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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Darin Zoccali: Rehashing points of concern

Jay Bergman: Progress Pace sets stage for Beach Glass vs. Pebble Beach showdown

Zeron trying to line up a good team for Fall Final Four at The Meadowlands

MacGrath talks return of Beach Glass

On The Backstretch: Profile of owner/breeder Mitchel Skolnick

Best Bets & Analysis

Cal Expo back in action; Allard, Banca, Grasso handed prison sentences; Shadow Play moves to New York

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2022

Mystical Powers



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Gwerner

[@harnesseveguy](https://twitter.com/harnesseveguy)

The desire to find answers for the unexplainable is somewhat of a basic human trait. When something unexpected occurs there must be a reason. More importantly, we must assign a reason so it makes sense in our minds.

If you are standing outside at night and see a flash of light seemingly come out of nowhere, it must be a UFO. If a plague wipes out a region, perhaps it is divine intervention. If a rainbow appears on the horizon, that is potentially good luck. If you have an itchy palm, that means money is coming your way. Present an occurrence and there is likely some common public conception of what it means. This is no different in harness racing or any other sport.

Those that have been reading my columns, articles and handicapping over the years may not realize the cosmic power I possess. Honestly, I'm not even sure how it happens or when this mystical ability was bestowed upon me. Apparently I can change the outcome of sporting events simply by writing or saying something. In some cases, just my presence alone can alter the results.

Before getting to harness racing, just to prove that my superhuman abilities extend beyond the trotters and pacers, here is an example. My younger daughter plays soccer on a youth team. Over the last two years I have missed perhaps 15% of her 40 or so games due to the Lexington sale or Breeders Crown. During that period of time she has scored three goals – all in games I missed!

The trend has gotten so severe that the other parents have at times asked me to stay home. Apparently I'm a jinx and my presence alone is too big of an obstacle for my daughter to overcome. What is a dad to do?

My powers are not limited to soccer. Whether I pick for or against a horse to win, that can have a serious effect on the outcome of a race – or at least some people believe it does. Those powers are even stronger when it comes to writing a

story. Just speaking to me in the days leading up to a race can change everything. Depending on who you are I can be the difference in your horse winning or losing.

For whatever reason, trainer Nancy Takter tends to do well when I interview her prior to a race. She's not the only one but for some reason that trend sticks out in my head. Once an owner screamed at me to "get the hell away from him [meaning the trainer]" as the horse was waiting in his stall before a race. Years later I honestly don't recall if the horse won, though I certainly wasn't rooting for him.

I'd like to say these powers of persuasion over the outcome of races are exclusive to me, but alas there are a number of other people who perform feats of racing luck with their words. Jay Bergman has knack of speaking to people that end up winning stakes a few days later. Ken Weingartner can tell you stories about trainers that walk the other way when they see him coming to avoid the potential black cloud that comes with speaking to a journalist before a big race. We sometimes joke about it when one of us writes a story and the horse wins.

We jest, of course, about luck, fate, and all of the invisible factors which seemingly play a role in the outcome of races. To be honest, I do it all the time. There is no logical reasoning behind it but whenever I watch a race and think my horse is definitely a winner, they lose. Could it be that my powers of thought are so great that I can alter the outcome of races? If only!

The bottom line is that despite what I or anyone else may want to believe, I have absolutely no impact on the outcome of the races. If something went wrong during a race it would make much more sense to blame the driver, trainer, groom, horse, track maintenance personnel, racing secretary, or even Mother Nature.

Unfortunately I'm powerless when it comes to impacting sporting events. Though I guess it is possible that a driver could read my comments and handle the horse differently. Or maybe a trainer could read an article and change something because of what they read. Hmmm, maybe I do have some hidden abilities. Maybe that is what was meant when they said the pen is mightier than the sword. All hail, me, controller of racing! Guess you better be nice to me if you want to win.



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AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali [@AtTheTrack7](#)

Rehashing points of concern

As the year winds down, I always like to write a column covering several topics that were prominent throughout the year and areas that I would like to see changes or improvement.

This season was certainly the year of the older pacer. Bulldog Hanover will look to put a bow on one of the most memorable seasons in harness racing history in the upcoming TVG Free For All Championships at The Meadowlands. For Bulldog, it was a year that encapsulated both dominance and speed, including a 1:45 4/5 world-record performance in the William Haughton Memorial at The Meadowlands this past July.

It is that world record that brings me back to a topic I have mentioned before. In a sport so consumed by speed, why are we still timing these races in fifths-of-a-second? Thoroughbred racing has long since moved to timing its races in hundredths-of-a-second and they are far less concerned about final times than harness racing. Thoroughbred racing includes tracks ranging from six furlongs in circumference to one-and-a-half miles, yet there aren't different records for different sized race-tracks. There isn't a special designation for the six furlong record at smaller tracks like Delta Downs and Charles Town. They are viewed the same as Churchill Downs, Saratoga and Del Mar. Yet all of these tracks time Thoroughbred races in hundredths-of-a-second.

Harness racing has a world record for every sized track and every age group, as well as differentiating between colts and geldings and fillies and mares. Like certain sports in the Olympics, harness racing is obsessed with world records. Can you imagine if the 200 meters in track, or the men's 400 meter freestyle swim were timed in fifths-of-a-second? In harness racing, a horse beaten a quarter of a length is given the same final time as the horse that beat him. News flash, they didn't finish in the same time. I don't know if someone is going to pace 1:45 4/5 again in 2023, but there is a difference between 1:45.99 and 1:45.81, and if we are going to continue to put such an emphasis on these records, we should be timing the races more accurately.

Switching topics, it was certainly a big year for those selling horses. The Lexington Selected yearling sale, with a tremendous lineup of trotters, was a wild success and the recently completed Harrisburg sale established a new record for total gross sales of over \$44.3 million. At a time when inflation continues to be problematic and the cost of living for everyday things is at a level never seen before, people certainly seem to have plenty of money for Standardbreds. The Sire Stakes programs in places like New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana remain flush with purse money and The Meadowlands is in a better place than it has been in probably the last 15 years. Owners are responding to these facts well and continue to pursue the many opportunities out there for young horses.

One of the focal points of some frustration for myself when it comes to harness racing is sometimes I feel the sport is still living in the past. Timing races in fifths-of-a-second is an example of that. Another is the lack of airtime for harness racing through either television, streaming apps or other devices in which sports can be viewed.

It is 2022 and every sport has a mobile app with some sort of streaming service. Whether it be the "big four" leagues – MLB, NFL, NBA and NHL – or auto racing, golf, tennis, etc, all of these sports and many more offer a streaming service through some kind of application. My 9-year-old son has a membership with the NFL and NBA Apps and can watch replays of any game he wants. But, the only way to watch replays of harness racing is via an ADW or through a YouTube search. Harness racing has to "get with the times" and create an application that provides this service.

I am not looking for anything too sensational. Rather, I am speaking about a harness racing application that could be available on Amazon Fire, Roku, Apple TV, etc. that includes all the harness racetracks and their race replays. To be fair, this doesn't exactly exist in Thoroughbred racing either, although there are certain racetracks and certain companies that do provide an application with race replays and the live racing feed, it just doesn't exist on an industry-wide scale. In addition, Thoroughbred racing is also presented on a near-daily basis through the Fox

Sports networks and although harness racing did a good job this year of having some of its biggest races air on national television, it needs to go a step further.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: RTN does offer a subscription-based package for watching live racing or replays via PC or mobile, though it does not have an app or any free content.]

Last but not least, we continue to see some instances where race-tracks have been forced to cancel racing programs due to lack of entries. Although the sales are doing extremely well, we still do not have enough horses in training to support the amount of racing. I know I am just spinning my wheels with this suggestion as it will never happen, but it needs to be said. Racetracks in the northeast should stop racing the same schedule as they always have just because it is what they have always done. When we get to March and April, having The Meadowlands, Yonkers, Pocono, Harrah's Philadelphia, Saratoga, etc. all racing waters down the potential field sizes and makes things difficult on the race offices. This point speaks to the overall notion that we need more cohesion between the racetracks on matters that impact racing on a daily basis, and maximizing field size for bettors and improving the overall racing product certainly is a part of that.


Happy Thanksgiving everyone.

Florida Harness Racing resurrection?


According to a report on [FloridaPolitics.com](#) by [Scott Powers](#), the House State Administration and Technology Appropriations Subcommittee approved Representative Dan Daley's pari-mutuel wagering bill that would allow permit holders at any race track to host harness racing in the state of Florida.

When Pompano Park closed in April it ended a long run for harness racing in the state and left horsepeople who have made their living at the track literally out in the cold as in order to race during the winter they would have to set up shop in the northern part of the country.

While there are still more hurdles to overcome and ultimately if the measure passes a group or track would have to agree to start a new meet of harness racing, Daley said "IF" it is allowed the earliest a licensee would be able to move forward is May 2023.



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Progress sets stage for Beach Glass vs. Pebble Beach showdown



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [@BergmanJay](#)

It's interesting as the glamour boy division goes into the final weeks of stakes competition - with the eliminations for the Progress Pace set for Thursday (November 17) and the \$250,000 final slated just six days later - two of the leading sophomore pacers will likely meet on just one occasion. North America Cup and Breeders Crown winner Pebble Beach will race in one of the two \$35,000 eliminations while Meadowlands Pace winner Beach Glass goes in a separate stanza. That the two have only met once since the June 18 North America Cup has most to do with the pair's differing schedule, while at the same time other elements have robbed the public of the chance of more showdowns between our best.

Just look at what happened to what could have been a "rematch" had Beach Glass, following his North America Cup runner-up performance, gotten the chance to meet Pebble Beach in the Meadowlands Pace in July. That proved not a possibility this year as Pebble Beach was deemed ineligible to The Meadowlands Pace because his sire Downbytheseaside became a stallion when he turned 4 and didn't return to the racetrack.

Rules are rules and sometimes those affected by them are innocent bystanders.

It's hard to look at The Meadowlands Pace as the sole cause as to why Beach Glass hasn't met Pebble Beach with more regularity. This year the Kentucky bred/raised program hit high gear, allowing some of the sport's best 2 and 3-year-olds to set up shop in Lexington and earn more than they might with no travel necessary between starts. That's why Pebble Beach's connections spent two straight months with starts only at The Red Mile. Between the Kentucky Championship series and the two-week Grand Circuit meet Pebble Beach was hardly dominant. Nevertheless, the competition he raced each week was limited in supply with I Did It Myway gaining four straight victories over him before Pebble Beach regained winning form in the Tattersalls Grand Circuit contest.

While Pebble Beach's Lexington stint kept him away from horses like Beach Glass, on the other end of the spectrum Beach Glass was able to prosper capturing the Meadowlands Pace, the Cane Pace, the Hempt and the Simcoe while coming up short in the Adios Final to Bythemissal, with Pebble Beach third in that mile. The hopeful encounter the public was looking for in the Breeders Crown didn't materialize either as Beach Glass needed an operation and did not recover in time to race in the Breeders Crown eliminations.

Now as we move through November, Beach Glass and Pebble Beach will be at the same track on Thursday but will be four races apart, with the former headlining the eighth race at Dover Downs while Pebble Beach is favored in the 12th race.

Thus, the showdown between two of perhaps the three best sophomore male pacers will likely be preserved for the November 23 final.

Beach Glass and Pebble Beach met on one occasion last year and that was the Breeders Crown final at The Meadowlands. At the time Pebble Beach was the established horse having won seven of his first 10 races including some wicked speed miles at The Red Mile. Beach Glass was a bit of a late developer that had won his first three races at Woodbine Mohawk Park before showing up at The Meadowlands to make his stakes debut in the Crown. His elimination performance, a second-place finish, was an epic mile where he just got beat late in a 1:50 2/5 mile. Beach Glass got roughed up in the Breeders Crown final won by Monte Miki as Pebble Beach settled for third as the lukewarm betting choice.

This year Beach Glass has won seven of his 11 races with career earnings likely to surpass the \$1 million mark following the Progress Pace final. Pebble Beach has captured nine of his 16 starts with 2022 earnings currently at \$1,324,550. Consistency has been the trademark of Pebble Beach throughout his racing career. He enters Thursday's Progress elimination finishing on the board in all 27 career starts. Beach Glass has finished off the board twice in his career, the Breeders Crown last year and this year's Bluegrass at The Red Mile on October 1.

So, in attempting to evaluate two horses with quite similar ability but

race schedules that didn't collide often enough, a different kind of handicapping must be tried. That's because Beach Glass, while a starter far less often than Pebble Beach this year, did not have the luxury of racing in a restricted program like Pebble Beach enjoyed in Kentucky. Beach Glass had to be on the road during August and September while Pebble Beach stayed in residence in Kentucky. While Beach Glass was able to avoid Pebble Beach because of this scenario, he had to meet true Grand Circuit rivals in the Adios, Cane, Hempt and Simcoe before his last race in the Bluegrass at The Red Mile on October 1. Beach Glass enters the Progress with a higher winning percentage (63.6) than Pebble Beach (56.2). Beach Glass has a faster best-win-time with his 1:47 2/5 Meadowlands Pace clocking 4/5 of a second faster than Pebble Beach's 1:48 1/5 clocking taken in the Breeders Crown. Those times of course are a bit misleading in that Beach Glass' record mile came during the summer and Pebble Beach captured the Crown on a 44-degree night.



(LEFT) NIKKI SHERMAN / (RIGHT) AMANDA STEPHENS

Beach Glass (left) hopes to meet up with Pebble Beach (right) in the November 23rd \$250,000 Progress Pace final at Bally's Dover Downs.

The question comes down to what is truly at stake in this year's Progress Pace? Is it possible for Beach Glass to wrest the division title away from Pebble Beach? The two have met just three times in their racing careers, with the freshman Breeders Crown a loss for each, this year's North America Cup a victory for Pebble Beach with Beach Glass the runner-up, and Beach Glass second with Pebble Beach third behind Bythemissal in The Adios.

No matter how the Progress final plays out, Pebble Beach will go to stallion duty in Kentucky in 2023 leaving the only potential rivalry between these two more likely as stallions than racehorses. It's a sign of the times and one that seems unavoidable. After all, both have pedigrees that are surely in demand. Beach Glass is the last great son of Somebeachsomewhere and Pebble Beach will become a next-generation son of Somebeachsomewhere, his grandsire through Downbytheseaside that becomes a stallion.

A byproduct of horses leaving the game is the demand for other 3-year-olds that can graduate into the 4-year-old ranks next year and that's where the Progress Pace is likely to be the starting point for many that have found new homes after recent transactions. Captain Cowboy moves into the Burke barn and Night Hawk moves into the Bongiorno stable for the first time in the first \$35,000 Progress elimination division.

Sam Bowie purchased Energetic Hanover and Tony Alagna trains the Captaintreacherous-sired gelding for the first time in the second Progress field where he'll meet Pebble Beach as well as another recent Burke stable addition in Market Based.

It's hard to say if there's another Bulldog Hanover in the making for next year from this sophomore crop with Bythemissal, a horse with just 17 lifetime starts likely to emerge in 2023. With 13 wins in 16 starts this year, he ranks right up there with Beach Glass and Pebble Beach, however, if he's the deciding factor between those two it should be noted that of Bythemissal's three defeats Pebble Beach was responsible for two and Beach Glass just one.



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Zeron trying to line up a good team for Fall Final Four

By Jay Bergman

Scott Zeron is clearly on the comeback trail. After suffering an injury during a racing accident, Zeron had been sidelined and away from some of the sport's most important races. With an upset victory in the Breeders Crown behind Treacherous Dragon he regained the spotlight. Now, on Saturday, Zeron hopes to take another step towards a full recovery in the driving ranks guiding 2-year-olds in elimination events for the Meadowlands Fall Final Four.

Zeron will sit behind Brace For Landing, a \$155K yearling purchase that will need to finish in the top eight of 10 colts and geldings in the \$20,000 Valley Victory elimination (race 5) to advance to the final.

"He's been consistent," said Zeron, "while not facing the top horses."

Brace For Landing will get tested for class in the Valley Victory elimination as Breeders Crown runner-up Celebrity Bambino (post 8) has already gone much faster and enters the Valley Victory off a stunning 1:55 1/5 effort in the Garden State at The Meadowlands on November 11 over a sloppy surface. With Volume Eight and Kilmister both taking byes into the final, the field is bolstered by the presence of Purple Lord (post 5), six-times first or second in 11 starts this year. Purple Lord was a game second chasing Volume Eight at a distance in the Kindergarten final at The Meadowlands on November 12.

As happens in the driving ranks, Zeron needed a bit of luck to land a top mount and he found that in the first of two \$20,000 Governor's Cup eliminations for 2-year-old colt and gelding pacers (race 6). He'll drive El Ray, an improving son of Captaintreacherous that he qualified on November 12 at The Meadowlands.

"That was Dexter's [Dunn] horse," said Zeron. "He's committed to drive Handlelikeaporsche."

With Dunn unable to drive two horses in the Governor's Cup, the way was paved for Zeron with El Ray.

"He's got an explosive finish," Zeron said, describing his impression of El Ray after the Tony Alagna trainee sprinted home in 25 3/5 in his qualifier.

El Ray drew post seven and will need a top-five finish to reach the final. "They've been racing him from behind and I'll probably do the same," said Zeron of potential strategy with a horse that has won four straight races.

El Ray faces Breeders Crown champion Ammo. The surprise 52-1 winner of the year's ultimate test, Ammo landed post two and makes his first start in three weeks for trainer Joe Holloway. A son of Sweet Lou, Ammo had just three starts on his résumé before the Crown eliminations and now enters the Governor's Cup as the logical horse to beat.

The Ron Burke-trained Act Fast (post 3) had been a major player in the Ohio Sire Stakes program prior to racing in the Breeders Crown at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The son of Downbytheseaside was too far back to menace in the Crown but bounced back in a big way winning the Matron stakes at Dover Downs on November 3 in 1:50 3/5.

Voukefelas, one of New Jersey's finest this year, appears to be heading into the Governor's Cup back in top form for trainer Mike Russo. The son of Lazurus N drew post six.

Zeron and Cultured, a 2-year-old pacing filly from the Linda Toscano stable, were both making a major comeback at the exact same time. "She was my favorite from Linda's stable from the first time I sat behind her,"

Zeron said, recalling the early talent the Captaintreacherous-sired filly showed in baby races and her first few starts. "Then she had a bout with sickness and Linda decided to point her for these races."

Cultured had missed close to two months of racing action when Zeron and her reunited in a division of the Kindergarten on November 5 at The Meadowlands. The pair scored a 1:53 victory with multiple horses on the finish line and Cultured bravely holding her neck out triumphantly.

The victory catapulted Cultured into the November 12 series final where she finished third, beaten just a half-length in a 1:50 2/5 mile.

"Maybe if I was sitting third and not fourth it might have made a difference," said Zeron of the Kindergarten final where Cultured was forced to come first-over and had to try to track down the pacesetter while at the same time holding off the pocket-sitter. "I think the mile did her a world of good. She hadn't been that kind of speed and I think it will benefit her."

Cultured landed post two in the 10-filly \$20,000 Three Diamonds single elimination (race 9) and will be well inside the likely two public choices in the field, notably Vivians Dream (post 9) and Strong Poison (post 10). Vivians Dream is a seven-time winner in 11 starts this year and enters the Three Diamonds following a 1:52 3/5 wire-to-wire performance in the Matron Stakes at Dover Downs on November 3. Strong Poison has been battling the best all year long for trainer Ron Burke, with more than \$416k banked in her first season of racing. Strong Poison paced a sub-54 back half in her November 12 qualifier in preparation for the Three Diamonds.

The Fall Final Four eliminations are accompanied on the 14-race Meadowlands card by a pair of \$34,500 Preferreds. Breeders Crown champions Bella Bellini and Ecurie D battle in the trot (race 8) while Crown runner-up Tattoo Artist shows up with new driver Todd McCarthy in the pace (race 10). Both races are considered preps for the TVG finals on November 26.



DERICK GIWNER

Scott Zeron came back from an on-track injury and won a Breeders Crown at Woodbine Mohawk Park.



2022 HOLIDAY ISSUE



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MacGrath talks Beach Glass in his return to the races

By Ken Weingartner

After a six-week absence because of throat surgery, Meadowlands Pace champion Beach Glass is ready to return to the races in the first of Thursday's two \$35,000 Progress Pace eliminations at Bally's Dover.

Beach Glass will start from post five in the six-horse field and is the 5-2 morning-line second choice with Yannick Gingras driving for trainer Brent MacGrath. I Did It Myway, the Kentucky Championship Series winner coming off consecutive second-place finishes in the Breeders Crown and Matron Stakes, is the 2-1 favorite.

The top-four finishers from each elimination advance to the Progress Pace final on Nov. 23 at Dover. Pebble Beach, who counts the North America Cup, Breeders Crown, and Matron among his nine victories this year, is the 8-5 favorite in the second elim.

Beach Glass has finished no worse than second in 14 of 16 career races, winning 10. The homebred son of Somebeachsomewhere-Im With Her has earned \$968,044 for the Schooner II Stable ownership group.

This year, Beach Glass has won seven starts, with the Cane Pace, Max C. Hempt Memorial, and a division of the Simcoe Stakes joining the Meadowlands Pace on that list. His only finish worse than second in 11 races this season came in a division of the Bluegrass Stakes on Oct. 1 at Lexington's Red Mile, where he led to the stretch before ending up fourth.

Beach Glass had surgery to correct a trapped epiglottis two days later and was being pointed toward a return in last month's Breeders Crown, but a second surgery was required. He heads to his Progress elimination off a 1:50 qualifier win, with a last quarter in 26 2/5, this past Friday at Woodbine Mohawk Park with Paul MacDonell in the sulky.

"He was stronger than I thought he would be," MacGrath said. "He was phenomenal.

"It was our goal to get him back to the races this year to make sure we had the problem fixed, and it appears as though we've got it licked. We scoped him again after the qualifier and he scoped perfect.

"We're very happy with the results of the surgery. He's just a different horse. He's a lot happier. He's eating better, he's feeling better. If Friday is any indication, he's going to race better too. He's healed up very quickly. You wouldn't even know he had surgery."

MacGrath, who is based in Nova Scotia and among the horse's owners, during the summer discussed the idea of racing Beach Glass as a 4-year-old. With the colt back in action, a 2023 campaign remains in the cards.

"Definitely," MacGrath said. "That plan never changed, as long as he was healthy. We want to race him bad next year. He's a perfect horse to race as a 4-year-old.

"There is some nice racing on the half-mile (tracks), and he liked the half-mile in Nova Scotia training down. I see no difference in him on the half as on the big track; he handles the turns just as well on the small track. I think he will be very handy on half-mile tracks."

The early-season MGM Borgata Pacing Series would not be a target, but races such as the Charles Juravinski Memorial Cup at Flamboro Downs and Battle of Lake Erie at MGM Northfield Park could be.

"I'm going to train him (on the half) in Nova Scotia all winter, so he'll be used to it again," MacGrath said. "We'll know how it's working out and judge it accordingly. We're excited about the opportunities next year."

For now, though, MacGrath is focused on the opportunity this week for Beach Glass.

"Hopefully, he'll have a good go Thursday night," MacGrath said. "We're looking forward to it. We're excited. He seems good. What else can you say?"

Racing begins at 4:30 p.m. (EST) at Bally's Dover.

The first Progress Pace elimination is race eight on the 15-race card. In addition to I Did It Myway, who starts from post one with Andy McCarthy driving for trainer Tony Alagna, the field includes Pennsylvania Sire Stakes champion and Little Brown Jug runner-up Fourever Boy. The colt is 7-2 with Dexter Dunn in the sulky for trainer Tim Twaddle.

Pebble Beach will start from post four in the second elimination with Todd McCarthy driving for trainer Noel Daley. Mad Max Hanover, who finished second in the Meadowlands Pace, Cane Pace, and Tattersalls Pace, is the 5-2 second choice with Tim Tetrick handling the lines for trainer Jake Leamon.

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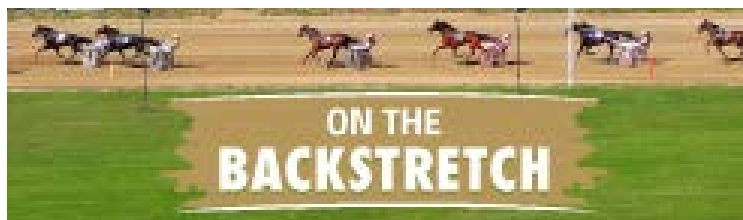


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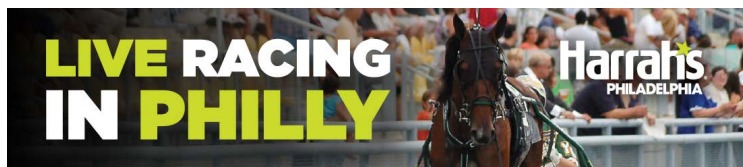
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BY DERICK GIWNER

Mitchel Skolnick started his journey in harness racing working for his father at Southwind Farms and eventually wound up creating his own breeding operation under the Bluestone Farms banner. While the transition seems simple, it was anything but and Skolnick was kind enough to relive those moments for us.

In addition to the broodmare operation at Bluestone, Skolnick has been involved with numerous stallions including Always B Miki. The well-educated 68-year-old took the time to discuss not only his professional life but harness racing in general.



OWNER/BREEDER MITCHEL SKOLNICK

How did you get started in harness racing?

I was just out of college when my father set up a group to race three horses. He asked me to take care of the accounting, staking, and writing the owners as to the status of the three horses.

Your late father (Allen) and mother (Connie) started Southwind Farms and you worked there at one point. Why did you leave?

I had to. I was fired. Truly. I was fired. My father and I did not agree on a range of issues both personal and business. We argued often and it seemed we lived in a constant state of quarreling. I think he finally reached a breaking point.

Interesting when I reflect back on that time. I was angry. I remember saying to him "Hell with you – I'll open my own farm." And here is a cautionary tale. Anger wears off. By the time it wore off for me – I had 60 acres and a half a dozen horses. And there was no way to return to Southwind.

Did you ever reconcile?

Never to the point either of us hoped to get to.

Your brother Barry took over Southwind Farms. Do you have a good relationship with him?

I believe we do. We don't have much contact, but I don't know of any animosity – at least on my part. Any distance between us today is more the result of collateral damage from that troublesome time I spent at Southwind Farm.

You went out on your own and started Bluestone Farms in 1997 with Eric Freeman and Frank Russo. Why the name Bluestone?

Mal Burrows suggested that name to me. There is an abandoned Bluestone Quarry on part of the property. He thought it would make a good name for our new venture.

25 years later, have you achieved the goals of Bluestone Farms?

After I left Southwind I had some moments where I thought I might just get out of the Standardbred Racing and Breeding business. I shared



COURTESY MITCHEL SKOLNICK

Mitchel Skolnick helped to create Bluestone Farms, which is in its 25th year of business.

my ambivalence with Paul Simmonds at the time. He could not believe I would even consider leaving the business. He said: 'What a waste it would be not to use all you have learned and accomplished at Southwind in your own venture.' When I consider Paul's counsel and your question – the answer is an unequivocal Yes.

And thank you for recognizing that Bluestone Farms is entering its 25th year in business.

How many broodmares do you currently have at Bluestone Farms?

Bluestone Farms has 10 mares wholly owned by Bluestone and 15 mares with the Caldwell family (Cane Run Farm) that we each own 50% of.

Who helped you most during your harness racing career?

Several people come to mind. First, somewhat begrudgingly, I would say my father. We may have been at loggerheads a lot, but I did learn some important lessons. Bob Boni's contributions to my knowledge and pursuits are immeasurable. I don't have words to express the extraordinary confidence Elizabeth and Rikki Caldwell have had in me as well as my partners Eric and Frank. Others like John Cashman, Fred Grant, Joe Holloway, Geoff Stein, Bob Stewart, Jim Crane, Harold Kelly, and Greg Peck come to mind. Each in some way have played an integral part in my pursuits.

What kind of car do you drive?

A Lexus RX450h SUV

Favorite dinner meal? Snack?

Probably a bowl of angel hair pasta with meat sauce and some garlic bread on the side. I am addicted to potato chips.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 9](#)

What is your favorite track to visit? Why?

The Red Mile. For a few days in October, I get to sit with many friends, talk of the industry, and reminisce of horses and people while watching Grand Circuit races. It feels like coming home.

What is your favorite big event in racing? Why?

I enjoy watching the Breeders Crown events. It is always of interest to me which horses have made it through a season of racing and have remained vital to the end.

How often are horses or racing on your mind?

I live on a farm. I wake up looking at horses, see them as I walk to the office, when I am in the barn and as I walk home in the evening. Pretty much all the time would be the answer.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of the sport?

It is returning slowly, but before the COVID outbreak, I liked having friends and family for dinners which I prepared.

What is your favorite sport to watch? Team?

College Basketball. I have season tickets to St. Johns Basketball. I regularly attend games with a very dear friend and my son. Along with St. Johns I watch IU, Notre Dame, Purdue, and UM games.

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

If I tell you that there will no longer be one thing about me that fans and bettors don't know.

What is one word that describes harness racing for you?

Grateful.

What was your best moment in harness racing?

Fortunately, I have had many. Everyone of those "best moments" were made so by the friends and family that shared those moments with me.

Is harness racing your sole profession? If not, how do/did you make a living?

Breeding and racing Standardbreds is all I do and have done the past 15 years. I live off of investments and profits from the farm when it does have profits.

You've owned a number of stallions during your career. Why doesn't Bluestone stand stallions?

Bluestone did stand a stallion in 1999 – Trade Balance. When Always A Virgin came along, Bob Boni and I thought Indiana would be the place to position him. Adam and Chris Bowden approached us to put Always B Miki in Pa. Finally, Bob and I, along with Alan and Steven Katz, believed JK Endofanera would also be best in Indiana.

I recently wrote a piece on the lack of success of high-priced yearlings and was told you have alternate information. What do your studies reveal?

I took the yearlings that sold in 2020 and sorted them from most to least expensive. There were about 3,500 that sold and I broke the yearlings down into 10% textiles by sales price and then by earnings. Taking what the top 10% earned as 2- and 3-year-olds, I divided that into the total earnings of the entire 2020 crop from those two years and found that the top 10% - 350 yearlings or so – earned 47% to 48% of all the money they raced for. When you add the next 10% into the equation you get to 68%. This proves that horsepeople know what they are looking at and what they are buying. You can't look at the top 10 because the sample isn't big enough but you can look at the top 350.



Mitchel Skolnick (far left) was part of the ownership group behind Always B Miki during his 2016 Horse of the Year campaign.

Bluestone is based in New Jersey and those state programs seem to be prospering. Are you happy with the state of racing in New Jersey right now?

We (Bluestone/Cane Run Partnership) receive little benefit from the New Jersey program. Elizabeth and I move our mares around to position their offspring to maximize sires stakes eligibility and Breeders Awards Programs. New Jersey is not a state (at least at this moment) that we target.

Do you see future development in the state?

I have significant reservations about racing in New Jersey. I have little confidence, if any at all, in The Meadowlands; even less, if that is possible, in the SBOA, and none at all in the New Jersey Racing Commission.

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

Hmmm? I am quite sure I'd change nothing. From the first day I entered this business to today I have heard few encouraging words about our future. My father would say this is not a business. Others would forecast the end is near. Still others said to me: you can't make any money racing, races are fixed, PED's are hurting our reputation, dependency on Casino money will destroy us, etc. Through all the negative criticisms and thirty years after my father's statement, we are still here. It seems the business is doing just fine. The last thing it needs is me changing something.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

From my early days in the business, I have been conscious of the commitment many of its participants have. When people argue – as I previously stated – that this is not a business, in one sense they are correct. It is a life for many. Racing horses gets under your skin. And for those who have been inoculated, it's a club that offers camaraderie, and for the lucky ones a moment to revel in success that comes from hard work and dedication.

There is a certain kind of individual that gravitates to this business. It is something that is inherent within them that causes them to dedicate themselves to this endeavor. Many came before us that had this essential characteristic. Many of today's participants in horse racing possess it. As long as the business remains populated by those who feel as we do, Standardbred Racing will be just fine.

Time for the stretch drive:

Best Horse you ever saw: Setting aside those horses I have owned, it would be Jate Lobell.

Best Driver Ever? Billy O' Donnell.

Best Trainer Ever? I'll take Bob Boni's word for it, Billy Haughton.

Lasix – Yes or No? Yes.

Favorite TV Show? Presently Ted Lasso; All time, Sports Night with MASH a close second.

Trotters or Pacers? Trotters.

Cal Expo meet kicks off Friday

The 46-night Winter/Spring Harness meet at Cal Expo gets underway Friday night with a \$7,000 contest for the Open filly and mare pacers headed by Rockin With Lou.

An 11-race card is on tap under the Watch and Wager LLC banner with first post set for 6:45 p.m.

This week will see a Friday program only, while next week will see the start of racing on a Friday/Sunday basis through April 20. The exceptions will be a Monday December 26 program and a Saturday February 11 card.

The schedule finds 20 California Sire Stakes contests, including a pair of \$50,000 events for the 4-year-old trotters and pacers in April, and a total of eight late-closers headed by the Alan Horowitz Pace next month.

There will also be such top events as the Alan Kirschenbaum, Kirk Breed, Lloyd Arnold and Don Fowler for the pacers and the Gary Budahn and Stan Bergstein for the trotters.

Looking at Friday's main event, Rockin With Lou has been assigned the outside post in the field of five for owner/driver/trainer Gerry Longo. The mare has gone several big miles over this layout in past seasons.

Taking her on from the rail out are the Luke Plano-reined and trained Brooklyn Moonshine; the Bob Johnson-conditioned Sweet Young Thing; Delightfully Wild from the Lino Pacheco shedrow and the Chip Lackey trained-and-driven Nebble Hanover.

-edited release (Mark Ratzky for Cal Expo)

Maisys Muscles tops Blooded Horse Fall Sale at \$45,000

Broodmare prospect Maisys Muscles topped the Blooded Horse Fall Sale held November 15 at the Champions Center in Springfield, Ohio. Winterwood Farm as agent consigned the lightly raced 3-year-old daughter of Muscle Hill that was purchased by Silver Creek Farm of Indiana for \$45,000.

Winterwood Farm also consigned the beautiful Somebeachsomewhere mare Chaxiraxi Hanover in foal to Tellitlikeitis that was purchased by Joe Wickey of Indiana for \$28,000. Rounding out the top three broodmares was the Yankee Glide daughter Wiki Hanover, consigned by Chapel Ridge Farm and purchased for \$35,000 by Robert McKim of Virginia.

The 75 yearling black-type section was led by Lady Lucina, a daughter of Downbytheseaside from the Spring Haven Farm consignment. Steve Richard of Massachusetts signed the ticket for the classy bay filly for \$40,000. Dublin Valley Farms brought a nice consignment that was led by Lucky Sequoia, a daughter of their popular young sire Volstead. John Merkel of Indiana was the winning bidder at \$26,000.

A handsome brown colt by What The Hill topped the 36 weanlings that were offered. Consigned by Stacey Ruddick, agent, the dual KY/OH eligible fourth foal of Cowgirl Hall 5,1.52 3/5f \$838,678) was purchased by Ryan Miller of Ohio for \$14,000.

Among the 20 stallion shares and breedings was a Long Tom share consigned by Crystal Springs Farm that was purchased by William Miller of Ohio for \$21,000 and a Swan For All share consigned by Jonas Schlabach that went to LaVern Bontrager of Indiana for \$20,000.

Burke Racing Stable brought an eagerly-awaited consignment of racehorses. These were led by the 3-year-old Ohio Sires Stakes trotter Up Blueberry Hill for \$40,000. The \$136,000-winning son of What The Hill went to William Hartt of Maine. Jim Eaton of Illinois was pleased to get the ultra-consistent 3-year-old pacer Silverstone for \$37,000. The son of American Ideal showed six consecutive miles in 1.51.

For complete sale results visit bloodedhorse.com.

-edited release (Blooded Horse Sale)

Shadow Play to stand in New York for 2023

Shadow Play, sire of Bulldog Hanover, the fastest Standardbred in history; 2021 Pepsi North America Cup winner Desperate Man; and 2018 Breeders Crown Champion Percy Blue Chip, are moving to New York.

A career winner of \$1.5 million, Shadow Play previously stood stud in Canada and now moves to Blue Chip's New York location with a \$6,000 stud fee.

Shadow Play bred 120 and 125 mares, respectively, the last two years, up significantly from the previous year. If you want to breed to Shadow Play in his new location before his book fills up this year, call us at 845-895-3930.

-edited release (Blue Chip Farm)



Handicapper's Corner

SIGN UP NOW



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17

RACE 4

(1) STREET GOSSIP gets to double-drop out of the NW3000L5's in his second start back after a layoff and has a driver switch to Bartlett.

-Greg Reinhart



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18

RACE 10

(4) INAMINUTE HANOVER has been a very solid trotter north of the border with times that stack up very nicely with this group. Recent \$87K Harrisburg purchase should acclimate well for new connections.

-Derick Giwner



RACE 7

(6) BABY BONITA had an impossibly long parked-out trip last week now she draws best. A better trip could see her in the winners circle at a square price.

-Garnet Barnsdale



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19

RACE 10

(7) TATTOO ARTIST is clearly heading to the front and is unlikely to get much resistance. Five-year-old seems like a legitimate odds-on favorite given the circumstances. (5) NO LOU ZING arrives in fine form for a new barn and could set up the cold exacta from on or off the pace.

-Giwner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

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

Meadowlands Analysis

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

Yonkers Analysis

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

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

ALLARD, BANCA HANDED MULTI-YEAR SENTENCES

Trainers Rene Allard and Richard Banca were both handed lengthy prison sentences according to a Wednesday (Nov. 16) release by the Southern District of Manhattan's U.S. Attorney Office.

Allard, who was third in North American trainer earnings in his last full season (2019), received a 27-month sentence while Banca (15th in earnings) got 30 months.

The official release from the Department of Justice can be read [here](#).

GRASSO SENTENCED TO 50 MONTHS IN PRISON

Louis Grasso, a veterinarian who was indicted in 2020 along with six other prominent harness-racing participants, was sentenced on Tuesday to 50 months in prison and ordered to forfeit \$412,000 for his role in supplying illegal substances to trainers, according to court records.

[READ MORE](#)

HANOVER ANNOUNCES 2023 STALLION SERVICE FEES

Hanover Shoe Farms has announced the 2023 service fees for their stallions. All except Nuncio stand in Pennsylvania.

Bar Hopping - \$12,000 (no overnight shipped semen)

Captain Corey - \$8,500 / Captaintreacherous - \$30,000

Greenshoe - \$25,000 / International Moni - \$8,000

Nuncio - \$7,500 (frozen semen only, foals not Pennsylvania eligible)

Papi Rob Hanover - \$10,000 / Stay Hungry - \$10,000

Tall Dark Stranger - \$20,000

The stallion books are now open. Mares can be booked online at www.hanoverpa.com. Alternatively, please call (717)637-8931 or email gpatel@hanoverpa.com or smasser@hanoverpa.com to request a 2023 booking contract.

-release (Hanover Shoe Farms)

LUCRATIVE BREEDING RIGHTS DEAL AVAILABLE FOR CENTURION ATM

Sugar Valley Farm, Delaware, Ohio along with partners Tristan Sjoberg and Chris Beaver are pleased to announce details of the lucrative breeding rights opportunity for World Champion trotter Centurion ATM 2:1:53 2/5 (\$728,894), who will stand his first Ohio season at stud in 2023 at Sugar Valley Farm for a fee of \$2,500.

The price for each breeding right is \$10,000 which includes two breedings per year for the life of the horse. There are only 15 breeding rights available.

Centurion ATM was a multiple stakes winner including the Peter Haughton Memorial (elim and Final in his World Record 1:53 2/5) at two and the Colonial Consolation at three.

By SJ's Caviar, he is a full brother to World Champion racehorse and successful sire Triumphant Caviar 4:1:51.4 (\$796,794). His dam ENS Tag Session has produced three \$700,000+ winners and four in 1:53 3/5 or faster.

From very limited opportunity he is a top sire of 2-year-olds in Australia, and from just two registered foals in the U.S., he is the sire of Jonas K S 3:1:53f'22 (\$56,000), impressive winner of the \$100,000 Battle Of Bunker Hill Trot at Plainridge.

For complete details contact Sugar Valley Farm, (740) 363-5618 or email info@sugarvalleyfarmstallions.com.

-edited release (Sugar Valley Farm)

ROYAL MATTJESTY PASSES AWAY AT 23

Winbak Farm is sad to report the passing of World Champion, Royal Mattjesty, p, 2, 1:50 3/5; 3, 1:50 2/5s; 1:48 4/5 (\$1,653,367). The 23-year-old passed away suddenly while enjoying a beautiful day in his pasture field on November 4th.

"We are deeply saddened over the loss of Royal Mattjesty," said Jack Burke, General Manager. "He was a true champion on the racetrack and we were lucky to be able to stand him at stud at Winbak Farm of Canada and Winbak Farm of Delaware."

Royal Mattjesty was a \$210,000 yearling out of the Hall of Fame mare inductee, Lady Hathaway.

He was a full-brother to O'Brien Award Winner, His Mattjesty, p, 2, 1:52 1/5f; 3, 1:51s (\$1,038,861).

"We are proud to have been the owners of Royal Mattjesty, he was the complete package, with a phenomenal pedigree, success on the track, and outstanding looks," said Joe Thomson, Winbak Farm Owner. "We were proud to stand him in our stallion lineup and to raise and sell his offspring."

As a racehorse, Royal Mattjesty was the first horse to ever take a sub 1:51 record at 2, 3, 4 and 5. He was the winner of 19 races and finished 1st, 2nd or 3rd in 57 races.

He was a World Champion at 2. He set the two-year-old World Record Winning the Bluegrass in 1:50.3. He also won the International Stallion Stakes and was second in a division in the Nassagaweya Stakes.

At 3, Royal Mattjesty won the Messenger Stakes elimination and New Jersey Sire Stakes leg. He was second in Hoosier Cup elimination, James Dancer Memorial elimination, New Jersey Classic elimination and Final, New Jersey Sire Stakes division, Oliver Wendell Holmes Stakes and Provincial Cup elimination. At 4, he won the Whenuwishuponastar Series leg. He was second in Pacing Classic Stakes Final and Whenuwishuponastar Series Final. As aged, he won the Allerage Farm Stakes Final, Battle of Lake Erie Stakes Final, Breeders Crown elimination, Magical Mike Stakes, Pacing Classic elimination, Spring Pacing Championship leg & War On The Shore FFA Invitational. He was second in the American-National Stakes Final, Breeders Crown Final, Canadian Pacing Derby elimination & Final, 2 Presidential Series legs & Spring Pacing Championship leg.

As a sire, Royal Mattjesty sired 9 Winners of \$300,000+ highlighted by Bay Girl, p, 3, 1:50s (\$576,130), Pointsman, p, 1:50 2/5f (\$497,214), Uncle Goodfellow, p, 1:50 2/5s (\$449,119), and Officernagentleman, p, 1:50 3/5f (\$405,438).

"Royal Mattjesty's final crop will be born in 2023," said Burke. "We look forward to their arrival and hope they will be successful on the race-track and carry on their sire's legacy."

Royal Mattjesty had also found success as a broodmare sire, including King Royalty, p, 1:51f (\$362,676), Ollie's Ztam, p, 3, 1:49 4/5 (\$334,543), Vintage Babe, p, 1:52 2/5f (\$294,915), and Royaltywestho, p, 1:50 4/5 (\$248,237).

"Winbak Farm is proud to have 12 Royal Mattjesty daughters in the broodmare band," said Burke. "We hope that they will produce champions as great as their sire."

Royal Mattjesty will be fondly remembered by the Winbak Farm team. "Royal Mattjesty was a truly special horse," said Thomson. "He will be missed."

For information on Winbak Farm, please visit www.winbakfarm.com.

-edited release (Winbak Farm)

PENNSYLVANIA HARNESS RACING COFFEE TABLE BOOK AVAILABLE

Harness Racing in the Keystone State, a lavishly illustrated coffee-table book detailing the colorful and important history of harness racing in Pennsylvania, is now available for purchase — just in time for holiday giving.

Commissioned by the United States Harness Writers Association Keystone Chapter and written by Victoria Howard, the book presents the development of Standardbreds and harness racing, from the formative years at Pennsylvania's county fairs to the current state of racing at the fairs and Pennsylvania's three pari-mutuel venues — The Downs at Mohegan Sun Pocono, Harrah's Philadelphia Casino & Racetrack, and Hollywood Casino at The Meadows.

The book features rarely seen archival photos of some of Pennsylvania's equine and human greats, and it includes scores of interviews with the horsemen and horsewomen, harness racing families, administrators and horsemen's associations that have helped propel Pennsylvania harness racing to its prominent role in North America.

This volume is a must for all who have participated in Keystone State harness racing . . . and for all who want their contributions to be remembered through the generations.

After payment of professional fees, all proceeds will help Keystone USHWA pursue its mission of supporting harness racing and the sport's equine and human performers. Purchase options from the publisher, AuthorHouse, include: Hard cover - \$49.99 / Soft cover - \$39.99 / Digital - \$3.99.

For orders and more information, please visit: <https://www.authorhouse.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/843037-harness-racing-in-the-keystone-state>

-edited release (USHWA Keystone Chapter)