

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

# Examining Yonkers Raceway's higher minimum wagers

*Has the \$1 Pick 5 and \$2 Pick 4 been received well by bettors?*

*PLUS: Faraldo chimes in on racing dates, fixed odds wagering and CAW's*



## EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner

[@harnessevegyu](#)

It is important to embrace change. At the same time, we must continually evaluate the revised product to ensure that the desired results reflect the initial goals.

When Yonkers Raceway made the decision to alter the minimum amounts required to wager on its Pick 4 and Pick 5 bets for 2025, I was intrigued. In general harness racing has gotten caught up with low-minimum mania and we've seen bets that used to have a \$2 or \$3 minimum for a single combination reduced to as low as .10 cents. Surely there is a place in the market for various levels of players and minimums, and I was eager to track how the raised base would be accepted by the bettors.

For those that don't follow Yonkers on a regular basis, and I have to admit to being more of a casual observer of the track, they raised the late Pick 4 minimum to \$2 from \$1 and the lone Pick 5 from .50 cents to \$1. To my knowledge there are no tracks offering a \$2 Pick 4 and only Northfield Park has a \$1 base Pick 5.

I recorded the total handle (rounding up to the nearest dollar) for the early and late Pick 4 as well as the Pick 5 from the start of the meet on January 20 to March 7. With 35 dates in total it seemed like a fair sample size to analyze and at least make some reasonable conclusions.

Starting with the late Pick 4, average handle has been \$9,128 in 2025, down just over 33% year-over-year for the same time period from the

\$13,627 average pool size in 2024. The pool has seen hits at both the top and bottom ends, with \$10,000-plus wagered on the late Pick 4 23 times in 2024 versus 15 in 2025, and seven pools under \$6,000 in 2025 versus none in 2024.

Viewing the above results in a vacuum would lead you to think that the change to a \$2 minimum has been a complete failure, but I don't think that is really fair. The change was made to accommodate the possibility of carryovers in the wager. The track wanted each Pick 4 to carry over to the same sequence on the following day so it has the opportunity to promote the boosted pool with a potential guarantee attached. The thought process was that for it to work each Pick 4 had to have a different minimum amount. Yonkers applied for the carryovers in December yet unfortunately they are still waiting for approval from the NY Gaming Commission nearly three months later despite this author being informed that Pick 4 carryovers were approved in 2024. Something is not right here and we are still waiting for a response from the Commission on the delay. For what it's worth, track officials tell us that they recently followed up on the request and are hopeful to hear something in the next week.

Another interesting point to consider revolves around the early Pick 4, which remained at a \$1 minimum. That wager also saw a decrease from \$16,714 to \$14,376, an almost 14% decline. Total average handle per race is also down 6.6% industry-wide in the United States. Looking at both declining numbers, we have to attribute at least a small portion of the 34% late Pick 4 dip to factors outside of the increased minimum wagering amount.

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In contrast, the Pick 5 minimum increase from .50 to \$1 has produced more positive results. Boosted by a number of carryovers that were clearly brought on by the higher cost of a ticket, the average Pick 5 pool has increased almost 6% in 2025 to \$13,128. The range of the Pick 5 in 2024 was \$5,565 to \$20,649 while in 2025 it is \$4,106 to \$53,752. On top of that, there have been four carryover-powered Pick 5 pools over \$30,000 in 2025.

What the \$1 Pick 5 does affect is the low end of the spectrum. Handle on any single Pick 5 fell below \$6,000 just once in 2024 while it has already happened 10 times this year. Interestingly, when the track offers its \$10,000 guaranteed Pick 5 pool on Mondays the average handle (eliminating the one Monday card with a carryover) comes in at \$13,508, above the total average for the 35 dates in 2025. Perhaps that is a signal to offer more guarantees throughout the week. At the very least, Tuesday should have the \$10,000 guarantee since it already averages \$12,979 in 2025 and the promised pool total can only help.

While the initial exercise was simply to evaluate the performance of the Pick X wagers given the wagering changes, my biggest takeaway involves the racing schedule as a whole and a clear indicator that Yonkers may be best served by racing Monday to Thursday with additional races on each card. In terms of the Pick X wagers, Friday is consistently the worst performing night of the week for the track.

Numbers can be manipulated but in this case they don't lie. Through seven Fridays in 2025, Yonkers is averaging \$6,769 per Pick X wager. Next up is Thursday at \$7,992 (eliminating one carryover night), which doesn't seem that much higher but it is an 18% increase. Competition is key and on Friday Yonkers must go head to head with industry leaders The Meadowlands and Woodbine Mohawk Park, two tracks which handle four to six times more than Yonkers.

Economically it just makes sense for Yonkers to race four cards a week with 13 races per night, 52 races per week, which is very similar to the number of races currently offered over five nights. Removing a racing night eliminates having to "turn the lights on" one night and have personnel at the track to handle the live racing. It also highlights the nights of the week where handle is better.

The top rebuttal to losing a night of racing will be that the track is required to race a certain number of dates per year (about 240). I would make an argument that any contract negotiated with the track (the current one expires in May) can simply change racing dates to total races, so instead of 240 dates it can be 3,120 races per year. That number could even be increased by 40 to 50 to accommodate Sire Stakes. While I believe there is a limit on the number of races a New York track can offer on one night (15 perhaps), the Gaming Commission has often made exceptions to increase that total when there are Sire Stakes scheduled so that overnight horses can compete. If Sire Stakes are on the menu, have 15 races, or if you have a special card of racing like Triple Crown Night that includes the MGM Yonkers Trot and MGM Grand Messenger Pace, race those on Saturday afternoon when all eyes will be on you.

We asked Standardbred Owners Association of New York President Joe Faraldo about reducing the dates for races and he was firmly against the notion.

"It brings you to a point where the next thing will be, how about we only race three days a week? And before you know it there will be only two days a week of racing and not enough to accommodate all of the people who were able to race five days at 10 races per night," said Faraldo. "When you get to the summer you can't fill 13 races. We have trouble filling them now and we have the best purses around."

It is difficult to fill races when certain trainers are not permitted to enter their horses and Faraldo also addressed the notion banded about on social media at times that Yonkers has a closed door policy.

"It does, but when you have a person apply at Yonkers who has four TCO2 positives at Plainridge and two more at Saratoga, I don't blame [race secretary] Joe [Frasure] for saying we don't want you. When you have a guy who makes a public statement about something at Yonkers that is no damn good, a trainer has to be careful. I'm the one that is supposed to make those comments and do those things because I'm not training horses and my livelihood doesn't depend on Yonkers Raceway."

Faraldo also added that some of the people who may have been denied entry was due to trainers possibly using "beards" to beat the system. He mentioned horses that would be entered with the same ownership but different trainers and felt at peace with management using its right to deny the entry. "The easiest thing to do is to say it is not in the best interest to allow the horse to participate because it is private property."

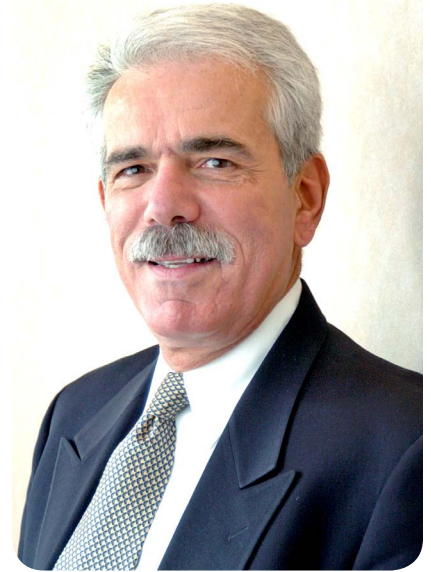
Faraldo also touched on the potential of fixed odds wagering coming to Yonkers Raceway in the future after he reportedly told the U.S. Trotting Association Board of Directors that it was in the works. He is currently working with NYRA as the Standardbred and Thoroughbred industries band together to get the legislation passed. The idea is to offer a fixed wagering horse racing opportunity to different wagering platforms, either as part of parlays or perhaps straight win wagers only.

To protect the harness industry from losing any current handle, Faraldo said the deal will include protection so that Standardbreds share in a percentage of the total revenue of the venture, including from the Thoroughbred side.

"I'm here to protect the industry, at least from the SOA of NY perspective," said Faraldo, who added that if it was passed by both houses of the Legislature in the current session we could see fixed odds wagering by 2026.

"Whether the numbers are miniscule or big, we can't afford to make the mistakes that track owners have made through the years. You can't let someone else control what you are doing."

-SOA of NY President Joe Faraldo



While I have consistently wondered why Faraldo has been so insistent on refusing to allow NYRA Bets to accept wagering on harness races from outside New York, he did make some interesting points when we touched on the topic. His main objection was that he has everything to lose and nothing to gain by giving in. According to Faraldo, NYRA would get around paying the 5% New York State tax by allowing its customers to use its New York hub for non-New York harness tracks instead of one from out of state. So NYRA benefits but Standardbred tracks don't, especially since their ADW's, like Yonkers' Empire City Bets, could lose harness customers to NYRA Bets if they were permitted to accept wagers on tracks like The Meadowlands.

"If I'm losing \$100,000 to \$200,000 a night in handle, before you know it there is no action on Yonkers," said Faraldo, who further argued that even if the numbers were much smaller it was irrelevant. "Whether the numbers are miniscule or big, we can't afford to make the mistakes that track owners have made through the years. You can't let someone else control what you are doing."

As we tried to cover all of the bases, Faraldo also chimed in on Computer Assisted Wagering (CAW) outlets and their impact on the sport. He worries that they will suck the remaining customer base dry and the industry will be left holding a ball with no court to play on.

"They drive people away from our game," said Faraldo. "At the bigger tracks they are 35% to 40% [of handle] and the smaller tracks they are 70%. What happens when they suck all the money out of the game from the other people who are trying to compete with these algorithms? Will they walk away and decide to go bet on the Denver Nuggets? Or what if they create an algorithm for any other sport and leave us? What will we have left? This is very dangerous."

There is a clear reason to be concerned and we've seen some Thoroughbred tracks take action by cutting off wagering for CAW players prior to post time. At least one Standardbred track told me that they are contemplating a similar move. That said, if Faraldo's percentage estimates are correct, one has to wonder if the sport can survive without the CAW handle even now. Though with most tracks not reliant on handle to support their purses, the sport is safe, for now.

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## JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [✕ BergmanJay](#)

### ANOTHER 'LEGEND' IN THE MAKING



MIKE LIZZI PHOTO

**Mosssdale Ben has won three straight races at Yonkers Raceway as he prepares for the MGM Borgata series.**

Bit Of A Legend N put trainer Peter Tritton in the spotlight back in 2016 when he arrived on the scene and went on to win the George Morton Levy series final at Yonkers Raceway. The celebrated son of Bettor's Delight would outdo his solid career in the Southern hemisphere going on to earn more than \$1.9 million in North America before embarking on a second career as a stallion in Ohio.

Now Tritton has a new Down Under-bred with similar characteristics named Mosssdale Ben, a recent import that has captured three straight races at Yonkers and heads into this Monday's (March 17) Invitational at Yonkers.

"I've been watching that horse closely for the last few years and we finally had a chance to buy him," said Tritton. "He's out of a full sister to Mosssdale Conner, the best horse I ever trained."

Mosssdale Conner's light shined only briefly in North America as Tritton had the good fortune to race the veteran in 2017 just six times before tragedy struck.

"He had bleeding issues like a lot of horses that come over and we put him on Lasix," said Tritton of Mosssdale Conner, who won his first three races at Yonkers in spectacular fashion before earning an invite to the Memorial Day feature at Harrah's Philadelphia. In that \$150,000 contest, Mosssdale Conner breezed to a 1:49 triumph over a solid field that included All Bets Off and Somewhere In LA.

"At that point we decided to give him some time off and get him ready for the fall," said Tritton.

But that plan never really worked out as Mosssdale Conner's bleeding issues would worsen.

"He was bleeding after doing light work," said Tritton, "So we had him checked out and they found that he had cancer in his lungs."

A few months later Mosssdale Conner would be put down and Tritton spoke with reverence about his fallen warrior. "They had to do an autopsy afterwards for insurance purposes and the vet that examined him, saw how far the cancer had spread and told me 'This must have been the greatest racehorse of all time' given what he was able to do," said Tritton.

Now eight years later, Tritton is training Mosssdale Ben and while the son of A Rocknroll Dance has looked impressive this winter, the trainer doesn't expect him to do what his older relative did.

"He's not the same caliber as Conner," said Tritton. "He's a solid horse that is easy on himself and knows what to do on the track."

Mosssdale Ben has won three straight times at Yonkers with Jordan Stratton guiding him from off the pace somewhat reminiscent of the early stages of Bit Of A Legend's North American career. It's way too early to compare those two yet but Tritton sees a lot of the same characteristics

when it his current and former charges.

"He just did what he had to do on the race-track," said Tritton of Bit Of A Legend, and that's exactly what he has seen so far from Mosssdale Ben. As for the three trips from off the pace, Tritton is ill-concerned that his horse won't be able to see the front end early in the mile. "That's just Jordan (Stratton) taking care of the horse for me. He does a great job."

Mosssdale Ben's most impressive performance came this past Monday (March 10) at Yonkers in a non-winners of \$20,000 class race as Stratton looked to leave from the outside but elected to take back with horses pushing

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**



## MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

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forward inside. On the move before the half, Mossdale Ben attracted reasonable cover but had a hard time gaining on the leader in a brisk third quarter. Stratton hardly moved a muscle in the bike, but it was clear when he called on Mossdale Ben there was plenty in reserve as he powered past the field in effortless fashion and scored in 1:52 4/5, with his final half in roughly 54 seconds.

“He can leave the gate,” said Tritton about racing tactics that will be necessary for Mossdale Ben to make the next step at Yonkers.

“We’ve put him into the Borgata Series and I know the competition will be much stronger, but I think he’ll do well,” said Tritton, who recently celebrated his 74th birthday and has enough experience to know the characteristics of a solid racehorse.

“I’m going to race him Monday (race seven, post two) and then probably give him a week off before the Borgata starts,” said Tritton, aware of what it takes to make it through the grueling series and hopefully garner enough points to reach the final.

Tritton has had good fortune with sons of Bettor’s Delight as both Bit Of A Legend N and Mossdale Conner were by the brilliant sire. Mossdale Ben’s dam is by Bettor’s Delight as well. The 10-year-old New Zealander named Diego is another by the noted stallion that will be making his American debut shortly. Despite his age, Diego, with \$637K in career earnings, was still racing against top-class horses in Australia last November.

On the mare front, the Australian-bred Silk Cloud is being pointed towards the Blue Chip Matchmaker series. The daughter of Shadow Play had the best year of her career in 2024, earning \$215K with 10 wins in 27 starts for Tritton.

“She hasn’t been drawing too well,” said Tritton of Silk Cloud, who landed post seven in a high-level conditioned race at Yonkers on Friday (March 14). Despite the hard luck draws, Silk Cloud finished second twice in Yonkers’ Filly and Mare Invitational in February while displaying a solid closing kick, and should fit quite well among the mares in the Blue Chip Matchmaker.



CLAUS ANDERSEN PHOTO

Driver Jordan Stratton (left) with Bit Of A Legend and trainer Peter Tritton back in 2018.

Tritton is hopeful that he has a 2-year-old filly in the stable that we could see on the New York Sire Stakes later in the year but reserved judgment on American Emily, a homebred by American Ideal and first foal from Kendra N, a mare that won a few races for Tritton in the top classes at Yonkers in 2020.

It seems 2025 is shaping up to be a good year for Tritton. Time will tell.

## Nominations spike for 2025 MGM Borgata, Blue Chip Matchmaker

Changes made to the scheduling and conditions of the MGM Borgata and Blue Chip Matchmaker pacing series have resulted in sharp nomination gains for the 2025 editions which gets underway in late March at MGM Yonkers Raceway.

The MGM Borgata series for older male pacers saw nominations jump from 30 in 2024 to 42 this year, the highest number of horses to pay the \$5,000 eligibility fee since 2021 when 46 signed on. The Blue Chip Matchmaker had a similar increase, going from 21 mares last year to 33 for the 2025 edition. The last time more than 33 nominated for the Blue Chip Matchmaker was back in 2019 when 43 paid into the event.

Both series are set to get underway two weeks later than in 2024, with the first of five preliminary legs of the Blue Chip Matchmaker set for March 28 and the opening round of the MGM Borgata commencing a few nights after on March 31. Another major change in 2025 revolves around the added money for the final of the Blue Chip Matchmaker, which gets a boost from \$125,000 to \$200,000, equaling the MGM Borgata total. With that increase the Blue Chip Matchmaker final will certainly offer the richest purse in recent history and far eclipse the \$276,200 purse from 2024.

Following five consecutive weeks of \$50,000 preliminary legs, in another scheduling adjustment for 2025, the finals will occur after a week off to provide horses some much needed rest before racing in the rich events. Both finals are slated for Friday, May 9 and will be accompanied by a pair of \$100,000 consolation events.

In terms of equine power, Hellabalou has paid his nomination fee and will look for his third consecutive victory in the final of the MGM

Borgata. The 7-year-old won the \$457,000 finale in 1:50 2/5 last year defeating Coaches Corner and Desperate Man, who are both among the list of eligibles for 2025. Others looking to take home the title include double millionaire Charlie May and last December’s MGM Grand Prix winner Typhoon Banner N.

The lucky winner of the Borgata will receive an invite to the June 7th Battle of Lake Erie at sister track MGM Northfield Park and be grandfathered into the MGM Grand Prix series which kicks off on November 24 at Yonkers Raceway.

Headlining the mares lined up for the Blue Chip Matchmaker is 2024 champion Lit De Rose. The now 10-year-old has made nearly \$1.3 million in her long career and recently prepped for the series with a qualifying effort at Yonkers Raceway. Joining her in the field are last year’s second-place finisher Coachellabound N, \$1.9 million earner Grace Hill, and some talented 4-year-olds like multiple stakes winner Rocket Deo and Ohio champion Seaside Diva.

In addition to the purse money, the winner of the Blue Chip Matchmaker final also gets a free breeding to either American Courage, Cannibal, Shadow Play or Sunshine Beach.

Yonkers Raceway is currently racing on a Monday to Friday schedule with first race post time set at 6:45 p.m. (EDT) nightly.

-release (Yonkers Raceway Media)



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Liberty Bell  
James Lynch Mem.  
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W.N. Reynolds Memorial  
John Simpson Sr. Memorial  
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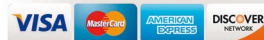
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We Accept



# Sarkine enjoyed her spotlight moment at The Meadowlands



## HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett [X @JHallettPhoto](#)

The Meadowlands Racetrack opened March with another installation of the International Women's Day event featuring 10 ladies lining up behind the gate in race five of the Saturday (March 8) evening card, in addition to presenting an on-camera and behind-the-scenes staff comprised fully of women.

The race drew their field of 10 drivers from all over, including overseas as the race winner, Victoria Gill made the trek from the Cayman Islands.

Starting from post nine on the car was Alexandra Sarkine, a 31-year-old from Indianapolis, Indiana. Sarkine primarily drives at fair tracks across Indiana with a handful of starts at Hoosier Park as well. She has 89 lifetime starts with a record of 11-17-15.

"I was incredibly nervous! I'm very competitive and take how I drive seriously," Sarkine said. "I want to be safe but also look like I belong out there. So here I am this girl coming from the fairs to the biggest track in the country and with the nine hole!"

At post time on the frigid evening at The Big M, Sarkine sent Jeff Cullipher trainee Always In Flight hard from the outer wings on the track towards the front.

"When I got behind the gate and looked at everyone I was like screw it, let's roll and see what we can do," Sarkine recalled.

In the early shuffle, Sarkine was caught on the outside in sixth at the 27 4/5 quarter, and from then on she raced the mile parked in seventh.

"I was pretty comfortable where I was at and tried to remind myself be patient," said Sarkine. "When we straightened up and I moved my mare, I was pretty surprised at how much horse I had."

As the field straightened out for home, Sarkine advanced with Always In Flight to bridge the gap between herself and the field's leaders. With a 29 3/5 final quarter, the pair maneuvered a show finish in the featured event.

"When I realized we were hitting the board, it felt like such a huge win," Sarkine said beaming. "Nine hole, parked to [the] finish and strong like that? Wow, what a blessing and experience! I'm still on the high of it."

The start was the first on the big stage for Sarkine, whose career in driving began in 2019.

"I had to remind myself to take in the experience and just have fun. When I went out to post parade it really hit me. Here I was out here with some legit female drivers. Unreal! I always pray before I go out and when I post parade, and I just kept thanking God for the opportunity. And as I went by the grandstand, I heard my friends cheering me on and it was just such a surreal feeling," said the young driver.

Sarkine's roots extend with a lifelong background in horse experience through riding and showing, but she only became involved in harness racing at the age of 18.

"I've been a horse girl my whole life. I ride for fun. In fact, my jumping horse is a retired race horse and my other I took to the outriding clinic in 2023 is a Standardbred, too," Sarkine said. "I found [my first racing] job on Craigslist when I was 18 and started working for Mike Hollenback. He actually let me jog and train a couple times that first year. [Then] I left for school and when I came back, I decided I wanted to go back working for him. I started really training in 2014. I talked about driving, but it just never worked out to get my license. Then, in 2019, I got it.

"I had three fair starts where I hit the board each time," Sarkine continued. "In 2023, I got partnered up with Larry Pointdexter who let me drive some of his horses at the fair and that's when things started to kick off. Last year I broke a track record at Kentland with his filly Little



JESSICA HALLETT PHOTO

Alexandra Sarkine came from Indiana to drive in her first race at The Meadowlands.



Lucky Lady. And had my first driving double with her and Celtic Tiger."

Sarkine won her first race at the Corydon Fair with Hollenback's Check Point Six. In 2023, she began driving in more starts and in 2024, she had her breakout season with a record of 7-7-2 in 23 starts and UDRs of .502.

"My goals would be to have an even better driving season this year, not just at the fairs, but now with my P [provisional]. Also to have a successful training season as well," said Sarkine, who owns two of her horses in addition to having a stable of 13.

"I jog and train horses every day. And I started the new year back at the gym five times a week to get ready for racing and horse show season," said Sarkine.

Her show season is highlighted by her two Standardbreds, one of which she attended the USTA's outriding clinic with in 2023.

"[The outriding clinic] was just another thing I wanted to try," said the driver/trainer. "I'd definitely say maybe later on down the road it could be something I'd think about, but right now I love driving and training, so maybe do this a little while longer and revisit that. It was such a learning experience and gave me a new respect for what they do."

One person's trash is another's treasure and strangely enough Sarkine views her biggest obstacle as a willingness to be daring in the horse world. "My biggest flaw is I'm incredibly fearless when it comes to the horses. So I'm always wanting to try new things. From jumping, cross country, and driving to the outriding clinic, I really want to try it all. But I'm blessed to have two horses that would ride through fire for me."

In the race season and on the track, Sarkine can be recognized by her pink and black colors adorned by a cross on each sleeve. They make her easily identifiable and certainly stand out in a crowd of drivers on the track.

"I wanted to be different so I went with pink and black," Sarkine explained. "I wanted to make sure I represented my faith with the crosses."

And so, the 31-year-old Indiana native who started at the fairs was quite easy to spot at The Meadowlands on March 8 as she added another new experience to her list and got to represent ladies around the world in the yearly event on International Women's Day.

"I told myself 20 years from now, do I want to look back and regret not taking opportunities? So, I finally got my P license. I did one race at Hoosier, gave the horse a great trip, but she tied up. Then, my friends actually pushed me to go to The Meadowlands and it was the best decision I've made in a while," said Sarkine. "I'd say I think tracks should really start adding more women's events. It's such an exciting race and usually the highest betting race!"

True to her words, handle on the Women's race was a healthy \$262,597, good for second-highest on the Saturday card. Clearly bettors want more!





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## PANDYCAPPING

By Bob Pandolfo [✕ bobpandolfo](https://x.com/bobpandolfo)

### Handicapping transitions as the seasons change

Before the Meadowlands opened, the harness tracks I followed were Roosevelt and Yonkers Raceways. I preferred the warmer weather racing at those two tracks, basically from March through November, because I felt that the horses raced more consistently and the racing was better during that time span.

In September of 1976, the Meadowlands opened. The New Jersey track ushered in a new era of high profile winter harness racing. From a bettor's perspective, the best meet at the Big M was also the coldest, the winter meet. I had never seen anything like it. I never would have imagined that on a sub 20 degree Saturday night with winds sweeping across the marshes at 25 mph, the place would be jumping – the grandstand, the restaurants, all well occupied. And the racing was frenetic, full fields of 10 horses with constant movement and lead changes.

Now the Meadowlands winter meet consists of 28 races spread out over two nights of racing. Even though they only race two nights, most of the races are competitive and I still think the winter meet offers some of the best betting opportunities. The favorites are winning at 40% so far this year, which is six to seven percent lower than some of the other tracks that have been racing this winter.

The Meadowlands was always a track where you could count on some big payoffs, and this winter has been no exception. If you look at the results from the nine cards raced in January, there are the 19 winners that paid \$30 or higher – (with the change left off) \$174, \$154, \$146, \$150, \$115, \$112, \$95, \$90, \$75, \$74, \$58, \$57, \$42, \$41, \$37, \$33, \$31, \$31, \$30. I actually picked one of the hundred dollar winners on top on my USTA picks, the \$112 horse Corsini A, which I bet all of two bucks on, LOL. I picked the horse because two starts back he picked up a catch driver and showed much better early speed, although he got parked out forcing a quick pace. The same driver, Bradley Chisholm, was back in the bike on January 24, so I took a shot that he might leave again and work out a better trip, and he did. The 28-year-old Chisholm has booted home a few longshot winners at the Meadowlands this year.

So why does the Meadowlands winter meet offer a chance at big payoffs? Well, first of all, the races are slower. The faster stakes and Open-caliber horses, and up and coming youngsters, don't really start racing until the spring. And then you combine that with the fact that horses race slower in cold weather. On a cold windy night on a one mile oval, the conditions tend to be tiring. It's not easy to go wire to wire. On warm nights, if a quality speed horse steals the first quarter it's game over.

Since we're still in mid-March, there could still be plenty of longshots winning at good prices. I believe the Jersey Sire Stakes start in early May and then the stakes season kicks into gear.

Keep in mind that Saturday's cards tend to have better quality horses. As a fan, I like watching the classier horses. As a bettor, I don't care. You can find good value on the Friday or Saturday cards. I'm more particular on Friday nights, I try to pick my spots. Sometimes when I'm handicapping what looks like a weak field on a Friday night, that turns out to be the race that I end up hitting for a nice price. Good betting races tend to be puzzles. If a race is predictable, it's hard to find value.

If you do get an unusually warm night, especially on a Saturday night, speed might hold up better than it did in January or February. The bias is always something to keep an eye on. Once you get into May, leavers will start to win more races and the bias is less of an angle. On warm nights, with faster horses, the races go faster and it's tougher for horses to rally to win from far back. A lot of it is mathematics. The same horses that go 1:55 on a 20 degree night may go 1:52 on a 70 degree night. That means that the last half is much faster so a closer has its work cut out for it.

How you evaluate outside posts changes as well. On a cold winter night, if I like a longshot from post 9, I might bet the horse even if I don't think the horse will leave. On a warm night, I wouldn't bet the same horse at the same odds. To me, this is one of the biggest differences during the winter meet. The pacesetters and leavers are more likely to run out of steam and that helps longshots emerge off cover or find room between horses. Once the better horses are racing, you really want to bet leavers and stalkers. If you bet a lot of horses that are third or fourth over, you'd better be betting to show.

Another difference in the racing is that during the winter, most of the Meadowlands drivers that are considered "regulars" take the winter off. Now they're starting to come back. Last weekend, Andy McCarthy, Todd McCarthy and Scott Zeron were all driving at the Meadowlands. I believe that the driver rule is still in place, where the drivers have to start driving at the track by a certain date to be eligible to drive during the stakes season. It's usually sometime in April. Once the regular driver colony is intact, that might also contribute to more formful racing with less boxcar longshots. The regular drivers are more predictable.

And that's not a knock on the drivers who've entertained us this winter. I've enjoyed watching young drivers like Brett Beckwith, Braxten Boyd and Mark Hershberger. Beckwith, in particular, has been red hot.

As far as value, while the payoffs are bigger in the winter, there will be good value bets during the stakes season. It's a little different, though. On a windy night in January, there may be two or three 15-1 to 20-1 shots that are enticing. On a warmer night in July, you might find a speedy 4-1 shot that should be 2-1. It's a trade off. You may not see that many boxcar longshots winning, but it's easier to pick winners and put together exotic tickets.

In the winter, it's usually a good time to spread in multi-race exotics, take some shots and try to get one of the huge longshots in your Pick 4. In the summer, I would play it more conservatively and try to hit the number a few times.

This is generally speaking, of course. There are still going to be longshot winners, just not as many, especially in the 14-1 or higher range that I highlighted.

Another big difference is the return of quality pacers and trotters. During the winter months, there are a lot of older claiming horses, and they tend to be inconsistent, which is yet another reason why the bigger longshots come in.

With spring on the horizon, a lot of young horses, like 3yo's, will return and some of them will win right off the qualifier. So watching the qualifiers becomes more important. I think there's an advantage to betting fresh horses that are making their first, second, or third start back. This is especially true with lightly-raced horses. They're in the prime of their life and you get a chance to bet on quality horses with good pedigrees that are fresh, sound, and improving. These young horses tend to give you a strong and consistent effort – they're not sore or soured on racing, they're raring to go.



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# Ryder has Twin B Joe Fresh down to 2:20; four in at The Big M

By Jay Bergman

Trainer Chris Ryder is still on a bit of a high following the Horse of the Year announcement last month. While his Twin B Joe Fresh is back in training and has been in 2:20, others in his 60-horse stable have either been racing or qualifying over the last few weeks with stakes season on the horizon. On Saturday night a pair of sophomores will see action at The Meadowlands and a pair of veterans hope to keep their form in over-night events.

Twin B Joe Fresh remains front and center on Ryder's mind and he has plans for a debut in May in the Betsy Ross at Harrah's Philadelphia.

"It's going to be tough to find her a race before that," said Ryder, who had a similar problem last year that saw Twin B Joe Fresh lose her first race and then go on to a brilliant campaign.

It may be a bit too early to know just what kind of season Twin B Joe Fresh will have in 2025. "It's hard to tell much going that slow with her but she's all racehorse," said Ryder.

As for this coming Saturday night's races, Luke's Bar, a 5-year-old son of Bar Hopping, has won two of his last three races and looks to continue his hot streak with Chris' son Patrick in the bike once again.

"We couldn't do much with him as a 3-year-old," said Ryder about Luke's Bar. "He was good at making breaks."

Luke's Bar had shown plenty of talent as a freshman having made it on to the Grand Circuit. "I didn't have him as a 2-year-old but he raced in the Wellwood and The Bluegrass at The Red Mile."

Indeed, Luke's Bar finished second in the Bluegrass back in 2022 but raced just one time as a sophomore. "We decided to turn him out for seven or eight months and bring him back," said Ryder of the absence from the races.

Given his recent performances, Luke's Bar appears to have grown up immensely from the time off and after some tweaking with his equipment Ryder is hoping that the gelding can build on his confidence.

"I think he's got the potential for sure to be an Open type of horse, but we'll take it week-to-week for now," said Ryder.

Luke's Bar drew post six in Saturday's tenth race, a \$17,500 conditioned event that drew eight horses.

The 5-year-old Handlelikeaporsche also drew post six for Ryder on Saturday in the fourth race and like his stablemate has looked solid thus far in 2025, with a win and second in a pair of starts.

"I'm hopeful that he's got his confidence back," said Ryder of the son of Lazarus N that was a terror on the New Jersey Sire Stakes circuit in 2022. Handlelikeaporsche was a 1:51 1/5 winner by the length of the stretch on February 15 at The Meadowlands and then stepped up in class to be a solid second in last week's (March 8) higher class at The Meadowlands. On Saturday Handlelikeaporsche will have to contend with a quality field that includes his former stablemate Stonebridge Reef (post 7), who is also entering the contest with a first- and second-place finish to his credit this year.

A pair of sophomores will make their career debuts for Ryder in the fifth race on Saturday with Darknstormy Deo (post 1) and Twin B Brigade (post 6) meeting more seasoned competition.

"They both qualified well," said Ryder. "Darknstormy Deo is a half-



NIKKA SHERMAN/DRF HARNESS

**Twin B Joe Fresh, 2024 Horse of the Year, is targeting a return to the races in the Betsy Ross at Harrah's Philadelphia.**

brother to I Luv The Nitelife." I Luv The Nitelife earned \$1.9 million for Ryder back in 2012-13. Her dam Lisjune has had some other notable performers as well, with the near-\$750K winner De Los Cielos Deo still racing at age 9.

Both of Ryder's colts are eligible to the Weiss Series that begins at the end of the month at The Downs at Pocono, along with four others from his stable.

Ryder's pair will meet some seasoned horses including Federer (post 9), a son of Captaintreacherous that made a solid debut on March 4 at Pocono for trainer Brett Pelling.

While the four in attendance at The Meadowlands on Saturday will keep Ryder occupied, the major work going on in his stable is preparing some solid 3-year-old pacers for the season.

"I'm very happy with Miki And Minnie," said Ryder of last year's 2-year-old champion in the U.S. "We're pointing her towards the Fan Hanover but she also has the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes and the Kentucky Sire Stakes."

Last year Ryder took an easy route with Miki And Minnie, racing her in the Kentucky Commonwealth divisions first before moving her in with the top fillies in the Kentucky Sire Stakes. By year's end she would go on to capture the Breeders Crown and Three Diamonds.

Ryder used similar strategy with Twisted Destiny, a son of Bettor's Wish that raced in the Pennsylvania Stallion series – winning the final – and went on to capture a Reynolds division to close out his campaign.

"Twisted Destiny is training back well," said Ryder. Twisted Destiny is the ninth foal from the \$1.9 million winning Tug River Princess and the fastest freshman she's ever produced.



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# Seven sanctioned by USTA Board after SRIF investigation

Tuesday, March 11 the US Trotting Association's communications department issued a release on fines and/or suspensions handed out to seven members. That release appears below with additional information of each rule outlined. That a member violated a portion of any rule does not mean that they violated every part.

At its annual meeting on Sunday (March 9) in Columbus, Ohio, the US Trotting Association (USTA) Board of Directors voted to hand down sanctions to seven members judged to have violated Association rules and/or bylaws.

The Board relied upon the results of a nearly year-long probe conducted by the Standardbred Racing Investigative Fund (SRIF), which earlier this year reported its discoveries. The findings of violations resulted from an investigation into misconduct committed in connection with former USTA member Nick Surick. In accordance with USTA Bylaw 8.01, the disciplinary actions may not be appealed.

"These investigations are the first to be completed but they will not be the last," said Russell Williams, President of US Trotting. The alliance between the Standardbred Racing Investigative Fund and US Trotting will enhance protection of USTA data integrity, including registration and transfer of horses. It will also encourage transparency and fair dealing among the membership. USTA staff handled these matters with the utmost competence. Our board made its determinations fairly and resolutely."

Those Association members penalized or cited are:

## Joel Benson (Pompano Beach, FL)

Two-year suspension of membership and a fine in the amount of \$50,000 for violation of USTA Rule 20.06 (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member); USTA Bylaws §§ 1:04(a)(1), (a)(2), and (a)(5).

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is from the USTA rulebook: 20.06 Fraudulent Misconduct by Member — Any misconduct on the part of a member of the USTA fraudulent in its nature although not specified in these rules, is forbidden. Any person or persons who, individually or in concert with one another shall fraudulently and corruptly by any means affect the outcome of any race or affect a false registration or commit any other act injurious to the sport shall be guilty of a violation.]

## Adam Bowden (Lexington, KY)

A fine in the amount of \$28,000 for violation of USTA Rule 20.06 (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member).

## Diamond Creek Farm LLC (Wellsville, PA)

A fine in the amount of \$5,000 for violation of USTA Rule 26.16 (Failure to Submit Information).

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is from the USTA rulebook: 26.16 Failure to Submit Information — Failure by a member to submit requested information or additional aids to identification relative to the breeding, registration and/or transfer of a horse to the USTA may subject the member to suspension by the USTA.]

## Yannick Gingras (Allentown, NJ)

A fine in the amount of \$5,000 and a written reprimand for violation of USTA Rule 20.07 (Conspiracy to Commit Violation of Rules) in conspiring to violate USTA Rule 20.06 (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member).

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is from the USTA rulebook: 20.07 Conspiracy to Commit Violation of Rules.—If two or more persons shall combine and confederate together in any manner regardless of where the said persons may be located for the purpose of violating any of the Rules of the USTA and shall commit some act in furtherance of the said purpose and plan it shall constitute a conspiracy and a violation.]

## Shaun R. Laungani (Lexington, KY)

A fine in the amount of \$7,000 for violation of USTA Rule 20.06 (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member).

## Debbie Surick (Freehold, NJ)

Permanent expulsion of membership for violation of USTA Rule 20.06 (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member); Rule 20.07 (Conspiracy to Commit Violation of Rules); Rule 20.15 (False Ownership); Rule 26.16 (Failure to Submit Information); Bylaws §§ 1.04(a)(7); 1.04(a)(2), and 1.04(a)(5).

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is from the USTA rulebook: 20.15 False Ownership — Any person who knowingly makes a false representation or knowingly causes a false representation to be made that a horse is not owned wholly or in part by a person or persons barred or otherwise disqualified from participating in racing when, in fact, the horse is so owned, shall be suspended from membership in this association for a minimum of one year.]

## Elizabeth C. Yontz (Paris, KY)

A fine in the amount of \$2,500, the entire sum suspended, and a written reprimand for violation of USTA Rule 20.06. (Fraudulent Misconduct by Member).



## EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner [X @harnessyeguy](https://twitter.com/harnessyeguy)

### Thoughts on the sanctioned seven

Just above you will find seven names which received fines and/or suspensions from the U.S. Trotting Association as part of an ongoing investigation from its Standardbred Racing Investigative Fund (SRIF).

After hearing about SRIF a while back I was very much intrigued, thinking there was going to be an investigation into finding "beards" (trainers who were serving as a front for other trainers) or at the very least uncover serious wrongdoers. At this point I can't help but feel underwhelmed by the findings, not just because of the people who were listed but also since it is impossible to know what any of the people did wrong from the release.

Take Yannick Gingras for instance. He was found to have violated rules 20.06 and 20.07, which means he did anything from dealing with the wrong person to race-fixing (this is 100% not the case but how is anyone to know by reading the release?).

I saw a couple of social media posts contemplating whether Jeff Gural would ban Gingras from The Meadowlands for his actions. That's just the type of foolish talk that ambiguous releases lead to in the end. When people can't explain something they immediately jump to conclusions.

I imagine Gingras must've done something wrong (he didn't want to discuss the situation at this time), but that he got just a \$5,000 fine shows it couldn't have been too severe.

Diamond Creek was hit much harder. Between the farm itself, President Adam Bowden and VP Shaun Laungani, the total is \$40,000.

Here again, the release above leads us to guess what was going on between Diamond Creek officials and Mr. Surick. Does the hefty total mean it was a major offense or was it simply a bunch of little ones that were multiplied? One's mind can wander but from what we hear the answer seems to be simply speaking to him via the phone about horses after his arrest.

Citing a desire to let everything sink in before speaking out, Diamond Creek also declined to comment, and I really don't blame them. The worst time to speak is when you are potentially angry.

I didn't reach out to Elizabeth Yontz since her fine was suspended and I elected not to contact the other two since they both received severe punishments and there is likely less haziness in terms of their connection to Mr. Surick.

We can certainly argue whether any of the punishments fit the alleged crime. We have to say alleged because this wasn't settled in a court of law but handed out by an organization policing itself, and I have no issue with that.

As an industry we should seek out people who do things that aren't in the best interest of the sport and take action if necessary. My only future ask is that the public is kept better informed. How can you expect the people in an industry to learn from an example if you don't clearly explain what is considered to be incorrect behavior? Why drag people through the mud to set an example if you aren't going to let the public judge their infractions? Thoughts to ponder.

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# Luna looks to continue moving up the ladder at Hoosier Park

By Ken Weingartner

Marvin Luna knows what it's like to sit at the top of the driver standings at Harrah's Hoosier Park. At least for a while.

The 23-year-old Luna led the way at Hoosier as late as the first week of June last season before perennial track champion Trace Tetrick reclaimed the No. 1 spot on his way to his 13th title at the Anderson, Ind., oval.

When the Hoosier meet ended in November, Luna was fifth in the standings in victories, but his 15.2-win percentage and .288 universal driver's rating were both second among the 13 drivers with more than 400 starts at the track.

"Trace was on the road at Miami Valley, so he would miss a couple days at Hoosier, and I was the leading driver for three months," Luna said, adding with a laugh, "Obviously, when Trace came back, he told me to step away. He took over. But that was fun, holding the title for a little bit. At the end of the day, I handed the lines to him."

Luna finished with 174 wins in 1,139 starts at Hoosier last year. Tetrick led with 281, followed by John DeLong with 233, Kyle Wilfong with 212, and Jordan Ross with 189.

As Hoosier prepares to open its 2025 meet Friday, Luna is looking to build on last year's success. For the entire year, he won 256 races (tied for 44th in North America) and \$3.7 million in purses (37th in North America). He shattered his previous highs of 83 wins and \$1.11 million in purses set in 2023 as his number of starts nearly tripled.

In addition to his accomplishments at Hoosier, Luna finished second in wins at Oak Grove Racing & Gaming last year, with his 40 victories falling three shy of leader Atlee Bender. His top triumph came at Oak Grove when he guided Hung Over to a \$100,000 Kentucky Sire Stakes championship for 3-year-old male trotters.

He captured a total of 10 other stakes for state-sired horses in Indiana and Kentucky and also notched a Grand Circuit win with Dale Yeah in a division of the Pegasus Stakes at Hoosier.

"Getting more opportunities, that was quite amazing," Luna said. "I was very grateful for that. It was a good year. I was very happy with it."

"Now, I just want to be better than I was last year. That's all. I don't have competition with any other person, just myself."

When Hoosier opens Friday, Luna will have eight drives on the 14-race card. He has two morning-line favorites, including Brookview Bullet at 8-5 in the night's \$18,000 Open 1-2 for pacers. It will be Luna's first time driving Brookview Bullet, a stakes-winning 7-year-old gelding who has earned \$537,062 in his career.

"No pressure," Luna joked. "That horse is really good. I'm looking forward to it. I haven't driven him before, but I've lost to him a couple times, which wasn't fun. Hopefully, I get to win with him."

Another of Luna's starters will be Low Rider, who is 3-1 on the morning line in a \$16,000 conditioned pace. Luna piloted Low Rider to a 1:48.4 win in an Open 1-2 last year at Hoosier, the fastest-ever mile for both the driver and horse.

"That was quite fun," Luna said. "He's a complete angel. He knows his job. I'm just there for the ride. He does all the work."

Only two of Luna's starters Friday are worse than 5-1 on the morning line, and none are higher than 10-1.

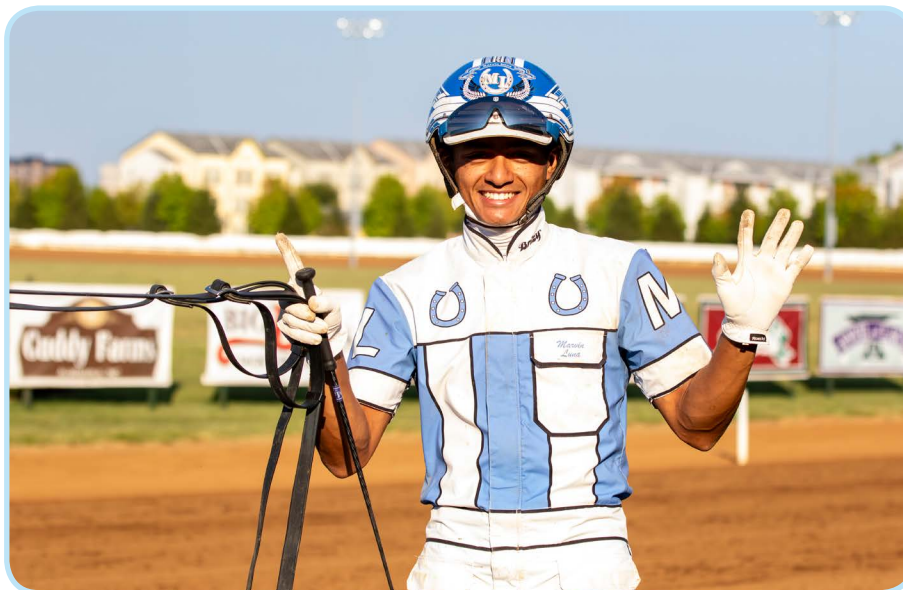
"It definitely makes me feel good," Luna said about his opportunities. "Power can definitely make me look good."

Luna, like all the drivers at Hoosier, will have to make some adjustments when the meet begins as the track will be eliminating the passing lane in the final eighth of a mile of the homestretch for a 60-day trial period. The move, made in partnership with the Indiana Standardbred

Association, is aimed at promoting more early movement and competitive racing on the seven-eighths-mile oval.

"I'm interested to find out how the no passing lane is going to play out," said Luna, who worked for trainer Tony Alagna for four years prior to focusing on driving. "For me personally, I think the passing lane did help me out because I'm a very patient driver. But I'm OK with it. I've driven at other tracks without it. If you're going to be a competitive driver, you've got to overcome any obstacles. I think we'll be OK."

Harrah's Hoosier Park will operate on a two-day Friday and Saturday schedule for each of the first two weeks of the season. From there, Hoosier Park will add Thursdays on March 26, before beginning a four-day Wednesday-Saturday schedule in April. Standard post time nightly for the 2025 racing season will be 6:15 p.m. (EDT).



AMANDA STEPHENS PHOTO

Marvin Luna won 256 races and \$3.7 million in purses in 2024.

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# Meadowlands experimenting with shorter-distance racing

It's not something you see all that often in harness racing. After all, the word "standard" makes up two-thirds of the word "standardbred", and those standardbreds in what is probably 99 percent of the races in North America go a distance of one mile.

Well, The Meadowlands is going to shake things up a bit this weekend, and, quite possibly, down the road as well.

On Friday (March 14), the 13th race at The Big M will be conducted at five-eighths-of-a-mile, which figures to test horsemen and handicappers alike.

Meadowlands' racing secretary Scott Warren says this is just a first small step toward what could possibly become something bigger.

"We've been kicking around the idea of a shorter-distance series," said Warren. "Rather than do that right away, I decided to do it with a race for a couple of reasons. One, when going a shorter distance, you worry about safety, as it's a different style of racing.

"Another reason is wagering on the product. That's the reason for this first week, the race was placed towards the end of the card where handle decreases some. I didn't want to put it in the heart of the program where wagering is strong. If we feel there is interest, I then wouldn't be opposed to moving the race to earlier on the program.

"If it goes over OK, I'm not opposed to writing more races or even a short series. We may also go in the other direction and write a longer distance race for trotters in the future."

The sprint for TrackMaster 68 pacers features a pair of horses with good early speed, so they figure to take plenty of action at the windows.

Sargeant Sonny is the 3-1 morning-line favorite and will depart from post four with driver Tyler Miller. The Jose Ramos student has led for the first three-quarters of three of his last four races and looks like a logical public choice.

John Novello trains 7-2 second choice Gaius Crastinus, who will leave from post two with Braxten Boyd in the bike. He's led at the half in each of his last two, so the action figures to be hot and heavy from the get-go in what figures to be an exciting dash.

"We are not now, or ever have been, afraid to try new things," said track Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Jason Settlemoir. "The possibility of odd-distance racing is something we think our fan base might react well to. Our product has a level of unpredictability to begin with. When you add in races that are either shorter or longer than the one mile everyone is used to, you get an even more-competitive race where the outcome is tougher to predict. That's what our fan base likes."

**A GRAND CONTEST:** Calling all handicappers!

The third edition of the 2025 Meadowlands Monthly Handicapping contest takes place on Friday (March 14). The event, which takes place once a month, goes for prize money totaling \$1,000.

For those interested in taking part, these are the details:

- There is a \$1,000 prize pool and the top two finishers earn entry into a December invitation-only tournament that will go for \$10,000 in prize money.

- Contestants must be on-site to participate.

- For complete information, and to enter, go [here](#).

**CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY:** On Saturday (March 15), come to the track and meet a pair of legendary Irish athletes when former New York Jets quarterback Ray Lucas and heavyweight boxing great Gerry Cooney will be on hand to say hello to fans.

Ask them about touchdowns and knockouts when a meet and greet takes place from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the Clubhouse Lobby.

There will also be a celebratory St. Patrick's Day race on the card, sponsored by Mary and Peter Grandich. Mr. Grandich is an author, financial advisor and horse owner, who, along with his wife, Lucas and Cooney, will make a presentation to the winning connections of the fourth race.

-edited release (Meadowlands)

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 13

### RACE 2

(6) FOX VALLEY TATUM got a perfect trip in her latest but had plenty of pace in the lane when she tipped off cover. She has been racing well and should be given every chance to double up; Billy Davis Jr.'s choice.

-John Rallis



**WOODBINE**  
MOHAWK PARK

## FRIDAY, MARCH 14

### RACE 7

(2) I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN has won two straight in this class including out-gaming a rival that seemed to have him beat last time. He's very difficult to pick against tonight.

-Derick Giwner



### RACE 11

(3) BUCKTOBER recently shipped in from Canada and joined the Bako barn, then overcame a break and tough trip to just miss in his local debut, also with Lasix added. Trotter can get over the top tonight.

-Matt Rose



## SATURDAY, MARCH 15

### RACE 6

(9) WRITE ME A ROSE plunges down the class ladder tonight off a much improved effort where he dropped a few seconds and came home in 26 4/5; expecting early speed tonight and a big mile.

-Giwner



## FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

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

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# NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

## OPENING CARDS OF 2025 MEET DRAWN AT HOOSIER

Harrah's Hoosier Park Racing & Casino will begin its 32nd season of live harness racing on Friday, March 14 with a 14-race card. A total of 104 horses have been entered for the season opener, which gets underway with a first post of 6:15 p.m. (EDT).

[READ MORE](#)

## EMPIRE BREEDERS CLASSIC PAYMENTS ARE DUE

The Empire Breeders Classic payments come due March 15 (postmarked by March 17 will be accepted).

Pertinent information and necessary forms are available on the [Tioga Downs website](#). Call (607) 972-5500 for details.

-release (Tioga)

## FORMER USHWA PRESIDENT BARRY LEFKOWITZ PASSES AWAY AT 66

Barry Lefkowitz, 66, a longtime publicist and executive in harness racing and a driving force in the resurgence of the United States Harness Writers Association as the current Chair of the Board and immediate past president, and through his efforts involving the Dan Patch Awards Banquet, passed away after battling cancer for the last year.

[READ MORE](#)

## 69 NOMINATED TO 2025 NORTH AMERICA CUP

Woodbine Entertainment Monday (3/10) announced 69 3-year-old pacers, including filly Chantilly, have been nominated to this year's C\$1 million North America Cup (G1) at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

This year's North America Cup is scheduled for Saturday, June 14.

[READ MORE](#)

## \$3,042 PICK-5 CARRYOVER SATURDAY NIGHT AT MGM NORTHFIELD PARK

On Wednesday night (Mar. 12th) the Pick-5 went unsolved creating a \$3,042 carryover to move forward to Saturday night (Mar. 15th).

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 \$1,122 and boasts the low 14% takeout.

-release (MGM Northfield)

## DELAWARE (OH) MARCH 15 PAYMENTS DUE

Two-year-old sustaining payments for the 81st edition of the Little Brown Jug (Grade 1), the 56th Jugette (Grade 1), the 74th Old Oaken Bucket (3-year-old open trot – Grade 3) and the 74th Buckette (3-year-old filly trot – Grade 3) are due March 15. These payments are for foals of 2023 and will be raced in 2026.

2-year-olds not nominated in the May 15, 2024 yearling payment, may be made eligible thru a supplemental nomination fee on or before the March 15, 2024 payment. This supplemental payment is in addition to the normal March 15 payment. Please visit the staking section of [ustrotting.com](#) to see the details.

Sustaining payments are also due for the 86th Standardbred two-year-old colt and filly stakes for foals of 2023 to be raced in 2025.

The \$1.2M (est.) Ohio Breeders Championships require a single \$300 (\$100 for the aged events) nomination payment due March 15, 2025 with no further sustaining payments required.

Also on the Delaware County Fair race schedule are \$20,000 legs of the Buckeye Stallion Series. To nominate to the BSS, a \$250 nomination fee is due with no further sustaining payments required.

The Delaware County Fair is once again pleased to be a part of the Ohio Fair Racing Conference. The OFRC events require either a \$75 nomination fee for just the Delaware County Fair or \$440 for all the OFRC events. Nominations for the BSS and OFRC events must be postmarked by March 15, 2025 and sent directly to the Ohio Harness Horseman's Association, 2237 Sonora Drive, Grove City, OH 43123.

The five-day Delaware Grand Circuit meet opens Sunday, September 14 and will run through Thursday, September 18.

Make checks payable and send all other entries to: The Delaware County Fair, Tom Wright, P.O. Box 1560, Powell, OH 43065.

For the latest news, information and nomination forms, please visit the Little Brown Jug website: [www.littlebrownjug.com](http://www.littlebrownjug.com).

-release (Little Brown Jug)

## PAYMENT DUE MARCH 15 FOR 2026 MEADOWLANDS PACE

The \$400 sustaining payment on 2-year-olds (foals of 2023) to race in the 2026 Meadowlands Pace is due March 15 (postmarked by March 17). There is a supplemental payment of \$1,000 that may be made to gain eligibility for any foal of 2023 that was not made eligible by the yearling payment.

The list of horses that were made eligible by the yearling payment is [here](#).

The form is available on the [Meadowlands website](#).

Sustaining payments for all 2025 Meadowlands stakes are also due on March 15. The list of eligible horses for all those stakes is posted on the [website](#).

-release (Meadowlands)

## KEYSTONE USHWA ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS

Evan Pattak and Pohla Smith, the husband-and-wife team who have been the "First Family" of Pennsylvania harness racing communications for over four decades, have been selected to receive the Mary Lib Miller Award, the highest honor annually given by the Keystone Chapter of the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA).

Also to be honored by Keystone USHWA are T C I, Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Horse of the Year; Todd Schadel, the Pennsylvania Trainer/Driver of the Year Award; Greg Wasiluk, the Unsung Hero Award; George Napolitano Jr., the Special Achievement Award; and the Rocky Top Stable, the Small Stable of the Year Award.

The Keystone award winners will be presented their awards in track-side ceremonies during the Pennsylvania ovals' racing seasons.

-edited release (Keystone USHWA)

## SUSAN LADEN PASSES AWAY AT AGE 80

Susan Laden, a prominent horse owner of champions in the 1980s, died after a short illness at Englewood Health Care in New Jersey, not far from where she resided. She was 80.

During the 1980s, Ms. Laden, a petite blond, was a striking presence in winner's circles, especially at the Meadowlands. She owned many notable horses throughout the years, primarily racing as North Woodland Stables, including:

Central Park West p,2,1:53 3/5f (\$534,863), a world champion, Breeders Crown winner and the 2-Year-Old Pacing Filly of the Year; JEF'S Spice 3,1:55 2/5 (\$951,469), a Breeders Crown winner at ages 2 and 3; Supergill 3,1:53 3/5 (\$664,194), winner of the 1987 Peter Haughton Memorial Trot and early-season favorite for the Hambletonian; Keyser Lobell 2,1:58 (\$610,965), winner of the 1988 Peter Haughton Memorial Trot; and many others.

Ms. Laden's horses were primarily trained by Bob Bencal, Bruce Nickells, Ray Remmen, Mark Loewe, Doug Miller and Kevin McDermott. In 1987, just two years after she bought her first Standardbred racehorse, she owned two starters in the rich Woodrow Wilson Pace for 2-year-old colts, Kingston and Threefold, who each won their elimination races.

"I really liked horse racing, but I didn't like going and watching other people's horses," Ms. Laden told racing writer Mike Farrell of The Record in New Jersey. "I've got a business of my own and I'm independent. I thought I would give it a shot."

Ms. Laden's business was a successful flea market that she established in Union City, N.J. Ms. Laden's approach to harness racing was hands on as she studied pedigrees in sales catalogs and then went to the yearling sales to personally inspect the horses she liked on paper.

Ms. Laden is survived by sons Eric Haber (Stacey) and Paul (Elena), and grandchildren Ashley, Matthew, Max, Sasha, Ellie, Evan and Olivia.

A funeral service was conducted on March 9 with a private burial on March 10. The family requests that memorial contributions be made to the National Kidney Foundation.