

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2022

The Sire Stakes boom and the Grand Circuit impact



RAY'S RUMBLINGS

By Ray Cotolo

@RayCotolo

Harness racing's mainstage has and will continue to be the Grand Circuit. The concept – which is a series of races that travel from track to track across North America – carries with it the highest prize money, the most history and thus the greatest prestige in the industry. At least, these races *did* offer the best prize money.

The introduction of racinos shifted the trajectory of racing in nearly every jurisdiction, boosting purse accounts and bringing revenue harness racing otherwise struggled to generate just to keep the doors open. With this new cash flow, state programs for racing had a wider wallet to pull from, and much of the money went not only into everyday purse accounts but also was continuously reinvested into the state's Sires Stakes programs. In the present day – even accounting for inflation – horses can earn much more money racing in Sires Stakes compared to 20 years ago.

So now we have competition in the marketplace. A little competition is not harmful necessarily, but the ramifications presented with choice have gradually been making themselves evident in the entry box of some Grand Circuit races.

"It's certainly competition for Grand Circuit races for sure," said John Campbell, current President of the Hambletonian Society, in a phone interview. "And let's be honest, Grand Circuit races from a value standpoint - of what you pay in and race for - cannot compete with most of the Sire Stake programs. Having said that, it depends on which Grand Circuit races you're speaking about. It certainly doesn't affect the Hambletonian, the Meadowlands Pace or the North America Cup. I think some of the middle-of-the-road Grand Circuit races are affected."

"And let's be honest, Grand Circuit races from a value standpoint - of what you pay in and race for - cannot compete with most of the Sire Stake programs. Having said that, it depends on which Grand Circuit races you're speaking about..."

-John Campbell

The value point Campbell talks about touches on the staking process between the Grand Circuit events and the state programs. For example, a Kentucky-eligible 2-year-old only has to make three payments of \$300 to be eligible for any Kentucky Sires Stakes division on the board. Compare that with, say, the Governor's Cup – a race for 2-year-old pacing colts and geldings. To be paid into the Governor's Cup, owners have to pay a nomination fee, three sustaining payments and a declaration fee upon entering the race. These fees for Grand Circuit races are what build a large portion of the purse while Sires Stakes programs are funded mostly off of state subsidies. In total, owners are paying \$4,900 to be eligible for a race that carries an estimated \$400,000 purse versus in Kentucky where owners can pay \$900 to race up to four times in \$80,000 preliminaries and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

DRF Bets

\$200 DEPOSIT MATCH & FREE DRF PPs

Join Now

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Jay Bergman: Grasso could return to NY spotlight with a pair of rookies
- Darin Zoccali: Educated consumers are the best customers
- Bax with plenty of power in Wellwood, Peaceful Way finals at Mohawk Park
- Jujubee eyeing a busy stakes schedule for the second half of the year
- Road to the Mohawk Million Week 2
- On The Backstretch: Profile of race secretary & Judge Peter Koch
- Best Bets & Analysis
- Headlines: Empire Breeders Classic at Tioga Sunday; Kane at Batavia
- Comments? Questions? Email the Editor DGiwner@DRF.com

Advertise with

For more information or to place an ad, contact Derick Giwner at dgiwner@drf.com

MULTIPLE PLACEMENT DISCOUNTS

© 2022 Daily Racing Form, LLC - 10 Grand Central, 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10017

\$100,000 GUARANTEED EARLY PICK 5

#1 STANDARD BRED

RACING

IN NORTH AMERICA



RACING

MON • TUE • THU • FRI • SAT

POST TIME
7:00 PM ET



WoodbineMohawkPark.com

Know When to Take the Reins. ResponsibleGambling.org

then in a \$400,000 final. This also doesn't include breeding bonuses paid to horses bred by a Kentucky stallion and mare.

"[Nobody's ever] come up with another alternative that would fund it the same way so we would have the purses we do," Campbell also said. "The system is what it is and, as I said, I think it's unfair to owners, but nobody's come up with a better alternative. Sires Stakes certainly are an alternative, to a certain extent. However, when you look at what the Grand Circuit brings, it's a different thing when you bring all the top horses from all over to a Grand Circuit race as opposed to just regional horses. And the one thing that the Grand Circuit does over and over again is increase handle. And obviously you look at the Hambletonian, but that's our biggest date. If you look at races at Northfield when they put on the Battle of Lake Erie, Western Fair Raceway when they put on the Camluck Classic . . . Grand Circuit racing brings increased handle to race tracks of all calibers and all handles – it's a bump. And I'm not sure they get the same bump just from Sire Stakes. It's certainly not as significant, put it that way."

Nonetheless, as much as betting is the driving figure to the health of harness racing, it unfortunately does not determine which horses decide to go in which races. Trainers have a greater number of opportunities now, but burdens come with the ability to choose which races to map for their horses' calendars. On one hand, more lucrative regional races give trainers the chance to choose between going for prestige on the Grand Circuit or trying some smaller ponds in big-purse Sires Stakes. But as already mentioned above, more races can have an impact on some historic events in the sport just with giving additional choice to horse people on their targets.

I talked with trainer Linda Toscano on this matter and her philosophy on how she approaches scheduling her horses' starts with the increasing options presented to owners and trainers. Toscano says, in her approach, that she stakes her horses to their respective Sires Stakes program immediately because "that's the least expensive way to keep them eligible for good money."

She expounded: "And then depending on how they're training down, I'm not a big believer – and I know I will take criticism for this – of just going down the line [in the stake schedule] and saying 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes...' Initially, my clientele didn't warrant doing that kind of stuff. So I try to decide based upon how they're training, I give every horse a chance to make a lot of money and yet at the same time I realize I can't dance every dance."

"So when I put the schedule together, the Kentucky schedule is really a good schedule because once you get them situated there, if they're good enough with the three-tier system, they can make money without having to travel. So it saves on expenses as far as shipping and also saves on the wear and tear on the horse. The Kentucky thing has been a godsend. Now having said that, some are Pennsylvania bred so you may want to follow the Sires Stakes circuit there, and you have others that you hope are going to be Grand Circuit [caliber]. So you just find the best schedule for the horse instead of putting them all in one thing and just going that route. It's hard, there's no question about it."

Toscano also touched on Sires Stakes programs including that in Indiana, where many horses do not have to travel far to race for large purses consistently. Incentives like decreasing travel can impact the route in the scheduling for certain horses. "I tease my owners when they say 'Well we could go here and we could go there.' I go 'You sit in your living room and change the channel. Every time you change the channel that could mean 10 hours in a truck for a horse,'" said Toscano.

What makes the choices for trainers even harder is the timing of certain races. All Grand Circuit races are coordinated annually at a meeting of harness race secretaries from across the country. However, these are races administered internally from the industry through organizations like the Hambletonian Society or the racetracks hosting their respective races. But Sires Stakes are administered by the state that funds them, and – as was the case last year – some states did not provide information for how they planned to schedule their programs.

"It is a headache, and I will tell you when you go to those race secretaries meetings to schedule the races it's like a puzzle getting them all figured in so there's not an overlap of divisions," John Campbell said. "What makes it even more complicated and difficult, the fact that we don't have all the Sires Stakes dates when we're putting that puzzle together in December is very frustrating and, to be perfectly honest, it's counterproductive."

At the annual meeting of race secretaries, president of the American Harness Race Secretaries Nick Salvi said "There are states that are always represented at the meetings, and there are some states that are

not. And those positions are largely political; people that are designated to run some of the programs are not necessarily well-versed in what we're trying to do – some of them are, some of them aren't.

"We're a little handicapped by the racetrack's schedules," Salvi also said. "So if Oak Grove is going to have money to have races of consequence, their dates are when they are going to be and they're probably not going to change because The Red Mile is not going anywhere. Then there will be conflicts. Can we make those conflicts more tolerable? I plan to talk to Kenny [Jackson with the Kentucky Sires Stakes] about how we can make it work better for both of us, because it doesn't do them any good to have five-, six-horse fields occasionally running off the card."

"So when I put the schedule together, the Kentucky schedule is really a good schedule because once you get them situated there, if they're good enough with the three-tier system, they can make money without having to travel. So it saves on expenses as far as shipping and also saves on the wear and tear on the horse. The Kentucky thing has been a godsend.

—Linda Toscano

This lack of communication causes instances where certain large-purse state races conflict with major events on the Grand Circuit. A recent example came this month with the 2-year-old trotting colt division where the Peter Haughton Memorial, which only drew 11 for a single elimination to lose one horse, had its final fall on the same weekend as preliminaries for Kentucky's breeding series. Whether this conflict verifiably influenced the number dropped into the box for the Grand Circuit race is unmeasurable, however I asked Linda Toscano how she would hypothetically approach choosing between those two races.

"First of all, I live in Jersey," Toscano said. "So if I have a colt good enough to race in the Peter Haughton – knowing that he's going to be performing on the world stage and racing for good money – I'm going to keep him home. But the second thing I'm going to do is I'm going to take into consideration who is going to be in the Peter Haughton. You know how fast they're going to go at The Meadowlands and you know how fast they're going to go on that day. And you know you have to have a really good one to compete. Sometimes, if they all want to dance the big dance, I'm going to head west and I'm going to race for \$80,000 and allow my colt to be the big fish in the small sea. Ultimately, I'm going to pick the best race for the horse to shine because you cannot sacrifice how important it is for a colt to win a race. Not only does the colt gain confidence, but the horse also gets respect from the other things, and that goes a long way. If you can sneak an eighth or a quarter in a race going forward, that comes from a horse being good. And that's really important to me also."

All in all, the market for races is treading in unknown territory. Gone are the original days of the Grand Circuit where nomadic horsemen would bring their fleet from town to town across many state lines for races they may or may not have belonged in as a strong competitor. States supplying large subsidies to support their regional programs have evolved the general business of making money for the horse owner to a system where many horses can thrive while barely stepping onto a shipping van. Of course, the Grand Circuit remains a value maker for creating black-type stallions and establishing broodmares of class. But in a game where the end goal is to make money, the landscape of added dollars in numerous other avenues has naturally muddled the way trainers approach certain races on the Grand Circuit. Maybe it's a case of too much racing, maybe it's a case of uncoordinated planning, or maybe neither matter as much in an era of low foal rates. The order is rapidly fading, and the times are just a changin'.

Grasso could return to the NY spotlight with rookie pair



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [BergmanJay](#)

For years there has been talk about closing the stables at Yonkers Raceway and converting the property into a better use. As many trainers abandoned the property seeking alternatives some longtime loyalists have remained. John Grasso has been on the backstretch at Yonkers since 1974 and has operated a small stable. For years Grasso has tried to come up with a quality colt or filly to race on the New York Sire Stakes program, predominantly by breeding his own mares.

Grasso himself thought the end was near just a few years ago. “My mares were getting old and not producing,” Grasso said on Monday (8/22). “I thought that was the end.”

Grasso’s homebreds had kept his family name alive in New York and put him on the map nationally back in the early 2000’s, specifically with a homebred by the name of Approved Action.

“He was the fastest son of Sir Taurus,” Grasso said. “He was the best horse I’ve ever had.”

Approved Action earned \$715K and finished second in the 2000 Yonkers Trot while capturing the New York Sire Stakes final during his sophomore season.

Dorothy Action, the dam of Approved Action, was also granddam to Affirmed Action (Conway Hall), a winner of 22 races and over \$360K during his career.

Yetta’s Angel, a full sister to Approved Action, produced three straight quality performers by Conway Hall, with Expressive Action finishing fourth behind Nuncio in the 2014 Yonkers Trot and accumulating lifetime earnings of \$424K under Grasso’s care.

The dream of coming up with another New York-bred trotter appeared to be over but Grasso found support from close family that didn’t appear ready to let go.

“My kids and others in my family urged me to go to Harrisburg,” Grasso said. Essentially it was the only way to go forward or otherwise close the business for good.

At Harrisburg last fall Grasso was able to find a pair of E L Titan’s to his liking and credits his brother for pointing him in the direction of one colt.

“He just loved the pedigree on this one,” Grasso said of the colt then named Curioso. “He liked that there was Garland Lobell on both sides. Maybe that’s something others weren’t interested in.”

Curioso was Hip number 302 and the first foal from a daughter of ABC Garland named Nothing But Nice.

“It was the mare’s first foal,” said Grasso. “I liked E L Titan because he was a fast son of Muscle Hill.”

Grasso secured the colt for a high bid of \$35,000. “I would have paid more for him if I had to.”

Grasso also came away with a filly originally named Crimson Rose for \$30,000 from the sale. She had a solid maternal line leading back to the New York Sire Stakes program. “Her dam is out of Miss Gibbons,” said Grasso, recalling the New York Sire Stakes 3-year-old filly champion from 2003 trained and driven by Howard Gill.

Grasso would rechristen the yearling purchases, changing Curioso’s name to Tillio’s Action and rebranding Crimson Rose as Jean’s Action in honor of past family members.

“My father’s name was Atilio,” said Grasso. “This is the first horse I’ve named after him since he passed away in 2005.”

Tillio’s Action could have an opportunity to fulfill a lifelong family dream if his early actions are an indicator of good things to come.

“When I took him to The Meadowlands to qualify [July 30] I told Dexter [Dunn] that I thought he was a nice horse, but I’d only trained him a mile in 2:07 at Yonkers and to take it easy with him,” Grasso said.

Dunn kept Tillio’s Action in the two-hole throughout the mile and finished second while never asking the colt to do much through a 1:57 4/5 performance, nearly 10 seconds better than the youngster had ever been before.

“The 2:07 mile at Yonkers was actually pretty good since you have to train in the middle of the track,” said Grasso to put things in perspective.



MIKE LIZZI

Tillio’s Action needs a good showing on August 31 at Batavia Downs in order to have a chance to make the NY Day of Champions.

Nevertheless, with the Sire Stakes season past its midpoint, time was of the essence to see not only how fast Tillio’s Action could go, but whether he could measure up on the New York Sire Stakes circuit dominated by a host of Chapter Seven offspring.

Two weeks later Tillio’s Action made his long-awaited (for Grasso) debut in a \$53,500 New York Sire Stakes division at Tioga Downs and made quite the impression. Racing from well off the pace against seasoned competition he rallied from fifth while first-over and scored by open lengths in a 1:56 3/5 mile. “I’ve never had a 2-year-old trotter win that fast,” said Grasso, who will turn 70 next year. “It was something special.”

Tillio’s Action was unplaced on Tuesday night when he started from post eight in one of two New York Sire Stakes divisions on Tuesday night at Yonkers and took back at the outset.

“You have to start three times in the Sire Stakes to make the final,” Grasso said, hoping that Tillio’s Action can get enough starts and points to be eligible to the September 10 finals at Tioga Downs. He will likely need a win in the third leg on August 31 at Batavia to find a way into the final.

The late start to the season for Tillio’s Action was a result of a pair of quarter cracks along the way that needed time to heal. While Grasso has been the sole caretaker for both his 2-year-olds, when it came time to help Tillio’s Action’s feet to be repaired he called on the best farrier to work on the colt he could find. “I brought in Ian McKinlay, and he did a great job,” said Grasso of the noted farrier.

Grasso has been a fixture at Yonkers Raceway since he first arrived there in 1974 and the very fact that he trained a pair of 2-year-olds over the half-mile track through the winter and onto the New York Sire Stakes is an accomplishment by itself.

“I broke them at home and then brought them to Yonkers in January,” Grasso said. “You can’t break a horse at Yonkers.”

Unlike the more populated training centers of the south, Grasso had to rely on himself and just a few others around him to make decisions as to if or how to stake his horses for the coming year. In Florida, for example, trainers are surrounded by other would-be stakes horses and can assess what they have against potential competition. In Grasso’s case it was mostly him sitting behind Tillio’s Action and Jean’s Action and comparing them against each other.

“I had Dennis Laterza sit behind Tillio’s Action while I trained Jean’s Action,” said Grasso of a point over the winter. “After Dennis got off, he told me I should stake the colt because he thought he was pretty nice.”

Grasso took the advice of his fellow trainer and nominated Tillio’s Action for this year’s Breeders Crown as well as Valley Victory Trot.

As for Jean’s Action, who finished third in a New York Sire Stakes division at Vernon Downs on August 19, Grasso remains optimistic. “She’s been improving a little bit with each start,” Grasso said. “We’ll try her Sunday in the Sire Stakes at Tioga.”



RACING IS IN OUR DNA
THE RED MILE 2022

REDMILE

FEATURING

THE 130TH KENTUCKY FUTURITY
BE A PART OF THE ACTION!

FOR SPONSORSHIP CALL CINDY SOLVERSON 847-845-0659 • REDMILESCINDY@GMAIL.COM

LIVE RACING

SUNDAY, JULY 31ST - SEPTEMBER 20TH, POST TIME 1:00 PM
SUNDAYS, MONDAYS, & TUESDAYS

MAJOR STAKES RACING STARTING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1ST,
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2ND, POST TIME 1:00 PM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8TH AND
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9TH, POST TIME 1:00 PM



Racing: Where educated consumers are our best customers



AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zocali [@AtTheTrack7](#)

We assume a great deal in horse racing. Those of us that have been around the game our entire lives and have acquired a great deal of racing knowledge assume that most horse bettors know and understand the basic intricacies of racing. However, as I have continued on the path of my career in the racing industry and have met many horse bettors around the country, I was shocked to realize how many of them know very little about racing and gambling.

That is not meant to be a slight against horse bettors, just an observation from my own experiences. One particular element has always stuck out for me. In my time working within V.I.P. Departments of racing companies, I couldn't tell you how many times I have heard some version of the following from a bettor who wagers a good bit of money:

"You guys must love me, I lose a ton of money betting with you guys."

In different ways I have been repeatedly told by horse bettors that they believe they have achieved a V.I.P. status because of the amount of money they lose. They viewed the racetracks and the Advance Deposit Wagering sites much the same as they view a casino – as "the house" – and because of those beliefs, they think the more they lose, the more sought-after their "action" is.

Recently Bartstool Sports founder Dave Portnoy was at Saratoga and tweeted a picture of himself with the following caption: "I'm going to bet recklessly today and try to bankrupt this place [Saratoga]"

([link: https://twitter.com/stoolpresidente/status/1561387316303876098](https://twitter.com/stoolpresidente/status/1561387316303876098))

Dave understands pari-mutuel wagering and I understand as someone with a massive social media following, many of his tweets are to be taken with a grain of salt as they have a specific purpose of benefiting his own brand. But, an individual can view that tweet and make the correlation between a racetrack and a casino. In order to "bankrupt this place," Dave Portnoy would have to win a great deal of money. Of course, that is not how horse racing or pari-mutuel wagering works. While Portnoy is aware of that, many people viewing that tweet are not.

I quote-tweeted Portnoy's tweet and spoke to the point that horse racing includes pari-mutuel wagering as its form of betting and highlighted the difference between that and betting against a casino. The tweet did earn a great deal of likes and re-tweets, but of course some people responded with either hostility or questions. One question was "why does it matter?" That is a very simple question with a very important and complex answer.

First and foremost, education is important for the bettor. In every aspect of racing, the more a bettor knows, the more likely they are going to enjoy their experience and the more likely they are to cash some tickets. It is a fairly basic principle that we want people who are wagering on horse racing to understand the wagering system it presents. That is true for any game of skill that includes gambling. A standard blackjack strategy will out-perform someone who doesn't understand when they should hit or stand. Certain wagering techniques in craps will improve your overall performance. The same could be said in racing and a part of that is a basic understanding of pari-mutuel wagering.

Secondly, it matters because of the general negative connotation associated with a casino as "the house." We've all heard the different sayings: "You can't beat the house" or "the house always wins" are views widely held by those who are trying to do just that, beat the house. So, if a person who is walking into a racetrack views the racetrack as "the house" it brings about the same negative feeling a casino presents when it is raking the chips away. Poker is considered one of the greatest games in the world because aside from the "rake," which is the portion taken out of each pot that the casino holds, there is no house. In poker, the players are wagering against one another. Horse racing is an identical principle. The racetrack has its takeout of each wager and the bettors are wagering against one another. It doesn't matter which horse wins, which player wins, the racetrack receives the same share of the wagering pools.

You would be shocked how many people that bet on horse racing don't know this. It is hard to believe, but I have heard it repeatedly with my own

two ears straight from the mouths of people who wager a lot of money on racing. It makes you wonder, if they don't understand the basic principle of pari-mutuel wagering, what else about horse racing do they not understand? If they are bringing friends to the races, what inaccurate information are they providing to those friends?

This all leads to one critical point. The education of the bettor matters because it is a cyclical process. The more the bettors know and the more informed they are, the more informed those who they expose to racing will become. In addition, if we are not realizing that there are bettors out there betting serious money who don't understand the basics of wagering, what else are we incorrectly assuming? How is that impacting our industry?

We need to assume less and communicate with our players more to gain a better understanding of what many of them know and perhaps more importantly, what they don't know.

First-crop sires in Ohio creating buzz

First-crop sires always create a buzz going into a fresh auction season. With new foals on the ground and yearlings being prepped for sales, breeders have been anxiously awaiting the opportunity to display and market their yet-unproven harness horses to the public. The Ohio Selected Jug Sale on Friday, September 16 at the Pickaway Ag Center will offer 46 colts and fillies by these new and exciting additions to the Ohio-sired landscape.

World Champion Lather Up p,4,1:46 (\$1,735,623) leads the pack with the most yearlings offered (21) and up until this year carried the moniker of 'co-fastest Standardbred of all-time.'

Lather Up serviced a full book in his first season while standing at Sugar Valley Farm in Delaware, and manager Joe McLead is very pleased with the stallion's progeny.

"The Lather Up foals that I have seen are great-bodied and have good conformation. They have a powerful look and are intelligent horses," noted McLead.

One cataloged standout is a Lather Up half-brother (Hip# 131) to 2-time Ohio Champion Queen Of The Pride p,4,1:50 2/5f (\$787,211), being offered by Hickory Lane Horse Farm.

Another household name around the Buckeye State is Dancin Yankee p,1:47 2/5f (\$2,003,907), whose 13 yearlings include eight colts and five fillies. A world champion and three-time Ohio Older Pacer of the Year, Dancin Yankee also bred a full book in his first season.

Still the fastest older pacer on a half-mile track (1:48 4/5), Dancin Yankee stands at Cool Winds Farm in Lima and remains one of the best Ohio-sired harness horses of all-time.

Spring Haven Farm will sell a Dancin Yankee half-sister (Hip# 222) to Mr Wiggle Pants p,4,1:49 4/5 (\$483,357), the 2016 Ohio 3-year-old Pacing Colt of the Year.

On the trotting side, Dublin Valley Farms stands Volstead 1:51 3/5f (\$773,903), a son of Cantab Hall with seven yearlings making their American debut. His first yearlings sold in Australia earlier in the year, with one individual fetching A\$95,000, and topping the sale session.

A Group 1 European champion, Volstead won 23 races, including the prestigious Sweden Cup, and set a season's leading record at Solvalla in 2017.

Walnut Valley Equine sells a Volstead half-sister (Hip# 263) to World Champion Barn Girl 1:52 3/5h (\$860,478).

Rounding out the freshmen sires is Bit Of A Legend N p,1:49 4/5h (\$2,569,621), who stands at Midland Acres in Bloomingburg. With five colts and fillies being offered, the son of Bettor's Delight won nearly a third of all his starts, winning 53 races lifetime and defeating some of the top older pacers of his era.

Midland Acres will offer a Bit Of A Legend N filly (Hip# 214) that is a half-sister to Rockette Baby p,4,1:50 3/5 (\$191,496) and Johnny Rockette p, 4,1:52 1/5h (\$138,730), etc.

An online PDF sale catalog for the upcoming annual Ohio Selected Jug Sale is now available [here](#).

-edited release (Chris Tully for Ohio Harness Horse Breeders Assoc.)

Bax with plenty of power for Wellwood, Peaceful Way finals

By Jay Bergman

If you listen to trainer John Bax speak about Righteous Resolve's training this winter, you'd be surprised that she's even in Saturday's C\$362,000 Peaceful Way stakes for juvenile trotting fillies at Woodbine Mohawk Park, let alone the likely favorite.

"She really didn't show much," Bax said. "She just went around the track like every other horse."

To Bax's surprise the full sister to last year's Mohawk Million runner-up Duly Resolved came out of her shell once she arrived in Ontario. "The lightbulb just went off," Bax said. "That first race when she trotted a last quarter in 27 was something I didn't expect."

Paul Macdonell guided the daughter of Resolve from well off the pace in her first pari-mutuel start on June 23 and she came from far back to win in a 1:59 3/5 mile. The last quarter indicated she was stakes material. Since then Righteous Resolve has gone on to win two of her three Ontario Sire Stakes Gold races, with last week's Peaceful Way elimination clocked in a career-best 1:55 3/5.

Asked to compare Righteous Resolve to her older brother, Bax saw notable differences. "She's actually a bit more masculine and stronger than he was," Bax said of Righteous Resolve.

On Saturday Righteous Resolve drew post three in the 10-horse field (race 5) with Bax having a second filly in the race named Quite Fast starting from post nine.

"I have three Walner's this year," Bax said. "I didn't have any last year, but I know they have a tendency to get hot."

Quite Fast is a filly out of Juanitas Fury, who finished second in the 2014 Peaceful Way for Bax. "Juanitas Fury was a sweetheart," Bax said in contrast to Quite Fast, who enters the Peaceful Way with five starts and no victories but did finish a solid third behind her stablemate in the elimination.

"Matt has done a great job with her keeping her calm and she's coming around," Bax said, describing how his son who drives Quite Fast has helped the filly mature and fulfill the promise of her pedigree.

The C\$665,000 William Wellwood Memorial (race 10) could be a wide-open affair and Bax has three in the 10-horse field including elimination winner Oh Look Magic (post five).

"He's a big goofy kid," said Bax, describing the gelding that has won three of his first five starts. James MacDonald will be back in the bike for the final. "He chose another horse in the elimination. He knows him and he's the best driver in Canada right now."

Oh Look Magic showed true resolve in his elimination score, setting a pedestrian half-mile clocking of 58 2/5 and then holding on under pressure late in a 1:55 1/5 career-best mile.

Bax had high expectations for Snowpiercer (post nine), a \$130,000 yearling purchase that he's been fiddling with equipment to get the most out of. Bax changed the bridle before Snowpiercer's Wellwood elimination, but the colt didn't respond as expected and was a bit too relaxed during the mile. Already a two-time winner in five career starts, the son of Muscle Mass will be driven by Paul MacDonell on Saturday.

Southwind Coors (post eight) is another Walner-sired offspring with a legitimate chance in the Wellwood. "We've been careful with him not getting too aggressive," Bax said. The results have been steady improvement including a second-place finish behind likely Wellwood favorite International Man in last week's elimination race timed in 1:56.

International Man, a colt from the first crop of International Moni, has won two of his first three races including a stroll-in-the-park victory in his elimination race for Yannick Gingras last week. International Moni drew post six.

The husband-wife team of Andy and Julie Miller send out French Wine from the pole position in the Wellwood. The son of Bar Hopping had a long overland trip in his elimination race but finished a solid third behind Oh Look Magic to set him up nicely for the final. Already a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes winner this year, French Wine is looking for his fourth win.

Ghostly Casper has yet to win in seven career starts but the son of



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Oh Look Magic (above) and Righteous Resolve (below) are two major competitors in the Wellwood Memorial and Peaceful Way finals, respectively.



Resolve hasn't lacked for determination, racing parked from outside posts and fighting to the bitter end. Ben Baillargeon trains Ghostly Casper, who landed post two in the field.

The well-bred Winners Bet (post four) gets Dexter Dunn back in the bike after the driver was too late on the scene to pilot him in last week's elimination victory. A son of Walner, Winners Bet has a 1:55 record taken at The Meadowlands in a Kindergarten division.

With a Wellwood victory producing an instant ticket to the Mohawk Million on September 24, we wondered where Bax stood when it came to putting a filly up against the colts in the rich event.

"I've got three owners that have spots in the Mohawk Million," Bax said. "It would obviously be up to the owners, but I think a 2-year-old filly can go against the colts."

Last year it was the filly Venerable that defeated the Bax-trained Duly Resolved in the second Mohawk Million. Perhaps his little sister will get a chance for revenge this year?

Saturday's Wellwood and Peaceful Way are part of a stacked card featuring a variety of top horses and hopeful stars of the future. Two divisions of the Nassagaweya for 2-year-old pacers and a pair of filly companion events also for rookies go as races 3, 4, 7 and 8. Perhaps the highlight for some will be the fastest pacer in history Bulldog Hanover starting in one of two seven-horse Canadian Pacing Derby eliminations. The top five in the sixth and ninth races will return for the final.

Post time for the 12-race card kicks off at 7:00 PM.

Jujubee eyeing a busy schedule



AMANDA STEPHENS

Jujubee turned in a winning 1:52 3/5 qualifier at The Red Mile on Monday morning (8/22).

By Derick Givner

It was a bit over a year ago when Jujubee burst on the national scene with a sparkling 1:49 4/5 victory at The Meadowlands on Hambletonian Day. That winning mile was part of a string of seven wins in eight starts including the Breeders Crown which vaulted him to the top of the heap in 2021 as Trotter of the Year.

Everything was perfect and this year started off the same way as Jujubee trained down for Greg Wright Jr., but just as he was approaching a return to the races something seemed off. The 4-year-old was diagnosed with a hairline fracture of his left hind pastern.

“The x-rays didn’t pick anything up so we brought him to Dr. Patty Hogan and she was able to find it on an MRI. Even after she found it she went back to look on the x-ray and couldn’t find it there,” said Wright, who gave the horse plenty of rest from his first qualifier on April 13 at Spring Ranch Garden to his second on August 3 at Pocono. “He seems good on it now. We’ve had him checked out and there is no reason to think otherwise.”

Wright drove Jujubee himself in the August 3 qualifier and had a front-row seat to his 1:55 4/5 victory. The plan was to qualify again before potentially going in the Sebastian K on August 20 at Pocono, but the son of Creatine got sick. So Wright moved Jujubee from Congress Hill Farm in New Jersey to The Red Mile to prepare for a Midwest campaign which got started on Monday (8/22) with a 1:52 3/5 qualifying win, this time with Andrew McCarthy in the bike. Jujubee tucked third from post seven, brushed to the lead at the half in 56 3/5, set the pace past three quarters in 1:24 4/5 and cruised home to win by 3 1/2 lengths.

“Andy [McCarthy] said he was really strong and did it easily,” said Wright about the qualifying effort.

First up on the stakes calendar for Jujubee is the Charlie Hill Memorial at Scioto Downs on September 10 and Wright is hoping to get a race in beforehand. If not, his stable star will qualify.

“They qualify [at Red Mile] on Monday, so that isn’t ideal. Hopefully we can find a race for him,” said Wright.

Assuming all goes well, the preliminary plan is for the career winner of \$961,857 to start two weeks later in the Caesars Trotting Classic at Harrah’s Hoosier Park on September 23, the Dayton Trotting Derby on October 1, the Allerage on October 9 and then start in the Breeders Crown eliminations at Woodbine Mohawk Park on October 22.

While Jujubee is seemingly lightly raced this year considering his dance card only shows three qualifiers and no pari-mutuel starts, Wright feels that the winner of 16 races in 23 career starts has actually had a long year since he was ready to return in April before forced into six weeks of rest. Even though the injury seems to be in the rearview mirror, Wright is not exactly doing cartwheels quite yet.

“It is not going to be easy [beating the top older trotters] but it is good to have him back,” said Wright. “If he gives us any indication that he’s not right we won’t continue with him.”

Wright and owner Jon Erdner are clearly hoping that Jujubee has a big second half of the year but it is always good to have options. They’ve already gotten calls for him to stand as a stallion in Indiana and Ohio.

“My owner wants to race him,” said Wright about the prospect of Jujubee racing in 2023. “Maybe we can breed and race.”



#32, LADY WICKED, P, F
McWicked-Lady Jen-Royal Mattjesty

9/25

Ontario Select Yearling Sale

Videos are posted.

[Click here to watch!](#)

ON Pacers Colts Fillies

ARTSPEAK	1	2
BETTERTHANCHEDDAR	4	3
BETTOR’S DELIGHT	1	-
HE’S WATCHING	-	1
MCWICKED*	1	2
SHADOW PLAY	6	4
SPORTSWRITER	1	-
STAG PARTY*	2	4

ON Trotters Colts Fillies

ARCHANGEL	2	2
MY MVP	2	2
THE BANK**	1	3

*First Crop / **First NA Crop

Visit www.ontarioselectyearlingsale.com for online bidding information!

Jack Burke, General Manager / Pat Woods, CAN Manager

James Ladwig, Yearling Manager

MD: 410.885.3059 / ON: 905.838.2145 / canada@winbakfarm.com

ROAD TO THE MOHAWK MILLION



The Mohawk Million for 2-year-old trotters is scheduled for September 24 at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Nine owners paid C\$100,000 each to own slots for the C\$1,000,000 race. Each slot-holder may enter their own horse in the Mohawk Million or make arrangements with another owner to use the entry. In addition, a tenth spot in the million-dollar race will be awarded to the winner of the William Wellwood Memorial on August 27 at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Below are the Top 10 horses on the Road to the Mohawk Million (Week 2 - August 25) as rated by DRF Harness Editor Derick Giwner along with his comments. (Horses are considered not only by on-track performance but chances of being in the race considering ownership)

1-KILMISTER (C--Chapter Seven) / Record: 5-5-0-0 (1:52 3/5 - Lex)

Trainer: Marcus Melander

Owner(s): Courant Inc.

Last Start: Won KY Sire Stakes at The Red Mile on 8/21

Giwner: Those that weren't overly impressed with his Peter Haughton Memorial win because he had a perfect trip have to be convinced now. Colt made an impressive backstretch charge to the front and powered away to a two-length score in the top division of the Kentucky Sire Stakes on Sunday. He skipped the Wellwood and his owner isn't a Million ticketholder, so unless there is a deal to be made down the road we won't see him on September 24.

2-OH WELL (C--Muscle Hill) / 4-2-2-0 (1:53 1/5 - Med)

Trainer: Marcus Melander

Owner(s): S R F Stable

Last Start: 2nd in Haughton Memorial on 8/6

Giwner: He was used some to make the front in the Haughton and that left him vulnerable to the top horse on this list in the stretch. Still, his record is solid, he's one of the fastest 2-year-olds this year and he's another one eligible to the Wellwood.

3-INSTAGRAM MODEL (F--Chapter Seven) / Record: 4-3-0-0 (1:53 - Med)

Trainer: Annie Stoebe

Owner(s): R. Lynn Curry

Last Start: Won NY Sire Stakes at Vernon on 8/19

Giwner: Beat up on a soft group at 1-5 in New York Sire Stakes action last weekend. Prior to that she rolled to an impressive victory in the Jim Doherty over Mabacita. The biggest issue is whether the Mohawk Million is even on the radar since her connections have stated the Breeders Crown is the clear goal. Time will tell.

4-OH LOOK MAGIC (C--Looklikeeachpndale)

Record: 5-3-0-1 (1:55 1/5 - Wbsb) / Trainer: John Bax

Owner(s): Bax Stable, Glengate Farms, The Cavalier Stable

Last Start: Won Wellwood Elim at Mohawk on 8/20

Giwner: Shocked them at 25-1 with a wire-to-wire victory in one of three Wellwood eliminations. Of course he was helped that the favorite broke and the second choice came away almost last, but it was promising that he set a new lifetime mark and the final time was faster than the other divisions. Colt has drawn post 5 in the C\$665,000 Wellwood final and potentially has a ticket to the Million via co-owner Glengate Farms.

5-YO BETH D (F--Helpisontheway) / Record: 5-4-1-0 (1:54 3/5 - HoP)

Trainer: Todd Luther

Owner(s): Black Magic Racing LLC

Last Start: Won IN Sire Stakes at Hoosier on 8/17

Giwner: Team Luther bought this gal from Verlin Yoder and immediately put a new lifetime mark on her, demolishing her foes by 11 lengths on August 17 at Hoosier. You have to wonder where her bottom is after that effort. While Luther doesn't own a Million ticket, I can definitely see him taking a shot if she continues on her current path. It's also worth noting that the Indiana Sire Stakes doesn't conflict with the Mohawk Million.

6-HEART ON FIRE (F--Father Patrick) / Record: 4-2-2-0 (1:54 1/5 - Med)

Trainer: Tony Alagna

Owner(s): Crawford Farms Racing

Last Start: 2nd in Peaceful Way Elim at Mohawk on 8/20

Giwner: Drops a few notches on the list after getting caught from behind by Righteous Resolve in her Peaceful Way elimination last weekend. The post Gods were kind to her with the four-hole in the final, so a rebound performance is certainly possible. That Crawford Farms owns a slot makes her a viable option for the Mohawk Million. She's also in Canada already and trainer Alagna keeps a string up north, so everything seems to be in place.

7-TUSCAN PRINCE (G--Kadabra) / 5-2-2-0 (1:56 3/5 - Wbsb)

Trainer: Luc Blais

Owner(s): Determination

Last Start: 2nd in Wellwood elims at Mohawk on 8/20

Giwner: There was lots to like in his Wellwood elimination as the son of Kadabra displayed speed at both ends of the mile and just missed the win while sprinting home in 27 seconds. He drew post 7 in the final on Saturday and a win would earn him a Million ticket, though with Determination as his owner, he doesn't need it.

8-DIRE STRAITS (C--Muscle Hill) / 6-3-1-0 (1:53 2/5 - Lex)

Trainer: Mattias Melander

Owner(s): Richard Gutnick, Thomas Pontone, Gary Cocco

Last Start: 6th in KY Sire Stakes at Red Mile on 8/21

Giwner: Didn't do much in his last start but certainly had an excuse considering he had post 9 and faced #1 on this list. Colts' prior KYSS efforts have been strong. The big issue with him being in the Mohawk Million (outside of getting a ticket) is that he is 100% aiming for the KYSS final on September 18 and would have to come back six days later on September 24.

9-BOND (F--Southwind Frank) / 5-3-2-0 (1:54 1/5 - Med)

Trainer: Ake Svanstedt

Owner(s): Ake Svanstedt Inc., Little E LLC, L.Berg Inc.

Last Start: Won PA Sire Stakes at Pocono on 8/21

Giwner: Made her move to the front past the quarter and went on to a solid 1:54 2/5 win at Pocono last time with Sarah Svanstedt at the controls. Her two open company races have resulted in second-place finishes, but she's certainly worth keeping an eye on if Svanstedt and company get her to keep improving.

10-CELEBRITY BAMBINO (C--Muscle Hill) / 4-1-1-1 (1:53 - Med)

Trainer: Ron Burke

Owner(s): Burke Racing Stb, J&T Silva Stbs, Knox Services, Phillip Collura

Last Start: 8th in Haughton Elim at The Meadowslands on 7/29

Giwner: Colt wasn't right in the Haughton elim and had to scratch out of the final. It's early in the year but he is one of the fastest 2-year-olds of 2022 and if they can get him right ahead of the Million, maybe he can make some noise.



BY DERICK GIWNER

Peter Koch has spent more than 40 years in the racing industry as a race secretary and Judge. His journey began at Buffalo Raceway and included stops at Batavia, Yonkers, Foxboro, Seattle, Freehold, and The Meadowlands, among other places.

The 63-year-old remains in the sport via his wife's Chapman Staking Service and will return to his roots this September to be the racing secretary for the five-day meet at the Delaware County Fair.

After finishing an afternoon round of golf, Koch took some time to chat with us about his journey in the sport and what it's like being a Judge. Enjoy!



RACING SECRETARY/JUDGE PETER KOCH

How did you get started in harness racing?

I was at Manhattan college and I saw an article about the Racetrack Industry Program at the University of Arizona. I liked going to the racetrack and I transferred there when I was in my sophomore year and I was there for three years. I graduated from there and at that time Delaware North was involved with sending people out to lecture to the program. Gaston Valiquette was the general Manager of Buffalo Raceway and I worked up there after my junior year for American Tote but I went in the morning and learned how the race office worked. When I graduated the next year he offered me the assistant race secretary job. That was in 1981. They also ran the Syracuse Mile. They were also the manager for a Thoroughbred meet at the Great Barrington Fair. That was my first year after college.

Who was most pivotal in helping your career in the sport prosper?

Gaston Valiquette got me started. I worked for Sharon Hermann, she was a race secretary. Also Don D'Andrea. All of them kind of got me going. When I was at Yonkers the Rooneys did a management deal to run Foxboro and they sent me up and that was the first place I was ever race secretary. I think that was 1984. In the meantime I had been talking to Joe DeFrank because they were trying to get Seattle going. Where Emerald Downs is now is where they were going to build a harness track. I was going to work out there. Joe told me that things looked good but that I shouldn't quit my day job. So of course I was young and quit my job. We ran a little fair meet but it never got going. We got people to come but we never got the whole financing together and the Thoroughbred people kind of kept us out. Luckily Garden State Park opened in 1985 and Don D'Andrea decided he would work with Joe DeFrank at The Meadowlands and do Garden State, so I got hired at Batavia and then at Buffalo. I did those tracks for seven years. We probably raced over 300 days a year between the two places and always had lots of horses. In 1993 I lost Buffalo and came to New Jersey as a Judge. I was an associate Judge and in 1998 and 1999 I was the Presiding Judge. Then Freehold offered me the race secretary job. I stayed there from 1999 to 2008. Then I went to The Meadowlands.

Since you have worked on both ends of the spectrum, is it easier to work at a smaller track or a more prominent one?

There is definitely more pressure at the bigger tracks because there is



DERICK GIWNER

Peter Koch started his career in racing at Buffalo Raceway.

more money involved. The way I always tried to be during my career is fair. If people help you out you have to try to help them out. It is a working relationship with the horsemen.

There was a lot of pressure at The Meadowlands to offer full fields. Did it push your skills to the limit?

I've had some wonderful jobs in this business but my timing hasn't always been the greatest. When I got the race secretary job in 2008 the purse supplement had been cut. Two weeks after I got the job they told me I had to cut the purses by 30%. That was hard because the year before they were carding \$50,000/\$60,000 claimers two divisions a week and they were going for \$34,000 or so. Then I was offering a \$50,000 claimer for \$21,000. It was hard. It ended up when I left being race secretary to be the Presiding Judge they got the purse supplement again [laughing]. I've never worked anyplace where there was slot money.

You also handled racing secretary duties at the Little Brown Jug for years. Was that more of a fun experience or is the stress at a fair meet similar?

I'm going to do it again and go back this year. Dave [Bianconi] is going to do the simulcast show and he's busy with Northfield. I always enjoyed going out there. It's fun. It's like a giant tailgate party. There are a lot of people if you ask them what race they want to win they would say the Little Brown Jug. It's an important race and it is still the best crowd of the year in harness racing.

What kind of car do you drive?

I used to drive a Lincoln Town Car but I live an hour from The Meadowlands and that was too expensive to put gas in so I drive a Honda Accord.

Favorite dinner meal? Snack?

A nice New York Strip on the grill; red seedless grapes.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 11](#)

ON THE BACKSTRETCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

What is your favorite track to visit? Why?

Unfortunately it is not open anymore but Greenwood Raceway in Toronto. It had so much charm and it was close to downtown. It had great racing and a great atmosphere.

What is your favorite big event in racing? Why?

That's hard because I've been lucky enough to be associated with the two biggest races our business has. I have to say Hambletonian Day. I love the Jug but I think Hambletonian Day is the best day of racing of the year.

Despite being semi-retired, are racing or horses on your mind?

I still follow it. I check the USTA. I was there for Meadowlands Pace night and I saw the Hambletonian.

How are you occupying your time now?

My wife has always had a staking service business. That was always her business and I wasn't involved, but since I retired she has wanted to back off and I've kind of taken over running it. It is Chapman Staking. Her father was John Chapman. An interesting stat is that when he passed away - he was only 51 years old - he was fifth all-time in money and wins I believe.

What is your favorite sport to watch? Team?

Baseball - New York Metropolitan.

What is one thing about you most fans/bettors don't know?

People may not know that my family really had no involvement in racing despite the fact that I've been in the sport for 40 years.

What is one word that describes harness racing for you?

Tactical.

Did you ever own horses?

No, but I might down the road.

What is the best advice you've ever gotten or given about harness racing?

My father told me that you can ruin your reputation in five minutes. I think I've got a good reputation in the business and I've always tried to work at that.

What was your most memorable moment in harness racing?

It's funny, I was working at Buffalo Raceway and I remember saying to the trackman that I thought every race could beat two minutes tonight, back when that used to mean something. When that happened, it was a cool feeling. I go back far enough that qualifying time during the winter at Buffalo was 2:12 for pacers and 2:14 for trotters.

You were the Presiding Judge at The Meadowlands recently for a couple of years. Can you describe the pressure of that position?

Judging is one of those jobs where 95% of the time it is repetitive and doing the same thing and the other 5% you have to know what you are doing.

Did you often field calls from complaining bettors as a Judge?

You'd get emails from people and I would always try to answer them the best I could. There is an inherent bias when someone bets on a race and something happens to cause them to lose their money. They are not

always thinking so clearly, but I would try my best to explain to them why we did what we did.

How much of Judging do you think is common sense versus the letter of the rulebook?

I think it a lot of common sense, though you have to follow the rules. It really is putting everything together, the years of watching races and the flow of them, putting them together and judging races that goes into making the right call.

You were involved with the disqualification of Charlie May in the 2021 Meadowlands Pace. Can you just tell me what you and your fellow Judges saw?

They still haven't made a decision yet and I don't know if there will be a further appeal, so all I can say is that all of us 100% stand by our original decision.

Was it harder to be a Judge or a racing secretary?

They both have difficulties. I enjoyed being a racing secretary more than being a Judge. A Judge is a very necessary job and an important one, but you are more of an umpire or a referee. A racing secretary, if you can put together good competitive fields and the handle is good, you get a feeling of satisfaction. As a Judge, if people don't notice you then you did a good job. The jobs are quite different.

The majority of this interview occurred during an inquiry at Scioto. Why do some of these inquiries take so long when the decision looks somewhat obvious?

You want to have the definitive camera angle, so that takes some time. You want the public to be able to see it when you show it. Also, in the back of your mind, if something might go to an appeal or court, you want to be able to back it up with the camera angle. There is also discussion between the three people. In an ideal world people want a decision in 15 seconds, but once you make it official there is no going back, so you want to be certain you are pretty sure.

With the new variables of horse shortages and the TrackMaster Ratings, how different is being a racing secretary today?

It's funny, I retired from being a racing secretary in 2018 and the TrackMaster things were just coming into play. I think they are a worthwhile tool that can be used with regular conditions.

If you had the power to change one thing in the sport, what would it be?

I would change our visibility to the general public because we are really not that visible to a great amount of people.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

I've been working at racetracks for 40 years and I'm still involved in racing, so I hope it is good. Right now I think it is a good time to own a horse; people can make money and pay their bills. It is worrisome though because the entire sport is basically subsidized. It has worked for a while and I hope it continues. Fingers crossed.

Time for the stretch drive.

Best Horse you ever saw: Niatross.

Best Driver: It is a hard question because there are different skill levels needed on a half, five-eighths and mile tracks. On a big track, for big money, John Campbell.

Best Trainer: Jimmy Takter.

Favorite TV Show?: Blue Bloods.

Trotters or Pacers?: There were a lot of days at The Meadowlands where I was happy to have trotters, but I would say I'm a pacing guy.

Gotthegreenlight goes for EBC

By Ken Weingartner

Gotthegreenlight is always ready to go.

"It doesn't matter where she's been, or how late you get home, or how hard she's raced, in the morning she's got her head out of her stall, her ears up, banging the gate looking for action," trainer Nifty Norman said about the 3-year-old female pacer. "She's just a good all-around honest horse."

Gotthegreenlight has won 14 of 21 career races and earned \$456,785. She was a New York Sire Stakes champion last year and this July was a dead-heat winner of the Park MGM Pace at Yonkers Raceway. Eleven days later at Yonkers, she won a division of the New York Sire Stakes in 1:51 3/5, setting the track record for 3-year-old female pacers. The previous mark of 1:51 3/5 had been set in 2013 by Charisma Hanover.

On Sunday, Gotthegreenlight will go in the first of two \$111,500 divisions of the Empire Breeders Classic for 3-year-old female pacers at Tioga Downs. She will start from post six in the seven-horse field with Jason Bartlett in the sulky.

Gotthegreenlight has won five of her past six races this season, and six of nine overall.

"She's been good again this year, and that doesn't happen all the time," Norman said. "Just like most of them, she's a little bigger and nicer looking (than last year). She's a lot more settled. Last year, you had to be careful with her because she could get hot. This year, she's very relaxed and very professional, so she's pretty easy to train."

Gotthegreenlight, by American Ideal, was purchased for \$40,000 at the 2020 Standardbred Horse Sale and is owned by Patricia Stable and Kovach Stables. Her full brother, Ideal Wheel, was a Grand Circuit winner and her mom, Bet On Luck, was a New York Sire Stakes champion. Bet On Luck's full sister Bettor B Lucky was a Grand Circuit winner and Empire Breeders Classic champ.

"I liked the look of her," Norman said about buying Gotthegreenlight as a yearling. "She had a great neck and shoulder on her, just a real athletic-looking filly."

When her career began, Norman was uncertain of Gotthegreenlight's talent level, but she won her first four races and eight of her first nine. In her second start, at the Meadowlands, she won in 1:51 2/5 with a 26 second final quarter-mile. Later in the year, also at The Big M, she won in 1:51 with a 26 1/5 final panel. Her 1:51 mile tied for eighth fastest among 2-year-old female pacers in 2021.

"She's got a big move," Norman said. "She can leave good if you want to, but that's not really her strong point. I think she's better off a helmet. She wants to hunt a horse down. She's just a competitor."

Gotthegreenlight is the 3-1 second choice in the first Empire Breeders Classic division. Julie Miller-trained Max Contract, who last weekend had a four-race win streak snapped by a third-place finish in the James M. Lynch Memorial, is the 2-1 favorite. She has won five of seven races this year, including three Grand Circuit stakes.

Norman also has a starter in the second Empire Breeders Classic filly division, Nadina Hanover, who is 8-1. She has won four of 11 races this year and is owned by Dune Road Stables. She will be heading to the New York Excelsior Series final in September.

"She's got good gate speed and she's very honest," Norman said. "She's no star but tries harder than most."

The 2-1 favorite in the second division for filly pacers is Ake Svanstedt-trained Valar Dohaeris. In her most recent five starts, all in the New York Sire Stakes, she has posted a win, two seconds, and two thirds.

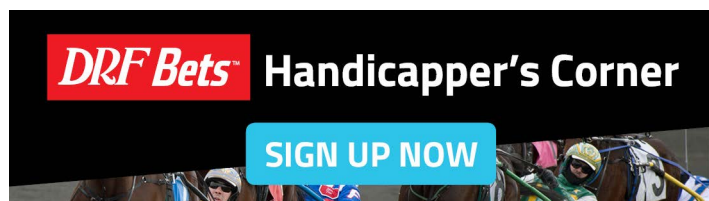
There also will be two Empire Breeders Classic divisions for 3-year-old male pacers Sunday at Tioga Downs.

Shakertown, who has won back-to-back starts in the Excelsior Series for trainer Tony Alagna, is the 2-1 favorite in the \$122,000 first division.

Early Action, a five-time winner on the Grand Circuit in 2021 including the Governor's Cup, is the 2-1 choice in the \$120,700 second division. The Joe Holloway trainee is seeking his first victory this season and is coming off a second-place finish in the Max C. Hempt Consolation I last weekend.

Racing begins at 1 p.m. (EDT) Sunday at Tioga Downs. The EBC filly divisions are races nine and 11 on the 14-race card. The EBC colt-and-gelding divisions are races seven and 10.

--edited release (USTA)--



DRF Bets Handicapper's Corner
[SIGN UP NOW](#)

At DRF Harness we strive to provide the best handicapping information in the sport. Each week we'll use this space to bring you some of our handicappers' best bets and value plays. Use this information as one of your tools when wagering or simply click on the link above and head to DRF Bets to wager now.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 26

RACE 7

(2) MACHIAVELLI jogged two back in \$15's and was claimed, then faltered when used hard after a double-jump in class for his current connections. Camilleri trainee splits the difference entering in a 20 and it seems he's found a very good spot.

-Matt Rose



RACE 7

(1) STONEBRIDGE HELIOS got a great tightener for this Gold event and you can be sure he will be put into this race much earlier. He is strictly the one to beat here.

-Garnet Barnsdale



SATURDAY, AUGUST 27

RACE 6

(4) ROCKYROAD HANOVER could offer a hint of value here with Jimmy Freight likely taking tons of action in his return to Canada. Short field only helps his chance of avoiding trouble.

-Derick Giwner



RACE 7

(5) THIRD POWER returns to Yonkers after a romping win over at Pocono where he easily defeated a heavy favorite. He's been facing stakes company in some recent efforts for trainer Nick Devita, and I imagine George Napolitano Jr. will hustle him out of there.

-Greg Reinhart



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

[Thursday](#) [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Yonkers Analysis

[Thursday](#) [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

INDUSTRY NEWS

BLOODED HORSE SALE HELD ON TUESDAY

Rose Run Zizi, by Domethatagain, grabbed top honors when Greg Luther signed the ticket for \$35,000 at the Blooded Horse Sale on Tuesday, August 23. One of the sport's more prominent owners, Luther was pleased to get the stunning black colt from the Rose Run Farm consignment for his brother Todd to train. Luther purchased three of the top six yearling.

[READ MORE](#)

\$75,000 KANE MEMORIAL FIELD DRAWN FOR FRIDAY

This Friday (Aug. 26) Batavia Downs will present a special card of live racing that will feature both colt and filly 3-year-old divisions of New York Sire Stake trotters who will compete for \$232,700 in purses. But the card will also feature the renewal of Batavia Downs signature stake, the Robert J. Kane Memorial Pace.

[READ MORE](#)

LONDON CLASSIC YEARLING SALE ROSTER NOW ONLINE

The roster is set for the first edition of the London Classic Yearling Sale (LCYS) which will take place Tuesday, October 18 and Wednesday, October 19 at the Western Fair District Agriplex.

[READ MORE](#)

CROWN, THE GRUFFALO SHOW SUPREMACY IN NYSS

Crown and The Gruffalo were sent off as heavy favorites in the two \$78,700 New York Sire Stakes events for 2-year-old colt and gelding trotters on Tuesday night (August 23) at Yonkers Raceway, and both of them would go home with victories.

[READ MORE](#)

NO RUST FOR BEACH COWGIRL IN PA SIRE STAKES WIN

She had already established her credentials by winning the first two starts of her career, both Pennsylvania Sire Stakes, in 1:51 and 1:50 2/5, the latter time within a fifth of a second of the world record.

[READ MORE](#)

WORLD HARNESS HANDICAPPING CHAMPIONSHIP COMING TO BIG M

Live horse racing returns to the Meadowlands Racetrack on Thursday, September 1st and runs through Saturday, September 17th with a 6:20pm post time. The September meet is highlighted by the NJ Classic A & B Series.

Saturday, September 10th is the World Harness Handicapping Championship Final. Players that did not earn a seat through a qualifying event can directly buy-in for \$1,000. The \$1,000 entry fee includes a \$300 bankroll, with the remaining \$700 going to the prize pool. The WHHC contest format requires players to bet 10 races: their choice of seven Meadowlands races, plus three designated mandatory races. Players keep all pari-mutuel winnings. Prize payouts are to the Top 10. Details on the WHHC can be found at <https://playmeadowlands.com/handicapping/contests-challenges/>

-edited release (Meadowlands)

WINBAK FARM'S ONTARIO SELECT YEARLING SALE VIDEOS NOW AVAILABLE

Winbak Farm of Canada is excited to host the third annual Ontario Select Yearling Sale, which will be held on September 25th. The Winbak Farm lineup selling at the Ontario Select Yearling Sale includes 44 yearlings.

[READ MORE](#)

FREEHOLD'S SUMMER/FALL MEET BEGINS ON FRIDAY

Freehold Raceway returns from its summer break and will begin the summer/fall meet on Friday, August 26, with an 11-race card and an HD simulcast feed.

[READ MORE](#)

Cecere duo aim for Wellwood

By Ken Weingartner

There is little mystery surrounding International Man, which makes working with the colt a pleasure for trainer Domenico Cecere.

International Man has won two of three races this year, including an elimination of the William Wellwood Memorial for 2-year-old trotters last weekend at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The Lindy Farms-owned homebred, from the first crop of stallion International Moni, will start Saturday's (Aug. 27) C\$665,000 Wellwood final from post six with Yannick Gingras in the sulky.

His sire, International Moni, was bred and raced by the Moni Maker Stable, which includes members of Lindy Farms' Antonacci family as well as David Reid. International Moni was a multiple winner on the Grand Circuit, including the Goodtimes Stakes at Mohawk in 2017.

International Man (outside) won his debut in 1:55 in a division of the Kindergarten Classic Series at The Meadowlands. Lisa photo.

"He reminds me a lot of his father because he's so laid back with a nice gait," Cecere said. "I really like him. It's enjoyable to train a horse like him. International Moni was a pleasure to train too. We love International Moni, and it looks like we have a nice son of his. It's very nice to see them go the right way."

International Man, out of the mare Birthright, is a half-brother to filly Raised By Lindy, who last year at age 2 won three times on the Grand Circuit and lost by a nose to Joviality S in the Breeders Crown.

"He's got a lot of pedigree," Cecere said. "I'm very happy with him."

International Man won his debut in 1:55 in a division of the Kindergarten Classic Series at The Meadowlands, then was beaten by a neck in a third-place finish in the second leg of the event. He won his Wellwood elim by a half-length over Southwind Coors in 1:56.

"He won the first start from off a helmet, and then in his next start he got stuck on front, but I liked that he fought until the end," Cecere said. "He's still a little bit green, but he's improving. We made some changes with his bridle at Mohawk after talking with Yannick and he responded. He had a nice race. I know they went slow (1:00 1/5) the first half, but I'll take it. I think we're in good shape."

In addition to International Man, Cecere will send out Winner's Bet in the Wellwood final. The colt also won an elimination, besting Tuscan Prince by a neck in 1:56 3/5. The son of Walner-Side Bet Hanover was purchased for \$200,000 at the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale and is owned by Lindy Farms and Robert Rudolph.

Winner's Bet won a second-round division of the Kindergarten in 1:55. Lisa photo.

Winner's Bet debuted with a third-place finish in a leg of the New Jersey Sire Stakes, then got a three-week respite before finishing second in the New Jersey Sire Stakes Consolation. Two weeks later, he won a second-round division of the Kindergarten in 1:55.

Dexter Dunn will drive Winner's Bet in the Wellwood final, leaving from post four.

"In the beginning, he could get a little bit hot, a little bit anxious," Cecere said. "We took our time with him and went easy. He's a very powerful horse. He always showed he had a lot of speed and class, but he wanted to do so much so quick. I'm very proud of him. He's really come around."

The third of the three Wellwood eliminations was won by Oh Look Magic in 1:55 1/5, the fastest time of the season for a 2-year-old trotter in Canada. Oh Look Magic, the winner of three of five races this year, will have James McDonald at the lines for trainer John Bax and starts from post five.

Saturday's card at Mohawk also includes the Peaceful Way Stakes final for 2-year-old female trotters, two divisions of the Nassagaweya Stakes for 2-year-old male pacers, two divisions of the Eternal Camnation for 2-year-old female pacers, and eliminations of the Canadian Pacing Derby for older male pacers. For additional details, click here.

The William Wellwood Memorial is race 10 on the 12-race card, which begins at 7 p.m. (EDT). The winner of the Wellwood receives the final starting spot in the Mohawk Million, which is Sept. 24.

"It's exciting," Cecere said. "Both of our horses looked nice. It looks like the plans we made for them are going the right way. Hopefully, it continues that way."

"Now, we'll try to finish the job."