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Friday, May 15, 2020

The willful ignorance of Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf

by Dave Briggs

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with **DAVE BRIGGS**

Both the governor's intransigence on returning to racing and his attempts to raid its chief form of funding sharply raises concerns of impending doom in one of the world's most successful standardbred jurisdictions.

Snap political multiple choice question. Select the **best** answer.

Is Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf...

- a. A person who hates horse racing?
- b. A person who is poor at economics?
- c. A person who has trouble understanding the COVID-19 advice of medical professionals when it comes to activities that can be safely done outdoors if proper protocols are followed?
- d. A person incapable, or unwilling, to look at the proof from other jurisdictions that horse racing can be conducted safely – and wildly successfully – without spectators?
- e. A person who places his political agenda ahead of the livelihoods of more than 7,000 of his citizens that rely directly on horse racing to make a living?

f. All of the above

One can't be 100 per cent certain, but it seems pretty clear

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the **best** answer is “f. All of the above” after Wolf released a letter on Tuesday (May 12) ([full story here](#)) stating horse racing would among the last things to re-open in the state following the COVID-19 lockdown.

“We foresee horse racing reopening when counties enter the green phase, like other entertainment (casinos, theaters, etc),” Wolf wrote in response to a letter from his own appointed secretary of agriculture, Russell Redding, who is also chair of the Pennsylvania State Horse Racing Commission. Redding wrote to the governor on May 1 asking Wolf to consider allowing racing to resume with safety protocols, including no spectators. Tracks then submitted plans for reopening to the racing commission.

Wolf’s rebuke of that request, at best, shows his ignorance on many fronts and, at worst, certainly smells worse than a manure pile in a heat wave.

Remember, this is a governor who in February released a 2020-21 budget proposal to try to raid \$204 million from the Race Horse Development Trust Fund (RHDTF) to launch a new scholarship program to support students attending one of the 14 state-owned universities ([full story here](#)).

Helping students offset huge debt is an admirable goal, of course, but not when one has to rob Peter to pay Paul and the plan calls for lowering student debt by throwing others out of work and onto the public dole.

The RHDTF receives about \$250 million annually from casino revenue, meaning Wolf was trying to illegally divert nearly 82 per cent of that funding despite the fact that in 2017 the state’s legislature passed Act 42 placing the RHDTF in a trust fund allocated as “not funds of the Commonwealth” and legally declared as funds the “Commonwealth shall not be rightfully entitled.”

The 2017 act came after various Pennsylvania politicians have tried to raid the horse racing funds in the past. So, Wolf isn’t the first Pennsylvania politician – and bets are he won’t be the last – to try to divert money, but it does speak to his character.

Though it’s still unknown how his budget proposal will fare, especially against strong opposition in the Republican-controlled legislature (Wolf is a Democrat), it seems odd that the governor of a state that has long had agriculture at or near the top of its leading industries, doesn’t understand, or at least appreciate, that horse racing is one of the state’s most successful agricultural sectors. Like it or not, that means jobs and economic activity in a time when states can ill afford to pass on either.

COVID-19 has proven deadly, both in terms of lives and

livelihoods. One wonders why Wolf wants to make things even worse for his state’s economy and a horse racing industry already reeling from the pandemic. After all, horse racing could safely operate under strict protocols as it has done in many jurisdictions in the United States.

The industry also drives much-needed revenue for the state – it has an economic impact of some \$527 million annually according to a 2018 study. Thanks to a successful partnership between casinos and horse racing, Pennsylvania, particularly on the standardbred side, is one of the most successful jurisdictions in the world – if not *the* most successful.

What governor wouldn’t take pride in having an industry that is a world leader?

What governor willingly looks at a strong revenue generator for the state and says, “No, thanks”?

Even if we give him the benefit of the doubt that he’s erring on the side of an abundance of caution not to open too soon to save lives, surely he is capable of understanding not a single reported COVID-19 case has come out of any of the racetracks that remained open or have recently re-opened. Surely, he can see other states and provinces giving horse racing the green light to return to action ahead of many industries. Surely, he can understand that operating an outdoor sport without spectators and grandstand staff is completely different than opening a casino or movie theater where people are not only indoors but also difficult to separate.

After all, Redding did clearly explain much of this in his initial letter requesting a return to racing.

As well, the Pennsylvania Equine Coalition has done excellent work – much better than most – lobbying and educating politicians about the importance of the horse racing industry, the number of jobs it supports and the economic activity it generates.

So, it’s not as if Wolf hasn’t been told.

Which leaves the following questions:

Did he listen?

Does he care?

And, perhaps most egregious: Is he employing both willful ignorance and the extraordinary powers granted to him in a state of emergency to damage the horse racing industry to the point it collapses, allowing him to redirect the money to a cause he finds more politically advantageous?

You be the judge.

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BETWEEN THE LINES



with BRETT STURMAN

As harness racing readies to resume elsewhere, prolonged shutdown in PA poses industry risk

Mark Weaver shares his assessment of the news that racing isn't expected to return anytime soon in Pennsylvania.

by Brett Sturman

At the time I spoke with one of harness racing's largest owners one month ago, Mark Weaver lent his perspective into how long a shutdown of racing could be sustained. Now, into the middle of May, with an end in sight hard to see in Pennsylvania, a real threat to the current industry dynamic could be a reality.

Just in the past couple of days there have been breakthroughs in the industry. Announcements were made and dates were set on the resumption of racing in Ohio, Ontario and Indiana. Racing in Ohio will commence next Friday on May 22, Woodbine Mohawk will start back with live racing on June 6 and racing in Indiana will follow on June 16. Other states may announce openings shortly too, but one state that may not be going anywhere soon is Pennsylvania.

This week, PA governor Tom Wolf responded to the PA State Horse Racing Commission noting that while he appreciated the industry's detailed efforts to mitigate against

COVID-19, that he doesn't envision horse racing in the state being able to open until counties that host racing are deemed to enter the "green" phase as part of the governor's coded matrix of COVID-19 severity. In the letter, Wolf considered horse racing to be judged similar as to when other entertainment such as casinos and theaters may be able to open.

Not one to be bashful, Weaver – a PA resident – shares a sense of frustration following a couple months of goodwill that most industry participants in the state now feel.

"I care about harness racing first and foremost, but I'm trying to be appreciative that a lot of people are in a similar situation no matter what industry they're in. And I'm sure everyone feels that their industry should be the exception to the rules and be allowed to go, but it's very disappointing when you see other jurisdictions that have raced non-stop through the peak time of the virus at a half dozen tracks in different parts of the country and to my knowledge there's been no outbreaks, nothing," said Weaver.

"For us to be grouped in with the casinos and movie theaters, that's hard to take. You see the other tracks and the precedent has been set. It's do-able. I'm pretty sure our horsemen's group came up with a plan that was good enough to be approved to race – obviously without spectators – and the governor basically just said no. People in the business, we know that he really hasn't been a friend to racing, but I don't know what our recourse is."

For those unfamiliar with the PA landscape, The Meadows resides in Washington County, a county that had recently been moved by the governor from the "red" phase of a full shutdown to the "yellow" phase of a lessening of some restrictions. With harness racing being an outdoor activity and one that be conducted without spectators unlike other sports, there was an assumption that The Meadows would be safe to resume.

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To anyone looking at the matter with any degree of objectivity, it's hard to comprehend why racing at The Meadows can't yet resume.

"On any given day I would guess there are a couple hundred people on the backstretch exercising the horses and basically doing all the same things that would be required to race them," Weaver said. "Anybody that's been out there for the past couple of months, there's clearly a difference in the culture in how people conduct themselves and act and stay away from each other and I think that's going to be here maybe forever," Weaver said.

He was speaking only with regards to The Meadows since the other PA harness tracks, including Pocono and Philadelphia, don't have horses stabled on the grounds, but in all honesty the same questions as to why racing can't resume in those areas deserves to be called into question as well.

Here's the thing. If these harness tracks have to end up waiting until their counties change to "green" in order to race, they could be waiting for an awfully long time.

Some statistics as of May 14 taken from the PA department of health are as follows: In the county where The Meadows is, ("yellow") there have been a total of three deaths outside of nursing homes attributed to COVID-19. The number three is out of a population of 206,000. In Chester county ("red") where Harrah's Philadelphia is, there have been just 32 non-nursing home deaths out of a population of over a half-million. The numbers are equally similar for Luzerne county ("red") where Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs is. There's actually a couple dozen counties that have either never had a single death or who have had one, and even those are still in "yellow." From that, it would seem that the industry's best bet is to convince the governor to consider spectator-less racing as a "yellow" function as it truly should be, rather than helplessly wait for a change to "green."

The troubling part for harness racing is that PA is the cornerstone of the industry as far as breeding goes and the longer that racing is closed, the greater the economic threat. The state is home to sires such as Captaintreacherous, Father Patrick, Greenshoe, as well as Weaver's Sweet Lou and Southwind Frank.

"I tell people all the time that PA is the best. The sire stakes program is awesome. We have the best sires, Hanover Shoe Farms, and we are kind of the lead as far as if you've got a good mare, you're going to breed to a PA stallion. And

to me, this does jeopardize that. What's disappointing is that I'm not going to say it's by design, but I don't think Gov. Wolf would lose any sleep if he negatively impacted harness racing in Pennsylvania," Weaver said.

Through the natural extension of economic woes in the state's industry should they be prolonged, what impact could there be to Harrisburg sale coming up in the fall?

"It's going to have a huge impact, it's just a matter of how huge," said Weaver. "It's going to hurt. It's hard to put a number on it, but I'd guess on the highest end it would hurt maybe 20 per cent because you're still going to have people wanting the best of the best and many of the people in our industry do have deep pockets. But in the middle market there are a lot of people – and I consider myself right in that middle market – I could see it hurting 40-50 per cent."

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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.

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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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Ohio racing to resume next week

Despite several conference calls – the new normal in the COVID-19 era – being plagued by comical technical problems, the news delivered was well received by the harness racing community.

by Bob Roberts

Don't be surprised if the United States Trotting Association is soon overwhelmed with requests by horse owners, those with a keen sense of humor, to reserve what would seem to be an odd name for a race horse – Pleasemuteyourphone.

There is good reason to desire such a moniker. While what unfolded Wednesday and Thursday in the Buckeye State will be viewed by some as funny and as painful by others, those who dialed into three tele-conference calls organized by the Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC) will not soon forget the experience.

The goal of the calls was to pass a resolution to clear the way for both standardbred and thoroughbred racing to resume at the state's seven tracks after being sidelined by COVID-19 since mid-March.

But the effort was plagued by a cacophony of noise that resulted in repeated pleas by OSRC chairman Scott Borgemenke and his staff for those on the line to "please mute your phone."

Instead, participants got to hear somebody snoring, several tweeting birds, a woman scolding a child (hopefully her own), those on a morning walk into a stiff breeze, even a guy tuned in from his car who shared his belief that nobody could hear him talking to a fellow motorist, even though most people on the call could hear him.

The three calls, jammed into 25 hours (the last one included a video conference for officials) did result in the unanimous adoption of a resolution that allows racing to resume in Ohio, without fans, as early as May 22.

"We are planning to start May 22," said Joe Morris, the vice-president of racing operations at Scioto Downs.

"We're scheduling qualifiers for May 18 and will start racing on May 26," said Brent Reitz, Northfield Park's vice-president and general manager.

When pari-mutuel racing commences, it will be under the OSRC's "Protocols for a Safe Return Without Spectators," pages of do's and don'ts for cleanliness and social distancing.

Renee Mancino, executive director of the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association, didn't mince her words when speaking to her membership.

"My message to our horsemen is that we got you to the gate, now you are responsible to win the race for us. If we



get shutdown, it's because you didn't comply."

While Ohio harness racing is preparing to reintroduce itself to fans and bettors on-line or on television, it was a two-day roller coaster ride to get in position to do so.

Wednesday morning's teleconference was delayed because the OSRC couldn't find a way to mute the dozens of people on the call, including someone who can apparently sleep anywhere, anytime.

"Somebody is snoring," said Borgemenke. "We need that phone muted."

Then, after a woman, perhaps sheltering at home with little ones, yelled for obedience, Borgemenke picked up another sound that didn't belong on the call. "Those birds sound beautiful, but please mute your phone," he said.

The constant beeping and bonking of new callers coming on line, proved too much for Borgemenke. He recessed the meeting until 7 p.m. Wednesday night with hopes of a more orderly call.

The evening session was as problematic as the morning one. Borgemenke plowed forward with little success.

"I apologize," he said. "This is immensely frustrating."

When the noise level increased, Borgemenke countered with, "I will stop this meeting. Please mute your phone," and with, "Guys, I will sit here all night."

But he didn't. When an attempt to mute all those on the line except the chairman resulted in total silence, except for a voice saying, "Jesus, c'mon" and "God, is everybody back on?" the call was again aborted.

One track official who requested his name be withheld, told a staff member, "When is the pain going to stop?"

It stopped Thursday morning when, after a test run, the conference call worked.

"Let's move as quickly as we can," asked Borgemenke.

After the resolution passed, a motion to adjourn was put forth, but not without a final hiccup. Commissioner William Patmon, Jr. struggled to unmute his computer microphone so he could vote.

"Give me a thumbs up, Bill," suggested Borgemenke. "Yes. It's unanimous."

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Responding to Leavitt, why racing 2-year-olds is important and, in the age of COVID-19, will yearling videos be more important than ever?

by Ron Gurfein

Tidbits: There is an old saying that all farm managers are frustrated horse trainers. I am hoping that is the reason for the personal attack on me by Alan Leavitt. It upsets me that a Harvard graduate is not a fan of my column. I say that because if he had been a follower of Ask The Guru he would know that the column is not all about horses, but I answer questions as well as editorialize on anything I think my readers would appreciate. His letter to HRU ([2020-05-10 Feedback](#)) seems written in a moment Alan thought it was wrong of me to disagree with his belief that it is impossible for us to have a racing commissioner. Anything is possible, and his attitude is a perfect example of the laissez faire attitude in the leaders of the state commissions that have created the disaster we find ourselves in.

To prove my point think of all the bad news that has filled the harness racing publications in the recent past. The incident at Pocono with Ray and DEXTER, the Cobalt positives in various places, the misplaced positives in

Pennsylvania. Name one person that has been ruled out after all that. No one.

While on the subject, Daryl Bier made a very nice remark about me on Facebook and asked why track management and racing commissions haven't taken advantage of my experience? The answer is simple: Management at some tracks definitely ask me things. As for commissions, most know me well and would be afraid to hear my responses.

* * *

To those of you missing the beginning of the baseball season it looks like you are in for a long wait as spring training must resume prior to the first pitch. I saw Bob Costas do a piece on TV about the soon-to-be, very short season without fans. He made a great suggestion that baseball should try all the suggested innovations within the shortened season. Among the ideas he felt should be implemented was a timer between pitches when the bases are empty, an electronic balls and strikes unit to replace the umpire and starting extra-inning games with a runner on second base.

Certainly would prove interesting.

* * *

I really shouldn't say this as I will put a hex on myself, but I have found one positive to life in the virus era. I can wear clothes I haven't worn in a dozen years. When I stopped smoking, as most people do, I gained 20 lbs. I never throw out good clothes. I have sports jackets that are like new and are 40 years old.

In the new situation, I do little but read and write my column as well as binge watch TV series. Try A Village In France. It has an excellent seven seasons. The only minus is subtitles which I now read even in English because I cannot hear very well.

An advertisement for the Waterhays Alliance. It features a photograph of a dark horse and driver in a sulky racing on a track. To the right of the photo, the text 'ADD YOUR VOICE TO OURS AND JOIN TODAY!' is written in large, bold, white and red letters. Below this text is the website address 'www.waterhaysalliance.com' in white. To the right of the text is a red octagonal sign with a white border and the word 'WHOA' in white capital letters.

Back to my weight loss. It is around 14 lbs, just from not eating much. Unfortunately, I have lost all that weight eating pie, ice cream, watermelon, Italian salami, and blueberry muffins. Great diet.

Proves to me one thing we eat way too much. Can you imagine how much I would have lost eating salad and fruit?

* * *

I have gotten a lot of mail about the GOAT challenge and I must print one as it is from my humble and extremely knowledgeable accountant (services available) Peter Weisberg. Peter's opinion, and I truly agree, is that Cam Fella was more relevant to the field of horses than most who were named to the event. I will not beat a dead horse so I will drop the discussion here and now.

Paul Richards asks: Your non-concern of racing 2-year-olds bothers me. Do you disagree with all the folks that think eliminating 2-year-olds is good for the sport?

This subject is getting old and the only reason that I am answering it again is that a very interesting article came out last week on the famed veterinarian Dr. Larry Bramlage who stated that in his opinion it is better for the 2-year-old to race then not to. He says it is a scientific fact that the bone development in the racing 2-year-olds is much better than the unraced ones. It is documented that the longevity of the racing life of a horse that raced at 2 is longer and more productive than those that remaining on the shelf are and start racing at 3, 4 or later.

Add to this the terrible financial upheaval in our sport that I have discussed in previous columns and the verdict is no longer debatable.

Billy Bigler asks: Your friend Gordon Waterstone has been selected to be on the screening committee for the Hall of Fame do you have any suggestions for him?

I certainly do. I will not go into detail about the accomplishments of my choices because I believe that if you need to discuss what a person has done to be worthy of nomination than he or she shouldn't be considered. If you look at your contemporaries that have been inducted you are fully aware of their accomplishments. Unfortunately I have way too many suggestions so I will update after my first choices have been elected (hopefully).

Frank "The Elder" and brother Gerald Antonacci, Per Eriksson, Ray Schnittker and Lucien Fontaine are my first suggestions.

Douglas Allen asks: Considering the health situation we find ourselves in, do you think it would be advantageous for the breeding farms to make more extensive videos of the horses this year?

I truly understand what you are getting at, but I do not think a video should be a selling point for a yearling. I think a video is a great tool for eliminating a horse, but not for buying one.

I started watching yearlings in the paddock at Dapple Gray Farm in the '60s. I learned early on that you can learn a lot about a colt in the field, but in person.

I have seen videos of horses that were amazing only to see them unable to hit the trot when I was standing in the paddock.

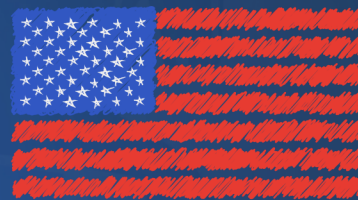
There are farms today that have Roman Polanski directing the video shoot. What you see is not always what you get.

Filming yearlings is a slow and tedious process and the editing is even more difficult.

To become confident of a seller, watch all their videos. When all of the horses are fast there is something wrong. No matter how good the stock is at any given farm at least 30 per cent of the videos should show a moderate speed.



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You can use videos as a screening tool. I do it myself especially with colts that have questionable pedigree. But please remember nothing does more for your own buying confidence than seeing a colt perform exceptionally in the paddock.

Mel Owens asks: I have been reading your column on the topic of commissioners and or medication rules. How much do the powers that be really want that kind of accountability?

You answered your own question. The main problem we face every day is that they don't want anything that in any way tends to upset the apple cart. I personally know many judges and commission members and for the most part they are very intelligent, well-meaning individuals. I think it's their superiors that tie their hands.

Guys like Dave Magee and Dick DeSantis are my friends and I assure you no criminal activity will go unnoticed under their watch. No positive test will be thrown in the trash. But if men like that alert their bosses of a potential problem and then some attorney says it's a slippery slope, what are they to do?

If there was a commissioner there would be plenty of "whistle blowers" and lots of changes made.

As for medication that is really a mess. Until there are uniform drug rules we remain paddling upstream, and what really exacerbates the problem is the fact that standardbreds and thoroughbreds in some domains fall under the same umbrella. In many jurisdictions, the runners rulings on Clenbuterol and Lasix will create a nuisance to our sport.

Andreas Jonsson asks: You trained a mare called Will Of A Woman. She is now the mother of a top colt and winner of four grade one events Aetos Kronos. He is trained by Jerry Riordan and co-owned by Jeffrey Snyder. What can you tell me about her?

Unfortunately, I have nothing good or bad to say about her. She was a Marvin Katz and Al Libfeld homebred that I broke and trained at 2. She was very nicely gaited, but also fairly slow. She was a decent sires stakes filly, but was non-competitive on the big stage. I told Marvin to breed her at three, but he wanted another opinion. She raced back the following year in another barn to no avail.

I am not surprised that she has a top colt as Katz and Libfeld have an exceptional collection of the finest breeding stock.

Tom Santoro asks: Would you buy a yearling knowing the sire came from a doping stable or would you just go by the bloodlines? What about a mare that came from one of those barns?

Fortunately, there have been very few trotting horse trainers that have been down that path. To be honest, the few times I have found myself in that situation I admit I refused to buy a foal from a mare with questionable connections.

As for stallions, I am not sure there is a trotting sire with that stigma.

Pacing horses are an entirely different story, but here again I have seen results so varied I would have to advise you to go with your gut feeling. I have seen good sires from known drug barns as well as bad ones. I have seen many bad sires from totally clean barns. Mr.Vic and Glidemaster are two that immediately come to mind.

My advice would be to stay away from the mares until they have a good foal and stay away from the first crop of the sires in question.

Wayne Hutt asks: If you had a choice between an Italian trotter or French trotter to race in the United States which would you pick?

An impossible question to answer. I would like the fastest one.

Once a horse is racing, the discussion is not where he came from but what can he do. If you want to rephrase the question and ask if I was to buy a yearling I liked and had to select between those two countries which would I chose I would most likely lean to Italy as there is way more American blood there than in France. The French trotter is larger and built more for endurance. The Italians trotters have really impressed me of late in the Yonkers International.

If you asked me that question 40 years ago I would have said the exact opposite. I was in love with Une de Mai.

Thanks to all for your kind words. Please keep the questions coming in. It's amazing how time flies. It's been going on four years since I started this endeavor, and you input has become stronger every year. Have a wonderful week and please STAY SAFE.

Have a question for The Guru?

Email him at GurfTrot@aol.com.

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SUSTAINING PAYMENTS DUE MAY 15

Previous payments must have been made to be eligible

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 Meadows

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 Meadows

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

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

EUROPEAN REPORT



with THOMAS HEDLUND

Earl Simon best in Caen

by Thomas Hedlund

French harness racing opened its gates on Monday (May 11) after two months of lockdown due to COVID-19 and on Wednesday afternoon, several top trotters were gathered around the big track of Caen, where the \$120,000 Prix des Ducs de Normandie was held.

Over 2,450 meters, approximately 1.5 miles, horses such as Cleangame, Bold Eagle and Delia du Pommereux tried to claim the win in the prestigious race, but it was another new French star that stole the show. Jarmo Niskanen's Earl Simon (Prodigious) finished second to Vivid Wise As in Criterium de Vitesse in Cagnes-sur-Mer in March and has showed great capacity among tough contenders in Paris throughout his whole career. When driver Franck Ouvrie drove a perfect race with the 6-year-old and when Earl Simon pushed his bank account to some \$927,000, the Elitloppet and Solvalla showed interest and invited the horse for the big mile race on May 31.

Earl Simon sprinted to superior win in mile rate 1:54.1 over the heavy distance and the French-bred stallion became horse 11 to be invited to Elitloppet this year.

Elite horse raced Wednesday at Solvalla

On Wednesday night, Solvalla arranged two races where the winners were receiving a ticket to Elitloppet. The \$20,500 Meadow Road's race over 1.640 meters resulted in two races instead of one since the interest was great from trainers with elite horses.

Svante Båth's Attraversiamo (Kiss Francais) was already given a spot in Elitloppet, but the horse's entourage wanted to test the 5-year-old over the mile and when Erik Adielsson served the Swedish Derby winner a perfect second over trip, Attraversiamo was hard to beat and he came home in 1:53.2.

Sorbet (Super Photo Kosmos) noted the same winner time in the second heat of Meadow Road's race. Daniel Redén's 9-year-old earned his place in Elitloppet by winning the \$82,000 Prins Daniels race in Gävle last year and from position first over, driver Örjan Kihlström had everything under control at Solvalla on Wednesday night, which mean



Valentin Desbriel

Earl Simon (Franck Ouvrie) winning the \$120,000 Prix des Ducs de Normandie on Wednesday at Caen.

that Sorbet will participate in Elitloppet in 2020.

[Earl Simon replay.](#)

[Attraversiamo replay.](#)

[Sorbet replay.](#)

World champion to Denmark

The \$72,750 Copenhagen Cup over 1.3 miles is scheduled at Charlottenlund racetrack in Copenhagen on Sunday and International Trot winner Zacon Gio (Ruty Grif) chases his 14th consecutive win when he leaves Italy for a trip north, to Denmark.

The Copenhagen Cup has gathered a nice field despite the reduced purse due to COVID-19 situation and Italy really parades the troops since Vitruvio and Alessandro Gocciadoro will try to capture another big trophy in Scandinavia.

Vitruvio had a great summer 2019 when he won two of the biggest races in Norway, Oslo Grand Prix at Bjerke racetrack and Ulf Thoresen Grand International at Jarlsberg racetrack.

Copenhagen Cup 2020:

- 1 Makethemark – Ulf Ohlsson
- 2 Chianti – Björn Goop
- 3 Arazi Boko – Jos Verbeeck
- 4 Milligan's School – Ulf Eriksson
- 5 Zacon Gio – Roberto Vecchione
- 6 Heart of Steel – Peter Untersteiner
- 7 Mister F. Daag – Robin Bakker
- 8 Vitruvio – Alessandro Gocciadoro
- 9 Generaal Bianco – Johan Untersteiner
- 10 Apapmand – Jeppe Rask

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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
Captaintreacherous	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.



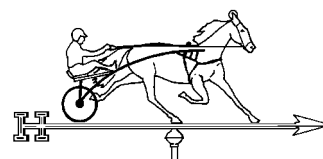
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GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVE



with CHRIS LOMON

Kurt Sugg's plan includes lots of patience, persistence and perseverance

by Chris Lomon

Kurt Sugg has always been a man with a plan.

Attention to detail, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, isn't lost on the longtime Ohio horseman.

On this day, the standardbred racing veteran, the one who has over 4,300 driving wins, and nearly 1,100 more as a trainer, is building something special.

Literally.

"We have 35 acres here (the property lies between Polk, OH, and Ashland, OH, about an hour from Northfield Park) and we just bought some property. We just built and we're putting the finishing touches on that. I'm actually out in the barn right now, cutting some wood so that I can line the walls.

"We originally bought six acres and we built a barn, and then we built a house. We bought six more acres right next to that, and then 26 acres came up for sale here this winter and we closed on that about eight weeks ago. We're going to add another pasture field for the horses and we're going to have a guy put in a track for us, so we can train right here at home."

And no, he's not endeavoring to buy up Ohio, one acre at a time.

"There's no more to buy in this area, and I'm 50 years old, so I don't need to buy up any more."

Not when his racing career is still in high gear.

Sugg is a major force in the Buckeye State, steadily rising his way through the ranks to become one of Ohio's most successful driver/trainers.

It was in 2007 when he stamped himself as a top-tier driver, a year that yielded 139 trips to the winner's circle, marking the first time he had eclipsed the 100-win plateau.



Jay Wolf

Kurt Sugg is a major force in the Buckeye State.

Things would only get better from there.

Since that time, he's reached the 300-win mark on four occasions, and recorded 200-plus victories 11 times. In 2018, his 44 training triumphs enabled him to track down his 1,000th conditioning win.

Before live racing was temporarily halted due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, Sugg was on pace to best the career-high 375 driving wins he notched in 2016. He was also training 15 horses.

In 601 starts in 2020, he's posted 96 wins – putting him behind only five-time national champion Aaron Merriman in the Northfield standings – and just shy of \$700,000 in purse earnings.

Patience, persistence and perseverance have paid off plentifully for Sugg.

He learned those qualities, first-hand, from his father, Ivan.

In 2003, Ivan was named U.S. Trainer of the Year, due in large part to his efforts in guiding future Hall of Fame inductee No Pan Intended to the coveted Pacing Triple Crown.

Sugg, during his childhood years, would frequently join his father on harness racing trips to Ohio county fairs.

"Looking back, you realize all of the things you picked up just by watching him, the way he approached his career," said Kurt. "All of that has helped me along the way."

With the interruption to the 2020 racing season, he's had ample time to both look ahead and look back on his career.

And when he does think of his 30-plus years in standardbred racing, Sugg views it in terms of stages, not totality.

“When I was younger, I worked for my dad, who had a Grand Circuit stable. I’ve travelled all over to a lot of tracks. I did some driving early on – not a whole lot – and then I went out on my own, and stayed in Ohio. But I went to Florida in the winter and didn’t drive a whole lot then. Since I’ve stayed in Ohio full-time, I get a lot of drives, and I really enjoy that, to tell you the truth. It’s probably my favorite thing, to drive the horses.

“I think Northfield is a great place to race. The drivers, we all get along, and it’s a fun place to race. And it obviously makes it a little more fun when you have some great stables to drive for. I’ve definitely won a lot more races than I thought I would have.”

In his formative years in the race bike, Sugg didn’t have grandiose expectations or any specific career goals.

Instead, he was buoyed by his love of horses and the sport, content to be part of a world he already held in high regard.

“When I first started, I never thought I’d be where I’m at now, in terms of lifetime wins. Early on, I just drove my dad’s horses and didn’t do any catch driving. I never thought any of this would happen. Back then, I didn’t have a certain number of wins that I wanted to achieve. As I went on, I thought it would be nice to get to 1,000 wins one day.

“Where I’m at now, if you had asked me 10 years ago, I wouldn’t have thought I’d have this many wins. I had a really good year last year. It started out slowly and it picked up in the middle of March, and then kept going. I had a really good start to this year, and I was hoping to have more wins than I’ve ever had in one year, but I don’t think that will happen.”

As for what got him to this stage in racing, Sugg once again points to the decision to stay put, and forego travels to the Sunshine State, as a genuine game changer.

“I used to train a stable of two- and three-year-olds. I would come up to Ohio in May and on the first of October I’d go back to Florida in the winter. Now, spending all of time in Ohio, and racing at Northfield, I’d pick up a couple of drives here and there. Then, it just kind of snowballed. Now, a lot of nights, I’m in almost every race. That makes the numbers go up, as does driving for some excellent owners. If you’re out there in a few races on 15-1 longshots, it can be tough. When you have three or four favorites every night, that really helps

anybody’s win total.”

Success has come with sacrifices.

A busy life on the half-mile track has meant less time on the home front.

“The biggest challenge is family life. My wife, she works at a school. So, usually, she leaves around seven in the morning and I’m still sleeping. She goes to work and I go jog the horse in the morning. I’m back in the afternoon and I’m by myself. When she gets home, I’m out driving. That makes it a little hard. When we do have those nights together, we’ll go out for dinner or see a movie. We also enjoy going on vacation. But with this industry, if you want to find success, you have to put in the time and effort.”

It’s what was expected of Sugg, every day, when he worked for his father.

When he recalls those days, he’s reminded it wasn’t words that helped shape him as a young horseman.

“My dad had a great work ethic and he instilled in that me and my brothers. We’d work all day long. That, more than anything, has really stayed with me.”

But not just on the racetrack.

Sugg has applied the same approach to his barn-building blueprint and life, in general.

“It’s really gratifying. We started out small and now we’re going to have 17 stalls when we’re all done. My one barn is about 50 feet away from my garage door and the other one is about 120 feet. It definitely gives you a sense of accomplishment. When it’s all done, I can sit in here, look at it and say, ‘It’s better than I ever thought it could be.’”

Just like a racing career, through design and dedication, that was built to succeed.

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YEARLING PAYMENTS DUE MAY 15*

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

**per USTA rule 12.02 all payments must be postmarked by midnight Monday, May 18*

Don't forget to stake your yearling!



Foals of 2019

TROTTERS

Arden Downs
Breeders Crown®
Currier & Ives
Dexter Cup
Hambletonian
Hoosier Stake No. 85
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

ChrisTullyTrot.com



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HRU FOAL OF THE WEEK

Foal of the Week

Submitted by Clay Horner

It's hard to believe the great Cabrini Hanover is now 18 and has produced 12 foals. The winner of \$1.3 million recently foaled her latest, a Stay Hungry colt, at Seelster Farms in Lucan, ON. Cabrini Hanover is owned by former Woodbine Entertainment Group CEO David Willmot and current WEG chair Clay Horner. Cabrini Hanover's most successful foal is millionaire filly Solar Sister, sired by Mach Three. Solar Sister posted a mark of 1:49.4.

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TWOS IN TRAINING



Jim Campbell in the HRU Twos in Training spotlight

Trainer Jim Campbell spoke to Jaimi MacDonald about the return of his divisional champ Real Cool Sam, his most promising 2-year-olds, coping with COVID-19, his long relationship with owner Jules Siegel and the influence of his father, Jack, and brother, John.

by Dave Briggs

HRU's Virtual Twos in Training series continued Thursday (May 14) featuring trainer Jim Campbell interviewed by Jaimi MacDonald.

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

Special thanks to [Preferred Equine](#) for sponsoring the Campbell video.

Campbell spoke about the return of his divisional champ **Real Cool Sam**, his most promising 2-year-olds, coping with COVID-19, his long relationship with owner Jules Siegel and the influence of his father, Jack, and brother, John.

On Saturday, May 16 at 7 p.m. EDT, MacDonald will interview trainer **Mark Steacy**. Thank you to [Winbak of Ontario](#) stallions for sponsoring that video.

On Monday, May 18 at 7 p.m. EDT, Heather Vitale will interview **Erv Miller**. Thank you to [Blue Chip Farms](#) and [Winbak of Ontario](#) stallions for sponsoring that video.

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, Noel Daley, Nancy Takter** and **Jim Campbell** – have garnered over 54,000 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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TWOS IN TRAINING

2020 - Jim Campbell





Muscles Yankee dead at 25

Harnessracing.com has reported that Muscles Yankee (Valley Victory–Maiden Yankee), the Hambletonian champion of 1998 and among the greatest trotting stallions in history, passed away peacefully in his paddock at Perretti Farms on Mother's Day (Sunday, May 10). The news was reported by Nicola Abrams, manager of the still existing Cream Ridge, NJ farm.

Muscles Yankee, immortalized as the sire of the greatest trotter in his decade, [Muscle Hill](#), won 15 of 21 starts at two and three and retired with earnings of \$1,424,938.

A foal of 1995, Muscles Yankee was 25.

Muscles Yankee was one of four Hambletonian victories for trainer Chuck Sylvester, and one of six wins for driver John Campbell.

—[Harnessracing.com](#)

Horse racing slated to return to Ontario on June 5

The return of live horse racing in the Province of Ontario just got one step closer.

Earlier Thursday (May 14), [the Ontario government announced a framework to gradually reopen the Province in stages](#). Stage 1, which is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, May 19, allows for horse racing without spectators and physical distancing measures in place.

"This is great news for the sport of horse racing and the tens of thousands of people it employs throughout the Province," said Jim Lawson, CEO, Woodbine Entertainment. "With this news, our plans to resume standardbred racing at Mohawk Park on June 5 and thoroughbred racing on June 6 at Woodbine remain on track. We appreciate the government's recognition that we can operate spectator-free horse racing safely by following strict physical distancing protocols.

"I would also like to thank the entire horse racing community for their patience, understanding and commitment in following health guidelines during this time.

In doing so, it has put the entire industry in the position to resume live horse racing in the coming weeks."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, harness racing at Mohawk Park was suspended on March 19, while the opening of Woodbine's Thoroughbred season, originally scheduled for April 18, was postponed.

—[Jamie Dykstra / Woodbine Entertainment Group](#)

Harrah's Hoosier Park announces June 16 opening date

Pending approval from the Indiana Horse Racing Commission, Harrah's Hoosier Park will kick off the delayed start of its 2020 Racing Season on Tuesday, June 16 with a 6:30 pm EDT first post time. Racing will be contested on a Tuesday through Saturday schedule through Nov. 21 for a total of 111 days. It should also be noted that racing will be conducted in a spectator free manner until further notice.

"We again want to thank Governor Eric Holcomb and the Indiana Horse Racing Commission staff for their leadership in paving the way for the opening of our barn area and ultimately the ability to conduct live racing," said Trent McIntosh, senior vice president and general manager. I want to assure everyone that as we embark on the start of our race meet, we will do so in a manner whereby we will take every precaution to ensure the health and safety of our employees and horsemen."

"While the Opening Night of every racing season is special this one will be even more so," said Rick Moore, vice-president and general manager of racing. "We want to thank our horsemen for their patience during this most difficult of times and wish everyone the very best of luck throughout the meet."

Details regarding Indiana Sires Stakes schedule, late closer schedule, open stakes schedule and average daily purse distribution will be forthcoming.

—[Rick Moore / Harrah's Hoosier Park](#)

Live racing resumes on May 26 at MGM Northfield Park

Live harness racing (without spectators in attendance) will resume at MGM Northfield Park on Tuesday, May 26, post time 6:00 pm.

On Thursday morning (May 14), the Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC) finalized a Resolution and Statewide Protocol Plan to allow the resumption of live horse racing, without spectators, in the state.

"We are pleased by the Resolution, and thankful to the OSRC and Ohio government officials for their hard work and

the opportunity to resume racing in Ohio” said Dave Bianconi director of racing operations at MGM Northfield Park. “The safety and health of our employees and horsemen is our top priority and we will diligently follow the OSRC protocols.”

The racing schedule for the final week of May at Northfield will include cards on Tuesday (May 26), Wednesday (May 27) an added program on Friday (May 29) and Saturday (May 30), all with a 6:00 pm post time.

While no spectators will be in attendance, wagering on the racing action will be available worldwide through Northfield’s simulcast network, including all major Advance Deposit Wagering companies (ADW’s). Free live video of Northfield’s racing is available every race night at www.northfieldpark.com and through most ADW platforms.

—MGM Northfield Park

Standardbred Horse Sales Company sale dates shifted one day

In order to accommodate potential travel challenges for customers who attend the Breeders Crown races at Hoosier Park, Standardbred Horse Sales Company announces that the sale dates for its 2020 Annual Sale in Harrisburg will be shifted forward one day.

The new dates for the 2020 Annual Yearling Sale are Tuesday, Nov. 3 through Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020. The new dates for the 2020 Annual Mixed Sale are Friday, Nov. 6 and Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020.

In light of the unique challenges posed by COVID-19 and associated restrictions, Standardbred is exploring options for online bidding and expanded telephone bidding to accommodate customers who may not be able to attend the sale in person. Standardbred is also exploring additional sanitary and safety measures in conjunction with PA Farm Show Complex officials. Additional information will be provided as conditions for the sale become clear.

—Standardbred Horse Sales Company

Update on Ontario’s Re-Allocation of Purse Funds Program

Attention horsepeople

- Ontario Racing has received applications for more than 5,000 racehorses from horsepeople across the province and is happy to report that checks are now being distributed. Many thanks to the HBPA, COSA, QROOI and ORM staff for their non-stop efforts to get an incredible amount of paperwork processed.

- Trainers who do not receive payment for their April invoices by **May 21** should contact ORM at syoung@ontarioracing.com. Please note that this date has been extended by one week. We expect payments for the month of May to be distributed during the last week of May.
- Checks for qualified standardbred racehorses, drivers and trainers for the last week of March have now been fully distributed. Please contact ORM at aglynn@ontarioracing.com if you have not received your check(s) or if you have any questions.
- Once a return to racing is achieved, we will quickly update the industry on revised breed specific HIP programming and dates.

—Ontario Racing

Tioga and Vernon Downs update

In light of the recent announcement that the New York regions containing both Tioga and Vernon Downs will be among the first to make a gradual return to business, Jeff Gural is working toward opening those tracks for live racing, hopefully by the end of May.

Negotiations with the horsemen’s organizations regarding details on just how to accomplish that in a fashion that would give racing the best chance to be conducted safely are underway.

“Although it’s not in my best business interests to open for racing before the casinos get back going as originally planned, being a horseman I sympathize with the guys that race with us and the situation they have found themselves in through no fault of their own,” said Jeff Gural, owner/operator of Tioga and Vernon Downs.

“Another key issue is the status of the NY Sires Stakes (NYSS) program. There are a lot of unknowns about the other tracks, when they will be able to open and what the landscape will look like when they do. I understand that Buffalo has chosen not to host NYSS races, so if we’re able to get open we’ll include that leg with those raced at Tioga and Vernon and get the program started.

“The picture should become much clearer over the next few days. We are busy working out the details of what will be expected of us to race and just how we’ll get that done. Horsemen will need to be involved and diligent in policing themselves because we cannot afford a single mistake.”

Further details will be announced as they become known.

—Nick Salvi for Tioga and Vernon Downs

SBOANJ continues to work toward a return to racing

As we work towards a plan to re-open racing at the Meadowlands, the SBOANJ has been in constant contact with a number of New Jersey legislators that have consistently been supportive of our program, including Senate President Sweeney and Senators Sarlo and Gopal.

Senator Sarlo has been appointed by Senator Sweeney to head "The Strategy for Fiscal Recovery to Restart the New Jersey Economy" Committee and both Sarlo and Gopal were sponsors of our Appropriation Bill.

Assemblyman Ron Dancer, a long-time friend of our racing and breeding industry, was one of the invited participants to a special conference call with Governor Murphy this past Saturday, when the Governor acknowledged that he is aware of what we are doing to return to "spectator-less" racing. Governor Murphy added that his team is reviewing our plan and also commented that his office would follow up this week with more specifics.

In conjunction with Dr. Karyn Malinowski, Director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center, we have submitted an extremely comprehensive "Risk Management Plan" of safety and sanitation protocols to commence racing at the Meadowlands.

This plan, along with significant information referencing the much needed economic benefit to New Jersey of the Meadowlands return to racing, has been presented to Governor Murphy as well as to the New Jersey Racing Commission and Douglas Fisher, the Secretary of Agriculture.

Additionally, Jeff Gural from the Meadowlands and Dennis Drazin from Monmouth Park, have been appointed to the "Tourism Advisory Committee," in regard to the state's racing programs, giving us more important representation.

Assemblyman Dancer also advised us that Governor Murphy said he would be making further announcements this week about the "restarting and recovery" of the New Jersey economy, and we are hopeful that there will be some indication of our future racing prospects.

We appreciate the patience of our racing and breeding community in these most trying of times and we will continue to update you with any pertinent information.

—*Courtney Stafford / PR Consultant SBOANJ*

Mark Austin Memorial at Dresden Raceway postponed

Woodbine Entertainment would like to inform horsepeople that the Mark Austin Memorial held at Dresden Raceway has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nominations for the Mark Austin Memorial were scheduled

to close today (May 15).

Originally scheduled for June 14, 2020, the Mark Austin Memorial, along with dates for the two preliminary legs, will be rescheduled for later this year. As such, a new closing date for nominations will be announced in the coming weeks.

The Mohawk Race Office will continue to administer all payments for this series.

—*Jamie Dykstra / Woodbine Entertainment Group*

NYSS May yearling payments must be postmarked no later than today

The New York Sire Stakes (NYSS) is sharing an important reminder regarding May Yearling Payments. Payments must be postmarked by today (Friday, May 15).

These payments cannot be made online and must be mailed. Certified mail is encouraged.

Meanwhile, all eligible 2- and 3-year-old horses are now posted on the New York Sire Stakes website. Owners and horsemen can now see their horses listed. You can see the list [here](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, the best way to get in contact with the New York Sire Stakes is to email info@nysirestakes.com.

—*Leah Rostohar for NYSS*

Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association extends college scholarships application deadline

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association has extended the deadline for applications for the 2020 Scholarship program.

Completed applications must be postmarked by July 10, 2020 to be considered.

Application and requirements are available on the [OHHA website](#).

The scholarships are available to graduating high school seniors and/or students enrolled in degree or certificate programs. Graduate students are not eligible unless they are enrolled in a harness racing-specific graduate or professional level program and provide complete details regarding the harness racing-specific graduate or professional level program in conjunction with their application.

Scholarships will be awarded on academic merit and financial need and must be used towards the cost and expenses directly related to coursework and a degree being pursued at a college or university.

The announcement of 2020 OHHA Scholarship recipients will be made Aug. 3, 2020.

—*Frank Fraas / OHHA*