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Mandatory payout Hi-5 at Woodbine Mohawk Park; Guaranteed wagers start Thursday at Hoosier

**Comments? Questions?
Email the Editor DGwinner@DRF.com**

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner
✉ @harnesseveguy

The world is ever-changing and if the harness racing industry is to survive it must adapt as well. That is basically the driving force behind a multi-million-dollar venture from entrepreneur and standardbred owner/trainer Michael Calderone.

Expected to launch during the first week of April, freeracehorse.com is an immersive potentially game-changing experience designed to expose new people to the sport by creating an emotional connection to the horses while also providing entertainment value and education about harness racing. The idea is to bypass the industry's normal method of attracting customers – as a gambling option – in order to create a wider funnel at the top so the sport can charm a general audience.

"We want to sell the story of the horse and reposition harness racing," said Calderone, who has a

team of videographers, editors and programmers working to make the user experience special.

The idea for freeracehorse.com came to Calderone when all great concepts hit the mind, during a sleepless night. "For months I was banging my head trying to figure out how to put this all together. Every path I started I ran into obstacles. I was sitting at my computer at my house down in Florida; it must've been three in the morning. I was just searching domain names and randomly put in freeracehorse.com and I never expected it to be available. You would think the word free is so powerful that the domain would be gone. That is when I knew this was meant to be," said Calderone.

So what exactly is freeracehorse.com? Broken down to the lowest common denominator, it is a website that offers the opportunity for any person 18 or older to own a small piece of a race horse for no cost. You visit the site, enter your name and email (or phone number) and then pick the horse you want to own from a selection of up to six options. Each horse will have 10,000 shares available, so you aren't going to get rich by participating, but to be

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DRF Bets



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Breeders Crown
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USS Indianapolis Memorial

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SCREENSHOTS PROVIDED

(above) Visitors get to choose which horse's journey they want to follow for free. (below) Each horse has a live multi-angle stall cam, a chat box and available race replays.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

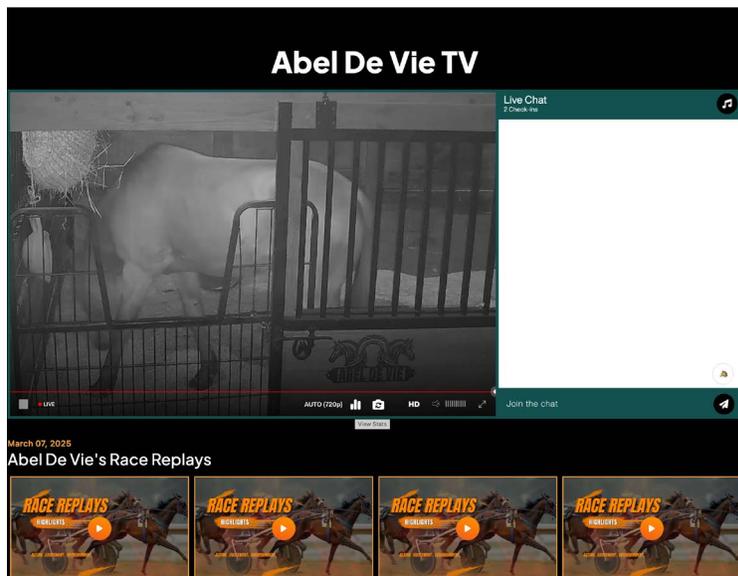
fair, you didn't invest anything. Besides, this is meant to be a door-opening experience to harness racing by taking the fractional ownership idea to a new level.

Once you sign up and get a horse of your own the experience truly widens. You can watch your horse play and relax via a multi-camera stall setup. You can even chat with other owners while watching your horse roll in the hay or listen to custom music about your horse. At Calderone's home base in Delaware he has 75 cameras positioned throughout the barn and the surrounding areas to catch all the action and produce 5K quality video. There is also a studio with a massive green screen where they shoot more informative content like "Vet Connect" to increase the education of site visitors.

At the heart of freeracehorse.com is the story telling. Each horse will have at least two weekly videos from three to five minutes in length covering their journey. These professional videos could cover anything from a horse learning to behave behind the starting gate to special behavioral quirks they have to training sessions. I was able to preview a half-dozen while at the Calderone's headquarters and all were broadcast quality features. Some storylines appealed to me more than others but that is why there isn't just one tale to tell.

For the first time in harness racing history people will truly be exposed to the backstory of horses before they hit the track and the story will be ongoing, like WWE does with wrestling or a soap opera or even reality TV. What kind of week is the horse having? How did they train? Did they sleep well? Are they eating their hay and oats? Everyone who takes Calderone up on a free horse will be part of the experience and participate in decision making. People will be able to follow along and see how the actual lives of these horses unfold. In some ways it is like what the reality show Big Brother does as it follows the story of 16 people living in a house and how they react to different variables they face daily.

"To most people horse racing means nothing because they know nothing about it and they won't give it any bandwidth. In our case free horse ownership gives them a reason to stop and take a look, and the engaging emotional content can drive the desire to want more and get more involved," said Calderone, who sees huge potential in getting the "average Joe" engaged in the sport. "People aren't rational, they're emotional.



We have created a most amazing experience where they will feel like the horse is in their backyard or part of the family."

While the first horse comes with an all-access pass to the content surrounding its journey as a way to showcase the platform to a wide audience, Calderone's model calls for a \$2.50 monthly charge per additional horse if you want to have access to the entertainment background content that comes with it. When you think about it, you are paying \$2.50 for 30 to 40 minutes of entertainment. That's certainly a better value than the cost of a game of bowling or a movie ticket.

The small fee is just one side of the monetary equation since horse owners will also earn points as they participate in the activities on the site. For instance, every penny earned is a point and community interaction can earn points. These can then be redeemed for digital assets, fan wear and other items.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)



DERICK GIWNER

Michael Calderone has a stable of 14 horses in Delaware that will begin qualifying in April.

operation. In a somewhat unprecedented move, his entire 14-horse stable has been on vacation for six months so they return in the proper condition for launch. They will all be qualifying in the coming weeks.

Under Calderone's watchful eye along with second trainer and driver Denny Bucceri, each horse is expected to have a lighter-than-typical yearly workload of maybe 20 starts to make sure they are in the best physical shape year-round. Members will be able to watch the replays of these races and Calderone is hopeful of working with the local tracks on the East Coast to provide never-before-seen coverage using up to six cameras at the track and a drone.

"We've figured out how to merge GoPro content from multiple cameras and combine it into a first-rate product like nothing people have seen before. We just need a track to allow us to use our equipment on the grounds," said Calderone. "This is a great opportunity for a track to get in on the ground floor with me."

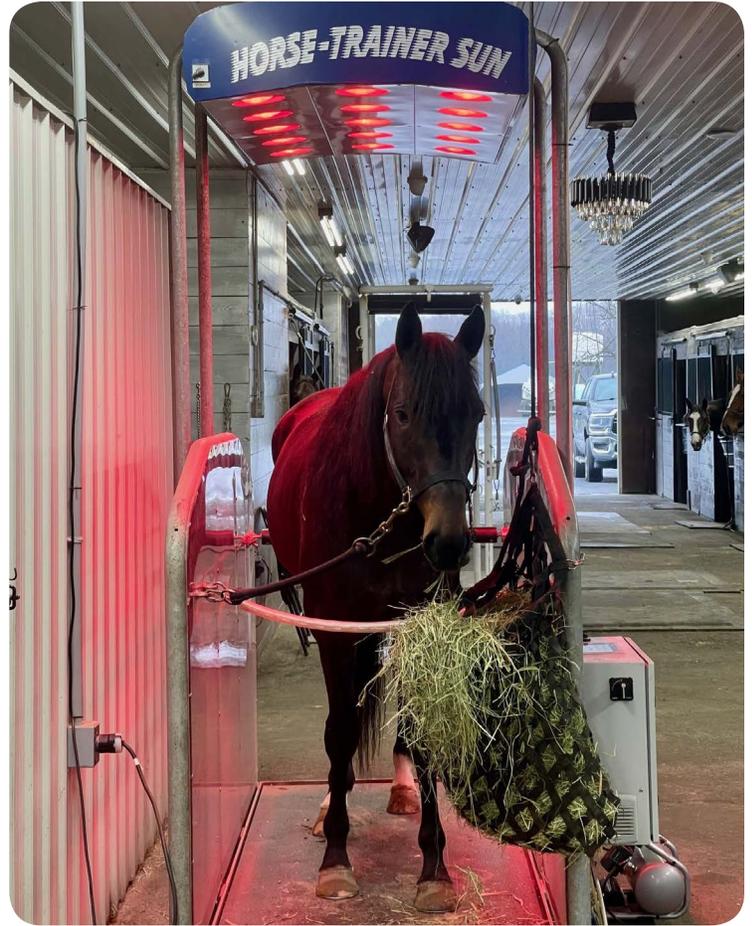
I floated the idea of his team perhaps creating promotional videos for a participating track to help them support their upcoming stakes or even live racing, and Calderone seemed willing. Imagine having the favorites from the Hambletonian eliminations featured and then this footage would be available for The Meadowlands to promote the final. We have seen the hype videos Sweden does to promote the Elitlopp and this could be that type of content in the U.S. to truly get people excited for the race.

Time will tell whether Calderone's investment will prove fruitful. He is convinced that this type of rebirth and repositioning of the sport using an entertainment gateway rather than gambling is the only way to truly bring in a new audience to harness racing. Once they are engaged the opportunities will be there for people to dip their toes into betting, or live track visits, and maybe even real horse ownership where they have a bigger stake in the industry. Calderone is already heavily invested with plans to spend more and has two feature articles spotlighting the venture planned for a national audience via USA Today and MSN. When is the last time Harness Racing got that type of national spotlight?

The possibilities are there for Calderone's venture to move the needle and there really is little downside to the industry embracing his concept. With some cooperation, if his vision comes to reality, perhaps the floodgates to the general public will finally open and provide Harness Racing the larger fan base it has so greatly yearned to see for decades.

"Keep in mind that most games don't return anything tangible," said Calderone. "We have a gaming experience in a full-blown entertainment platform. And we give people ownership. That is something that has never been done before."

During a tour of his facility it was clear that Calderone has spared no expense in terms of horse care. From water treadmills to electromagnetic therapy to cushioned stall mats, everything a horse could need to stay happy, healthy and sound is part of the



DERICK GIWNER

Horses in the Calderone barn were getting many treatments.

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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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- The **ONLY** trotting stallion to win sub-1:50 twice!
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Standing in New York at Winbak Farm.
2025 FEE: \$7,500 (U.S.)



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



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CONFESSIONS

By Keith Gisser

Branding/marketing Harness Racing

Last time we discussed the idea of having the USTA or some other Harness Racing entity sponsoring a car in NASCAR. After some research, I came to the conclusion that this would be cost prohibitive. But then I started thinking, what about another sport? Or what if we flipped the script completely?

The International Hot Rod Association (IHRA) is the major sponsor of drag racing in the United States, but it has been in a downward slide for years. Recently, IHRA was purchased by a venture capitalist who has big plans, but let's face it, the days of Shirley "Cha Cha" Muldowney, "Big Daddy" Don Garlits and Jake "The Snake" Prudhomme are long gone. With the uncertainty of the big revival, I would pass. Plus you only get 8-10 seconds of exposure per race.

F1 (Grand Prix) and Indy Car sponsorships are even more expensive than NASCAR, running as high as \$3,000,000 annually. So let's find a sport that is a little slower.

The PGA tour. Putting a logo on Jordan Spieth or Rory McIlroy's cap only costs between \$250-500K according to printandpromomarketing.com.

The Pro Bass fishing tours get good TV exposure on Fox Sports, Outdoors channels and the ESPN family. I reached out to Sara Neumore, whose Nu Threadz clothing company not only outfits many of the guys on the pro bass tour but also sponsors several. As in NASCAR, these guys are walking billboards and while many of the sponsors are industry related – Shimano, and Daiwa fishing gear and Mercury Boats, for example (where's my Zebco 33 sponsorship?) – you will also see Pop Tarts, Mountain Dew and Farm and Fleet represented.

Although not a title sponsor, the Nu Threadz fishing team consists of six anglers at the top level and several more in the minor leagues.

"There are quite a few similarities with sponsorship between the way NASCAR works and professional fishing," said Neumore. "To sponsor an individual pro you can expect anywhere from the following (depending on the angler):

\$3,000 a year would get you a small logo on the jersey, boat, truck wrap and 6-8 social media posts throughout the year about your product.

\$5,000 gets you a medium logo on all plus more social media posts

A title sponsor . . . largest logo on the side of the boat, truck and jersey, could run you \$25K-100K depending on the angler. "

These sound like numbers our sport could afford. And the fans of this sport are already familiar with the outdoors. What's more outdoors than horse racing? It might be worth a thought.

Now let's consider flipping the entire narrative. What if we got sponsors for our drivers and turned them into walking billboards? Currently the USTA rule 17.13 allows ads on driver's colors, stating:

(c) Except where the logo conflicts with a titled, sponsored event, drivers may display company logos, trademarks or other advertising insignias on their driver colors provided the driver is properly authorized by the entity owning the logo.

(d) All logos and trademarks must be in good taste.

(e) The use of a logo or other advertising insignia by a driver although specifically allowed by these Rules shall nevertheless always be subject to scrutiny and evaluation by the judges of a meeting in determining whether said driver is properly dressed.

I was surprised that there is no size limit on these patches. We have all seen the Walsh Harness patches on top drivers' colors and one of the great attractions of our sport is that each driver has his or her own

colors. It makes it easy to follow a horse on the racetrack – far more so than a small saddle pad with a number. And while now we do see some drivers wearing owners' colors, a la Thoroughbred racing, driver colors would be a perfect spot for commercial logos.

The USTA already has corporate partnerships with a number of companies and while I am not sure I want to see the Big Ass Fans logo plastered across Dave Palone's back, John Deere and Tim Tetrick share green and gold colors. It's a logical tie-in. Sherwin Williams, another USTA partner, shares colors with now retired Ron Pierce. So does Pepsi. Opportunity lost.

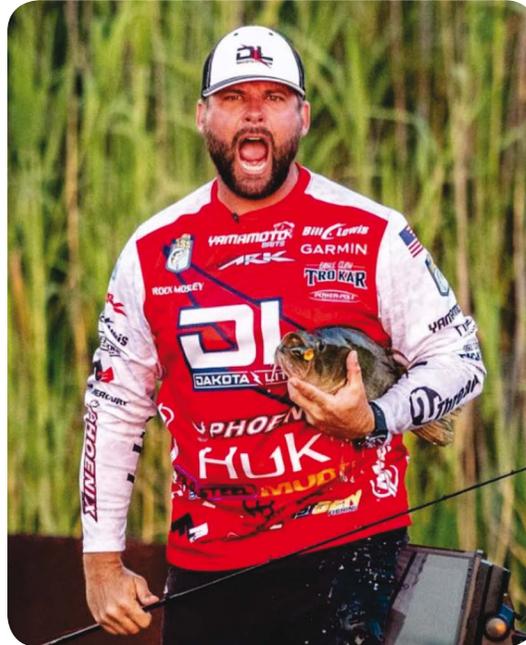
And while he does sport black as part of his colors, Dexter Dunn's red and white would be a perfect spot for a Coca Cola logo. Or incorporate the black and bring on Pizza Hut as a sponsor. Aaron Merriman's red, white and gold mimic the Golden Arches of McDonald's. I could go on, but you get the idea.

I know what you are thinking – what good does it do the sport to have those sponsors? As Neumore pointed out, many pro fishermen get sponsored not just with logos, but for social media posts that mention product. This is where our sport would benefit most – imagine Tim Tetrick, who has a strong social media presence (63,000 on Facebook alone), on a John Deere tractor posting on social media or being part of an ad campaign. I am not sure how the USTA would respond to sponsors like beer or the nicotine patches we mentioned last time, but we are missing an opportunity here.

Additionally, there could be on-track events – Coca Cola Giveaway night with Dunn signing autographs. Or, similar to McDonald's promo with pro basketball teams – when they score a certain number of points, you get a free or discounted item – every time Merriman wins three or more races you get an order of free fries (but only in the app). The possibilities are endless.

I'm not saying we should do these things. I am just saying we need to think outside the box in order for our sport to get the recognition it needs to survive and thrive.

That's it for this time. Back to horses next time. Hopefully your brackets are still intact and that will allow you to go cash.



COURTESY NU THREADZ

Brock Mosley is a regular angler sponsored by Nu Threadz among other companies.

Gisser remembers Hunter Myers

This month's column was written a couple weeks ago. I like to let them sit for a bit before a final proof and then off to editor Derick. I figured I was all set. And then Wednesday afternoon (March 19) at The Meadows happened. Hunter Myers, 27, passed away after a horrific accident. I didn't know Hunter well – I interviewed him a couple times and he drove a few for us – but I have followed him since he was high schooler driving at the fairs. I have watched a lot of great drivers start out as youngsters over the years. I saw David Miller at Lebanon and Scioto; Aaron Merriman and Brett Miller at Northfield and Tim Tetrick, of course. I was even around for the start of the Dave Palone years. All I can tell you is that Hunter had the potential to be just as good as any of them. 2,500 wins before turning 27! He wasn't just talented, but as anyone who was close to him has said, he had a positive attitude (maybe due to his craving for Rock Star energy drinks) and always had a smile on his face. In a sport where many participants would benefit from being "turned out" for a couple weeks, according to everyone around him, Myers' energy was contagious. I read a lot of tributes over the last few days, but none stood out more to me than [Anthony MacDonald's video and Commentary](#). Not only did Hunter have great success with horses from thestable.ca such as Sintra, AMac was at The Meadows when it happened. I pray for Hunter's fiancé Chloe and their infant son Hayden. I'll close by saying what I posted on my Facebook when I found out, but saying, "may his memory be for a blessing," seems grossly inadequate.



MEADOWLANDS MADNESS

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Burke/Hellabalou begin Borgata three-peat journey at Yonkers

By Jay Bergman

Trainer Ron Burke's horses have captured four of the last five Borgata Series finals at Yonkers Raceway and the sport's leading conditioner will be looking for his first three-peat when he sends out Hellabalou in the first of five \$50,000 divisions in the opening round of the 2025 edition on Monday (March 31).

Hellabalou was hardly a dominant horse when he competed in the Borgata in 2023 and 2024, but that didn't matter as he lit-up-the-board winning the 2023 finale as a 47-1 outsider and then came back last year with an equally impressive score at odds of 11-1. Burke was mindful that Hellabalou could only make last year's final if things worked out perfectly in the final leg.

"In the last leg he needed to finish second to reach the final," said Burke of Hellabalou's path in 2024. "Then he was just vicious in the final."

Hellabalou went winless through the five preliminary legs in 2024 and won just one of the five legs the previous year, but like many Burke horses he just kept getting better with each week and would be at his best for the final.

"I think what works best for him at Yonkers and in this series is that he's got unbelievable speed out of the gate," said Burke. "He can get himself in position and that's big in a series like this."

In Monday's opening round of action Hellabalou landed post seven and that's not likely as big a handicap for him as it is for others. Yannick Gingras, who guided him to last year's title, will be in the bike as the 7-year-old son of Sweet Lou looks for his third straight win.

"I would say that's probably the biggest difference this year is that he's much sharper coming into the series than in the previous two years" said Burke, pointing to the solid foundation Hellabalou has under him with the big races ahead.

With almost \$1.5 million banked through his career, Hellabalou is not the richest horse in the field he'll face on Monday. That honor goes to the warhorse Charlie May (post 4) with nearly \$2.3 million to his credit. Both 7-year-olds enjoyed success as sophomores and have added to their careers as older performers. Charlie May prepped for the Borgata with a 1:49 1/5 win at The Downs at Pocono on March 15.

Another horse sired by Burke's famed Sweet Lou could be a sleeper in the series ready to break out. Ammo has only been in the "Burke Brigade" for a few months, but he's gotten the attention of the Hall of Fame trainer.

"He's a Breeders Crown winner with some class," said Burke of Ammo, a major upset winner in the Crown juvenile event in 2022 that has never quite come back to that performance since. "He was sneaky good in his last start and he's just starting to respond to our program."

Ammo drew post two in the eighth race and fourth \$50,000 Borgata division, and that's the good news for team Burke. The bad is that he's likely in the toughest of the quintet with Desperate Man (post 3) and the streaking Mossdale Ben N (post 6) to his outside in a packed division.

Desperate Man won 11 of his 16 starts last year for trainer Travis Alexander but was denied the Borgata championship final when he got parked the mile yet somehow managed a third-place finish. Desperate Man qualified solidly at Pocono in 1:54 on March 26, his third prep race in advance of Monday's 2025 debut.

Mossdale Ben N has been in action for trainer Peter Tritton and has been the best horse to race at Yonkers this meet, with four consecutive wins including an easy score in the March 17 \$35,000 Invitational over the Yonkers half-mile strip.

Act Fast (post 1) has a position edge in the seventh race Borgata division but to date Burke hasn't been enamored with his performances. "I've been disappointed with him," said Burke. "I know he's better than the way he's been racing."

Act Fast has yet to hit the board in three starts this year but figures to have a big chance with the favorable draw on Monday.

Birthday has had a few prep races at The Meadowlands prior to the Borgata and Burke is happy with the way he's coming in. "He's a good horse that will need to get the right kind of trip in this series," said Burke of the 6-year-old Sweet Lou-sired gelding that won nine times last year and had success over the Yonkers strip.

Birthday drew post three in the ninth race and final division, and will get tested from a solid field of eight that includes last year's MGM Grand Prix champion Typhoon Banner N (post 1) along with the well-traveled Rocknroll Runa A (post 6). Also joining this group is Miki Shan N (post 8), a winner in both his North American starts at Yonkers including a solid effort on March 25.



MIKE LIZZI

Hellabalou capturing the 2024 MGM Borgata final at Yonkers.

Burke doesn't have a horse in the sixth race Borgata division where Coaches Corner (post 7) will make his 2025 Yonkers debut after enjoying tremendous success here last year for trainer Per Engblom. Coaches Corner finished second in last year's Borgata final and appears to have come back in excellent condition.

Trainer Cory Stratton is no stranger to the Borgata and has a pair in the series, including For Once In My Life (post 4), a son of Downbytheseaside that's been first or second in all six of his starts this year racing at the top level at The Meadowlands.

Dunkin' won two preliminary legs of the Borgata for trainer Scott DiDomenico last year but then drew post eight for the final where he finished fifth. Dunkin' has been second in four of his five starts this year heading into the Borgata and landed post two in this division.

Burke also seemed excited about the prospects of his pacing mare Seaside Diva in the Blue Chip Matchmaker series that begins on Friday (March 28). "She's a solid mare and I think she can go with the best in that series," Burke said.

Monday's 12-race Yonkers program starts at 6:45 p.m. (EDT) and the five Borgata races form a \$10,000 guaranteed Pick 5 wager. Free past performances for the series will be available [here](#).

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**MEADOWLANDS
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT**

DeVita brings a six-pack to Pocono for Weiss opening round

By Derick Givner

Trainer Nick DeVita is rolling into The Downs at Pocono starting Saturday with a six-pack of 3-year-olds as he looks to make some noise in the first round of the Weiss Series for late-developing trotters and pacers. The 39-year-old had a bit of a down year statistically in 2024 as he focused on younger horses.

"I learned a lot, business-wise and all-around," said DeVita, who has about 50 horses in his barn that races out of Mark Ford's training center in New York.

DeVita called 2025 a "restructuring year" for his barn as he looked ahead to the younger horses racing not just now but in late spring and summer. "It's very exciting, especially this time of year and the next couple of months when the 2-year-olds qualify, but there is a lot of disappointment, you get your hopes up and things fall apart in the last minute," said DeVita.

DeVita has an interesting group of four slated to compete in the six Weiss divisions for sophomore male pacers on the Saturday afternoon card that gets underway at 1:00 p.m. (EDT) and DeVita has secured Tim Tetrick for all of them. "The owner David Hamm likes Tim a lot and has used him a lot down in Delaware at Dover. He asked me to reach out to Tim and see if he would come out to drive and Tim said 'sure'," said DeVita.

Stay Out Late gets the party started for DeVita and Tetrick in the sixth race. The son of Stay Hungry was victorious at Dover Downs in 1:58 1/5 in his lone career start on March 17 and is clearly stepping up in company.

"He's still very green," said DeVita, who added that they didn't do much with him as a 2-year-old because he was a bit of a "bull" last year. "He's already improved from his first qualifier to his last start at Dover and I know he's racing against tougher this weekend but we are all happy with what we've seen so far and are hoping there is more improvement to come. He looks like a good horse and this week he's trained really well. We are anxious to see if he picks up a bit more."

Stay Out Late starts from post six as the 9-2 fourth choice on the morning line. Gold Glove Hanover is the 5-2 early choice from post four.

Dune Buggy enters the eighth race and third division of the Weiss as the 7-2 third choice off a pair of second-place finishes at Dover, the son of Huntsville's only two starts of the year.

"He kind of got a rough trip in his first start in Delaware and his

feelings weren't hurt and he raced well in his next start," said DeVita about the gelding that will start from post four. "We are hoping he improves a little bit racing against tougher horses. He showed a little bit of ability last year so we weren't afraid to throw him in this race and hopefully it pays off by making some money in the series."

On paper DeVita's best chance of success comes in the tenth race when Charge Me Up leaves from post three following a pair of Dover Downs victories as the odds-on favorite with Tetrick in the bike.

"He raced very tough going a big first half and holding on in his last race at Dover," said DeVita. "He seems to like to win and I'm guessing Tim's thinking his afternoon revolves around this one."

Saturday concludes for DeVita and the Weiss Series in the 14th race with Zip Time (7-2), a son of Captain Crunch who starts from post two. The gelding finished fourth in both of his 2025 starts so far at Pocono and hopes to find his way to the win column for the first time in his six-race career.

"He's had a lot of bad luck in his first couple of starts. That last race a couple of horses made breaks in front of him and knocked him out a bit, but he closed good and he's been getting better," said DeVita.

Pocono is dark on Sunday but starts back up Monday at 1:00 with 3-year-old male trotters racing in a trio of Weiss splits. DeVita's day starts in race three with Big Shot, a son of Propulsion who won his debut at Dover in 1:59 but struggled in his second start to finish sixth in 2:00 3/5.

"We paid a lot of money for him so there is a lot of weight on his shoulders," said DeVita, who added that the gelding will race on Lasix for the first time on Monday.

Anthony Napolitano is listed to drive Big Shot from post six.

DeVita also has Global Twist in the seventh race Weiss event from post seven with Tyler Buter in the bike and he was thrilled with his second second-place finish over the Pocono surface on March 17.

"Tyler drove him great in his last start. He closed really good and I couldn't have been happier with him," said DeVita.

"Both of them are alright but still green and learning the process, plus us figuring them out equipment-wise," said DeVita. "Global Twist is a little more fine-tuned right now."

The Weiss series is a spring staple at Pocono. It offers three preliminary legs and a \$50,000 final for each division on April 19 and 21.

Hoosier to debut GTD wagers

Harrah's Hoosier Park will look to kick off its racing week with a bang as a trio of \$10,000 guaranteed pools have been added to the 11-race card on Thursday, March 27.

With a first post of 6:15 p.m., the guarantees will start right from the jump with a \$10,000 guaranteed Pick 5 sequence in races 1-5. In 2025, all Pick 5 sequences at Harrah's Hoosier Park have seen takeout reduced to 15%.

Race fans will then turn their attention to the Pick 4 in races 6-9 which will also see a \$10,000 guaranteed pool. As part of the wagering menu changes for 2025, Pick 4 sequences at Harrah's Hoosier Park see an industry low takeout of just 12%.

There is also an industry low takeout of 12% in both Hoosier High 5 sequences on the card in races 7 and 11. The latter will feature the traditional \$10,000 guaranteed pool, a weeknight staple at Harrah's Hoosier Park which will be implemented again in 2025 in the final race of each card.

Harrah's Hoosier Park will race on a Thursday through Saturday schedule for each of the next two weeks, before going on Wednesday through Saturday schedule beginning on April 9. Standard first post each night at Harrah's Hoosier Park is 6:15 p.m.

For more information on the 2025 live racing season at Harrah's Hoosier Park, guests are encouraged to visit www.harrahshoosier-park.com.

-edited release (Hoosier)

Cal Expo to possibly close?

A report by Rowena Shaddox from Fox 40 of Sacramento, California said that harness racing at Cal Expo could come to an end pending a Friday decision by the Board of Directors.

There was a public meeting scheduled for Thursday morning at 9:15 a.m. local time to discuss "the future of horse racing at Cal Expo" according to a bulletin posted by the California Exposition & State Fair. A second notice cites that the Board of Directors will meet on Friday morning at 9:00 a.m. in closed session to discuss the "leasing of real property at 1600 Exposition Blvd." where the Cal Expo harness meet is currently conducted by Watch & Wager LLC. A public session is scheduled for 10:15 a.m. when the fate of the track may come to a head.

A source told us that officials running the Cal Expo meet were informed just two weeks ago that they may be given notice. While Watch & Wager LLC has a lease until 2030, it apparently contains a six month out clause.

Cal Expo races Friday and Saturday weekly and began its 2024-25 meet on December 13. Closing night is scheduled for May 2. It is the only U.S. Standardbred track west of Minnesota where Running Aces has a May through September meet.

Should the 50-plus year run of Cal Expo come to an end, many local horsepeople will be faced with life-changing decisions. While many compete in Minnesota, Indiana and Western Canada during the spring and summer, California has become their winter homes.

Pelling pair has sights set on Blue Chip Matchmaker success

By Jay Bergman

The 2025 Blue Chip Matchmaker series arrives on Friday night with a revamped purse structure and a solid group of nominees that led to four \$50,000 divisions carded on the Yonkers program. Trainer Brett Pelling has never started a horse in the series before but has two quality mares ready to battle, with Walkin On Sunshine, undefeated in three starts this year over the Yonkers strip, primed for the lucrative series.

"She's been dynamite since I got her," said Pelling of the 5-year-old daughter of Always A Virgin that shipped east this winter and has dominated the Invitational Mares category over the Yonkers half-miler.

"You can do anything you want with her, she's quite versatile," said Pelling, who believes that attribute will go a long way in a series. "She doesn't have to be on the front end to win."

Walkin On Sunshine has been absent from the races for a month, with Pelling suggesting that there were no races that filled as he tried to give his mare a race in preparation for the series. To keep her fresh Pelling put Walkin On Sunshine in a qualifier at The Meadowlands on March 22 and she showed explosive speed in the stretch, circling the field with a 25 4/5 final quarter and in the process roaring past the \$1.9 million winning Grace Hill. Jason Bartlett, who drove Grace Hill in the qualifier, returns to the bike on Friday where Walkin On Sunshine landed post five in the sixth race and second \$50,000 division.

Walkin On Sunshine faces six rivals including Lit De Rose, the now 10-year-old mare that captured last year's championship, and has qualified three times for trainer-driver Pat Lachance in advance of her 2025 debut. Lit De Rose drew post three.

In the seventh race and third Blue Chip Matchmaker division, Rocket Deo will be making her 4-year-old debut for Pelling from post four in a field of seven.

"I wish I had a few weeks more," said Pelling, who ideally would have liked to have a race first prior to the stakes event for Rocket Deo.

A winner in a qualifier at The Meadowlands on March 22, Rocket Deo has won half of her 22 lifetime starts with \$500K banked predominantly as a sophomore. Pelling is ill-concerned with the fact the daughter of Captaintreacherous has never raced around a half-mile track.

"She'll have no trouble getting around it," Pelling said of the Yonkers half-mile oval.

Rocket Deo looks to be making Blue Chip Matchmaker history of sorts as the mare is out of the 2012 series champion Rocklamation. Back in 2012 as a 4-year-old, Rocklamation won the prestigious event for trainer Ron Burke. A daughter of Rocknroll Hanover, Rocklamation would race in the series and make the final in 2013 and 2014 as well.

How Rocket Deo will handle older competition remains to be seen, with Friday's field including some veteran performers with a wealth of experience over the Yonkers oval. Lloyd's Loves (post 1) has been on the board in six of her seven starts this year and has proved a worthy purchase by trainer Edwin Quevedo, who snagged the oft-winning mare last fall and has campaigned her at the top level since.

Grace Hill spent some quality time at Yonkers last fall, winning a pair of Invitationals in November before tackling Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh in the FanDuel at The Meadowlands. Trainer Virgil Morgan Jr. has the 7-year-old daughter of Always B Miki primed for another season, with Friday's debut a first for her in the Blue Chip Matchmaker.



MIKE LIZZI

Walkin On Sunshine landed post five in the sixth race at Yonkers Raceway on Friday.

Grace Hill landed post five in the last of the four \$50,000 stanzas and will need to be ready against a solid field.

The 4-year-old Seaside Diva has been a monster over the last two years in Ohio for trainer Ron Burke, having earned more than \$800K on the Sire Stakes scene and beyond. The daughter of Downbytheseaside had a prep race at Hoosier Park on March 21 in advance of the Blue Chip Matchmaker and should be solid from the pole position on Friday night.

Trainer Jeff Cullipher has a pair in the series opening leg, with Uptown Hanover (post 3), a daughter of Somebeachsomewhere, testing the top level of the division following a breakout campaign in 2024 that saw her finish in the money in 26 of her 37 starts while banking nearly \$170K in the process. Uptown Hanover was a winner at Yonkers in December, likely giving ownership the incentive to nominate to this series.

The opening division of the Blue Chip Matchmaker, carded as race four, marks the North American debut of Aardie B Miki N, a 5-year-old daughter of Always B Miki with impressive credentials racing in Australia last year including nine wins in her 18 starts. Aardie B Miki N (post 6) has not raced since November but looked lively in a single qualifier last Saturday (March 22) at The Meadowlands for trainer Per Engblom. Racing from off the pace with Jason Bartlett at the controls, Aardie B Miki N seemed within herself pacing home in 26 3/5 in a second-place finish behind Rocket Deo.

Trainer Cullipher's Talk Curdy To Me has plenty of experience at Yonkers and makes her 5-year-old debut from the rail in this division. As a 4-year-old in 2024, Talk Curdy To Me was first or second 15 times in her 27 starts and she has the ability to race on all sized tracks.

Though it is Pelling's first go-round in the Blue Chip Matchmaker, he fully understands what's necessary to reach the final. "I expect to race in all of the legs," Pelling said, knowing that means five straight weeks of races. "I'll probably give her (Walkin On Sunshine) an extra day off each week to keep her fresh," said Pelling with an eye on what is certain to be the richest Blue Chip Matchmaker final in the race's history on May 9.

AFTER THEY RACE, WE FIND THEM A PLACE



New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program accepts horses from all major U.S. tracks.



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USTA responds to “Conflict of Interest” claim regarding sanctions

Forty-eight United States Trotting Association directors met on the afternoon of March 8, 2025, during the USTA’s annual meeting to receive and discuss the report of the board’s ad hoc investigative committee. In the course of a 2-1/2 hour meeting, the board found the violations and imposed the penalties that have since been reported to the membership. The vote was overwhelming. People inside and outside the harness racing industry have paid close attention to these board actions. However, discussion in the media raised the following points that need correction or clarification.

The investigative committee sifted through a mountain of information and carefully considered all evidence. Every person and organization that was the subject of possible board action was given advance notice of their possible rule violations and all the evidence on which violations might be based. All investigated members were permitted to be represented by an attorney and afforded a hearing before the investigative committee, at which they could present evidence and argue their interpretation of the evidence. As a result of the hearing process, the investigative committee was persuaded to modify its initial recommendations in most cases, generally in favor of the investigated member. The evidence and committee’s recommendations were kept confidential until presented to the board. In addition, the USTA board accepted and considered written material from investigated members at the time the committee’s recommendations were considered.

It is well known that a private association like the USTA is not subject to constitutional requirements of due process. Nevertheless, the process afforded to those members subject to sanctions by the board exceeded fundamental principles of fairness and due process. Suggestions to the contrary are baseless.

The USTA board of directors is a neutral decision-making body and the best authority to decide cases of this type. No one has produced the slightest evidence of bias or prejudice on any director’s part. “Conflict of interest” is an incantation frequently heard after someone receives an unfavorable result, and this board decision is no exception. The term has appeared in the racing media recently, including in quotes attributed to a sanctioned USTA member, but its invocation regarding this board decision falls flat.

All USTA directors (except the five committee members) and all USTA staff members were excluded from the investigative process. Russell Williams, Joe Faraldo, and every other USTA director who participated in the board’s decision to impose sanctions had no knowledge of specific allegations or the evidence on which those allegations were founded until the March 8 meeting.

The board met in executive session to consider the investigative committee report. Our purpose was to avoid exposing to the public any information about the people and organizations involved except for the final decision. A

complete record of the investigative committee’s work has been preserved. There may be curiosity among members of the public about the record, but the “court of public opinion” is not the proper place for this information unless one or more of the subjects of the investigation chooses to have it disclosed by making claims that require factual rebuttal.

A recent opinion piece asserted that sanctions against Adam Bowden and Diamond Creek Farm were tainted by a particular conflict of interest based on the premise that the USTA’s president, Russell Williams, held the power to punish and sanction his competitor (Mr. Bowden) through a secret investigative process. That assertion is also baseless. The investigative process was not carried out in secret. While it may have incorporated confidentiality for the protection of those being investigated, those individuals, including Mr. Bowden, were afforded extensive notice and an almost unlimited opportunity to be heard on the allegations against them. The fact is that Russell Williams had no special knowledge or power over the investigation or its outcome. Indeed, the process was designed to eliminate the possibility of undue influence by any individual over the outcome, whether a board member, a target of the investigation, or a member of the public.

The USTA, as an industry association directed by individuals in similar or competing lines of work, has robust conflict-of-interest policies expressed in its rules and bylaws. Independent legal counsel advised the USTA and carefully monitored the investigation committee process. Williams had one vote among 48 votes from a group of directors that included several other Standardbred breeders. In voting to apply USTA rules, Williams was on the same footing as any other director regarding knowledge of the investigations. In every instance, the penalties followed the conduct at issue.

The USTA has renewed its commitment to investigating and enforcing violations of its rules and bylaws, including through its alliance with the Standardbred Racing Investigative Fund. This initiative is not being imposed on the USTA from an outside entity or regulator — it has been demanded internally by its membership. In carrying out this mandate, the Association has demonstrated its commitment to fairness and professionalism and will continue to do so in investigations to come.

-release (USTA Communications)



HUNTER MYERS MEMORIAL RACE

Sat. March 29 • Race 4
Meadowlands Racetrack

The Meadowlands & SBOA net revenue from the race will be donated to Hunter’s family

MEADOWLANDS RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

Driver Skip De Mull passes from heart attack following Northfield race Tuesday

Following the ninth race at MGM Northfield Park on Tuesday night (March 25), driver Skip De Mull had a medical incident on the track after finishing fourth with BB Fire and after being taken to the hospital passed away.

Mr. De Mull was 67 years old.

Mr. De Mull was transported to Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest Hospital where he underwent emergency heart surgery according to a Facebook post from his wife Julie last night, who wrote, “Please prayer warriors Skip needs a lot of help tonight. He suffered a heart attack tonight (Tuesday) after the 9th race & is having emergency surgery right now to repair around his heart where they removed a blood clot...”

Following is a statement from MGM Northfield Park on the passing of Mr. De Mull.

“MGM Northfield Park is saddened to learn of the passing of driver Skip De Mull. Following Tuesday’s ninth race, while driving BB Fire, Skip suffered a medical emergency after the wire. Skip was transported to a local hospital, where he passed away.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Julie, his family and friends, and the harness racing community during this difficult time.”

-release (USTA Communications)

RACE OF THE WEEK

8 YONKERS FRI

1 Mile Pace BLUE CHIP MATCHMAKER LEG #1. Purse \$50,000

\$2 PICK 4 (8-9-10-11) | \$2 EXACTA | \$2 TRIPLE | \$.10 SUPERFECTA

1 SEASIDE DIVA (L)

3:1504 (5/8) Q \$27,344

b m 4, by Downbytheseaside, Real Diva by Real Desire

Last 5 Sts-\$41,180

25 YR 0 0 0 0 -25 Tot 1 0 0 0 \$1,440
24 YR 0 0 0 0 -24 * 20 13 2 2 +\$572,790
23 YR 0 0 0 0 -Life 32 17 5 3 \$814,035

5-2 Y. Gingras

320-61-48-35 (191)

Br - Burke Rcg Stb & Weaver BrusceMI,PA;etc.

21 Mar25	8HoP	fst148 ^o	271	.553	1:232	1:512	Opn II FM	18000	6	6 ⁷ / ₂	6 ⁶ / ₂	3 ⁰ / ₄	2 ³ / ₂	4 ² / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	283	281	272	273	1:514	100
12 Mar25	3HoP	fst168 ^o	271	.561	1:243	1:512	Qua	18000	2	2 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	282	274	282	264	1:513	7				
29 Nov24	11HoP	fst18 ^o	26	.56	1:243	1:513	Thanks-3F	52000	4	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	26	30	283	27	1:513	100				
22 Nov24	10HoP	gd3 ^o	261	.543	1:232	1:521	BallysR-3F	52000	10	4 ¹ / ₂	4 ³ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	27	281	281	29	1:522	96
15 Nov24	9HoP	fst48 ^o	27	.55	1:241	1:514	StarDes-3F	30000	2	3 ¹ / ₂	3 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	27	28	283	273	1:514	97
1 Nov24	9HoP	fst4 ^o	25	.543	1:233	1:511	D-USS Indy	100000	7	2 ¹ / ₂	2 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Ch/Page	RoBurke	26	283	29	293	1:531	92
18 Oct24	7HoP	fst4 ^o	26	.551	1:234	1:511	Pegasus-3F	22500	5	1 ⁰ / ₁	JoDeLong	RoBurke	26	291	283	272	1:511	102				
12 Oct24	9Nid	fst5 ^o	271	.554	1:24	1:522	D-OHSS 3F FM	30000	5	1 ⁰ / ₁	Ch/Page	RoBurke	27	281	281	282	1:522	102				
28 Sep24	3Lx1	st6 ⁷ / ₂	284	.563	1:25	1:522	Bluegrass	85000	8	1 ⁰ / ₁	DaNoble	RoBurke	31	273	274	27	1:532	89				
19 Sep24	16Del	fst18 ^o	271	.54	1:222	1:512	QBC-3F	118200	8	6 ⁵ / ₂	6 ³ / ₂	3 ⁰ / ₃	2 ² / ₂	2 ¹ / ₂	Ch/Page	RoBurke	281	263	281	282	1:512	107

18 Mar25	8HoP	fst148 ^o	271	.553	1:232	1:512	Opn II FM	18000	6	6 ⁷ / ₂	6 ⁶ / ₂	3 ⁰ / ₄	2 ³ / ₂	4 ² / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	283	281	272	273	1:514	100
12 Mar25	3HoP	fst168 ^o	271	.561	1:243	1:512	Qua	18000	2	2 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	282	274	282	264	1:513	7				
29 Nov24	11HoP	fst18 ^o	26	.56	1:243	1:513	Thanks-3F	52000	4	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	26	30	283	27	1:513	100				
22 Nov24	10HoP	gd3 ^o	261	.543	1:232	1:521	BallysR-3F	52000	10	4 ¹ / ₂	4 ³ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	27	281	281	29	1:522	96
15 Nov24	9HoP	fst48 ^o	27	.55	1:241	1:514	StarDes-3F	30000	2	3 ¹ / ₂	3 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Br/Bates	RoBurke	27	28	283	273	1:514	97
1 Nov24	9HoP	fst4 ^o	25	.543	1:233	1:511	D-USS Indy	100000	7	2 ¹ / ₂	2 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	Ch/Page	RoBurke	26	283	29	293	1:531	92
18 Oct24	7HoP	fst4 ^o	26	.551	1:234	1:511	Pegasus-3F	22500	5	1 ⁰ / ₁	JoDeLong	RoBurke	26	291	283	272	1:511	102				
12 Oct24	9Nid	fst5 ^o	271	.554	1:24	1:522	D-OHSS 3F FM	30000	5	1 ⁰ / ₁	Ch/Page	RoBurke	27	281	281	282	1:522	102				
28 Sep24	3Lx1	st6 ⁷ / ₂	284	.563	1:25	1:522	Bluegrass	85000	8	1 ⁰ / ₁	DaNoble	RoBurke	31	273	274	27	1:532	89				
19 Sep24	16Del	fst18 ^o	271	.54	1:222	1:512	QBC-3F	118200	8	6 ⁵ / ₂	6 ³ / ₂	3 ⁰ / ₃	2 ² / ₂	2 ¹ / ₂	Ch/Page	RoBurke	281	263	281	282	1:512	107

2 LYDEO (L)

4:151 \$3,847

b m 6, by Sweet Lou, Show The World by Western Ideal

Last 5 Sts-\$23,610

25 YR 0 0 0 0 \$23,610 25 * 4 2 1 0 +\$23,610
24 YR 0 0 0 0 -24 Tot 25 3 11 3 \$87,944
23 YR 9 2 1 1 \$35,140 Life 80 15 29 \$346,731

8-1 S. Zeron

67-7-97 (104)

b m 6, by Sweet Lou, Show The World by Western Ideal

Last 5 Sts-\$23,610

25 YR 0 0 0 0 \$23,610 25 * 4 2 1 0 +\$23,610
24 YR 0 0 0 0 -24 Tot 25 3 11 3 \$87,944
23 YR 9 2 1 1 \$35,140 Life 80 15 29 \$346,731

14 Mar25	3YR	fst152 ^o	281	.572	1:254	1:541	FNW15000L5	19000	6	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	281	291	282	282	1:541	93				
7 Mar25	2YR	fst142 ^o	283	.581	1:262	1:55	FNW10000L5	17000	6	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	283	283	281	283	1:55	89
21 Feb25	4YR	fst126 ^o	281	.58	1:272	1:564	FNW10211L5	17000	7	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	281	303	281	282	1:55	75				
14 Feb25	6YR	fst130 ^o	274	.58	1:262	1:554	FNW11738L5	17000	6	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1no	2 ² / ₂	2 ² / ₂	1hd	MaKakaley	DoDilljr	274	301	282	301	1:563	81
7 Feb25	2YR	fst125 ^o	29	.583	1:271	1:56	QUA T/P	4	4	1 ² / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	MaKakaley	DoDilljr	29	293	283	284	1:56	86
18 Oct24	11Nid	fst180 ^o	272	.574	1:26	1:543	Opn FM	20500	2	3 ² / ₂	3 ² / ₂	6 ³ / ₂	6 ² / ₂	7 ³ / ₂	1hd	Jalvinie	RaBendis	274	303	281	283	1:551	86
9 Oct24	7Mw	fst163 ^o	264	.552	1:232	1:522	FNW9600L4	12500	3	2 ¹ / ₂	2 ² / ₂	3 ² / ₂	5 ⁵ / ₂	7 ⁵ / ₂	1hd	WMWilder	RaBendis	27	284	28	293	1:532	91
21 Sep24	2Nid	fst180 ^o	273	.571	1:253	1:541	FNW8000L4	14000	4	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	2 ² / ₂	2 ² / ₂	1hd	ChLems	RaBendis	273	283	283	29	1:534	88
14 Sep24	9Nid	fst172 ^o	261	.551	1:23	1:522	FMOPEN HCP	20500	5	1 ⁰ / ₃	1 ² / ₂	3 ³ / ₂	3 ⁶ / ₂	3 ⁷ / ₂	1hd	ChLems	RaBendis	261	29	283	30	1:534	95
4 Sep24	8Mw	fst178 ^o	262	.55	1:222	1:51	FMOPEN HCP	21200	6	9 ³ / ₂	4 ³ / ₂	1hd	WMWilder	RaBendis	27	283	272	29	1:52	98			

14 Mar25	3YR	fst152 ^o	281	.572	1:254	1:541	FNW15000L5	19000	6	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	281	291	282	282	1:541	93				
7 Mar25	2YR	fst142 ^o	283	.581	1:262	1:55	FNW10000L5	17000	6	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	283	283	281	283	1:55	89
21 Feb25	4YR	fst126 ^o	281	.58	1:272	1:564	FNW10211L5	17000	7	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	JaBarritt	DoDilljr	281	303	281	282	1:55	75				
14 Feb25	6YR	fst130 ^o	274	.58	1:262	1:554	FNW11738L5	17000	6	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1no	2 ² / ₂	2 ² / ₂	1hd	MaKakaley	DoDilljr	274	301	282	301	1:563	81
7 Feb25	2YR	fst125 ^o	29	.583	1:271	1:56	QUA T/P	4	4	1 ² / ₂	1 ² / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1hd	MaKakaley	DoDilljr	29	293	283	284	1:56	86
18 Oct24	11Nid	fst180 ^o	272	.574	1:26	1:543	Opn FM	20500	2	3 ² / ₂	3 ² / ₂	6 ³ / ₂	6 ² / ₂	7 ³ / ₂	1hd	Jalvinie	RaBendis	274	303	281	283	1:551	86
9 Oct24	7Mw	fst163 ^o	264	.552	1:232	1:522	FNW9600L4	12500	3	2 ¹ / ₂	2 ² / ₂	3 ² / ₂	5 ⁵ / ₂	7 ⁵ / ₂	1hd	WMWilder	RaBendis	27	284	28	293	1:532	91
21 Sep24	2Nid	fst180 ^o	273	.571	1:253	1:541	FNW8000L4	14000	4	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	1 ¹ / ₂	2 ² / ₂	2 ² / ₂	1hd	ChLems	RaBendis	273	283	283	29	1:534	88
14 Sep24	9Nid	fst172 ^o	261	.551	1:23	1:522	FMOPEN HCP	20500	5	1 ⁰ / ₃	1 ² / ₂	3 ³ / ₂	3 ⁶ / ₂	3 ⁷ / ₂	1hd	ChLems	RaBendis	261	29	283	30	1:534	95
4 Sep24	8Mw	fst178 ^o	262	.55	1:222	1:51	FMOPEN HCP	21200	6	9 ³ / ₂	4 ³ / ₂	1hd	WMWilder	RaBendis	27	283	272	29	1:52	98			

3 UPTOWN HANOVER (L)

6:151 (1) \$4,800

b m 7, by Somebeachsomewhere, Upside Surprise by Art Major

Last 5 Sts-\$37,160

25 YR 0 0 0 0 -25 Tot 0 0 0 0 \$169,450
24 * 31 6 7 7 \$143,700 24 Tot 37 9 8 9 \$605,088
23 * 35 6 7 8 \$171,100 Life 131 32 28 \$1,393,438

15 Mar25	4M1	fst150 ^o	291	.574	1:26	1:523	Qua	18000	6	6 ⁷ / ₂	6 ⁶ / ₂	6 ⁵ / ₂	6 ⁴ / ₂	5
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Saturday's fourth race proceeds at The Big M to benefit family of Hunter Myers

Since the tragic event that took the life of 27-year-old Hunter Myers in a race at The Meadows (Pa.) on March 19, it seems like just about everybody from every facet of the harness racing industry has pitched in to support Hunter's fiancé, Chloe Fisher, and young son, Hayden Myers.

On Saturday (March 29) night, everyone who likes betting on Meadowlands races has a chance to help out as well. The fourth dash is the "Hunter Myers Memorial Race", and all proceeds from the one-mile event will be donated to help Chloe and Hayden.

In addition, Big M Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jeff Gural has pledged to match all monies raised.

"What an amazing young man, gone far too soon," said Meadowlands Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Jason Settlemoir on his Facebook page. "This breaks my heart! Every time I saw Hunter it was 'Hey boss or Mr. Settlemoir'. Last year at the Delaware County Fair, we settled on just calling me Jason.

"Hunter sure did love our sport and we sure did love Hunter. His energy, his passion, his smile, his genuine and spirited attitude towards life. He was a great young man and a talented young driver. Pray for his family and pray for our sport. This certainly hurts and puts everything in perspective. Fly high, young man, fly where only angels soar. My thoughts and prayers to his family and friends. This is tragic."

The race that honors the fallen driver who amassed 2,450 lifetime victories is one that should attract a lot of attention from bettors. It's a Track-Master 83.5 pace with a full field of 10 where half of the field shows at least one win in their last five starts.

"We urge our fans, whether they come to the track once a week or once a month or bet us on their favorite ADW (Advance Deposit Wagering) site to bet on the fourth race Saturday," said Settlemoir. "Small bettors, big bettors, we urge them to get involved and be a part of helping Chloe and Hayden."

QUALIFIER REPORT: In the first of six qualifiers that take place Saturday afternoon, trainer Marcus Melander sends out a pair of intriguing Swedish shippers.

Aetos Kronos S qualified third at The Big M a week ago. The 9-year-old son of Bold Eagle-Will Of A Woman, a lifetime earner of \$1.3 million, raced in the \$1-million Prix d'Amerique in January of 2024.

His stablemate, S I P, is a 6-year-old son of Bar Hopping-Barbara Brooks, who hasn't raced since October of last year. Melander is likely hoping the potent pair will be able to race in the upper-echelon events for older trotters this year.

A horse well known by Meadowlands regulars will also be qualifying in the opener. The Ron Burke-trained Lexus Kody, the Big M track-record holder for an older gelding of 1:49 4/5, won eight of 20 starts a year ago and banked over \$200,000.

In the second qualifier, Burke's Cheers Hanover, who earned \$108,250 a year ago, and Nifty Norman's Yannick G Kemp, \$85,870, will get their 3-year-old colt trotting seasons underway, while the fifth qualifier finds three lifetime earners of \$500,000: Robert Cleary's Soaring Now, Jeff Cullipher's Sonny Weaver N and Shane Tritton's Springsteen.

The qualifiers begin at 4 p.m., and can be seen live on The Meadowlands website (playmeadowlands.com) or rtn.tv (Racing Television Network). To see the entries, go [here](#).

A GRAND NIGHT: The fourth edition of the 2025 Meadowlands Monthly Handicapping contest takes place on Saturday, April 19. The event 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](#).

-edited release (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, MARCH 27

RACE 1

(3) SPEED MAN N won handily over NW5000L5 foes from the eight-hole a couple of weeks ago. He moves inside on the gate here and partners with Jason Bartlett again.

-Greg Reinhart



FRIDAY, MARCH 28

RACE 8

(4) WIN TOGETHER S has been stuck with outside posts while facing better competition at Yonkers. Notice the horse who won his last race was Antognoni S, a winner here in NW \$12,500. I'm expecting to see early speed here and a much better performance.

-Derick Givner



RACE 2

(3) ATREACHEROUS A hit the board in her last two but tonight she seems to catch an easier group and looks to have a bit of a class edge on these; Bartlett is back driving.

-Matt Rose



SATURDAY, MARCH 29

RACE 12

(7) OUTSIDE THE FIRE lands in a much better spot this week from a slightly better post and really has no excuses for failure.

-Givner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

[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

MOHAWK JACKPOT HI-5 MANDATORY PAYOUT SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY

Woodbine Entertainment has announced a mandatory payout will be offered for the Standardbred Jackpot Hi-5 this Saturday, March 29 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

The Jackpot Hi-5 carryover currently sits at \$131,002.73

The Jackpot Hi-5 requires horseplayers to select the top five finishers in order. A horseplayer can only win the entire jackpot if they hold the only winning ticket for that evening's wager. If there are multiple winning tickets, half the pool is paid out, while the other half is added to the carryover.

The entire carryover will be paid out, plus new money wagered, during the mandatory payout. The Jackpot Hi-5 has a \$0.20 minimum and a 15 percent takeout.

The Jackpot Hi-5 mandatory payout will be offered on the final race of this Saturday's 14-race card that also features three Pick 5s and the New Holland Series Finals.

Post time for Saturday's card of live racing at Woodbine Mohawk Park is 6:30 p.m.

-release (Woodbine)

SHENANDOAH DOWNS OPENS FOR ITS TENTH SEASON IN APRIL

Shenandoah Downs raises the curtain on its tenth season of pari-mutuel harness racing in Woodstock on April 26 and a seven-week spring campaign will continue every Saturday and Sunday afternoon through June 8. Later in the year, a seven-week fall season will extend from September 13 - October 26 and a four-day non-wagering County Fair meet will precede that, running from August 27-30. Post time is 1:05 PM except on thoroughbred Triple Crown days --- May 3, May 17 and June 7 --- when first harness post will be 3:05 PM.

READ MORE

79TH SEASON OF LIVE RACING AT HARRINGTON STARTS APRIL 14

Harrington Raceway's 79th season of live harness racing is set to kick-off Monday, April 14 (post time 4:30 p.m.) with a Monday through Wednesday schedule most of the season.

Horsemen are reminded that the first qualifiers will be on Tuesday, April 8, and will occur primarily on Wednesdays after that point throughout the season.

Improvements to the race paddock were started immediately following the conclusion of the 2024 season, including paint, all new stall mats, new chairs, benches and stall gates on all race stalls.

Stall applications are due March 28 and can be submitted online through the website here.

Fans will be treated to a tumbler giveaway on opening night (while supplies last) at 4:15 p.m. in the grandstand lobby. Free program pages to nightly race cards will again be available on the website courtesy of the Delaware Standardbred Owners Association.

The first draw for qualifiers will be Monday, April 7 and the first race draw on Tuesday, April 8.

Also new this year is racing will occur on the first night of the 10-day Delaware State Fair on July 17 with a special 5 p.m. post time.

On the wagering front, a pair of Pick 4 (50 cents) wagers will remain, starting in race 2 and again for the last four races on the program. A 50-cent minimum base Superfecta will be available in most races except for the opening legs of the Pick 4 and non-full fields. There is no consolation payout on the Pick 4 and Superfecta as they will feature 100 percent carryovers.

There will be a customary summer break, except for the fair night card, until August 11 when racing will resume through October 22.

-edited release (Harrington)

SHIPSHAPE SAILS TO GAME OF CLAIMS SERIES TITLE AT POCONO

The Captaintreacherous gelding Shipshape, taken at The Meadows for \$6,000 by Team Pirillo - trainer Justin and owner Gianna - on February 5, now has earned \$26,710 for his new connections after triumphing in the \$20,000 Championship of the Game Of Claims Pacing Series for \$15,000 base-tagged horses in 1:52 4/5 Monday afternoon at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania.

READ MORE

HUNTER MYERS FUNERAL SET FOR MARCH 31

HUNTER R. MYERS, age 27, passed away suddenly on March 20, 2025. Hunter lived a life full of energy, passion, and love that touched everyone he met. He is survived by his beloved fiancé, Chloe Fisher, and their son, Hayden Myers. His presence will be missed by his parents, Mike and Kelly (nee Paas), his sister Seazon Myers-Turley (Nicholas), niece, Alayna Turley, and his future "in-laws" Mike and Coleen Dowdall. Hunter is also survived by his loving grandparents, Mike and Jama Paas, and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Hunter was preceded in death by his grandmother, Brenda Clemens; great-grandfather, Fred Paas; great-grandmother, Betty Paas; grandmother, Beverly Myers; and great-grandparents Robert and Mable Fredricks, as well as other family members.

From a young age, Hunter was a spirited boy who grew into a young man that went "full throttle." He had an infectious personality that could light up any room; his humor often caught people off guard as he shared a laugh with those around him. Hunter had a unique ability to connect with others, and he truly never met a stranger.

His passion for harness racing was evident from early in his life. Growing up in the business, Hunter dedicated himself to his dream of becoming a driver, a passion that remained a significant part of his life. His enthusiasm for the sport was unmatched, and it was a joy to witness his commitment it.

In addition to his love for racing, Hunter cherished spending time outdoors, where he created lasting memories with his family. He enjoyed tractor rides with Hayden, grilling out, dining out, and retreating to his "man cave" garage. Hunter had a special fondness for Tennessee, often finding peace and joy in the cabins there, where he could escape and unwind. Wherever he was, his heart was always with Chloe, as he loved being by her side.

Hunter was known for his compassion and generosity. He had a kind heart and a strong desire to help others, always looking for ways to make things better for those around him.

His selflessness was a defining trait, and he continued to embody this spirit until the very end, giving the gift of life through organ and tissue donation.

Hunter leaves behind a multitude of friends, each with their own cherished memories of adventures and shenanigans shared with him. He will be terribly missed, but forever remembered!

Friends may call at THE FERFOLIA FUNERAL HOME, 356 WEST AURORA RD. (OH RT 82), SAGAMORE HILLS FOR MEMORIAL VISITATION ON MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025 FROM 1:00 - 5:00 P.M. Memorial services will be celebrated at 5:00 p.m. at the funeral home.

Forever Hunter Proud.

-release (Ferfolia Funeral Home)

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