

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner  
 X @harnessveguy

The groundhogs have emerged from their shelters and either predicted an early spring or six more weeks of winter. Regardless of how cold it will be outside, stakes payments will be due February 15 and now is the time that owners and trainers are mapping out a road to success for their horses.

Some horses will focus on Sire Stakes and softer Grand Circuit races as they look to build a foundation before perhaps taking on the best in their division. Others will dive right into the deep waters with races like the North America Cup and Hambletonian. We'll be able to watch them all in what is a slightly different calendar than recent years.

Below I'll take you through the year while touching on many of the most important dates with multiple big-money stakes while also mentioning changes from previous years. There are obviously too many stakes to single out each one, so my apologies to the tracks that don't make the cut. I'll be using a general parameter of having at least two \$100,000 stakes on the card to be included and will list any guaranteed purses.

It is rare these days that we get any significant shifts in the placement of stakes but Yonkers Raceway threw us a curveball this year by pushing the MGM Borgata and Blue Chip Matchmaker series back a few weeks on the calendar. A series which typically got underway with the first of five preliminary legs in mid-March now begins on the last week of the month and the final will now occur two weeks after the last leg on May 9 this year.

Let's give credit to the track for making this decision since it likely increases participation on multiple fronts. First, it gives older horses an extra couple of weeks to return from winter vacation and perhaps more importantly provides a week for them to recover after the last preliminary leg so they'll be at their best for the final.

"I moved the series because of the Grand Prix," said Racing Secretary Joe Frasure, pointing to a new series for older pacers and trotters he added to the schedule for late 2024. "The people in the Grand Prix races might've wanted an extra week or two break so they can turn their horses out and bring them back. The Grand Prix races are going to be a regular thing for us and I didn't want the trainers to have to rush to bring the horses back so early.

"I tried to be methodical with everything I did and thought about it from different angles. Last

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STANDARD BRED PICK 6

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year a couple of people said their horses wouldn't be ready for the series, so having the Grand Prix gave me an excuse to move the dates. I'm hoping with the change we'll fish a few more entries."

Another important change specific to the Matchmaker, which starts on March 28, is a nice bump in the purses of each leg and the final. Preliminary legs are bumped up from \$40,000 to \$50,000 and the final gets \$200,000 in added money, up from \$125,000 in previous years. The consolation guarantee also gets an increase from \$75,000 to \$100,000 in 2025.

"I wanted to raise the purses because they've treated the fillies and mares like second-class citizens and I don't believe in that. To me the mares are just important to our business as the boys are," said Frasure, who is hoping the changes in purse as well as schedule will increase participation in both events.

It isn't a Grand Circuit stake but Yonkers also did a similar thing with the John Brennan Trotting Series, raising the preliminary leg purses from \$25,000 to \$30,000 and increasing the guaranteed money for the final by \$45,000 to \$100,000. The series runs from April 2 to April 23.

Getting back to the marquee racing dates, Harrah's Philadelphia will host its trio of \$100K stakes on May 25 and the Elitlopp is the following day in Sweden, but we'll shift to the second week in June for a huge weekend of upper-level harness racing action. On Friday the 13th, The Meadowlands has the New Jersey Sire Stakes finals for 3-year-old trotters where we'll certainly get a good look at horses we'll see in the Hambletonian seven weeks later. Sister track Vernon Downs will host the Empire Breeders Classic for the same divisions. Those are simply the appetizer for the Saturday card at Woodbine Mohawk Park which features the C\$1,000,000 North America Cup for the best 3-year-old male pacers along with four other stakes worth approximately another million in Canadian dollars.

Two weekends later sees a pair of Triple Crown events at Yonkers Raceway when they hold the finals for the \$300,000 MGM Yonkers Trot and MGM Grand Messenger on June 27. Eyes will then shift across the Hudson River to The Meadowlands one day later for a quartet of stakes for older horses.

July kicks off with fireworks on the third day of the month with the Zweig trot for 3-year-olds of both sexes at Vernon Downs and the action continues at The Meadowlands two days later with the Graduate finals for 4-year-olds and Meadowlands Pace elimination. Ohio state-breds also get a chance to shine on July 5 when Scioto Downs hosts four six-figure Next Generation races for 2-year-olds.

July 12 is one of the best nights of racing on the calendar as The Meadowlands offers more than a half-dozen stakes headlined by the Meadowlands Pace. Total purse money will exceed \$2 million.

July wraps up with the \$250,000 Spirit of Massachusetts and \$100,000 Clara Barton on the 20th of the month at Plainridge Park and the Adios Pace at The Meadows on the 26th.

The "Greatest Day in Harness Racing" takes place on August 2 this year at The Meadowlands when the 100th Hambletonian for 3-year-old trotters will take place. The \$1,000,000 race will be complimented by nine other stakes on a special noon card.

August is a busy month in general with a major stakes card scheduled every Saturday: Northfield Park has the \$300,000 Carl Milstein Memorial for 3-year-old pacers and a pair of Ohio-sired races worth \$100,000 on August 9; The Downs at Pocono presents Sun Stakes Saturday on the 16th with over \$2 million in purse money; Woodbine Mohawk Park gets its stakes groove on the following two weekends with the Wellwood and Peaceful Way for 2-year-old trotters heading a huge card on the 23rd and the Maple Leaf Trot and Canadian Pacing Derby for older performers anchoring another big night on the 30th.

With Sire Stakes finals in multiple states occurring, September is by far the most congested month of the year in terms of rich stakes events. Just check out September 5th and 6th alone:

**September 5**

Harrah's Philadelphia: Four \$300K PA Sire Stakes Finals for 2YOs

The Meadowlands: Eight NJ Classic Finals for 2&3YOs

Woodbine Mohawk Park: Champlain & Simcoe for 2&3YO filly pacers

**September 6**

Batavia Downs: Eight \$300K NY Sire Stakes Finals for 2&3YOs

The Meadows: Four \$300K PA Sire Stakes Finals for 3YOs

Woodbine Mohawk Park: Champlain & Simcoe for 2&3YO filly trotters

Scioto Downs: Three \$200K+ stakes for 3YO pacers and older pacers and trotters

There are three noteworthy details from the above dates. First, the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes finals get a bump in 2025 from \$252,000 to

**\$\$\$ BIG MONEY \$\$\$**

**Racing dates with total purses exceeding \$1,000,000 (USD)**

DATE	TRACK	MAJOR RACES (OVER \$250K USD)
05/26/2025	Solvalla	Eitlopp
06/14/2025	Mohawk Park	NA Cup, Goodtimes, Roses Are Red, Armbro Flight
07/12/2025	Meadowlands	Meadowlands Pace, Stanley Dancer, Hambletonian Maturity, William Haughton
08/02/2025	Meadowlands	Hambletonian, Oaks, Cashman, McKee, Cane
08/16/2025	Pocono	Max Hempt, Earl Beal
08/23/2025	Mohawk Park	William Wellwood, Peaceful Way
08/30/2025	Mohawk Park	Maple Leaf Trot, Canadian Pacing Derby
09/05/2025	Harrah's Philly	PA Sire Stakes 2YO Finals
	Meadowlands	NJ Classic 2&3YO Trot Finals
09/06/2025	Batavia	NY Sire Stakes 2&3YO Finals
	The Meadows	PA Sire Stakes 3YO Finals
09/13/2025	Yonkers	MGM Yonkers International Trot
09/14/2025	Red Mile	KY Sire Stakes Finals
09/18/2025	Delaware	Little Brown Jug
09/19/2025	Harrah's Hoosier	No races over \$250K
09/20/2025	Mohawk Park	Metro, Mohawk Million, She's A Great Lady
		Canadian Trotting Classic
09/27/2025	Dayton	OH Sire Stakes Finals, Dayton Derbies (4)
10/05/2025	Red Mile	Kentucky Futurity, Filly Futurity, Tattersalls
10/10/2025	Harrah's Hoosier	IN Sire Stakes 2&3YO Finals
10/11/2025	Vernon	Big Apple Finals
10/24/2025	Mohawk Park	Breeders Crown 2YO Finals
10/25/2025	Mohawk Park	Breeders Crown 3YO+ Finals
11/15/2025	Meadowlands	FanDuel Finals (4), Governor's Cup, Three Diamonds, Goldsmith Maid, Valley Victory

\$300,000. Second, the New York Sire Stakes get an even bigger boost from \$225,000 to \$300,000 each. Finally, and certainly most interesting from my viewpoint is the return of the Jug Preview to the Scioto Downs stakes calendar.

The Jug Preview for 3-year-old colt pacers was a mainstay on the Scioto schedule into the 2000s before a decade absence that ended in 2017 when Downbytheseaside took the event. In 2018 only four horses entered the race and it was discontinued. According to Director of Racing Jason Roth, the Jug Preview returns this year because Caesars Senior Vice President of Racing Joe Morris happened to find an old Scioto Downs program from 1997 with the Jug Preview on the cover when he attended a Brittany Farms event at the Stable of Memories on the grounds of The Red Mile last fall.

"Joe stopped by one day after a commission meeting, dropped it in my office and asked me why we don't have the [Jug Preview] anymore. I told him we could add it and we discussed why it went and the lack of interest," said Roth, who made a few changes to the format to make it more attractive to the top horses. "The race always went in two divisions and that lowered the purse for each race, which may not appeal to some of the top horses. We are going to go one division this year of the top 2025 money-earners."

With just a \$500 nomination fee due May 15 for a purse that will likely be over \$200,000, the 2025 Jug Preview is very attractive. There is a \$2,000 entry fee but Scioto pays down to 10th place and the horse who finishes last would get their entry fee back. Plus, Scioto is offering two additional bonuses to entice more entrants. First, Scioto will pay the entry fee for all Ohio-breds that pay the nomination fee. Secondly, and more appealing to the Grand Circuit horses, Scioto will pay the \$7,000 starting fee into the Little Brown Jug for the winner of the Jug Preview. For that to happen the winner would need to be eligible to the Little Brown Jug but Roth is trying to find a workaround for the future.

# Early Closing Events

ALL PURSES ARE ESTIMATES

## EVENTS CLOSE FEBRUARY 15



### NEW JERSEY CLASSIC SERIES

Open to NJSDF 2 & 3 Year-olds.  
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nominate at age 3.

2YO Trot for Colts & Fillies  
3YO Trot for Colts & Fillies  
\$25,000 Eliminations  
\$250,000 Finals  
\$100,000 Consolations

2YO Pace for Colts & Fillies  
3YO Pace for Colts & Fillies  
\$15,000 Eliminations  
\$150,000 Finals  
\$50,000 Consolations

## 2-YEAR-OLDS

### KINDERGARTEN SERIES

\$25,000 Legs  
\$125,000 Finals guaranteed per division

### FRESHMAN FALL FINAL FOUR

No eliminations. Top money winner format in 2025.  
\$400,000 Valley Victory 2YO Colt Trot  
\$400,000 Goldsmith Maid 2YO Filly Trot  
\$400,000 Governor's Cup 2YO Colt Pace  
\$400,000 Three Diamonds 2YO Filly Pace

## 3-YEAR-OLDS

\$700,000 Meadowlands Pace 3YO Open Pace  
\$250,000 Stanley Dancer Memorial 3YO Colt Trot  
\$225,000 Del Miller Memorial 3YO Filly Trot  
\$175,000 Jerry Silverman Memorial 3YO Filly Pace

## 4-YEAR-OLDS

### GRADUATE SERIES

(3) Legs at \$75,000/\$50,000 Divided  
\$250,000 Finals

## OLDER HORSES

### \$1,000,000 FANDUEL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Stakes below are FanDuel Legs. See site for complete list.

\$300,000 John Cashman Memorial Trot	\$175,000 Dave Brower Memorial
\$275,000 WR Haughton Memorial Pace	\$175,000 Crawford Farms Trot
\$275,000 Sam McKee Memorial Pace	\$150,000 Dr John R Steele Memorial Mare Trot
\$175,000 Dorothy Haughton Memorial Mare Pace	\$150,000 Perfect Sting Mare Pace
\$175,000 Lady Liberty Mare Pace	\$150,000 Six Pack Mare Trot
\$175,000 Arthur Cutler Memorial Trot	\$100,000 Miss Versatility Mare Trotting Series

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## EVENTS CLOSE MARCH 15

## NEW YORK SIRE

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“Obviously it takes a few years for a change to happen, but I asked [The Little Brown Jug Society] if we can make the Jug Preview a race where if you aren’t eligible to the Jug it will make you eligible. We’ll see what happens in the next few years on that,” said Roth.

Almost every day on the calendar from September 12 to 20 has a group of major stakes:

September 12: Harrah’s Hoosier (Peter Haughton, Jim Doherty, etc.)

September 13: Yonkers (\$1,000,000 MGM International Trot, two \$200K Invites for older horses – note the purse decreased by \$50K each)

September 14: The Red Mile (Eight \$400K KY Sire Stakes finals for 2&3YOs)

September 17-18: Delaware County Fair (Little Brown Jug, Jugette, Miss Versatility final, etc.)

September 19: Harrah’s Hoosier (Kentuckiana, Caesars Trotting Classic, HP Pacing Derby, etc.)

September 20: Woodbine Mohawk Park (C\$1,000,000 Metro & Mohawk Million, etc.)

September ends with a gigantic night for Ohio racing as well as the Grand Circuit with Dayton Raceway hosting eight \$300,000 Ohio Sire Stakes finals and four \$250,000 Dayton Derbies for older pacers and trotters of both sexes.

Stakes performers will invade The Red Mile on October 5 for a monster card that includes the Kentucky Futurity and its filly companion race for

3-year-old trotters, as well as the Tattersalls and Glen Garnsey for 3-year-old male and female pacers respectively, and four Allerge races for older foes.

Regional horses are in the spotlight the following weekend as Harrah’s Hoosier will crown eight champions in \$250,000 Finals for Indiana-bred 2- and 3-year-olds and Woodbine Mohawk Park does the same for the 2-year-old Ontario-breds in C\$300,000 Finals on October 10. The Ontario 3-year-olds get their due on the next night at Mohawk Park while Vernon Downs has four \$250,000 Big Apple Finals for 2-year-olds, a new race to the schedule for 2025.

The most important nights in harness racing for 2025 are October 24 and 25 when Woodbine Mohawk Park serves as host site for the Breeders Crown Finals. There will be four championship races on Friday and eight on Saturday with total purses over \$7 million.

October stakes racing ends on Halloween with a number of six-figure stakes at Harrah’s Hoosier and November brings the \$125,000 Kindergarten finals on November 1 at The Meadowlands, Matron races at Dover Downs on the 6th and 13th, and then the last major stakes date of the year on November 15 at The Meadowlands. The New Jersey track has four FanDuel Finals for older horses and the Fall Final Four races for 2-year-olds.

Closing out the calendar year is the Progress Pace for 3-year-olds on November 26 at Dover and a pair of \$250,000 MGM Grand Prix Finals on December 19, closing night at Yonkers Raceway.

That’s a wrap on what you have to look forward to in 2025. Now if only it was May already so we could get started.

## Early returns for handle in 2025 are far from promising



### AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali [X AtTheTrack7](#)

Winter weather has not been a friend to horse racing so far in 2025. While the Northeast has had to combat some bouts with frigid temperatures, other parts of the country, including the south have faced winter weather not seen for generations. Canada, while accustomed to the type of weather that only the abominable snowman could love, has also been dealt a difficult hand so far in 2025.

In Thoroughbred racing, 34 racing programs were cancelled due to the impact of winter weather. Some tracks faced snow storms never seen before, like the Fair Grounds in New Orleans, while others, like Turfway Park, were hit with snow and temperatures that made it difficult to even walk outside.

Standardbred racing was not immune to this blast from “Mister Frost” either. No less than at least a portion of 24 racing programs in both the United States and Canada combined were cancelled due to winter weather. The vast majority of those 24 cancellations were of the full-card variety.

What has that meant? Less wagering.

While Thoroughbred racing weathered the winter storm with year-over-year handle that was virtually flat for the month of January, Standardbred racing was not as fortunate. It is important to dive deeper to avoid getting the wrong impression as to why handle is down.

The 24 cancellations across North America has led to a near \$22 million year-over-year handle decline, roughly 15.2%. Approximately \$11.5 million of that is attributed to the United States and \$10.5 million from Canada.

While Thoroughbred racing still had more racing than January 2024, 79 more races to be exact, Standardbred racing in North America had 144 fewer races when compared to the same month last year.

As I mentioned earlier, it is always important to look deeper. It would be unwise to simply assume this is not an issue because there were 144 fewer races than last year. You can’t take the approach of “less races means less handle, so what’s the problem?”

The 144 races represents 6.4% of the total Standardbred races in North America last January. This is why it is important to dig deeper.

The number of races are down 6.4%, but handle is down 15.2%. That cannot be ignored.

The average handle per race was \$58,601 compared to \$64,629 one year ago. Again, you can blame the weather, but I assure you that January 2024 was no picnic as Thoroughbred racing ran over 400 fewer races in January 2024 than the same month the previous year, mostly due to weather cancellations.

The USTA is reporting that handle per race in the United States is \$59,515 compared to \$64,365 in 2024, very similar to the numbers I shared above when incorporating Canada.

The real concern for me is that the marquee track in North America, The Meadowlands, gained one day of racing and for the month of January was +\$1.46 Million. Granted that means their average handle per race is also down, but again not at the level of the total handle decline for the industry. Handle per race at The Meadowlands is down less than six percent, while the industry is down almost 10 percent.

If anything, The Meadowlands is helping the overall numbers compared to all other racetracks. If you remove The Meadowlands from the equation, North American Standardbred handle for January was \$95.2 million compared to \$118 million last year. That means all other tracks besides the Meadowlands were down 19.3% year-over-year for the month of January.

Again, removing The Meadowlands, average handle per race was \$48,770 compared to \$55,924 in January 2024, a decline of nearly 13%, while the number of races were down 6.4%. There were a couple of cancellations at Woodbine Mohawk Park that have a greater impact on handle than some of the other tracks, but not to the extent these numbers report.

It’s only a one-month sample size and Freehold is closed (though this is reflected in the average handle per race figures). Handle was up last weekend about five percent, though it should be noted that Northfield did not race on the same weekend in 2024. It’s too soon to tell which direction handle is heading in for 2025 and there are too many moving parts to this analysis due to constant cancellations. But I study these numbers routinely and anyone in horse racing that sees an average handle per race decline that is double that of the total handle decline would say there is cause for concern.

Take this as a reminder that other forms of gambling are not going away, they are ever-expanding. Competition for wagering dollars has never been higher and while The Meadowlands fared okay in January, the rest of the industry clearly lagged, and if for no other reason than to see if that trend continues, the industry should pay attention to these figures as the year moves forward.





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# PAYMENTS DUE FEBRUARY 15\*

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## 3-year-old Trotters

Arden Downs  
Bally's Randy  
Battle of Bunker Hill Trot  
Breeders Crown  
Carl Erskine  
Catholic Cowboy Series (NEW)  
Circle City  
Colonial / Oaks  
Crossroads of America  
Currier & Ives  
Delmonica Hanover  
Dexter Cup \* at Meadowlands  
Earl Beal Jr. Memorial  
Hambletonian / Oaks  
Horseman  
Keystone Classics  
Landmark  
Liberty Bell  
Matron Series  
NY NY Mile  
Pegasus Series  
Pennsylvania All-Stars  
Phil Langley Memorial  
W.N. Reynolds Memorial  
John Simpson Sr. Memorial  
Star Destroyer Series  
Thanksgiving Classic Series  
Tompkins-Geers  
MGM Yonkers Trot

## 3-year-old Pacers

The Delvin Miller Adios / Adioo Volo  
Bally's Randy  
Breeders Crown  
Cane Pace  
Catholic Cowboy Series (NEW)  
Circle City  
Horseman  
James Lynch Memorial  
Jenna's Beach Boy  
Matron Series  
Keystone Classics  
Landmark  
Liberty Bell  
Matron Series  
Max Hempt Memorial  
Matron Series  
MGM Grand Messenger Stakes  
Monument Circle  
Park MGM Pace  
Paul Revere Pace  
Pegasus Series  
Pennsylvania All-Stars  
Progress Pace  
W.N. Reynolds Memorial  
John Simpson Sr. Memorial  
Star Destroyer Series  
Thanksgiving Classic Series  
Tompkins-Geers  
USS Indianapolis Memorial

## Open Events

Breeders Crown  
Caesar's Trotting Classic  
Clara Barton Distaff Pace  
Dan Patch  
Dayton Trotting & Pacing Derbies  
Dayton Distaff & Oaks Derbies  
E.T. Gerry Jr. Hambletonian  
Maturity (4-year-old only)  
Hoosier Park Pacing Derby  
Spirit of Massachusetts Trot

## 2-year-old Events

Breeders Crown  
Kentuckiana Stallion Mgt. Pace  
Kentuckiana Stallion Mgt. Trot  
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Jim Doherty Memorial  
Peter Haughton Memorial

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# Dilloian stable stocked with strong older talent for 2025



## JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [✕ BergmanJay](#)

Trainer Doug Dilloian Jr. had his horses ready when Yonkers Raceway opened the doors on its 2025 season. With a month away from the races and holidays to celebrate, there's always a question of how horses will respond from the time off.

"We had them ready," said Dilloian. "Gaitway's a great place to train and the horses were all prepped. Some trainers like to give them a few starts but that's not what we do."

Dilloian's horses came out ready and the results in the two weeks of January that Yonkers was in action were astounding, with the stable winning 7 of its 17 starts in that short window.

"I wasn't surprised at how well they raced," said Dilloian of the accomplishment, with the wins a bonus for the preparation that went into it.

Dilloian low-keyed last year's breakout season for his stable that saw its earnings exceed \$1 million for the first time. "We've always been around 30 percent," said Dilloian. "Last year was a little different because we went out and purchased Combustion."

Combustion was a \$200,000 purchase at the 2023 Harrisburg sale following his 3-year-old season. The son of Captaintreacherous enjoyed modest success during his 4-year-old season while racing in the lucrative Kentucky Sire Stakes program along with other overnight events. With a solid 4-year-old season under his belt there will be much more earning potential this year.

"It was always the plan to keep him out of the Open races last year," said Dilloian, who is currently prepping Combustion for his 5-year-old campaign. "We're getting him ready for the Borgata Series."

While Combustion preps, Dilloian is not short on talent in the stable that numbers around 20 on any given day. The make-up of the stable is interesting in today's racing game.

"We don't have any 3-year-olds and don't have any 2-year-olds in the barn," said Dilloian, who up until recently didn't have claimers among his stable either.

"The Wallach's (Ira and Brian) approached me a few years back and asked me to take claimers," said Dilloian. "I turned them down then because it wasn't something I wanted to do."

Dilloian was asked again last year and decided to expand his stable and take advantage of the lucrative purse structure at Yonkers. "The Wallach's are very aggressive," said Dilloian. "They buy them and put them right back in at the same level."

For Dilloian, who had operated a small stable over the years with horses staying for years under his care, the claiming game was a departure that increased the number of horses he would start and the number of races he would win.

While the claiming game has helped get his season off to a flying start, it was clear that having horses to fill the conditioned classes at Yonkers was paramount to Dilloian's focus. Much of the success over the last few years has come from importing quality horses from Down Under and it's easy to see by the 2025 results that the trainer has come up with another solid group. Finvarra A has won his first two starts of the year including the featured \$35,000 Invitational on January 27 at Yonkers.

"I think he's an Open horse during the winter," Dilloian said of the 7-year-old by American Ideal who came through the same pipeline that has brought him other top horses in the past.

"I've got one of my best friends Mark Lewis down there and he finds the horses and I get first crack at them," said Dilloian of Lewis, who raced in

the States for a while but returned to his homeland. "We take horses that race at Gloucester Park (Australia) because the track is very similar to Yonkers and for the most part if they can race over that surface they can fit here."

Finvarra A came out of the top classes for older horses and has fit nicely at Yonkers thus far, but Dilloian is awaiting the arrival (February 5) of Jumpingjackmac, a horse from similar connections, with higher class potential. "He's made over \$950,000," said Dilloian of the horse from the last crop of Mach Three.

Jumpingjackmac has the half-mile track talent and hopefully the class necessary to compete at the highest level. "If everything goes as planned, we'll point him towards the Borgata series."

Dilloian understands that not all the horses will meet expectations when they arrive and is able to weigh that in his calculus. "Ideally I like to have my horses race well and start them no more than 30 times over the year," said Dilloian. "I want them to stay sharp, so I'll give them a break here or there."



MARK HERRON

**Combustion won a KYSS leg in 2024 and hopes to make more stakes noise this year.**

While Dilloian expects Combustion as a 5-year-old to be ready to battle the best, he's taking a more modest approach with the now-4-year-old Endofstory.

"They sent him to me last year to race in the New Jersey Sire Stakes," Dilloian said of the altered son of Lazurus. "Then I had my ownership group buy the horse with the idea that he'd be a nice fit for the 3-5 year-old Opens at Yonkers."

Endofstory went some big trips late in the season, including a 1:49 4/5 career-best mile at Pocono. He is now being prepped for 2025 with Dilloian staying close to script at Yonkers, with perhaps a few other stakes engagements versus 4-year-old competition.

Dilloian once again went back to Harrisburg last fall and was able to purchase five from the sale. The Sweet Lou-sired Lydeo, a former campaigner in the Blue Chip Matchmaker series, is close to qualifying. "She's training very well," said Dilloian. "I'm not sure she's ready for the Matchmaker but I think she'll do well near the Open level."

Another late-2024 purchase, Rose Run Xtra won his first and only start for Dilloian in December at Yonkers. "He trotted in [1]:55 and change," said Dilloian, who expects the son of Cash Hall to have a solid season over the Yonkers half-mile track.

"We've been very fortunate to have great help and that's made the difference," said Dilloian, recognizing that it is indeed a team effort to be able to expand a stable and continue to have success at a high level.

While January's high win percentage will be hard to maintain, it is clear that Doug Dilloian's stable has gained power and will be a force to reckon with at Yonkers and beyond in 2025.





**NEW**

**\$8,000**

### *Sig Sauer*

Muscle Hill - Sigilwig - Donato Hanover  
2, 1:53.3, 3, 1:49.3 (\$1,151,312)



**\$8,500**

### *Captain Corey*

Googoo Gaagaa - Luv U All - Angus Hall  
3, 1:51.0F (\$1,090,333)



**\$10,000**

### *Greenshoe*

Father Patrick - Designed To Be - Donato Hanover  
3, 1:49.4M (\$1,353,772)



**\$6,000**

### *International Moni*

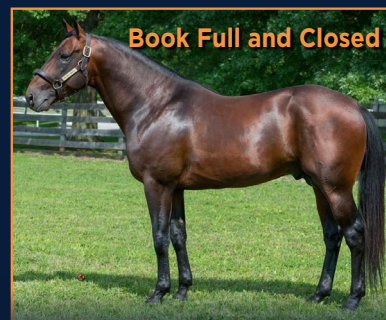
Love You - Moni Maker - Speedy Crown  
2, 1:53.1M; 3, 1:51.4M (\$775,463)



**Book Full and Closed**

### *Captaintreacherous*

Somebeachsomewhere - Worldly Treasure - Artsplace  
p, 3, 1:47.1M (\$3,148,657)



**Book Full and Closed**

### *Papi Rob Hanover*

Somebeachsomewhere - Panera Hanover - Rocknroll Hanover  
p, 3, 1:47.1F (\$927,979)



**\$6,000**

### *Stay Hungry*

Somebeachsomewhere - My Little Dragon - Dragon Again  
p, 3, 1:47.3M (\$1,303,709)



**\$8,000**

### *Tall Dark Stranger*

Bettor's Delight - Precocious Beauty - Art Major  
p, 3, 1:47.1M (\$1,741,645)



**\$6,000**

### *Volume Eight*

Chapter Seven - Lass A Rope - Encore Encore  
2, 1:52.0M (\$434,002)



**\$7,500**

### *Nuncio*




Andover Hall - Nicole Isabelle - Lindy Lane  
3, 1:50.4M (\$3,645,363)  
(Frozen semen only. Foals not Pennsylvania eligible.)

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# Freehold's \$1.6 million in state funds approved for Big M use

By Derick Givner

With virtually no fanfare, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed S3921/A5090 on January 30 allowing the state funds which formerly went to Freehold Raceway to be used for overnight purses at The Meadowlands. The Bills, sponsored by Senator Paul Sarlo and Assemblyman Clinton Calabrese, were passed by the Senate 38-0 and Assembly 70-0-1 on December 19 last year.

With the signing, The Meadowlands will now get another \$1.6 million to be used for overnight racing only. How that money will be divvied up remains to be seen. First let's examine the language in the bill, which provides two interesting statements in italic and bolded sections below:

*In the event that live racing programs cease to be conducted by the permit holder at Freehold Raceway, the New Jersey Horse Racing Commission shall reallocate to Meadowlands overnight purses any and all funds allocated to Freehold overnight purses pursuant to this section **until such time as a permit holder resumes live racing programs at Freehold Raceway.***

It is perhaps hopeful thinking on the part of the legislature but it is nice that they carved out a resumption of funds to Freehold Raceway should it resume racing at some point in the future.

*Any funds reallocated from Freehold overnight purses to Meadowlands overnight purses pursuant to this section shall be used for the sole purpose of conducting not less than 35 standardbred race dates at the Meadowlands Racetrack that otherwise would have been conducted at Freehold Raceway. **The minimum of 35 standardbred race dates as herein provided may be decreased upon agreement and written consent from the Standardbred Breeders' and Owners' Association of New Jersey, notwithstanding the requirements of section 30 of P.L.2001, c.199 (C.5:5-156).1***

While many people assumed that the gaining of \$1.6 million would automatically result in additional racing dates at The Meadowlands, the above statement clearly points out that with SBOANJ approval The Meadowlands doesn't have to add anywhere near the 35 suggested dates. The Meadowlands did increase its total dates this year to 94 from 88 last year and some consideration will be given to adding more programs according to SBOANJ President Mark Ford.

"I'm thinking we take that money and use it wherever we can. Maybe have a couple more races, add a couple more days," said Ford, who wisely feels targeting quieter times during the year when other tracks are closed is the correct strategy for adding any dates. "There is a big lull in November, December and January. Yonkers is down for a month, Saratoga is down for two months, Pocono and Chester [Harrah's Philadelphia] are down for three months, Plainridge is down for four months."

While the original plan was for The Meadowlands to race Sundays in February, Ford said it was premature to publicize that schedule and it simply didn't make sense considering the horse population during that month.

"In theory there are 160 horses a week that raced at Freehold. That's 10 races and eight horses per race. But that's not reality, it was more like 145. If you went through those 145 horses, there were only 25 to 30 that could even race at The Meadowlands. The other ones aren't competitive. If you put it all on a spreadsheet and look at it, it is not enough to fill more cards," said Ford. "You have to have 10-horse fields and be able to fill a card. The first couple of weeks in January there are 500 horses in the [entry] box [at The Meadowlands], but that's not reality because there are horses entered in multiple classes. The following week there are 400, then 300, and you get to today [February 4] when the track is calling for horses [to fill classes]."



**\$1.6 MILLION**



Reading between the lines, everything appears to be on the table for discussion when it comes to the \$1.6 million. If you simply divide the total by the remaining 82 racing dates there would be just over \$19,500 per card available. In reality that number would be even higher considering that the money can only be used for overnight races and The Meadowlands has a number of programs that are almost exclusively for stakes horses.

In addition to adding a few more cards to the calendar during the late fall and early winter, and boosting some purses when the horse population is depleted to lure them to the lone remaining New Jersey Standardbred track, Ford mentioned the possibility of writing some series' to attract horses. He said that Meadowlands President/CEO Jeff Gural has been more than accommodating.

"I see a big opportunity [racing an extra night or two in December or January], and I'll take my hat off to [Jeff] Gural. He basically told us we could do whatever we want with the stipulation that we can fill full fields," said Ford. "We've already missed those dates [in January] this year. Maybe we can race two more days [a week] in January [2026], but then again, you never know because everything is evolving."

"At the end of the day what is important is that we got the money. Everything else we'll work out. We have to pat [lobbyist] AJ Sabath and [SBOANJ Director] Mike Gulotta on the back for getting the legislation done as quickly as we did."



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2, 1:58.1h; 3, 1:54.3h; 1:52.3f (\$993,615)

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## TRIXTON

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



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- Sire of multiple 2024 OSS winning two-year-old **COUSIN HALIFAX** (2,1:56s -'24; \$46,750).
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- Sire of 77, \$100,000+ earners and 79 in 1:55.

Standing in Ontario at Winbak Farm.  
2025 FEE: \$7,500 (U.S.)



## SIX PACK

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



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2025 FEE: \$7,500 (U.S.)



## PERFECT STING

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



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# Mackenzie has half-dozen ready to compete at The Meadowlands

By Jay Bergman

For many trainers it's been a struggle to get horses they put in the entry box at The Meadowlands to race on the Friday-Saturday programs. For trainer Bill Mackenzie – a longtime New Jersey-based horseman – it has been tricky but he's managed to get his stock raced with a few minor exceptions, and this weekend will have six spanning the two cards with excellent chances of success.

"I think things are getting better now," said Mackenzie as far as having horses race consistently at The Meadowlands. "With Yonkers re-opening, and Saratoga, and now Pocono, it's getting easier." The race office has had it tough with 500 horses in the entry box every Tuesday. Mackenzie's biggest edge has been that his horse is predominantly New Jersey-owned.

Mackenzie seemed optimistic about getting the weekend off to a fast start at The Meadowlands with Go Long (post 1) entered in Friday's fourth race, a conditioned event for non-winners of \$3,000.

"It's a good spot for him for sure," said Mackenzie about the son of Long Tom that finished just a nose back in this class on January 24. "He's not that fast at the start but at least from the pole he'll get away closer and that should help. He's sharp right now."

In Friday's fifth race, National Sport drew post two for Mackenzie in a Trackmaster rated 71.5 event and although that seemed positive, Mackenzie isn't sure what to expect from the veteran pacer.

"He's been inconsistent," said Mackenzie. "I actually warmed him up before his last start (January 24) and he tied up on me and we had to scratch him."

Without a race in the last four weeks National Sport is a question mark, though he's fit and is racing at a reduced level.

The pacing mare Kay Sage (post 6) has been showing improvement and Mackenzie is hoping an equipment change can make the difference. "(Johnathan) Ahle has been telling me that she could use a headpole inside," said Mackenzie. "I was a little reluctant to go along with that, but I've decided to use it this week."

A third-place finisher against similar company on January 31, Kay Sage could be a sleeper with value in Friday's ninth race.

"I think she was actually better than the line suggests," Mackenzie said.

It's been a while since Sweet Ideal has raced for Mackenzie but the trainer was reassuring that the fault was more with him than the 5-year-old son of Sweet Lou. "I just haven't been able to get him a race," said Mackenzie. "A few times the classes didn't fill and then last time I probably should have kept in contact with the race office, but we missed the opportunity."

Four weeks later Sweet Ideal landed post four in a \$15,000 claimer carded as the third race on Saturday. Coming off a win in \$10,000 company a month ago the trainer was ill-concerned with the class level.

"I definitely think he's good enough to compete here," said Mackenzie, with Sweet Ideal looking to double his entire win output of 2024 with a victory.

Both Dance It Out and Dance Partner have been giving Mackenzie problems with sickness over the last few weeks, but he's been able to battle back and bring them to the races in good condition. Dance It Out looks for his second straight win of the year in Saturday's seventh race, a Trackmaster rated 80.5 event where the 7-year-old by Sweet Lou landed the pole position.

"It's a decent spot and he's racing well," said Mackenzie, understanding the jump in class will make things more challenging this week.

Dance Partner is yet another horse coming off a winning effort and moving up in class this week for Mackenzie, and the veteran son of A Rocknroll Dance has his quirks.

"He can be a problem getting his head straight in the early going," said Mackenzie.

Dance Partner scored at 34-1 in handling the non-winners of \$7,500 class on February 1 and though the public may have been surprised with the result, the trainer was not. "The week before Jordan (Stratton) moved him to the front on the turn and he paced a 25 and change quarter."

Dance Partner tired that night but Brett Beckwith gave him more time to relax in his next start and the gelding equaled his personal best with a 1:50 4/5 mile. Dance Partner drew post seven in Saturday's featured \$17,500 pacing feature, race nine on the 14-race program.



DERICK GIWNER  
Trainer Bill Mackenzie won the 2019 Little Brown Jug with Southwind Ozzi.

Mackenzie is hoping for lightning to strike once again this year with three 2-year-olds he currently has in training, the first offerings from his \$1.1 million winner Southwind Ozzi.

"I've trained horses before from mares we bred but this is the first time I'm training a horse where both the sire and dam are horses I raced," said Mackenzie. "The sons of Somebeachsome have turned into great sires and we're hoping he can do the same."

Southwind Ozzi had a limited number of mares bred in New Jersey. "We sent him out to Cool Winds Farm in Ohio and he bred like 60 mares last year,"

Southwind Ozzi captured the Little Brown Jug in 2019, making Ohio a very nice fit.



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# Whelan hopes his patience pays off in Mohawk series finals

**THIS STORY REPRINTED FROM LAST WEEK SINCE THE MOHAWK PARK CARD AND SERIES FINALS WERE CANCELLED**

By Jay Bergman

Trainer Walter Whelan has had a philosophy purchasing his horses that has proven successful over time. The veteran conditioner has bought inexpensive yearlings with the hope of giving them enough time to develop.

“There’s less pressure,” said Whelan. “If you spend a lot you try to get it back as quickly as possible.”

With that said, Whelan’s horses have gotten better with age, and while missing some of the big money at 2 and 3 years of age, they find themselves better positioned for success into their 4-year-old seasons. On Friday night Whelan has three such horses entered in a pair of series finals on Woodbine Mohawk Park’s 12-race card, with the Always B Miki-sired gelding A Class Yankee likely his best chance at success in the C\$40,000 Showshoe final (race 5).

“His whole family tends to get a bit stronger as they get older,” said Whelan while on the track training one of the 50 he currently has in his stable. “His older brother Yankee Clout was the same way.”

Whelan’s affection for this maternal family is deep. After paying \$7,000 for Yankee Clout, he upped the bid a year later and plucked A Class Yankee for \$12,000. In 2023, C C Yankee - the first filly from the dam - was purchased for a hefty \$25,000 by Whelan’s connections, with the daughter from the first crop of Papi Rob Hanover making just a few starts in her freshman season in 2024.

A Class Yankee raced competitively on the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes circuit in 2024 and was getting better towards the end of the campaign, so Whelan put him in a few late closers over the winter at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The results have been encouraging, as the gelding captured the Valedictory final at Woodbine Mohawk on December 26, overcoming post 10 in the process. Following a few weeks off, A Class Yankee began his 4-year-old season with a solid second-place finish (again with post 10) behind one of Friday’s possible favorites G A Speed Expert.

With a better post in last week’s (January 24) second leg of the Snowshoe, A Class Yankee rallied from sixth at the three-quarter pole to victory, setting him up nicely for the final.

“We had trouble keeping him healthy last year,” said Whelan of the

3-year-old season that saw A Class Yankee earn a shade under six-figures in just 17 starts. A Class Yankee dipped his toes in the top tier Pennsylvania Sire Stakes program, and as his trainer suggested, appeared to be finding his best footing towards the end of that series. A Class Yankee was just a neck behind Timeisonmyside in the final Sire Stakes prelim at The Meadows on August 30 in a mile time of 1:49 3/5. It was that kind of effort that led the gelding to race in the Breeders Crown trials at the Meadowlands in late October, a race he finished sixth in after pacing a final quarter in 26 1/5.

A Class Yankee, the 2-1 morning-line choice with Michael Whelan in the bike, is rapidly gaining confidence, and Whelan is looking forward to Friday night and beyond.

“He’ll get a break after the race on Friday and then we’ll bring him back later,” said Whelan. “We’re definitely going to stake him.”

Whelan has another horse in the Snowshoe final in Gansbaai, a gelded son of Downbytheseaside that cost but \$11,000 as a yearling.

“He hasn’t been finishing up the way we’d like to see,” said Whelan of Gansbaai. With post seven on Friday, he’ll need some racing luck.

G A Speed Expert (5-2) has been strong in both legs of the Snowshoe, but he too may need a bit of racing luck starting from post 10 in Friday’s feature. The 4-year-old by Sportswriter won half of his 16 starts as a 3-year-old and looks for the biggest payday of his career in the finale.

Whelan is hoping for his own kind of racing luck with Space Cadebt in the C\$37,000 Blizzard Series final carded as race 10 on Friday night.

“The rail is a tough place to start from,” said Whelan, “but it’s better than post 10.”

Space Cadebt enters the final with a pair of third-place finishes in the prelims to her credit. A filly by Betting Line that was highly thought of as a 2-year-old and raced in the Three Diamonds elimination, Space Cadebt didn’t progress as expected.

“It wasn’t the kind of year we thought she would have,” said Whelan.

Space Cadebt did win a couple of races in the fall at Pocono and reached the Niagara Series final at Woodbine Mohawk Park in December.

Perhaps post position will pay off for Whelan as his charge tackles Oh A Legend, a daughter of Bit Of A Legend N who drew post nine in the field of 10. Oh A Legend swept through the preliminaries with open-length victories for trainer Chris Bush and driver Tyler Borth. She was made the 4-5 morning-line choice.

The 12-race Woodbine Mohawk Park card begins at 6:30 p.m. (EST) on Friday.

## PRIX D'AMERIQUE WINNER IDAO DE TILLARD INJURED

By Karsten Bonsdorf for USTA

Idao de Tillard, who was supposed to start in the Prix de France at Vincennes on Sunday (Feb. 9), has injured a fetlock in a foreleg in the paddock and will not be able to start.

“It is not a serious injury, but it takes time to get the horse back again, and I can already say that Idao de Tillard will also not race at Cagnes sur Mer in the Grand Criterium de Vitesse on March 9,” said trainer Thierry Duvaldestin.

The Prix de France is the second major international race in the series — Prix d’Amerique, Prix de France, and Prix de Paris.

In the Prix de France, the distance is 2,100 meters (1-5/16 miles) and the total prize money is 400,000 Euros. The field is displayed to the right and the picture is courtesy LeTrot on X.


## FLORIDA DECOUPLING BILL GETS OUT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

A bill that would allow Gulfstream Park to operate its casino without any statutory obligation to live racing sailed through its first hearing on Wednesday in front of a Florida House of Representatives subcommittee.


The bill, which has the support of Gulfstream but is opposed by a large number of state and national racing organizations, passed easily out of the Industries and Professional Activities Subcommittee, which has 18 sitting members, with only four votes in opposition.

“It is not the legislature’s responsibility to force a business to operate a line of business that may not be profitable,” said Rep. Adam Anderson, the sponsor of the bill, just before the vote was taken.

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🏇 ATTELÉ
🕒 C4 - 15:15
🏠 AUTOSTART
📏 2 100 m (GP)

1	AMPIA MEDE SM	V. D'ALESSANDRO JR	😞
2	EMERAUDE DE BAIS	F. NIVARD	😄
3	DON FANUCCI ZET	P.PH. PLOQUIN	😞
4	GO ON BOY	R. DERIEUX	😄
5	KILMISTER	G. GELORMINI	😞
6	INMAROSA	LEO ABRIVARD	😞
7	BANDERAS BI	E. RAFFIN	😞
8	HOOKER BERRY	N. BAZIRE	😄
9	HUSSARD DU LANDRET	Y. LEBOURGEOIS	😞
10	IDEAL LIGNERIES	B. ROCHARD	😞
11	WORKING CLASS HERO	M. MOTTIER	😞
12	JUSTIN BOLD	P.Y. VERVA	😄
13	HIP HOP HAUFOR	D. BONNE	😞



# Prime time for Willowtime and Outside The Fire at Meadowlands

By Ken Weingartner

Willowtime, who was runner-up to T C I for the 2023 O'Brien Award for best 2-year-old male trotter to compete in Canada, will make his U.S. debut for new owner Tom Pollack on Saturday (Feb. 8) when he faces nine rivals in a \$24,000 conditioned trot at The Meadowlands.

An Ontario Sire Stakes champion and Grand Circuit winner at the age of 2, Willowtime was purchased privately by Pollack Racing in November and joined the stable of trainer Jeff Cullipher. The 4-year-old stallion was trained previously by Mark Etsell. He hit the board in 11 of 17 races in Canada, winning five, and earned C\$473,097 (US\$347,039). All his victories were against stakes company.

"We're excited to see what he can do," Pollack said about the son of Lookslikeeachpndale-Sos Respect. "He's a 4-year-old trotter with some back class and ability, so we thought he was worth taking a shot on. You can never have too many solid, good young trotters."

Willowtime made his first appearance since October when he won a qualifier last Saturday at The Meadowlands. Willowtime, who has been stabled in New Jersey with Cullipher assistant Rico Robinson, was nearly 11 lengths from the lead at the half-mile point but made a strong move to close the gap entering the final turn and then moved again in the stretch to win by 1-1/4 lengths in 1:55 3/5.

"We decided to give him a nice break to freshen up, and he's come back super so far," Pollack said. "That was a real good qualifier, we were very happy with it. He was super. Rico, who has been the main one working with him, really likes him."

Willowtime will leave from post two on Saturday with Braxten Boyd in the sulky. He is 10-1 on the morning line.

"Saturday will be his first start since October, so we'd like to see him finishing well late," Pollack said. "I think he'll show up."

"This is a little bit of a trial run (ahead of making stakes payments in mid-February). We're looking at the Canadian Graduate Series and we're kind of on the fence with the main 4-year-old Graduate. But if he does his thing Saturday and finishes up well, we'd probably give him a shot in that."

"We'll just hope he continues forward and does well and maybe we'll have a nice stakes horse down the road."

In addition to Willowtime, Pollack will be watching another recent addition to his operation, Outside The Fire, in the same race Saturday at The Big M.

Outside The Fire, also purchased in November and trained by Cullipher, has two wins and two seconds in five starts since his arrival. His only start this year came on Jan. 28 in the Open at Bally's Dover, where he was a little headstrong and made repeated breaks.

"He hadn't raced for a month and kind of got wound up over there," Pollack said. "Throw that race out. There is nothing wrong with him and Rico said he trained excellent this week. Outside of that last start, he's been a model of consistency for us."

Outside The Fire, a son of Cantab Hall-Light The Flame, has won 22 of 76 career races and earned \$334,693. He has five wins and three seconds among 13 lifetime starts at The Big M, where he first set his career mark of 1:52 2/5 last season.

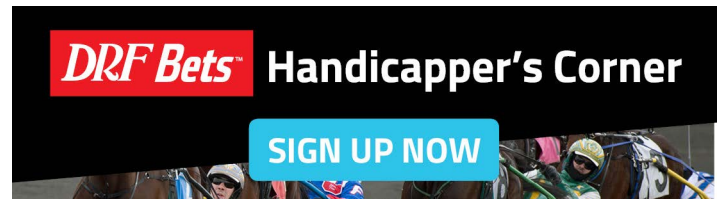
"He was a horse I always liked," Pollack said. "He would pop up with a big mile here or there and catch your eye. He showed signs of really being able to go fast. He's more just an overnight horse for us. We buy some babies and some stakes horses, but we're mainly a racehorse operation. He fits that mold."

Outside The Fire will leave from post nine Saturday with Tyler Buter in the sulky. He is 9-2 on the morning line.

"He's good to go and, other than the post position, I would expect a big effort from him. I know he likes the Meadowlands. When he's right, you can see that he can trot in (1):51 and (1):52. He knows what he's doing."

Queen Of America S, a 5-year-old mare who is 2-for-2 for trainer Ron Burke since her arrival to the U.S. from Sweden, is the 5-2 favorite in the featured trot. She will leave from post eight with driver David Miller.

Racing begins at 6:20 p.m. (EST) at The Meadowlands.



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, FEBRUARY 6

### RACE 6

(4) SOUTHWIND CAPONE took a shuffle as they were turning for home and showed good trot late in the mile to be 3rd. He draws a good spot on the gate here and should have every opportunity to break his maiden.

-John Rallis



**WOODBINE**  
MOHAWK PARK

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

### RACE 7

(4) IDEAL SKIES has been racing well for a \$20,000 claiming tag and now drops in for \$12,500 in a spot where it is hard to see him losing.

-Derick Gwerner



### RACE 9

(6) TIPSY MONI has come back razor-sharp in 2025 for the Burke Brigade and the mare goes for three straight. I suspect we'll see her back at the top levels before too long.

-Matt Rose



## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

### RACE 9

(8) LYONS STEEL dropped to this class last week and wound up with a pocket trip. He got shut off to the inside by a very good horse on the lead and when he finally cleared outside it was too late. Faces softer than last week.

-Gwerner



## FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis [Thursday](#) [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Meadowlands Analysis [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Yonkers Analysis [Thursday](#) [Friday](#)

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

# NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

## \$15,090 PICK 7 CARRYOVER ON FRIDAY AT CAL EXPO

Friday night's program at Cal Expo will feature a Pick 7 carryover of \$15,090 with a \$35,000-guaranteed gross pool, along with guaranteed pools in both the Pick 5 and the late Pick 4.

The Pick 5 will offer a \$20,000 guarantee while the late Pick 4 comes with a \$25,000 guarantee and all Pick 4s and Pick 5s at Cal Expo feature a reduced 16 percent takeout rate.

The early and late Pick 4, Pick 5 and Pick 7 are 20-cent wagers.

-release (Cal Expo)

## \$2,375 PICK 5 CARRYOVER SATURDAY NIGHT AT MGM NORTHFIELD PARK

A trio of big longshots led to chaos in the mid-card Pick 5 on Wednesday night (Feb. 5th). The carryover of \$2,375 rolls over to the Saturday evening (Feb. 8th) card.

The \$1 Pick 5 wager beginning in race 6 features an estimated pool of \$15,000. As always it sports the player-friendly 14% takeout.

The 50-cent non-jackpot Pick 6 beginning in the 8th race will also have its own carryover of \$1,922 and boasts the low 14% takeout.

Post time for the 15-race program on Saturday is 6:00 p.m. MGM Northfield Park slightly alters the upcoming live racing schedule to race on Saturday (Feb. 8th), Monday (Feb. 10th), Tuesday (Feb. 11th) and Wednesday (Feb. 12th).

-edited release (Northfield)

## GRASSROOTS PURSES UP 24 PERCENT IN 2025

To kick off its second half century, the Ontario Sires Stakes program will expand to six Grassroots Series opportunities in 2025 with purses for each division increasing to \$25,000.

Fuelled through a partnership with the Central Ontario Standardbred Association (COA) and Woodbine Mohawk Park, the change will see overall purses at the Grassroots level increase by 24 per cent over the 2024 season.

"We heard the feedback from owners and trainers that purses needed to be higher in the Grassroots," said Bill O'Donnell, chair of Ontario Racing's Standardbred Improvement Program (SIP) Committee and president of COA. "And we hope the additional leg will have a positive impact on the horse population through the fall."

The six Grassroots Series opportunities will be contested in five legs, with one leg having two events numbered "A" and "B". The five legs will be followed by \$25,000 Grassroots Consolations, on Thursday, Sept. 25 for the two-year-olds and Friday, Sept. 26 for the three-year-olds, and \$75,000 Grassroots Championships, on Saturday, Sept. 27, all at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

As in the 2024 season, each Grassroots champion will be able to enter and draw into its respective Gold Series Super Final if it does not fill with Gold Series point earners.

In 2025 the five Gold Series Legs will be worth \$180,000 divided by the number of divisions, or \$140,000 for a single division, followed by \$300,000 Super Finals at Woodbine Mohawk Park on Friday, Oct. 10 for the two-year-olds and Saturday, Oct. 11 for the three-year-olds. The Gold Series Mid-Season Consolation and Finals will not return in 2025.

The Prospect Series will once again consist of eight opportunities contested in five legs, with divisions going for a purse of \$8,000. The Prospect Series Finals will be increased to \$20,000 and go postward Friday, Oct. 3 for three-year-olds and Tuesday, Oct. 7 for two-year-olds, both at The Raceway at Western Fair District.

"Creating the budget was challenging again this year," said O'Donnell. "Wagering by Ontarians on horse racing provides about 60 per cent of the funding for the OSS and it has decreased by almost \$100 million over the last two years."

Fewer Grassroots Series divisions and Gold Series Mid-Season Consolations than budgeted, along with an increasing number of single division Gold Series legs, saw the OSS program finish under budget in 2024, which helped support the expansion of the 2025 Grassroots program. COA and Woodbine Mohawk Park also committed to funding half of the purse for the additional Grassroots Series opportunities.

"A strong OSS program is important for racing in Ontario," said O'Donnell. "We are all committed to making sure it continues to be one

of the best sires stakes programs around."

For complete details visit the Ontario Sires Stakes [website](#).

-release (Ontario Racing)

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RETURNS TO THE MEADOWLANDS

Join us as the Meadowlands Racetrack celebrates women in racing on Saturday, March 8.

Jessica Otten and Emily Gaskin will host the night's live broadcast and paddock interviews brought to you by Jenna Otten.

The night will include videos and interviews with the industry's top female trainers, drivers, and grooms, plus a race with an all-female field this year.

Interested female drivers can reach out to race secretary Scott Warren at [swarren@playmeadowlands.com](mailto:swarren@playmeadowlands.com) and Marketing Coordinator Jessica Otten at [jotten@playmeadowlands.com](mailto:jotten@playmeadowlands.com).

The first 10 interested will get a slot in the 2025 International Women's Day celebration.

-release (Meadowlands)

## LAST CALL FOR 2025 HARNESS RACING IMMORTAL NOMINATIONS

Time is running out for members of the Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame to submit Immortal nominations for the Class of 2025.

All Museum members have the privilege of nominating persons and horses who they feel have made a significant contribution to the sport of harness racing. The nominees must be deceased at least three years to be eligible for consideration. Nominations must include a complete biography of the nominee and detailed harness racing career statistics, when applicable. Nominations must be postmarked no later than March 1, 2025. They may be emailed on or before that date to [director@harness-museum.com](mailto:director@harness-museum.com) or mailed to the Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame, 240 Main Street, Goshen, NY 10924.

NOTE: Nominees selected by the Immortals Committee of the Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame and elected by the Museum's full board of trustees in 2025 will be inducted in July 2026.

-release (Harness Museum)

## PACING FOR THE CURE: "JOIN OUR QUEST TO CURE MS"

Pacing For The Cure is a 501(C) (3) nonprofit organization who works to help provide mobility assistance and medical services for individuals living with autoimmune and neuromuscular diseases (Multiple Sclerosis, ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), Cerebral Palsy, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Parkinson's Disease). In addition, the organization has raised money for research since it was formed in 2016.

Starting Wednesday February 5th and running through Sunday February 16th, anyone who donates a minimum of \$25 will be entered into a random drawing (each additional increment of \$25 will receive an additional entry) to be held on Monday February 17th for a Heston Blue Chip breeding for 2025 donated by Winbak Farm.

Winners will be contacted by phone or email.

Heston Blue Chip, p, 2, 1:50 4/5f; 3, 1:48f (\$1,777,769), stands at Diamond Creek Farm of Pennsylvania for \$6,000. Heston Blue Chip is the sire of the 2024 Juette Winner, Soft Shot, p, 3, 1:49 3/5h -'24 (\$250,903), 2024 Pennsylvania Stallion Series Final Winner, Pressure Cooker, p, 3, 1:50f -'24 (\$208,176), and 2024 Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Winner, Rush In, p, 3, 1:49 4/5f -'24 (\$189,455). Pacing For The Cure thanks Winbak Farm for the breeding donation.

Donations can be made through this [secure link](#):

Any questions should be directed to Jeff Gesek at 609-354-8992

-release (Pacing for the Cure)

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