

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023

# Harness Racing should follow the lead of Major League Baseball



## EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner

[@harnesseveguy](#)

Major League Baseball has been more than tinkering with its game over the last few years. Some of the changes include adding a universal DH, banning the shifting of infielders to one side of the field and perhaps the most dramatic move, installing a pitch clock to speed up the pace of the game.

Certainly all of the changes have supporters and detractors. The key here is that MLB is tinkering with a nearly 150-year-old sport to make it better and perhaps more modern in a society that prefers instant gratification and action on the field.

Harness Racing was once a more popular sport than baseball and while those days have come and gone, racing is still a billion dollar industry in the United States alone. Just as MLB has a rich history which perhaps needed tweaking for today's society, racing too is steeped in tradition that wouldn't be wiped away by a few changes.

Some will say that like MLB has sped up the game – by adding the pitch clock and reducing it 20 to 30 minutes from an average of just over three hours – racing needs to follow suit. They will say that programs which last more than five hours are too long and wear people down. They will say that waiting 20 to 25 minutes between races is way too long and turns off the casual fan. There is likely some merit to all of the above. Even I get worn down at times as the clock approaches 11:00 p.m. and I've already watched a dozen races. But the

answer is not speed as much as it is cooperation.

We live in a simulcasting world and perhaps the sport should embrace that aspect. Every track has downtime between races. Some fill that space with a bit of in-house commentary or show commercials, but in the end there can be anywhere from two to eight minutes where people are simply stuck with the simulcast feed and no content. With that, the suggestion is that tracks partner-up.

I've given up the idea that all tracks can work together to form a schedule where there is little overlap and the ability to maximize exposure for all. It simply won't work in the U.S. system because there is just no desire to make it happen. But what about the buddy system. What if each track worked with just one other track and propped each other up? Take those few minutes of "dead" air and show the race of your partner track. For instance, on Mondays Monticello (12:10 p.m. post) and Saratoga (12:00 p.m. post) could work in tandem, as could Miami Valley (4:00 p.m.) and Dover Downs (4:30 P.M.) plus Yonkers (7:00 p.m.) and Woodbine Mohawk Park (7:00 p.m.).

Certainly this extra exposure can only improve the content and handle of both tracks. Watching a race while waiting for the next event at your home track has to be preferable to viewing a screen with irrelevant odds, since most of the handle funnels into the pools in the final minutes before post time.

## Switching gaits

As a regular watcher of Cal Expo, every once in a while Director of Racing Robin Schadt throws

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Landmark Stake  
Liberty Bell  
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Matron Series  
MGM Grand Messenger  
PA All-Stars  
Progress Pace  
W.N. Reynolds Memorial  
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Max Hempt Memorial  
Jenna's Beach Boy  
Keystone Classics  
Landmark Stake  
Phil Langley Memorial  
Liberty Bell  
James Lynch Mem. (Filly)  
Matron Series  
Monument Circle  
PA All-Stars  
Pegasus Series  
Paul Revere Pace  
W.N. Reynolds Memorial  
John Simpson Sr. Memorial  
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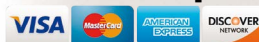


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Melissa Simser photo

## We Accept







LISA PHOTO

**Nineteen women showed up at The Meadowlands on March 4 to drive in a pair of races and celebrate International Women's Day.**

#### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

us a curveball (to continue the baseball theme). Dubbed the "Double Down Invite" Schadt has come up with the concept of pitting trotters against pacers. That's right, a mixed-gait race.

Typically the Double Down has some of the second-rung Open trotters on the grounds facing the worst pacers. In the last event of this type on February 24, a trotter won as the 4-5 chalk and two pacers finished behind him at 14-1 and 23-1. Not surprisingly, the trotters, who had better form on paper, took all the money in the race.

"When people come out here they are on an island. There are no other tracks where they can go to find a softer spot, so I have to make it work and find a way to put money in their cards so it is worthwhile for them to be here," said Schadt, who tends to card these races with a few trotters which have been getting just small checks a few pacers which face been getting little to no money against their peers.

Thinking on a larger scale, why couldn't a trot/pace work at other tracks in the sport as a novelty once a card or once a week? Something different to throw at the audience in order to break up the norm might be well-received.

"We need something different," said Schadt.

On March 2, Yonkers Raceway offered a five-horse Open Trot that went in 1:54 2/5. Certainly throwing a few pacers of similar ability into the mix and offering an eight-horse field would be not only more enticing for the bettors but also create larger handle.

"I think it can be done but the person carding the races has to be in tune with what level of pacers you can put with the trotters," said Schadt, who admitted there were times when she considered doing it at Hawthorne as well.

Those interested in seeing the Double Down in action can watch race 3 on Saturday (approx. post 9:55 p.m. E.T.) as there is a field of two pacers and four trotters – all winless on the year – set to battle.

#### **Different distances**

Just because our horses are called Standardbreds doesn't mean they can only race at the distance of one mile. Many tracks – from The Meadowlands to Cal Expo – have experimented with racing shorter and longer

racers from three-eighths to more than two miles, but it really has never stuck as a regular mainstay at any track.

For a number of years a bit more than a decade ago, Georgian Downs hosted Xtreme Horsepower, showcasing horses at varying distances from an eighth-of-a-mile to a mile-and-a-quarter on the same card. The track even had horses going the wrong way on the track as well as other innovative ideas. It was a neat card to watch but perhaps too difficult to embrace for handicappers. From the perspective of the wagering dollar, you can't go too far outside the box if you want people to invest their money. But throwing one race that is a little different, maybe a mile-and-five-eighths event at The Meadowlands or one-and-three-eighths at Pocono seems like a fun little change of pace once a night.

"People have messed with going different distances and that doesn't always work so well. Sometimes the problem is that they don't want to let them go on the turns," said Schadt, who has carded some marathon races at Cal Expo. "Every now and then I'll throw a route race on the card, but it is a little harder here. You have some horses that are sound enough to race but you don't want to be throwing mile-and-a-half races at them too often."

#### **Bring back the women**

On March 4, The Meadowlands hosted women drivers from all over the globe. The results were a pair of full fields (10 and 9 – due to one scratch) and a nice event for the track as they celebrated International Women's Day.

While some people will have you believe that the best drivers in the sport are needed for wagering to remain at the highest levels, The Meadowlands saw over \$627K wagered on the two women races with many participants that you never see in the bike in New Jersey and only race occasionally in their home regions. The fourth race handled \$364,938, making it the highest non Pick 4/5 race on the Saturday night card.

I wouldn't mind seeing these fine women come in once a month to race. Perhaps each appearance doesn't require the pomp and circumstance that was well done by Jessica Otten and team at The Meadowlands, but it is nice to see something different.

None of the above changes are going to make harness racing as popular as MLB or any major league sport. That is an unachievable goal. It's all about baby steps.





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# Very few can buck the trend of the third-year stallion blues



## JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [BergmanJay](#)

There are some businesses you question why anyone would want to go into. First on my list of those enterprises would be standardbred breeding farms. In an age when everyone is looking to make a buck quickly, breeding horses is a business that requires a large investment in money, property and most definitely time. If you don't have all three there's no point getting started.

Over the years we've seen countless owners look to increase their own personal fortunes by turning a yearling into a champion and then reaping the rewards once a horse becomes a stallion. The formula for each is quite different, but for many having a top sire that prospers for years can be rewarding both on and off the track. That said, no stallion career can be made without the accompaniment of quality mares, and while some racehorse owners like the prospect of eventually coming up with a stallion, many just look to get paid stud fees and leave the breeding business to those with more time and perhaps money.

What's been fascinating to me over the course of time is how treacherous the path to stallion success can be and how faith in a particular horse can vary depending on many variables, with luck perhaps the most important of them all.

The first year at stud for any retired champion tends to attract the highest caliber of mares the horse will likely see in its new career. Those who breed are hopeful there is strong interest at the yearling sale in order to recoup an investment that includes a stud fee and nearly three years of expenses, with roughly two of those spent on the resulting foal. Through the passage of that time frame, the breeder needs to make decisions on who to mate his mare with the next year. Some involved in stallion syndication will remain loyal to their own horse in the second year while others may look for the new kid on the block, essentially the next first-year stallion to come along.

The decisions add up as does the expense, and years pass with just mares being bred to a stallion and no horses to watch on the racetrack. Sure, you'll hear glowing reports of just how great the first crop looks perhaps moments after the first foal drops, but none of those will guarantee success on the racetrack two years later.

Then comes year three. Essentially, it's the one that everyone is betting totally blind and taking more risk than in years one and two. The reason is because any mare bred in the third year of a stallion's career may find the resulting foal's potential yearling price at the mercy of the success of the first crop on the racetrack. This is no small detail, and it pales in comparison from a risk perspective to years one and two. There are few black marks a stallion can have in years one and two, but year three's offspring can run into strong headwinds should a viable top stakes performer not emerge from a first-crop pedigree. That's essentially how the business has been run for years and that third-year hole could be a make or break for some stallions while others that see first-year success are likely to see business pick up once again in years four and five.

What's interesting to me while looking up and down the list of the sport's best and most proven stallions on both the trotting and pacing sides, is how many have outstanding first years only to be followed by a reduction in the second year and a third year where the numbers practically fall off a cliff. No matter how far you go back in any successful pacing stallion you'll find the downward progression in year three. Those who have substantial first-year prowess will find the numbers rapidly pick up in years four and five while those that don't hit in the first two years lose traction, move to different states or may even return to a racetrack. It's a tough business and the degree of difficulty is mind boggling. For those with breeding farms the number of correct decisions that need to be made over time is numbing, but more important is the level of patience as prosperity can be fleeting.

In looking over the numbers, arguably Somebeachsomewhere stands out as the best stallion of the last 20 years, but even he stumbled in his third year. Career earnings for Somebeachsomewhere's first and second crop are both in excess of \$24 million. His third crop earned just \$10 million, but to be fair was nearly half the size of his first two. Somebeachsomewhere rebounded nicely in years four and five, once again breeding full books and siring numerous champions.

Captaintreacherous put his sire Somebeachsomewhere on the map as a first-year success story and followed the same game plan as a stallion with superb results from his first two crops, with cumulative earnings of \$35 million. Captaintreacherous' third year showed a distinct drop in earnings, with current numbers hovering at \$11 million.

On the trotting side is where we found a quite different story and one that suggests there's a good reason why most in the business put Muscle Hill on a pedestal few will reach. Unlike the elite pacing sires, Muscle Hill's third year proved even better than his outstanding first and second crop. That's in large part due to the outstanding year Triple Crown champion Marion Marauder would have, and of note the presence of future stallion Southwind Frank. Stallions Trixton and E L Titan were part of Muscle Hill's solid first crop and world champion Mission Brief came along from the second crop.

Then there is the phenomenon that is Windsongs Legacy, a Triple Crown winner that had a brilliant if short-lived stallion career due to his untimely passing. His numbers were incredibly consistent over his first three years, with a third crop of just 56 registered foals earning more than his second crop. A major reason for that came in the brilliant Chapter Seven who earned \$1.9 million during his career. Chapter Seven himself followed the path of his sire with solid results in year's one and two, where Walner and Atlanta showed his star quality on the racetrack in consecutive crops. In year three it was Gimpanzee, the three-time Breeders Crown champion, that would emerge. Chapter Seven's third year was even better than some of the others, specifically because he only had 49 registered foals that year when compared with 81 and 74 in the first two.

This year we're likely to find out whether the third year is a charm as well for Walner, who had a brilliant debut in 2021 and followed it up with a strong second crop that will be sophomores this year.

Given the likely quality drop in mares in year three for any stallion, those who defy the odds are surely destined for greatness.

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# Fans deserve a seat at the table for Horse of the Year voting



## CONFESSIONS

By Keith Gisser

Congratulations to all the Dan Patch winners, especially Bulldog Hanover, our Horse of the Year, who put together one of the most impressive seasons in the history of our sport. No matter who was doing the voting, even a group of Skid Row bums would have placed Bulldog in the top spot this year. But the winner has not always been as evident in other years, and that is because the electorate is limited. The sport would be better served by opening up the voting.

I am not suggesting that we take the vote away from the United States Harness Writers Association. Just that we open it up a bit. Nearly every major sport does this for its All-Star game, and while Horse of the Year is more akin to a vote for Most Valuable Player, opening up Dan Patch voting to the fans would create a buzz about the awards...a buzz that, despite all of USHWA's best efforts, tends to be missing.

In the National Basketball Association, fans account for 50% of the vote for starters while media and players account for 25% each. While the NBA does not announce a total vote, LeBron James alone received 7,418,116 votes this year. Of course, the exhibition match they call an All-Star game, with less defense than the French provided in World War II, is barely worth watching, and yet millions of folks are engaged.

In the National Hockey League, fans account for two of the 11 players on each of four squads who play a three-on-three tournament. While I admit to not being a hockey fan, I find this convoluted "game" nearly as bad as the NBA's. Having said that, it is hugely popular with hockey fans, so who am I to judge? Of course, before the format change, back in 2016 there was the John Scott Affair. Learn more about it here- [The Punchline \(radiolab.org\)](https://www.radiolab.org).

Major League Baseball goes farther. There are two phases of voting and fans choose ALL of the starters, with the players and all-star managers choosing the reserves. The MLB game is the one that keeps closest to the true meaning and spirit of the sport, so it is not surprising the fans are so thoroughly involved in player selection. Fans vote, narrowing the choice to the top two at each position (top six in the outfield) and then they vote again to determine the starter.

But, Keith, you say. Even you admit all-stars and most valuable players are different. Yes. I do. But it's the closest we have. I can't see a fan vote for Hall of Fame – this is harness racing, not rock and roll – so this is the best answer. Our Hall of Fame ballot is highly limited to begin with. Not so in rock and roll.

Wait, rock and roll? Yep. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has a fan vote. In fact, I have been voting every day, and while I have a vested interest in seeing Warren Zevon voted into the Hall, my vote is not that important. See, the Rock Hall fans vote from among the 14 nominees and the top 5 (currently George Michael, Cyndi Lauper, Zevon, Soundgarden and Iron Maiden) become the fan ballot. It will be one of about 600 votes, overall. A minimal influence, to be sure. And yet, as of this writing, there have been over 3,250,000 votes cast. That fan vote influences the other voters – looking at the nominees, Zevon sitting third ahead of the likes of Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, The Spinners and Iron Maiden, has to be an eye-opener to other voters. There have been several years where the larger "expert" vote matched the fan vote exactly. And then there was 2020 when the Dave Matthews Band won the fan vote and was not inducted.



The public could have the same influence on our Horse of the Year. Open up the fan vote from Monday after the Breeders Crown until Thanksgiving. Then the USHWA vote (usually only about 150 voters) can do their thing from Thanksgiving or just after, until the week before Christmas, basically as they do now. The voters will have the full benefit of the fan's input. You could do it like the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame and make the fan vote count as one vote. Better yet, give the fans 25%. Let USHWA keep 75%. Even better, give 25% to licensed horsemen and let USHWA keep 50%. That still makes them more influential than the media in any of the so-called major sports.

I certainly don't have all the details of this concept worked out, but I do know it would raise a ton of social media interest and could generate interest from the casual fan and media. Our sport is regularly criticized for not reaching out to the racing fan. Here is an easy way to do it.

Speaking of voting, I have always believed in the regularly misattributed quote: "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." Whoever said it first, in the somewhere around 20 years of writing this column in one form or another, I have made all kinds of suggestions and proposals that I thought would make our sport better. But with all due respect to this publication and its influence, I am still just a pundit, with little true influence. That is why I am pleased to announce I have been elected a Director in the Owner's Section of the Ohio Harness Horseman's Association. It's a three-year-term and among the committees I have been assigned to is "Industry Enhancement," which seems pretty apropos, based on my experience. Of course I was also assigned to the Legislative Committee, which has Thomas Jefferson rolling in his grave. I will listen to my more experienced colleagues, agree when appropriate and disagree when appropriate, but I will always have what I think is best for the sport in mind.

That's it for this month. Now go cash, perhaps at Northfield or Miami Valley. OH-I-O!

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### Stallion Information



NAME of Stallion:

Stallion AGE:

North American Service Fee:

Sire:

Dam:

Nominator:

Sire of Dam:

Farm & Country of Stallion:



### Owner Information



Owner NAME:

Owner ADDRESS:

Owner EMAIL:

Owner PHONE:





# Fanning quartet find good spots for Saturday Big M action

By Jay Bergman

Trainer Tom Fanning has a solid stable of 26 these days with five 2-year-olds preparing to race later this year. On Saturday night Fanning sends out four of his veteran performers in separate races on the Meadowlands 14-race program.

Kicking off the festivities for the Fanning four will be Give Us Awake A, a not-so-recent import that Fanning is hoping finally gets the ball rolling.

"He was supposed to be racing in January," said Fanning, noticeably disappointed in where the 6-year-old son of Mach Three has been thus far. "We had setbacks with a quarter crack and he had the thumps."

More recently Give Us Awake A was scratched due to sickness in February at Freehold. "I think he's back on track now."

Give Us Awake A drew post six in Saturday's fourth race, a non-winners-of-\$3,000 contest that Fanning believes is well within the gelding's capability.

"He should do really well in there," Fanning said.

Give Us Awake A returned after a four-week absence in an overnight race at Freehold last Saturday (March 4) and had little chance coming from the back after drawing post eight. Still, his trainer was encouraged by the effort to see him return to action at The Meadowlands this week.

"I think he's a horse that needs to race every week," Fanning said, noting that this will be the first time the horse has raced consecutive weeks since his arrival.

If there has been one staple to the Fanning stable over the years, it's the fact that he has extended the racing career of a solid group of trotters and seen his owners reap the benefits of the management. The now-7-year-old No Drama Please has been a consistent part of the stable for years and returns from the rail with driver Dexter Dunn in Saturday's fifth race. It's a non-winners-of-\$10,500-in-last-5-starts conditioned affair and Fanning is happy how No Drama Please is entering the race.

"I thought he qualified really well," said Fanning of the effort last Saturday (March 4) over the Meadowlands surface where he finished a solid third in a 1:55 4/5 clocking.

"It's a bit of a tough non-winners of \$10,500," relayed Fanning, given that seven of the 10 horses in the field have earnings in excess of that amount in their last 5 starts and yet find a way into the field through additional conditions. Nonetheless, the capable No Drama Please could be a factor.

"I think he's going to have to work out a trip," said Fanning.

The recently imported Harry Knows IR (post 9) makes his third start in North America moving up slightly following a 1:54 1/5 victory in this contentious event.

The 8-year-old Mississippi Storm surprised a few people last week, Fanning not among them, with his superb performance right off the bench. The gelded son of Cantab Hall smoked his final quarter in 26 4/5 after being a willing follower of the pace for seven-eighths of a mile.

"I think he surprised [driver] Jordan [Stratton] a bit," Fanning said.

A career earner of \$801K, Mississippi Storm has been a staple in the Fanning stable since he was purchased as a 2-year-old by longtime owner Joseph E. Smith. "He paid \$75,000 for him," said Fanning.

Mississippi Storm has earned six figures every year since the acquisition and has proven better with age, banking nearly \$384K in the last two seasons.

Fanning says he doesn't do anything special with his trotters, but the longtime performance indicates he's doing something right.

"I just look for trotters that don't make breaks. Ones that can leave the gate and get around a half-mile track," said Fanning.

Mississippi Storm clearly does all three quite well.

Mississippi Storm landed post five in Saturday's \$40,500 trotting feature at The Meadowlands, carded as race nine, and seems in good



LISA PHOTO

Mississippi Storm has been with trainer Tom Fanning for a half-dozen years.

position in a race that was handicapped, leaving last week's winner Rich And Miserable (post 9) and runner-up Ahundreddollarbill (post 8) saddled with the outside draws.

Paternity Suit A (post 2) closes out Fanning's quartet in race 12, a non-winners-of-\$5,000 conditioned event.

"He should be ok in there," said Fanning, who suggested when on his game Paternity Suit A is a notch above this level.

In addition to his 2-year-olds, Fanning is quite excited about the prospects of some 3-year-olds, most notably the \$100,000 Harrisburg Mixed Auction purchase Captain Batboy, who was second last year in the Nassagaweya at Woodbine Mohawk Park behind Save America.

Another is the Stay Hungry gelding Fendi Hanover, who is on the comeback trail.

"I was very high on this horse last year," said Fanning. "I trained him back today [Wednesday] in 2:01 with a last quarter in 28 with me driving." The implication suggests there's a lot more in the tank.

The American Ideal-sired Southwind Sambucca has been working on his game over the off season, with Fanning hoping to reverse a 2-year-old trend.

"He couldn't get around the half mile tracks," said Fanning, noting that the rich New York Sire Stakes program was the objective. "We've been training him on the half and he's getting better."

The Saturday Meadowlands program kicks off with a 6:20 p.m. first post and 14 races carded.

**DRF Bets**

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## MARCH 2023 STAKES PAYMENTS

NOMINATION FORMS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.REDMILEKY.COM](http://WWW.REDMILEKY.COM)

### Grand Circuit Events

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

#### #4) Kentucky Futurity #132

*Foals of 2021 to Race in 2024*

#### #5) Tattersalls Pace 2024

*Foals of 2021 to Race in 2024*

#### PAYMENT DUE FOR EVENT #4 & #5

	OPEN	FILLY
March 15, 2023.....	\$500	\$300
a) Supplemental Payment due March 15.....	\$1,500	\$750

a) Those horses not nominated to these events by the yearling payment may be eligible by making the two-year-old supplemental payment of the fees designated above.

#### #6) International Stallion Stakes #121

*Foals of 2021 to Race in 2023*

#### #7) Bluegrass Series #49

*Foals of 2021 to Race in 2023*

#### PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #6

March 15, 2023.....	\$300
April 15, 2023.....	\$400
May 15, 2023.....	\$500
b) Supplemental Payment due March 15...	\$1,000

#### PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #7

*March 15, 2023.....	\$350
April 15, 2023.....	\$450
May 15, 2023.....	\$550
b) Supplemental Payment due March 15...	\$550

b) Ineligible two-year-olds may be supplemented to these events in 2023.

Payment designated above on March 15 plus the April 15 and May 15 payments.

Future Eligibility: \*The March 15 payment guarantees eligibility to the Bluegrass Series #49 as a three year old.

### The Allerage Farms Series

#### Early Closing Events For All Divisions Of Older Horses

#### #8) Open Pace

*\$150,000E Sunday, October 8*

#### #9) Open Trot\*

*\$150,000E Sunday, October 8*

#### #10) Open Mare Pace - FanDuel Series #11) Open Mare Trot\* - FanDuel Series

*\$70,000E Sunday, October 8*

*\$70,000E Sunday, October 8*

#### PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENTS #8 & 9

March 15, 2023.....	\$1,500
April 15, 2023.....	\$2,000
May 15, 2023.....	\$2,500

#### PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENTS #10 & 11

*March 15, 2023.....	\$1,000
April 15, 2023.....	\$1,500
May 15, 2023.....	\$1,500

\*The Red Mile reserves the right to invite one horse to race in each of the trot finals subject to payment of all fees associated with this series.

### To Be Raced At Hoosier Park Racetrack & Casino

#### Three Year Old Filly Early Closers (Open)

#### #12) Nadia Lobell - 3YO Filly Pace

*\$150,000E Friday, June 30th*

#### #13) The Moni Maker - 3YO Filly Trot

*\$150,000E Friday, September 22*

#### PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENTS #12 & 13

March 15, 2023.....	\$1,500
April 15, 2023.....	\$2,000
Declaration Fee.....	\$2,500

COMPLETE CONDITIONS FOR ALL RED MILE STAKES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE USTA STAKES GUIDE. CHECKS (US FUNDS) MADE PAYABLE TO THE RED MILE @ 1101 WINBAK WAY, LEXINGTON, KY 40504859) 255-0275 Ext. 224. For Staking info call Connie Hochstetler at 708-921-1719 • [homhoc@aol.com](mailto:homhoc@aol.com).



# MGM Borgata, Blue Chip Matchmaker nominations led by 2022 champs

Funatthebeach N and Drama Act, winners of the 2022 MGM Borgata and Blue Chip Matchmaker finals, respectively, are on the list of nominations and ready to defend their titles when each series commences at MGM Yonkers Raceway later this month. The two events launch a stakes schedule worth over \$6 million including Grand Circuit and NY Sire Stakes races.

A total of 37 older male pacers paid the \$5,000 nomination fee to be eligible to the MGM Borgata, down slightly from 40 the previous year. The series begins on Monday, March 20 and continues for five consecutive weeks with \$50,000 preliminary legs before a \$200,000-added final estimated to boost the purse to \$500,000 on April 24.

Funatthebeach N won two legs and the final of the MGM Borgata in 2022 and has started his year off nicely with four wins in seven starts for owner Mark Ford and trainer Jeff Gillis. The 9-year-old Down Under import was able to parlay his success at MGM Yonkers Raceway to a MGM Northfield Battle of Lake Erie victory, and the MGM Borgata winner will have that opportunity again.

MGM Yonkers Raceway will offer the MGM Borgata champion a win-and-you're-in opportunity to both the \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie at MGM Northfield Park on June 10 and the \$200,000 MGM Aria Pace at Yonkers on MGM Yonkers International Trot Day (September 23).

Other notables on the nomination sheet for the MGM Borgata include 2021 MGM Messenger Pace winner American Courage, millionaires Jimmy Freight, Tattoo Artist and Lochinvar Art A, 2022 MGM Borgata runner-up Leonidas A and 2021 winner This Is The Plan.

The Blue Chip Matchmaker saw 29 older pacing mares sign up in 2023 led by the aforementioned Drama Act. Sent out by trainer Ron Burke for The OK Corral, the 6-year-old has already won two of three starts this year and is slated to leave from post two in Friday's (March 10) \$36,000 Open Handicap at the Westchester County oval. She'll face fellow nominees Easy To Please (post one), Karma Seelster (post three), Racine Bell (post four) and Gia's Surreal (post five).

The Blue Chip Matchmaker kicks off on March 17 for five straight Fridays and will conclude with a \$125,000 added final that should go for at least \$250,000 on April 24. The early rounds of the Blue Chip Matchmaker will go for \$40,000 each.

To complement the MGM Borgata Series, the Empire Terrace dining room will be open 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays from March 20 to April 24. Owners and fans are invited to attend the races and enjoy food from an ala carte menu. No reservations are required.

Click [here](#) to see the complete MGM Yonkers Raceway stakes schedule.

Live racing at Yonkers is offered from Monday to Friday with a 7:00 P.M. first-race post-time through April at which time Wednesdays are dropped from the schedule in favor of Saturdays.

-release (Yonkers Raceway Media)

## NA CUP DRAWS HIGHEST NUMBER OF NOMINATIONS SINCE 2010

Woodbine Entertainment Monday (March 6) announced 86 3-year-old pacers have been nominated to this year's C\$1 million Pepsi North America Cup.

This year's Pepsi North America Cup, scheduled for Saturday, June 17 at Woodbine Mohawk Park, will mark the 40th edition of Canada's most prestigious harness racing.

The total of 86 nominees is up significantly from 61 last year (2022) and is the highest number since 2010 (89). The record for highest number of nominations is 133 (2009).

O'Brien and Dan Patch Award winner Stockade Seelster leads the group of 86 nominees. The Dr. Ian Moore trained colt won eight of 11 starts, including the C\$900,000 Metro Pace, to finish his rookie season with C\$917,470 in earnings for owners Sally MacDonald and Paul MacDonald.

The last horse to win the Metro Pace at age 2 and Pepsi North America Cup at age 3 was Tall Dark Stranger in 2020.

Other notable stakes winners nominated to this year's Cup include Ammo (Breeders Crown), Confederate (Kentucky Sires Stakes), El Rey (Governor's Cup) and Save America (Champlain).

The first sustaining payment for this year's Pepsi North America Cup is due March 15. Sustaining payments will also follow on April 15 and May 15. The eliminations are scheduled for Saturday, June 10.

-edited release (Woodbine)

## 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.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 9**

### RACE 11

(6) REACHTHRUHESKY AS receives some additional class relief here in her fourth start of the season, and I think she can get her first win of her 5-year-old campaign.

-Greg Reinhart

**EMPIRE CITY**  
CASINO  
YONKERS RACEWAY

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10**

### RACE 3

(3) MARGOT HANOVER was kept on hold most of the mile and finished with good energy in the qualifier two starts back. In her 2023 pari-mutuel debut, David Miller went to Pocono basically to drive her and she flattened out a bit late but still paced a 27 1/5 final quarter.

-Derick Giwner

**MEADOWLANDS**  
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### RACE 3

(4) DONATOVER trotted a sub-28 third 1/4 last week while making a brush for the front and that softened him up late. Picking up the leading driver here makes him the one to beat.

-Garnet Barnsdale

**WOODBINE**  
MOHAWK PARK

**SATURDAY, MARCH 11**

### RACE 4

If you chart the course of (6) GIVE US AWAY A since he arrived in the U.S. there are many legitimate excuses. There is more here than meets the eye.

-Giwner

**MEADOWLANDS**  
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

## 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

## WOODBINE MOHAWK PARK 2023 MAJOR STAKES NOMINATIONS RELEASED

Woodbine Entertainment Tuesday (3/7) released the full list of horses nominated to this season's major stakes races at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

Woodbine's lucrative Standardbred stakes program again saw strong support from owners and trainers for the February 15 nomination deadline. From 18 major stakes requiring a nomination, half of the events saw numbers increase or remain the same.

[READ MORE](#)

## HASKELL HIRED TO ENFORCE ON-TRACK POLICIES AT THE MEADOWLANDS

In a continuing effort to provide the most competitive racing product possible during this season's "Championship Meet", The Meadowlands will employ USTA licensed and ROAP accredited Presiding Judge Lou Haskell to enforce Meadowlands on-track policies beginning on Friday, March 31.

During the course of the "Championship Meet", The Meadowlands will have eight race cards telecast to a national audience on the popular "America's Day at the Races" program on the Fox Sports Networks via an arrangement with the New York Racing Association (NYRA).

[READ MORE](#)

## FLAMBORO DOWNS TO INCREASE PURSES BY FIFTEEN PERCENT

Ontario Racing is announcing that Flamboro Downs is increasing purses by 15 percent effective Saturday March 11.

This increase will continue until the end of the current meet on May 28, 2023.

This increase is due to a number of weather-related cancelled race dates, and less than the expected number of races per card.

[-release \(Ontario Racing\)](#)

## AMERICAN COURAGE HEADLINES POCONO QUALIFIERS

Driver Matt Kakaley and trainer Travis Alexander, the early-season leaders at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania, kept up their winning ways during the Wednesday qualifiers at the mountain oval, with Kakaley driving three winners for Alexander and three winners for other trainers to give him six triumphs during his early-day work.

[READ MORE](#)

## CAL EXPO FRIDAY CARD MOVES TO SATURDAY DUE TO WEATHER

Due to impending storms, Cal Expo has moved its Friday program to Saturday and will now race Saturday and Sunday night this week.

Saturday's card will get underway at 6:15 Pacific.

This weekend's highlight will be a pair of \$20,000 Sire Stakes for the 4-year-old pacers, with Cenalta Hawk and JP Jetty heading the race for

males and Give Me This Dance and Divine Art renewing their rivalry in the distaff division.

[-release \(Cal Expo\)](#)

## TIOGA AND VERNON DOWNS STALL APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 15

Tioga and Vernon Downs' stall applications for the 2023 racing season are now available for download on the horsemen's pages at [www.tiogadowns.com](http://www.tiogadowns.com) and [www.vernondowns.com](http://www.vernondowns.com).

Both tracks are the only non-half-mile ovals in the entire Empire State and provide lucrative racing opportunities.

Horsemen are advised that 2023 stall applications for both tracks must be received by Wednesday (March 15). Forms must be completed in their entirety and signed to be valid. The backside at both facilities opens on April 1.

Applications should be sent to Andrew •Shades• Demsky at Tioga Downs ([ademskey@playmeadowlands.com](mailto:ademskey@playmeadowlands.com)) and Scott Warren at Vernon Downs ([swarren@VernonDowns.com](mailto:swarren@VernonDowns.com)).

[-release \(Tioga/Vernon\)](#)

## 2023 STALLION BREEDINGS AVAILABLE

The Harness Racing Museum would like to thank all donors and bidders for a successful 2023 stallion breeding fundraiser. If you have not already booked your mare available breedings are listed below. Please contact the Museum at 845-294-6330 or email Joanne Young at [development@harnessmuseum.com](mailto:development@harnessmuseum.com).

A complete list of the 2023 stallions, conditions and bid form is posted at [www.harnessmuseum.com](http://www.harnessmuseum.com) under the Fundraising tab.

If you have a breeding, or know someone not using a breeding, and want to donate to this important fundraiser we are happy to receive breedings throughout the spring. Duplicate breedings are acceptable.

The current list of stallions available by state and gait:

INDIANA: Trotter: Don't Let 'Em; MARYLAND: Pacer: Nuclear Breeze; MICHIGAN: Trotters: Fitzmagic, Pacers: Bondi Hanover, One Through Ten; NEW JERSEY: Trotter: Six Pack; NEW YORK: Trotters: Coraggioso, Deweycheatumnhowe, The Veteran, Pacer: So Surreal; OHIO: Trotter: Triumphant Caviar, Pacers: Well Said, Western Vintage, Yankee Cruiser; ONTARIO: Trotter: My MVP, Pacers: Artspeak, Betting Line; PENNSYLVANIA: Pacer: Heston Blue Chip; VIRGINIA: Pacer: Tom's Titan.

[-edited release \(Harness Museum\)](#)

## CORRECTION

In last week's On The Backstretch profile of Rob Harmon it was incorrectly written that the trainer said if he could, he would race all of his horses on Lasix. In fact, the trainer actually said: "If I could race all my horses without Lasix I would."

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