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Sunday, May 10, 2020

Harness racing still waiting to return while more thoroughbred tracks open

The biggest standardbred tracks are hampered by being in states hardest hit by COVID-19 or facing tougher lockdown rules by their governors.

by Brett Sturman

BETWEEN THE LINES



with **BRETT STURMAN**

Despite continuing best efforts, harness racing has failed to gain the same traction that its thoroughbred counterparts have achieved in recent weeks.

While harness racing has been shut down entirely since March, major thoroughbred meets have been ongoing in Florida and Arkansas, with smaller tracks conducting racing in Oklahoma and Nebraska, of all places. Now, a slew of additional thoroughbred tracks are scheduled to open in the coming weeks, most notably Churchill Downs starting next weekend. But nothing, yet, has been solidified for harness racing.

There are many different reasons for that, with the first being related to geography. This time of year, harness racing is typically in full swing across New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. As most know, New York and New Jersey have been two of the states hardest hit by COVID-19. And like those two states, neighboring Pennsylvania remains to have one of the more stringent requirements around its shutdown. The thoroughbred tracks that reside in the jurisdictions mentioned above, have either not felt the impact that the

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REMINDERS FOR MAY 15TH

SUMMER SERIES NOMINATIONS DUE

DREAM MAKER

Two-year-old open pace.
Purse: \$50,000 Guaranteed
Final: Monday, August 10, 2020

MILLARD FARMS

Two-year-old open trot.
Purse: \$50,000 Guaranteed
Final: Thursday, August 13, 2020

WHENUWISHUPONASTAR

Two-year-old filly pace.
Purse: \$50,000 Guaranteed
Final: Tuesday, August 11, 2020

PURE IVORY

Two-year-old filly trot.
Purse: \$50,000 Guaranteed
Final: Thursday, August 13, 2020

YEARLING NOMINATIONS DUE

2021 CHAMPLAIN OPEN

2021 CHAMPLAIN FILLY

2022 SIMCOE OPEN

2022 SIMCOE FILLY

2022 SBOA FILLY

SUSTAINING PAYMENTS DUE

PEPSI NORTH AMERICA CUP XXXVII

Three-year-old open pace.
Final: TBA

MOHAWK MILLION

Two-year-old open trot.
Final: Saturday, September 26, 2020

ARMBRO FLIGHT

Three-year-olds and older
fillies and mares trot.
Final: TBA

BATTLE OF THE BELLES

Ontario Sired Two-year-old filly pace.
Final: Monday, August 3, 2020

BATTLE OF WATERLOO

Ontario Sired Two-year-old open pace.
Final: Monday, August 3, 2020

CANADIAN PACING DERBY

Three-year-olds and older open pace.
Final: Saturday, September 5, 2020

CANADIAN TROTting CLASSIC

Three-year-old open trot.
Final: Saturday, September 19, 2020

CASUAL BREEZE

Three-year-old filly trot.
Final: Friday, August 28, 2020

CHAMPLAIN FILLY

Trot: Thursday, August 27, 2020
Pace: Saturday, September 12, 2020

CHAMPLAIN OPEN

Trot: Thursday, August 27, 2020
Pace: Saturday, September 12, 2020

ELEGANTIMAGE

Three-year-old filly trot.
Final: Saturday, September 19, 2020

ETERNAL CAMNATION

Two-year-old filly pace.
Final: Saturday, August 29, 2020

FAN HANOVER

Three-year-old filly pace.
Final: TBA

GOODTIMES

Three-year-old open trot.
Final: TBA

MAPLE LEAF TROT

Three-year-olds and older open trot.
Final: Saturday, September 5, 2020

METRO PACE

Two-year-old open pace.
Final: Saturday, September 26, 2020

MILTON

Three-year-olds and older
fillies and mares pace.
Final: Saturday, September 26, 2020

NASSAGAWEYA

Two-year-old open pace.
Final: Saturday, August 29, 2020

PEACEFUL WAY

Two-year-old filly trot.
Final: Saturday, September 12, 2020

ROSES ARE RED

Three-year-olds and older
fillies and mares pace.
Final: TBA

SHES A GREAT LADY PACE

Two-year-old filly pace.
Final: Saturday, September 26, 2020

WILLIAM WELLWOOD MEMORIAL

Two-year-old open trot.
Final: Saturday, September 12, 2020

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Mid-Atlantic states have, or are states that have governors that have not implemented the most dramatic sets of restrictive measures.

If Cal Expo's meet had not already concluded due to it only being scheduled to the end of April, they may have been a candidate for the first harness track to resume operations. Being the last harness track standing, they were forced to close at the same time thoroughbred tracks Santa Anita and Golden Gate were shut down by county health boards. Now, both of those tracks are planning to open over the next week and one would presume that Cal Expo would have had the same opportunity had May racing been on their calendar. Rosecroft is in a similar position. Its meet was scheduled to run through May. Maryland track Laurel Park has expectations to re-open shortly, but by the time that does occur, the Rosecroft meet would have already concluded based on the calendar.

In Pennsylvania, home to The Meadows, Pocono Downs and Philadelphia, the state is still widely under a stay-at-home order. Most recently set to expire on May 8, Governor Wolf continued the order for counties that include Pocono and Chester (home of Harrah's Philadelphia) through June 4 but did move the re-open level of Washington County – home of The Meadows – from red to yellow. The Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association has actively been working with horsemen's groups, legislative leaders and lobbyists to move towards a safe re-opening of live racing once the stay-at-home order expires, so perhaps there may soon be movement with regards to The Meadows.

Just a few miles west of The Meadows is Ohio, another state populated with multiple harness racing tracks as well as the home of the United States Trotting Association. In that state, there's been a growing frustration.

In a letter that was issued by the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association on Friday, it noted "Currently, the Associations, Racing Commission and all Permit Holders have been trying to work towards a final plan without success." The letter continued, "The general tenor from the Permit Holders is a desire to continue down the path of uncertainty, without a definitive plan to resume racing, unless assurances and guarantees are received for all casinos and racing operations, racing or not."

From this, it appears that the most difficult obstacle is coming to terms with the casinos that are linked to the tracks. While horse tracks across the country can re-open to live racing without spectators, casinos are not able to do the same and won't be able to for some time. With casinos not open, it raises questions in the state as to how they'd be able

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to or want to support racing.

It's a bit different in the thoroughbreds. There's no question that slot and gaming revenues still go a long way to fund horse purses, but thoroughbred handle does generate revenue. At Oaklawn Park, for example, which just concluded the spectator-less meet while its casino was closed, the track handled over \$40 million last Saturday. Doing a general back-of-napkin calculation, handle for that day alone could have resulted in around \$10 million in revenue for the track. In harness racing, unfortunately the handle at most tracks fails to reach even the purses offered. Which is most likely the reason why Jeff Gural won't open up racing at Tioga or Vernon without the casinos first opening – there wouldn't be any money to fund the purses.

The other question is, what do race purses look like once racing does come back? No matter when racing returns in NY, NJ, PA or OH, some of the tracks will open back up before their casinos open. Provided that happens, it seems assured that purses would be sharply lower than they were pre-COVID. With the exception of Churchill Downs, all thoroughbred tracks slated to resume racing are seeing steep cuts to stakes purses, and in some cases stakes programs for the year are being scrapped altogether.

It was announced Friday that Northfield Park has canceled its signature races the Battle of Lake Erie and the Cleveland Trotting Classic. At the same time, PA announced postponement of sire stakes races scheduled to take place in early June. Like sire stakes that had previously been postponed from May, these races are planned to be rescheduled later in the year, but, obviously, the further the shutdown goes the greater the risk to the stakes. The same holds true for postponed stakes thus far at tracks across other states as well as into Canada.

Good news was received yesterday in Indiana as Harrah's Hoosier Park announced it will begin the process of opening its barn area on Monday after receiving approval from the

Indiana Horse Racing Commission. This bodes well for Harrah's Philadelphia when Pennsylvania's shutdown is lifted, as both harness racing properties are owned by Harrah's.

In the meantime, horsepeople groups continue to work as diligently as possible towards track re-openings, but it remains a slower than desired process.

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HARNESS RACING UPDATE

About Harness Racing Update

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EUROPEAN REPORT



with **THOMAS HEDLUND**

Aetos Kronos and Diana Zet crowned king and queen in Sweden

by Thomas Hedlund

The \$199,500 Kungapokalen and \$199,500 Drottningpokalen – the King's and Queen's trophies, respectively – for 4-year-old trotters were held at Åby racetrack on Saturday afternoon and two spectacular races took place in front of an empty grandstand.

The Drottningpokalen for mares was the first big race on the card at Åby and many fans had Ganga Bae (Muscle Hill) as first choice. A torrid start, where two of the most interesting horses made breaks, opened the race up for \$550,000 Oaks winner Diana Zet (Hard Livin), who was sent to the front after a quarter of a mile by Örjan Kihlström.

Kihlström had no thoughts of letting Ganga Bae (first over) get the lead and the pace was set quite high during the race's first 5/8 of a mile.

Diana Zet defended herself well when Jorma Kontio put Ganga Bae in the highest gear with 600 meters to go and the leader even held strongly, finishing challengers behind her when the wire approached.

This was Diana Zet's third start of the year and trainer Daniel Redén really hit the perfect condition in perfect time.

"Diana Zet had some problems during the winter, we couldn't train her as much as I wanted to due to a problem with a tooth. So she was in need of some races before she'd hit the best shape and today I had a good feeling," said Daniel Redén.

Diana Zet's mile rate over 1.3 miles was 1:56.4. Grande Diva Sisu finished strongly to second place and Tonique used Åby's open stretch to reach the bronze medal.

When it was time for the boys to fight over the same distance, Courant Stable had a new chance to grab a prestigious trophy. Green Manalishi (Muscle Hill) was, in many ways, the most interesting horse of the day at Åby racetrack. With one race complete in Sweden – where he finished second to Aetos Kronos (Bold Eagle) in the elimination for Kungapokalen – the former U.S.-based trotter was the first choice in the race, but something bothered the Muscle Hill son when the car accelerated from the field of 12 trotters. Green Manalishi, racing without shoes, went off stride and did not have his best day.

Instead, Don Fanucci Zet (Hard Livin) and Kihlström looked to make the day at Åby very special for Redén. Don Fanucci Zet, with very little racing form, fought well in front and was close to victory, but couldn't defend himself when Jerry Riordan's champion trotter Aetos Kronos and Johan Untersteiner challenged in home stretch.

Aetos Kronos, who won two finals of \$199,500 E3 and \$199,500 Breeders Course in 2019, made his comeback at the track in the eliminations two weeks ago. Trainer Riordan has really done his job well during the winter. Aetos Kronos was among the best in the crop last year, but as a 4-year-old, the Bold Eagle son looks more developed and more muscular.

Aetos Kronos' speed is his best weapon and driver Johan Untersteiner could wait for a definitive attack until the last stretch of the race. But don't think that Riordan's horse was



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served a kind and decent trip before the last battle in the home stretch. Aetos Kronos had to do the heavy job three wide without cover and the performances from the top trio in the race were super.

"Aetos Kronos is really a fantastic horse. It's an honor to get the opportunity to drive him and he had a great performance today. When I drove him as a 3-year-old, the horse had a closed bridle, which made him a lot more concentrated and focused on what his job is and the difference now, with open bridle, was that Aetos Kronos ran a little bit less straight," said Untersteiner after the great triumph in a mile rate 1:55.

Don Fanucci Zet finished second and Click Bait third.

[Diana Zet replay.](#)

[Aetos Kronos replay.](#)

Cokstile in 1:52.1

Norwegian-bred Cokstile (Quite Easy) claimed his ticket for the Elitloppet when he, paired with Christoffer Eriksson, won \$30,000 Algot Scotts Minne over the mile at Åby on Saturday afternoon.

Seven-year-old Cokstile had to do his job outside of leader Cyber Lane, but had no problem in disarming the leader in the end of the last turn.

The 1:52.1 win was enough to convince Solvalla's sports manager Anders Malmrot regarding the horse's spot in the Elitloppet later this month.

Cokstile, trained in Italy – or in Sweden by an Italian trainer – will make his second attempt in the Elitloppet. The Quite Easy colt participated in Solvalla's biggest race in 2018, when he finished 7th in his Elitloppet elimination.

[Cokstile replay.](#)

France opens up for racing Monday?

Harness racing in France is expected to open up with race cards on Monday. In Lille, nine races are on the menu. On Wednesday, big names are entered when the \$120,000 Prix des Duces de Normandie over 2.450 meters is scheduled in Caen.

Bold Eagle, Cleangame, Dijon, Delia du Pommereux, Tony Gio and Earl Simon are some of the top trotters that are engaged to the big race in Caen.

Monday is scheduled as first day of racing in France since the lockdown began in March.

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Two-Year-Olds

BREEDERS CROWN No. 34

\$600,000 in 2020

To race Friday, October 30, at Harrah's Hoosier Park, Anderson, Indiana
Elimination heats, if necessary, will be raced Saturday, October 23
-\$600-

Entrance Fee: \$5,000

THE ELEVATION

-\$125,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$500-

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

Entrance Fee: \$750

FOX STAKE No. 94

\$55,150 in 2019

-\$450-

Open. To be raced Wednesday, August 12 at the Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis. One heat only.

Entrance Fee: \$1,200

HOOSIER STAKE No. 84

\$91,400 total in 2019

-\$100-

To be raced Wednesday, August 12 at the Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis

Entrance Fee: \$200

KENTUCKIANA STALLION MANAGEMENT PACE/TROT 2020

-\$200,000 Est. in 2020-

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

-\$1,000-

Entrance Fee: \$1,500

KEYSTONE CLASSICS 2020

Early Closing Events For Pennsylvania-Sired 2-Year-Olds

\$339,600 total in 2019

-\$400-

Colt & Gelding Pace/Trot to be raced Monday, September 14 at The Meadows

Filly Pace/Trot to be raced Tuesday, September 15 at The Meadows

Entrance Fee: \$400

LANDMARK STAKE EARLY CLOSER

-\$42,500 Est. total in 2020-

-Colts & Geldings: \$250-

-Fillies: \$125-

To be raced Friday, July 3 at Goshen Historic Track

-Colts & Geldings Entrance Fee: \$300-

-Fillies Entrance Fee: \$150-

LIBERTY BELL 2020

Early Closing Events For Pennsylvania-Sired 2-Year-Olds

-\$75,000 Est. in 2020-

-\$400-

Colt & Gelding Trot/Pace to be raced Friday,

October 9 at Harrah's Philadelphia

Filly Pace/Trot to be raced Wednesday,

September 23 at Harrah's Philadelphia

Entrance Fee: \$400

MATRON SERIES 2020 (for 2-year-olds)

\$692,200 total in 2019

-\$500-

To be raced Thursday, November 5 at Dover Downs

Top 8 format.

Entrance Fee: \$1,000

RALPH WILFONG No. 83

\$33,383 in 2019

-\$400-

Open. To be raced Wednesday, August 12 at the Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis.

One heat only.

Entrance Fee: \$600

W.N. REYNOLDS MEMORIAL EARLY CLOSER

\$246,100 total in 2019

-\$300-

All divisions to be raced Friday, August 28 at The Meadowslands

Entrance Fee: \$500

JOHN SIMPSON MEMORIAL EARLY CLOSER

\$442,400 total in 2019

-\$400-

Colt & Gelding Trot/Pace to be raced Friday, October 23 at Harrah's Philadelphia

Filly Trot/Pace to be raced Friday, October 16 at Harrah's Philadelphia

Entrance Fee: \$400

TOMPKINS-GEERS EARLY CLOSER

\$260,700 total in 2019

-\$300-

All divisions to be raced Friday, July 3 at The Meadowslands

Entrance Fee: \$500

Three-Year-Olds

SUPPLEMENTS (Early Closers)

THE COURAGEOUS LADY FILLY PACE

-\$125,000 Est. in 2020-

-Supplemental Nomination: May 15 - \$3,500-

To race Saturday, October 17 at Northfield Park

Entrance Fee: \$1,500

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Al Libfeld: From houses to horses

The book on a breeder and owner that has few equals.

by Murray Brown

Alexander Jacob Libfeld, AKA Al Libfeld, represents the fourth generation of his family to be involved in the construction business.

His great grandfathers founded a flooring business in Kielce, Poland, before Al's parents moved to Little Rock, AK in 1950.

After a few years there, Al says his mother longed for real rye bread while pregnant with him and the family moved to Chicago where Al was born. The family continued in construction.

Al pursued his higher education at American University in Washington D.C where he spent two years. He then transferred to the University of Illinois.

He had an uncle in Canada, who told him about the opportunities available in the Toronto area. So in 1974, at the age of 22 and determined to make his way in the world with his wife Sheila, Al moved to Toronto originally as a drywall contractor for nine years. In 1983, he established Tribute Communities, an entity that was destined to become one of the biggest and most prominent home building companies in Ontario.

Prior to moving to Toronto, Libfeld describes himself as having always been a gambler, but in terms of horse racing, his attendance at the racetrack was minimal and his knowledge of horses perhaps even less. In Canada, he met his future lifelong friend and partner Marvin Katz who



Dave Landry

Al Libfeld (front right with trophy) with some of his important friends and team members (from left): driver Yannick Gingras, yearling-picking expert Perry Soderberg (also with trophy), Jimmy Glass (arm raised), Christina Takter and Sam Goldband after Libfeld's beloved Ariana G won a heat of the 2017 Kentucky Filly Futurity.

quickly interested him in the purchase of a yearling pacing filly named Keystone Hera. The filly cost \$100,000 and was trained by Dr. John Hayes. She earned all of her purchase price back on the racetrack and was subsequently sold to Hanover Shoe Farms for the same amount that the partnership paid for her.

Al Libfeld was hooked.

He soon decided that he preferred trotters to pacers, not so much for the reasons that most people give: because of the natural beauty of their gait, the challenge and great sense of accomplishment associated with getting a good one and winning major races. Rather, he found more consistency in their pedigrees and not only did he feel that it was easier to find good ones but also that they had more intrinsic value. It wasn't at all because he didn't like pacers, but almost entirely because he found trotters less challenging.

Several years later, Libfeld and Katz became involved with Bart Glass who was to become not only a great friend, but also their advisor on all facets of the business.

Recently I had a long conversation with Libfeld. This is what I discovered.

How are the terrible times we are going through affecting you and your business?

"I'm doing well, mostly enjoying life here in my cottage on Lake Simcoe. Our construction business is classified as essential, so we are lucky.

"It hasn't slowed us down at all. We still have our full staff at work. In addition to our primary business of building homes and condominiums, we have now expanded into constructing and owning apartment buildings. I'm still involved, but not as deeply as before. My son Steven is the CEO and is in charge.

"We do have a strong executive team that we now teleconference with every Wednesday.

"I don't view the horse business as being quite as healthy. In fact, I am quite concerned about its short term health. Unless we get to racing soon and get our horses on the racetrack, especially the young ones on which so much has been invested, we can be in a heap of trouble. If last year's yearling buyers don't get a return on their investments, it will almost certainly adversely affect the prices of this year's yearling crop resulting in great damage to our breeders."

Let's talk about some of the people you are and have been associated with.

Bart Glass- "If there was a turning point in our transition from people who liked the business, liked horses and

breeding our own, it came with our association with Bart. Bart was not only an extremely knowledgeable horseman, he was also a visionary. Much of our success we have today owes its genesis to Bart. He was not only able to evaluate bloodstock at a given point in time, but was also able to predict to a great degree how they would influence future generations."

Perry Soderberg – "After Bart passed, Perry came along. There are very few, if any areas of the business in which Perry does not have excellence.

"His eye is at least as good as Bart's was. In addition, he has so much hands on experience in every phase of the business. He likely looks at more yearlings than anybody else and he also knows their families cold. Chances are that he has looked at the dam and the grandam of most of the horses he looks at. He is an invaluable member of every aspect of our team."

Marvin Katz – "A great guy and a great friend and partner. He is fair, bright, trustworthy and a fun person to spend time with. There is no doubt that I wouldn't be in the business if not for him."

Sam Goldband – "One sweet human being. He isn't involved to the extent that Marvin and I are. He is a great friend and a good partner."

Let's talk about your trainers.

Jimmy Takter – "I know he's retired. But he is still around. Certainly the greatest trainer of this generation and has to be included in any conversation of the greatest of all time."

Nancy Takter – "A chip off the old block. Her success thus far has been incredible. She is much like her dad in that she is extremely focused and detail oriented. There's always the thought in the back of my mind that if she encounters an insurmountable problem she has access to a man who is capable of conquering the insurmountable."

Per Engblom – "Another graduate of perhaps harness racing's greatest school. Per worked many years as Jimmy Takter's number one man. In addition, he ran his own successful stable in his native Sweden."

Julie & Andy Miller – "I first met them while we were in Sweden with John Bax, at the Elitlopp. We bought a filly from them and each year we've had at least several horses with them."

John Bax – "He and his son Matt are wonderful horsemen and great people. John is a friend with whom I usually have a couple of trotters."

What do you like most about the sport?

"Just about all of it that relates to the horses themselves. The challenges involved in breeding. Getting foals and seeing them grow into yearlings. Then it's extremely satisfying to see them become successful on the racetrack. We have a strict policy of selling all of our colts and keeping a few of our better fillies that we hope one day will become great broodmares."

What do you like least?

"Like just about everybody else, the bad actors which most industries have, but seems to be highlighted in ours. Hopefully these recent FBI arrests will take care of ridding us of some of them and scare others from straying to the dark side. All most people want is a fair playing field."

Just from my observation, you seem to favor and find more pleasure in breeding, while Marvin seems to prefer racing.

"Actually, we enjoy both, but to varying degrees. I would guess that I favor breeding on a 60-40 ratio, while Marvin probably favors racing by that same ratio."

Who are your three favorite horses?

"In order: Ariana G, Stubborn Belle and Armbro Monarch. They are all females. They represent the future in what we intend to do. I try to always look ahead."

What has been your biggest thrill?

"Just the knowledge that we have made an impact — our overall success. Our earning the Proximity Award last year gave a great deal of credence to it."

What has been your biggest disappointment in the business?

"In our early years of selling yearlings, it seemed like we were just giving them away. I don't know if the product wasn't that good, although we felt it was. Perhaps, as you suggested, maybe the fact that we also raced affected the public's confidence in what we were selling. However, once it was firmly established that we were market breeders and that all of our colts were for sale, then they started selling much better. I suppose their success on the racetrack probably had a lot to do with it."

What's the smartest thing you've ever done in this business?

"Relying on Bart Glass and now Perry Soderberg to lead us in the right direction. Part of being smart is knowing what you don't know and finding those abilities in others."

What's the dumbest thing you've ever done?

"When Captaintreacherous was a yearling I was offered a substantial piece of him and I turned it down. I can't or maybe don't want to remember why, but I sure missed the boat on him."

Let's talk about Maverick.

"It wasn't difficult to determine that he was an exceptional colt. Even Stevie Wonder could see that. It was the general consensus that he was the best colt in the sale. I didn't really think that he could reach a million dollars, because I had my doubts that there was that much money out there that people were willing to spend on a yearling. My expectations were somewhere in the \$700,000-\$800,000 range. **BUT** if there was someone willing to go a million on a yearling, I felt that he would be the horse that would bring it. As it happened, he wasn't the only one, but he was the first."

How about Maverick's brother Greenshoe?

"Up until Maverick, Greenshoe was the best yearling we ever raised. His success on the racetrack was a source of great pride and satisfaction to us. When he was syndicated to stand at Hanover Shoe Farms, we purchased eight shares in him. Other than Hanover itself, I think we bought more shares in him than anyone else."

What pleases you most other than your two businesses.

"Sitting here in my summer cottage enjoying life, hopefully in the company of my two children and grandsons."

What special friendships have you made in the business?

"Quite a few, but especially with Jimmy Glass, Bart's son, and Kentuckiana Farms' Bob Brady and their respective families. The Glass family raise our yearlings and Kentuckiana Farms keeps our broodmares and represent our yearlings at the sale. They are all great people."

Despite all the success you have achieved in life, you have also been subject to an inordinate number of physical challenges and personal tragedies. Would you want to speak about them?

"No one is immune to tragedy and personal hardship. You have two choices: either you give up and just fade away or you do your best to live with life's afflictions. You need to pick yourself up and go forward."

I'm making Al Libfeld commissioner of Harness Racing. What are you going to do?

"I think the one thing we need above all others is unity. We need **one** set of rules. I understand the notion of states' rights and individual states powers, but it can't be that hard for all the commissions to get together and establish one set of rules and guidelines including medications that the entire industry needs to work by."

Have a question for The Curmudgeon?

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

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IMPORTANT NOTICE TO BREEDERS

The Breeders Crown No. 35 Yearling Payment of \$150.00

For foals of 2019 is due on May 15, 2020.

This payment makes yearlings by the following stallions eligible to race in the Breeders Crown as 2-year-olds in 2021 and 3-year-olds in 2022, subject to the conditions and payments in those years.

Stallion Nominations for Breeders Crown No. 35

A Rocknroll Dance	Credit Winner	Luck Be Withyou	So Surreal
Always A Virgin	Dejarmbro	Maharajah	Somebeachsomewhere
Always B Miki	Devious Man	Manningly	Southwind Frank
American Ideal	Deweycheatumnhowe	McArdle	Sportswriter
Andover Hall	Donato Hanover	Mister Big	State Treasurer
Andoversure	Domethatagain	Mr Web Page	Straight Shooting
Angus Hall	Dover Dan	Mr Wiggles	Sunshine Beach
Aracache Hanover	Downbytheseaside	Muscle Hill	Swan For All
Archangel	Dude's The Man	Muscle Mass	Sweet Lou
Art Official	E L Rocket	Muscle Massive	Tellitlikeitis
Artiscape	E L Titan	Muscles Yankee	Text Me
Artspeak	Encore Encore	My MVP	Thinking Out Loud
Bar Hopping	Explosive Matter	Nuncio	Third Straight
Betterthancheddar	Father Patrick	Odds On Equuleus	Triumphant Caviar
Betting Line	Fear the Dragon	Panther Hanover	Trixtion
Bettor's Delight	Fred And Ginger	Pet Rock	Uncle Peter
Big Jim	Glidemaster	Ponder	Up The Credit
Bolt The Duer	Guccio	Possess The Will	Villiam
Break The Bank K	He's Watching	Prestidigitator	Walner
Bring On The Beach	Heston Blue Chip	Racing Hill	We Will See
Cantab Hall	Holiday Road	Real Desire	Well Said
Captaintreachorous	Huntsville	Resolve	Western Ideal
Cash Hall	JK Endofanera	Rock N Roll Heaven	Western Vintage
Chapter Seven	Justice Hall	Rockin Amadeus	What The Hill
Class Included	Kadabra	Rockin Image	Whataworkout
Classic Card Shark	Lionhunter	Roll With Joe	Wheeling N Dealin
Control The Moment	Lis Mara	Royal Mattjesty	Winning Mister
Conway Hall	Long Tom	Royalty For Life	Wishing Stone
Crazed	Lost for Words	Sebastian K	Yankee Cruiser
Creatine	Love You	Shadow Play	Yankee Glide

The above list is subject to omissions and corrections

Foals of 2019 by the above stallions will be eligible to the open division (for 3-year-olds and older) of the Breeders Crown in 2022 and to the Breeders Crown open division in subsequent years upon payment of the advertised fees for the specific year's open event. Owners of eligible 3-year-olds will have the option of entering either or both the 3-year-old and the open event by making the 3-year-old payment due February 15, 2022. Conditions for Breeders Crown No. 35 are available from The Hambletonian Society website: www.hambletonian.com or in the 2020 U.S.T.A. Stakes/Futurities Nomination Booklet.



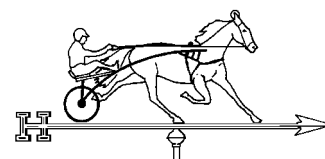
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Race callers remember their favorite, and least favorite, calls

by Garnet Barnsdale

Last week I was reading an article in a mainstream sports publication that polled several announcers with a few questions, so I thought it might be fun to create a similar piece here polling some prominent harness racing announcers.

Here are the three questions I posed:

1. What race sticks out to you as your best race call and why?
2. Which race is your favorite to announce and why?
3. If there is one race call that you'd like to take back if you could, which is it and why?

Here's what they had to say:

Ken Middleton - Woodbine Mohawk Park

"The call that I remember as my fondest was the 2008 Pepsi North America Cup which saw Somebeachsomewhere demolish the competition. The race was anything but action-packed as Somebeachsomewhere quarter pole-moved to the front and won easily. What separated that race from any other that I called was the crowd's interaction during the race – and to me that assisted the race call itself. The crowd roared at the head of the lane and as a race caller you really get a chance to feed off of that energy. It was just a reactionary call to the moment and I felt I did the horse and the race justice.

"There are lots of incredible races I have the privilege of calling each year, and if I had to put my finger in one in particular it would be the Pepsi North America Cup. It's one of the richest of the season, it's the one that is the official launch to stakes season and it features the always compelling Glamour Boy division.

"I can't really think of a significant race that I flubbed. I've made lots off gaffes by calling wrong names in some

overnight races, but I really can't think of a major flub in a Grand Circuit race where I said to myself, 'I'd really like a do-over in that one.'"

Shannon "Sugar" Doyle - The Raceway at The Western Fair District

"My 2008 Tajma Hall track record got some play last year in the 'Canada's Best Race Call' poll – and I am really proud of that one – but I believe my best race call to date would be the 2014 Molson Pace. It would be my first 'big race' call in Ontario after coming in from Alberta months earlier. State Treasurer would make a bobble at the start leaving from the rail and would be sitting last before the first turn. If I had anything scripted for the early going (thankfully I hadn't) it would have been thrown out the window immediately. This race was also my first opportunity to call the great Foiled Again and he was getting something special during the race regardless... As they turned for home 'This is Foiled Again being awesome – it's awesome being Foiled Again!' was my only scripted piece for the call and it worked out well. In the end, a three-across finish went to State Treasurer over Apprentice Hanover and Foiled Again. I'll go back and watch it, from start to finish, every now and then. It was a great horse race with some real nice horses. I don't think you'll ever see another invitational horse make a break, sit last and then circle them for the win on any half-mile track.

"My favorite race to call is always the 'big one.' Out west it was the Western Canada Pacing Derby and here in Ontario at The Raceway at Western Fair it's the Camluck Classic (formerly the Molson Pace). It's the best horses and drivers competing for the biggest purse of the meet and in front of our biggest crowd. If a guy can't get excited for that then something's not right.

"One I'd like to have back would be a thoroughbred race from 2001 in Edmonton. It was very early in my thoroughbred announcing career and I was just getting familiar with the jockey's silks. On this day I had been sick – frequenting the bathroom between races – which allowed me very little prep time to memorize the horses and jockey's silk colors. The perfect storm materialized that day – a 10-horse field, sprint race with a few different sets of blue colors in the race. Before I knew it, the race was over and I called the wrong winner, and of course, the victorious jockey was wearing blue silks. I chalked it up to being sick and unprepared to call that race and you know what: it wasn't the first time someone called the wrong horse a winner and it won't be the last."

Ken Warkentin - Meadowlands

"I like to believe my best race call is still to come. By constantly working at it, always trying to improve, then one can reasonably expect something better. With experience and preparation you'll be ready to do justice to those exciting races when they happen. You're always trying to paint that perfect word picture.

"If I have to pick one from recent memory, maybe last year's Meadowlands Pace when Best In Show rallied for the big upset. What a finish and what a drive by Brian Sears. There were also some great races on Hambletonian Day when everything came together.

"Speaking of the Hambletonian, that has to be my favorite race. It's the sport's most coveted prize and I've had the great privilege to call 20 editions. There's so much history, build up, international interest, national television coverage, roaring crowd, a million dollar purse. Hey, there's even a trophy. Horsemen target that special day and it all comes down to timing it just right. You can always count on great drama and the adrenaline rush is indescribable.

"Sometimes, I think I want them all back, so I could make corrections and adjustments. But obviously it's not a voice over where you have time to mold that piece of clay to your liking. There's no editing a live race call and that pressure makes it exciting.

"It's a performance. Singers and actors will tell you for no particular reason some days you have it and some you don't. You're human, and you just have to let it happen and move on.

"Sports play-by-play announcers correct midstream and have a support staff to assist them during the game.

"You're in the booth by yourself, and you may hear or read about a mistake much later from the self-anointed experts."

Gabe Prewitt - Red Mile and Pompano Park

"We are always fortunate enough to get some special moments in the fall at Lexington, and I remember being speechless after Homicide Hunter in 2018 became the first sub-1:49 trotter in the sport's history. I think as a fan of the sport, I was just thrilled to witness that moment and hopefully the excitement carried over to the race call as well. Another that sticks out was the Snowstorm Hanover win in the Kentucky Futurity. I was thrilled for the connections and he came into that day completely overlooked. The final was an off track, and he appeared to be collared but fought back to win in an exciting finish. That was the first year I had the honor of calling the Grand Circuit races in Lexington which

also made it special. I believe the best race call I've heard was Sam McKee describing Always B Miki's world record in Lexington. His excitement was spot on and it was an incredible thing to witness in person.

"The first day I ever walked into the track to watch a live harness race was on a Grand Circuit afternoon in Lexington with Sam McKee on the mic, on a day I was likely supposed to be in class. I remember thinking, 'Where has this place been my whole life?' Sam was a dear friend and my mentor in the business, and we miss him dearly every day. There is something special about those two weeks in the fall, and I would have to say my favorite would be our signature Kentucky Futurity. For a kid from central Kentucky, it doesn't get any bigger than that.

"I would have to say the 2019 KY Futurity. I'm sure there are plenty I would like to have back, but that one is still fresh in my mind. There were a lot of strange variables (12-horse field, double tiered throughout), but the worst part was we had torrential rains in Lexington all afternoon and by that time the drivers were completely covered in mud. Don't Let'em, who was a personal favorite of mine, closed from 10th I believe to rally into second behind Greenshoe. I literally couldn't see a thing when the horses were coming head on at us, so I didn't pick up Don't Let'em until very late. I wasn't happy with myself walking out that afternoon."

Roger Huston - Little Brown Jug

"No question it was Wiggle It Jiggle it in the Jug. The way the race developed with the slight miscue in the first turn, first up after the quarter and head-to-head for the last 3/8 of a mile. The battle has turned in to a War! Lost For Words opens up and then Wiggle It Jiggle it fights back to win in the final stride. It was just plain high energy from the get go and I was in it. Fans probably say Falcon Almahurst for the line, 'If you haven't been on your feet you better get up now.'

"Without question The Little Brown Jug, year in and year out with a crowd of 40,000 plus. You can hear them react to your every word. It is the one track in the world that drivers can hear every word you say and you see them react to your call as well. Several have admitted that they reacted to what I was saying.

"I was in Australia and called a race with 12. I had a phrase that I would use in those days, 'So and so is nailed to the rail (locked in). In that race, it was the horse named The Messiah. 'The Messiah is nailed to the rail.' Wrong horse to say that."

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Hambletonian
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Horseman No. 113
Ralph Wilfong No. 84***
MGM Yonkers Trot

*** no separate filly division

PACERS

Adios
Arden Downs
Breeders Crown®
Cane Pace
Fox Stake No. 95***
Hoosier Stake No. 85
Horseman No. 113
MGM Grand Messenger
Progress Pace***

*** no separate filly division

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TWOS IN TRAINING



Nancy Takter, Jim Campbell next two trainers in HRU's Twos in Training spotlight

Trainer Nancy Takter is on tap for Monday, May 11 and trainer Jim Campbell will be in the spotlight on Thursday, May 14. Both will speak to Jaimi MacDonald about their most promising 2-year-olds and coping with COVID-19.

by Dave Briggs

HRU's Virtual Twos in Training series continues Monday, May 11 featuring trainer **Nancy Takter** being interviewed by Jaimi MacDonald. Trainer **Jim Campbell** will be interviewed by MacDonald on Thursday, May 14.

Viewers interested in seeing either or both of the interviews live can do so on the [HRU Facebook page](#).

Both interviews will begin at 7 p.m. EDT.

Like all our videos, both the Takter and Campbell videos will be available for watching anytime on both our [Facebook page](#) and our [YouTube page](#).

Special thanks to the [Lexington Selected Yearling Sale](#) for sponsoring the Takter video.

Thank you to Preferred Equine Marketing ([check out their brand new website](#)) for sponsoring the Campbell interview.

Both trainers are expected to speak about coping with COVID-19 and their most promising young horses.

Both will field a few questions from viewers that comment live via Facebook and also a few that are emailed to HRU in advance of the show.

To submit a question in advance for Takter, [email questions before 3 p.m. EDT Monday \(May 11\)](#). Please make the subject line: Questions for Nancy Takter and please include your full name.

To submit a question in advance for Campbell, [email questions before 3 p.m. EDT Thursday \(May 14\)](#). Please make the subject line: Questions for Jim Campbell and please include your full name.

To date, HRU's 2020 Virtual Twos in Training videos – featuring **Marcus Melander, Carter Pinske Ben Wallace Ron Burke Paul Kelley Ray Schnittker Casie Coleman Tony Alagna and Noel Daley** – have garnered over 48,000 total views on Facebook and YouTube combined.

To make sure you don't miss a video, subscribe to HRU's YouTube page - for free - today.

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Dave Landry

Trainer Nancy Takter will be the featured guest Monday at 7 p.m. EDT on the next instalment of HRU's Virtual Twos in Training series.



Dave Landry

Trainer Jim Campbell will be in the HRU Virtual Twos in Training spotlight on Thursday at 7 p.m. EDT.

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HOLLYWOOD'S HITS



with **BOB HEYDEN**

Remembering the most dominant 10-year stretch in harness racing history

by *Bob Heyden*

Two men thoroughly dominated harness racing in the 10-year stretch from 1967 to 1976.

Together, Billy Haughton and Stanley Dancer won more than half of the 60 Triple Crown races (31 of 60). If you add Vernon Dancer (2) and Peter Haughton (1), the names "Dancer-Haughton" won 34 of 60.

Here are the Triple Crowns by race:

Messenger (9 of 10)

1967 – Romulus Hanover (Haughton)
1968 – Rum Customer (Haughton)
1969 – Bye Bye Sam (Dancer)
1970 – Most Happy Fella (Dancer)
1971 – Albatross (Dancer)
1972 – Silent Majority (Haughton)
1974 – Armbro Omaha (Haughton)
1975 – Brets Champ (Haughton)
1976 Windshield Wiper (Haughton - denying Dancer a Triple Crown with Keystone Ore)

Jug (5 of 10)

1968 – Rum Customer (Haughton)
1969 – Laverne Hanover (Haughton)
1970 – Most Happy Fella (Dancer)
1974 – Armbro Omaha (Haughton)
1976 – Keystone Ore (Dancer)

Cane (6 of 10)

1967 – Meadow Paige (Haughton)
1968 – Rum Customer (Haughton)
1970 – Most Happy Fella (Dancer)
1971 – Albatross (Dancer)
1973 – Smog (VERNON Dancer)
1976 – Keystone Ore (Dancer)



USTA

Stanley Dancer.

Hambletonian (5 of 10)

1968 – Nevele Pride (Dancer)
1972 – Super Bowl (Dancer)
1974 – Christopher T (Haughton)
1975 – Bonefish (Dancer)
1976 – Steve Lobell (Haughton)

Kentucky Futurity (3 of 10)

1968 – Nevele Pride (Dancer)
1972 – Super Bowl (Dancer)
1976 – Quick Pay (PETER Haughton)

Yonkers Trot (6 of 10)

1968 – Nevele Pride (Dancer)
1970 – Victory Star (VERNON Dancer)
1971 – Quick Pride (Dancer)
1972 – Super Bowl (Dancer)
1975 – Surefire Hanover (Dancer)
1976 – Steve Lobell (Haughton)

The FACTS:

1. Haughton won the Triple Crown with different trotters in 1976 – Steve Lobell (Yonkers Trot and Hambletonian) and Quick Pay (KY Futurity).
2. Haughton and Dancer are the only two trainers to have a Triple Crown winner the SAME YEAR. In 1968, Dancer won the Trotting Crown with Nevele Pride and Haughton took the Pacing Crown with Rum Customer.
3. Dancer's three Triple Crowns (1968, 1970 and 1972) are two more than any other trainer in standardbred history.
4. Peter Haughton was just 22 when he won the 1976 Kentucky Futurity.
5. Entering 1976, Dancer and Haughton were the two leading money-winning drivers of all time.
6. Haughton did not win a Hambletonian as a trainer or driver until after his 50th birthday.
7. Both men were Hall Of Fame bound during this stretch – 1968 for Billy and 1969 for Dancer, who was four years younger.

Even more dominance

Dancer, alone, posted the most dominant six-year stretch in the sport's history from 1967-1972.

1. He had the Horse of the Year five of those six years.
2. The year he did not have the HOY he had the Triple Crown winner Most Happy Fella in 1970 (the HOY runnerup to Fresh Yankee).
3. He finished 1-2 in the 1972 HOY balloting with Albatross over Super Bowl.
4. Dancer's UDRS. from 1967-1972:
1967: .488
1968: .511
1969: .430
1970: .415
1971: .436
1972: .448
5. Five of the six years of 1967-1972 he had multiple horses get HOY votes EACH YEAR!
6. In 1971, the Trotter Of The Year was the Hambletonian winner Speedy Crown for Howard Beissinger. Care to guess which 3-year old trotter out-earned him that year? Quick Pride trained and driven by Stanley Dancer (\$231,210 for Quick Pride, Savoir was second with \$194,131 with Speedy Crown third at \$189,342).



USTA

Billy Haughton.

7. Remember that Dancer became the first driver to win a Triple Crown race three straight times: 1969 Bye Bye Same 1970 Most Happy Fella and 1971 Albatross.
8. From 1967-1972, there were 1,200 votes cast for Horse Of The Year, 799 went to a horse trained/driven by Stanley Dancer (66.7 per cent).
9. For 13 straight years from 1960 to 1972, Dancer got Horse of the Year votes. It is the longest streak in harness racing history.
10. Nevele Pride was the first 2-year-old trotter voted HOY (1967) and is the only trotter to win it three straight years.
11. In 1968, Danver became the first driver/trainer to hit the \$1 Million plateau (with Cardigan Bay, who then immediately retired back to the land Down Under.
12. Dancer became the first driver to win in sub-1:55 in back-to-back years (Albatross) and the first driver to win \$1 million combined in two straight seasons (1971 and 1972). Albatross was the all-time leading pacing earner upon retirement at \$1,201,470.
13. He had Nevele Pride indeed. He won the Horseman

Futurity three straight years:

1967 Nevele Pride 2:04.4 stakes mark

1968 Nevele Major 2:06.1 third fastest

1969 Nevele Rascal 2:05.3 second fastest to that point.

14. Dancer was in the top five in driver earnings all six of these seasons, despite driving far less than others.

15. He went into the Hall Of Fame in 1969 having the HOY the very same year (Nevele Pride). He was the first trainer to pull off this double.

16. Nevele Pride set the speed standards of 1:56.4 on the half-miler and 1:54.4 on the miler that would stand the test of time. Same with Albatross' 1:54.4 and 1:54.3.

17. In 1971 on the Grand Circuit only, Dancer's earnings were \$462,694 Second best? Billy Haughton at \$191,590 and Joe O'Brien third at \$191,519.

18. Frank Ervin had five HOY titles in his glorious career. Dancer had five with two horses – Nevele Pride and Albatross (just like Ervin with Good Time (2) and Bret Hanover (3)) but Stanley added two more Su Mac Lad and Keystone Ore for a career total of 7).

19. Dancer's greatness continued OFF the track, with his trainees establishing themselves as all-time great sires. Albatross-Most Happy Fella-Super Bowl and others have made more money in the breeding shed than stallions produced by any other trainer ever, with Gene Riegler and Glen Garnsey rounding out the top three.



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Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
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March							April						
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							30						



HRU FOAL OF THE WEEK

Foal of the Week

submission by Jenna McNiven

This colt from the first crop of Lazarus N and out of the McArdle mare Farouche Hanover was foaled on May 2 at Twinbrook Farms in Embro, ON and was photographed just three hours after foaling with his new dog pal Bella. The colt, owned by Jeff Roberts and Jeff McFadden, is a $\frac{3}{4}$ brother to 3-year-old Bettors Delight colt Bettorbuckleup (1:54.3 \$46,505) and is the third foal out of Farouche Hanover, who is also the dam of Bettors Delight yearling colt Bettorholdontight. Farouche Hanover earned \$323,586 on the track and posted a mark of 1:51.4f.

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BREAKING STRIDE

with TREY NOSRAC

Hoofprints in Fog

Scene 6 (Gala)

by Trey Nosrac

The setting is a room in an Alzheimer's ward. A young couple, Mandy and Ryan, continue to visit Martin Kilbane, an elderly horse trainer. In his lucid periods, Martin describes events in his life with remarkable clarity. In earlier sessions, he has talked about serving in the US cavalry, the death of his young wife, and his life-long struggle with alcohol.

[Scene 1](#) | [Scene 2](#) | [Scene 3](#) | [Scene 4](#) | [Scene 5](#)

SCENE 6

(Intro music)

(Hospital background, sounds of rattling cigar box)

RYAN: Soon, this box with his newspaper clippings and junk will be the only trace of Martin.

MANDY: Someday, every one of us will be just memories.

RYAN: And only IF we have somebody who even remembers us.

MANDY: I don't even have a box. What are you gonna do with his after...you know?

RYAN: Don't know, haven't thought about it.

MANDY: What's with the newspaper clippings?

RYAN: (paper ruffling) Racing. You know, this type of racing horses was a big deal. Did you ever hear the name Gay Talese?

MANDY: Is she a drag queen?

RYAN: He. Gay Talese was a He, a very famous writer, well

actually he still is a renowned writer. He's in his nineties now. He wrote novels and for major magazines, a real character, always dapper, dresses like a movie star. Talese worked his way up the writing ladder, starting with newspapers. He was descriptive and took his time, a perfectionist who painted a picture with his words. (paper rattling) This clipping is an article he wrote for the *New York Times* about harness racing in 1958. Here, look.

MANDY: (more rustling of paper - she reads dramatically) Breaking news from 60 years ago. The headline: Accent on Style at Harness Oval.

RYAN: Read it out loud.

MANDY: (Reading with flair) Men in big cars, suntanned women trimmed in fur, all added to the plush décor tonight as Yonker Raceway, the Fort Knox of Westchester County, began a 104-night harness horse racing meeting.

The 30,998 first-nighters, many of them pearled, powdered, preened, and money-hungry, bet a total of \$2,036,279. They sipped cool drinks as they watched Gold Worthy win the featured \$22,000 Coronation Pace.

Conforming to the current belief that a New York harness track must be plush and emulate the Copacabana Night Club, Yonkers Raceway was bright with flowers, decked in colorful modern furniture and overpopulated with headwaiters.

Chemises, trapezes, and bouffant styles were very popular with women dining in the clubhouse. Mrs. Frederick E. M. Ballon wearing a gown from the famed Givenchy House of Paris received as much attention in the clubhouse as Justforfun, who won the first race.

Many missed the daily double. Traffic was bumper to bumper up the Major Deegan Expressway. Some customers were settling into their racing forms when Governor Averell Harriman's Cadillac pulled in at 7:45.

"Hiya Gov," yelled a stout man with a large cigar. The Governor put on his jacket, straightened out his tie and led his wife out of the car. He shook dozens of hands, then was led to his table by officials and press agents.

Mood music played in the background, perhaps music to mute the loss of money gushed throughout the grandstands



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and clubhouse over 24 amplifiers. A 50-piece band from Garfield, The Holy Name Cadets, strode down the track in two-quarter time before everyone settled down to the business at hand.

Six searchlights swept the sky. Photographers edged and elbowed through the massive crowd, snapping pictures of popular first-nighters. Governor Harriman, himself a former gentleman harness racer from Goshen New York, posed willingly but said he had no hot tips on horses.

As early as the second race, some race-goers, determined to beat the rush home, left their seats and headed for tier cars. Harold Klien, a horseplayer, won \$35 after three races, so he just took off in his convertible while he was ahead.

A TV announcer in a white dinner jacket, standing on the track, smiling up at the grandstand, interviewed Jackie Robinson and Ralph Branca, former ballplayers. Through it all, most spectators whooped and hollered, but the United Nations Ambassadors from Chile, Panama, and Columbia remained at their tables with solemn dignity.

A press agent reported that opening night was a big success, although he added that many of the those at opening night came to see and be seen, not lose money on the horses. He added that in the future, more horseplayers and fewer dignitaries would increase financial prosperity.

It was a nerve-tingling night in the Yonkers kitchen. Like any opening night, the kitchen corps had its fair share of troubles. More than 2,100 dinner guests jammed the Empire Terrace and the Good Times Room to capacity. Cooks had begun to prepare as early as Monday so that the service would be quick tonight. Still, over 5,000 customers who applied for dinner reservations, were not able to get them. The service was a bit slow, but the tips reported were fast and heavy.

RYAN: See what I mean, before we met Martin, we never heard of this sport. We still don't know much about it, but once upon a time it was a huge deal. The horses and the races that Martin talks about, they weren't just a little hobby. Harness racing wasn't a nothing burger for a few people who liked horses. Racing was like a World Series game.

MANDY: Why do you suppose he kept this article?

RYAN: Look at the end of the article. Look, down here, where they have the racing results. See right here, seventh race, Trot, purse \$12,000. The winner of the race was a horse named Trader Horn. Next to the horse's name is the trainer, Billy Houton.

MANDY: So?

RYAN: Look at the name of the horse that finished second.

MANDY: Heavens Rein...trainer Martin Kilbane. Oh my God, our Martin, part of this big show!

RYAN: Thirty thousand people knew this game, and a lot of them knew Martin's name.

(fade to sound)

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Statement from OHHA executive director Renee Mancino regarding racing in Ohio

We are disappointed to report that despite multiple plans submitted and meetings beginning on April 1 and moving forward, we are nearing the close of another week in Ohio without a clear path forward to resume racing.

With each week comes a new challenge that prevents a factual announcement or final plan. During the last several weeks various rumors regarding qualifying and opening have circulated back to us from a lot of different sources. This process ebbs and flows regularly.

Currently the Associations, Racing Commission, and all Permit Holders have been trying to work towards a final plan without success.

The general tenor from the Permit Holders is a desire to continue down the path of uncertainty, without a definitive plan to resume racing, unless assurances and guarantees are received for all casino and racino operations, racing or not.

Due to this dynamic, the Ohio State Racing Commission has scheduled a series of meetings moving forward to resolve the impasse in accordance with the Governor's Office and all Orders in place.

Our expectation is this will continue to fuel the rumor mill, likely more than ever. As advised prior, we will update as soon as we have factual information to release and definitive plans. We are working as hard and as quickly as we can to continue to roll out benevolence and get everyone back to the business of racing.

Regarding benevolence, all benevolence announced, or requests received within the last three days have been processed and sent. We thank you for your patience as we continue to do our best on behalf of the industry, with the

goal as always to resume racing.

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

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

— *Frank Fraas / OHHA*

Battle of Lake Erie and Cleveland Trotting Classic cancelled for 2020

MGM Northfield Park announces the cancellation of both the \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie (June 6) and the \$175,000 Cleveland Trotting Classic (July 3). Both "By-Invitation-Only" events are among the highlights of Northfield's year-round racing calendar, and annually feature the best veteran pacers and trotters in North America.

"The health and safety of our guests and team members is essential to MGM Resorts. Coupled with the uncertainty of racing dates and possible travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, cancelling the upcoming 2020 Battle of Lake Erie and Cleveland Trotting Classic is the responsible thing to do," said Dave Bianconi, director of racing operations at Northfield Park. "The stakes calendar is going to be jam-packed through the late summer and fall when tracks get back to racing, so trying to reschedule them later in the year doesn't make sense. We look forward to their return in 2021."

MGM Northfield Park's premier race, the Carl Milstein Memorial for 3-year-old pacers, is currently scheduled to be contested on Saturday, Aug. 15.

— *MGM Northfield Park*

Changes to future Little Brown Jugs and Jugettes announced; May 15 payment date to remain

Little Brown Jug Society president Tom Wright has announced some sweeping changes to future Little Brown Jugs and its filly companion event, the Jugette.

In 2022, the Little Brown Jug will start accepting supplemental entries with a payment of \$45,000 (Jugette

supplements would pay \$15,000). Horses will no longer have to win either the Cane Pace, the Messenger, the North America Cup or the Meadowlands Pace to supplement. Supplemental entries will be due using a five-day box and would be the first horse(s) eliminated should the field exceed the 24 horse maximum.

Future eliminations of the Jug will be raced for a purse of \$50,000 each (\$25,000 in the Jugette), with the balance remaining for the second heat.

All of the starters in the second heat will receive at least one per cent of the second heat purse (starting with the 2020 LBJ).

The second heat will now allow for 'also eligibles.' Horses will be ranked based on their elimination finish position and then by highest lifetime earnings.

"We hope these changes will allow the best horses available to compete in the Little Brown Jug. Our goal is to make sure we have full fields and put on a great event for our fans," said Wright.

The changes were finalized by the LBJ Society executive committee and approved by the entire board.

The new conditions will start with the 77th Little Brown Jug to be raced in 2022. The Yearling Nomination Payment for the Jug and Jugette remain \$50 and are due May 15.

A copy of the new conditions can be found at LittleBrownJug.com.

May 15th Payments Due Date Remains

Besides the Yearling Nomination Payment for the Little Brown Jug and Jugette, the 2022 Old Oaken Bucket and Buckette (\$25) and the 2021 Standardbreds (\$25) are also due on May 15. Payment forms can be found on LittleBrownJug.com.

—*Little Brown Jug publicity*

May 15 payments due soon for Meadowlands stakes

The Meadowlands reminds the connections of those horses made eligible to our stakes that the deadline for the final sustaining payment on a number of those races is (postmarked by) May 15.

Yearling [nominations](#) on the foals of 2019 to race in 2022 Meadowlands Pace are also due by May 15.

Complete information on Meadowlands stakes payments and lists of eligibles may be found [on the web](#).

—*Nick Salvi / Meadowlands media relations*

SBOANJ May stakes payments due

Nominations and sustaining payments for SBOANJ sponsored races due May 15, 2020 (postmarked).

The nomination payments are as follows:

Garden State Trot #4, yearling payment \$25

Home Grown Pace #4, yearling payment (NJ sired or SDF nominated) \$25

Home Grown Pace #4, yearling payment (NJ foaled but not SDF nominated) \$150

The sustaining payments are as follows:

Garden State Trot #3 \$400

New Jersey Trotting Futurity #55 \$300

Home Grown Pace #3 \$300

For payment forms and conditions please visit www.sboanj.com. Any questions please call the office at 732.462.2357

—*Courtney Stafford / PR Consultant SBOANJ*



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Leavitt responds to Gurfein, quotes Nietzsche

Ronnie Gurfein completely misses the point when he sees the problem in creating a commissioner of harness racing as a lack of parity between the states ([full story here](#)).

The fact that different states regulate our sport differently is simply an offshoot of the fact that every state is an entity unto itself, with not the slightest inclination to sharing one drop of its authority with any outside entity, such as a Commissioner of harness racing.

Money also plays a role here. Every state collects a fee for every license it issues and they grasp at every penny they see. Ronnie seems to think that after the USTA and Standardbred Canada put together their little committees, the various state commissions will be susceptible to giving up their authority to those committees. Dream on.

I've also never heard that greatness comes from change before I read it in Ronnie's column. I think one could make a better case that greatness comes from courage and a deep devotion to honesty. Being clear headed and clear thinking also plays a role. Before I follow Ronnie's thoughts on the subject, I'll feel more comfortable with the writings of Nietzsche.

As he said, "Our friends show us what we can do. Our enemies show us what we must do."

I was under the impression that Gurfein's role was to answer horsemen's question about training and rigging. Now he ranges far afield, with unrequested opinions on many matters, plus a healthy dose of ego tripping. If Ronnie aspires to personal greatness, he should understand that the first prerequisite is humility.

—Alan Leavitt / Lexington, KY

Thanking Leavitt

I would like to thank Alan Leavitt for his guest column ([full story here](#)) on why there will never be a harness racing commissioner. I hope this will put an end to HRU publishing more letters to the editor calling for a commissioner.

—David Haaker / Livingston, NJ

Harness racing should follow NASCAR's lead on a commissioner

With great interest, I read Alan Leavitt's HRU article ([full story here](#)) on why there will never be a commissioner in harness racing. He makes a number of many strong points comparing the differences between harness racing and the major sports in this country. While those comparisons have relevancy, he left out the sport that has a commissioner and is the most closely aligned with harness racing — and that is NASCAR.

NASCAR also races in different states that race under different rules and regulations. As Mr. Leavitt noted, the owners in baseball created the Commissioner. That is what team owners did in basketball, football and hockey, also. They knew that if they wanted their sports to succeed, they had to yield their control. He also notes that states will not "relinquish one iota of its power." An interesting choice of words. Because it is not the states that have to relinquish their power to create a commissioner's office. It is the harness racing cliques that are not being as financially impacted by the downturn in harness racing that needs to relinquish its power, and it looks like Mr. Leavitt speaks for them.

Following the model which turned NASCAR from a regional oddity in to a national success story by giving power to a commissioner, it is the horsepeople and ONLY the horsepeople who can create a commissioner's office to oversee the game. That is what NASCAR did. It was the drivers and the car owners, not the racetracks, that decided on a commissioner.

Breeders and sales companies do not want a commissioner. As the supply of horses decreases, the demand goes up and you see what the prices are at sales. Of course, the dwindling supply also means an eventual end to racing, but as the old saying goes, "make hay while the sun shines."

Owners, drivers and trainers, the ball is in your court. Do you want harness racing to continue, or do you want the Alan Leavitt's of the world tell you that you have no future?

—Gil Winston / Manalapan, NJ

Gurfein's commissioner committee lacks balance

I have a comment about Ron Gurfein's suggestion that a committee be appointed to come up with a plan for designating a National Commissioner of Racing ([full story here](#)). I do not oppose the idea in concept, although I also believe that because of the territorial attitudes of the various racing commissions, such an effort is highly unlikely to

succeed. My immediate quibble is with the tentative roster for the committee that Ron suggested. It is certainly true that all five of Gurfein's suggestions are eminent and qualified. The problem is that because they consist of four trainer/drivers and one racetrack operator, they represent a relatively small segment of the harness racing industry. Where is the representation for owners and breeders, for example? The inclusion of a state or provincial regulator who is known to support the idea would also give it greater credibility. Populating the committee in that manner is not only fair, it would enhance the possibilities of success for an exercise that is questionable at best.

—Steve McCoy / USTA director

Murray Brown responds to Gary Kay

With reference to Attorney Gary Kay's letter to the editor in last Sunday's HRU ([2020-05-03 Feedback](#)) just for the sake of argument, let's assume that he is correct.

He says that 2-year-olds should not be raced.

Has Mr. Kay addressed or even thought about the practicality of his suggestion?

Two major questions come to mind.

1. In order to practically implement such a suggestion, the land holdings of just about every breeder would have to be increased by a factor of approximately 40 per cent or more.

The vast majority of breeders are losing money or just scraping by.

Assuming that such land is available and that the breeder can afford to buy it and also assume the extra costs associated with tending to it and the horses on it, why would they want to do so? I would guarantee, that at least some and perhaps the majority would just say **ENOUGH** and just get out of the breeding business. We are not breeding enough horses to fill our cards (in non-COVID-19 circumstances) today. Doing that would further increase a significant problem.

2. I wonder if Mr. Kay has ever raised a group of yearlings, specifically a group of stud colts. It's difficult enough when you've got a group of yearling boys out there together beating up on and trying to mount each other. As they grow older they become more studdy, stronger and much more inclined to inflict injury upon each other. It happens with all too much frequency as yearlings. A multiplier effect would certainly take effect when they become full-fledged stallions.

Oh, I know. Let's make geldings of all of them.

Discounting the probable damage it would do to the breed, it would almost certainly affect the growth and strength of the male horses.

Mr. Kay, I haven't seen all that many yearling geldings, but I've seen quite a few. Without exception, they haven't had the same masculine features and level of physical maturity that

a normal colt has. Simply put, you are preventing it from becoming the horse it is meant to be at perhaps the time of its life when it grows and matures the most.

I am not completely discounting the possibility that Mr. Kay's premise might be correct, although even if I were in the financial position to try it, I wouldn't.

But there is nothing that prevents Mr. Kay from doing it himself and showing us all the merits of his theory.

There is no greater proof than success.

—Murray Brown / Boca Raton, FL

What have we learned while racing has been halted?

Okay, we're all ready for the return of harness racing but what have we learned moving forward?

- As we look at current thoroughbred racing we see an over-abundance of longshots winning and off-the-board favorites (statistical anomalies — yea right). Considering the recent indictments perhaps the fear of further scrutiny is playing a major role here and this is to some degree to be expected. What was not expected is the obvious in-actions of the local and state oversight. Numerous 1-2 and 3-5 favorites back up through the field and no questions? Is the track veterinarian actually verifying the race worthiness of all animals prior to all races?

- Now to harness racing, with an in-your-face understanding that the Feds have and are finally involved in the sport, what positive steps have been taken AND announced by tracks (except for the Meadowlands) in the 2+ months the tracks have been down? Does this tell you about how important you are to the tracks? Have the tracks solicited feedback from the fans/bettors, trainers or owners and implemented changes to move the sport forward? I think not.

- If we don't take this time to demand change now, perhaps WE become the major factor in the integrity issue. The Feds are currently involved and listening maybe now is a good time for a write-in campaign. If the tracks are truly on our side then now would also be the ideal time for a statistical audit of previous racing outcomes should be a no-brainer. The numbers don't lie and the data is available, all that is lacking is a nudge from the public.

- Without continuing, meaningful change at most tracks, we are being driven to wagering at only two major tracks, one in Toronto and one in New Jersey.

- There is still time and I'm rooting for the right actions at the many smaller venues. So, once again the ball is in your court — fix it or build condos on the property.

—David Perry / Dearborn, MI

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