.2 (\$3,186,658)

Bred more than
150 TOP MARES
IN 2019

BETTORS DELIGHT'S
Richard & Fastest Son

Seelster Farms.COM
BOOK NOW [CLICK HERE!](#)

ENTER TODAY



New! JUNE MIXED SALE

Monday, June 22, 2020 · Michiana Event Center, Shipshewana Indiana

***ENTRIES ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED
AND WILL CLOSE ON MAY 11TH
(or earlier when full)***

“Our goal was to find a date that we felt would be late enough that we could make it work, while still early enough to fit the needs of both buyers and sellers of all classes of racehorses. We will take every precaution possible to have this be a safe environment, and we are optimistic about getting back to racing and back to business.”

—Jeff Fought

In addition to all the amenities normally provided at the Fall Midwest Sale, including 50% payment of proceeds paid the day of the sale, we will offer in person bidding and online bidding.

For more information or to enter today, please visit midwestauctionco.com, email jeff.fought@midwestauctionco.com or call 260.463.1649.



racing for the first time since 2009, a reason why the meet was set to be longer than it had been in recent years. To be able to run on the dirt requires changing the track over, which is a considerable expense. Considering the economic climate, Gural doesn't expect the thoroughbred interests to go ahead with plans to race at the Meadowlands in the fall, at least on the dirt. If the track is not converted, harness racing can continue without a stoppage.

"We would like to race in the fall," Gural said. "I don't think the thoroughbreds will race there on the dirt. We were originally going to switch over but I don't think that's going to happen in light of the crisis. We would run to make up some of the dates by racing right through in the fall. It's common sense. Neither one of us has any money and it's expensive to convert the track."

Gural said that when racing resumes it is unlikely that there will be any major changes to the stakes schedule or to purses. The \$200,000 Cutler Memorial is scheduled for May 16 and two stakes that are part of the Graduate Series are also scheduled to be held in May.

He is also waiting to find out when racing can resume at

the two other tracks he owns, Tioga Downs and Vernon Downs, both of which are in New York. Vernon was scheduled to open April 17 and the Tioga meet was set to begin May 2. Like New Jersey, New York has been hard hit by the coronavirus and strict stay at home rules remain in place.

It appears that it may take longer for the two New York tracks to open than it will for the Meadowlands. Gural said that racing can't resume at the two upstate New York tracks until the casinos are allowed to open.

"Once they give us the go-ahead to open the casinos, we will open the tracks," he said. It's just a question of whether they let us open the casinos or not. Without the casino revenue there is no money for purses."

Because social distancing is particularly difficult in a casino environment, it doesn't appear that the state's casinos will be allowed to operate any time soon.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



HARNESS RACING UPDATE

About Harness Racing Update

Harness Racing Update is owned by HRU Publications of Millwood, NY and will publish Fridays and Sundays from fall through late spring. HRU will add Saturday editions early summer through fall, publishing 3 days per week, and will add editions throughout the year as major news breaks.

Editor: Dave Briggs

Production: Brian Fuller

Graphic Design, Ads & Placement: Lisa Bihuniak

Advertising Sales: Wilma Van Vaerenbergh | contact_for_ad_sales/questions

Results & Stats Editor: Lisa Duong

Founder: Bill Finley

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

Get in touch with HRU

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

Editor/News Stories: editor@harnessracingupdate.com

Advertising: advertising@harnessracingupdate.com

Customer Service: customerservice@harnessracingupdate.com

Advertising info & rates:

If you are interested in advertising with us [please contact Wilma](#)

WESTERN FAIR AGRIPLEX LONDON, ONTARIO

LONDON

Selected
YEARLING SALE

Saturday, October 17 &
Sunday, October 18, 2020

LAST CALL FOR ENTRIES!

ENTRY DEADLINE:
APRIL 30th

A collaboration between  Forest City Standardbred Sales Inc. and  STANDARDBRED CANADA Standardbred Canada.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION

BETWEEN THE LINES



with BRETT STURMAN

Hambletonian Society nominations appear to be on par following April payment deadlines

by Brett Sturman

The decision announced by the Hambletonian Society to keep the April 15 payment deadline intact for stakes and early-closers that the organization administers was one that sparked a hotly contested debate in recent weeks. It became a question of what flexibility – if any – should have been allowed in modifying the payment due date, weighed against the increasingly difficult world economic climate.

In keeping with the date as scheduled, there was an intent to maintain the value of the stakes races at accustomed purse levels while at the same time not trying to alienate anyone with financial hardship who had made nominating payments up to that point. With the April 15 date having now passed a little more than a week ago, early indications do not seem to show the type of drop in nominations that one may have expected considering the circumstances.

“I’ve got to be quite vague, but the only thing I can tell you

at this stage, based on preliminary numbers, is that our payments held up remarkably well,” said Hambletonian president John Campbell. “This is really preliminary, because the mail is terrible in both countries (U.S. and Canada) and has been whether we have a crisis or not, so we always have to wait on for a little while after the 15th because it’s amazing how even with postmarks of the 14th and 15th how long it takes to get to the office sometimes.

“Just based on our numbers we’ve seen so far we’re very thankful for what they show. There’s an attrition that we have a scale for where we go back over the last few years, and the attrition is from February to March and March to April and it’s pretty consistent. It varies a bit from year to year, but not much. So, we have some numbers there from this year and our attrition is going to be in line with previous years.”

Provided the final payment tallies are consistent with Campbell’s early observations, the 2- and 3-year-old stakes associated with the Hambletonian Society shouldn’t see a significant purse reduction when those races do run. Because of the how these purses are tied largely to payments, in addition to stake sponsors, there was concern prior that had nominating payments been substantially reduced that the purse of each stake would have suffered directly as a result.

It certainly counts for something to have an idea of what purses for the stakes races will be, but it still remains completely unknown as to when – or even if – those races will occur.

Even with his stature, Campbell remains in the same camp as any of us when it comes to knowing what comes next. “I wish I knew, but nobody knows. It’s basically all up to the numbers and statistics that each state and local health


WOODBINE STANDARD BREED EARLY
PICK

**\$75,000
GUARANTEED**

**15%
TAKEOUT**

**SELECT THE WINNERS OF THE FIRST
FIVE CONSECUTIVE RACES**

#BetWoodbineSB
Know When To Take The Reins. ResponsibleGambling.org

 **WOODBINE
STANDARD BREED**

officials are watching and so I don't know, and nobody knows at this point," said Campbell. "It is really frustrating for everybody, not having at least some idea, and we just don't. I honestly believe it'll be a staggered approach to racing where some jurisdictions will start racing before others based on their state or province, but I can't say when they'll start."

To this point, the harness racing stakes season hasn't yet reached the point of being decimated, though the amount of stakes postponements and cancellations are beginning to pile up. In Ontario, the postponement of the North America Cup was announced over a week ago and yesterday came the announcement that the Confederation Cup will be re-targeted towards a September timeline that aligns with other stakes in the industry at that time.

The harness racing stakes season already operates on a tight schedule in normal circumstances. Nearly every week between June through October is loaded with stakes action and with only so many races to select from, connections for horses have to pick and choose as it is. Should additional stakes races continue to be postponed from their initially scheduled date, it could become increasingly difficult to reschedule those into already narrow windows.

Campbell and the Hambletonian Society are actively monitoring the stakes calendar, but the need to make actual changes at this juncture hasn't had to occur yet. "The Society with David Janes, our stake manager, we've had three stakes so far on our calendar. Two were cancelled and one was postponed," said Campbell. "The one that was postponed was the Currier & Ives 3-year-old trotting fillies which The Meadows will look to slot in somewhere later in the year and we will obviously work with them to do that. And the Dexter Cup and Reynolds were cancelled, so our next stakes that we administer are not until the end of June. So, we have a little breathing room now, but it'll be a constant watch, obviously, with the calendar moving forward and looking at schedules later in the year."

Being over the April payment hurdle, horsepeople should have more confidence in knowing the kind of stake money they'll be racing for. Now, the question becomes if and when they'll be able to race for it.

What about the claimers?

This time of year it's easy to focus on the stakes horses, but the overnight conditioned horses and claimers is what still

makes up the overwhelming majority of the horses. With regards to the claimers, should special considerations be given when racing resumes? Look at it this way. If you're an everyday owner or trainer who has worked and incurred months of expenses with a claimer during this shutdown, does it seem fair to have a horse be claimed away from you in your first start back?

At Pocono Downs for example, there was a slew of claiming activity through their claiming series right up to when racing was stopped. Perhaps one solution could be for tracks to offer race conditions exclusively for claimers for some period of time, but without the ability to claim those horses.

If I own a horse that raced for a claiming price of \$12,500 immediately prior to the shutdown, then that horse could be allowed to race in claiming races for a tag of no lower than \$12,500. This way, owners could race their claimers to re-coup some of the missed earnings while not having the fear of immediately losing the horse. It seems like a win-win idea for owners and for competitive racing.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



**HRU WANTS YOUR
BEST FOAL PHOTOS
FOR OUR NEW FEATURE**

Foal of the Week

SEND PHOTOS AND AS MUCH INFORMATION
ABOUT THE FOAL & FAMILY AS POSSIBLE TO:
DAVE BRIGGS · HRUEDITOR@GMAIL.COM

HRU
HARNESS RACING
UPDATE



Remembering the days when PEDs were allowed, thoughts on whether some horsemen lack flair, a guess as to why thoroughbreds are still racing and explaining the success of GooGooGaga

by Ron Gurfein

Tidbits: BEWARE of Greeks bearing gifts? Maybe. Of hospitals opening prematurely for elective surgery? For sure.

For example, just last week we lost a great man and leader in our sport. Although if you read most of the obituaries you would never know the whole truth. Phil Langley went into the hospital for by-pass surgery and contracted COVID-19 while a patient. His subsequent passing may not have been solely caused by Covid-19, but it may well have been a contributing factor.

I was never a fancier of anyone putting a knife in me for any reason. A few months from my 80th birthday, everything in my body was there the day I was born with the exception of one tooth implant.

Please listen to an old fool. If you need elective surgery make the appointment the day after Yankee Stadium has 50,000 fans in attendance or Madison Square Garden has 20,000. Better to be safe than sorry.

* * *

The public airing of ill feeling initiated by Paul Fontaine against Joe Faraldo was a total ridiculous waste of time. If you feel the need to air your dirty laundry be a man and call the guy with your problem, don't insult him in an open forum.



The Guru's cat Ike.

I am not going to get into innocence or guilt in any matter as am tired of being attacked. But this still is America. We stand by the law that states: innocent until proven guilty. The fact a man of Joe Faraldo's stature should be asked to resign because he had horses with a man not proven guilty of anything is a sin.

* * *

I know that everyone is not an animal lover, but I will say that the existence of my two Foxhounds (Ruby and Stella) and my two cats (Jax and Ike) have truly made my existence more pleasurable during this time of isolation.

All four are rescue animals and I would suggest that if you are on the verge of psychological crisis you consider saving an animal. I promise a new addition will change the entire program of your lifestyle for the better.

* * *

Peaky Blinders season 4 was exceptional. If you got a little bored in season 3 as I did, skip to 4. It's amazing.

I have not read a new book worthy of suggesting as a great read in a year but I did read an older novel that I loved. The



Jax.

Charm School by Nelson DeMille. The finale is spectacular.

Some good news. The ride north will be dirt cheap. Gas prices are under \$1 in Georgia, South Carolina and Kentucky. FYI the cheapest gas in the world is in Venezuela \$0.02 (two cents) per gallon.

* * *

I have been a Miami Dolphin fan for 40 years, but I must admit the Florida Patriots. (Tampa Bucs) are getting stronger by the day. Brady and Gronc are a team by themselves.

Rich Williams asks: We always hear about drug trainers in the U.S. I see horses going to Europe and Canada and stepping up big time. One even came from your barn. Can you explain Delicious, Propulsion and Musical Rhythm?

To begin with, all of the above were in great form when they were sold. Delicious came off a 1:52 victory over Maven, Musical Victory won a non-winners of five at Pocono Downs in 1:56 and Propulsion won four of his last five starts winning in 1:52, last quarter in 26 seconds.

On top of that, the new trainers were both world class conditioners that I certainly would not consider drug men. Musical Rhythm went to Benoit Baillargeon, and Delicious and Propulsion went to Daniel Reden.

All three horses had good pedigree and many horses radically improve with age. Propulsion was a \$350,000 yearling who obviously had problems early on. He didn't make a start for money at 2 and only had eight starts at 3 so he truly had a right to be on the upswing.

Delicious was always a good filly and she was lightly staked and I raced her in easy company at 2 and 3 as she was so small. She had a major upside. I begged Jerry Silva to protect her to \$200,000 at Harrisburg because I was sure the best was yet to come. Needless to say they never made a bid and she only brought half that amount.

Musical Rhythm is another story. Benoit certainly did a wonderful training job and maybe just a new home was enough to make the improvement. All the foals of Musical Victory were either mares or geldings. Musical Rhythm was the only stallion and since all his brothers were gelded it's make me think he may have been a bit fussy and the change of scenery had a positive effect.

Tony Alagna trained the other two and he just won three Breeders Crowns last fall so I sincerely doubt that the aforementioned missed a thing.

Paul London asks: GooGooGaga has become a dominant sire in Sweden. Why so much success in Europe and none here? Maybe a pacing bred trotter is the way to go.

Basically, he was unsupported in the U.S. He was bred to only 11 mares in his last season in America and their quality was not near to what he was bred to in Sweden.

The two top 3-year-old horses he had in Sweden were out of good mares. One was out of Dreams (also the name of my favorite Italian white wine from Friuli) a Victory Dream mare from the great Nan's Catch and the other out of a French mare Orlando Vici.

Many great trotters pace. If you watch the replay of the Hambletonian that Mack Lobell won he paced right after the wire. Self Possessed switched to the pace in the middle of the stretch in the Beacon Course. My good mare Franconia always paced to the gate. It's not unusual at all. My thanks to my friend Lina Alm for assistance with this question.

Bobby Short asks: I am your age. Why when we started in the business did we not hear of drug trainers like we do today?

I love this question because the answer is so simple. I will take a wildly educated guess that 80 per cent of the PEDs from when I started in the sport in the 1960s were perfectly legal. To give you some idea, if someone said I could race on

the Grand Circuit tomorrow but with the 1960 guidelines and everyone else will have to be under the 2020 rules I am certain if I had decent stock I would be Trainer of the Year.

Today's trainers are not permitted anabolic steroids, not allowed any cortisone based drugs. Those two alone are more than enough to give me a ridiculous edge.

I certainly don't demean the great names of yesteryear, but I am not naive enough to think that Dancer and Haughton didn't have Dr. Steele or Dr. Brennan have free reign on their barn.

I was a firm believer in Equipoise, perfectly legal and it had a profound effect on the strength and endurance of the horse. I won many races because of the performance-enhancing qualities of the steroid. Unfortunately, training Grand Circuit type horses it was not advisable as it would compromise fertility.

I will not name names but I know for certain that many Grand Circuit outfits' horses lived on weekly doses of anabolic steroids.

Markku Vartiainen (trainer and good friend from Paris) asks:
Why is it that thoroughbred horses are racing and standardbreds are not?

I really can't say for sure, but I will guess that runners don't have to warm up and they are not herded together in a cluttered environment i.e.: a PADDOCK.

The thoroughbred can come from the barn to the saddling area all in open air and then race providing ample room for social distancing.

Also TVG is a major format for wagering on the runners and are basically pathetic when it comes to knowledgeable information on our sport. With no fans in the stand and casinos closed we would have an uphill battle unless it was a major venue like the Meadowlands, and I assume they will be the first back on track.

Gural and company will conceive a way to race that supports social distancing.

Tom Santoro asks: When you watch a driver/trainer interview do you wish they had more flair? Example: Campbell and LaChance were technical but lacking something. Tetrick seems bashful and bored. Coleman is way too forthright. Erv Miller sounds like he should be teaching a dry wall class. You are right when you say Gingras is intelligent and a good speaker for the game.



Stella and Ruby.

Picky, picky, picky. It is not easy to do television for the average person. Before you criticize CONSIDER THE SOURCE.

Most of the trainers and drivers grew up where there were more cows than people.

I personally did some television when I was 11 years old and I still think I was awful when I started doing it at the Meadowlands in the 1980s. It took me years to become comfortable with a microphone in my hand. Now I love it.

I really think you are micro-managing your thought process. I really disagree when it comes to John Campbell. Is he exciting with the mic in his hand? No. However, he is very bright and very professional delivering a story or a message. I would give him very high marks as a public speaker.

As for Michel Lachance, English is his second language and I think, that said, he is excellent on camera. He was training and driving horses at the age we were in high school. Erv Miller is a quiet Amish man, but highly intelligent. I would guess that he was in his 40s before he ever appeared on camera.

Now that I have shot all your theories to hell, don't bail on me, your questions always evoke interest.

Thank so much for all the kind words. Please keep the questions coming in and have a wonderful week...STAY SAFE.

Have a question for The Guru?

Email him at GurfTrot@aol.com.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story





Top races at Aby today and Saturday

by Thomas Hedlund

Harness racing continues to roll in Sweden and even Norway has opened the gates despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Åby racetrack in Sweden plays host to some really great horses today (Friday) and tomorrow (Saturday). Eliminations for the \$199,000 Kungapokalen and Drottningpokalen will be held on the today's race card and the final of \$199,000 Paralympiattravet the day after.

Green Manalishi (Muscle Hill) arrived in Stefan Melander's barn a couple of weeks ago and the 4-year-old top trotter will face the distance 1.3 miles from post one in his elimination for Kungapokalen, the race for 4-year-old colts and geldings.

Green Manalishi's debut on European territory is interesting, of course and the fact that the Courant Stable owned trotter will face several opponents with high potential makes this start even more spectacular. Normally, Green Manalishi belongs among the 4-year-olds that will hit the final and even win it and it's indefinably announced that the horse will be aimed for the Elitloppet in the end of May.

[Entries to the race card tonight at Åby can be found here.](#)

Saturday's card is also top class. The Paralympiattravet final over 1.3 miles will most probably be a speedy one since the fastest leaving horses have drawn the best numbers behind the gate. Disco Volante (Scarlet Knight) from one will be challenged from outside horses like Cyber Lane (Raja Mirchi), Billie de Montfort (Jasmin de Flore), Elian Web (Like A Prayer) and Next Direction (Orlando Vici).

First choice might be Milliondollarrhyme (Ready Cash) and Fredrik B Larsson. The duo did a great effort in the first start of the year in the elimination that Elian Web won at Romme racetrack two weeks ago.

Ten trotters chase the trophy in Paralympiattravet and 10 horses can really win.

Paralympiattravet 2020

Horse – Driver

Disco Volante – Ulf Ohlsson

Cyber Lane – Johan Untersteiner

Billie de Montfort – Björn Goop

Elian Web – Jorma Kontio

Milliondollarrhyme – Fredrik B Larsson

Next Direction – Iikka Nurmonen

Looking Superb – Erik Adielsson

Velvet Gio – Carl Johan Jepson

Gareth Boko – Marc Elias

Sorbet – Örjan Kihlström

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



HRU EDITIONS FROM THE PAST



Previous HRU editions are available any
time for FREE on the HRU website

www.harnessracingupdate.com/archives

HOME

SUBSCRIBE

PAST EDITIONS

ADVERTISING

ABOUT US

January

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

30

GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVE



with CHRIS LOMON

Matt Bax on being at home with horses

The son of noted Ontario trainer John Bax said he is relishing the opportunity to share his passion with his young children.

by Chris Lomon

It's a scene very familiar to Matt Bax.

Over the last five or so weeks, nearly every day, 5-year-old Elliott Bax and her 2-year-old brother Tucker can be found helping tend to the over two dozen standardbreds stationed at Bax Stables in Campbellville, ON.

For their trainer/driver/owner father, it's always a welcome sight, something that's taken on even more meaning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

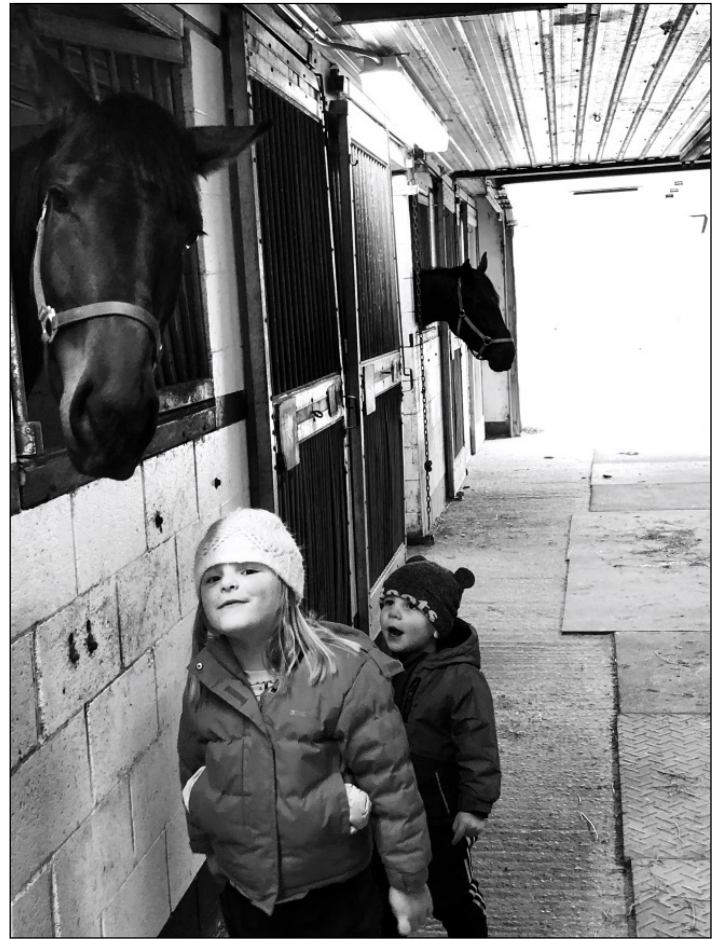
"My wife is working from home, so I take the kids down to the barn every morn and they run around," said Bax. "Their job is to feed the horses carrots and fill the water pails. I guess watching them is the only other thing, along with watching Netflix, that we're doing these days.

"If you are looking for a silver lining with everything going on in the world today, it would be getting to spend more time with my family. Normally, the kids would be at school or in daycare. Having them running around the farm is pretty special. It might be stressful times right now, but down the road, you'll look back and realize you had that time and those moments with them."

Just like the times Bax had with his father, John, one of standardbred racing's most decorated trainers.

Seeing his own children enjoying their time in the barn prompted the younger Bax to reminisce about his own childhood experiences around the horses.

"I remember always running around the barn and doing little jobs around there. I always loved it because I was big into sports. Any rep sport there was – whether it was football, hockey or soccer – I was always on the road. I wasn't around a whole lot when I was younger, but the aspect of racing being competitive, all the planning involved, in both



Courtesy Matt Bax

Matt Bax's children, Elliott and Tucker helping in the barn.

the short and long term, it really resonated with me. I think this is a sport that draws in people who are competitive at heart. A lot of sports people love racing."

Even when he was somewhat removed from horse racing, Bax's affinity for it never waned.

Not even during his university days in Guelph, ON.

"My parents told me they didn't care what I did in life, but I had to get a piece of paper. Whether it was a one-year diploma, a four-year degree, I had to get that piece of paper to fall back on. I scraped my way into university and through university, and got my degree. But I remember the moment I wanted to be in racing. I was in my first year and it was March break. I was looking forward to getting home because it was the time you start training the 2-year-olds. They're starting to go faster, and the weather – it's those nice days in the spring. And I remember getting to the farm and thinking, 'What's that smell?' It was the smell of sweat on the horses. And I thought, 'That reminds me of home and I miss that.' Then I realized that this life was for me. It was a part of me more than I realized."

In 2010, Bax officially joined the standardbred world as a trainer. Two years later, he was in the driver's seat. Soon after, he added owner to his resume.

Ten years after it all began, the 30-year-old is still feeling right at home in a sport that continues to fuel his competitive spirit.

"You get each horse ready the best way you can. It's like you're a coach of a hockey team and you know the tendencies of each individual. Every one is different and you're trying to get the best out of each one. They're not all superstars, but they all have a role to play. If you can get the most value out of them, at the end of the day, the owners will be happy, you'll have a little fun, and then you get back out there again."

While he hasn't won his version of the Stanley Cup yet, Bax has still celebrated some memorable winning moments over his career.

One of the biggest highlights, to date, came in the form of a \$1,500 purchase.

"I bought a horse, Balance Squared, off my uncle. She broke a couple of jog carts on him... she was a very difficult horse. She was a double cross of Balanced Image. We broke her for my uncle and sent her back to him. She was some of my first drives. I drove her twice and sold her for a little more money, and bought a yearling the next year with my dad. Her name is Random Majority and she won her first three Grassroots races. She made a little money and we sold her."

With the money they earned from the sale, father and son purchased a share in Hemi Seelster.

The now 8-year-old trotting son of Holiday Road, bred by Seelster Farms (Lucan, ON), has recorded 33 career wins from 138 starts.

In 2015, Hemi Seelster pulled off a 76-1 shocker in the final of the Goodtimes Stakes, crossing the wire nearly two lengths in front in a time of 1:54.

The win was even more special considering John Bax trained and sometimes drove the horse the stake was named after, a Hall of Fame trotter – inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 2004 – who won 50 of 244 starts, along with 130 top-three finishes, and earned over \$2 million.

"I feel like that victory by Hemi Seelster is a very special one, considering what Goodtimes has meant to our family, and to my dad. That was a big moment for me."

There have also been challenging times.

One that quickly comes to Bax's mind is something, he noted, that would likely be found at the top, or near the top, of almost every standardbred horseperson's list.

"It's a tough business and it requires seven days a week of your time. Before I got into it, I thought, 'I have a degree and I can become an accountant.' There's nothing wrong with being an accountant, but I would say it's an easier way of life than having to work every day of the week. But my wife reminds me that I enjoy this sport and when I go to work, it doesn't feel like a job. A lot of people don't get a crack at their in their lifetime, so I'm happy I gave it a shot."

Amid the struggles of current times, including racing being put on pause at numerous racetracks across North America, Bax remains unwavering in his passion for horses and horse racing.

When live racing does get the green light, he'll be ready. So, too, will the string of horses at Bax Stables.

"We have 26 in training in now, 17 of them are 2-year-olds, eight are 3-year-olds, and there's one older horse. Most of the barn, it's been business as usual, especially with the 2-year-olds. Dad and I sat down and talked about what we should be aiming the 3-year-olds for. We had a couple ready and we had a couple more than ready to qualify. We said that we'll manage them each differently, and try to have them all ready for May 1, but I'm thinking that might be the second week of May now. That's tough part, trying to know when to have them ready. You kind of have to have them close."

"We have a really nice group of younger horses. A lot of the owners went out and spent some big money. There are some very nice individuals. (Owner/breeders) Al Libfeld and Marvin Katz bought a Kadabra filly, Up And Ready, for \$300,000 at Lexington. She's not very nice to deal with in the barn or the paddock, but she's all business on the track. When a horse comes at her on the track, she pins her ears and she goes. When they have that competitive instinct – that's something you can't tell when they're at the sale – it's something that puts a smile on your face when you get them home."

For now, Bax's biggest smile will be reserved for the moments spent with his young children around the barn.

"It's something you never tire of seeing, and it's something that brings you back to your younger days. It's a nice connection to have."

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



A primer on handicapping and betting on Australian harness racing

With no North American harness racing to wager on, yet, here's what you need to know to bet on Australian racing.

by Jerry Connors

As we continue without any pari-mutuel harness racing on which to bet in North America, wagering services, through computer or phone, do continue to offer up some harness action – although “the rules” are a good deal different than what we are used to in the already-challenging North American game.

I have my betting service through Penn National, as in Pennsylvania we were (at least at the time) supposed to sign up with the most local service provided. And through Penn National, I have been able to see some Australian harness racing cards, and I have sought to try to come to an understanding of their racing and their fields before the races go – trying to keep sharp my handicapping skills (betting we'll talk about at the end).

So here is a primer on what I have learned about the process of deciphering the form of Australian harness racing.

1. What we see in North America is Australia's daytime cards. The east coast of Australia is 14 hours “ahead” of East Coast time, meaning that if their races are to start at 10 p.m. here, it's already noon the next day Down Under. Thus, we see the daytime cards. If they were sending nighttime cards that started at say 7:30 p.m., they would be starting at 5:30 a.m. here, and with all due respects to followers of South African racing, that's just not prime time for western hemisphere bettors.

2. The schedule of races for the entire country, and all kinds of handicapping information, is available at www.harness.org.au. This site is the equivalent of the USA and Standardbred Canada main sites. You click on “Racing”

then “Form Guides,” their term for what we would call program pages, and then click on the track you're interested in. You can print out the program pages/Form Guides for the card (they call a day of racing a “meeting”) or for certain races. We'll explain how to read the Form Guide – the most important part of handicapping – later on.

There are also some tip sheets, with good analysis, available. Click on “Punting,” then “Punter's Corner,” and you can take your pick. The one I have found most useful is “iForm,” if it is available at your track – it puts out a morning line (the Form Guide does not), does some race analysis, and then gives an informed opinion as to where the horse is likely to be placed during the early part of the race. “Speed Maps,” which appears to be for Queensland racing, gives the likely position of the horses “at the bell” (a signal that there is one circuit of the track to go).

Under the “Racing” section, a click on the “State Premierships” will give you the leading trainers and drivers at both the city meets and the “country meets.” Which of the six Australian “states” the track you're following is located comes right after its listing on “Form Guides.” (You'll learn a little Australian geography, too.)

3. Things that are totally different in the operations of an Australian track. Upon looking at the “Form Guides,” you'll see very few horses are racing back at the track at which they last competed. Many tracks race only once or twice a week (part of the reason is that some also have courses for runners, and a few even for dog tracks!) It can be noted here that it's not unusual to see three foes from “Track A” last time out matched together again at “Track B” in their next start.

The biggest obvious difference in the actual contests is that races Down Under are carded at many distances. The distance of both the race is printed at the top of every race. For equivalency, 1609 meters is one mile, and 2000 meters is almost 1¼ miles, etc. Sometimes you'll see “1 1/8 miles,”



RESULTS & REPLAYS



US & CANADIAN RESULTS/REPLAYS AVAILABLE IN EACH ONLINE EDITION

www.harnessracingupdate.com

which is about 1800 meters (an 1/8 of a mile being about 200 meters).

The circumference of the track is obviously important to the racing, and is also listed at the top of the page. Tabcorp Park Menangle is the biggest track both figuratively and literally at 1400 meters (7/8 of a mile). Most tracks are usually half-milers (800m) or five-eighths milers (1000m), although don't be surprised if you see a variance of 50m plus or minus from those standard sizes. Some tracks have "passing lanes" ("sprint lanes") and some don't – that fact is noted at the top of the Form.

We should talk about the starting of the races. Most are "mobile start," using a starting gate, noted as (MS). There are also "standing starts" (SS), usually in races involving trotters and races where horses are actually handicapped distance at the start (10m-20m-30m)! There are the expected rambunctious horses, but most of the horses are used to these "tape starts," and don't throw a horse out because he has to overcome a 30-meter disadvantage – he's starting behind because it's a handicap, and he is often the most accomplished horse in the field.

Menangle Park goes 10-wide, but many of the other tracks go 6- or 7-wide – this information is at the top of the Form Guide. Since Aussie races often have 9 and 10 horses, it's not uncommon to see six on the gate and three or four trailing! Horses on the gate carry the designation "Fr1" (front) out to "Fr7" if they go that wide, and "trailers" will show where they are in their tier – if you have an "Sr1" on a 7-wide track, it means the horses started behind the rail horse (what Western Fair would call PP8).

And since you won't learn the colors of most drivers that quickly (they are listed in the "Form Guide," in the unusual place of the third line on the left, while the driver is listed on the fourth line on the right), you'd be wise to have the colors of the saddle pads written nearby to help you follow the horses.

They have a uniform set of harness saddle pad colors – but they're not the North American pattern:

- 1 – red with white number
- 2 – black and white stripe with red number – the two red numbers (on 2 and 6) are hard to read
- 3 – white with black number
- 4 – blue with white number
- 5 – yellow with black number
- 6 – green with red number
- 7 – black with white number
- 8 – pink with black number
- 9 – light blue with black number
- 10 – blue/white/red with black number, like Neapolitan ice cream with blueberry instead of chocolate

4. The races will be about half an hour apart at a given track, and if two tracks are racing, they'll be on the same Sky Sports channel. Occasionally you'll even get thoroughbred racing thrown in.

5. Classification system. There will be maiden races, stakes preliminaries and finals and the like, but most of the races are written for horses who fit under a parameter established by the Australian authorities. The race on top of the stack next to my computer showed that that event was for horses rated between "50 to 58." (How they get to that figure is outside the scope of the story.) Sometimes it may say "up to 47," or the like.

Purses don't vary much within the structure of a given track, but they will vary from track to track. Class shifts are sometimes difficult to note; the tip sheets often can provide help there.

6. How the times of the races are reported. There is a **MAJOR** difference between what you will see as the times posted during and after a race, and how they are recorded in the Form Guide. It's important to know the difference – although one can be inferred from the other.

During a race, the first "split" (fractional) time will be for whatever distance is covered until the field reaches the point of a race where a mile (1600m really) is left; then the quarters for each succeeding 400m are reported. In a 2000 meter race, you might see fractions of



Harness Racing Update on Facebook

/HARNESSRACINGUPDATE



Harness Racing Update on Twitter

@HARNESSUPDATE



33.0-31.0-32.5-30.8-30.0 (timing is done in TENTHS). If it is a face at 2500 meters, the first fraction, for a half-mile plus a sixteenth, could read 69.7 for the 900 meters, and then “normal” fractions would be posted.

In the “Form Guide,” the times listed are the mile rate (the time divided by the distance, for average, then multiplied by the mile distance) of the contest, what the last half/800m was officially covered in, and then the same four “back fractions” as shown on TV. The horse’s individual clocking is not shown, except by implication when he wins the race (but they do show how many meters a horse was beaten, with three meters being a little more than a length, which “equals” 1/5 U.S. or 2/10 Aust.). Oh, and you’ll see the expression “shfhed,” which is “short half head,” what we would call a nose.

7. How to read the “Form Guide.” If you want to be a handicapper, you plunge into the Australian program. Here’s some help so you understand what you might see:

- THE TOP LINE IS THE **OLDEST** OF THE HORSE’S LAST FIVE RACES. The most recent is the last line – unless the horse hasn’t won within his last five starts, in which case the last line (the sixth) will be the line of his last victory. (I recently saw a race where the bottom line was from November 2016 – and the horse won!)

- The Australian racing season does not follow the calendar – it starts on Sept. 1 and goes through Aug. 31. The long strings of numbers under the horse’s breeding, breeder, and owners refer to the horse’s finishes in the current racing season on the right, and the year before to the left of them. An “s” indicates that a horse has been “spelled,” or laid off.

- Underneath are career starts-firsts-seconds-thirds, lifetime earnings, best mile rate, summary of this year’s and last year’s record, win and “place” percentage (in the Form, “place” includes 1-2-3s; in betting, it can mean something different), racing record with mobile gate, over the track, at this approximate distance (along with best mile rate at “the distance”).

- On the actual raceline from left to right: in bold is the

finish and the number of starters, track, date, distance, mobile or standing start, post position (read again about “Fr” and “Sr” near the end of section 3), track condition, purse and race condition (like in No.Am., sometimes instead of the type of race the racename is used – grrrrrrrrrr...), how many meters behind the horse finished. The odds of the horse are expressed in return to win for a unit of \$1; thus “\$2.30 fav” would mean that the horse was the 6-5 favorite the way “we talk”. Then the first and second horses in the race are listed unless “our horse” was 1-2, and then it lists the third, with the fractions of the race AS EXPRESSED IN THE “FORM GUIDE” (see above for distinction).

Lastly comes a comment about the horse’s performance, which uses a lot of jargon – the most common: “1 out – 1 back” being what we would call second-over, one off the rail and one behind the lead horse in that tier, the racecallers often shortening it to “1 and 1”; “swabbed” = tested; “pegs” = pylons = the inside.

8. Prior races. Charts of previous races, mostly with videos, are available through “Racing” / “Results,” and then going to the meeting for which you are looking. This can supplement your handicapping. At the end of the charts is a section called “Stewards’ Comments,” which we strongly advise not to try to figure out at risk of hurting your brain – translating these is like taking an upper-division course in graduate school. I’m not even going to tell you where the equivalencies of the almost 500 abbreviations used can be found. Watch the replay – you’ll save time and be better off, unless you’re switching to full-time Australian harness playing, in which case the detailed comments can be valuable.

9. How to handicap Australian harness racing. Well, I’ve been trying to handicap North American harness racing for 52 years now, and I’m still constantly learning new and better techniques in trying to figure things out. You think I have that much insight into Australian racing? Besides, the real fun of handicapping is that you do it yourself. No amount of green at the end of the race is better than the thought that



Harness Racing Update on YouTube

/HARNESSRACINGUPDATE





Have a great photo you would like to share?

editor@harnessracingupdate.com



“YES! I figured all of that out on my own!” (Some people may not agree with me.)

The basic principles you know about “our racing” and the successful handicapping (judgment of probability) remain the same in Down Under racing, with the distance factor added in – and the positions/lengths behind at the calls, a crucial part of my handicapping style, not available readily.

But to make three generalities, I'd say: a) **The closers look to have a bit better chance Down Under than they do in No.Am.** If you're not in the first three at the half here, often you have little shot; in Australia, perhaps because of the added distance, perhaps horses make what look to us to be early three-wide moves to give cover, and because horses tend to do better on the turns coming from behind. It will be tougher to figure out who will be where (see the tip sheets as mentioned), but don't count yourself out of it because you're not close approaching the last turn. And this is despite last halves and quarters often being quite quick, relatively speaking.

b) **Like thoroughbreds, and unlike harness racing over here, distance switches must be taken into account.** A horse who can post good finishes at a mile or 1750m may have trouble “stretching out” to a 2000+m event. Also, closers in longer races may be helped by getting away from an 800m (half-mile) track; some of the rough-gaited ones will be hampered less on the bends, and have a longer straightaway over which to rally.

c) **Bet the driver in the short-sleeved colors.** I was watching the warmups at one non-city meeting, and many of the drivers seemed to have the Eisenhower-like colors on top and white pants, all long-sleeved as if they might be year-round colors. Then I saw one driver go by with a streamlined one-piece driving colors suit, like most have over here – and he had short sleeves on, something no one else sported. I looked at the form and saw that the driver was Chris Alford – and I remembered he had once competed in the World Driving Championship. So my “inspection handicapping” had my eye drawn to a driver, not a horse, and it seemed Alford's horse, not out of it on the form, had a good chance,

[Here's a link to the race \(it's race 2, scroll down\).](#)

(Later did I find out that Alford has 7,000 career wins; if

you're looking him up, the local drivers' standings would have shown him to be the leading sulky-sitter on his circuit).

10. How to bet Australian harness racing. Betting, as always, is your reckoning of which horse(s) offer the best value in odds relative to the chances you evaluate them to have in this particular race. That's a universal. It's also why I tend to prefer bets like win and exacta, where they post the probable payoffs, allowing for recognition of “overlays.” You may prefer more exotic bets, but maybe caution might be a bit better upon dipping your toes into the Australian betting pool – at least to start.

One important thing to understand is the different meanings of the word “place” in betting Down Under (and in most parts of the world). “Place” could refer a 1-2 finish if 8 horses or less and 1-2-3 if 9 or more; there is no “show” betting in much of the world. My system offers win-place-show as North Americans would understand it.

One final thing to note is that you are likely to hear or see three sets of odds – again, only the one going through your betting system directly affect your pocketbook, although the other two could provide you with useful information. Commentators (announcers) will refer to the “fixed-line favorite,” which refers to the chalk in the early line guaranteeing you odds, and they will frequently refer to the tote favorite, which is through the Australian TAB system, not necessarily the odds your provider is quoting.

So now you know some of the basics of Australian harness racing, and how its program is to be read to help with your handicapping. You can, of course, refer to any of the other tools mentioned in here, but there is NOTHING like figuring out your own likely winner. Betting is relative to what odds are being offered, so other than the terminology, you are ready to go there (according to your bankroll).

Have a good look at the Australian harness races – but of course good luck to getting back our own North American harness season in reasonably good order in a reasonable amount of time.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



Harness Racing Update on Instagram

@HARNESSRACINGUPDATE





TWOS IN TRAINING

Ben Wallace



Ben Wallace in the HRU Twos in Training spotlight

*The veteran trainer talked about his stellar career, his two promising 2-year-olds - one by **He's Watching** and another by **Betterthancheddar** - and the recent announcement that he will be inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame this year.*

by Dave Briggs

HRU's Virtual Twos in Training videos series has added trainer Ben Wallace as the third installment of its live interviews, this one conducted by Jaimi MacDonald.

The interview is available both on our [Facebook page](#) and our [YouTube page](#).

Wallace talked about his stellar career, his two promising 2-year-olds - one by He's Watching and another by Betterthancheddar - some old favorite and the recent announcement that he will be inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame this year.

He will also fielded a few questions from viewers that were emailed to HRU in advance of the show.

Thank you to [Woodbine](#) and [Blue Chip Farms](#) for sponsoring the Wallace video.

HRU intends to feature a new live interview with a trainer every Thursday, Saturday and Monday evening. Next up is trainer Ron Burke on Thursday, April 23 at 7 p.m. EDT.

Finally, we need your help to reach 1,000 YouTube subscribers.

If you haven't subscribed - for free - to [HRU's YouTube channel](#), we would appreciate it very much if you would.

We currently sit at just over 800 subscribers. The way YouTube works is once you reach 1,000 subscribers it allows HRU to generate some income from YouTube. We want to use that money to make more - and better - videos for you.

If you like our previous Twos in Training videos, reports from the two major yearling sales or the new Virtual Twos in Training videos featuring Marcus Melander, Carter Pinske and Ben Wallace - with many more trainers to come in the weeks ahead - we would appreciate you taking a minute to [subscribe to our YouTube channel](#).

Thank you very much from all of us at HRU.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story





TWOS IN TRAINING

2020 - Ben Wallace





TWOS IN TRAINING

Ron Burke



Ron Burke in the HRU Twos in Training spotlight

The sport's leading trainer talked about his stellar career, how his operation is primed for 2020, some of some of his most promising youngsters, his recent trip to New Zealand and more.

by Dave Briggs

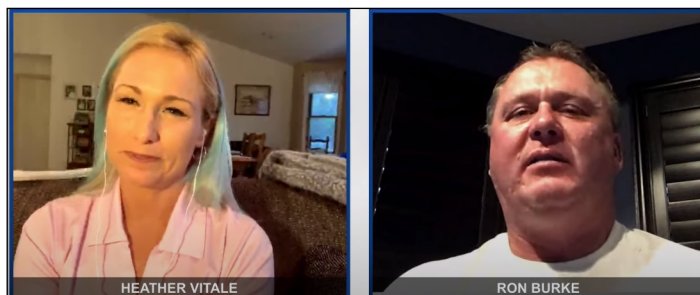
HRU's Virtual Twos in Training videos continued Thursday (April 23) featuring the sport's leading trainer, Ron Burke, being interviewed by Heather Vitale.

Viewers interested in seeing the interview can do so on the [HRU Facebook page here](#) and on the [HRU YouTube page here](#).

Burke talked about his stellar career in which he's won more than 10,000 races and earned over \$235 million. He also discussed how he's coping with COVID-19, how his 250-head stable is primed for 2020 and what he learned from his winter trip to New Zealand.

He also fielded a few questions from viewers.

Thank you to [Winbak Farms](#) stallions Courtly Choice and



Jimmy Freight for sponsoring the Burke video.

HRU intends to feature a new live interview with a trainer every Thursday, Saturday and Monday evening.

CLICK HERE
To Share This Story



CLICK HERE

To send us your feedback!



TWOS IN TRAINING

2020 - Ron Burke



Harriett Marie (Buck) Jones dead at 96

Marie Jones, 96 of Montgomery, NY, died April 18 with her loving family at her side.

Jones was born on July 16, 1923 in Westerville, OH. The daughter of Fred and Harriett Buck.

She graduated from Westerville High School in 1941, then attended and graduated from Bliss College.

Marie Buck and Harness Racing Hall of Famer Hal Jones were married in 1950, a union that lasted 65 years, until his passing in 2015.

Marie and Hal started out working at Mac Dot Farm in Westerville, OH. Then from 1951 to 1969, they managed Pickwick Farms in Bucyrus, OH for USTA president Walter Michael. Marie was the farm secretary, while also raising their two boys, Mike and Steve.

Hal built Blue Chip Farms for the Kimelman family, then managed Hanover Shoe Farms and Lana Lobell of New Jersey before purchasing their own farm in 1982.

Marie and Hal bought and developed Cameo Hills Farm in Montgomery, NY. Hal's horsemanship was important, but Marie's management of the finances gave them the ability to own and build their dream. That dream continues to this day, as Marie's son Steve, and his wife Kathy, and their two boys – Tyler and Jake – continue the family legacy.

Marie's primary caregiver at the end of her life was her son Michael, and her granddaughter Ayden. She was very appreciative of them, and happy she was able to be at home, with family, her entire life.

She is survived by her sons Michael and Steve, daughter in law Kathy, and her sister Rosie. Marie also had 5 grandchildren – Ayden, Matt, Auriel, Tyler and Jake, and great grandson Emerson.

In lieu of flowers – contributions in her memory can be made to Goshen Historic Track, 44 Park Place, Goshen, NY, 10924

Services will be private at the request of the family.

–Steve Jones

Lexington Selected to offer online bidding

Lexington Selected Yearling Sales Company announced today that it will offer live, online bidding at its annual Selected Yearling Sale, scheduled for Oct. 6-10 at the Fasig-Tipton sales grounds in Lexington, KY.

The company's full statement follows:

As we navigate through this fluid COVID-19 environment, our management team continues to assess the overall situation. With the addition of state-of-the-art online bidding to our live auction format, we continue our vision to create the best marketplace in our industry for our buyers and sellers in 2020 and beyond.

The company is also making additional plans to increase capacity to its current phone bidding service that will allow pre-approved customers to bid through a member of the auction staff for prospective buyers who are not able to attend the on-site auction.

We will carefully evaluate and monitor the health conditions throughout the United States and Canada, as the current stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions in place have delayed our physical inspection appointments. However, as soon as it is safe and practical, we will be reaching out our consignors/breeders to set up appointments for our inspection teams to resume the important inspection process for the class of 2020.

We understand these are trying times and the management of Lexington Selected is committed to remaining flexible while working with its consignors and will attempt to make any adjustments needed to properly preserve "The Lexington Experience."

This is an unprecedented situation for everyone, and it is important for our industry to work together. Above all, it is our hope that you, your family and your staff are staying safe and healthy through all of this.

As always, please feel free to contact Randy Manges, David Reid or any member of the Lexington Selected staff as we look forward to working with our loyal consignors and buyers during the coming months.

–Lexington Selected Yearling Sales Co.

Empire Breeders Classic postponed

Governor Cuomo's extension of the NYS on PAUSE order until May 15 will cause the postponement of the Empire

Breeders Classic (EBC) trots at Vernon Downs from the scheduled eliminations on May 15 and final on May 25 until a date as yet to be determined.

That extension will also affect the opening of the Tioga and Vernon casinos, thus delaying the start of the live racing at both properties until the order is lifted.

Governor Cuomo has been quoted as considering permitting the reopening of businesses in the less populated regions of New York first. It is our hope that that plan would permit Tioga and Vernon casinos to get open and allow for us to prepare for racing.

Any developments will be addressed and passed along as soon as there is anything to report.

—*Nick Salvi*

Helpful updates on the Re-Allocation of Ontario Purse Funds Program

Now that the Re-Allocation of Purse Funds Program has been announced and we have started to receive applications, here are a few helpful updates:

- Checks will be issued on a monthly basis with the first checks scheduled to be mailed in early May **to cover April expenses.**
- **We are in the process of issuing the checks for the last week of March eligible horses.**
- A copy of your trainer's invoice as well as proof of payment for the month of April must be submitted in order to qualify for payment in May.
- Last week, Woodbine Entertainment CEO Jim Lawson hosted a live Q & A for horsepeople and during the session he mentioned that he was hopeful that live racing could potentially return in June or July. You can watch the entire Q & A session here: <https://woodbine.com/horsepeople/> (bottom of page).
- We will work to re-schedule OSS races to later in the year depending on the date on which live racing resumes in the province.

Please note: It is not anticipated that there will be any live racing in the province during the month of May.

Thank you for your patience as we move through the application process.

—*Ontario Racing*

CLICK HERE

To send us your feedback!



Todd Haight named USTA District 8 chairman

Todd Haight, who is the director and general manager of live racing at Batavia Downs, was named the interim chairman of United States Trotting Association District 8 region on Friday (Apr. 17). Haight will replace long time District 8 chairman Michael Kane, who resigned earlier this year.

Haight was elected by his peers to his first term as a director during voting held back in January of this year and was assigned to the Communications/Marketing, Pari-Mutuel and Regulatory committees. He was again voted by his peers to the chairman position last week.

District 8 covers all of New York State as far south as Orange County. The roster of current directors include Kim Crawford, Mark Ford, John Matarazzo, Ray Schnittker, Mike Torcello and Scott Warren.

"I want to thank Mike Kane for the outstanding job he did during his tenure as chair. Having worked with Mike for many years, I feel the transition to his position should be seamless. I'm honored to take over and look forward to working with USTA president Russell Williams, chairman Joe Faraldo, vice-chair Mark Loewe and all the USTA directors," said Haight.

"Despite the unprecedented times we are all currently working through, I feel that harness racing will return to the sports scene very soon and regain its popularity once again. And in my new role I plan on doing whatever I can to be a part of that resurgence in New York and across North America."

Kelly Young is the executive director at Agriculture and New York State Horse Breeding Development Fund and oversees the operations of the New York Sire Stakes. She works closely with the chairman of District 8 during the stakes year as well as running the awards banquet in the fall. Young has worked with Haight for many years and looks forward to further concerted state racing promotional efforts with him in his new role.

"I have been pleased to work with Todd for nearly two decades at Batavia Downs and am excited to welcome him to, and work with him in this new role leading Upstate New York. I would also like to thank outgoing chairman Mike Kane for his collaboration and leadership over the years," said Young.

Haight started his career with Western Regional OTB in 1998 when they became the new owners of Batavia Downs. He then served in various positions at the track before taking over as the director and general manager of racing in May of 2011.

—*Tim Bojarski, for Batavia Downs*