

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024



Captain Albano won his elimination and final of the Little Brown Jug on Thursday.

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By Greg Reinhart

Captain Albano rebounded in style after making a break in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Championship at Pocono on September 9, capturing his \$50,000 elimination and the \$525,000 final of the Little Brown Jug for 3-year-old pacing colts and geldings on Thursday evening at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair. With what he earned by winning the two races, Captain Albano, last year's Dan Patch Award winner for the group, went past \$1 million in lifetime earnings.

A pair of eliminations were held to set the final, and they were won by Captain Albano (Todd McCarthy) in 1:49 2/5 and Captain's Quarters (Jody Jamieson) in 1:51 3/5. The other horses to make it to the final were Captain Luke (Scott Zeron), Mirage Hanover (Dexter Dunn), Huntingforchrome (Matt Kakaley), Total Stranger (Dan Noble), Legendary Hanover (James MacDonald) and Sweet Beach Life (Matt Kakaley).

In the draw for the final, Captain's Quarters landed the pole, with Captain Albano, Total Stranger, Captain Luke, Mirage Hanover, Legendary Hanover, Huntingforchrome and Sweet Beach Life drawn outside of him. The only driver with a choice was Matt Kakaley and he took Sweet Beach Life over Huntingforchrome, putting Chris Lems on the latter for the final.

Captain's Quarters took advantage of his inside draw to make the lead in the final and

Captain Albano quickly landed in the pocket. To their outside, Mirage Hanover had also shown speed for Dunn but wound up parked out as Captain's Quarters drove on to the quarter in 27 2/5. Captain Quarter's continued to front the field to the half in 55 2/5 as McCarthy sat half-in/half-out with Captain Albano, not wanting to get locked in by Mirage Hanover. McCarthy then fully committed to the two-wide path late on the third bend.

As they raced in the backstretch for the final time, Captain Albano made steady progress towards Captain's Quarters and got to within half a length of him at the 1:22 4/5 three-quarters. Captain Albano then found another gear on the final turn that Captain's Quarters couldn't match and cleared him past the midway point of the bend. From there, Captain Albano was clear to the wire, winning the final by three lengths in 1:50 1/5. Mirage Hanover went a huge trip and was second, followed by Legendary Hanover and Total Stranger. Huntingforchrome advanced from seventh to fifth in the final quarter.

"I've got the shakes a little bit. It's pretty awesome," McCarthy remarked. "This race is such a prestigious race and it brings such a big crowd. It means so much. For horses to be able to go two heats like that and win, it really shows what kind of horses they are. I was just glad that

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)



GIMPANZEE

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Luna Lovegood

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BY **CHAPTER SEVEN** OUT OF **STEAMY WINDOWS**

this guy got to show what he could do today. I can't thank the connections and Noel enough for letting me drive this horse. It was such a great experience.

"I figured that (Dunn) would probably be wanting to wait on me there and get that second-over trip. I was just hoping it wasn't going to be too early that I really had to commit. It wasn't until the top of the stretch here that I sort of had to start making a plan to get going. At that point the pace wasn't overly fast and I was kind of content to have him sit out there. The rest of it went pretty well. We had him rigged today with the Murphy (blind) on the inside and just kind of wanted to have him going out a little bit there on this half. It kind of worked perfectly for him. Once he leveled up with Jody on the inside and he couldn't see him, he was waiting for me to call on him. Once I did, he swelled right up off the turn and he was ready to go."

A Captaintreacherous colt bred by Fred Hertrich III and his All American Harnessbreds, Captain Albano is owned by Patricia Stable, L. A. Express Stable LLC., Sjoblom Racing Inc. and Michael Dolan and is trained by Noel Daley. Captain Albano has 15 wins from 22 career starts, has banked \$1,242,723 and paid \$3.40 to win in the final as the favorite.

"That was great he got to show himself off today," remarked Daley. "The Little Brown Jug is on everyone's bucket list. This is the first time I've won the Jug. I've won the Jugette, but not the Jug. It's pretty cool to check it off."

After some bad luck in the North America Cup where he was locked in the pocket and the Meadowlands Pace where he had an impossible trip, Captain Albano has won the Adios, the Max C. Hempt Memorial and now the Little Brown Jug, putting him at or near the top of the 3-year-old colt and gelding pace group once again.



CONRAD PHOTO

Driver Todd McCarthy celebrates with Captain Albano's co-owners Matts and Catarina Sjoblom.

"It's just amazing. Captain Albano's been a great horse all year," stated Dolan. "He's had a lot of bad luck. He finally got to show what he can do. I don't have words. I've got great partners; we're like a family. It's fantastic."

A Smart Bet

Other major 2024 stakes winners by Bettor's Wish include:

Arbitrage Hanover, 1.49.1, 7 wins from 9 starts, NJ Sires Stakes and NJ Classic Champion

Bytheliteofthemoon (M), P, 2, 1:51.3, 3 wins from 4 starts in the KY Goldenrod Series

Odds On Steno (M), 1:50.4, NJ Sires Stakes Champion

Royal Desire, 1.50.4, winner NJ Standardbred Development Fund

Swimwiththecurrent, stakes-placed with a mark of 1:50.3

Twisted Destiny, P, 2, 1:51.0F 2 legs and final of PA Stallion Series

Wedlock Bluechip, P, 2, 1:51.3F, Arden Downs, PA Sires Stakes

Wish You Well, 1:49.1F, Adios elimination winner with earnings of \$427,940

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908-451-4135



Better Is Nice (Bettor's Wish x Thatsoveryverynice) P, 3, 1:48.0M \$924,183

Supplemental entrant Soft Shot shines in Jugette final

The connections of Soft Shot were rewarded handsomely after paying the \$15,000 supplement fee to put her in the Jugette for 3-year-old pacing fillies on Wednesday afternoon at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair as she won both her \$25,000 elimination and the \$260,000 final.

A pair of eliminations were held, with the first one going to Soft Shot (David Miller) in 1:49 3/5 to tie the world record for a sophomore pacing filly on a half-mile track. My Girl EJ (Dexter Dunn) would then take the other trial in 1:49 1/5 to lower the world record. The remainder of the finalists were A Few Choice Words (Jim Marohn Jr.), Dandy's Mercy (Scott Zeron), Donegal Spirit (Todd McCarthy), Odds On Platinum (Todd McCarthy), Lou Lou (Yannick Gingras) and Hunting Hula (Andy McCarthy). Soft Shot had the pole for the final, with My Girl EJ, A Few Choice Words, Odds On Platinum, Lou Lou, Dandy's Mercy and Hunting Hula lined up to her outside. Todd McCarthy stuck with Odds On Platinum, giving the drive on Donegal Spirit to Ronnie Wrenn Jr. in the final.

In the final they lined up quickly in post position order, and Soft Shot cut the quarter in just 27 3/5. Coming to the half, McCarthy had Odds On Platinum off the rail and moving from fourth, but My Girl EJ, who was in the pocket, wound up with a broken hobble and made a break. That scattered the entire field, including Odds On Platinum, who was forced wide to get around her. That left Soft Shot with a loose lead in an opening half of just 56 1/5.

Soft Shot continued on a clear lead to three-quarters in 1:23 4/5 as Odds On Platinum stalled first-up and A Few Choice Words was gapped in the pocket, and a 27 1/5 final kicker propelled Soft Shot to the 2 1/2 length victory in 1:51 flat. A Few Choice Words held off a game Odds On Platinum for second, Dandy's Mercy was fourth from second-over and Donegal Spirit checked in fifth.

"I was getting pretty easy fractions anyways. Dexter, I don't know if he started to move or what exactly happened, but I looked back and saw she made a break. Whatever horse was out there already, it took them right out, too," Miller recalled about the incident going to the half. "When

the half flashed up in 56, I let her pace a little bit up the backstretch. I heard a horse coming to her. I called on her at the head of the lane, and she had horse left."

A daughter of Heston Blue Chip, Soft Shot is trained by Jessica Roegner for owner Paul O'Neil. Bred by Shanamphilankilou Inc., Soft Shot has 13 wins from 20 outings, has banked \$245,078 and paid \$5.80 to win in the final as the 9-5 second choice. This was only Soft Shot's second career stakes start. She was third in the Courageous Lady at MGM Northfield Park back on August 10 but was coming into the Jugette off a victory over older foes in the F&M Open Handicap at The Meadows on September 4.

"She's amazing. We were here for the fun," Roegner said about her expectations after paying the supplement fee. "That was unexpected, but you can't win it unless you're in it."



Trainer Jessica Roegner plants a kiss on Soft Shot after her Jugette victory.

-By Greg Reinhart

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NJ PACER	Colts	Fillies
Perfect Sting*	-	1
NJ TROTTERS	Colts	Fillies
Muscle Hill	-	1
Six Pack	-	2
Walner	1	-
NY PACERS	Colts	Fillies
American Ideal	5	4
Courtly Choice	2	2
Huntsville	1	-
NY TROTTERS	Colts	Fillies
Chapter Seven	1	2

OH PACERS	Colts	Fillies
Downbytheseaside	1	1
OH TROTTER	Colts	Fillies
Ready For Moni*	1	-
ON PACERS	Colts	Fillies
Betterthancheddar	-	2
Bettor's Delight	1	4
Cattlewash	3	4
McWicked	1	6
Shadow Play	-	2
ON TROTTERS	Colts	Fillies
Archangel	1	-
Green Manalishi S	1	-
Muscle Mass	-	1

ON TROTTERS	Colts	Fillies
Resolve	-	1
Trixtion	-	1
PA PACERS	Colts	Fillies
Bettor's Wish	2	1
Captain Crunch	-	1
Papi Rob Hanover	1	2
Stay Hungry	-	1
Sweet Lou	2	1
Tall Dark Stranger	2	-
PA TROTTERS	Colts	Fillies
Bar Hopping	1	3
Father Patrick	1	3
International Moni	3	1

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JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman ✕ [BergmanJay](#)

Burke enjoying the 'Seaside' view

Trainer Ron Burke has done what no other trainer has ever managed to accomplish in our sport's history. While setting training records for years, Burke has successfully branched out into the breeding business.

When individual states expanded Sire Stakes programs, Burke and his core investors quickly branched out not just to compete but with the idea of dominating. Like all great business models, the Burke Brigade has broken with norms and found a pathway to conquer. Such is the case with one stallion – Downbytheseaside.

"They are smart horses that like their work," said Burke, describing the sons and daughters of Downbytheseaside he has trained over the years. Specifically for Burke, the ones he has trained fit his conditioning program perfectly and that has led to enormous success on the racetrack.

A close inspection of the stallion career of Downbytheseaside makes it rather clear that Burke's stable has been a driving force. Six of the top 10 money-winning foals from Downbytheseaside's illustrious career have come from the Burke Brigade, with the top of the list offering a very special horse in the 2022 Little Brown Jug winner Bythemissal.

Pointing to the attributes that Downbytheseaside has passed down to his sons and daughters, Burke was specific about Bythemissal's credentials. "No horse tries harder than him," said Burke of the near \$2.2 million winner that not only was dominant in Ohio but throughout North America.

"We focus a lot of our stable on Ohio," said Burke. "Downbytheseaside has been the dominant stallion there."

While other trainers have bought Ohio and stayed in Ohio, Burke has managed to transition his horses using both the Ohio Sire Stakes program and other regional programs to profit. Last Sunday (September 15) saw the world champion Sippinosearoc finish second behind stablemate Louprint in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sire Championship at The Red Mile. The colt with 100 percent Ohio roots (his dam Queen Ann M earned \$374K racing in the Buckeye State), had previously paced to a 1:48 2/5 career-best in a leg of the Kentucky Championships.

"I knew early he had a lot of ability," said Burke of Sippinosearoc. "We trained him at my farm in 1:56 and no other 2-year-old had ever done that."

Still, transitioning from training center to stakes winner is not always an easy conversion and Sippinosearoc has managed it well thus far.

"We'll probably head back to Ohio for his next races," said Burke, who has changed his philosophy this year regarding his younger horses. "I think we may have over-raced some last year," said Burke of efforts in 2023.

While Sippinosearoc may not have that many starts remaining on his calendar, Burke was more than happy with how Louprint, the Kentucky Champion following his 1:49 effort on Sunday, has progressed.

"I'm really happy with the way Ronnie (Wrenn Jr.) has handled him," said Burke. "He's never been stressed and he's just come home strongly each time."

Louprint is by Sweet Lou, and one of many Burke team homebreds that have emerged and profited over the last few years.

While Burke's Ohio-bred was doing well in Kentucky, he sent the undefeated Swingtownto into last Saturday's Metro trials at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The half-brother to stakes winners Captain Barbosa and Whichwaytothebeach had the pole position in his trials for driver Chris Page and led throughout the mile only to be overtaken late by a pair from trainer Tony Alagna's stable. The third-place finish landed Swingtownto in the C\$1 million Metro Final on Saturday (September 21), but the lack of a victory found him drawing outside the favorites with post seven.

"The way he finished up the mile, he looked like he was pulling himself up late in the stretch," said Burke. "We pulled blood on him and it looks like he tied up."

Swingtownto, a \$160,000 yearling purchase, had been tearing up the competition on the Ohio Sire Stakes circuit, with four victories in individual legs. His Metro elimination was the first time racing on a big track, having dominated over the half and five-eighths mile tracks on his tour of Ohio.

Burke's dominance on the Downbytheseaside list is a combination of his belief in the stallion as well as his willingness to spend more than others to get the better ones.

"I think you can compete outside of Ohio with some of the better pedigrees," said Burke.

It was Sea Silk – the 2021 freshman filly champion in Ohio – that proved that point when she captured a Grand Circuit event at The Red Mile in the fall of that campaign in 1:50 3/5. She then went on to an incredible second-place finish in the Breeders Crown at The Meadowlands despite starting from post 10 and racing parked the entire mile for driver Chris Page. Only Niki Hill finished ahead of her in that epic Crown performance.



CONRAD PHOTO

Swingtownto starts Saturday in the C\$1,000,000 Metro final at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

"Right now, there are only two stallion lines," Burke said. "It's either sons of Somebeachsomewhere (the sire of Downbytheseaside) or Sweet Lou."

While Burke raced and has ownership interest in Sweet Lou, Downbytheseaside's success has captivated him to a point that has led him to breed his own mares to the top Ohio stallion.

"We actually bred a couple of our mares," said Burke of a pair of now-yearlings that he expects to be training this fall. "Dr J (veterinarian Bridgette Jablonsky) gave both of them high marks."

With just four crops of racing age, Downbytheseaside has established himself throughout North America with an ability to pass on not only high speed but a high degree of toughness. It's that attribute that has seen them be battle tested and come back for more and more with each passing race. To be fair to the stallion and the others that have benefited from his great success, we'd be remiss if we didn't recognize Pebble Beach, a colt from Downbytheseaside's first crop who garnered instant attention when he dominated the Kentucky Championship program in 2021, exhibiting sub-1:49 speed for the first time in juvenile events at The Red Mile.

While others have recognized Downbytheseaside's stallion prowess, Burke's stable has appeared to come up with some of the more talented sons and daughters over the last few years. As for the need to have sub-1:50 talent to succeed, Burke has changed his attitude.

"It used to be that if you had a 2-year-old that could pace in 1:55 you could make money. Then it was if you had a 2-year-old that could pace in 1:52 you could make money. Today if your 2-year-old can't pace in 1:50 they are going to cost you money," said Burke, who along with his stable have found a way to stay ahead of the curve both on the racetrack and in the breeding business, dominating Sire Stakes programs throughout the States and competing at the highest levels on the Grand Circuit.

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Economics stand in the way of racing as a 4YO and beyond



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner X @harnessveguy

Recently co-owner Steve Stewart was quoted as saying that his Dan Patch Award-winning trotting mare Jiggy Jog would hopefully be on the track for years to come. As a fan of the sport, the words were music to my ears. But it was also a reminder of how many horses we never get to see past their 3-year-old campaigns.

Economically it certainly makes sense to race Jiggy Jog since the 5-year-old has already earned \$809,188 in 2024 through only five starts and could reasonably make at least another \$500,000 before the year is done. As a broodmare, after waiting a few years for her first foal, the best you could hope to get is probably \$1,000,000, and that is if she produced a perfect foal. More likely it will bring in the \$500,000 to \$750,000 range, still a healthy payday but less than she can make on the track, and let's face it, what's more fun than winning big stakes races?

If we use the weekly Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown Top 10 Poll as a guide, the best two horses in Harness Racing right now are older mares, with 4-year-old pacer Twin B Joe Fresh occupying the top spot and Jiggy Jog second. The remainder of the list is filled with horses that are 2- or 3-year-olds. Recent history says this is the norm, with mares and freshmen/sophomores ranking as the best while older males are nowhere to be found. Over the last five years, when the final tabulation was done for the poll after all stakes races were in the books, only seven male horses have occupied a spot in the Top 10.

Taking a closer look at the group of seven horses who raced well enough to reach the top 10 and decided not to retire after their 3-year-

old seasons, two – Bythemissal and Allywag Hanover – are geldings, two others – Tattoo Artist and Bulldog Hanover – really didn't have strong enough credentials to retire as top stallions after their 3-year-old season, and Ecurie D was brought over from Europe as an older horse to race here. So that leaves us with Bettor's Wish and Gimpanzee as the only legitimate 3-year-old colts who elected to return to the races for their 4-year-old campaigns.

"If you come back as a 4-year-old the expectation is that you might not have as good of a record and you'll cheapen your stud value."

-Owner/Trainer Chris Ryder

We of course have the Stallion Restriction Rule (Gural Rule) in place which states a horse must race as a 4-year-old or his first crop is not eligible to compete in certain stakes at The Meadowlands, Tioga and Vernon. While good in theory, one has to wonder how many horses are really taking it into account when only two 3-year-old colt millionaires in the last five years returned to race. For the record, Beach Glass also tried to come back and Perfect Sting was medically excused from the mandate.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 9](#)

A Smart Bet



TWISTED DESTINY
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to win in a stakes-record
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Twisted Destiny (Bettor's Wish x Tug River Princess) P, 2, 1:51.0F \$47,963

Four others – Confederate, Tactical Approach, Pebble Beach and Tall Dark Stranger elected to retire.

According to co-owner and trainer Chris Ryder, the Gural Rule played no role in deciding whether Bettor's Wish, who won 13 of 19 races and earned \$1.6 million as a 3-year-old, would return to the races. Additionally, the gamble paid off since the son of Bettor's Delight was named the 2020 Dan Patch winner as older male pacer with \$685,432 earned.

Bettor's Wish was the exception to the rule as he did double duty and bred 58 mares before racing in 2020, and despite the large total in the earnings column, he wasn't going to demand a high enough stud fee to make retirement mandatory.

"If you come back as a 4-year-old the expectation is that you might not have as good of a record and you'll cheapen your stud value," said Ryder, who originally stood Bettor's Wish for \$10,000 in New Jersey and now has him in Pennsylvania for \$7,500 through Diamond Creek Farm. "If he had won the Meadowlands Pace and gotten the same wins that Confederate had, we wouldn't have raced him as a 4-year-old."

In some ways perhaps Bettor's Wish was an anomaly in that he earned a large sum of his money finishing second in races like the North America Cup, Meadowlands, Pace, Messenger and Breeders Crown.

Ultimately it all worked out as from his small first crop he has produced Kentucky Sire Stakes champion Better Is Nice (\$924K, 1:48) and Adios runner-up Wish You Well (\$427K, 1:49 1/5) among five who have earned over \$250K.

"We are pretty pleased with the Bettor's Wish's at the moment. He's having a good run," said Ryder.

Gimpanzee is a completely different animal in terms of his 3-year-old success and decision to return the following year. He certainly had the credentials as a winner of the Yonkers Trot and Breeders Crown as a sophomore but still chose to remain on the track. According to co-owner Ander Ström (Courant Inc.), there were a number of factors at play, none of which were the Gural Rule.

"Gimpanzee raced until late as a 3-year-old and he had much left in the tank when the season closed," said Ström. "We had discussions on taking him to Europe for the season after. Eventually we decided to stay and race as a 4-year-old in North America since the race program for these horses had improved. It was not a clear cut decision, had Solvalla offered a good flight itinerary to Elitloppet, I think we would have taken that option instead."

"We wanted to make sure Gimpanzee could serve enough mares per season before syndicating him and that decision has now proven to be right, with the interest we had in the syndication and the high number of mares he breeds standing at Diamond Creek. In hindsight we probably increased the value of the horse slightly, including the purses won (almost \$1m in 11 starts at 4) and the limited number of breedings we sold the first seasons, but it has to be said, Gimpanzee was a special case."

Gimpanzee made his connections look great by capturing the Hambletonian Maturity, Cashman Memorial, Caesars Trotting Classic and Breeders Crown as part of a Dan Patch Trotter of the Year season. Regardless, Ström feels that beefing up the stakes program for 4-year-olds even further would be a welcome addition.

"Personally I would favor more big stakes races for 4-year olds, so there are even better incentives for the good horses to race for one more season," said Ström. "I am keen to breed on talent, but a great young horse that can show longevity and soundness by winning at 4 is even better."

Going back a 10 years, Captaintreacheros returned to the races after one of the most dominant seasons by a 3-year-old. He won just over \$2 million while winning 13 of 16 starts as a sophomore. According to racing manager Myron Bell, the Gural rule was the only reason the horse was brought back for another year.

"Like all good horses they only have a certain amount of races in them. His blood count wasn't good at 4 so we only raced him sparingly. He only had like seven starts and he wasn't at the top of his game," said Bell, who ultimately syndicated Captaintreacheros for \$12 million despite him only winning two of seven starts while earning \$175K as a 4-year-old. "[Hanover Shoe Farm] only bought 15% based on \$12 million and the rest was syndicated among the best breeders in the country. The farms just want the rights so they can get 12 free breedings, though some of them get 18. Hanover's 15% was 18 breedings and then they got 12 free, so they had 30 total."

Individual shares of Captaintreacheros sold for \$120,000 and went up to \$150,000 at one point. Now at age 14, Bell says the shares are still worth six figures.

"When you have a horse of that magnitude it is all timing," said Bell on the need to retire the best 3-year-olds. "It is like Karl, how much more



DERICK GIWNER PHOTOS

Bettor's Wish (above) and Gimpanzee (below) both returned to race as 4-year-olds.



value could he add by racing? Not much."

With all the above said, how do we get a top stallion prospect to consider racing as a 4-year-old and turn down \$10-\$12 million? The answer is we can't. As my daughter would say, the math doesn't math. Yes, in theory if a 3-year-old comes back and earns \$1,000,000 the following year the return on investment works financially, but what happens if they lay an egg as a 4-year-old as breeders sour on his ability? Does the syndication go away? Does it decrease from \$100,000 a share to \$75,000 a share and cost the owner \$3,000,000?

There is the "love of the game" argument, but that simply ignores the money aspect of the game. Basically an owner brings the horse back because they like to race. It happens, but we certainly can't rely on it.

"Some people just want the champion horse and the fun of going to the races with their partners," said Nikola Ryder.

Is there a purse amount that could be offered which would lure a horse back? On the pacing end, what if we took the William Haughton Memorial at The Meadowlands in July, the Dan Patch at Harrah's Hoosier Park in August, the Canadian Pacing Derby at Woodbine Mohawk Park in September, the Breeders Crown in October and the Fanduel Championships at The Meadowlands in November and made it special jackpot series. Any 4-year-old who wins all five races gets a \$2,000,000 bonus. Certainly that is something that could be insured. The odds have to be long, but isn't that a nice carrot on the end of a stick to entice a horse to try?

Consider that the top-earning pacer on average over the last four years has accumulated just over \$1,000,000 in earnings. This would provide an opportunity to triple that number. Maybe there can even be a consolation prize of \$200,000 (\$50,000 put up by each track) for any 4-year-old that competes in all five and wins four.

Are we likely to convince an owner to take a shot and race their top 3-year-old the following year? Maybe not. But at least maybe they'll give it a second thought if there is more incentive to show up on the track.

CANE RUN FARM



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COLTS

***Hip 27 WUKONG**, b.c. KY +Bonus

Gimpanzee-Side Bet Hanover-Donato Hanover

Three-quarter brother to multiple stakes winner **WINNER'S BET** 4,1:49.3-'24 (\$900,471). From stakes winner **SIDE BET HANOVER** 3,1:53.1 (\$237,646). Second dam is a half-sister to **SPELLBOUND HANOVER** 3,1:54.3 (\$962,395 - dam of Hambletonian winner **MARION MARAUDER** 1:50.2 - \$3,392,609).

Hip 278 BE GREEN, b.c. PA/KY

Greenshoe-Bright Baby Blues-Andover Hall

Half-brother to **JULA MUSCLE PACK** 3,1:53.1 (\$356,291), **WHOSE BLUES** 3,1:52.3f (\$135,748) and KY Commonwealth Series winner **BEST FRIENDS GIRL** 2,1:57-'24 (\$18,000). From stakes winner **BRIGHT BABY BLUES** 3,1:54.2 (\$492,203).

Hip 337 FOOTBALL IS LIFE, b.c. KY +Bonus

Gimpanzee-Habit's Best-Muscles Yankee

Half-brother to the trio of multiple stakes winners **HABITAT** 3,1:53f (\$1,262,221), **ON A STREAK** 2,1:52.4 (\$803,475) and **HAT TRICK HABIT** 3,1:52.3 (\$220,054), and **GOTTA HABIT** 4,1:55.2f-'24 (\$122,434).

***Hip 371 EARWIN**, b.c. KY +Bonus

Gimpanzee-Magical Lady-Kadabra

Half-brother to multiple stakes placed **SHIRIN** 3,1:56.3-'24 (\$53,989) and **CAPTAIN CHESLEY** 3,1:56.3f (\$48,757). Third living foal from **MAGICAL LADY** 3,Q2:01 (\$90,621), half-sister to **SUNSHINE DELIGHT** 3,1:53.1 (\$354,847) and **ONTOPOFTHEHILL** 3,1:54 (\$110,428).

Hip 609 SLIDERS, b.c. NJ/KY

Tactical Landing-Oasis Dream-Cantab Hall

Three-quarter or half-brother to **ONLY PASSING THRU** 1:54.2 (\$287,105) and **ONE AFTER NINE** 1:54.2f-'24 (\$196,109). From stakes winner **OASIS DREAM** 3,1:53.4 (\$221,961), full or half-sister to the dams of stakes winners **JACK FIRE** 4,1:54.1 (\$327,219), **LILBITALEXIS** 3,1:51.1 (\$214,790) and **FLY BY** 3,1:53.3f-'24 (\$228,437).

***Hip 692 VENTURE CAPITAL**, b.c. NJ/KY

Tactical Landing-Anikadabra-Kadabra

Half-brother to **BLUE SKIES SHINING** 3,1:55.4f (\$30,906) and full brother to 2024 2-year-old **Confident** BT 2,1:57.3-'24 (\$3,720). From **ANIKADABRA** 3,1:56f (\$83,809), half-sister to International stakes star **RESOLVE** 4,1:50.4 (\$2,621,086).

Hip 752 FORTUNATE ONE, b.c. PA

Father Patrick-Fortunes Of Fables-Muscle Hill

Three-quarter brother to **FADE INTO YOU** 3,1:54.4 (\$215,628) and half-brother to **FIFTY WAYS** 1:54.1f-'24 (\$324,055) and **FIGHT SONG** 1:53.1f-'24 (\$150,286). From a full sister to **FEED YOUR HEAD** 3,1:52 (\$245,662).

Hip 770 UNDERGROUND, b.c. NJ/KY

Muscle Hill-Hidden Temple-Kadabra

Full or half-brother to KY Proud Final winner **YO MONICA** 2,1:58.3-'24 (\$31,420) and **PIRATE'S LOOT** 3,1:56.3f-'24 (\$30,501). From a half-sister to **TEMPLE OF DOOM** 3,1:52.4f (\$745,917) and **JIMMY SHIN** 1:54.3 (\$420,882).

FILLIES

Hip 87 CALYX, b.f. NJ/KY

Muscle Hill-Creature Of Habit-Donato Hanover

Full sister to 2024 2-year-old Court And Spark BT1:56.4-'24 (\$6,850). Second foal from **CREATURE OF HABIT** 3,1:54.2f (\$94,810), half-sister to multiple stakes winner **HABITAT** 3,1:53f (\$1,262,221). Breeders Crown winner **ON A STREAK** 2,1:52.4 (\$803,475) and **HAT TRICK HABIT** 3,1:52.3 (\$220,054).

***Hip 226 GUINEVERE**, br.f. NJ/KY

Tactical Landing-Vita Bella Bi-Donato Hanover

Three-quarter sister to **EXCALIBUR BI** 3,1:52.2 (\$146,227) and **LANCELOT** 2,1:55.3-'24 (\$5,480). Third foal from a half-sister to **CRYS DREAM** 3,1:54f (\$997,378) and **BRIGHAM DREAM** 4,1:53.2 (\$639,280).

***Hip 356 MISS ANN REED**, b.f. NJ

Muscle Hill-Lady Ann No-Credit Winner

First foal from **LADY ANN NO** 1:57.1h (\$185,255), half-sister to **THANKFUL NO** 1:53h (\$285,092). Second dam is World Champion and Hall of Fame Broodmare **PEACEFUL WAY** 4,1:51.4 (\$2,746,240).

***Hip 392 GRACE IN HEAVEN**, b.f. NY

Chapter Seven-Oblivion-Muscle Hill

Second foal (oldest now 2) and from the immediate family of multiple stakes winners **PERSONAL STYLE** 4,1:53.1 (\$778,391-dam of **PATRIARCH HANOVER** 1:51.4-\$755,143 and **PAULINA HANOVER** 3,1:52f-'24-\$331,989), **MASSIVE LIGHTNING** 1:54f (\$353,779) and **FLASH LIGHTNING** 3,1:52.4 (\$322,018).

***Hip 524 YGRITTE**, ch.f. KY +Bonus

Gimpanzee-Etta Am S-Muscle Hill

Three-quarter sister to stakes winner **CHAPTER ONE** 2,2:03.4f; BT1:57f-Europe (\$40,000-Int.). Third foal from Etta Am S BT1:58.1f-Europe (\$16,866), half-sister to **DORNOCH AM** 1:59.1f-Europe (\$65,000-Int.) and **GASSIN AM** 1:56f-Europe (\$45,000-Int.). Second dam a half-sister to **SILVERADO DREAM** 1:55.2 (\$329,345).

Hip 748 FLY THRU TIME, b.f. PA/KY

Cantab Hall-Fate Smiled-Muscle Massive

Three-quarter or half-sister to **SKYLINE SEASHELL** 2,1:57.2f (\$48,863) and **Forward Path** 2,Q2:00.4-'24; BT1:54.4 (\$13,300). Third foal from **FATE SMILED** 3,1:56f (\$158,119), half-sister to multiple stakes winner **FOR A DREAMER** 4,1:53 (\$535,829).

***Hip 758 OROMONO**, ch.f. KY +Bonus

Gimpanzee-Goldavila F-Love You

Half-sister to **SIR HISS** 3,1:55.2f-'24 (\$25,205). Third foal from Goldavila F 2,Q2:04.3-Europe, half-sister to stakes winners **HAVANA D'AURCY** 3,1:57.4-Europe (\$305,000-Int.), **KANADA** 2,2:03.4; BT1:54-Europe (\$255,000-Int.) and **JAMAICA D'AURCY** 4,1:57.2-Europe (\$135,000-Int.). Dam is by leading world, European and French champion sire **LOVE YOU** 1.10.2 (mile rate 1:52) (€1,416,537).

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Takeout reduction: Low risk, high reward for casino-fueled tracks



AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali [X AtTheTrack7](#)

The correlation between purses and handle in harness racing is a thing of the past. Often, stakes races in harness racing offer a purse that exceeds the amount wagered on that race. Given that at many racetracks the majority of the funding for that stake races comes from casino or alternative gaming revenue, it's something that is not really discussed.

While I understand the economics of situation, I still believe it is not a good look.

The Meadowlands offers several races throughout the year that feature some of the highest purses in the country. Obviously, Hambletonian Day is the richest non-Breeders Crown program in harness racing, boasting total purses of nearly \$3.5 million. Total handle for the day is more than double the total purses and not all of that purse money is provided by the racetrack as some of the purse funding comes from horsemen stake payments. That said, it is worth noting that every \$1 million in handle produces approximately \$25,000 for purses. Therefore, even if The Meadowlands liability on Hambletonian Day was only \$1 million of the \$3.5 million in purses paid, that would require \$40 million in handle to offset the purse cost. The North American handle was \$7.4 million, by far the largest handle seen on a single harness racing card on this continent in 2024. But of course, not nearly enough to pay for the purses paid out on the day.

Most recently, Yonkers Raceway hosted the Yonkers International Trot amidst an 11-race program that sported \$3.3 million in purses. The International Trot itself was worth \$1 million. Similar to The Meadowlands, these purses were not entirely at the expense of Yonkers Raceway, but significant nonetheless. The North American handle for the program was essentially exactly that, \$1 million. Similar to Hambletonian Day, there will be non-commingled International export handle that will increase that total, but not by a significant amount as it correlates to the purse expenses of the day.

I've written column after column over the years about how we have lost sight of the importance of wagering handle and the industry has become complacent at times due to the casino subsidy injections into the industry. The big days of racing at racetracks that are receiving casino subsidies certainly speak to that point.

Big days of racing are supposed to result in huge wagering handle. There were Monday and Tuesday nights three and four years ago at Yonkers Raceway that produced handle equal to or greater than that of the International Trot card. That's not a criticism, it's simply a fact.

For years I have wondered why these racetracks who see 90-percent of their purse money come from casino revenue don't lower their takeout to ground-breaking levels. The easy answer to that question is "because there are laws and regulations in place that will not permit that." In my opinion, that is a lazy response. Laws change all the time. If that were an initiative that a racetrack truly wanted to pursue, they could put together an exploratory committee, have experts perform an analysis and put together a multi-year plan supporting a change in the law that would allow for the racetrack to pursue the initiative.

In 2023, Yonkers handle for the year was roughly \$125 million. For the purposes of this example, let's assume Yonkers charges four-percent for their signal and 90-percent of their wagering handle came via their export signal. That means their export signal would produce \$4.5 million in revenue and their on-track handle would produce approximately \$2.5 million in revenue. Assuming a standard 50/50 split between the race-track and horsemen, in that scenario Yonkers purses would receive around \$3 million in purse revenue from their wagering handle after taxes. That is for the entire year of racing. This coming Friday, Yonkers is paying out \$229,000 in purses, roughly eight-percent of their total purse revenue for the year, which speaks to how important casino revenue is

and how thoroughly unimportant to the bottom line wagering handle is in the current environment.

If something is that insignificant, why not try to improve it with drastic measures? If that measure was a colossal failure and handle remained exactly the same, Yonkers would lose \$1.5 million in purse money for the year, which would mean for two months they would have to reduce purses by 20-percent and then would be back to even.

Why not take a shot? If you are paying out \$50 million-plus in purses and 95-percent of those purses are paid for by your casino, why not try to do something incredible to boost your handle?

Is it hard to get laws changed? Of course it is. But all too often laws are based on opinion. In this instance, Yonkers would have math on their side. I have outlined it many times before, but reducing takeout results in higher payouts to the players, who in-turn would take those higher payouts and "churn" it, meaning betting it back through the windows. In doing so, because the players are investing their larger winnings back into the windows, handle over time will grow. Sure, there is no guarantee that every dollar would go to Yonkers, which is why it would take time to show that growth. But certainly some of it would, and over one year, two years, three years, a reduced takeout plan with a reduced signal fee would result in handle that would grow like a snowball rolling down a hill. That math can get the law changed and furthermore, it would be done at very little risk to the racetrack itself.

I am using Yonkers as an example, but this could be applied to just about any racetrack whose purses are supported predominantly by casino revenue. It simply amazes me that it is 2024 and this has not been tried. I am not talking about slight takeout reductions on certain wagers. That is not enough. I am talking about across the board sizable takeout reductions and signal fee reductions, which in-turn would increase the signal's exposure and distribution. I continue to hope that somewhere, someone will try it.

TWIN B JOE FRESH: NEXT STOP, DAYTON

By Derick Giwner

Many of the top horses in the sport will be in action either Friday at Harrah's Hoosier Park or Saturday at Woodbine Mohawk Park, but one horse that will be on the sidelines for another week is the leader in the race for Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh.

Twin B Joe Fresh is coming off a one-length victory over Sylvia Hanover in the C\$205,000 Milton stake at Woodbine Mohawk Park on September 14. She brushed to the front for regular driver and co-owner Dexter Dunn and stopped the clock in 1:49 1/5. It was a workmanlike performance but not one that trainer Chris Ryder was thrilled with.

"She wasn't quite on her game, to be honest, but we'll address that," said Ryder.

Next on the schedule for the 4-year-old is the Dayton Distaff on September 28 at Dayton Raceway followed by the Allerage on October 6 at The Red Mile and the Breeders Crown eliminations on October 19 at The Meadowlands. For the year she has won eight of nine starts and earned \$495,812.

"You have to be the best of the best to make that kind of money with an older pacing mare," said Ryder, pointing out that the division races for some of the lowest purses in the sport.

As successful as she's been, one would wonder whether we'll see her again in 2025 and the answer is a strong maybe.

"People ask me but we haven't thought about it much because we are concentrating on racing," said Ryder, who added, "I think so, why not?"

Zeron looks to keep rolling with It's My Show, Periculum

By Jay Bergman

It's been three weeks since Scott Zeron guided Periculum and It's My Show to major victories on the Woodbine Mohawk Park program. The Maple Leaf Trot and Canadian Pacing Derby champs will see action once again on Friday night with Zeron hoping for similar results at Hoosier Park.

First It's My Show will take the track in the \$165,000 Hoosier Park Pacing Derby. One race later, Zeron will guide Periculum in the \$200,000 Caesars Trotting Classic. The two stakes are part of nearly \$1.4 million in purses being distributed on the 15-race Hoosier Park card that starts at 6:00 PM (EDT).

Following an early-season slump, It's My Show has emerged as a force against the top older pacers and he looks for his third consecutive win in the Hoosier Park Pacing Derby.

"He's got human emotions," Zeron said of It's My Show. "Right now, he's feeling great and racing great. It's my job to get him the best trip."

Following a dismal effort in the Prix D'Ete on August 18, Zeron returned to the sulky behind It's My Show in a Preferred pace at Woodbine Mohawk Park on August 24 and guided him to a third-place effort. A week later in the rich Canadian Pacing Derby, It's My Show blasted out of the gate and worked out a ground-saving trip before Zeron found him a clear path and led him to a 7-1 upset of race favorite Abuckabett Hanover.

It's My Show enters the Pacing Derby following a victory on September 10 at The Red Mile. "I gave him a nice cover trip and he just wanted to go by," said Zeron of the 1:49 2/5 tune-up.

On Friday, It's My Show drew post two in a very competitive field of 10 and once again may be an underdog against a group that includes Haughton Memorial winner Abuckabett Hanover (post 8), the 64-time winner Little Rocket Man (post 5), as well as the 2022 Little Brown Jug champion Bythemissal (post 9).

Dunkin' (post 1) returns to Hoosier Park and will likely get a little more play than the 20-1 odds he went off in August before capturing the track's signature Dan Patch in a career-best 1:49 1/5 clocking.

The Hoosier Park Pacing Derby is loaded with talent, as trainer Travis Alexander not only named I Did It Myway (post 10) to the event but had Backstreet Shadow (post 6) supplemented. The ageless warrior Charlie May has not won as often this year as the past but remains a threat against any competition. The Ohio-bred son of McArdle landed post seven.

Prior to capturing the prestigious Maple Leaf Trot last month at Woodbine Mohawk Park Periculum had been a nice horse but not exactly considered elite by many. His elimination and final score earned him not only name recognition but placement in a major race that followed.

"After he won the Maple Leaf he got an invitation to the International Trot," said Zeron. "That was a really great opportunity."

That opportunity was great for both Zeron and trainer Marcus Melander, who had the Muscle Hill-sired 5-year-old in good shape.

"It was tough navigating a trip in the International," said Zeron. "We were starting from the second tier and I thought the horse that I was following would get me into the race."

Unfortunately for Periculum and Zeron, a chance at winning the \$1 million International was spoiled by the long trip and the fact that Periculum was just too far away from race-winner Jiggy Jog when he turned into the homestretch.

"I wish I could have been closer. It would have been interesting," said Zeron.



AMANDA STEPHENS

It's My Show has posted back-to-back victories and hopes for the hat trick on Friday at Harrah's Hoosier Park.

Periculum (post 4) won't have a rematch with Jiggy Jog in the Caesars Trotting Classic as the mare was not entered. Still, there are nine others in the field with talent and that could make things challenging as Periculum seeks his third win in his last four starts, all with Zeron in the bike.

Though all three of Zeron's drives have been off the pace, the driver is not concerned about his charge being one-dimensional.

"They told me he's fine and you can leave with him," Zeron said. "Hoosier's a tough track to navigate. You'd think with the long stretch that it favors closers but that's not the case. With as fast as we have to go, it's still hard to make up ground in the stretch."

Winner's Bet (post 6) rebounded nicely after a break in stride kept him from qualifying for the Maple Leaf final. The Nancy Takter-

trained 4-year-old put in a monster effort in capturing the Charlie Hill Memorial at Scioto on September 7. In that race driver Dexter Dunn had to come overland in a snappy final half and finished out his mile with a 26 2/5 final quarter.

Trainer Ron Burke has a pair in the Caesars, with It's Academic and Chapercraz starting from posts one and two in the field, and M-Ms Dream, now listed under the care of Henry Graber Jr., starting from post 10 in the second tier. It's Academic has captured a pair of stakes events this year in six tries for Burke. The Ohio-bred managed a fifth-place finish in the International Trot at Yonkers. Chapercraz has won just once in 15 tries this year but that was a major accomplishment with the 4-year-old by Crazy Wow upsetting at 32-1 in the \$425,000 Hambletonian Maturity at The Meadowlands on July 13.

Trainer Marcus Melander sends out Oh Well (post 3) along with Periculum in the contest and the 4-year-old should not be ignored. A runner-up in the Maple Leaf to his stablemate, Oh Well has been mired with poor post positions all season long and finally gets some reprieve in the Caesars Trotting Classic.

Zeron will again be in the bike for trainer Melander on Saturday night as he guides the freshman Meshuggah in the Mohawk Million.

"He's got great manners," said Zeron of the 2-year-old he guided to victory in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes final at The Meadows on September 5. "He drew post seven and it's his first trip over a big track."

As for the outside draw, Zeron said: "He can leave the gate fast."

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Macintosh spent a little and looks to win a lot in Mohawk Million

By Derick Gwerner

When spending less than \$50,000 for a pair of yearling trotters you don't list on your whiteboard "start in the Mohawk Million" as a goal. However, that is exactly where co-owner and trainer Blake Macintosh finds himself on Saturday with Go Ahead Makemyday and Monalishi in the richest race for 2-year-old trotters on the stakes calendar.

"We don't buy expensive horses so you never expect it. I think one was \$17,000 and one was \$28,000. You just hope you get nice horses," said Macintosh. "It has worked out great and everything has gone perfect so far. You just hope it keeps going that way."

As a "pay to play" event with a \$50,000 price tag, Macintosh and his ownership group didn't own slots for the C\$1,000,000 Mohawk Million. What he was able to do is work out deals to get his horses into the race.

"We made a deal with Diamond Creek for the slot that the Walner colt is in [Go Ahead Makemyday] and purchased Brad Grant's slot for Monalishi," said Macintosh.

Monalishi, one of three fillies in the field, brings the slightly stronger résumé into the Mohawk Million. She won the C\$390,000 Peaceful Way over this track on August 24 and has won five of seven starts in her initial year on the track. Last time out she set slow fractions on the lead and just out-sprinted fellow Million starter Lasting Dream with a 27 1/5 final quarter.

"She is not a good horse on the front. She is better chasing horses. Even training down she was terrible on the front. Her game is chasing horses," said Macintosh. "[Driver] James [MacDonald] tried to get Louie [Roy] to come around and he wouldn't, so it wound up being a sprint coming home. She has a lot of heart and wants to win."

Monalishi is from the first crop of Green Manalishi in Canada and has really opened the eyes of Macintosh. "We have three of them this year and they all made the races and have been competitive. They are a good breed. I think he's the next good sire and will really help the Ontario breed."

Go Ahead Makemyday owns a decent record of his own with three wins in seven tries. Most recently he was second behind fellow Million competitor Onajetplane (post five, Andrew McCarthy) in the \$250,000 New Jersey Classic final at The Meadowlands. It was a bit of a "trouble" line as he was trapped in the pocket as the winner got momentum on the outside.

"I don't want to say it cost him the win but he would've been a lot closer. I'm not going to take anything away from the other horse; he raced great," said Macintosh. "He's a grinder and doesn't have a big turn of foot but he would've battled him a lot harder if he got out sooner."

As the gray Go Ahead Makemyday only owns a 1:54 4/5 lifetime mark compared to 1:52 2/5 for Monalishi, it would be easy to say he's not as good as her, but Macintosh isn't ready to put one above the other.

"I think she has more pure speed but I think the gray colt will improve and keep going," said the trainer, who will watch Go Ahead Makemyday start from post three with David Miller and Monalishi just to his outside with MacDonald in the bike.

The Million drew a strong field with a number of stakes winners in



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Monalishi won the Peaceful Way final at Woodbine Mohawk Park and starts from post four in Saturday's Mohawk Million.

the 10-horse lineup. Maryland (post two, Dexter Dunn) won the C\$575,000 William Wellwood Memorial over this track and followed it up with a victory in the \$390,000 Peter Haughton Memorial last week at Harrah's Hoosier Park. He is one of two starters for trainer Marcus Melander, who also has Pennsylvania Sire Stakes champion Meshuggah starting from post seven with Scott Zeron in the bike.

Trainer Luc Blais sends four to post for his owner Determination. They include Champlain winner Emoticon Legacy (post one, Roy), Lasting Dream (post six, Bob McClure), Wondrous Blue Chip (post eight, Tyler Jones), and Lookatmegoamigo (post nine, Jody Jamieson). Rounding out the field from post 10 is Kentucky Sire Stakes runner-up Torrisi with Yannick Gingras in the bike.

"Dexter's horse Maryland. He looks like the best, but Luc's got two really nice horses in there too," said Macintosh when asked which were the horses to beat. "Any horse can win this race. Nobody put up \$50,000 or whatever they put up not thinking they had a shot. It will all come down to the trip they get and what happens out there."

The Mohawk Million is race 10 on a power-packed 13-race program at Woodbine Mohawk Park on Saturday. It shares the purse spotlight with the C\$1,000,000 Metro Pace for 2-year-olds, while the undercard includes the C\$713,000 Canadian Trotting Classic, C\$532,000 She's A Great Lady, and C\$347,000 Elegantimage.

Post time for the card, which offers a pair of \$100,000 guaranteed Pick 5 pools in races 1 and 6, is 6:30 PM (EDT).

Allywag Hanover retires

Allywag Hanover, one of North America's greatest racehorses, has been retired from racing.

A multiple World Record holder, Allywag Hanover started 79 times during his career, winning 28 races and placing in 49 of them.

Allywag Hanover was voted the Dan Patch Award winner as the best older pacer in 2021. During that year he became the fastest 4-year-old gelding in the history of The Red Mile when he stopped the timer in 1:46 4/5 during the Allerage Farms Open Pace. His career continued with another record on a 5/8ths track when he won the Potomac Pace at Rosecroft in 2022, again in 1:46 4/5.

Perhaps Allywag Hanover's most well-known feat is when he upset Bulldog Hanover in the Allerage Farms Open Pace at The Red Mile in a World Record (for a gelding) 1:46.

At the time, trainer Brett Pelling had this to say about him: "He's a beast. People don't give him the kudos that he deserves. When you're

around him, trust me, he gives you chills. You have no idea how fast he is traveling, and he's got a very unique way of going, and it's just plain fast. And it's a different kind of speed. It's raw."

The partners want to thank Brett Pelling, driver Todd McCarthy and groom Terry Buchanan for all their hard work.

"We want to thank everyone who has followed, watched, and cheered on Allywag over the last six years," said racing manager Marcus Johansson, representing Allywag Partners. "He has provided some of the greatest moments of racing for both us as owners and the sport as a whole"

The now 7-year-old gelding will have a forever home at Diamond Creek. He will be turned out and rehabbed, and then it will be determined what he wants to do next, whether it's a second career as a riding horse, an equine ambassador, or just enjoying life as a pasture pet.

Allywag Hanover retires with \$2,335,342 in earnings and stakes wins in the William Haughton Memorial, Sam McKee Memorial, Canadian Pacing Derby, Allerage, TVG/Fanduel, Potomac, and Hoosier Park Pacing Derby.

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Freehold Raceway set to close at end of 2024

By Matt Hegarty

Freehold Raceway, a New Jersey harness track with 170 years of history, will close at the end of the year, according to a notice sent by the track's parent company to employees and a later announcement.

The notice, which was obtained by Daily Racing Form, states that the employees will be laid off as of Dec. 28, the last day of racing for Freehold's 2024 meet. The notice was sent by the track's general manager, Howard Bruno, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a statement released by the track after it notified employees of the closing, the track's parent company said that it would "cease all live racing and simulcast operations" at the track on the same date. Freehold is open seven days a week for both harness and Thoroughbred simulcasting.

"This was an extremely difficult decision, especially given the historical importance of Freehold Raceway to the local community and the New Jersey horse racing industry," Bruno said in the statement. "Unfortunately, the operations of the racetrack cannot continue under existing conditions, and we do not see a plausible way forward."

Freehold is one of two harness tracks in New Jersey, along with the Meadowlands. The track is owned by a partnership including Penn National, a national casino and racetrack company, and Greenwood Racing, the owner of Parx Racing outside of Philadelphia.

Chris McErlean, Penn National's vice president of racing, declined to comment beyond the press release.

Freehold receives a portion of an annual \$10 million purse subsidy from the New Jersey government. The remainder, approximately \$8.5 million, is allocated to the Meadowlands. Earlier this week, the New Jersey state legislature authorized the subsidy through 2029.

The Meadowlands is owned by Jeff Gural, a real-estate developer, casino owner, and horse owner. On Thursday morning, Gural said that the Meadowlands would consider running additional dates because of the Freehold announcement.

"I think we could, assuming we get their portion of the subsidy," Gural said via email. "But we lose a lot of money on racing, so [I would] need to analyze it."

Freehold had pared its live racing calendar since being purchased by Greenwood in 1999 for \$46 million. The track is scheduled to hold a total of 85 days of racing this year, the same as it ran in 2023. It has already held 52 days of racing this year.

Freehold also operates two offtrack betting locations under the name Favorites, in Toms River and Gloucester. The OTBs will be closed because the licenses for the facilities are tied to Freehold's racing license.

— additional reporting by Derick Gwerner

SBOANJ TO MEET TO DISCUSS FREEHOLD SITUATION

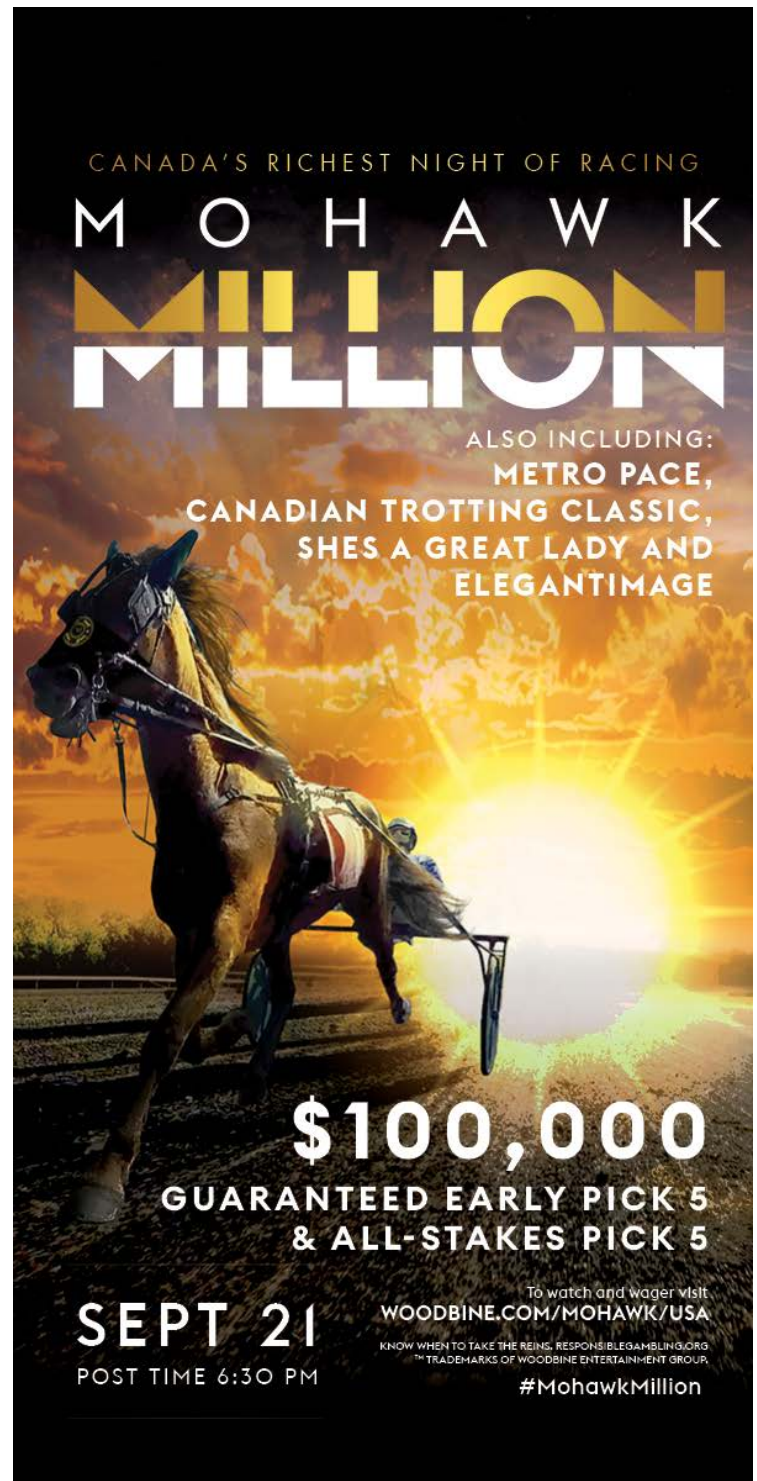
To the Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of New Jersey's dismay, Freehold Raceway has announced that it will cease all live racing and simulcast operations on December 28, 2024.

The SBOANJ has been working extensively with Freehold Raceway's general management for the last few years to rectify the establishment's existing conditions, unfortunately to no avail. We will continue to work with Freehold and the New Jersey Racing Commission as advocates to the horsemen/women on all closure issues.

The New Jersey Sire Stakes board of trustees has assured us that the New Jersey Standardbred Development Fund program will continue to exist in 2025. Sire Stakes board of trustee Nancy Grbelja stated, "We do not want horsemen to feel discouraged or that they have nowhere to go. We will continue working with the SBOANJ to find a place to race the SDF program, whether that be Freehold Raceway or an alternative location."

The New Jersey Racing Commission has requested SBOANJ President Mark Ford and Executive Administrator Al Ochsner to attend a meeting next week to discuss the situation further. The SBOANJ board of directors is dedicated to preserving the opportunity for racing at all levels in the State of New Jersey. The board, as always, will continue to do whatever possible to protect and benefit our membership.

—release SBOANJ



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Hoosier Friday \$20K GTD Pick 4

Analysis by Derick Giwner

One of the biggest nights of the year at Harrah's Hoosier Park takes place on Friday, September 20 when the track offers up 15 races worth nearly \$1.4 million in purses. In the spotlight are a pair of Kentuckiana Stallion stakes for 2-year-olds, and the Hoosier Park Pacing Derby and Caesars Trotting Classic for older horses. On the wagering front, there will be a \$10,000 GTD Pick 5 in the opener which gets underway at 6:00 PM (EDT), a \$20,000 GTD Superfecta in race 13, \$15,000 GTD Hoosier Hi-5 in the 15th race, and a \$20,000 GTD Pick 4 in race 12 which we examine below.

RACE 12: \$165K HOOSIER PARK PACING DERBY

(9) BYTHEMISSAL returned from a three month break in action and was clearly a bit short while pacing a 1:48 3/5 mile at Scioto to be fourth. The outside post isn't ideal, but the long run into the first turn and driver change to the more aggressive Yannick Gingras certainly helps the cause. (2) IT'S MY SHOW is certainly feeling better now than he was back in July and the long stretch here suits his wait and charge late style. (5) Little Rocket Man seems to keep getting better with age and is now riding a three-race winning streak. Dave Miller picked up the drive last time and he was super winning first-over. (8) Abuckabett Hanover has proven time and again that he is a contender in this division. That said, he tends to go off at odds-on prices and simply isn't worth under 2-1.

RACE 13: \$200K CAESARS TROTTING CLASSIC

(6) WINNER'S BET looked like perhaps the best older trotter in the sport earlier this year but suffered through a tough August. He was back with a vengeance in the Hill Memorial on Sept. 7 with a powerful first-over victory and will be very tough to beat with a similar effort. (4) PERICULUM was a killer on the seven-eighths track at Mohawk and raced very well from an impossible spot versus the divisional leader Jiggy Jog last time. Only issue is he's been pace dependent so you have to hope things work out. (5) Ponda Jet is the hometown horse with an apparent tactical edge as a speed horse in a race that on paper seems to lack that quality. (1) It's Academic won this race last year and I don't think his last effort is as bad as it looks.

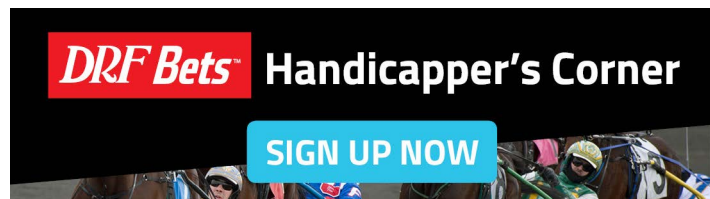
RACE 14: NW4 OR \$55K LIFE

(5) EVILEYE FLEEGLE missed almost a year of action so it wasn't surprising that he needed a couple of starts. Notice he came home in 26 seconds last time and that he was a pretty good 2-year-old. Think we may see what he has in the tank this week. (8) SEASIDEESCAPE gets Lasix back and was able to win in 1:50 3/5 with the medication in place at Scioto three starts back. (9) A NEW ENDEAVOR gets first-time Lasix after a seventh-place finish versus tougher. Post is the only issue. (4) JD'S KING JAMES gets Tim Tetric to stick around after the stakes races and may be live.

RACE 15: NW \$3,251 IN LAST 4

(4) ROCKIN PULSE dropped out of claimers for a softer spot than this one but really had no chance chasing slow fractions. That was also his first race in almost four weeks, so improvement is possible. (2) MADE-LINES BLK JACK gets out of the second tier and I like the fact that he should be close to the pace in a field that might not have too much early speed. (9) MAJOR ATTRIBUTE gets class relief but wasn't exactly a killer when down in class either.

.50 Pick 4 Ticket: 2,9 / 4,6 / 4,5,8,9 / 2,4,9 = \$24



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, SEPTEMBER 19

RACE 4

(5) HERESTHATMANAGAIN drops to face a weak Pop Up field and he should dominate. He will be a single for me.

-Garnet Barnsdale



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

RACE 10

I may need to have my head examined but I am making (4) BYRDS THE WORD my best bet of the day. Yes, she is 1-48 from 2023-24 and has just 6 wins in 95 starts but this may be the easiest field she has seen all year. This field is a combined 2-103 in 2024 and the two wins came from #7 and #8 in here, who both really have no chance from the outside.

-Larry Fox



Your BEST BET for a GOOD TIME!

RACE 10

(5) FULL RIGHTS gets class relief in his second start back from a two-month break and the Schnittker trainee can head to the front tonight.

-Matt Rose



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

RACE 7

(7) SWINGTOWN reportedly tied-up in the elimination and that jives with what I watched in real-time as the colt certainly seemed aggressive. I'm sure trainer Burke will have him ready.

-Derick Giwner



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

Thursday Friday Saturday

Freehold Analysis

Thursday Friday

Yonkers Analysis

Thursday Friday Saturday

DHP PPS

HARNESSEYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

ROUND BARN FUNDRAISER SET FOR SUNDAY, SEPT. 29

The annual Stable of Memories "Round Barn" fundraiser will be held Sunday night, Sept. 29, from 6-9 p.m. at the historic Lexington landmark adjacent to the Red Mile. The event is being held the night before the opening of the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale at Fasig-Tipton.

This year's Stable of Memories event will feature the official debut of the Brittany Farms Collection of trophies, which Brittany owner George Segal has donated to the Stable of Memories. Brittany is selling its last crop of yearlings at this year's Lexington Selected Yearling Sale.

The evening will also include a silent auction of framed harness racing/horse artwork from various collections and a live performance by local artist John Lovern, and dinner and bar service, provided Bayou Bluegrass Catering.

All proceeds from the evening benefit the preservation of the "Round Barn," and its designation as the Stable of Memories Inc., which is a 501c3 non-profit corporation. All funds raised and donated are used to maintain the historic building and its collections and are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tickets for the Sept. 29 fundraiser can be purchased via the following link: <https://stableofmemories.square.site/>

-release (Stable of Memories)

DINING OPTIONS FOR THE 2024 BREEDERS CROWN

Dining reservations are now being taken for Breeders Crown Eliminations weekend, October 18-19, and Breeders Crown Finals weekend, October 25-26. Friday, October 18, has a special post time of 12:30 p.m., while Saturday, October 19, Friday, October 25, and Saturday, October 26, have a post time of 6:20 p.m.

On elimination weekend, Friday's lunch buffet and Saturday's dinner buffet are both \$49.95 per person plus tax and gratuity.

Pink Restaurant's buffet on Finals night, Friday, October 25, features shrimp cocktail, Gouda-stuffed arancini, and grilled Caesar salad. Guests can also dine on chili-rubbed NY strip, baked Mahi Mahi with a lemon dill sauce, and moist carrot cake. Friday's menu is \$74.95 per person, plus tax and gratuity.

Saturday's buffet is \$79.95 plus tax and gratuity and is highlighted by a seafood tower filled with shrimp, clams, oysters, and crab legs. Other menu features include lobster bisque, roasted ribeye, and sweet and sour chicken.

Reservations can be made by calling 201-The-BIGM (201-843-2446). All reservations must be prepaid.

Guests looking for ala carte dining can enjoy our 2nd floor Lounge, which is the place to be to watch and wager all the racing and the day's sports action. Guests can dine on delicious Victory Sports Bar fare, including wings, burgers, lobster mac and cheese, salads, wraps, and more. The purchase price is a food credit that will be applied to the food and beverage bill. Tax and gratuity are not included in this credit and are additional.

Available Seating/Dining Options for purchase include:

Grandstand Bar Seat: \$50 per seat

Grandstand Lounge Table: \$100 per two-person table/\$200 for a four-person table.

Grandstand Lounge Couch: \$200 per two-person section, complete with couch.

Tables are now available for purchase at <https://playmeadowlands.com/event/breeders-crown-championships/>

-release (Meadowlands)

SADBIRDSTILLSING FLIES TO BUCKETTE VICTORY

Sadbirdstillsing picked up a Grand Circuit credit when she took Wednesday afternoon's \$80,000 Buckette for sophomore trotting fillies at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair in 1:54 for driver Todd McCarthy and trainer Tony Alagna.

[READ MORE](#)

MORGAN JR. SENDS OUT TWO OF WEDNESDAY'S OBC WINNERS

Trainer Virgil Morgan Jr. bagged one of two \$66,500 Ohio Breeders Championships (OBC) for 2-year-old filly trotters with Aunt Laura and the \$33,600 OBC for older trotters with Refined on Wednesday's card at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair.

[READ MORE](#)

2YO FILLIES FACE OFF IN STANDARDBRED STAKES

Two days worth of Standardbred Stakes, a Grand Circuit event, got going on Wednesday afternoon at the Delaware County Fair with races for 2-year-old fillies.

[READ MORE](#)

VIC ZELENSKYY CRUSHES FOES IN HIS KY GOLDEN ROD SERIES FINAL

Three-year-old colt trotter Vic Zelenskyy became the fastest offspring of sire Greenshoe with a dazzling 1:50 1/5 performance in one of eight \$50,000 Kentucky Golden Rod Series finals on Tuesday afternoon at The Red Mile.

[READ MORE](#)

95-YEAR-OLD VIRGINIA HARNESS TRAINER WINS RACE AT SHENANDOAH

With the help of 4-year-old pacer Billy Boy B, 95-year-old harness trainer William Fletcher collected his first win in four years during the fall season opening day card on Saturday at Shenandoah Downs.

[READ MORE](#)

OHIO BREEDERS CHAMPIONSHIPS APLENTY ON THURSDAY

Ohio Breeders Championship contests at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair concluded on Thursday afternoon with splits for 2-year-old male pacers, 2-year-old colt and gelding trotters, 3-year-old male pacers and 3-year-old pacing fillies.

[READ MORE](#)

HANOVER SHOE FARMS-BREDS REIGN IN STANDARDBRED

Dreamboat Hanover came up just a fifth of a second shy of the world record for a 2-year-old gelding pacer on a half-mile track in winning the \$47,000 Standardbred on Thursday afternoon at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair in 1:51 2/5. Arrowhead Hanover was victorious in the companion \$50,000 tilt for trotters.

[READ MORE](#)

FOUR SIXES WAS NUMBER ONE IN OLD OAKEN BUCKET

Stakes action on Little Brown Jug Day at the Delaware (Ohio) County Fair kicked off with Four Sixes winning the \$92,150 Old Oaken Bucket for 3-year-old male trotters.

[READ MORE](#)

GARDEN STATE TROTS, HOME GROWN PACE HELD

Three \$40,000 races - two divisions of the Garden State Trot for 3-year-old filly trotters, as well as the Homegrown 3-year-old filly pace - took place on Thursday afternoon at Freehold Raceway.

The Homegrown saw a 31-1 upset as Celcius scored a new lifetime mark of 1:53 4/5. After the wings folded and the horses settled into position, Celcius and Joe Bongiorno sat second behind the 2-5 favorite, Miraculous Deo. Coming out of the third turn on the half-mile track, Bongiorno positioned the mare to move first-over around the leader, who seemed to be losing steam. They cleared to the lead just as the field turned for home and paced on to win it by 4 1/2 lengths. Per Engblom trains the Lazarus filly for William Shults. A win bet paid \$64.40.

[READ MORE](#)