

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023

A weighty photo finish issue

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DERICK GIWNER



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [BergmanJay](#)

If it is correct to suggest that harness racing belongs in the entertainment business, it's fair to ask how good a job it has done in keeping people's interest and getting viewers excited.

As a veteran of this sport that ventures back into the early 70's, I've seen many things change over time. Much change has been for the better as the sport went from the singular trainer-driver combination to a separation of the talents. This in my mind has led to races where driver talent is universally at a high level no matter what track you're watching.

As races have changed and gone faster one image appears further and further in the rearview mirror and seems to have mostly disappeared in today's product: The "close finish" – a compelling

factor allowing the sport its popularity in the 60's-80's – has become a distant memory as races have gone faster and heavy favorites along with speed have dominated the racing scene.

The first round of the NFL playoffs (January 14-16) where nearly every game came down to the final drive, was a fitting example of the kind of action that keeps viewers interested as the outcome is uncertain until the very end of a three to three-and-a-half hour contest. We may be able to fit 10 races within the same time frame, but one wonders how often we create a suspenseful ending to any of those contests where viewers still have a reason to watch.

The challenge for this sport is quite clear – to survive. Either we become more interesting and give people more reason to pay attention to us or we continue to play just to ourselves and hope we can bring the next generation of like-minded individuals along to maintain a pulse.

The idea of going back in time would seem futile as the dynamics of harness racing and

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the allocation of purse money has changed radically over time. Yet in my mind there's still hope for something different on the horizon that asks those in power to take a gamble, if you will, and modify the races to attempt to make them more compelling.

The idea is far from original but perhaps there has never been a better time to try to implement a system that attempts to balance out the horses within a race and in the process achieve results where the final eighth-of-a-mile finds viewers at the edge of their seats, still uncertain of the ending. Perhaps 2023 would be a good time to think about adding physical weight to the sulky as a means of handicapping the races to more effectively attempt to balance out the horses behind the starting gate. While harness driver weights are not standardized as they are among thoroughbred jockeys, there's no reason to believe that weight couldn't be added to sulkies to slow some horses down ever so slightly.

Before going further let's just try to understand that the issue here is trying to make the races more interesting and more exciting and not handicap trainers, drivers or owners so that they will lose money in the end. It's a hard concept to grasp because it's natural for each party to get the most out of their investment without restriction. Unfortunately, I believe we're in the current state because no individual or czar has ever been given the authority to monitor the product from all sides and do what was believed to be in the "best interests of the sport." The experiment of slot-funded harness racing has been a success from one aspect of the sport but unfortunately it has made it all too easy to look away from the actual product and only think of the best ways for owners, trainers and drivers to profit. In the 70's-80's there was no alternate universe to provide purses from and racetrack owners had to be 100 percent focused on the product as the sole source of the purse fund and track profits. Revenue was a product of on-track attendance and wagering on the sport.

The revival of harness racing has been all too one-sided and for bettors to get back in the game, the thought here is adding a factor to handicapping that makes it a bit more challenging and at the same time causes a change to the results that no longer guarantees the 1-5 shot unlimited access to the winner's circle 20 minutes before the race goes off.

The concept is to allow racing secretaries to add weight to the sulky of horses as a means of handicapping them versus others within the race. While post positions may have accomplished this feat on some occasions, the use of them as a handicap has had a troubling impact over time. In the 70's-80's at Yonkers and Roosevelt Raceways, giving post seven or eight to a horse in a handicap race made the event more interesting because even without leaving the gate said horse could still win under those conditions. In today's sport, assigning post eight on a half-mile track more often induces a horse not to leave and bettors to simply ignore them in the wagering. Surprisingly, despite the incredible differences in the effectiveness of such handicapping over the last 50 years, the sport continues to do the exact same thing.

In thoroughbred racing, just a few extra pounds added to the saddle was thought to make a major difference in performance. It's impossible without experimentation to know just how much additional weight would need to be applied to shave a fifth or two seconds from a horse's best effort. That said, it is something that is worth the experiment. Primarily because it would give not only racing secretaries an added tool to make races more competitive but could be an additional factor bettors use towards handicapping a race.

Added weight could also be an effective tool towards the sport getting a better mix of front-end versus off-the-pace winners. Any move in that direction would not only help the look of the product but would also likely achieve more interest from gamblers of both persuasions.

No plan such as this could possibly work without the total support of



Close finishes like Kobe's Gigi beating Test Of Faith by a head on Hambletonian Day are the types of exciting outcomes that can thrill fans.

NIKKI SHERMAN

horsemen and perhaps a way to get them on board would not be to handicap them in the reverse. I would suggest that any horses "weighted down" in advance of the race to make them appear more competitive should be rewarded with a larger share of the purse should they accept the added weight and go on to win. In this way both horsemen and bettors are incentivized and maybe in the end wagering on the sport trends upward.

We can only hope.



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One final goodbye to the original Meadowlands grandstand



MICHAEL LISA PHOTO

John Campbell waved goodbye to the original Meadowlands building on Hambletonian Day 2013 but demolition of the building didn't begin until 2022. Now it is gone.



AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali [@AtTheTrack7](#)

On December 14, 2022, the last of what remained of the original Meadowlands grandstand was demolished. The footage was captured by someone across the way at the present facility and admittedly it was tough to watch.

The original Meadowlands facility was the Mecca. When built and subsequently opened in 1976, it was a gem of a facility, one that captivated its patrons and had them coming back for decades. Sure, it helped that the facility was home to the finest harness racing the world had ever seen. But the building also sold itself. It was massive, state of the art and everything you could want in a racetrack. Now, it's gone.

Sure, The Meadowlands Racetrack still exists. The racing is still excellent. But nearly 10 years removed from the last time I stepped foot in the original building, I can now admit that leaving that building always gnawed at me.

Of course, I understood the business side of things. It was a massive facility built for a time when it housed 40,000 people on nearly a daily basis, a time when 50,000 people would show up to watch Larry Holmes square up against Gerry Cooney on closed-circuit television in 1982. Admittedly, those days were long gone.

That doesn't make it any easier for those of us who spent countless time in that building. Especially someone like me who literally grew up there. It was very hard working at The Meadowlands and having to help sell the idea of a brand new Meadowlands facility being what we needed, when all I needed was my old seat in the Clubhouse Teletheater.

The last day in the old building I remember walking out to my car in the adjacent parking lot, looking at the old grand dam of harness racing and saying goodbye. When I went to work on the following Monday, it would be in the new facility across the way. When things are new, they are exciting,

and when you are a part of something new, you are filled with hope, belief in the promise of tomorrow and look forward to the future. But I am not sure I ever got out of the past.

My dad used to describe that feeling to me about the old Yankee Stadium, by old I mean the one that Mickey Mantle played in, not Derek Jeter. Sure, it was the same building, but when it was renovated in the 1970's, it was dramatically changed and it never sat right with my father. He would tell me stories of watching Mickey Mantle chase down fly balls in the cavernous outfield that was 461 feet to center field, but just 296 feet down the right field line. He would talk about the old façade hanging from the roof of the stadium and how all the changes took the charm out of it.

I never saw that version of Yankee stadium and it is funny how things repeat themselves because the new Yankee stadium has never grown on me either. I miss that old building because to me, it too had charm. Admittedly, the new Meadowlands Racetrack has never grown on me either. But, it never had a chance with me. It could have been the most incredible racing facility ever constructed and it wouldn't have mattered, it wasn't the Mecca across the way.

Of course the facility has some great qualities. The rooftop is a beautiful spot to watch the racing and enjoy a summer night with the New York skyline as a gorgeous backdrop. The level with the

skyboxes and Pink provides great views of the racing. Trotters is a really cool spot to enjoy a meal and watch the races. But with me, none of that really ever mattered.

I pined for the days of getting to the track at 8:30 AM because it was Kentucky Derby Day and having to race up the ramp into the building, fly up the escalators to get a prime spot in the Clubhouse Teletheater. I missed the Carvel Quiz where if you got the right answer, you won a dinner for two at Terraces. I wish I could have one more meal from Franchises, which was tucked away in between the Clubhouse and Grandstand levels and was by far the most underrated meal in the facility.

That facility may have outlived its time. It may be true that there was no need to continue operating out of a facility that size considering the present state of horse racing attendance and the fact that so many people watch and wager from home. The old Meadowlands building was outdated, wasn't in great shape and probably needed a major facelift. But to those of us who spent years or even decades there, none of that mattered.

When customers used to express their displeasure with the plan to build a new facility, the Meadowlands leadership team never really understood it. I remember phrases like "I don't get it, this building is falling apart, it's old, it's outdated, why do they love it so much?" The funny thing was, I was one of those people and there was really no reason to try and explain it, because if you didn't feel that way, there wasn't an intellectual argument to be made to try and explain it. That's because the answer was obvious to all of us who understood. The answer was simply, because it's The Meadowlands.

As I watched the last part of the facility demolished, which was the far side of the Clubhouse where the Pegasus elevator and lobby was, I was thankful for all the memories I had. I was thankful for all the great times spent in that building. I was thankful that was the place that my dad and I spent so much time together. I remember a colleague of my father asking him once, "How could you take your son to the racetrack so much?" That colleague of his would never understand because there wasn't an intellectual argument to be made to try and explain it. The answer was, because it's The Meadowlands.

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\$175,000 Dr John R Steele Memorial Mare Trot	\$150,000 Six Pack Mare Trot
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Strong initial crops in the offing from Gimpanzee & 'Manalishi'

By Jay Bergman

The three "G"s were a dominant force when they campaigned as sophomores for trainer Marcus Melander a few years back. In 2023 the first crop of Greenshoe will hit the racetrack, with 2-year-olds in training right now for a hopeful summer preview. Those who followed the careers of a pair of his stablemates, namely three-time Breeders Crown champion Gimpanzee and Hambletonian elimination winner Green Manalishi S, won't see their first crops perhaps until this fall when yearlings will go on the block.

At times it was hard to separate the three on the track as all had their moments and the same could end up being true in the breeding shed for various reasons. Greenshoe's head start with an impressive first book of mares gives him the obvious edge, but a look at the early prospects for his former stablemates suggests his prodigy may have company when his second crop meets their first ones.

From a purely numbers game Gimpanzee's breeding career will get off to a slower start as his first season lists only 73 mares bred, and to date only 34 are registered with the USTA. The registrations did not include a filly from the \$1.2 million winner Tamla Celeber S, who captured the Breeders Crown in 2012 for Mares. They did include some notable heavyweights in the business, primarily a filly from the great Mission Brief and one too from Jolene Jolene, the dam of Mohawk Million champion Venerable. It was the fifth foal from Jolene Jolene, who is a 100 percent producer with stakes fillies Crucial and Ineffable coming before she was bred to the Chapter Seven line with Walner, the sire of Venerable. Gimpanzee represents a potential new window to this stallion tree. Mission Brief's first two foals hinted at extreme speed but lacked consistency, a trait that could easily be acquired with the match to Gimpanzee, who over three years of racing went undefeated in nine starts at 2 and then won 16 times in 25 starts his final two years.

Gimpanzee has another pair of fillies from the mother-daughter combo of She's Gone Again and Tuscany. She's Gone Again also produced a pair of stakes winners in Enterprise and Live Love Laugh. Tuscany appeared destined to be her fifth and best foal in an abbreviated but exciting 3-year-old season. A winner in four of her six career starts, Tuscany defeated Hypnotic AM at The Red Mile in 2020 in a 1:51 2/5 mile that came a week after she trotted a career-best 1:51. Tuscany's first foal is already named Marilyn Ruth.

The well-bred D'Orsay may have finally met her perfect match in Gimpanzee. The stakes-winning mare and sister to international star Propulsion has tried the Muscle Hill line with limited success and perhaps Gimpanzee can kick start her breeding career with an unnamed colt.

It is worth noting that Gimpanzee's foals will be eligible to the rich Kentucky breeding program.

Contrasting Green Manalishi S with his former stablemate is rather easy. The son of Muscle Hill has a maternal family that is Swedish-bred initially, but a closer look reveals a pair of fantastic trotting mares in the \$1 million-winning Keystone Pioneer (1975-80), who was unraced as a 2-year-old but campaigned for six years with distinction against the best males in the sport. Keystone Pioneer's daughter Kit Lobell captured the Yonkers International Trot in 1989 when just a 4-year-old.

Green Manalishi S was a superb 2-year-old, finishing first or second in all 10 starts. The wins included the Wellwood and Bluegrass, with runner-up spots in the rich Peter Haughton and the Breeders Crown



The first crop of Gimpanzee will hit the yearling sales this fall.

final, where he overcame post eight finishing second behind Gimpanzee.

As a sophomore Green Manalishi S overcame post eight to capture his Hambletonian elimination in 1:50 3/5, a career best, but again did his best racing in Ontario capturing the lucrative Canadian Trotting Classic.

A stallion in Ontario now, Green Manalishi S will have a distinct numbers edge in his first year against Gimpanzee, with 139 mares bred and 77 registered foals with the USTA to date.

As the proverbial "new kid in town" Green Manalishi S was bred to a nice cross-section of mares with provincial roots. The \$470k winner Wilsonator was a two-season star on the Ontario Sire Stakes circuit in 2009-10 when she battled with a superior class that included the \$1.3 million winner Poof She's Gone as well as Random Destiny, who would later be known as the dam of champion Walner. Wilsonator, who has a Green Manalishi S colt, is a sister to the dam of Resolve.

Bax Of Life enjoyed a tremendous racing career earning in excess of \$600K before turning to motherhood. Green Monster is what they've named her third living foal, who has already been gelded.

Hanover Shoe Farms invested nicely in Green Manalishi S with the broodmare Angel Eyes Hanover coming up with a filly from his first crop. The mare previously produced the \$724K winner Ambassador Hanover.

The breeding business is far from an exact science. It would hardly be a surprise if Gimpanzee or Green Manalishi S found success from far lesser-known mares once their first crops see the races. The two bring distinct traits to the stallion ranks and appear destined for success.

Field taking shape for January 29 Prix d'Amerique at Vincennes

The final qualifier for the January 29 Prix d'Amerique at Vincennes Racetrack took place on January 15 with three horses earning tickets for the 1,000,000 Euros race. With likely favorite Calgary Games pulled from the race, Horsy Dream won his second preliminary and another unneeded ticket.

"He is an extraordinary horse, he was able to win easily today when he was not unshod," driver Eric Raffin told LeTrot. "However, he deserves to be preserved because he is only beginning his career. He will have logical ambitions to finish in the top three of the Prix d'Amérique Legend Race, but you have to keep a cool head."

Hirondelle Sibey finished second and would've gained a spot in the Prix d'Amérique but was disqualified, allowing stablemate Decoloration to get the place spot despite a fourth-place finish. He got moved up twice because Gu d'Heripre was also disqualified from third. The double-disqualification bumped Hohneck to the podium and earned him a coveted spot in the 2700-meter race on the final Sunday of January.

The 12 competitors which have earned a spot in the Prix d'Amérique are as follows:

- Hip Hop Haufor (Won Qualifier #1)
- Italiano Véro (Second Qualifier #1)
- Ampia Mede Sm (Third Qualifier #1 & Third Qualifier #5)
- Hooker Berry (Won Qualifier #2)
- Hussard du Landret (Second Qualifier #2)
- Etonnant (Third Qualifier #2)
- Idao de Tillard (Won Qualifier #3)
- Horsy Dream (Won Qualifier #4 & Won Qualifier #6)
- Délia du Pommereux (Won Qualifier #5)
- Flamme du Goutier (Second Qualifier #5)
- Decoloration (Second Qualifier #6)
- Hohneck (Third Qualifier #6)

The Prix d'Amerique includes 18 participants and the six remaining places will go to the horses with the most winnings among those entered. Currently that would include: Callmethebrezee, Moni Viking, Vernissage Grif, Don Fanucci Zet, Cokstile and VIVID Wise As. In the event of the defection of one of them, Hirondelle Sibey, Elvis du Vallon or Mister F Daag would move up the list.

Final entries are due noon (French time) Thursday, January 26.

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EDITOR'S EYE

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

What is a best bet?

For many in the Harness Racing industry who deal with younger or Grand Circuit horses, winter allows time for reflection. There are more quiet moments with little or no trips to the track required to race. Perhaps some use the time for vacation or rest while others ponder what went right or wrong and how to maximize their returns in the new year.

When big-money races from Sire Stakes to Grand Circuit are seemingly going off multiple times every day from May to November, there is little time to consider much outside of that realm. As someone who covers the sport, the cold months of winter provide an opportunity to contemplate the nuts and bolts of handicapping. One topic that has been percolating in my mind for months waiting for the right moment is the concept of 'best' bets. More specifically, what is a "best" bet?

You've heard the old adage, "what came first, the chicken or the egg?" Well, is a handicapper's "best" bet the horse they think has the best chance to win regardless of odds or does value come into play when considering a "best" bet?

From my perspective as a public handicapper, "best" bet means the most likely winner, but I will add that there is no point offering up a horse that will pay \$2.10 or \$2.20 to the general public. So my "best" bet is typically the horse I feel most confident will win while paying a minimum \$3.00 (1-2 odds). If I like two horses equally and one "can't lose" but will pay \$2.10 and one has slightly more risk at \$3.60, I'm always going to give out the \$3.60 horse despite the reduced chances of winning.

As handicapping is all about opinions, I took the liberty of asking a few people who currently or previously provided public selections to see what their thought process is on "best" bets.

Garnet Barnsdale: "For me it's always been the most probable winner. I try to look for value with the nightly 'Spot' play."

Bob Pandolfo: "It should be the horse that you think might be the best value bet on the card."

Matt Rose: "I always defined 'best' bet as the horse on the card that I think has the best chance of winning, regardless of price. Value doesn't matter regarding best bets, I'm strictly looking for a winning horse."

Darin Zoccali: "Value comes into play. It's not 'most likely winner.' It's 'best' bet. I believe value comes into play on any wager, because it is literally a 'best' bet, value must be considered. Now, understanding what value actually is, is a different story. A horse can be 2-1 that you deem value. For me 'best' bet is a combination of a horse I like the most on the card whose odds will most closely reflect his chances of winning. So if I really like a horse that I think should be 4-1, but is going to be 10-1, that's a best bet. If I really like a horse that's 8/5, that I think should be 2/5, that can be a best bet too."

Jay Bergman: "I would say best chance to win, though personally I wouldn't play a horse or best bet at odds below 2-1, but that's just me."

Melissa Keith: "Overlays make the best 'best' bets...Is it meaningful to give out a really obvious horse, likely to go off at low odds, as a 'best' bet? A public handicapper is probably expected to dig a little deeper than that."

Keith Gisser: "For me, the 'best' bet has always been the sure thing -- the most likely to win. He may not be the best wager, but he is the 'best' bet, both literally and in the vernacular."

Frank Drucker: "The idea is not to be a chalk-eating rat. The public doesn't need me (or anyone) taking credit after telepathically 'finding' some puny proposition. Hence, the 'Best' bet would be horse that has a solid chance of winning, while at same time beating the board."

To dig a bit deeper on the topic, I conducted a Twitter poll asking the following of everyday handicappers: "If a public handicapper lists a best bet, what do you expect from that horse? 1) Win regardless of price or 2) Win and provide value." The final tally had 73% voting that price was unimportant and 27% expecting some value. Some people also weighed in with comments:

Richard Rosenblum: "Hope [the best bet] loses because I'm betting against it as long as I like another horse."

@racing_dude: "Back in the day I would note the popular handicappers and tout sheets, and their top selections. They were usually overbet. They won at times, like 1/3 or so, but they were generally underlays. That's changed in the last 20 years or so. I generally don't pay attention these days."

Mike Wandishin: "Depends on who the handicapper is and what they do well. One handicapper may be a chalkie and, of course, their 'Best' Bets will be chalkie, and a longshot player might be out of their element picking a favorite as a 'Best' bet and, of course, the opposite is true."

Marty Brink: "If a public handicapper gives out a selection, I would expect that horse to give a good showing of him/herself for me to continue to follow that public capper. If the horse falters, I would hope that bettors have enough analytical, racing knowledge to understand why. The public must understand that a public handicapper has no control over the odds a horse may be showing on the tote board. That would be determined by what the selection shows in his/her PP lines and how 'good' handicappers are able to identify and interpret that info."

Justin Marks: "I would consider a 'best' bet to provide a little value. If looking just for a single in multi's then that opinion can vary. Balmoral, if I remember right, had a lock of the night and something similar to a bet of the night. That could be two different horses because of value."

One side note as it relates to public handicappers is that we have no choice when it comes to making selections. The job is to make picks in every race whether we like a horse(s) in the race or not. There are cards where I finish and really don't have a strong enough opinion to make a horse a 'best' bet, but there still needs to be one listed...or does there? Would people accept an analysis with no 'best' bet if we didn't feel strongly about a horse?

Perhaps the ultimate conclusion is that a best bet is in the eye of the beholder, just like one person thinks \$3.00 is an acceptable win price and another demands at least \$6.00. Like the 'chicken and the egg' argument, there is no definitive answer.

Highalator moving to Safe Haven Farms in Delaware

Highalator, one of the winningest sons of super-sire-of-sires Somebeachsomewhere, has relocated from Indiana to Safe Haven Farms in Delaware effective with the 2023 breeding season.

Credited with 43 wins including the Bobby Weiss Final, PA All Stars, a leg of the Graduate series and a Golden Receiver sweep, Highalator bred some 60 mares in Indiana last year but this year he will stand at his home base in Delaware.

Highalator, who owns a lifetime mark of 1:48 and accumulated career earnings of \$675,764, is among the best-bred sons of the great Somebeachsomewhere. He is from the world champion Higher And Higher by Western Terror. Higher And Higher was a Bluegrass winner and She's A Great Lady runner-up at age 2 who had a mark of 1:49 1/5f and earned \$923,975 during her career. Her other foals include Highalator's full brother South Beach Star, a 1:48 1/5 winner as a 3-year-old.

Highalator is the only son of Somebeachsomewhere to stand in Delaware. His fee is set at \$3,500.

-release (by Bob Marks)

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With the most victories (43) of any son of the super "sire of sires" SOMEBEACHSOMEWHERE, he will stand at Safe Haven Farms for the 2023 breeding season and beyond.

Racing from age 2 through 7, his victories include the Bobby Weiss Final, Ben Franklin consolation (in his record 1:48f), Golden Receiver Final and the Van Rose Memorial.

He is the first foal of the **World Champion** and multiple stakes winner **Higher And Higher** p,1:49.1f (\$923,475), and a full brother to **South Beach Star** p,3,1:48.1 (\$180,064) and to the dam of stakes winner **Joyride Hanover** p,3,1:51.2f-'22 (\$240,817).

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Study shows nearly \$2 billion impact for Indiana's Agri-Business

It's not just auto racing and paved tracks that are making investments in Indiana; another type of Hoosier Horsepower is making a big impact as well. The horse racing industry is a big business for the state of Indiana, touching all 92 counties. The newly released results of a recent economic impact analysis, conducted by Purdue University, show the Indiana agri-business industry of horse racing has more than doubled in the past decade. The racing and breeding business linked to horse racing has now reached just under the \$2 billion mark of economic impact. The Indiana General Assembly laid the footprint for success nearly 30 years ago to grow the agri-business industry in Indiana by creating jobs, increasing goods and services sold in Indiana, and subsequently increasing tax revenues.

Purdue University's study was a joint effort between all entities associated with Indiana horse racing, including the Standardbred, Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse Associations, Indiana Horse Racing Breed Development, and Racetrack Ownership. Like prior studies, detailed surveys were circulated by Purdue University, to those involved in racing, covering all aspects of the industry including breeding farms, training facilities, racetrack operations, and other impacted businesses in between.

"As a group, we identified there had been a significant increase in participation in our industry, but we didn't know the exact impact on the state," said John DeLong, President of the Indiana Standardbred Association. "Seeing the results from this survey is very enlightening and encouraging to our organization which has worked hard to boost Standardbred racing in the state. We are set to host the prestigious Breeders Crown for a third time in 2023, which only strengthens us as one of the most viable options in Standardbred racing."

One of the most staggering statistics was the amount of investment within the state. The report noted between 2007 and 2020, a 59.2 percent increase in horses owned, trained, or bred. Another statistic showed 25.1 percent of the information reported resulted in an increase in Indiana owned property with an additional 47.9 percent representing an increase in invested equipment directly related to horse racing.

"We have seen a lot of new farm development in recent years, especially around Horseshoe Indianapolis," said Joe Davis, President of the Indiana Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association. "This survey solidifies what we expected to see based on our growing numbers in racing and breeding operations. Plus, these facilities are directly impacting their local communities by hiring additional workforce, purchasing supplies, and bringing tax dollars to the state. We knew there had been a significant increase in our industry but had no idea it had amounted to \$2 billion." Tom Mosley, President of the Indiana Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association added, "Our annual fall sale has shown significant increases over the past few years and the number of new owners is growing immensely. We are adding new stallions and brood mares to our program each year, which has elevated the quality of our breeding program. It's exciting to see this surge of interest in our business."

"We have seen a lot of investment in the Indiana Quarter Horse racing industry just in the past five years," added Paul Martin, President of the Quarter Horse Racing Association of Indiana. "The Quarter Horse breed is one of the most popular in the state through several disciplines, from pleasure riding to rodeo activities, including the popular barrel racing circuit. It's encouraging to see some of those people starting to branch out into the racing end of our breed. Our hosting of the Bank of America Challenge Championships this past fall, the industry's premiere event, boosted our awareness on a national level and increased interest in our program in Indiana."

The most recent study on the economic impact of Horse Racing in Indiana encompasses mature business levels since the implementation of casino gaming at the tracks, which includes the addition of table games at the two race-tracks in 2020. The continued growth of the Indiana equine agri-business that has been shown at each benchmark, in

direct proportion, proves positive when looking towards the future and the implementation of further gaming opportunities.

"We are committed to bringing the Indiana horse racing industry to a higher level," said Joe Morris, Senior Vice President of Racing for Caesars Entertainment, which includes both Harrah's Hoosier Park and Horseshoe Indianapolis. "Our goal is to continue to elevate all three breeds into the national conversation of horse racing. We work closely with the horsemen organizations to ensure we are traveling in the right direction at all times. Our relationship with these groups is imperative to continue the growth of our industry. Our collaboration with the horsemen and horsewomen in this state, the Indiana Horse Racing Commission, and the Breed Development programs is second to none in the United States, and we are not done yet. Our racing team is devoted to the success of horse racing in Indiana and seeing the results of this survey proves we are headed in the right direction."

"It is a great accomplishment that all facets of horse racing have worked together over the past two decades to build such a viable and impactful industry for Indiana," stated IHRC Chairman Phil Borst.

-release (Indiana Horse Racing Commission)

Shartin to be bred to Capt Midnight in 2023

It has been announced by harness racing's Kountry Lane Standardbreds, LLC of Indiana, that the 2019 Harness Horse of the Year, Shartin N (Tintin In America), will be bred in 2023 to Capt Midnight (Captaintreacherous - It Was Fascination - American Ideal).

Currently, Shartin N has a yearling filly by world champion Captaintreacherous and is due to foal this month, the resulting foal also sired by Captaintreacherous.

In a glittering harness racing career, the world champion mare won 46 of her 68 lifetime starts and \$2,667,563 in purses- an average of \$39,228 per start.

Shartin N put an exclamation mark on her 2019 season in August when she produced a jaw-dropping world record performance to win the \$183,500 Lady Liberty at The Meadowlands, carving out the mile in 1:46 4/5 - 0.6 faster than the prior world mark. She also became the fastest Standardbred horse ever bred in New Zealand.

A month later Shartin N set another world record for mares on a five-eighths track when she was clocked in 1:48 at Harrah's Philadelphia in a \$30,000 Open Pace.

Capt Midnight p,2,1:49 4/5s; 3,1:48 3/5s, BT 1:47 2/5m (\$551,567) stands stud at Premier Aces in Indiana for a fee of \$5,000 in 2023. His first two breeding seasons were booked full and closed. For more information on Premier Aces, [click here](#).

"Capt Midnight was a talented 2- and 3-year-old racing against the best of his class Tall Dark Stranger and Papi Rob Hanover," said Tony Alagna, Capt Midnight's trainer. "With his pedigree, conformation and natural ability he will make his presence felt in Indiana and equally on the national scene as well."

"We will be buying yearlings from his first crop," Alagna added.

-edited release (by Steve Wolf for Kountry Lane Standardbreds)

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BY DERICK GIWNER

Ola Yoder started his involvement in the Standardbred industry in 2019 and has accumulated a few stallions and 30 broodmares since. His successful cabinet-making company in Indiana (Kountry Wood) has allowed him to make the investment in breeding and Yoder (along with his team) is poised to make a big splash at the fall sales in 2023 with about a dozen yearlings.

We pulled the septuagenarian away from his daily duties at the cabinet company long enough to ask him about his path in the Standardbred industry, how he sees the path of Kountry Lane Standardbreds progressing and Amish life. Enjoy!

BREEDER OLA YODER

How did you get started in harness racing?

I'm not really into harness racing. I'm into breeding mares to raise yearlings for the sales. I started four or five years ago by buying mares for Roadsters. I was just spinning my wheels with that. Back during the fall sale at Harrisburg (2019) White Birch Farm was selling out and I saw that they had a lot of good mares. I was always told that it was a good time to buy when there is a dispersal like that one.

What made you decide to go after those mares and start breeding Standardbreds?

There is more money involved and it is more profitable. I'm a businessman. If you invest in something you want to be able to get a good return for it. I found out that if you get better quality mares with good records and better families behind them, that is what people want. I thought broodmares and stallions would be a good investment. If you invest in the stock market, that goes up and down all the time. I like to invest in things where you know where your money is rather than with some broker.

Can you tell us a bit about your day job at Kountry Wood?

It is a cabinet company that builds over 1.2 million cabinets a year. Next year we'll be celebrating 25 years and I'm going to sell out to my boys and some other guys.

You're 77, right? Why start a new enterprise in your 70s?

Yes, I just turned 77. You have to do something. Plus, I have people around me. This isn't all about me. I bought a horse farm when I was 75 and Duane Miller's family is managing it. I have a younger generation involved in it as well. I'm kind of just an investor and I enjoy horses.

Under the Kountry Lane Standardbreds moniker your sole focus is on breeding top-quality yearlings. Why did you decide to stay away from the racing side?

I'm not a racer. That is for other people. If you try to be everything it doesn't work. I decided to stick with broodmares and I have 30 right now.

How much would you say you've invested in mares since starting your breeding operation?

I'd just as soon not talk about that. I don't like to talk about money.

Is it safe to say that the Shartin N-Captaintreacherous filly that will sell this fall is the one you are most anticipating?

We are looking forward not only to that one but also others. We have a Plunge Blue Chip that I think is from Chapter Seven. We have about 12 or 13 going to different sales this fall. When we go to the sale we have no reserve on our horses. We are there to sell.

Which sales do you plan to sell at?

I'm hoping to sell most at Lexington. I have a couple that will probably go to the Hoosier Classic Sale. Maybe some will go to Harrisburg.

Is this your first season selling?

Oh no. I think I've sold for three years at Lexington already. One year I sold one. The next year I sold about four and last year I sold four.

You are Amish, right?

Yes I am.

I've seen a number of Amish people at the horse sales. Are there a lot of Amish people in the industry?

Yes, there are a lot of them. The Amish buy a lot of horses off the racetrack, like the ones that don't make it. Some of them are used for Roadsters. They have their own sales in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Illinois. I was out in Illinois two weeks ago and Amish people are all that was there. There are a lot of Amish that sell to the racing industry, especially in Indiana.

Sometimes you hear people on the backstretch say 'we are going to Amish that horse' like it is a bad thing. It sounds like a negative thing, is it?

I wouldn't say so. Maybe it is a negative for the racing people but the horses get fed good. If you every go to the Amish sale, they have all good-looking horses. Part of our religion is to take care of animals.

Do you attend the races? If so, which is your favorite track?

Not really. Some Amish do but I don't.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 14](#)



KOUNTRY LANE STANDARDBREDS PHOTO

Ola Yoder preferred not to be photographed but was very willing to show off his farm in Indiana.

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If one of the horses you bred made it to the Hambletonian, would you make the trip to The Meadowlands?

I doubt it. I'll let the people who buy it get the attention. I'm not in this for ego. My thing is to just sell yearlings at the sales.

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

I'm just a regular guy. Nothing really stands out about me. You'd have to ask other people.

What is one word that describes the harness industry for you?

I don't know. I think it is a good sport. I'm not into the gambling part. I just like the idea of competition and to be able to see the great performances of horses.

You also have some stallions in Enterprise, Temporal Hanover and King Of The North. What made you want to be involved on the stallion side?

If you have broodmares you are always buying breeding shares. Actually, I bought Enterprise before I had any mares. The guys in Ohio got me to invest in the stallion. That kind of got me started into the broodmares and that got me to buy more stallions. Sometimes you try to get into good stallions and you can't because the books are filled. The stallions were an investment. Temporal Hanover and King Of The North, I bought when they were still racing.

Are you happy with the stallion investments so far?

Yes. We syndicated both horses [Temporal Hanover and King Of The North] and sold some shares. Down the road we'll probably sell more. At least that got us started in business. I don't do the breeding myself at the farm, but we have a couple of good places to put them.

You don't stand your own stallions. Do you house your mares in Indiana where you live or at another locations as well?

We do. We have a farm here and we have some down in Kentucky. We kind of trade them back and forth so they can be Kentucky-eligible. They have to be there 180 days.

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

Keep your eyes open and watch your back [laughing]. Nah, it is not that bad but you have to be wise and not get hyped up because other people do. You have to try to make good choices.

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

There are some things that I think could be changed but my job is to make sure I do the right things. To be honest with what I'm doing.

Is the whole "be honest with yourself" thing an Amish trait?

I don't know if it is an Amish thing but it is my thing [laughing].

What is the Amish lifestyle?

I've been Amish my whole life and I don't have a dull moment.

All the stuff about no electronics and stuff. Is that just a myth?

Amish have electronics. They might not be the latest phones but they have computers and stuff, especially the businesses. I went down to the yearling sale in Indianapolis and it really opened my eyes how many Amish Standardbred breeders were there. That's one thing about bringing Temporal Hanover here is that it will be a boost for Indiana.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

I think the industry has a good future but you have to be careful what you buy. What I found out is that it is much more than raising a foal. You have to have a good foal. The foal almost has to be perfect. They x-ray the yearling and do things to check them that they don't do with just raising horses. It is almost a perfection industry. The legs have to look right. The conformation has to be right.

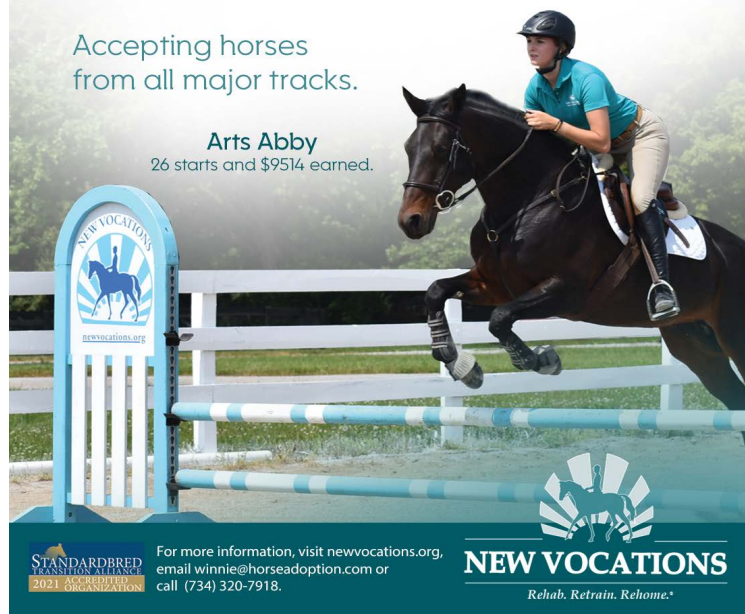
Where do you see Kountry Lane Standardbreds in 10 years?

I'm hoping we'll be set pretty good and be profitable. I don't think we'll want to get real big. We try to invest in the better mares and stay around 30. We just want to be in the business and have fun doing it.

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Diamond Creek Winter Showcase auction via OnGait ends Friday

Diamond Creek is providing a unique opportunity to buyers as the breeding season approaches. This week, Diamond Creek unveils their **Winter Showcase Sale**, offering six in-foal broodmares and two stallion shares for sale, through OnGait.com. They are young mares, carrying only their first or second foals, with their whole career ahead of them. These pedigree rich mares are carrying foals by CHAPTER SEVEN, DOWNBYTHESEASIDE, FATHER PATRICK, and GIMPANZEE.

Stallion shares in DOWNBYTHESEASIDE and SWEET LOU are also offered. These two stallions have proven their claim as top pacing stallions that book full year after year.

Auctions are set to end on Friday midday (1/20). Any questions should be directed to Diamond Creek's Shaun Laungani, (859) 797-3430 / shaun@diamonddcreekfarm.com.

Mares are located in Lexington, Kentucky at Diamond Creek's Overbrook Farm division and available for inspection by appointment.

-release (Diamond Creek Farm)

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TAKE 5 WITH DRIVER AUSTIN SORRIE

Twice monthly until April, a familiar Woodbine Mohawk Park horse person will step into the spotlight to answer a handful of fun, offbeat questions, while giving readers a unique perspective into their personality on and off the racetrack.

O'Brien Future Star Award-winning driver Austin Sorrie has continued to shine following his first million-dollar year in 2021. With 1,518 starts and \$2.2 million in purses in 2022 – both career-best marks – the young Maritimer's no-quit attitude is apparent. Sorrie capped off his year with an impressive three wins on New Year's Eve at Woodbine Mohawk Park, including a \$34,000 preferred with pacer Saulsbrook Victor.

What's your first stop when you visit home (PEI)? "First stop for food would be Maid Marian's for a steak sandwich."

What goes through your head right before a race starts? "I'm just trying to figure out what everyone's going to do, who's leading, who's not. I'm feeling confident."

Name the horses you'd put in your absolute dream stable (current or past). "Somebeachsomewhere, Muscle Hill, and So Much More. 'Somebeach' is just one of the best horses around with that racing career, Muscle Hill is one of the best trotters, and with So Much More, how could you go wrong? You can't go wrong with her."

What's your karaoke song? "I don't do karaoke, I'm not that good at singing."

If you had to choose... "Shania Twain, Party for Two. It's just the song I can sing the most of."

If you could only watch one movie for the rest of your life, what would it be? "That would be Talladega Nights. I can watch it all the time and never get sick of it. Just one of those shows that you just keep watching. You don't watch it for a day, and you go, 'Ah, I'll watch it again.'"

-Grace Martin (Woodbine)

"GOLDEN TICKET" FOR KINDERGARTEN WINNER INTO FINAL FOUR

A new incentive has been added for those 2-year-olds that are made eligible to both the Kindergarten Series and Freshman Fall Final Four at The Meadowlands in 2023.

For the first time, the winners of all divisions of the \$1 million Kindergarten finals will be awarded a bye that includes the added perk of drawing for post position with those horses that win the eliminations, into the finals of the \$1.6 million Freshman Fall Final Four.

To be eligible for this "Golden Ticket" into the Final Four, the Kindergarten final winner must be eligible for the Final Four by completion of all required payments.

Further information on Meadowlands stakes is available on the [web](#). All nominations are due by February 15, 2023.

The Meadowlands, in concert with the Hambletonian Society, will again offer discounted entry fees to those 2-year-olds eligible to the Tompkins-Geers Grand Circuit stakes that have also paid into the Kindergarten and Freshman Fall Final Four.

The clause addressing the discounts is written into the stakes conditions; Standard Entrance Fee: \$500

* If a 2-year-old has made all payments to the Fall Final Four & Kindergarten Series, the entrance fee will be waived. * If a 2-year-old has made all payments to the Fall Final Four only, the entrance fee will be discounted 50% to \$250. * If the 2-year-old has made all payments to the Kindergarten Series only, the entrance fee will be discounted 25% to \$375.

All divisions of the Tompkins-Geers stakes for 2-year-olds will be raced at The Meadowlands on Friday, June 30.

The Tompkins-Geers stakes are administered by the Hambletonian Society.

-release (Meadowlands)

\$5,044 PICK 6 CARRYOVER AT MEADOWLANDS

The Meadowlands will have a \$5,044 Pick 6 carryover on Friday evening. The Pick 6 begins in race 8 on the 14-race card. Post time is 6:20 PM.

DRF Bets Handicapper's Corner

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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.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18

RACE 9

(1) IDEALSOMEMAGIC A finds the bottom level here in his third start in the U.S. and blasted home in 26 2/5 at the Meadowlands on January 7.

-Greg Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

RACE 5

(6) CIEL BLEU gets a chance to drop out of the NW6 class since he has \$53,312 in lifetime earnings, and I imagine trainer/driver Pat Lachance will be keen to take advantage of the opportunity. He owns a victory against NW4's back on November 3.

-Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

RACE 5

(6) HES REALLY KEEN deployed closing tactics last time and he was never going to pass them all. I think he gets a better start this time and that can make the difference; top call.

-Garnet Barnsdale

WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

RACE 11

(5) RAPTORS FLIGHT N was done in by a bad post and a brutal trip last week. He moves to the middle of the gate now and can take these to task.

-Derick Gwerner

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Mohawk Park Analysis

Thursday

Friday

Meadowlands Analysis

Friday

Yonkers Analysis

Wednesday Thursday

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