

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

STALLION EXPLOSION!

The number of stallions entering the market this year should increase the horse population while making it more difficult to get quality mares



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman X Bergmanlay

There's a seismic shift in the standardbred sport revealed only recently at the Harrisburg mixed auction. A sport that formerly moved slowly to change has now caught a windfall of renewed interest in the breeding business that is likely to change the number of horses bred while shifting the fortunes of both stallion and broodmare owners.

What the recent notification that has sent a host of horses off to stud reveals could be a boon not just for the breeding industry, but for the population of racehorses over the next five to 10 years.

When horses like Karl and Sig Sauer are retired following brilliant careers as 2- and 3-year-olds, it's understandable what owners and breeders are thinking. Retire a horse at the peak of their racing careers and get the benefit of a breeding public that can capitalize on that success in the not-toodistant future. While we all would love to see those horses back as 4-year-olds, the temptation has become too great to risk a downturn in performance and a loss of revenue in the breeding shed.

Joining the sophomores leaving the scene for greener pastures will be T C I, and while his résumé is certainly good enough to retire from racing, his sophomore season wasn't nearly as successful as his freshman, and likely in the past would have necessitated a return to a 4-yearold career on the track. That he was so coveted



(ABOVE) NIKKI SHERMAN / (BELOW) AMANDA STEPHENS

Sig Sauer (above) and Karl (below) are the top two earning 3YO colt trotters and both are retiring to stallion duty.



to begin service in Ohio in 2025 made it virtually impossible for owners to accept the risks of racing. Older horses will also be missing from the Open ranks in 2024, with Winner's Bet, It's Academic, Southwind Tyrion and Ari Ferrari J heading to stud next year.

We've mentioned seven horses already and haven't even touched on the pacing ranks, which are already losing Captain Albano and Legendary Hanover from the sophomores and Hellabalou from the older group.

Even the most expensive harness horse to ever sell at public auction – Amazing Catch – has caught the stallion bug with plans to race him in 2025 as part of a syndicate agreement that will see him as a stallion in 2026.

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The harness sport has never seen the multitude of retirees in one year that we have witnessed, and it certainly suggests incredible optimism in the breeding business. That's incredibly positive news because two major breeders – Brittany Farms and All American Harnessbreds – are in the process of exiting the business.

As is generally the case when news of a dramatic shift in a business takes place, one needs to examine the rationale that leads to the movement. It is clear there is ample room in the trotting business for new stallions as only a small number have dominated, and some have aged and lost their influence. It does seem exodus is more a part of the economics in the breeding business led predominantly by state laws that have given breeders mobility and the ability to prosper just by having their mares in residence in a particular state. The state of course is Kentucky, and it has become the perfect place to board a broodmare while breeding in any other state in the country. Dual eligibility in my opinion is the major driving force behind the dramatic changes we are currently witnessing. That breeders will have future foals to sell with eligibility on multiple fronts suggest the value of these yearlings will grow. What we saw in Kentucky this year was just scratching the surface of what we're going to see in the coming five years. By laying the foundation with three-tiered Sire Stakes events (really four if you include the Wildcat), Kentucky has served as a road map to those buying yearlings and looking for a bigger bang for their buck.

While Kentucky will certainly have a larger racing presence in the future, the Sire Stakes dynamic also works in reverse to the benefit of those dual eligibles that stay at home and don't travel to Kentucky. Those that remain local will end up racing against lesser company and thus have a greater chance to earn without needing to travel as far. Ohio has already seen its breeding business grow exponentially since the advent of slot machines and appears more likely than ever to have local horsemen reinvest and add breeding stock to their racing stables in years to comen resentially, dual eligibility is also a boon for small breeders as well. It's likely the reason that "Team Burke" has done as well as they have over the last five years and why others like Andrew Harris and Greg Luther are more focused on buying fillies at the auction that can be turned into money-making machines in their second careers.

While the sales figures are quite encouraging, the breeding business remains a difficult one to predict. On that subject, the stallion business is even harder to navigate. Though expectations are always high, speculating what great racehorses will become great stallions is rife with uncertainty. Down that long road to breeding the right mare to the right stallion, getting a good-looking foal and then seeing it to the racetrack, there are dozens of potholes that need to be avoided. Some of sports greatest horses have turned into mediocre stallions. Then there are lesser horses that hit with one or two stars from their first crops and catch a wave of support.

The best news that could come from this year's tidal wave of retirees is that more mares get bred throughout North America and the horse supply increases enough to give racing secretaries an easier time in the future. On the other end of the spectrum there's going to be a slight drop-off in the talent we see at the Open level. Geldings like Highland Kismet may prove to be the stars that make a difference on the racetrack. I wouldn't be all that surprised if one or two of the retiring trotters from this year's large assemblage could be forced back to the racetrack if the potential books fall short of expectations.

As a fan of the breed, it's been obvious over time that there are winners and losers in the breeding business, with very often the elapsing of time the difference in what is realized on the racetrack. Horses like Bettor's Delight were not overnight hits, nor was Sweet Lou. Not all horses get the number of mares necessary to achieve a high level of success on the track immediately or ever.

Those backing the stallions that retire this year will have to recognize that securing top mares for those stallions may be a tougher battle than any of those stallions ever faced on the racetrack.

Here's wishing them all good luck.



NEW STALLIONS FOR 2025

TDATTEDO

	IKOIIEK2		
<u>STALLION</u>	FARM	<u>FEE</u>	
Karl	Diamond Creek (NJ)	\$20,000	
Sig Sauer	Hanover Shoe Farms (PA)	\$8,000	
TCI	Midland Acres (OH)	TBD	
It's Academic	Tara Hills Stud (ONT)	\$6,000 (CAD)	
Winner's Bet	Blue Chip Farms (NY)	TBD	
Southwind Tyrion	Winbak Farm (NY)	TBD	
Ari Ferrari J	TBD	TBD	
1	DACEDO		

FACERS	
FARM	FEE_
Blue Chip Farms (NY)	\$8,500
Southwind Farms (NJ)	\$7,500
Winterwood Farm (OH)	\$4,000
Pedigree Point Stables (IN)	\$4,000
Bluff Country Equine (MN)	\$2,000
	FARM Blue Chip Farms (NY) Southwind Farms (NJ) Winterwood Farm (OH) Pedigree Point Stables (IN)

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Walner	\$50,000
Chapter Seven	\$40,000
Muscle Hill	\$35,000
Captaintreacherous	\$30,000
Tactical Landing	\$25,000
Sweet Lou	\$25,000
Confederate, Gimpanzee	\$20,000

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Louprint delivers milestone Crown wins for Wrenn, Gillon



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett X @JHallettPhoto

A 2-year-old Standardbred experiences many firsts when getting to the races including their first time in the harness, first trip to the track, first win, and more. It's not uncommon to check off these first milestones in that freshman year, however it's not every day that a first for the rookie performer is shared with the connections as well.

Louprint, a 2-year-old son of Sweet Lou and the Rockin Image mare Rockin Racer, followed that blueprint exactly. Trained by Ron Burke, the colt won the \$700,000 Breeders Crown Final on Oct. 25 at The Meadowlands Racetrack and in that pursuit, he not only achieved his largest race victory to date, but he also joined driver Ronnie Wrenn Jr. and caretaker Margaret Gillon in securing their first Breeders Crown trophies.

Louprint was bred by owners Burke Racing Stable LLC, Weaver Bruscemi LLC, and Phillip Collura. He made his first on-track appearance in a qualifying session at The Big M, winning that mile by two lengths in 1:55 3/5. He followed that with a duplicate 1:55 3/5 mile two weeks later over the same Meadowlands surface. July 13 marked his first lifetime start

Throughout Louprint's 10-race career, Ronnie Wrenn Jr. has been the pilot in the bike. Together they have won seven races, finished second twice, and finished third once to set a perfect on-the-board tally. Louprint took his mark of 1:48 4/5 in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes Final at The Red Mile. He has accumulated \$737,939 in his lifetime-to-date bankroll.

On that Friday of the Crown weekend, Wrenn lined Louprint up in post nine in the field of 10.

He rocketed from the outside post on a diagonal beeline to the front, achieving the early lead to the quarter in 27 1/5. Fallout (Tim Tetrick) took over to the half in 55 2/5 and three-quarters in 1:22 3/5 while Louprint accepted the pocket ride to the wire. Down the stretch, Louprint scooted to the center of the track with Fallout and stablemate Sippinon-searoc (Scott Zeron) to his inside. The trio of horses crossed the wire in unison with matching 1:49 1/5 finish times, but the photo finish proved Louprint the winner by a head over Sippinonsearoc.

Wrenn started in harness racing when he was in college. He worked for his uncle's stable, guided by Pete and Melanie Wrenn.

"A lot of people think I've been in it since I was a kid, but that really wasn't the case," Wrenn said. "I started working for them during my early college years. Just like everyone, I got the bug and I wanted to be a driver"

In 2008, Wrenn made his first track appearance as a driver. Sixteen years later he has achieved over 8,300 career wins in the bike and has driven horses to \$67.5 million in lifetime earnings. He lives near Northfield Park and races two nights a week there while also driving full-time at The Meadows. In the summers, he travels to various tracks to drive for Burke.

Wrenn said his highest purse-race entry to date has been the \$1,000,000 Little Brown Jug in 2023 with a fourth-place finish in the elimination with Ervin Hanover, but his triumph with Louprint in the Breeders Crown is the biggest race he has won.

"Just to be in the race with a legit shot of winning, I would say [with] Louprint in both the Kentucky Sires Stakes Finals and the Breeders Crown," said Wrenn about the biggest race opportunities of his career.

"It was a hard feeling to explain until you do something like that. I feel like I really accomplished something," Wrenn added on his first Breeders Crown win. "I'm happy for the owners, they bred that horse and it means a lot to them to breed a horse and have it as a weanling all the way up to it starts racing. I'm sure it hits home a little bit more for Mark [Weaver] and Ronnie [Burke] and everyone else involved.

"For me, it was a lot of things. It meant obviously a lot that my father-inlaw and son were there. It was the first time I was in the Breeders Crown with a legit shot of winning. It was only my third Breeders Crown. That one was definitely the one I had a chance to win, but I knew it was going to be pretty difficult out of the nine-hole, but luckily I was able to get a good



JESSICA HALLETT

Ronnie Wrenn Jr., who has won 8,330 career races in the bike, got his first Breeders Crown win with Louprint at The Meadowlands.

trip and it worked out. [I was] also relieved just to be able to get the job done; thinking I can and doing it are two different things. I think Ronnie and those guys have the trust in me, which is important."

Wrenn describes Louprint as a versatile horse that has been able to respond to anything on the track while driving.

"He's actually really easy to drive, which is great. It makes driving a great horse a lot easier. When they are a little bit one way or unmanageable, they need to be on the front, it isn't always the easiest, especially in those races. It's like a chess game, everyone is trying to get in perfect position," Wrenn explained. "I can just drive him any way. Pretty much most of the year I didn't leave aggressively with him, up until the Breeders Crown Final. I tripped him out, came off the pace, a couple of times I moved to the front. To have the ability to be versatile and race him any way is huge. He was the same way when I qualified him his first start. He responded well. Everything I asked him to do, he did."

Going forward, Wrenn looks ahead to what's in store for Louprint as well as his own driving bucket list.

"I got a lot of races on the bucket list now because of [Louprint]. Obviously, living in Ohio, the Jug is important to me. Races like the Milstein, and the Adios because the Meadows I consider my home track as of now. I've been in that race quite a bit for Ronnie, so to win a race like that would be great; the Meadowlands Pace, North America Cup, another Breeders Crown. Winning one of those is great but in another way it just makes you want to win more and more of them. That feeling never gets old.

"I don't want to jump the gun but there's races I'm looking forward to next year with him. I think he's going to be a horse to do it. Hopefully he comes back well and everything like that; he's healthy. I think he's going to have a shot in all those races," Wrenn added.

All in all, Wrenn emphasized his appreciation to be able to sit behind horses like Louprint and to be able to drive for the Burke Racing Stable.

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"The last five to six years or however long I've been driving for Ronnie, it's an awesome opportunity. It's been great to be able to drive for Burke and Weaver Bruscemi. We have developed a great relationship and they really have given me a lot of drives, not only in Ohio and PA but the Grand Circuit. Knowing that I have their trust to drive in big races not only means a lot to me but gives me a lot of confidence. It means a lot and I'm just looking forward to next season," Wrenn concluded.

Joining Wrenn in celebration for a first Breeders Crown triumph on the shoulders of Louprint is caretaker Margaret Gillon.

Gillon has become a prominent name in harness racing as a caretaker after she not only won the Fair Island Farm Caretaker of the Year award in 2023, but she has taken care of some of

the top horses in the business, including Atlanta [78: 37-21-6; \$3,532,863; 1:49M], Celebrity Bambino [30: 10-4-5; \$866,902; 1:50 4/5M], T C I [25: 17-3-1; \$1,831,072; 1:50 4/5M], and Foiled Again [331: 109-70-46; \$7,634,944; 1:48F] on his farewell tour.

Gillon started in the harness racing business at the age of 19.

"I was a waitress and long story short, there was a gentleman who came in with his two kids and he was one of my customers. He owned his own business but raced and owned horses part time. We just got talking and I told him how I went to OTB sometimes to pick names. I wasn't involved in harness racing: I was just one of the people that would just go to the track sometimes. He said if I was in New Jersey, I could come see his horse race at The Meadowlands. At the end, he gave me his number and I didn't call him or anything at first. A month later, I called him and met him at The Meadowlands. I've been in horse racing since then," Gillon said. "I started going every weekend with him to watch his horse race. I started going to the farm with him on weekends just to clean stalls and brush horses. I started to jog and started to progress and then I've been in it ever since. I'm 42 now."

In January 2012, Gillon started working for Burke. Based out of Gaitway Farm in New Jersey, she currently takes care of seven horses and helps out around the barn with other tasks.

"A lot of the grooms look up to me if they want something," Gillon said. "I do the barn shopping for all the care-

takers, besides doing my own horses and my own work. I try to help 'Murph' out as much as I can with the little things. If a groom needs a new buxton or a new pair of tendon boots, I'll try to call our tack guy and order it for them. I make sure the grooms have clean and nice stuff. You want to have pride when you step in the paddock."

While majority of her horses race in stakes and Grand Circuit contests, Gillon also takes care of This Is The Plan [169: 30-37-20; \$3,189,411; 1:47 3/5], who is now an overnight horse.

"I don't have any overnight horses but one," Gillon said. "I've been with This Is The Plan through it all. We call him Jaws. He's an overnight horse now, I've had him since he was 3. He has a world record of 1:47 on a half; probably in our lifetime we won't ever see that be broke. The second I saw him in Lexington I knew this was my heart horse, I loved him. I ride him around the ring or the farm. The first time I put the saddle on him, it's like he's been riding his whole life.

"I've had plenty of horses that I liked and loved, but he is the horse that put me on the map. He made me want to work harder. I never got to the barn at 4:30 a.m. to turn out horses. He did that to me. He made me want to

work harder. Every time he came off that track, it was like he was telling me tomorrow I'm going to work harder. He's the one that put me on the stage at the Dan Patch and I thanked him for that."

Gillon accepted her Caretaker of the Year award at the Dan Patch in 2023.

"The fact [Fair Island Farm] does that award every year for the care-takers is amazing. To let us participate on such a wonderful night," Gillon said. "There's no words. I couldn't believe it. I had people that I worked with or that I knew that nominated me for it, I never asked anyone to write me a letter. I was just really touched. I felt so honored.

"We run to the winner's circle. We're proud, we want the photo with our horse and sometimes the photo is the only thing we get," Gillon added on the importance of caretakers. "I think they should mention the names of the caretakers with a little more ink [in the program] or a little

announcement. [Caretakers] are very important."

As far as Louprint goes, Gillon sums him up as a sweet horse to work around, while still having his male tendencies.

"He's a sweetheart, but don't get me wrong, he is a boy and has his moments," Gillon explained, "When he's on crossties, he can't stand still. He'll look at you and stand still for a moment and then do it all over again. He's just a boy and he's young. He's a high-strung horse. He loves being out in the field, but you can't leave him out for too long because he doesn't know how to relax. He walks up and down the fence. He loves to eat. He loves to drink molasses in his water. He's not much of a treat horse. You have to break it up into fine, fine little pieces for him to eat it. He won't take a big molasses cookie or a carrot."

Outside of the winner's circle after their milestone win, Gillon was met by Wrenn with a hug in celebration of their victory.

"I don't know Ronnie Wrenn personally. I know him from hearing of him and watching him race, but I don't know him. The eliminations were the first time I talked to him and that was it," Gillon said. "That hug meant so much to me. I didn't have Louprint all year long, but for the short time I did have him, I really tried so hard to keep him sound, healthy, and happy. The Breeders Crown was something I was going after.

"When he gave me that hug, I didn't want to let go because I wanted to savor the moment. Not the hug, but the moment of us both winning the Crown

together. That's what made it so special. This driver was taking a second to say thank you and give me a hug, like I'm being recognized by the driver. It was amazing – I finally got a Crown and I got the driver thanking me for it. It was a great moment."

Along with photos and memories, Gillon was able to take home some Breeders Crown memorabilia to remember the win.

"I kept everything from the Breeders Crown – the ribbon, the blanket, everything," Gillon said.

Going forward, Gillon has some bucket list race wins of her own to chase, including the Hambletonian.

"I'd like to win the Hambletonian. I love trotters, but I never really went after that race. Since the last two years, getting beat with two favorites, I just really want to win the Hambo. And the other one is the Meadowlands Pace. I've been in that a few times," Gillon said.

Louprint, at the ripe age of 2 years old, has not only made his mark as a racehorse, but has made an imprint on the lives of Ronnie Wrenn Jr. and Margaret Gillon, giving each of them a Crown memory that will last a lifetime.



Caretaker Margaret Gillon has been involved with some of the best horses in the sport but got her first Breeders Crown win with Louprint.





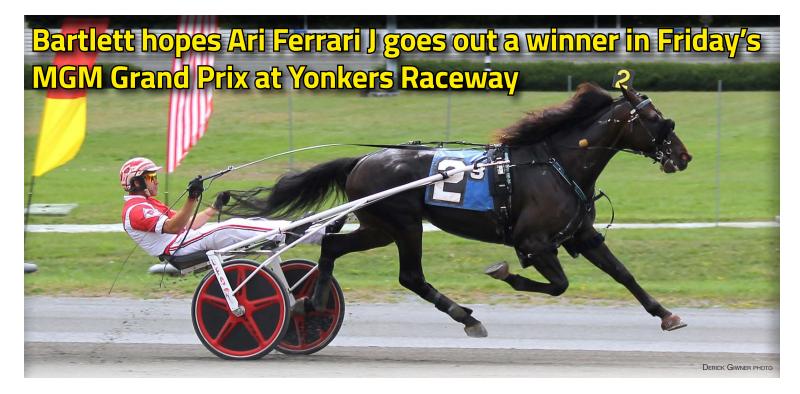
Watch the \$125,000 Potomac Pace LIVE from Rosecroft Raceway

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By Jay Bergman

There's big money riding this Friday night at Yonkers Raceway as the \$250,000 MGM Grand Prix Trotting Series finale hosts eight horses going a mile and a sixteenth. Yonkers leading driver Jason Bartlett likes where's he's starting from in a field of eight, sitting behind one of the likely favorites in Ari Ferrari J. An impressive winner at the added distance earlier this year in the \$250,000 Robert Miecuna Trot at Yonkers, Ari Ferrari J will be making his 45th and last career start on Friday.

"I like the draw," said Bartlett, assessing Friday's contest. "The added distance mixes things up a bit. The inside horses can get a little squeezed."

For Bartlett, post four, where Ari Ferrari J will start in Friday's eighth race, is ideal.

"A lot of horses from the outside that normally would have a tough time with the first turn, now have a chance to leave where they wouldn't at a mile."

For Ari Ferrari J, a 4-year-old son of Walner that owner Ken Jacobs has a deal in place that will send him off to stallion duty in 2025, the MGM Grand Prix represents a final race and last chance to prove his talent on the track. It's something that Bartlett is keenly aware of as his regular pilot this year.

"It's hard to replace a horse like this," Bartlett said, giving credit to the Tony Alagna trainee that has won half of his 14 starts this year and has bounced back nicely following a disappointing eighth-place finish in the Breeders Crown.

"I put him in a good spot and then got covered up by Winner's Bet (eventually Crown champion). I thought at worst we would be second or third," said Bartlett, who revealed that Ari Ferrari J scoped sick after the race, likely explaining why the horse faded in the stretch.

"But he bounced back great in his next start and was even better last week," said Bartlett of the victory in the third leg of the series. "He beat a very classy horse in It's Academic."

Ari Ferrari J's (5-2 morning line) early speed gives Bartlett plenty of options on Friday night and despite his inside post advantage, the driver recognizes there are plenty of other talented horses also looking for the top prize.

"Jordan's (Stratton) horse (Take All Comers) has been racing great," Bartlett said. "Ronnie Burke has two in there that can get out of the gate."

Leading trainer Burke will send out 2-1 morning-line favorite It's Academic (post 6) with David Miller and Chapercraz (post 7, 7-2) with Yannick Gingras. It's Academic won two of the three preliminary legs of the series and enters the final as the richest horse in the field with a shade under \$2.7 million banked. Chapercraz has had a big season of his own in

2024, winning the Hambletonian Maturity as a 32-1 outsider in July.

The Jim Campbell-trained Take All Comers (6-1) has been a fixture at Yonkers this season and comes into the final with consecutive leg wins. In his November 8 triumph he was clocked in 2:01 for the added distance. Take All Comers landed post five.

Delayed Hanover (8-1) finished in a dead-heat with Take All Comers in the penultimate leg of the series. Dexter Dunn is listed to replace Bartlett in the bike behind the 6-year-old from post three on Friday night.

Bestfriend Volo (post 1, 20-1), Ghostly Casper (post 2, 20-1) and Pappardelle (post 8, 20-1) round out the field for the MGM Grand Prix Trotting final.

Bartlett likely has the overwhelming favorite in the \$35,000 Filly and Mare invitational with Grace Hill in the seventh race. The prior Breeders Crown champion and one of two mares to defeat the likely Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh this year, Grace Hill returns to Yonkers for trainer Virgil Morgan looking to regain winning form.

"The night I raced her before the Breeders Crown she was as good as a horse could be," said Bartlett, recalling the 1:51 3/5 mile at Yonkers on October 11 that set Grace Hill up for her biggest triumph of the year in the Breeders Crown elimination eight days later. "I knew Virgil (trainer Morgan Jr.) was having trouble with sickness and her tying up all year."

Grace Hill has indeed regained top form and Bartlett isn't concerned at all with the post eight draw in Friday's handicapped event.

"For a big horse she gets around the half mile very well," said Bartlett of Grace Hill.

Grace Hill will face seven rivals including Blue Chip Matchmaker Champion Lit De Rose (post 5) and the resurgent Coachellabound N (post 7), a winner in three of her last four races at this level for trainer Ricky Bucci.

Bartlett appears well on his way for a career high in total earnings with his mounts in 2024 and will likely have one of the favorites in the MGM Grand Prix Pacing final should Coaches Corner continue the form he's been showing the last couple of weeks.

Coaches Corner finished a solid second in a brisk 1:50 4/5 mile in Monday's (November 11) second leg behind Desperate Man.

"Per (Engblom) has done a great job keeping him fresh," said Bartlett of Coaches Corner, who finished second in the Borgata Final at Yonkers, won the Joe Gerrity at Saratoga in July, and is still strong in November. "I would have preferred to be sitting second with him but the race didn't go that way and he fought to the end to be second," said Bartlett.

Friday's 10-race card at Yonkers kicks off at 7:00 PM (ET) with the MGM Grand Prix Trotting Series set for approximately 9:40 PM in race eight.

Stellar field gets together for Rosecroft's \$125K Potomac Pace

By Derick Giwner

The best older pacers in harness racing will convene in Maryland at Rosecroft Raceway on Sunday (Nov. 17) for the \$125,000 Potomac Pace Invitational. The track's marquee event is slated as race 11 on an 14-race card that kicks off with a special 3:00 PM (ET) post time.

Trainer Andrew Harris sends out a pair in the field led by the leading money-winner from the division in 2024 Abuckabett Hanover. The 6-year-old son of Betting Line has won the Dayton Derby, William Haughton and Dave Brower stakes along the way but comes into the Potomac Pace off a disappointing seventh-place finish in the Breeders Crown after being used very hard to make the lead from post eight through fractions of 26 and 53 2/5. Prior to that he had finished first or second in his previous five starts, all stakes.

"He was tired for a few days after the race as expected but we gave him a couple of weeks and he bounced back," said Harris, who sends Abuckabett Hanover out from post three with Dexter Dunn driving. "He trained great yesterday [Nov. 13]. We did the usual thing, tucked him in a hole, let him get brave and then pass a couple of horses; just reinvigorated him a little bit and he seems really sharp."

While Abuckabett Hanover leads the pack at \$621,147 earned this year, both Coaches Corner, who has been racing at Yonkers Raceway in the MGM Grand Prix, and Little Rocket Man (post seven in the Potomac) are less than \$70,000 behind with a chance to catch up during the remainder of stakes events in November. For Harris, who co-owns Abuckabett Hanover with William Pollock and Bruce Areman, a Dan Patch Award for Older Pacer of the Year at the end of 2024 would be a great honor.

"I don't know what it will take to seal up the award; he only has two races left," said Harris, referring to the Potomac and Fanduel final at The Meadowlands on November 30. "It think it would mean the world to Bill to have this horse, who we sat down and talked him into buying. He absolutely loves this horse and it would be huge for him, and probably be invigorating for the sport for him to get an award like that because it will make him want to invest more into it."

Harris also sends out a likely longshot in El Rey from post five with Todd McCarthy slated to drive. While his odds may be high, the four-year-old should be taken more seriously after finishing third in the

Breeders Crown at 150-1 and following that up with a win and a third in the Grand Prix at Yonkers.

"Certain horses, as 4-year-olds battling aged horses, it takes a bit of an adjustment period," said Harris. "El Rey is one of those horses that I think is going to be a major player next year. He just took that adjustment period. He was racing horses that could go more than he could go and it took some time to get his footing versus them. He had a little bit of the 4-year-old blues as well. Now, at the end of the year, he's getting bigger and stronger as well. It just seems to me that he's starting to fit into that division now."

Harris added that El Rey has blazing speed off the gate which could come into play, especially on a five-eighths surface like Rosecroft.

"This horse on a five-eighths definitely has a shot," said Harris. "He has unreal gate speed. It has been unrealized because he's been in races versus aged horses and he's drawn bad posts so we've had to duck him [race conservatively]. He's drawn eight and nine more than any horse I've had. He showed off his speed a little at Yonkers recently. He can blast off the wings and he still has staying power somehow."

While the Potomac is stacked with eight legitimate contenders, beaten 2-5 Breeders Crown favorite Bythemissal is certainly at the top of the list. The Ron Burke trainee was sidelined for a spell during the summer but was riding a two-race winning streak into the Crown Final before finishing a non-threatening fifth after making a first-over bid into Abuckabett Hanover. He'll look to rebound from post six with regular driver Yannick Gingras at the helm.

Ruthless Hanover was a major part of the early pace in the Breeders Crown Open Pace and did well to finish fourth, beaten less than two lengths. Although he'll be hampered by post eight, the speedy Thomas Cancelliere-trained 7-year-old is a five-eighths track savant who has won four of five starts over that sized track in 2024 and owns the fastest mile ever – 1:46 3/5 (Harrah's Philadelphia on May 28, 2023) – on a three-turn mile.

"It is not as hard [at Rosecroft] for a leaver like that. They have the slanted starting gate there like Chester [Philadelphia]," said Harris about Ruthless Hanover, who will be driven by George Napolitano Jr.

Rounding out the field for the Potomac are Charlie May (post one, Tim Tetrick), It's My Show (two, Scott Zeron) and Voukefalas (four, Jordan Stratton).

Barry Lefkowitz named as USHWA's Member of the Year

Barry Lefkowitz, past president of the U.S. Harness Writers Association (USHWA) and its present Chair of the Board, with a strong history of service to the Association, especially in the financial realm, and still working hard on future improvements, has been selected as the USHWA's Member of the Year (also known as "USHWAn of the Year") through a poll of former awardwinners.

Lefkowitz was first exposed to the sport at Monticello Raceway at age nine, and it was a "Catskills Connection" that helped establish him in the sport: Andy Furman got him to write for local papers in the Brooklyn area, and Communicators Hall Of Famer Allen Finkelson facilitated his first racetrack hiring in the sport, at Jackson Raceway in outstate Michigan. Barry has also worked for Scioto Downs, Windsor Raceway, Batavia Downs (as general manager), and perhaps most notably at Roosevelt Raceway, where he oversaw the massive effort to stage the prestigious Roosevelt International Trot, "down to dealing with Customs and having the track cleared when the quarantined foreign horses worked out."

After graduating Kingsborough Community College and attending Brooklyn College before entering racing, Lefkowitz eventually turned to the insurance business as his profession, and is still successful in that endeavor. His strong sense of finances, of streamlining expenses and "reaching out" to produce additional funds, is what he thinks has been his major contribution to USHWA, as the Association's finances have enjoyed an unprecedented boom period.

He helped initiate these actions when Association treasurer; Barry is one of only a few persons to hold five different officer positions in USHWA. He has been a member of USHWA for 30 years, and has served as Director for 17 of those years; besides his Board participation, he has represented the New York City, Ohio, Western New York, and Delaware Valley chapters as their director.

A major project Lefkowitz has taken charge of is nearing completion: the compilation of all the annual divisional racehorse winners and Trotter/Pacer/Horse of the Year, along with their trainers and drivers, back to the first elections in 1947. A labor of over two years, the assembled data will be used to blend the champions of yesteryear with the stars of today.

Barry Lefkowitz will be honored at USHWA's Dan Patch Awards Banquet, presented by Caesars Entertainment, to be held Sunday, February 23, 2025 at the Rosen Centre in Orlando FL. Sponsorship information for the Banquet can be obtained from Shawn Wiles at swiles@rwcatskills.com; advertising in the souvenir Journal can be arranged through Kim Rinker at trotrink@aol.com. More information about the Banquet, including tickets and associated USHWA meetings that weekend will soon be available at www.usharnesswriters.com; this site already has a link for room reservations within its story of Caesars Entertainment presenting the Dan Patch Awards Banquet.

-release (U.S. Harness Writers)

Strong Preferred Trot at Big M

It would be hard to find a stronger field of horses anywhere to rival those that will get in behind the gate Saturday (Nov. 16) night at The Meadowlands in the featured \$40,000 Preferred Handicap for trotters, in which, several of the competitors will be prepping for the Nov. 30 FanDuel Championships Open Trot.

Of the seven horses in the field, five have lifetime bank accounts that are in excess of \$1 million, topped by the leading horse in the older trotting division this season – and current eighth-ranked horse in the weekly Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown Standardbred Poll – Winner's Bet, who will start out at 2-1 on the morning-line from post four in the 10th race.

The Nancy Takter trainee is in the midst of a stakes streak having taken the Hill Memorial, Caesars and Breeders Crown in his last three starts. Dexter Dunn, who guided six Breeders Crown winners three weeks ago at The Big M to give him the inside track on a fifth Dan Patch Driver of the Year Award in the last six years, will be in the sulky. He currently sits atop the North American money-earnings drivers' list with \$15.6 million.

Periculum (5-2) is the leading money-winning horse in the older male trotting divisions this year, having hit the board in 12 of 15 seasonal starts, with his big victory coming in the Maple Leaf Trot. The Marcus Melander student, who will leave from post seven, will be driven by defending Dan Patch Driver of the Year Scott Zeron.

Steele Memorial winner M-M's Dream, off a third-place finish in the Breeders Crown Mare Trot, will start out at 5-1 from post one for driver Dave Miller and trainer Ron Burke. Oh Well (6-1, post five, Todd McCarthy, Melander), the 2022 Mohawk Million champion, and Hillexotic (8-1, post six, Yannick Gingras, Todd Luther), the 2023 Dayton Derby winner, round out the field's quintet of seven-figure standouts.

2-YEAR-OLDS ON PARADE: In addition to the dash with the five millionaires, there will also be three divisions of the New Jersey Garden State for trotters and two divisions of the Home Grown for pacers on Saturday's card. Purses for the five dashes for 2-year-olds total \$258,000. Two of the races will be non-wagering events and take place before the betting card. Post time is 5 p.m.

-edited release (Meadowlands)



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RACE OF THE WIEEK

8 YONKERS FRI	1 1/16 Mile Trot MGM GRAND PRIX	(TROTTING SERIES FINAL. I	Purse \$250,000	
		0) \$2 EXACTA \$2 TRIPLI	•	
4 1:51 (1) Q \$12.088	og 4, by Walner, Bank Of Newport by Tagl Takter,EWindsor,NJ;N C Takter,Allentown,NJ;3 Brother	rs Stbs,NY,NY;Deja Blu,Versailles,KY	Last 5 Sts-\$19,875 *1:51 M1Q 1:52.1 Lx1	24 YR 3 0 0 1 \$16,500 24 • 17 8 2 2 \$205,495 23 YR 0 0 0 0 -23 * 12 6 4 0 \$139,250 22 YR 0 0 0 0 -Life 30 14 6 2 \$344,745
20-1 Ma. Kakaley 1144-200-164-181 (.175) 8 Nov24 4YR fst56° 272 :563 1:263 2:022 MGM GP L3	N. Takter 24-6-4-6(.250) 3 75000 4 3 ² 3 ³ 3 ³	Br Kentuckiana Farms LLi 4 ⁴ 5 ⁹ ½ MaKakaley	C,KY;Jorgen Jahre Jr,NO NaTakter 274 292 30 37 2:041 76	-5 4w L14.30 AriFerari ItsAcadmc GhostlyCs 1 ₁₆ 3hole,empty-5
1 Nov24 4YR fst ⁶³ ° 28 :571 1:254 1:534 MGM GP L2 26 Oct24 9M1 fst ⁵⁴ ° 264 :544 1:23 1:51 D-Br Crown	2 75000 4 214 34 434	4 ⁴ 5 ⁹ MaKakaley 4 ³ 4 5 ⁵ MaKakaley 11 ¹⁹ 11ds YaGingras	NaTakter 281 294 282 283 1:55 87 NaTakter 272 281 29 34 1:583 57	+0 7w L27.50 ItsAcadmcAriFerariGnsHnv Led,yld,shfld,no bid-7 +4 3w L57.80 WinersBet Periculum Hilexotic Tuck,shfld,stoppd-11
11 Oct24 8YR fst61° 274 :573 1:262 1:561 MGM GP L1	1 75000 3 2 ¹¹ 2 ² 2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹ 3nk MaKakaley	NaTakter 28 30 28 ³ 29 ³ 1:56 ¹ 81	+4 8w 3.90 Chapercrz AriFerari BstfrndVI Pkt,room rail,stdy-8
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9 Sep24 6Lx1 fst ^{71°} 283 :554 1:242 1:523 KYSS4YOH 26 Aug24 1Lx1 fst ^{90°} 273 :552 1:234 1:512 KYSS4YOH		3 ³ ½ 2hd MaLuna 1 ² 11 ½ YaGingras	NaTakter 301 271 28 271 1:523 92 NaTakter 281 273 28 273 1:512 98	 *.33 Overpymnt BstfrndVl DrinkUpDr *.33 BstfrndVl CntryDagr PceOfHonr -7
GHOSTLY CASPER(L)	o h 4, by Resolve, Cool Creek Breeze by A lenoit O Baillargeon, ON; Teresa J Davidson, ON; Santo & N	Angus Hall	Last 5 Sts-\$26,620 1:51.4 Wbs 7/8 1:53 Wbs 7/8	24 YR 6 0 1 2 \$33,420 24 Tot 24 5 3 5 \$126,680 23 YR 0 0 0 0 -23 Tot 17 4 3 2 \$303,027
20-1 P. Lachance 449-60-71-88 (.134)	P. Lachance 376-52-62-70(.138)	Br Diane Ingham-Harry Ri	utherford,Mount Pleasant	22 YR 0 0 0 0 - Life 53 9 12 10 \$595,489
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19 Sep24 10YR fst75° 281 :58 1:264 1:553 NW22681L5	24000 2 2 ¹ 1 2 ¹ 1 3 ²	324 21 PaLachano		+6 6W L*45 Tachyon GhostlyCs IGetIt Pkt,2nd ov,stdy-7 +8 6W L99.80 Periculum OhWell LoganPark Empty-10
3 ‡DELAYED HANOVER(L)	h 6, by Southwind Frank, Don't Wait Up b		Last 5 Sts-\$37 125 1:52 PRc 5/8	24 YR 4 1 1 1 \$44,625 24 Tot 22 5 4 5 \$120,106 23 * 1 1 0 0 \$10,500 23 Tot 25 6 2 5 \$125,918
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11 Oct24 5YR‡ fst61° 274 :57 1:251 1:531 MGM GP L1 4 Oct24 9PRc‡ fst71° 264 :554 1:242 1:532 Opn Hcp	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	6 ⁹ 4 6 ⁹ TyButer	KMcDermtt 293 292 273 282 1:55 87 KMcDermtt 271 283 283 294 1:541 91	+4 8w L59.75 ItsAcadmc TkeAlCmrs GhostlyCs Sat bck,no fctr-7 L ★50 BigBoxHnv SeaCan GoldnKrns -8
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15 Sep24 6Stg‡ fst ⁷⁸ ° 28 :571 1:253 1:551 WO/OpenH- 5 Sep24 8PRc‡ fst ⁷⁷ ° 27 :561 1:241 1:53 Opn Hcp	25000 8 6 ⁹ 6° ⁵ 5° ² 4	4 ³ ½ 3½ MaWhtcrft	KMcDermtt 284 282 273 281 1:53 96	L*.45 DelaydHnv InmnteHnv MalibuKid -8 L3.30 MrqsLfyte SiddFinch DelaydHnv -8
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3 1.50 3 (1) \$23 232	enneth E Jacobs,Baldwinsville,NY F. Alagna 36-13-8-2(.361)	Br M Biasuzzi Stable Inc.F	1:50.3 Lx1	23 YR 2 0 0 2 \$40,800 23 Tot 18 5 7 2 \$574,481 22 YR 0 0 0 0
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26 Oct24 9M1 fst54° 264 :544 1:23 1:51 D-Br Crown	F 600000 1 3 ² 2no 3 ¹³ / ₄ 1 75000 8 6°5 ¹ / ₄ 5°4 ¹ / ₄ 5°3	33 861 JaBartitt	ToAlagna 271 273 283 284 1:521 89	+4 3w 17.10 WinersBetPrcImHlxtc Brsh,ld,yld pst 1/2,trd-11
<u>26 Sep24</u> <u>8YR</u> fst ^{72°} 271 :56 1:243 1:534 lnv	1 75000 8 6°54 5°44 5°3 39000 6 3 ⁴ 4 3 ³ 2°1	2hd 11 JaBartltt	ToAlagna 284 293 283 291 1:561 84 ToAlagna 28 283 281 29 1:534 97	+8 9w *.75 AriFerariTkeAlCmrsMsspiStrm 3hole,1st up,safely-7
7 Sep24 3YR fst ⁷³ ° 29 :574 1:26 2:004 D-RM TROT 22 Aug24 10YR fst ⁷⁶ ° 281 :59 1:281 1:553 nw20000L5	250000 2 1°no 1 ¹ ½ 1 ¹ ½ 24000 1 2 ¹ ¼ 2 ¹ ½ 2°1	1 ¹ ½ 12 JaBartltt 1 ¹ 4 11 ½ JaBartltt	ToAlagna 29 284 281 344 2:004 95 ToAlagna 282 304 291 271 1:553 88	+4 6w 7.00 ArFrrCclHnvTkAlCmrs 1,16 Brsh,led pst 1/4,handy-10 +5 5w 1.35 AriFerariCecilHnvTchyn Pkt,2w bef 3/4,handy-7
14 Aug24 6PcD fst ⁷⁴ ° 29 :583 1:272 1:552 Qua	$\frac{5}{9}$ $\frac{3^3}{1^{1/2}}$ $\frac{1^{1/2}}{1^{1/2}}$ or g 6, by Creatine, Nantab by Cantab Hal	1 ¹³ 11 MaKakaley		nb AriFerari Fleurie LittExpns -5 24 YR 11 3 5 2 \$175,555 24 Tot 13 3 5 2 \$178,055
5 1:50.4 (5/8) \$13,697	lunthetable Stables,Montvale,Nj Ii. Campbell 16-3-5-5(.188)	" Br Runthetable Stables &	1:50.4 Phl 5/8	23 • 2 1 0 1 \$48,000 23 Tot 14 5 2 1 \$216,640 22 • 4 3 0 0 \$32,000 Life 65 19 13 9 \$953,866
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15 Aug24 7YR fst82° 272 :57 1:251 1:534 lnv	39000 4 2°no x4°4 68¾	6 ⁷ 1 6 ¹⁰ JoStrattn 3 ² 1 3 ¹ 1 JaBartItt	JiCampbll 272 302 291 284 1:554 86 JiCampbll 294 284 274 28 1:542 91	+2 5w
21 July24 9PRc fst85° 254 :541 1:222 1:512 SPIRIT	250000 4 3°2 32 43 ₁	4 ² 1 6 ³ ToMcCrthy	JiCampbll 261 282 282 29 1:52 101	9.80 ItsAcadmc Chapercrz LoganPark -9
5 1:50.1 (1) * \$29.732 B	o h 7, by Uncle Peter, Annapolis by Muscle gradley J Grant,Milton,ON, CA		Last 5 Sts-\$101,400 1:51.2 PRc 5/8 *1:50.2 M1	24 • 4 2 1 0 \$143,750 24 Tot 13 4 1 1 \$386,510 23 YR 1 0 0 0 \$80,000 23 • 18 8 3 5 \$\$951,911 22 YR 1 0 0 1 \$\$120,000 Life 97 34 19 17 \$\$2,697,733
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1 Nov24 4YR fst ⁶³ ° 28 :571 1:254 1:534 MGM GP L2 26 Oct24 9M ¹ fst ⁵⁴ ° 264 :544 1:23 1:51 D-Br Crown	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	1 ¹⁴ 2½ YaGingras 1 ¹³ 12½ YaGingras 6 ⁴¹ 6 ⁴¹ DaMiller 12 11½ JaBartltt	RoBurke 281 29 283 28 1:534 95 RoBurke 264 281 283 281 1:514 93	+0 7w L ★.40 ItsAcadmc ArFrr GnsHnv Brsh,ld 2nd trn,handy-7 +4 3w L20.00 WnrsBtPrcImHlxtc 2w pst 1/4,ld,shfl,even-11
11 Oct24 5YR fst61° 274 :57 1:251 1:531 MGM GP L1 6 Oct24 2Lx1 fst83° 262 :542 1:223 1:492 Allerage	1 75000 7 113 12 12	12 111 JaBartltt 534 534 DaMiller	RoBurke 274 291 281 28 1:531 98 RoBurke 27 28 274 272 1:501 103	+4 8w L*.35 ItsAcadmc TkeAlCmrs GhostlyCs Led,won handily-7
28 Sep24 10Dtn wf66° 271 :554 1:243 1:523 DTN DERB	Y 250000 8 4 ³ 4 ³ 5 ^{°3}	431 4p333 DaMiller	RoBurke 274 283 284 281 1:532 93	L10.60 LoganPark Hilexotic ItsAcadmc Moved up p.3-9
20 Sep24 13HoP fst ⁷¹ ° 27 :551 1:231 1:503 D-Caesars 7 Sep24 5YR fst ⁷³ ° 293 :582 1:272 2:25 D-MgmYlnt	1000000 6 7 ¹⁰ 7 ⁹ 7 ⁸	7i ⁴³ 5 ⁹ DaMiller	RoBurke 273 283 283 263 1:512 99 RoBurke 313 283 284 574 2:264	L20.60 WinersBet OhWell Periculum -10 +4 6w L25.00 JggyJgSPrclmldlSnLnd 1½ Bad cvr,3w,bthrd,no bid-10
3 1:53.4 \$24.481 B	og 4, by Crazy Wow, Chaperess by Chapt Jurke Rcg Stb, Frdrcktwn, PA; Weaver Bruscemi, Cnsbrg, PA	ter Seven A;P Collura,Mntn Tp,PA	Last 5 Sts-\$98,750 1:54.2 M1Q 1:53.4 YR	24 • 4 2 1 1 \$78,750 24Tot 21 3 6 6 \$\$14,105 23 YR 4 1 2 1 \$207,580 23Tot 17 5 4 4 \$474,662 23 YR 0 0 0 0 0
7-2 Y. Gingras 771-157-155-103 (204) 8 Nov24 6YR fst ⁵⁶ ° 264 :564 1:251 2:01 MGM GP L3	R. Burke 508-90-77-68(.177)	Br Purple Haze Stables LL 23 33 YaGingras	C,NY RoBurke 272 30 281 353 2:011 93	22 YR 0 0 0 0 0 - Life 39 8 10 11 \$993,489 5 4w L2.40 DelaydHnvTkAlCmrsChprcrz 1 1 to tup,rebufd, even-7
1 Nov24 6YR fst63° 273 :57 1:25 1:541 MGM GP L2 24 Oct24 6YR fst61° 273 :581 1:263 1:553 NW36121L5	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	2 ¹ 1 2 ¹ YaGingras 1 ¹ 1 ½ JiMarhnJr	RoBurke 27 ⁴ 29 ² 28 29 ¹ 1:54 ² 90 RoBurke 27 ⁴ 30 ³ 28 ² 28 ⁴ 1:55 ³ 88	+0 7w L*1.50 TkeAlCmrsChapercrzDlydHnv Pkt,2w lst tm,even-7
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28 Sep24 10Dtn wf66° 271 :554 1:243 1:523 DTN DERB' 20 Sep24 13HoP fst71° 27 :551 1:231 1:503 D-Caesars	200000 2 311 33 461		RoBurke 271 283 283 27 1:512 99	L20.60 WinersBet OhWell Periculum -10
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BY DERICK GIWNER

At just 22 years old driver Justin Irvine is starting to make a name for himself. He's more than doubled his best season in wins and earnings while sitting second in the driver standings at Northfield Park behind perennial leader Aaron Merriman.

A fourth-generation horseman whose father Don is in the Ohio Hall of Fame and many in his family compete on the track or own, one would certainly say that harness racing is in his roots.

Just a few days removed from guiding Southwind Amazon to his record 138th victory, Irvine took some time to discuss his career, his family and the sport in general with some very thoughtful answers. Enjoy!

DRIVER JUSTIN IRVINE

You are a fourth-generation participant in harness racing. Was there ever a chance you wouldn't be involved in the sport?

I think my mom (Renee) and dad (Don) hoped I wouldn't be but I knew after I jogged my first horse that I was going to do something with horses. It was fun and I liked it.

I watched a video where you mentioned possibly going to college. Did you go?

I got accepted to a couple of different places but I decided not to go. I just didn't think I would like it.

Just to get the timeline right, you were born in Ohio, moved to Indiana and then came back to Ohio?

Yeah. I was born in Ohio and when I was like eight or 10 months old my parents moved to Indiana when they first opened up at Hoosier and also Indiana Downs was there. When my parents got divorced when I was 9 in 2010, I moved back with my mom to Ohio.

Your dad Don Irvine Jr is an Ohio Hall of Famer with over 7,600 career wins. Does having an accomplished dad make your path harder or easier?

I don't think it plays a big role from the outside looking in, but for me it is harder because I wanted to do well because of him, because he's been so accomplished I feel like I owe it to him and everybody to do well. Though I don't think anyone else sees it that way.

According to USTA records your first win came at the Goshen Fair in 2016 when you were 14 but you didn't drive again for more than two years. How come?

I have a picture in my house. I was driving for Mark Ford. That was the second matinee I ever drove. I kind of got into sports. I played football and I wrestled. My dad also moved to Pennsylvania at The Meadows so it was a little difficult for me to stay in touch with the horses as much as I would like to. There weren't a lot of matinees in Ohio and the ones that are around were far from me, they were more southern and western Ohio. They were three and four hours away from me.

This year you've already doubled your career high for wins and earnings. What changed from 2023 to 2024?

Just location and opportunity. I was up in Michigan for a while driving and working for somebody that had a bunch of horses. It was a far drive to race in Ohio so I just stayed in Michigan most of the time. Then I



RAVMOND LANCE PHOTO

Justin Irvine is in a three-way battle for second in the Northfield driver standings with Hunter Myers and Kurt Sugg.

moved back home [Ohio] and there were a lot more opportunities.

I lived in Michigan for about a year and a half. I drove horses and got experience. When I got my license it was the year of COVID [2020] and since everything was shut down, everybody wanted to drive when we came back. So there wasn't much opportunity in Ohio and I went to Michigan. Without doing that I wouldn't have gotten as much experience and wouldn't have been driving as much as I did.

Is it an eye-opener doubling your salary in one year?

Yeah. I always imaged I could make pretty good money driving horses, but driving in Michigan for less money I didn't really know if it was possible. Even at the beginning of the year I didn't think I'd get to where I'm at now. I thought maybe 1.25 million in earnings, adding 25% to the previous year was possible but I've basically doubled all my stats in each category.

You are currently second in the Northfield driver standings behind Aaron Merriman. What does that mean to you?

It is kind of surreal I guess. I've watched Aaron and Ronnie [Wrenn], and guys like Kurt Sugg, Chris Lems, and Billy Davis my whole life. To be able to go out there and race with them is unbelievable. I think the top eight to 10 guys here are all capable of driving good horses and they all drive very well. To be able to be second behind the leading dashwinning driver the last 10 years or so is pretty cool.

Recently you drove at The Meadowlands for the first time and picked up a couple of seconds. What was that like?

It was cool. Two seconds is kinda like a win, at least that's how I look at it [laughing]. In the winter time they kind of get down on drivers and we're not racing Friday and Saturday right now at Northfield so I figured at least on Fridays when they don't have stakes races and the top-name drivers won't be there, I might as well take a shot and at least experience it. I drive like 95 to 98% of my horses on a half and I don't get the big-track experience, not only the name like The Meadowlands but just the bigger track in general. It was a good experience and a lot of fun.

Do you see yourself hanging around at The Meadowlands through the winter months?

If I can get some work I'll be there every night that I'm listed.

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What is your favorite track to race at? Why?

I would say the Delaware Ohio fair. I'm an Ohio kid and I grew up watching the Jugette and the Jug, and all of those races. Just the atmosphere, it is a county fair but it has some of the best racing in Ohio with Grand Circuit races. It is a great track and just a cool atmosphere with the fans and so many events. It's just a great place.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of harness racing?

I guess it must be driving on the road because that is what I've been doing a lot [laughing]. I like to work out and relax. I try not to do too much because I'm usually in the barn or I'm racing.

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

If I was small enough I would much rather be a jockey than a driver.

What is one word that describes harness racing for you?

Fun.

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

Drive for checks and the wins will come.

What was your best moment in harness racing?

Driving in the Courageous Lady this year because it was my first Grand Circuit start. I drove Soft Shot and finished third for Jessica Roegner.

Which is your favorite horse to drive?

Southwind Amazon.

Speaking of Southwind Amazon, you recently drove him to win #138 to set a new all-time record for lifetime wins. What was it like to be in the bike that night?

It was really cool and a lot of people have asked me, but it is not about me, it is about the horse because he's done it the hard way in overnight horses his whole life. It was cool to be the one in the bike but he's an old guy that knows how to do everything himself; I was just a passenger who got to steer him.

Southwind Amazon has really gotten sharp now, no?

He had a little bit of a bad spell during the summer time but as of late he's been really good. I'm not going to say he's his old self but against the horses he's racing he looks like his old self.

In May you had an incident where your horse wasn't responding on the lead and you tossed your whip in frustration into the infield. While it didn't affect the outcome of the race, do you regret it?

Yeah, for sure. It was immature and stupid. I looked over and hit the wheel disk and the tip of my whip broke. It was a culmination of I was 1-5 and I'm getting beat and I just broke my whip. I thought to myself that I was beat anyway and just threw my whip as a temper tantrum; I'll just call it what it was. I definitely regret it and it will never happen again.



Southwind Amazon winning his 138th career race with Justin Irvine in the bike.

DIANE WISE PHOTO

What is your ideal vision for the future of your career?

Just to drive good horses and be able to make a living.

Do you see yourself staying in Ohio the rest of your life or aspiring to drive on the Grand Circuit regularly?

If you ask anybody that question they'd be silly to say that they wouldn't want the opportunity to drive Grand Circuit horses and drive on a big stage. Ronnie Wrenn Jr just won a Breeders Crown this year and Aaron Merriman has driven in the Hambletonian and was fourth. Those guys are mainstays in Ohio; Chris Page, too, he's driven in multiple Breeders Crowns and won the Little Brown Jug. I think you want to do that and I've dreamed of being a big-time driver and being great, and if that is where my career ends up taking me, absolutely I'd travel and leave Ohio, but wherever I can make money is good with me. I enjoy driving horses and doing well. I'm just going to do the best I can and if the opportunity comes along I'll make the most of it.

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

The perception of people on the outside. They look at it like a cruel sport and we are forcing the horses to do what they do. I went down in an accident a couple of months ago and I couldn't hold her. These horses let you do want they want you to do. We aren't forcing them to do anything they don't want no matter what anyone says. Some of them are 1,200 or 1,300 pounds and if they want to roll off the track, want to wheel, kick or stop, there is nothing we can do. Sure, we can do different things to try to make them stop but ultimately they are bred to do this, just like a dressage horse is bred to do that or a show jumper is bred to do that. I don't think people on the outside understand that these horses don't know what to do with their lives if they weren't racing. Like Southwind Amazon, he's going to go nuts when he's done racing because he doesn't know anything other than racing. I just wish people on the outside understood that while, yes there have been some bad looks on the sport and I wish sometimes there never were, obviously, but if you worked around horses and understood what we do to take care of these horses and race them, and all the effort that goes into them, people would understand how much we care about the animal; not just the sport. We care about the animal a lot.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

I think it depends on the jurisdiction but there are a lot of places that are

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ON THE BACKSTRETCH

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definitely trending upwards. Unfortunately Michigan's last racetrack closed down and I had to move home and in Illinois, Hawthorne is very limited on days. But look at places like Ohio, Kentucky or New York, their stakes programs keep getting better and better every year and people keep breeding and buying more horses. I even bought an Ontariobred this year because their program is good and you can definitely make money. There are places all over the country that are getting better every year. Obviously with the casinos and sports betting, that helps tremendously since it is where we get the majority of our money from, but I think the states now too are starting to realize the big economic impact that harness racing has on a state with employments and everything. So I think for the foreseeable future, at least the next 10 to 15 years, maybe 20, I think there are quite a few jurisdictions that are safe. I don't want really like to use that word because anything can happen at any time, but I think it is definitely trending upwards; for sure in the Midwest and even East a little bit too.

How many horses do you own?

I currently own parts of four horses.

What does a day in the life of Justin Irvine look like?

I get up between 7:30 and 8:00 am. I go to the barn and help my dad because he has a couple of horses he trains for other people, and I take care of my own as well. Then I usually go home and work out for 45 minutes to an hour, maybe get something to eat or have a coffee, shower and rest until about 4 o'clock. Then I pack up my colors and everything and head to the track. I'm usually there from 5 until midnight.

Time for the stretch drive:

Best Horse you ever saw: Because I've seen him race so many times and I've only seen most of the good ones on TV, Charlie May. I've watched him race in Ohio for the last few years and seen him a bunch of times live at Northfield. He's the best horse I've seen up close.

Lasix - Yes or No: Absolutely, yes.

Favorite TV Show: I watch some Netflix. I really liked Peaky Blinder and Suits is my number one.

Trotters or Pacers: Trotters.





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, NOVEMBER 14

RACE 5

SHE PREFERS GIN signalled she is ready to break her maiden by pacing a 55-flat back 1/2 in her comeback race last week. She will be a single for me here.



-Garnet Barnsdale

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15

RACE 7

(7) THANEEYA gets a major driver change and while she doesn't look great on paper, she's been here before and raced reasonably well, winning a race last year.





RACE 10

(4) KASHA V has been a quality trotter for veteran trainer Tom Corelli dating back to his 2YO season and hopefully he's over some breaking problems. Solid second last out at The Meadowlands and Steve Smith drives again.



-Matt Rose

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

RACE 5

(4) BIONIC had no shot last time when trying to pass most of the field and was similarly up against it from post eight in the start prior at Philly.

DHP PPS



-Giwner

FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES Freehold Analysis **Friday Mohawk Park Analysis** Thursday **Friday** Saturday Meadowlands Analysis **Friday** Saturday Yonkers Analysis **Thursday Friday** TRACKMASTER PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNESS

HARNESS EYE PPS

FREE PPS

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

FAZE FINISHES FIRST IN MATRON FOR 2YO PACING FILLIES

Faze grabbed her first career Grand Circuit Stakes victory by taking Wednesday night's \$133,100 Matron for 2-year-old filly pacers at Bally's Dover in 1:53 1/5.

READ MORE

LUNA LOVEGOOD REBOUNDS SUCCESSFULLY IN MATRON

Luna Lovegood, who made a break as the favorite in the Breeders Crown 2-Year-Old Filly Trot final and had to settle for sixth, was a 1:53 2/5 winner in Monday evening's \$116,100 Matron Stakes at Bally's Dover.

READ MORE

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR FAIR ISLAND FARM CARETAKER OF THE YEAR

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2024 Caretaker of the Year. The award, sponsored by Art Zubrod and Leah Cheverie's Fair Island Farm in conjunction with the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA), recognizes the unsung heroes of the sport: the caretakers who maintain the health and welfare of the horses on a daily basis.

READ MORE

BLOODED HORSE SHOP AND SELL OPPORTUNITY; SUPPLEMENTS OPEN

The Blooded Horse Sale is offering an especially nice group of horses at its Fall Mixed Sale on Wednesday, Nov. 20 in Springfield, OH. In addition to the supplements that are currently being taken, the main catalogue includes 67 yearlings – by sires such as Bettor's Delight, Stay Hungry, Cattlewash, Swan For All, Rockin Image and Summa Cum Laude.

READ MORE

FIELD SET FOR RACEWAY'S DRIVERS' HOLIDAY CHALLENGE

The Raceway at Western Fair District has finalized its field of 8 drivers for the 5th Annual Drivers' Holiday Challenge in support of Toys for Tots which takes place on Tuesday, December 10th.

Two of WEG's top reinsmen, Tyler Borth and Bob McClure, will take part in this year's challenge – both were former leading drivers at The Raceway before making the move full-time to the WEG circuit.

The Raceway's current leading driver Garret Rooney will lead the local contingent which also includes former Holiday Challenge winner Natasha Day and Lorne House who is having his most productive season in the race bike since his career-best year in 2016. Travis Henry, who sits second in Canada in wins this season at 338, will also take part. Sam Fillion and Daryl Thiessen round out the talented lineup.

"We have a really deep group this year, some breakout stars, some new faces and some top local drivers, it's a great mix of talent," said Raceway Manager Amy O'Toole. "This event has quickly become one of the most important on our annual calendar and I think that having it on a Tuesday night this year will ensure a strong handle card along with a great on-track atmosphere, including our dining room. But the most important thing is that it is for a wonderful cause"

Kelly McNiven will once again assist The Raceway team with the fundraising efforts. Those who would like to make a cash donation can do so through e-transfer to mcnivenk@gmail.com. Collection boxes for toy donations will be set up at Wilson's Tack shop at The Raceway, Flamboro Downs paddock, and the Wilson's Tack retail location in London.

All those who make a cash donation prior to the 26th will be entered for a chance to win a dining package for 2 at the Top of the Fair the night of the event. All donations are also entered for a chance to win a gift certificate to Britt's Custom Creations, Mare Flare Equestrian and The Keg (donated by Twinbrook Farms)

First post for the December 10th program is slated for 5:50 p.m. It takes place in conjunction with the monthly Trifecta Tuesday promotion at the Top of the Fair Dining Room, featuring buffet-style dinner, racing & gaming vouchers and seniors' pricing.

To view the menu for Dec. 10 or book a table, visit www.topofthefair.com.

-release (The Raceway at Western Fair)

KREISER EARNS 1,000TH CAREER TRAINING VICTORY AT NORTHFIELD PARK

Milestones continued to be set on Monday (November 11) as Cory Kreiser earned his 1,000th career training victory, conditioning Brooklets Desire to victory at MGM Northfield Park.

Coincidentally, driver Billy Davis Jr., who recently earned his 4,000th career driving win, was in tow.

"I'm thrilled to have reached this milestone, I have to thank everyone who has helped me along the way, it's a team effort, without them I wouldn't be here," said a happy Kreiser.

-release (MGM Northfield)

AMAZING CATCH SYNDICATION ANNOUNCED

After setting a record as the most expensive Standardbred to ever sell at public auction, the new connections of Amazing Catch have announced his racing and breeding syndication.

The 3-year-old Walner colt was sold at Harrisburg for a new record \$1,850,000 to Greg Luther of Blacklick, Ohio. New Image Media photo.

The 3-year-old Walner colt was sold at Harrisburg for a new record \$1,850,000 to Greg Luther of Blacklick, Ohio. The horse will be trained by Ake Svanstedt during his 4-year-old year in 2025 and will then go to stud.

Today, syndicate manager Prolific Equine announced an exciting racing and breeding syndication at www.AmazingCatchInfo.com.

This new style of opportunity allows shareholders to participate in racing as well as lifetime breeding of the stallion. The video announcement reveals details on the share syndication, the state that the stallion will breed in and much more.

With regard to the innovative approach for the harness racing world, Greg Luther stated, "Amazing Catch represents a tremendous opportunity for those that want to be involved with one of the most anticipated new approaches available in the harness racing world. With such a deep pedigree, tremendous results on the track and next year's racing plans, this will be the most exhilarating partnership you'll find where shareholders can turn a financial profit before they begin breeding to him."

For more details on the limited shares available, visit www.Amazing-CatchInfo.com or contact Prolific Equine at 614.582.9860.

-release (Prolific Equine)

OHIO STANDARDBRED DEVELOPMENT FUND MEETING ON MONDAY

The Ohio Standardbred Development Fund will meet on Monday, November 18, 2024, at Scioto Downs in the Three Diamonds Room. The meeting will begin at 2 PM.

The meeting is open to the public and horsemen are encouraged to attend.

-release (OHHA)

HANOVER SHOE FARMS ANNOUNCES 2025 SERVICE FEES FOR STALLIONS

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

 $Green shoe - \$10,000 \ / \ International \ Moni - \$6,000$

Papi Rob Hanover – \$10,000 / Sig Sauer – \$8,000 / Volume Eight – \$6,000 Stay Hungry – \$6,000 / Tall Dark Stranger – \$8,000

The stallion books are now open. Mares can be booked online at www. hanoverpa.com. Alternatively, please call 717.637.8931 or email gpatel@hanoverpa.com or smasser@hanoverpa.com to request a 2025 booking contract.

-release (Hanover Shoe Farms)

CATALOG AVAILABLE FOR NORTH AMERICAN STANDARDBRED MIXED SALE

We are pleased to announce the North American Standardbred Mixed Sale catalog and roster is online now!

We have a very exciting selection of race horses, broodmare prospects and broodmares in foal. Horses will move into the building at Mt Hope Facility on Monday, December 16th. Selling all horses Tuesday, December 17th starting at 10 am. 332 horses are consigned! We look forward to seeing you at the sale.