I recently attended WrestleMania XL in Philadelphia with family and friends and believe it or not, it got me thinking about harness racing. I am sure you are wondering, “How is Darin going to draw a line from professional wrestling to harness racing?” Bear with me and I will get you there.

Harness Racing is a sport, centered on gambling to provide a form of entertainment. Much like professional wrestling it has a long history in this country, going back generations. Professional wrestling used to be presented as a sport, but is now referred to as sports entertainment. That is because professional wrestling over 20 years ago made a drastic change to how it is marketed. They peeled the curtain back and allowed those who watched to gain a little more understanding of what was actually happening.

Throughout my childhood, up until an event in 1997 known as the infamous “Montreal Screw Job,” I believed wrestling was real. It was portrayed as a sport, appealing to children my age, often pitting the baby-face (good guy) against the heel (bad guy). Sometimes the baby-face won, sometimes the heel won. But then Vince McMahon went on television and said “we feel you, the wrestling audience are quite frankly tired of having your intelligence insulted. We feel you are tired of just seeing good guy versus bad guy.” From that point on, wrestling completely changed.

Today, professional wrestling centers on prolonged storylines that take you through a rollercoaster of emotions. Certain characters may appeal to you, while others gnaw at your skin, and ultimately the characters you like are who you want to see prevail. They may be a baby-face like Cody Rhodes or a heel like Roman Reigns.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
TATTOO ARTIST
(Hes Watching - Stylish Artist - Artsplace)
p.2,1:52s; 1:47.1s ($3,245,658)

Triple Millionaire with 19 Sub-1:50 Wins!
• OSS Super Final winner at age two.
• Second to Tall Dark Stranger in the North America Cup at age three.
• Canadian Pacing Derby Champion at age six.
• Out of Breeders Crown Champion Stylish Artist ($940,022).

NEW to New Jersey in 2024! Standing at Deo Volente Farms.
2024 FEE: $10,000 (U.S.)

TRIXTON
(Muscle Hill - Emilie Cas E - Garland Lobell)
2,1:54.4s; 3,1:50.3 ($968,696)

Hambletonian Champion!
• By a Horse of the Year and out of a Horse of the Year!
• First crop of ON-eligibles averaged $74,000 in Lexington.
• Sire of Evident Beauty ($890,866) & Cuatro De Julio ($379,061).
• First crop of ON-eligibles race in 2024!
Standing in Ontario at Winbak Farm in 2024.
FEE: $7,500 (U.S.)

SIX PACK
(Muscle Mass - Pleasing Lady - Cantab Hall)
3,1:49.1 ($1,973,661)

The Only Trotting Stallion to Win Sub-1:50 Twice!
• Won the Ky Futurity (1:49.1) and Yonkers Trot (1:54) at age three.
• Won the Allerage Open Trot (1:49.2) and TVG (1:50) at age four.
• Sire of 21 2YO winners from his first crop.
• Sire of stakes winning 2YO Sunkist Beauty ($97,750), Blazing Dee ($91,150) & Mr Bluebird ($69,694).

NEW to Winbak New York!
NEW FEE: $7,500 (U.S.)

LAZARUS N
(Bettors Delight - Bethany - Christian Cullen)
p.1:48.4, BT 1:46.3 ($3,103,100)

The Heir Apparent to Bettors Delight!
• The richest son of Bettors Delight standing in the U.S.
• Over $4.5 million in progeny earnings from just two crops.
• The sire of Voukefalas p.3,1:49.2 ($591,655).
• Nine $100,000+ earners and 22 in 1:53 already!

Standing at Deo Volente Farms.
NEW FEE: $5,000 (U.S.)

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PERFECT STING
(Always B Miki - Shebestingin - Bettors Delight)
p.2,1:49.2; 3,1:48.1 ($1,861,447)

Undefeated Breeders Crown Champ at Two!
• Breeders Crown Champion at both two and three.
• Led all N.A. horses in 2021 earnings with $1,327,147.
• Never missed the board in 26 career starts (26-17-8-1).
• Bred a full book of mares in his first two years at stud.

Standing at Deo Volente Farms.
2024 FEE: $10,000 (U.S.)
Harness Racing remains a sport, but where is the entertainment? Horses go out to the track and race. People watch the races and wager in cheering for a sun-tanned, blonde haired man wearing yellow and red telling them to say their prayers and eat their vitamins. It had become cheesy, for lack of a better term.

Change has not come to harness racing the same way. Every week drivers all standing around talking amongst themselves waiting to get in one pocket spot with driver Yannick Gingras. Change has not come to harness racing the same way. Every week drivers all standing around talking amongst themselves waiting to get in one pocket spot with driver Yannick Gingras.

Harness racing needs to have a little bit of edginess to it, even if it were fabricated and made into a story. In professional wrestling, when two characters are in a feud they talk about one another on television. It’s called “cutting a promo.” Before they actually do it, they talk to one another behind the scenes and talk about what they are going to say to attack each other. They make sure they don’t cross a line with the person another behind scenes and talk about what they are going to say to attack each other. They make sure they don’t cross a line with the person.

Harness racing could do that. What is more interesting to watch, 10 drivers all standing around talking amongst themselves waiting to get in the sulky for the next race, or having a driver “cut a promo” after a race. I understand this is a gambling sport and there are racing commissions and judges involved, and anything done to embellish what is actually taking place on the track or between drivers is a grey area. We would be concerned how a better reacted to hearing a driver say “that’s the third time that guy closed that hole on me this week and it’s getting annoying.” But all sports are now “gambling sports” whether they are regulated by a state commission or by federal oversight. We hear players complain all the time about referees in post-game press conferences. A better can stand up after hearing that and cry fix.

But all sports are now “gambling sports” whether they are regulated by a state commission or by federal oversight. We hear players complain all the time about referees in post-game press conferences. A better can stand up after hearing that and cry fix.

The journey incorporated smaller stories into one prolonged larger story, leading to the coronation of Cody Rhodes as the new WWE Champion at WrestleMania XL, an event that experts have called one of the greatest shows in WWE history.

What does this have to do with harness racing? The answer is the concept of change. Those who were the decision makers in wrestling believed their product had become stale. Kids were no longer interested in wrestling shows in WWE history. The journey incorporated smaller stories into one prolonged larger story, an epic journey led by Roman Reigns, a heel champion with a lot of fans.

There are people now that cheer for the bad guy, something you almost never saw 25 years ago. Over the last four years the WWE took its fans on an epic journey led by Roman Reigns, a heel champion with a lot of fans. The journey incorporated smaller stories into one prolonged larger story, leading to the coronation of Cody Rhodes as the new WWE Champion at WrestleMania XL, an event that experts have called one of the greatest shows in WWE history.

Editor's Eye
By Derick Giwner
@harnesssepyw

Borgata Final conclusions

Yonkers Raceway is not typically known for intense pace battles on a daily basis. Yes, it happens from time to time, but it is certainly the exception rather than the rule. That is why fans of the sport were treated on April 22 during the $457,000 MGM Borgata final.

To set the stage, Linedrive Hanover (4-5) and Desperate Man (6-5) dominated the five preliminary legs of the series and were expected by the wagering public to do the same in the final. Despite that, it was a trickier race than it seemed on paper since neither horse had the early speed to take charge right off the gate and both seemed likely to make moves to the front from the first eighth to the three-eighths marker.

I was on record as not liking the chances of Linedrive Hanover because he had drawn inside (post two) Desperate Man (post four) and would likely be forced to move first, ultimately placing him in the pocket and potentially trapped late. Everything played out as expected, with Hellabalou easily making the front off the gate and Linedrive Hanover brushing to the lead ahead of a move from Desperate Man. That is when all hell broke loose.

About 99% of the time the leader (Linedrive Hanover) would just yield and accept a pocket trip behind the charging first-over challenger (Desperate Man). In this case driver Scott Zeron behind Linedrive Hanover elected to keep Matt Kakaley and Desperate Man parked on the outside through unheard of fractions of 53 1/5 to the half and 1:21 1/5 to three quarters as Hellabalou sat in the perfect pocket spot with driver Yannick Gingras.

My initial internal reaction was to question Zeron’s decision to not give up the lead. Surely he was destroying any chance his horse had of winning by pushing the 6-year-old to unrealistic fractions. Thinking about it further and using the logic of my pre-race handicapping that would have him yielding and sitting the pocket but getting locked in late, perhaps Zeron didn’t make an error in judgement. Maybe his best chance to win the race (as opposed to finishing second, third or fourth with no room to race late) was to keep the other “best” horse parked to his outside.

Looking at the race from another perspective, should Kakaley have seen the writing on the wall when Zeron kept the pedal to the metal around the second turn? Should he have aborted his all-out attempt for the lead (he was visibly tapping Desperate Man with the whip) and instead tried to rate his horse on the rim? Would that have resulted in a better placing for both horses?

Regardless of which side you are on, the result was a very entertaining race won by the pocket-sitting Hellabalou, who was nicely guided off the pylons at the right time and swept to the front around the final turn. People are calling it a “great” drive by Gingras and there is no doubt he did everything right, but at the same time the race worked out nicely for him and he did what a Hall of Fame driver should do, make a winning decision.

For the record, I bet Desperate Man, so I have every reason to be annoyed that Linedrive Hanover didn’t release him to the front. But I’m not. What we watched in the Borgata is what racing needs to put on display more often, horses battling for the lead and putting it all on the line with the end result an outcome that maybe wasn’t so predictable. Or was it? I did use the winner and runner-up on my losing Pick 5 ticket.

[Editor’s Note: You can watch the Borgata here and form your own opinions.]

On another handicapping front, sometimes you can be wrong and right at the same time. That was the case for me with the $276,200 Blue Chip Matchmaker final on the same Monday card at Yonkers. I correctly predicted that 7-5 favorite Lit De Rose would be first-over and stated that if she was able to go that trip and beat me, so be it. Well, she did! Congratulations to her connections (driver/trainer Pat Lachance and owner/breeder Guy Corbeil) on the victory as well as Burke Racing Stable, Eric Good, Weaver Brosucemi and Larry Karr on the victory by now two-time Borgata champ Hellabalou.
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HARRISBURG

Photos: Triscari Web/Video/Marketing, Amanda Stephens
There’s no doubt that this year’s MGM Borgata Series final proved to be the most competitive race in the six-week series. For some that may give off the vibe that the rich event for older pacers meets projections as an early-year test for the best horses in competition. On the other side, slopping through five consecutive weeks of elimination races where horses earn points just by showing up and races often go single file until the three quarter pole, one has to wonder just what kind of return on investment the track and horsemen are providing those who watch and wager on the event?

Listening to various trainers over the years, there is always the recognition of how difficult the challenge is for them to send out horses perhaps six weeks in a row to race at the highest level. Many of those trainers recognize it is not always in the interest of the horse to meet the schedule demands of the series, but in fact necessary since the rules give a full 25 points to every horse that goes behind the gate each week. This perhaps in early years was a brilliant move to assure that the track and the series had enough horses each week to provide multiple races, yet over time it has simply worked as a tool to create too many six-horse fields with only one or two live choices.

From a betting perspective, the reality we have seen has been a multitude of $50,000 events at night lacking in any more intrigue than a qualifying race does in the morning. It’s regrettable that so much money goes into funding these races without getting anywhere near the bang for the buck. One tends to expect from a sport trying to showcase its best in stakes action.

I believe it is fair to say the structure of the Borgata and in a lesser way the Blue Chip Matchmaker series has been broken for a long time and is in need of repair, or at least some remodeling that will offer a better balance to the horsemen, the track and the betting public.

Perhaps the first order of business would reflect upon the number of legs and the time span of the series itself. There really is no justification to conduct any series in six consecutive weeks during the times we live in. While I can continue to marvel at the number of horses that can endure this schedule, I can also see what it does not just to the horses, but to the connections as well. Despite entering five consecutive weeks, few if any horses will be at 100 percent effectiveness on each occasion. This lends itself to many more boring events than the public should have to witness. Trainers will argue that if a horse misses just one week, it may mean it wouldn’t qualify for the final. To me the message this sends is contrary to how we should be addressing the public. There is simply no room any longer for points to be earned just for showing up to the event. A more positive approach would be to better recognize the horses that do perform at a high level each start. I think a revised point system for the series should remove any participation points and change the dynamic only, offering a 50-30-20 split to the top three horses in any division. Thus, instead of just rewarding those for showing up, give credit and earned points to those that provide the public with the winning exactas and triples, two pools that could benefit from the alteration.

From a scheduling standpoint there could be an argument either way about offering fewer rounds of elimination races. To me it’s not the number of rounds that I find problematic but that they come in consecutive weeks. What would be the harm in starting the series two weeks earlier and having weeks off in between? This way horses, horsemen and the betting public are not subjected to horses needing rest while entered in the preliminary legs.

With a remodeled series I can envision utilizing a concept that the NBA has used over the last couple of years and that is the “Play-In tournament.” The concept used for this series would provide a gateway to the final for just two horses that are not among the top six point earners during the course of the preliminary events. Conduct the play-in races the week before the final, with two horses needing to win the race to get into the final. There could be multiple variations to the play-in format depending on the actual number of horses that compete, but regardless, I would expect a lot more buzz and certainly betting interest on two races that have a “win or go home” feel to them.

There’s another aspect to the MGM Borgata that needs to be addressed and modified and that is the separation of horses from a particular stable in preliminary events. While I come from a time in this sport where it was essential to couple for wagering all horses owned in part by a particular person, group or from a specific trainer, those times have passed, and the sport and public have accepted multiple horses from the same trainer in many races as standard. Why then is it necessary to give larger stable the benefit of entering multiple horses and not racing against themselves? If in fact the larger stables have several top horses, or most of them as we’ve seen over the years, why not put them in against each other in preliminary races and thus give the better a more competitive event. Often, it’s the very fact that these horses are split that allows five or six-horse fields to exist. For my money the number of short fields needs to be reduced or eliminated to make the series work in a better way for the betting public.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: New York State wagering rules require a minimum purse of $100,000 in stakes races for common interest (owned and trained by same people) horses to be uncoupled in the wagering. In stakes races with purses of at least $25,000, horses trained by the same person and owned by different people may be uncoupled.]

It is not for me to say what the purse structure for the MGM Borgata or Blue Chip Matchmaker should be, however, if a revised format allows for points to be earned by only the top three in each race I could see a need to bump the purses in the preliminary rounds as an added incentive.

Quite often in our sport the balance of interest is weighted too heavily on one side of the ledger. Horsemen have enjoyed higher purses across the board by virtue of funding from slot machine revenue. This in large part is the reason races such as the MGM Borgata and Blue Chip Matchmaker have enjoyed a spot on the stakes calendar over the years. Providing both with a future the includes those purses but also boosts betting handle is in need of repair, or at least some remodeling that will offer a better balance to the horsemen, the track and the betting public.

With a remodeled series I can envision utilizing a concept that the NBA
## WE ARE RACING
### 2024 STAKES SCHEDULE

### OHIO SIRES STAKES

**2-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT**
1. Northfield Park Mon. July 15
2. Scioto Downs Thurs. July 25
4. Scioto Downs Mon. Sept. 2
5. Dayton Raceway Sat. Sept. 28

**2-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT**
1. Northfield Park Sun. July 14
2. Northfield Park Wed. July 24
3. Scioto Downs Thurs. Aug. 8
4. Scioto Downs Mon. Sept. 2
5. Dayton Raceway Sat. Sept. 28

**2-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE**
1. Scioto Downs Sat. July 13
3. Northfield Park Sat. Aug. 10
4. Scioto Downs Sat. Sept. 7
5. Dayton Raceway Sat. Sept. 28

**2-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE**
1. Scioto Downs Sat. July 13
3. Northfield Park Sat. Aug. 10
4. Northfield Park Sun. Sept. 1
5. Dayton Raceway Sat. Sept. 28

**3-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT**
1. Miami Valley Sat. May 4
2. Northfield Park Sat. June 8
4. Northfield Park Sat. Aug. 10
5. Scioto Downs Sat. Sept. 7

**3-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT**
1. Miami Valley Sat. May 4
2. Scioto Downs Fri. June 14
3. Northfield Park Wed. July 17
4. Northfield Park Wed. Aug. 21
5. Scioto Downs Sat. Sept. 7

**3-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE**
1. Miami Valley Sat. May 4
2. Northfield Park Sat. June 1
4. Northfield Park Sat. Aug. 24
5. Scioto Downs Sat. Sept. 7

**3-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE**
1. Miami Valley Sat. May 4
2. Scioto Downs Sat. June 22
4. Northfield Park Sun. Aug. 18
5. Scioto Downs Sat. Sept. 7

### BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES

**2-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT**
1. Scioto Downs Tues. July 16
2. Scioto Downs Tues. July 23
3. Urbana Fair Tues. Aug. 6
4. Northfield Park Tues. Sept. 3
5. Delaware Fair Tues. Sept. 17

**2-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT**
1. Scioto Downs Mon. July 15
2. Scioto Downs Mon. July 25
3. Scioto Downs Thurs. Aug. 15
4. Northfield Park Sun. Sept. 8
5. Delaware Fair Wed. Sept. 18

**2-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE**
1. Scioto Downs Fri. July 12
2. Northfield Park Mon. July 22
3. Urbana Fair Tues. Aug. 6
4. Northfield Park Wed. Sept. 4
5. Delaware Fair Thurs. Sept. 19

**2-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE**
1. Northfield Park Mon. July 15
2. Scioto Downs Fri. July 26
4. Scioto Downs Fri. Sept. 6
5. Delaware Fair Mon. Sept. 16

**3-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT**
1. Miami Valley Thurs. May 2
2. Northfield Park Fri. June 14
3. Scioto Downs Thurs. July 4
5. Delaware Fair Sun. Sept. 15

**3-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT**
1. Miami Valley Wed. May 1
2. Northfield Park Wed. June 12
5. Delaware Fair Mon. Sept. 16

**3-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE**
1. Miami Valley Thu. May 2
2. Northfield Park Sat. June 8
3. Scioto Downs Thurs. July 4
4. Scioto Downs Fri. Aug. 30
5. Delaware Fair Mon. Sept. 16

**3-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE**
1. Miami Valley Wed. May 1
2. Scioto Downs Fri. June 21
3. Scioto Downs Fri. July 26
4. Northfield Park Mon. Aug. 19
5. Delaware Fair Wed. Sept. 18

### Championships & Consolations

**OHIO SIRES STAKES**

**$400,000 SCARLET & GRAY CHAMPIONSHIPS**
2- & 3-Year-Olds
October 12-13, 2024
MGM Northfield Park

**$85,000 VETERANS CHAMPIONSHIPS**
4-Year-Olds & Up
Friday, August 30, 2024
Eldorado Scioto Downs

**BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES**

**$75,000 CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS**
2- & 3-Year-Olds
Saturday, October 5, 2024
Dayton Raceway

**$25,000 CONSOLATIONS**
2- & 3-Year-Olds
Sunday, October 6, 2024
MGM Northfield Park
Monticello native and resident Gary Messenger tends to race horses at his home track while shipping as far as Pocono Downs or Yonkers Raceway when needed. So why does the 69-year-old trainer find himself making the six hour trek to Shenandoah Downs in Woodstock, Virginia this Saturday (April 27)?

The Virginia trip is a result of a 20-25 year connection with Scott Woogen, who in many cases co-owns and breeds a number of the horses under Messenger’s care. A doctor by trade, Woogen lives in Richmond, Virginia and was instrumental in the creation of a “certified residency program” to award the connections of horses that spend at least six consecutive months in Virginia before they become 2-year-olds.

“We raise all of our babies in Virginia. They foal at Cameo Hills Farm in Montgomery [New York] and after they wean them we send them to Virginia. It is warmer down there,” said Messenger, who explained the value of raising a horse in Virginia. “The 5-year-olds were the first crop and when they raced as 2-year-olds they got $1.06 for every dollar they earned. It is a good program.”

Indeed, the Virginia program is on the rise and according to Woogen the number of foals taking advantage of the residency program has increased from the mid-40 range at the start a few years ago to about 100 this year. If a horse spends a minimum of six months in Virginia before they turn age 2, they will earn points for every start during their 2- and 3-year-old seasons of racing. Each horse earns one point for every dollar earned – even outside of Virginia (but excluding Virginia stakes) – up to 5,000 total points. At the end of the season awards are given based on total points.

“Our goal was to increase the economic impact of horse racing in the state and make it more relevant for the legislature,” said Woogen, who serves as President of the Virginia Harness Horse Association. “There is a pot of money right now that offers $500,000 each for 2- and 3-year-olds. If all the horses in the program earn a million dollars total, each point will be worth 50 cents (500,000/1,000,000). The money is distributed at the end of the year. If the horse changes hands during the year the money will follow the owner of the horse on the day of the race. We’ve had horses earn up to $30,000 in a year through the program.

“Percent-wise more of our total money goes into breeding than any other state,” continued Woogen, who also outlined that the Virginia Sire Stakes program has $60,000 finals and a mare/stallion bonus when a foal qualifies. Plus there is a third program for Virginians who own 100% of their horses.
a mare with an eligible foal – no matter where it is bred – to compete in $80,000 races for 2- and 3-year-olds.

While the races are ineligible for the residency program bonus money, there are four $25,000 events for certified horses on the 12-race Saturday Shenoandoah card that kicks off at 1:05 PM (EDT), and Messenger and Woogen have the clear favorite in the Blue Ridge Pace for 4- and 5-year-old horses and geldings with KJ Hunter, who was an easy two-and-a-half length winner in an April 20 prep as the 1-5 favorite.

“He won it last year when it was 4-year-olds and under, because that is the oldest eligible crop. Now it is 4 and 5-year-olds. He’s a pretty nice horse. Last year he won in [1:52] on a half and [1:51 2/5] on a big track,” said Messenger, who also has KJ Unreal in the five-horse field carded as race 12. “Unreal is not quite as good as Hunter but he’s a nice horse as well. He’s a small, tough little horse.”

KJ Hunter drew post two just to the outside of his uncoupled stablemate. Fern Paquet Jr. drivers the former while Corey Braden takes the lines behind KJ Unreal.

In the $25,000 Blue Ridge for mares of the same age, Messenger along with co-owner and breeder Ken Weckstein is represented by Brendas Delight, second behind Hillbilyclassygirll in a prep race last weekend.

“There is one horse that looks a little tougher in there,” said Messenger, alluding to Hillbilyclassygirll. “[Brendas Delight] pulled first-over last week and cleared but got beat by that horse following her. If she races like she did she’ll be no worse than second.”

Brandas Delight goes from post five (Paquet) while Hillbilyclassygirll (Christian Myers) has the three-hole in the six-horse field carded as race two.

Trotters are spotlighted in a pair of races called the Alleghany. Big Daddy D seems like the standout in the first race if he minds his manners ( cauliflower Saturday and cleared but got beat by that horse following her. If she races like she did she’ll be no worse than second.”

While all of four of the $25,000 races have fields of six or less on Saturday, as the Virginia program continues to grow so too will the quantity of horses participating. The number of stallions in the state has grown to 17 according to Woogen.

“We recognized that there was no reason to breed to a Virginia stallion; the program was too small back then,” said Woogen, looking back more than a handful of years. “We had a $40,000 race and we allowed the mares, if they were owned by a Virginian, to breed anywhere in the country. So horses like KJ Hunter, who is a Huntsville, is eligible to New York and our Virginia program.”

Shenandoah Downs will continue its spring meet until May 19, offer county fair races at the end of August, and pick up a fall meet from September 14 to October 27. Clearly the Virginia Standardbred industry is on the upswing and while some may’ve missed a great ground-floor opportunity, the possibilities appear to be trending upward.

**Thinker Monkey leads eight into May 4 Dexter Cup at Freehold**

By Ken Weingartner

Eight horses were entered Wednesday for the Dexter Cup, the first Grand Circuit event of the season for 3-year-old male trotters, making eliminations unnecessary Saturday at Freehold Raceway. All eight horses advance directly to the Dexter Cup final, which will go for a purse of $514,900 on May 4 at the half-mile track in central New Jersey.

Headlining the octet is Thinker Monkey, who was purchased for $500,000 at the 2022 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale and is a full brother to 2020 Trotter of the Year Gimpanzee. Thinker Monkey is the only Dexter Cup participant eligible to the $1 million Hambletonian Stakes on Aug. 3 at The Meadowlands.

The remaining seven horses are, in alphabetical order: Blackhawk Zette, Casanova Hall, Chaplind, Inflation, Jakey Jumpup, Sir Pinocchio, and Stockholm Hanover. The draw for the Dexter Cup will be May 1.

Thinker Monkey, a son of Chapter Seven-Steamy Windows, won the $500,000 consolation division of the New Jersey Classic last year. He hit the board four more times in his 12 starts, including in divisions of the Bluegrass Stakes and Kindergarten Classic Series, and earned $120,440.

The Marcus Melander-trained colt is owned by Judith Taylor, Daniel Plouffe, and breeder Order By Stable AB.

“He got a little tired at the end of the year; he had a long season and raced all over the place,” Melander said about Thinker Monkey, who competed in New York, New Jersey, Canada, Indiana, and Kentucky. “Of course you want to win more, but he was doing good work and had a good year overall.”

Thinker Monkey will make his sophomore debut in the Dexter. He will head to the race off a third-place finish in a qualifier this past Saturday at The Meadowlands, where he was timed in 1:56 2/5 with a 27 4/5 last quarter. Scott Zeron was in the sulky.

“He’s coming back good,” Melander said. “He grew a lot and filled out nicely. Hopefully this year he’s a little bit more mature and he’ll have another good season. He’s a good half-mile track horse, so I think he’ll do good at Freehold. We’ll start him in the Dexter and then probably go to New York after that. We’ll see where it takes us.”

Thinker Monkey’s brother Gimpanzee was a Dan Patch Award winner at ages 2 and 3 and three-time Breeders Crown champion (sharing the record with Mack Lobell for the most trophies for a male trotter). He made $2.7 million lifetime.

Iteration, Thinker Monkey’s full sister, also was a Grand Circuit winner and a two-time New York Sire Stakes champ.

“It’s always hard to compare the siblings,” Melander said. “(Thinker Monkey) is good gaited and will go around any size track, which both of them did as well. But there will be just one Gimpanzee. It’s always hard to live up to that.”

Thinker Monkey’s rivals in the Dexter will include last year’s New York Sire Stakes champion, Chaplind, who is trained and driven by Trond Smedshammer. The son of Chapter Seven-Lindy’s Head Nurse had two victories and a third in six races last season and banked $172,030 for owner Purple Haze Stables, making him the top money-earner in the Dexter Cup final.

Blackhawk Zette is 4-for-4 this year for trainer Robert Baggitt Jr. and owner J L Sadowsky. The son of Cantab Hall-Zette Starlet, who had one win in four starts last year, has three victories this season in the Bobby Weiss Series at Mohican Pennsylvania’s Pocono Downs. The $50,000 Weiss final is Monday (April 29).

Sir Pinocchio was a New York Excelsior Series champion last year after hitting the board three times in the preliminary rounds of the event. The son of Met’s Hall-Lady Cromwell is owned by breeder Carolyn Atherton.

Casanova Hall was a two-time winner in the Pennsylvania Stallion Series last year and finished second in the final. The son of Greenshoe-Caterina Hall also was second in the final of the Kentucky Commonwealth Series. He is owned by David McDuffee and trained by Nitty Norman.

Inflation, a son of Chapter Seven-Fraulein Blucher, won twice last year in the New York Sire Stakes Excelsior Series and finished second in a division of the Simpson Memorial. The Lucas Wallin trainee is owned by Shermay Stables, Mal & Janet Burroughs, and Wallin Racing Stable.

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(this program is separate from Virginia Breeders Fund program).
Ford, Norman send out contenders in quartet of Weiss finals

By Jay Bergman

Veteran trainers Mark Ford and Richard “Nifty” Norman, who will each send out a pair of horses, find themselves with contenders in the four $50,000 finals for the Bobby Weiss series at Pocono beginning this Saturday (April 27) and concluding Tuesday (April 30).

Ford is represented well on the pacing side Saturday afternoon with Clairedelou (post 1) hoping to pull off a minor upset in the $50,000 Weiss final for 3-year-old pacing fillies carded as race eight. The trainer also has Southwind Celsius (post 3) seeking his third straight victory in the $50,000 Weiss for sophomore colts and geldings, race 10 on the program.

The Weiss trotting finals will take place on Monday (April 29) and Tuesday with colts and geldings going first and Norman’s Usain Hanover (post 1) holding the inside draw against seven rivals. Tactical Lori looks for a series sweep on Tuesday in the $50,000 final for 3-year-old trotting fillies. The daughter of Tactical Landing drew well (post 3) in a power-packed field.

Clairedelou (above) tries for the mild upset in Saturday’s 8th race Weiss final while Usain Hanover seeks victory in Monday’s 10th race.

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The Weiss is a late-closer for non-winners of 2 pari-mutuel races or $30,000 lifetime and trainer Ford’s pair fit that bill nicely.

“Each raced last year but really weren’t mentally or physically ready,” said Ford of his pacers that he took over about six weeks ago.

Following a winless campaign as a freshman, Clairedelou has turned the corner with a first- and second-place finish in three Weiss preliminaries.

“She’s been getting a little better each week,” said Ford. Clairedelou will have to pick up her game in Saturday’s final with Beautiful Roz (post 7) looking to sweep through the series after three easy victories in the preliminary legs. A daughter of Always B Miki trained by Brett Pelling, Beautiful Roz, a $260,000 yearling purchase in 2022, has won four of five career starts including a personal and series-best 1:53 clocking taken on April 20.

Ford’s charge Southwind Celsius drew well for the Weiss colt and gelding final and the son of Captain Crunch will hope to continue his winning form – albeit for a new driver – with Marcus Miller in the bike as regular pilot Braxten Boyd has chosen Who Said I Can’t (post 7) for his mount in this affair.

“He was just a very difficult horse to be around last year,” Ford said of Southwind Celsius, who started to turn the corner following castration. Ford was able to put Southwind Celsius on Lasix following his fifth-place finish in the opening leg of the series and that could be one of the factors that has seen him elevate his game over the last two weeks.

“He’s still a bit green, but he’s learning how to put things together,” said Ford.

Trainer Blake McIntosh sends out a pair of sons of Courtly Choice, with Supplemental Fee (post 4) and Spring Blake (post 8) solid contenders. Captain Caveman (post 1) has won three of his four starts this year for trainer Robert Clary including a 1:51 4/5 mile in the April 13 qualifying round.

Who Said I Can’t is the fastest of the finalists for trainer Mark Harder. The homebred gelding was a convincing 1:51 2/5 winner in the third leg (April 20) following a fourth-and third-place finish in earlier series action.

Ain’t Nostopn Time (post 5) is the richest sophomore in the field and enters the final with five wins in nine starts this year. The Lazzurus N-sired half-brother to Always B Miki hails from the top stable of Per Engblom.

Usain Hanover started seven times as a freshman with but one victory. This year he’s won two of three starts for trainer Norman, all in the Weiss series. On Monday (April 29) he gets his best draw and a proven driver in Dexter Dunn in the bike for the tenth race final.

“He’s grown up a lot since last year,” said Norman. “He can be kind of tricky to drive, bearing out at times, but definitely has a lot of potential.”

Usain Hanover won on the front end in the second leg of the series (April 15) in a career-best 1:54 4/5 clocking and then coasted following a first-up move to capture a division in the final round last Monday (April 22).

“He has a tendency to pull himself up before the wire,” said Norman, hoping that Usain Hanover can keep his mind on business for the rich $50,000 final.

Though Usain Hanover drew favorably he’ll have to tangle with a quality field that has landed the better competition on the outer edge of the starting car. Both Blackhawk Zette (post 6) and Victor Laszlo (post 8) have gone through the three preliminary legs unscathed, with the former owning the fastest time, a 1:54 2/5 mile on April 15. Blackhawk Zette is undefeated in four starts this year and has been entered for the Dexter Cup on May 4 at Freehold. Victor Laszlo went winless in six tries for trainer Ray Schnittker as a 2-year-old but has come back sharp this year with four impressive victories. Mark MacDonald drives the son of Chapter Seven.

Norman has high hopes for Tactical Lori but recognizes Tuesday’s $50,000 Weiss final (race 10) is a wide-open affair.

“I think Burke’s filly [Kinesiology] has looked solid along with Elista Hanover,” said Norman of the competition that drew outside his filly.

“She’s very professional,” is how Norman described Tactical Lori following four consecutive wins this year racing both on the front end and coming from off the pace.

Though Tactical Lori won three times in the series for driver David Miller, the Hall of Fame reinsman has opted for Elista Hanover (post 4) for the final following a pair of solid victories by the daughter of Internatonal Moni in the first two legs of the series.

Kinesiology is another example of a 2-year-old that had gone winless suddenly finding her footing in the Weiss series. The Burke-trained daughter of Walner was unthreatened in her two leg victories but must overcome post seven in Tuesday’s final.

Trainer Julie Miller also has a contender in this event with Teo Palema (post 8) looking to remain unbeaten as a sophomore despite the unlucky draw.

All three Weiss Final cards at Pocono get underway at 1:00 PM (EDT).
10 POCONO SAT
1 Mile Pace, BOBBY WEBS SERIES LC, NO. 6 - FINAL 3 YR, OLD COLTS & GELDINGS NW 2 EXT, PM RACES OR $30,000 LIFETIME AS OF A INCLUDING 2/1/24 Purse $100,000

EXACTA - 50 CENT TRIFECTA | 50 CENT SUPERFECTA | 50 CENT PICK 4 (10-11-12-13)

1 CAPTAIN CAVEMAN
10-12, Schadel 4-1, 3rd (11-0-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Captain Crag, Out Of The Night, by Fast Action

R. Cleary 41-14-7-3 (341)
Br - Frederick W Herrick II DE
12 April 23

5 PctD
4 PctD
3 PctD
2 PctD
1 PctD
T. Schadel 74-71-68-56 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

12:19, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
20/12/23

2 ANTE UP HANOVER
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Betting Line, A Pippin Hare by Dragoon Again

M. Drier, T. Mott & M. Shellenberger 5 7-4-2-1 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

15/12/23

3 SOUTHWIND CPLUS(L)
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Captain Crunch, Cut And Paste by Wells Sad

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

4 SUPPLEMENTAL FEE
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Courtly Choice, Miss Poppycock by Machtag

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

5 AENT NOSTOP TIME
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Lasaanz N, Ant subscriptions by Artiss Giovanni

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

6 REGGIE THE FOURTH
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Huntsville, Jully J by Dayton Frontier

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

7 WHO SAID I CANT
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by The Arsenal, Symphony In Motion by Battino's Delight

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

8 SPRING BLAKE
1 3-1-3, Schadel 5-5-1 (2-1-0-0-0)
bro 3, by Spring Time, Spring Break by Dream Away

T. Schadel 40-37-34-28 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

15/12/23

DRF Harness Digest | 11 | April 25, 2024
Visit us online at drf.com/harness
Trainers from Down Under and Sweden have certainly made their marks in Harness Racing in North America. Robert Cleary is clearly succeeding at getting his native Ireland on the map as he set a new career high in wins in 2023 with 72 and broke the million-dollar mark for just the second time since coming to America.

Cleary has started off 2024 nicely with 14 wins in 41 starts and he sends out the 5-2 morning line favorite Captain Caveman in Saturday’s $50,000 Weiss final at Pocono Downs Mohegan Pennsylvania. He also trains potential top 3-year-old Maxim Hanover.

During some downtime, the 41-year-old discussed his journey in the sport and what the future holds for the now New Jersey resident.

**TRAINER ROBERT CLEARY**

**How did you get started in harness racing?**
I grew up in it. My dad was a trainer and driver back home in Ireland.

**Was there ever a doubt you would be involved in the sport?**
I don’t think so. I was horse-crazy since I was very young.

**How good of a trainer/driver was your father Patrick?**
He did a good job back home. It is a hobby back home but he was competitive in that standard of racing.

**What made you leave Ireland for North America?**
I just wanted to be able to work with horses full-time and make a good living at it.

**You started in North America under Anthony Haughan in Canada, right?**
Correct. He was from Ireland as well and our dads have been friends for a number of years.

**How did you end up in the United States and where are you stabled now?**
I moved to New Jersey to work for Tony O’Sullivan as a second trainer. I’m stabled at Gaitway Farms.

**How many horses are in your barn?**
25. That is right around as many as I’ve had before.

**According to USTA records you drove in North America before you officially moved here. Did you drive often in Ireland? Why didn’t you pursue that here?**
Correct – I was more successful driving in Ireland. I felt there were more opportunity here for trainers rather than drivers or trainer-drivers.

**What is your favorite track to race at? Why?**
The Meadowlands. They have the best horses and best drivers.

**What is your favorite thing to do outside of harness racing?**
Watch sports. I like to watch Soccer and my favorite club is Glasgow Celtic.

Robert Cleary trained his first horse in North America in 2016 and currently conditions 2023 Matron winner Maxim Hanover.

**What is one thing about you most fans/bettors don’t know?**
I played a lot of soccer when I was younger and I played for the Irish college team.

**What is one word that describes harness racing for you?**
Passion.

**What is the best advice you’ve ever gotten or given about harness racing?**
Work hard, take care of your animals and hope for the best.

**What was your best moment in harness racing?**
It may’ve been winning the Matron at Dover last year [Maxim Hanover].

**Speaking of Maxim Hanover, how is that 3-year-old pacing colt coming along?**
Very good. I’m pleased with him. We are about a month away.

**Will we see him first in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes?**
It’s possible but we are going to qualify him first at The Meadowlands and take it week to week.

**Do you have a target stakes race for him in 2024?**
My owners are Ohio people and we would love to be able to take him to the [Little Brown] Jug in September.

**Which is the best horse you’ve ever trained?**
Rodeo Rock.

**Do you go back to Ireland often?**
I’ve been busy but I try to spend a week at Christmas time every year.

**What is racing like in Ireland?**
It is a small community but the racing is pretty competitive and they have a lot of fun when they are racing.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 13**
You’ve won the first two legs of the Weiss Series at Pocono with Captain Caveman. What are your hopes for him in 2024?

I hope he can stay healthy and sound and have a good year for his connections.

I see he didn’t race in leg three of the series. How do you view your chances with Captain Caveman in the Weiss?

He’s a young horse and we didn’t want to go three weeks in a row with him right now.

I think he is quite competitive. If he draws a good post he always puts in a good effort.

Any other horses you are excited to race this year?

Flash Move [The Stallion Stakes final winner in 2023] and Oakwood Ardan [Ir] are horses I think can have a good year.

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

I just wish the racetracks and officials were more on board with the horses and horse people. I feel like sometimes they can make a horseperson’s life a bit awkward to take care of their animal the way they want.

I’m not sure the racetracks understand the care and attention that our horses need.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

I try to be optimistic about everything. There are some great horse people and great horses so hopefully there will be great races for some time to come.

What does a day in the life of Robert Cleary look like?

An early start, spend the day at the barn. I’ll work my horses in the morning and communicate with owners in the afternoon. Then I try to get home and relax or go to the races.

Time for the stretch drive.

Best Horse you ever saw: Somebeachsomewhere.

Lasix – Yes or No: Yes. It is most important.

Lasix isn’t allowed in Ireland, correct?: It is not allowed. They don’t go big speed and they don’t have fast tracks over there. If you are racing miles in 1:58 and 2:00 it is much easier to do it without Lasix. When you are looking to go 1:48 to 1:50, with that speed I think it is important that horses get treated with Lasix.

Trotters or Pacers: Pacers. I grew up with them.

Captain Caveman looks for his fourth straight victory and a sweep of the Weiss series on Saturday at Pocono for Robert Cleary.
Mandatory payout at Mohawk

Woodbine Entertainment today (4/24) announced a mandatory payout for the Standardbred Jackpot Hi-5 is scheduled for this Saturday at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

The Jackpot Hi-5 carryover currently sits at $204,166.53. Jackpot Hi-5 wagering will be available on each card leading up to Saturday’s mandatory payout. Should the Jackpot Hi-5 be hit on either Thursday or Friday, there will be no mandatory payout on Saturday.

The Jackpot Hi-5 requires horseplayers to select the top-five finishers in order. A horseplayer can only win the entire jackpot if they hold the only winning ticket for that evening’s wager.

The entire carryover will be paid out, plus new money wagered, during Saturday’s mandatory payout. The Jackpot Hi-5 has a $20.20 minimum and a 15 per cent takeout.

The Jackpot Hi-5 is offered on each card’s final race of the evening. This Saturday’s final race (Race 12) will feature an overflow field of 11 pacers. Post time for Race 12 on Saturday is 11:22 p.m.

Shenandoah Downs Saturday analysis

By Derick Giwner

Shenandoah Downs will offer four $25,000 races for Virginia owned horses on Saturday. The half-mile track features tight cornering into the first turn which can undo a horse with a shaky gait and did as such to some of the horses we’ll mention below during last week’s prep races.

The four Finals for 4- and 5-year-olds make up the early and late double and we’ll take a look at each. Post time for the 12-race card is 1:05 PM (EDT).

Race 1: Alleghany Trot

The best horse in this race is clearly (1) Big Daddy D, but he made breaks at multiple points during his prep last Saturday as it seemed every time another horse came near him it set him off. It is also worth noting that he broke in this exact race last year. While I would consider him if an equipment change was announced, it is hard not to key (6) K J TODD after a 10-length romp against these last time out. We might find some value underneath with (5) Terry’s Watching, who made two moves early in the mile and barely missed second to a fresher horse. Note that she won six of 12 starts here in 2023.

Race 2: Blue Ridge Mare Pace

Hopefully we’ll get a mild upset here in the second half of the double. (5) BRENDAS DELIGHT had to work a bit first-over last week to clear the lead and fell victim to (4) Hillbillyclassygirl, who had a perfect trip on her back. There is no denying that the former has proven to be a bit faster on paper, but perhaps that is just a matter of Brendas Delight not racing on bigger tracks. She’s a half-mile track regular and can use that to her advantage.

Early Double Play: 6-5

Race 11: Alleghany Mare Trot

It is difficult to look past (5) ELLEN’S WISH in this Final after her open-lengths win last weekend. She’s also the fastest mare in the race with a 1:59 4/5 win over the track while others haven’t come close to 2:01. Oh, and she has eight wins over the track the last three years while the rest of the field combined has six. (4) Joan Deer is an intriguing play on the bottom of the exacta ticket. He rolled into a break trying to corner into the stretch the first time but recovered nicely to catch the field and keep up through the wire. That she stayed flat in her previous two starts gives hope she can do it again.

Race 12: Blue Ridge Pace

(2) KJ HUNTER easily beat this field last weekend and also won the Blue Ridge in 2023. He is simply too fast for this group and something would have to go very wrong for him to taste defeat. Unfortunately there is no value in the exacta either as (1) KJ Unreal seems likely to get away no worse than third and finish off that wager at somewhere around a $5 mutuel.

Late Double Play: 5-2

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, April 25

Race 9

(7) BLUE GLAMBER comes in hot for a barn that has been on a roll recently and she is the one to catch and beat here.

Garnet Barnsdale

Friday, April 26

Race 2

(6) BETTE TINA gets to team up with a catch driver for the first time in a few weeks tonight, and I’ll look for that to result in an improved performance against a wide-open group.

Greg Reinhart

Saturday, April 27

Race 9

(4) BLUE HUNT was favored from the eight hole in last week’s local return and he rallied for third from too far back in what was a quick mile for the class. He drops, gets post relief and seems primed to pick up his first seasonal win.

Matt Rose

Mohawk Park Analysis

Meadowlands Analysis

Yonkers Analysis

DHP PPS | Harness Eye PPS | Trackmaster PPS | Free PPS

Instant Racing Updates Via Twitter: @DRFHarness
PICK 5 JOINS REVISED MEADOWLANDS WAGERING MENU

Meadowlands management is never afraid to make changes when they think they’re warranted. With the 20-cent Pick-5 not quite creating the level of expected excitement since its inception seven months ago, The Big M has decided to discontinue the wager while adding a second 20-cent Pick-5 to its popular low-takeout laundry list of multi-leg puzzles.

“The wagering public speaks every day and every night,” said track Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Jason Settlemoir. “They are the barometer for what works and what doesn’t. The Pick-8, despite seeing a total pool of $150,000 earlier this meet, did not make the cut as we head toward the Championship Meet, which begins the first weekend of May. The Late Pick-5 will be another popular low-takeout wager, making our all-star wagering lineup even stronger.”

The Meadowlands will continue to have eight nightly wagers that offer a low takeout of just 15 percent. The new lineup of those wagers:

- Races 1-5: Early 20-cent Pick-5
- Races 2-8: 20-cent Survivor Pick-7 (mandatory payout nightly)
- Races 4-9: 20-cent Pick-6
- Races 6-9: Early 50-cent Pick-4 ($50,000 guaranteed pool)
- Race 7: 20-cent Pentafecta (Hi-5)
- Races 8-12: Late 20-cent Pick-5
- Races 10-13: Late 50-cent Pick-4 ($50,000 guaranteed pool)
- Race 11: 20-cent Pentafecta (Hi-5)

“The Meadowlands has always known that responding to the horseplayer and providing them big pools along with value has to be part of a successful business model,” said Settlemoir. “Stating that, the evolution of The Big M wagering menu through the years is nothing short of incredible. There was a time when there was only one trifecta on a program, and the daily double was the only multi-leg wager on the card. The evolution continues this Friday, as the Meadowlands will roll out a Late Pick-5 that starts on the eighth race every night.”

The numbers say that adding a Pick-5 is a good idea, as thus far during April, the six Pick-5s’ one-per race card for six race cards — have taken in a total of $447,426, an average of $74,571 per card.

Placing a Pick-5 later in the action will give bettors who join in wagering at The Meadowlands during the middle portion of the program an opportunity to participate in what’s a very popular bet at the mile oval.

“The new Late Pick-5 will have a 20-cent minimum and a 40-percent takeout reduction from the pari-mutuel pool down to 15 percent,” said Settlemoir. “The wagering menu will be shuffled, with the end result being one of the most exciting and low-takeout-oriented wagering menus in all of racing.”

Live racing takes place this Friday (April 26) and Saturday (April 27) with a first-race post time of 6:20 p.m.

Big M open for 2-year-old training in May

The Meadowlands Racetrack and the SBOA of NJ will again cooperate to provide access to the racetrack for those harness racing horsemen wishing to train their young horses over the oval during the month of May, beginning Thursday, May 2.

The track will be open each Thursday in May from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and the paddock is open and available during those hours.

All horses entering the grounds must have a Current Negative Coggins test. Vaccination against EHV-1 within the last 90 days is recommended. Horses shipping into New Jersey from out of state must have a health certificate within 30 days per federal law.

The cost for these sessions and paddock hors d’oeuvres and refreshments will be covered by the SBOA of NJ.

Please call the Race Office at 877.782.2537 no later than noon each Wednesday with an estimated number of horses so preparations may be made.

YO umbers seek change Adds Saturdays

The month of May brings with it a change in the live racing schedule at MGM Yonkers Raceway as Saturdays are added back into the mix.

While there will be a few Wednesday programs during the summer (June 26, August 7, August 14 and September 14), Yonkers will operate primarily on a Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday-Saturday slate beginning next week and continuing through the end of September.

Yonkers will host stakes events in May on Thursday the 2nd as the John Brennan Trotting Series concludes with a $78,000 final and $35,000 consolation and on the 20th when the 3-year-old trotting fillies of the New York Sire Stakes circuit are in town.

Grand Circuit racing at Yonkers returns on Friday, June 21 as elimination races are scheduled for the MGM Yonkers Trot and MGM Grand Messenger Stakes, the first legs of the Trotting and Racing Triple Crowns for 3-year-olds. Their companion filly events - the New York New York Messenger Stakes, the second legs of their respective Triple Crowns - are also on the docket. Those finals will occur the following Friday (June 28).

Last, but certainly not least, New York Day of Champions, the MGM Yonkers International Trot, the Robert Miescua Invitational Trot and the MGM Aria Face will comprise a huge program at Yonkers on Saturday, September 7 that will get underway at 12 noon (EDT).

MEADOWLANDS SUMMER SURVIVAL CHALLENGE BACK FOR 2024

The Meadowlands Summer Survival Challenge powered by 123Racing kicks off Friday, May 3, 2024. Cash prizes and Meadowlands swag are up for grabs in this free online contest.

The game covers the Meadowlands Championship Meet and concludes on August 3, 2024.

WOODBINE AND COSA REACH NEW THREE-YEAR AGREEMENT

Woodbine Entertainment and the Central Ontario Standardbred Association (COSA) jointly announced today (4/23) the agreement of a new three-year deal that includes capital investments in each year and increases to purses.

BORTH BEST IN 2024 ONTARIO REGIONAL DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP

In his first Regional Driving Championship appearance, Tyler Borth showed he’s a main event player with a victory in the 2024 Ontario Regional Driving Championship (ORDC) on Tuesday, April 23 at The Raceway at the Western Fair District in London, Ont.

LUTHER FEATURED ON FRESHMAN FOCUS

The Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association (OHHA) will feature Todd Luther and his Ohio 2-year-olds in training in this week’s edition of Freshman Focus.

Freshman Focus with host Roger Huston will air Thursday evening on the OHHA Facebook page and the Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association YouTube channel. Airing time is 7 PM.

Freshman Focus is presented by Sugar Valley Farms, The Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center, and Eldorado Scioto Downs.

KARL SET TO QUALIFY SATURDAY AT BIG M

Dan Patch Award winner Karl, the No. 1-ranked horse in Meadowlands announcer/analyst Ken Warkeftin’s Hambletonian Winter Book Top 10, will be among the stars making their first appearances of 2024 when The Meadowlands hosts 18 qualifiers Saturday morning.

WARRAWEE YANG EXTENDS WIN STREAK IN BRENNA NN TROTTING SERIES

Warrawee Yang will be the only horse with a chance to sweep the 2024 edition of the John Brennan Trotting Series at MGM Yonkers Raceway as he took the first of three $25,000 divisions of the final preliminary round on Wednesday night (April 24).