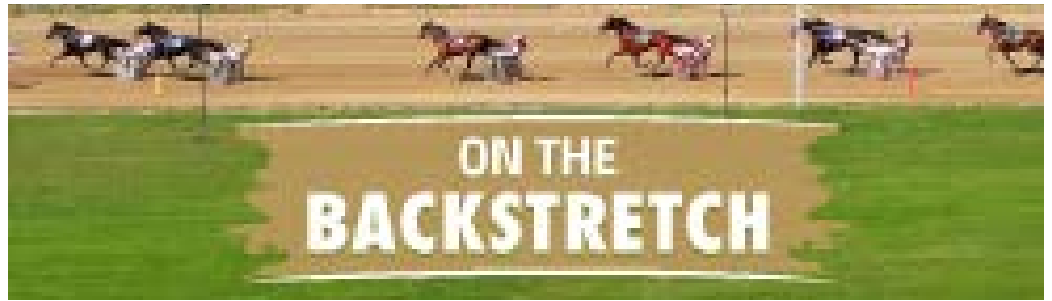


THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025



TRACK EXECUTIVE/ ANNOUNCER GABE PREWITT

BY DERICK GIWNER

Whether you know Gabe Prewitt personally or just from watching him on a simulcast signal, it is clear he loves harness racing. The now 41-year-old was first exposed to the sport in his late teen years and has made what could ultimately turn out to be a Hall of Fame career as one of the most well-rounded people in the sport.

I'm going to keep the preamble short because if you do know Gabe, he can talk! And talk he did, about people who have touched him in the sport, his journey from Kentucky to Pompano to Hoosier, wagering, and much more. Normally I say "grab a cup of coffee and enjoy" but today, make it a thermos or a venti at Starbucks to get you through what it likely the longest On The Backstretch since I started in 2017. Trust me, you'll enjoy this one. I know I did.



Gabe Prewitt (right) with TV personality Kelsey Grammar at the 2023 Hambletonian.

experience at The Red Mile. I always enjoyed racing but didn't know if I'd have a career in it. I had no family experience in it and I wasn't thinking along those lines. I was selling ads at the Thoroughbred Times and then I became the Director of the Kentucky Harness Association in 2010. That was really the first time I looked at a full-time job in the business. Before that I just thought it was really cool and enjoyed going to the races.

Are you surprised with the career you've made for yourself in the industry?

Yes. The route that I've taken is not one I ever could've predicted. I have been very fortunate that a lot of people have given me great opportunities and I've had a lot of great mentors that have helped me along the way. Every opportunity I've gotten has come as a little bit of a surprise, but it has been because of really good people who have been kind enough to pave the way for me.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)

How did you get started in harness racing?

I moved too close to The Red Mile when I went to college at the University of Kentucky [laughing]. I'd never seen a harness race. I loved Keeneland and went there all the time, and I love gambling, which will come as no shock. I moved directly across from the stable gate at The Red Mile when I came to college in 2001. I had a buddy ask if I wanted to bet the horses at The Red Mile. He said they had the carts behind the horses but we could still gamble on them. I said, that sounds good to me. After that I never left.

I know you started as a mutual clerk, when did it become clear that you would move forward in the industry?

That would be much later. I started as a mutual clerk probably two to three months after my first

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Speaking of great people in the industry, you've worked closely with the late Hall of Famers Sam McKee and Dave Brower during your career. What did you learn from them?

Everything. Out of pure accident I started to announce the races at The Red Mile when they got a little desperate. At the start it was just two or three races a night to fill in. Sam was always so kind with his time and demeanor. When I first started I was beyond awful. Sam would take the time to call me and really almost coach me, and more importantly build me up. I already knew I was terrible and he made me feel like I had a future in this line of work. He would tell me how good I was, that I would get better and better, that my voice was great and that I only needed to work on the logistics of calling the race. Sam was so good in that regard and quite frankly I never took a job in the industry after that without his consultation. That even includes when I took the job as the Director of Racing at Pompano. I was the announcer and did some things but he was sort of the rock for me as someone to talk to and bounce everything off of. He was really a great friend. I can remember when I got to Buffalo in 2012, I think it snowed a foot my first week and I didn't know anybody in town. We started in January and the weather was just brutal and I couldn't even drive my car. I called Sam and said 'I don't think I can do this. I'm going to have to tell them to find someone else and I'm going to have to go home.' He obviously said 'Gabe, you can't do that. You committed to these people.' He was 100 percent right and I probably would've stayed there forever if Pompano didn't come to call. Sam was always a voice of reason for me. I have a quick trigger at times and Sam was a little different style. I can honestly say I wouldn't be in this business without Sam.

Dave was like a brother to me. I knew him from when I started going to the track every night in college. The Meadowlands was the signal I played, so I knew him from that. We got to be close. When I went to The Meadowlands to travel, it was like I was going to hang out with a buddy for a few days. We would do lunch and grab drinks after the races. He lived vicariously through my gambling [laughing] and was sweating all my action. I had to listen to an endless stream of bad beat stories. He was just a true friend. We started back at The Meadowlands at the same time, unfortunately after we lost Sam. They brought Dave back and that was the same Championship meet I started going to every weekend. We always had that as a little bit of a bond. He made me feel so comfortable.

If everything didn't fall into place, what would you have done with your life? What is your degree in?

Business Management. I actually started out of college as an assistant manager at a grocery chain called Kroger. I don't know where I would've gone. I don't think I would've done that for too long. I really don't know what I would've done. I'm Kentucky through and through so I'm sure I would've done something at home.

In terms of tracks, let's start with your great love of Pompano Park. What made Pompano special for you?

It's funny, I got the job because of Sam McKee. They were really



GABE PREWITT FACEBOOK

Gabe Prewitt with his mentor, the late Sam McKee.



DERICK GWINNER

Even a rain storm couldn't stop Gabe Prewitt from doing his job one night at The Meadowlands.

adamant to hire him. Jeff [Gural] had just taken over at The Meadowlands and Sam was doing a bunch of different things with sponsorships and other stuff he hadn't done in the past; he wouldn't have minded a change. At the 23rd hour, his daughters were still in college, he withdrew his name after they really put the full court press on him to get him to come. He recommended me and John Yinger, who was the boss at Pompano at the time, said if Sam recommends you that's good enough for me.

I'm an amateur poker player. I can't say professional because I think you have to make a profit to qualify. I had been to south Florida a handful of times with friends on poker vacations and I always planned it around being close to Pompano, because being the degenerate that I am, I wanted to watch the races. I was always intrigued by the place. Part of the reason Sam was slowed down

by the opportunity was the uncertainty of the track's future. I was a single guy in my late 20s and I didn't care; I'll have fun, stay warm and play a lot of poker. That was how it started. After I got there, Pompano educated me. I don't think I saved Pompano as much as it saved me. I was very fortunate through multiple management and ownership changes, somehow I was one of the only guys to stick around. There were three ownership changes and at least three Directors of Racing over a nine year period. Twice I had that role.

Once I laid eyes on the track and got the lay of the land, I realized there weren't getting much action, maybe \$70 to \$80 grand a card despite little competition. The thought that hit me was we should be doing much better and quite frankly it was embarrassing. Through conversations and different relationships with the leadership, they allowed me to fix it as long as it didn't cost them any money. That meant changing post times, the days of the week they raced and you name it. A lot of things we tried didn't work but there was never any pressure. I just wanted to succeed. At some point it developed into more of a passion project and eventually into a rallying cry to stay open. We were like the movie Major League.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

The ownership didn't really want us to win and we kept winning in spite of them. I think everyone took a lot of pride in it. I never got any feedback about racing too late or anything. Everyone was just interested in how we did each night. Everyone bought into that we wanted to have some pride and wanted to kick some ass. That was the unique thing about Pompano. It was a very selfless situation. Just by the little bit of success we had we bought the place two or three more years than it would've had.

While you've been at least the part time announcer at The Red Mile since 2007, in 2023 you took a position there as VP of Racing and Sports. Why did you leave in 2025?

I love The Red Mile. It is literally in a dead heat with Pompano as my favorite facility. It is home to me and it was an extremely difficult decision, one that I marinated on for what any party involved would tell you was far too long [laughing]. At the end of the day, Joe Morris is a guy that has always had my back. He hired me at the Thoroughbred Times way back when I was 20 years old and he had my back at Pompano and was instrumental in getting us a final year. Hoosier is a cool track and I always thought it had a lot of opportunity. Having said that, Joe Morris is the reason I took the job. I try to be loyal to people who have always been loyal to me, not saying that anyone at The Red Mile hasn't been loyal, but Joe is a guy that has always had my back and is a guy I really trust.

Will you still be calling the Grand Circuit races at The Red Mile?

Yes. I could not compute in my head being away from that track. I love it too much and all my friends are there. As I was debating the decision [of whether to leave] I carried that plan to both sides. I'm going to come down and call Sundays and Mondays and I'll probably split the Grand Circuit meet with Steve Cross, but that is still up in the air. I'll for sure be there week two of the Grand Circuit and week one we'll see.

You are now Vice President and GM at Harrah's Hoosier Park. How is it going so far?

We were in a little bit of emergency mode when I first got here. The horse population was very tricky. We were having likely the worst cards in the history of Hoosier Park unfortunately due to a lot of factors. Since, things have gotten a lot better. It is a lot more fun when you can put out a great product; it is a lot easier to market. For instance, on [May 14] we nearly bowled a perfect game with 13 10-horse fields and one with nine. That's pretty good and a long way from where we were. We are going against the winds of the business, which is down pretty drastically this year. We are up [in handle] with fewer races and far fewer horses. For the first 20 days we were down 220 horses here. That's like a horse per race on any night.

How much is handle up in 2025 with you at the helm?

I believe about 15% at the moment. We've been up every single week except one and that was when we had a drastic shortage on races and horses. Anywhere I'm at the way I look at things is we need to win and a win is being up over last year. We did that at Pompano for many years. If you win five, six or seven years in a row, that is a pretty good number. We just have to continue to climb and beat each previous year.

What do you attribute the increase to in an environment where most tracks are way down?

Luck, I guess? We changed the way we do business. I'm a little of a maniac when it comes to post times. That is one thing I don't like to give up control over. I like to be the guy that radios the starter when to start and hangs the post times so I can slot us in the best place. It is sort of what I enjoy to do and I think it is the most important job at any track if your metric is handle.

I think post time management has helped us out to a certain degree. We changed the betting menu and lowered the takeout. Last week we had our biggest Pick 4 pool of the season at \$22,500. I think that is awesome. When we lower takeout it isn't like turning on a water faucet, it is a slow build, which we saw at Pompano as well. One thing we haven't benefitted from is that we haven't had many carryovers. Hoosier has always been known for competitive racing and big fields, but we haven't had many carryovers and

last year they had plenty of them. So I think bigger and better things are on the horizon when we start to see bigger fields and carryovers. The one tricky part is that we are legislated to race 160 days and it can put you up against it trying to get those in from March to November. We are looking at things in the future. Am I better off spreading it out a little bit and trying to extend the calendar and going into Pomp territory [December] when handle is much better too? I know it is a bit colder here in December than south Florida but we are looking into it.

This is a bit of a different footprint for me because we open and my competition steadily grows. More tracks open as the spring and summer months crank up. At Pompano I was used to opening when there was a little more traffic and the competition would decline. With my first go-around here, I've been a little careful with guarantees because I keep looking at the calendar and seeing track after track opening. I've tried to not be overly reactive to the success because there are always new tracks coming up on the radar.

I'm sure you saw that The Meadowlands reversed course on its post time drag. Can a track survive without sitting on zero minutes to post for an extended period of time?

God bless them. I applaud them for trying. We all hate the drag; it is ludicrous. Sometimes I get blamed and people think I love the drag. I do not. It is completely false. However, as The Meadowlands just displayed to



USTA PHOTO

A 31-year-old Gabe Prewitt in 2015 couldn't have known 10 years later he would've run Pompano, The Red Mile and Harrah's Hoosier Park.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



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p, 3, 1:49.3 -'25 (\$86,100)

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us in real time, it is impossible to be the only track that follows the rules. If every other harness track has a drag, you can't be the only one trying to do the right thing. It has to be all of us or none of us to avoid a failed mission. The one advantage that The Meadowlands or even The Red Mile has is private ownership, so if Jeff [Gural] decides he wants to do something he can. If I did that at a corporate level they'd probably be looking for my replacement in a week. As stupid as drag is, in this environment it works and it won't change unless we do something that isn't very common in horse racing and that is cooperate.

What is your favorite big event in racing? Why?

I've been so fortunate to have opportunities to go to these big events, and I went to almost all of them before event working them. Hambletonian Day is obviously awesome and it has its own element. I see people I maybe only get to see once a year. I love the Adios. That is an incredible event that is very local with Pittsburgh and the community getting behind the race. It is always a huge crowd. I love going there. The Jug is incomparable. It is sort of the mecca. If there are a couple of days to go to every year it is that week. Being a homer I also love the Kentucky Futurity. It is a cool day and many times it turns out to be one of the best cards in the entire sport and in my opinion on the best racetrack in the sport. Those are the ones that stand out, but it doesn't take much to pump me up. I was hyped for a Tuesday card at Pompano.

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

Hang out with family and friends. I try to do things to wind down. I'm sort of a high-gear person. I'm constantly looking for ways to relax. My mind is constantly rolling, particularly on what we can do better from a racetrack standpoint or if I'm not at the track what I'm doing watching racing. I'm also a big Kentucky sports guy.

What is one word that describes harness racing for you?

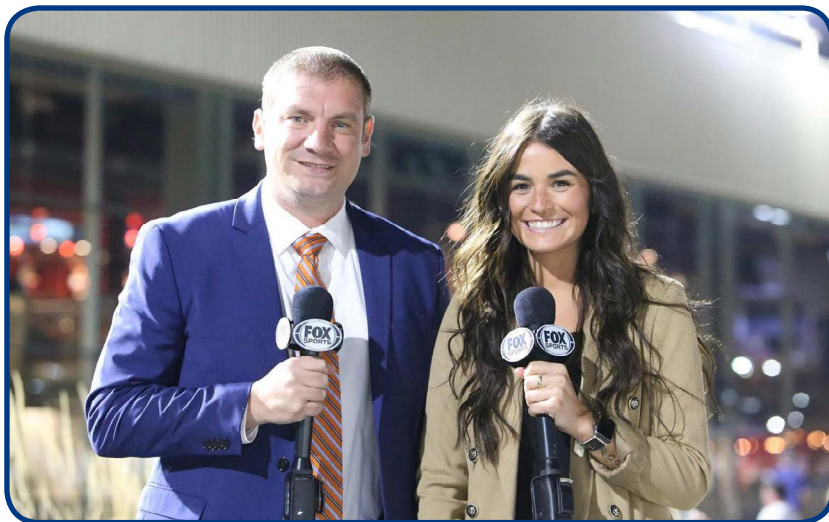
Fun – that is what it should be and what we are trying to bring here. It is not supposed to be a miserable, complain about everything deal. We want it to be fun for everybody – those that are racing, those that are gambling, those that are just coming out to the track. That is my goal going back to when I first came to the track. It was fun.

What was your best moment in harness racing?

Being the sicko that I am, I want to say when we broke handle records at Pompano. Financially it is probably when I got to call my horse Mt Sterling Mafia winning a \$175,000 Sire Stakes final at Lexington.

You are one of the faces of harness racing on the Fox Sports broadcasts and you've immediately expanded Hoosier's presence to be part of a show on May 17 when you have mostly overnights. Should the sport being doing more nationally?

Yes, 1000 percent. It is ludicrous that the national TV doesn't get more support. This is one of our only shots to get in front of a new audience. We don't get many of those chances. And we get to work with an absolutely first class team and staff who do this on a regular basis with Thoroughbreds and do a fantastic job. We are very fortunate that they are willing to include us as part of that. I think that even with dollars and support, we have to come together as an industry. No offense to anyone, but look at some of the money they divided up with the USTA broadcast fund, there is no better place to put this money and to be giving a pebble to something like this which is so vitally important while directing the money to some things that are going to have 100 or 200 viewers. No disrespect to anyone but we have literally one shot to get in front of a new audience. Some of these nights, even when I'm on the broadcast, we really try to simplify things and give people cool storylines to make things interesting. It is not like doing the show at The Meadowlands where I'm in pure degenerate mode talking to pure hardcore gamblers. On national TV we are trying to develop interesting storylines and explain things. We've gotten lots of



DEAN GILLETTE PHOTO


Gabe Prewitt hosting a Breeders Crown show for Fox Sports along with Jessica Otten.

nice feedback. I see how it is working and it is discouraging sometimes that we don't have more support. For a broadcast fund, this should be the number one priority by the length of the stretch. We are still very fortunate that guys like Jeff Gural, Joe Morris here at Caesars and others are supportive of it but I think as an industry we really need to get behind it.

Do you plan to continue to do more shows with Hoosier?

I'd love to be on any time we can. Those guys know that and we have a good relationship. Any time that we can come on we'd love to be anyone's dance partner, so to speak, if they have a big night.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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You're going to hate this question, but with dual qualifications as both a broadcaster and executive, couldn't you one day be one of the elite in both the Communicators and main Hall of Fame?

Those types of things don't cross my mind. I'm worried about the draw we are doing for Friday right now and hoping we get 14 races. I live in the moment, which sometimes can be good or bad. However that ends, we'll see.

When you are on the air or online, you never try to hide that you are gambling along with the people out there. Why do you think others try to hide it?

I just think that it makes you more relatable. Right or wrong, I lay my cards on the table. Sometimes on air I will comment on whether it is a good night or a bad night. I just think that gambling fuels this game and the fact that it is frowned upon or people are hiding it, I just take a different approach. I think we need people to know that it is cool. We've all had good nights and we've all been buried. Those of us that play the races have faced everything you can come up with. When you are watching a broadcast it is very easy to decipher who is buried in the weeds with you and in action based on comments and those that aren't. I just think people can relate to someone who seems more like themselves.

One of your claims to fame is the #Senditin network. Looking back, are you surprised how your following through that message has grown?

That would be a complete shock. The way that was even coined was a one-off tweet one night at Pompano. We really had a lot of online support for it and I think online is really important. When I came to the sport in college, there were no ADWs or phone apps, you bet on track. I had people to talk to, educate me, discuss bad beats and communicate with. You felt some comradery. In this era the handle hasn't altered that much but it is really where it is coming from. People sit at home and watch all the races. A lot of the comradery is gone from the brick and mortar facilities, and it is unfortunate because it is what got guys like me hooked, being able to hang out and chat at the track. So I think online allows us that opportunity. We've had a lot of buy-in and support on the hashtag and it's been a lot of fun. I think we've reignited some of the fun with the #Senditin army for the nighttime signal at Hoosier.

You also own and breed horses. How many horses do you have now?

I've got three in training, two racehorses with the Schillaci's at Northfield. I have one 2-year-old with them as well. I've had some yearlings with Brian Brown over the years as well. I have a couple of broodmares at my father's farm just outside of Lexington that are semi-retired. A total of about 10 but only three that are earning income.

If you could only do one thing in harness racing – announcing, track management, gambler, owner, breeder, pedigree reader, broadcaster – which would you choose?

Hang post times and not even be on-air. It is like a poker game every night. It is a results-oriented thing. You can see what you did well or what you messed up race by race. I just really enjoy it.

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

The thing that comes to mind and for a million reasons this is impossible, but I would want to make us the greatest gambling game in the world. When I say that I mean lower the takeout and market it. Again, for a million reasons it can't happen. I lowered the takeout to 12 percent and got assassinated by a couple of people saying I was cutting their margins. That is the unfortunate thing that people don't see behind the curtains in our game, how many different entities are at play and you have to satisfy. You have to thread the needle. If I had the magic wand, I would make it five to 10 percent takeout across the board. It would be cool and fun to market.

Your horse racing utopia would require starting from scratch, no?

You do because the model we are in is too tough. I have guys here at the track every night who are good shooters and I've gotten to know very well at Hoosier and they play on their phones right in my grandstand. It is a tricky environment and no one could've seen back then the way the landscape was going to change to the degree it has, with mobile wagering, etc. Unfortunately I don't know there is a way out.

How do you view the future of harness racing?

The Midwest is extremely strong. Kentucky is in orbit. Ohio is also in orbit. Indiana remains very strong. We hope that something breaks in our favor at other facilities. The Meadowlands needs a casino. If they get a casino they'll be the mecca, five nights a week, huge purses and full fields like The Meadowlands we remember. No one is rooting harder for that than me. The unfortunate thing with harness racing, just by pure bad luck, the jurisdictions that were always strong from the perspective that I like, gambling handle, they never really got support. The Meadowlands has been decimated by all the states around them, tracks who just don't care as much about the handle and just take the horse population and leave them struggling. Even Chicago, when I first started I was an absolute animal playing Balmoral and Maywood. If they had gotten casino relief back in the day, God only knows were that product would be now. Just by sheer odd luck we've gotten casino subsidies in states that don't seem to be doing as well in the marketplace.

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Looking ahead to a rare next-year Hambletonian rematch



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman ✕ [Bergmanjay](#)

There are no do overs in harness racing. Major stakes races come and they go, and no matter how the result was reached the winner forever holds the trophy and distinction while the losers wish for another day that never comes.

When Karl captured the 2024 Hambletonian it was destiny for driver Yannick Gingras, the Hall of Famer who had been denied before but wouldn't be with the favorite last August. Trainer Nancy Takter again accomplished what she set out to do, expertly choreographing a schedule with the expectations realized on the first Saturday in August over The Meadowlands mile surface.

That an intense downpour marred the event for some it only added to the visual spectacle and shook the running of the race in such a manner that it appeared on the final turn as if the favorite was in danger of not getting the job done and the race was open to any that could navigate the long stretch and the potential traffic.

There were twists and turns in the stretch, room for some but not for others. For the talented but vastly inexperienced Highland Kismet, there was a lead in mid-stretch that for a short period appeared to have him likely to post the upset. A grueling two-move effort put him on the precipice of capturing the sport's biggest race. Whether he was waiting on competition or totally exhausted from the journey is of little consequence today as the final sixteenth and a determined Karl made Highland Kismet forever a bridesmaid in the 2024 Hambletonian.

Then there was the 41-1 shot Amazing Catch with Dexter Dunn trying to take the shortest route possible to an upset, only to fall short in the final strides and settling for third.

While there are no do overs, the chance the top three finishers in the 2024 Hambletonian will get to meet again – perhaps as a co-feature on the afternoon of the 100th Hambletonian, specifically August 2 – is a possibility should Karl, Highland Kismet and Amazing Catch be in alignment and advanced far enough in the 4-year-old careers to take on older foes in the John Cashman Memorial. Currently trainer Nancy Takter has suggested that Karl, unlike the other two, has just started training back and could make his debut in August if he stays on schedule.

Chances are strong, however, that Highland Kismet and Amazing Catch are likely to see action in the coming Graduate series for 4-year-olds as well as the rich Hambletonian Maturity (July 12).

Trainer Mark Etsell has qualified Highland Kismet twice thus far at Woodbine Mohawk Park, with his latest 1:53 4/5 effort on May 9 a solid mile that has him ready for his 4-year-old debut.

"I will look to get him a race here (Woodbine Mohawk Park) in the next couple of weeks and then go with the 4-year-olds in the first leg of the Graduate," Etsell said.

"I could have gone with him to the Cutler (May 17) but I thought it was too early with the ship to The Meadowlands and racing against older horses, and I didn't want to rush into that," Etsell said.

Etsell got Highland Kismet to train following his 2-year-old season and did an outstanding job going from non-winners of 1 at the outset of his 3-year-old campaign to a chance to capture the \$1 million Hambletonian in only a few short months. Highland Kismet, an altered son of Father Patrick, showed extreme speed from the start but was not always the easiest on himself or his driver within a race. For a period in 2024 he wore trotting hobbles and then there was the sense he didn't need them. Inevitably hobbles would return but the rigors of racing and working out favorable trips led to a series of late-season mishaps and missteps. In the end Highland Kismet had a great year for any horse that didn't race as a 2-year-old trotting in North America and then would be among the top five in the sophomore class. At the same time, Highland Kismet would tease racing fans and his connections with impressive miles while prepping for major races only to be followed by disappointments when the big money was riding.

Such was the case when he followed up wins in the Simcoe and Canadian Trotting Classic elimination with a break in stride in the rich Canadian Trotting Classic finale.

In Lexington he survived a rain-soaked surface to dominate in the Bluegrass Stakes and a week later as the favorite in the \$500,000 Kentucky Futurity got embroiled in speed duel that saw him reach the half on the lead in a shocking 52 4/5. The Futurity ended with an eighth-place finish but likely took enough out of Highland Kismet to never allow him to regain the form he held coming into the Hambletonian.

"It took him about five hours to recover from that race," said Etsell of the Futurity. Recovery for the trainer took much longer.

The Futurity led to a driver change but Hall of Famer Tim Tetrick couldn't turn things around driving Highland Kismet on just three occasions, with the gelding breaking in two of those stakes events.

While Highland Kismet looked great in both of his qualifiers, Etsell still has some unsettled business to attend to before his stable star embarks on what he hopes will be a more consistent season.

"Right now, we have to find a driver," said Etsell, who was meeting with owner Mary Clark to discuss the options. "Ideally I'd like to have someone that can stick with him."

With the May 31 Graduate around the corner, Etsell is likely to keep the trotting hobbles on. Highland Kismet's first qualifier was without hobbles but with races expected to go faster Etsell wanted his horse to be more manageable when tested.

Should harness fans expect a different Highland Kismet in 2024?

"He's grown a bit, but he was a big horse last year," Etsell said.

As for the mental aspect of racing, Etsell was more on the fence. "I guess we all get a little smarter as we get older."

Like Highland Kismet, Amazing Catch spent much of his 3-year-old campaign around the winner's circle but not in it. He did win the Canadian Trotting Classic but was second in the Kentucky Futurity and third in the Breeders Crown. Amazing Catch was purchased by Greg Luther Racing late last year but remains in the Ake Svanstedt stable where he qualified for the first time on May 2 at The Meadowlands.

Highland Kismet was the first foal from the Muscle Hill-sired Highland Top Hill. Etsell took over the training of his 3-year-old sister Highland-starburst and expects to have her ready to race soon. The third foal is a Greenshoe-sired 2-year-old colt by the name of Highland Destiny.

"I don't know if he's got the ability of Highland Kismet," said Etsell when asked about the juvenile. "We've staked him to the races up here the Wellwood and the Breeders Crown."

It will be interesting to see whether Highland Kismet will be able to take the next step as a 4-year-old and reach the level his connections had anticipated during his sophomore season.

"I'm confident he'll race well against the 4-year-olds," Etsell said.

Highland Kismet may not be able to rewrite the 2024 record books but he'll have the opportunity to perhaps prove if he's the best 4-year-old from that crop against some of the best to return in years.



DERICK GWINNER

Highland Kismet will be making his 2025 debut very soon.

Cutting giving up the road warrior life for a stable home in NY



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett X @JHallettPhoto

A common lifestyle of harness horsemen is that of a nomad. Constantly putting the miles in and not just on the track, but on the road. Every track has a season and usually those seasons span over a few months at a time, meaning that horsemen must pick up and move to the next track for the next season, repeating this cycle annually. For Jacob Cutting, a lifelong horseman, being a nomad has built his harness racing career thus far, but no longer.

The 24-year-old is a native of Alberta, Canada and son of horsepeople Darryl and Melinda. Under the guidance of his parents, Cutting spent a lot of time in the barn in his childhood, but he had yet to catch the bug to make it his career.

"When I was younger, I was always more into sports. I was always around the barn, but it was maybe when I was 16 or 17 I got more serious with working with the horses," Jacob Cutting said.

At the end of 2018, Cutting began training with nine starts made between Flamboro Downs and Century Downs. In May 2019, he scored his first training win with Starface in a claiming race with David Kelly in the bike.

It wasn't until 2019 that Cutting jumped into the race bike for his first track appearance in a qualifier at Century Downs in Alberta. Throughout June and early July he made several starts in qualifiers and on July 10, 2019, Cutting made his first lifetime start in a fillies and mares conditioned claiming pace, a race he finished second in with his dad's Casey N Grinegan. As the month went by, he picked up more drives at the Calgary, A.B. track before moving to The Track On 2 in Lacombe, A.B. where he secured his first driving win with Gregor Manning's Cajun Beat on Aug. 17.

From there, he split his time between Century Mile in Edmonton, A.B. and The Track On 2 before ultimately moving stateside in November to race at Cal Expo in Sacramento, California. When Cal Expo concluded its meet in March 2020, Cutting picked up a start in Wisconsin at Rice Lake in May before journeying to Running Aces in Minnesota for five months. He ventured further east for a start at Monticello before returning to Cal Expo to start the cycle again with a fresh meet.

In 2021, he continued the process of traveling long distances, visiting Cal Expo until April, Running Aces through August and then to Rosecroft in October, splitting his time between that 5/8ths mile track in Maryland and Dover Downs in Delaware before ultimately ending at Freehold Raceway in New Jersey. It was a breakout year for the young reinsman, with 131 wins and \$782,000 in purse earnings.

Cutting's 2022 gave even the road warrior salesperson a run for their money. He competed at Rosecroft, Freehold, Dover and The Meadowlands before transitioning to Tioga Downs' summer meet full time at the start of May. Batavia and Monticello were also in the mix in what amounted to 611 racing miles for the year and thousands of road miles trekked.

The pattern flowed the same for 2023 through April before Cutting moved back to Aces and then Cal Expo. Then in 2024, Cutting started at Cal Expo before leaving the track for good in April. After the Aces meet, he returned to the East Coast permanently.

"Me and my parents were [racing] together when Kendra and I met in Minnesota and then we went to California and we were still racing with my parents. Then we decided to move to New Jersey, that was when Kendra and I decided to move out on our own," said Cutting.

When racing looked bleak in Cal Expo, before the decision came down that the facility would stop hosting harness racing after early May 2025, and when the doors closed permanently at Freehold Raceway, Cutting and his wife Kendra were looking for a landing spot for their stable. Thus, in 2025, his lines have charted a focus on an upstate New York track,

Saratoga Casino Hotel.

"I've been moving all over the place, but I think the future in California was kind of up in the air and we were getting tired of moving. [Saratoga] was another track that I hadn't been to, but Brett Beckwith was the one helping me and thought it would be good if I came out and gave it a try," he explained. "We really like it so far and that's the plan is to stay here."

Saratoga's harness racing meet runs 10.5 months of the year with only a short six weeks between the seasons, leaving a perfect off-time for the horses to have a break and horsemen as well. Suddenly, the nomadic lifestyle transitions into a fixed one with the exception of occasional travel for races elsewhere. Except for in the case of Cutting, the fixed and settled lifestyle has come true to term as he has not made starts besides at the Saratoga Springs half-mile oval since the meet started.

"We're tired of moving and we like it here. We like the area and the racing; it seems like a place kind of hard not to like here. That's the plan is to stay long term," said Cutting.

In addition to the lengthy racing meet with 150 race days a year, Saratoga is a town focused on horses, given the historic nature of the illustri-



JESSICA HALLETT

Jacob Cutting and his wife Kendra now reside in Saratoga, NY.

ous Thoroughbred racecourse just steps away from the harness track. With acres of farmland, crosswalks dedicated to horses, four tracks, and over 100 barns between the two landmarks, Saratoga is the ideal place for any horse lover.

Settled into their new home, Jacob and Kendra have six horses in Saratoga together and four still in Minnesota. Though he said there could be a plan for travel in the future, for now he is staying local to Saratoga.

As a driver, he now has 555 wins and just over \$4 million earned, and as a trainer he has 91 wins with \$462,000 earned. His most memorable win comes from his triumph in the 2023 Dan Patch Free-For-All at Running Aces with Hezzz A Wise Sky.

"Minnesota, the Dan Patch, I got the opportunity to drive Hezzz A Wise Sky for John Filomeno. That was probably one of the highlight driving moments for me for sure," said Cutting.

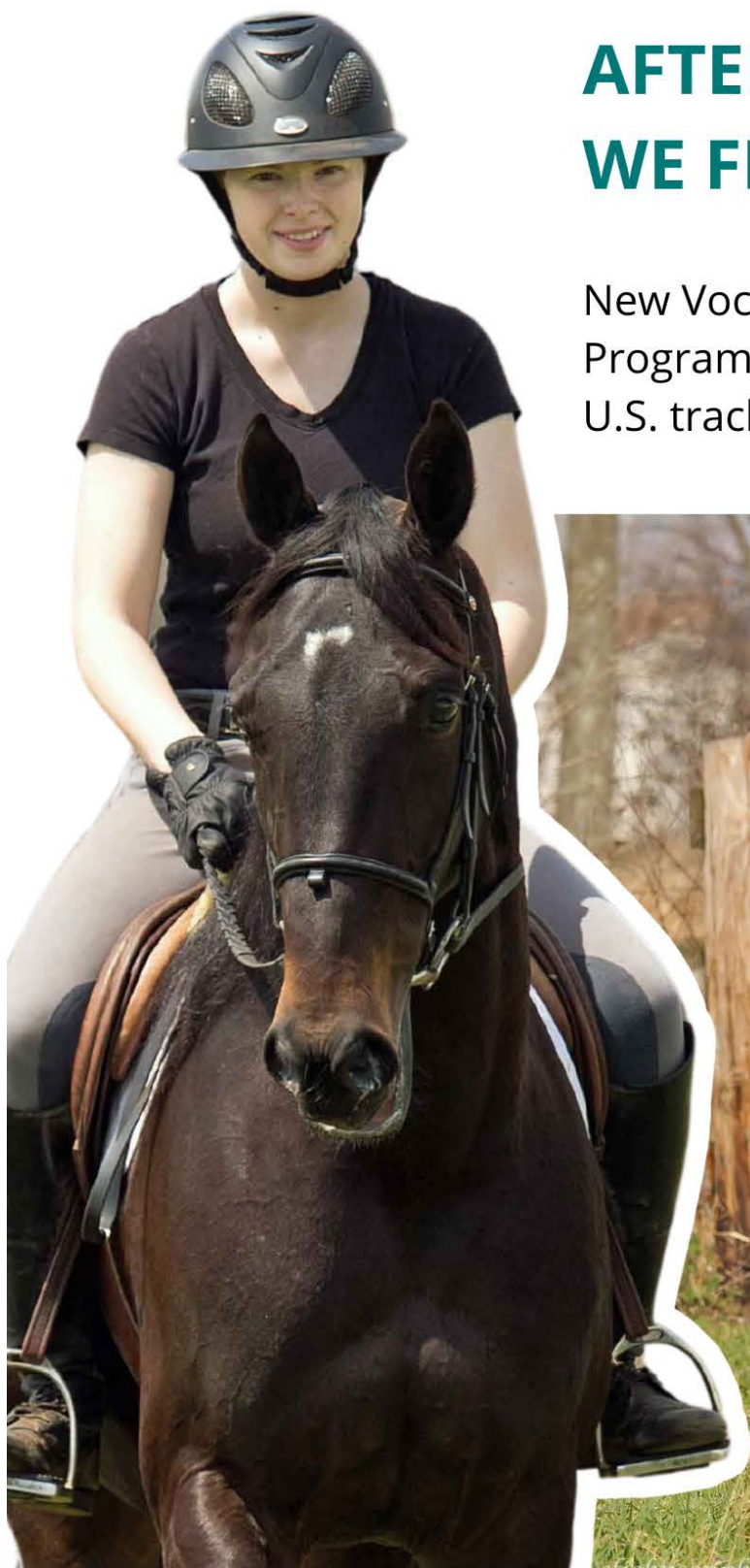
As far as advice for the next generation, Cutting says it all comes down to hard work.

"Overall, you just have to put in the work and you can't take any shortcuts. If you're not going to put in the work, you're not going to get anywhere. I think if you study anyone in this business that has success, you'll see they work hard, whether it's a catch driver or a horse trainer – they are working all day every day," concluded Cutting.

Donning his white, blue and orange colors, Jacob Cutting looks to chart a lot more miles on the half-mile oval in Saratoga Springs this year than on the roadway across the country, and so far he has charted himself into fifth on the driver leaderboard to date.

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Periculum, Oh Well carry the Melander torch in Cutler Memorial

By Jay Bergman

The \$158,000 Arthur J. Cutler Memorial drew a field of 11 and to the surprise of some one of trainer Marcus Melander's top older horses – Aetos Kronos S – did not make the earnings cut. Melander had plenty of backup as he entered two others including one of last year's breakout stars Periculum in his quest to annex the year's first major Open event for trotters.

Periculum makes his 6-year-old debut from post five in the tenth race of 14 on Saturday's program The Meadowlands.

"Last year when he came to me, he was coming off a so-so year in Sweden," said Melander. "We didn't know what to expect from him, but thankfully we staked him."

Though starting out in 2024 below the Open level, Periculum gained momentum and would go on to capture the lucrative Maple Leaf Trot at Woodbine Mohawk Park that earned him an invitation to the \$1 million MGM Yonkers International Trot where he finished second behind runaway winner Jiggy Jog S.

"He's come back very well," said Melander. "I was very happy with his qualifier (May 2)." The 1:53 1/5 effort was enough for Melander to conclude his horse is ready for stakes competition.

As for Aetos Kronos S failing to qualify: "I was a little surprised, but you know it's an early race and there's no Jiggy Jog to be concerned with, so I guess some others took a shot," Melander said. "I mean Up Your Deo didn't get in either."

Melander expects Periculum to be ready to tackle 10 rivals in the field, with Oh Well, who finished second to Periculum in the Maple Leaf, perhaps in need of a start or two before hitting his top stride.

"Oh Well knows the difference between a qualifier and a race," said Melander, assessing two third-place finishes in qualifying miles over the last two weeks. "He's the kind of horse that only does what he has to do."

"He's a bigger horse and he needs more work," said Melander, who still expects Oh Well to race well on Saturday.

With many of last year's top older horses now retired, the Cutler is a first step towards determining what this year's class will look like. In addition to Melander's pair, trainer Ron Burke has three in the Cutler with last year's Hambletonian Maturity winner Chapercraz (post 9) looking for his second straight win following a 1:51 2/5 victory on May 2 at The Meadowlands. Burke's other pair – Lexus Kody (post 2) and Antognoni S (post 4) – have an inside track, with Antognoni S, who made a miscue in his last start, one of 2025's brightest stars after winning eight races in 10 tries since arriving from Sweden.

"I have no idea why [he broke], but he touched his knee and that's why he ran. He doesn't even wear knee boots and didn't touch them at Yonkers," said Antognoni's driver and co-owner Yannick Gingras about the break on May 10. "I think he can go with them and will surprise a lot of people."

Trainer Tony Alagna usually has his horses ready at first asking and Ari Ferrari J looked more than ready in both of his qualifiers at The Meadowlands. Ari Ferrari J drew post three and races with Lasix for the first time.

Trainer Ake Svanstedt has captured the Cutler in two of the last three years, scoring in 2024 with Jiggy Jog S and in 2022 with Ecurie D DK. He'll send out Get A Wish DK from post 11 in the second tier in this year's edition. The 7-year-old by Wishing Stone will be making his debut for Svanstedt having last raced in the MGM Yonkers International last September for overseas connections.

Trainer Nancy Takter captured the Cutler in 2021 with Manchego. She will send out Hasty Bid (post 6) with the 5-year-old making his first start of the year following three qualifiers.

Melander has several sophomore trotters in action on Saturday night with divisions of the Garden State for fillies and colts on the 14-race undercard.

"I was happy the way Get It All raced in her first start," said Melander.

Get It All cut out a 1:53 mile in her debut at The Meadowlands on April 25 but was outkicked late by a colt. She'll face five fillies in the \$40,000 Garden State division slated as race 11. The field includes Yo Tillie, a Tactical Landing-sired filly making her pari-mutuel debut for trainer Andrew Harris following a brilliant juvenile campaign in Kentucky last year.

On the colt side, Melander pointed to Go Boom (post 5) in the \$55,000 Garden State male division going as race eight.

The Garden State will give Melander's New Jersey-breds an opportunity prior to the Sire Stakes season getting underway in the coming weeks. His top 3-year-old trotter and winter book favorite for this year's Hambletonian – Maryland – is nearly ready to make his qualifying debut.

"I had him up here last Saturday (May 10) and he trained a mile with Dexter (Dunn) in 1:58. He'll be back to qualify next Saturday (May 24) and we'll see if he qualifies just once or twice," said Melander, sounding more than happy with how Maryland has prepped for the coming sophomore season.



DERICK GIWNER

Periculum training at The Meadowlands in late April with Mattias Melander.

MEADOWLANDS QUALIFIERS THIS WEEK

The usual star-studded group of horses will be in action Saturday morning at 9 AM (EDT) for qualifying action at The Meadowlands. Below are some of the standouts:

Captain Albano - Two-time Dan Patch winner
My Girl Ej - Dan Patch winner
Abuckabett Hanover - Dan Patch winner
Captain Optimistic - Governor's Cup winner
Warrawee Michelle - Hambletonian Oaks winner
Date Night Hanover - Zweig Filly winner
Sabonis - Carl Milstein winner
R Melina - Kentucky Filly Futurity winner
Call Me Goo - Breeders Crown winner
Hard Seven - Dexter Cup winner
Monserate - Valley Victory winner
Amazing Catch - Canadian Trotting Classic winner

Dearly Beloved aims to continue progress in PASS

By Ken Weingartner

Jenny Melander has liked Dearly Beloved from the minute she began working with the filly, and the trainer hopes the speedy 3-year-old trotter will continue to mature and put her best foot forward as this season progresses.

Dearly Beloved was winless in three races last season, going off stride in each, but has returned this year to win three of four starts for Melander and owner Donald Bartling. Her 1:53 4/5 score in her most recent race April 28 at Mohegan Pennsylvania's Pocono Downs makes her the second-fastest sophomore trotting filly of the season, and the quickest on a five-eighths-mile track.

On Friday, Dearly Beloved will go on the road for the first time in her career, visiting Hollywood Casino at The Meadows for the first leg of the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes for 3-year-old female trotters. She is one of eight Hambletonian Oaks-eligible fillies in the two PASS divisions, which total 13 horses.

"I was very high on her last year, she was just very immature," Melander said. "This winter she trained down beautifully, and she seems to be able to deal with things a little bit better. Hopefully, we're seeing a different side of her."

"She's absolutely gorgeous, beautifully gaited, and super talented. She's got all the physical attributes. I have some high hopes for her if her mind can handle her talent."

Dearly Beloved, a daughter of Greenshoe-Broadway Chuckles, was purchased for \$60,000 under the name Dazzling Shoes at the 2023 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale. Her second dam, Fun And Strokes, was a multiple Grand Circuit winner and finished third in the 2001 Hambletonian Oaks.

So far in her career, Dearly Beloved has competed only at Pocono Downs. Among her three wins this season were a preliminary round of the Bobby Weiss Series and the event's consolation final, when she set her mark of 1:53 4/5 with Matt Kakaley in the sulky.

"She's plenty fast," Melander said. "She did that handy. There is no question there is speed there for sure."

On Friday, Dearly Beloved will leave from post three with driver Mike Wilder in the second of the two PASS divisions. She will face six rivals going for a purse of \$51,682 and is the 3-1 second choice on the morning line.

"This will be a little bit of a test to see how she handles a different track and shipping and a new driver," Melander said. "Hopefully, she is mature enough that she can handle it."

"Even though she didn't stay flat in any start last year, she showed us a lot of talent. She is staked pretty heavily this year for that reason. If she manages to keep her head on tight, then she has plenty of opportunities to make good money this year. I do really like her a lot and hope she will be a good horse for us this year."

The 2-1 morning-line favorite in Friday's second PASS division is Blueberry, a Hambletonian Oaks eligible filly who was the runner-up in last year's PASS championship. The Doug Snyder trainee will leave from post five with Ronnie Wrenn Jr. in the sulky. The other Oaks eligibles in the field are Tom Fanning's Saints Preserve Us (5-1) and Anette Lorentzon's Seal The Deal As (7-1).

In the first division, going for a purse of \$51,282, Goodgirl Bi IT is the 3-1 favorite from post one for trainer Marcus Melander and driver Mattias Melander. She was a winner on the PASS circuit last year and is 2-for-2 this season.

Goodgirl Bi IT is among the four Oaks eligibles in the field, with Melvin Schmucker's Country Victory (7-2), Ray Schnittker's returning PASS champ Shes A Shoe In (4-1), and D.R. Ackerman's Princess Jackie (7-1).

Racing begins at 12:45 p.m. (EDT) at The Meadows.

Undefeated Chantilly makes 2025 debut on stakes-filled card at Mohawk Park

By Derick Gwerner

A new queen was anointed in Canadian harness racing last year and she's back on Saturday at Woodbine Mohawk Park in one of four SBOA finals for Ontario-bred 3-year-olds. The undefeated Chantilly makes her 2025 debut off a pair of qualifiers and is ready to roll according to driver James MacDonald, who has horses in each of the six-figure events.

"She seems unbelievable. The first qualifier I was hoping to go [1:]54 or 55 and she went a mile in [1:]53 pretty much as easily as a horse can go a mile in two minutes," said MacDonald. "She just floats around the track."

Chantilly, who was perfect in nine starts and named Horse of the Year in Canada, followed up her 1:53 qualifying victory with a 1:55 score and will start from post six in the C\$133,512 second race filly pace on Saturday. Already a good-size horse, MacDonald said Chantilly really filled out over the winter and seems ready to tackle whatever stands in her way, though he isn't ready to crown her just yet.



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Chantilly goes for her 10th straight win on Saturday.

"She's a powerhouse. I don't think we've gone anywhere near the bottom of her, but there are always horses who pop up. There's other horses who have come back good and there are a few in the States that look like machines and they'll give her everything she wants. It will be interesting to see how she compares. I think she's the best right now but things can change in the blink of an eye in harness racing," said MacDonald.

Trained by Nick Gallucci for Millar Farms, Chantilly is the 1-5 morning-line favorite in her 11-filly final.

While Chantilly is expected to win, MacDonald has a reasonable chance of success in all of the SBOA races on Saturday. He steers 8-5 early choice Monalishi in the C\$136,513 final for filly trotters carded as race four.

"Hopefully I can find her a trip in the final because she's a very nice trotter," said MacDonald.

MacDonald will have to settle for the second choice Getthegreen (4-1) in the C\$130,913 colt and gelding final for the boys in race six. That one finished second in the elimination round last week as the 6-5 chalk.

"He's got a good shot. Last week he felt like a winner to me and he knuckled over at the top of the stretch and just got all out of gear right when Louie [Roy, driving Day] was pulling out of the hole," said MacDonald. "It was just bad timing. Mine got rough and he got the jump on me. I really couldn't push mine. If I can work out a trip and he's trotting good, he's as good as any in there."

In the C\$126,912 split for male pacers (race eight), MacDonald sits behind Boxer Seelster (5-1) for the first time. While he doesn't have prior experience with the son of Bettor's Delight, he did say that the connections told him the horse schooled with Lasix added "like a million bucks" and he's hoping the horse is ready.

The 10-race Woodbine Mohawk Park kicks off at 6:35 PM (EDT) and offers a \$75,000 Guaranteed Pick 5 in the opener.

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Meadowlands post drag to be reinstated this weekend

By Derick Gwerner

On Monday (May 12) The Meadowlands announced that it was reinstating post-time drag beginning with the races for this weekend, abandoning an experiment that began in mid-April.

"[We] will revert back to the formula of sending the horses onto the track at 0 minutes to post and going to the gate approximately seven minutes later," said a release from the track. "Heeding customer complaints regarding the practice of 'dragging' post time out, as is the new normal at virtually all tracks, and going off at '0' resulted in a sharp decline in export handle. Among the lessons learned was that our CAW customers could not adjust, resulting in a large percentage of the lost handle."

Handle at The Meadowlands has been down approximately \$2 million per weekend for the last three to four weeks.

The drag elimination experiment also included reduced card length, with live racing often concluding 20 to 30 minutes earlier than in the past. According to COO/GM Jason Settlemoir, that practice will continue despite the return of the drag.

"The goal is still to be done between 11:15-11:30," said Settlemoir, who added that closing out CAW players from the win pool with two minutes to post time remains on the agenda pending New Jersey Racing Commission approval of the new tote company software.

"It already began as the CAW's were self-monitoring," added Settlemoir.

The track's release went on to outline the need for a significant marketing budget to accomplish the goal of getting younger people to the track and said it would push that initiative if a casino license was ever awarded.

Racing at The Meadowlands resumes on Friday at 6:20 PM (EDT) and continues on Saturday with the A.J. Cutler Memorial stake as the featured race.

HUGE HI-5 POOL LOOMS FRIDAY AT THE MEADOWLANDS

There were no winning tickets sold on the 14th race Hi-5 (or Pentafecta, if you prefer) last Saturday (May 10) night, creating a carryover of \$11,399 for Friday's (May 16) 14th dash.

Hi-5 carryovers are uncommon and a total pool of \$40,000 or more is expected. In the event \$30,000 of "new money" were wagered, that would create a surplus of over \$6,000 for players to shoot for, creating a "negative takeout", where winning tickets are exchanged for more money than what was bet.

HARRAH'S HOOSIER PARK TO AIR ON FOX SPORTS MAY 17

Harrah's Hoosier Park is proud to announce that its card on Saturday, May 17 will be broadcast live nationally on Fox Sports 2, joining the Meadowlands for its Cutler Memorial broadcast from 8-11 p.m.

With a post time of 6:15 p.m., the Harrah's Hoosier Park card will focus on some of the best sophomores in the state of Indiana as they prep for the Indiana Sire Stakes season. The Saturday card will feature both \$25,000 Finals of the Hal Dale and Go On BB (fillies and mares) Pacing Series for Indiana Sired horses who are non-winners of two of \$25,000 lifetime. Past champions of the Hal Dale include the likes of Sabonis and Always A Prince.

In addition to The Hal Dale, Harrah's Hoosier Park will add \$20,000 Indiana Sire Stakes Eligible races for all four sophomore divisions (3CP, 3FP, 3CT and 3FT). These races will serve as a prep for the first leg of Indiana Sire Stakes, which will kick off for all four three-year-old divisions on the special Memorial Day card (Monday, May 26).

Vice President and General Manager of Racing, Gabe Prewitt, will co-host the Fox Sports broadcast live from Harrah's Hoosier Park and be joined by The Meadowlands' Jessica Otten who will be reporting from East Rutherford.

Bettors will have \$7,500 guarantees in both the Early Pick 5 (races 1-5) and Late Hoosier High 5 (last race on the card) on the May 17 card. Free online programs are posted nightly on the Hoosier Park website along with tip sheets, race replays, and other handicapping resources.

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

-release (Hoosier)

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THURSDAY, MAY 15

RACE 9

(7) JOHNSTOWN JET will make his 3rd start for new trainer Tess Waxman. He was a dominant winner in a \$20k condition claimer at Flamboro, and just got picked off in his latest. He picks up the services of JR Plante.

-John Rallis



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

FRIDAY, MAY 16

RACE 13

(4) MISS YOU JOANN two-moved in defeat last time at Tioga and prior to that took a bad shuffle and finished up with steady pace. Five-year-old picks up Beckwith and looks like an odds-on winner versus a very suspect bunch.

-Derick Gwerner



RACE 4

(1) SEASIDE DIVA took a few starts into her 4YO season to get rolling and her last three starts have been stellar, Burke trainee faces some quality competition but gets the call.

-Matt Rose



SATURDAY, MAY 17

RACE 12

(4) SAULSBROOK HERO was used to the front, got shuffled and rallied nicely with late pace to be second. This looks like a winning spot.

-Gwerner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

[Thursday](#)

[Friday](#)

[Saturday](#)

Meadowlands Analysis

[Friday](#)

[Saturday](#)

Yonkers Analysis

[Thursday](#)

[Friday](#)

[Saturday](#)

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS



INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES



Racehorse Health and Safety Act introduced to repeal and replace HISA

On Thursday (May 15), Rep. Clay Higgins (LA-03), Rep. Don Davis (NC-01), and Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) introduced the Racehorse Health and Safety Act (RHSA), a bipartisan, bicameral effort to deliver a constitutional solution to safety regulation in the horse racing industry.

The legislation is backed by industry organizations representing tens of thousands of horsemen and is endorsed by the United States Trotting Association (USTA), National Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association (HBPA), the North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians (NAARV), and others.

The RHSA would establish an interstate compact to develop nationwide rules governing scientific medication control and racetrack safety for horse racing. The RHSA would replace the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act of 2020 (HISA), which has been found unconstitutional by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and awaits a decision on whether the Supreme Court will take up the case.

"Government should be a partner to Americans, not a predator. While the federal government initially passed HISA with the intention of bringing uniformity to the horse racing industry, it proved to be a well-intentioned disaster that plagued the industry with confusion and disruption. The Racehorse Health and Safety Act is a solution to the problem. It is rooted in science and draws from industry experts. It is of horsemen, by horsemen, and for horsemen. This legislation protects horses and horsemen while reasserting state sovereignty and pushing back against federal oppression," said Rep. Clay Higgins.

"Congress must prioritize the establishment of equitable and consistent standards within the horse racing industry. In pursuit of this, we are supporting legislation that promotes improved safety regulations through a thoughtful and pragmatic framework," said Rep. Don Davis.

Sen. Tom Cotton stated, "The RHSA will provide horse owners and racetracks flexibility, while also bringing safe and effective regulation to the horseracing industry."

The RHSA establishes the Racehorse Health and Safety Organization (RHSAO), with a Board of Directors appointed by the state racing commissions. Five board members will be appointed by the racing commissions in the states with the most racing days, and four members will be appointed by racing commissions in the remaining states.

The RHSAO Board will establish three Scientific Medication Control Committees, one for each racing breed: Thoroughbreds, Standardbreds, and Quarter Horses. Committee members will be selected by industry associations and the Board. The RHSAO Board will also establish one Racetrack Safety Committee comprised of board- and industry-appointed members that will recommend breed-specific rules to the Board. The Board will have the final say on all rules adopted, but it must justify its decisions with scientific evidence.

Further, the RHSAO will be granted the power to investigate rule violations, but the state racing commission of each participating state will retain enforcement power unless it requests the RHSAO to assist with enforcement.

Finally, the RHSAO will be funded through annual fees from the participating state racing commissions, which will be specific to each breed. Because enforcement will be returned to state racing commissions, the RHSA will drastically reduce the fees placed on horsemen.

States will have two years to decide whether to participate in the compact, but only participating states will be allowed to export simulcast signals for interstate, offsite betting. The RHSA would repeal HISA in its entirety.

In addition to being found unconstitutional twice by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, HISA proved ineffective in other ways.

In 2024, HISA's enforcement arm came under fire for punishing innocent owners and trainers for miniscule amounts of substances in a horse that have no effect on its performance or health. Over 1,000 horsemen signed a petition by the National HBPA to the Federal Trade Commission

to require HISA to establish no-effect thresholds, which would ensure that respected horsemen do not have their reputations and careers ruined over incidental exposures to everyday substances.

"The RHSA is a commonsense bill that is beneficial for both harness racing and Standardbreds," Russell Williams, president of the USTA, said. "It achieves the goal of rule uniformity while respecting the unique characteristics of different racing breeds. Above all, it embraces the principle that the welfare of the horse must always come first. The USTA is proud to endorse this important legislation."

"As a veterinarian, I believe the Racehorse Health and Safety Act is a critical step toward ensuring a scientifically sound and constitutionally valid regulatory framework for horse racing," Doug Daniels, DVM and president of the National HBPA, stated. "We must prioritize equine health and welfare through veterinary, evidence-based research into medication control and racetrack safety standards. The RHSA will provide the industry with the stability it needs. It is our responsibility — as horsemen, veterinarians, and racing commissions — to collaborate in protecting both the integrity of the sport and the welfare of our human and equine athletes."

"The North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians fully supports the Racehorse Health and Safety Act," said Dr. Nicholas Meitinis, president of the NAARV. "The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority is a deeply flawed institution — one that not only harms the industry but also restricts veterinarians from providing the best possible care to their equine athletes."

With the Grand Circuit underway and first-time graded stakes scheduled in harness racing, the effort will continue to encourage other congressional leaders and stakeholders to step up to the starting gate alongside Reps. Higgins and Davis, and Sen. Cotton and race to support an industry in urgent need.

National Groups in Support:

- National Horsemen Benevolent and Protective Association (National HBPA)
 - United States Trotting Association (USTA)
 - North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians (NAARV)
- State/Regional Groups in Support:


- Alabama HBPA
- Arkansas HBPA
- Arizona HBPA
- Charles Town HBPA, West Virginia
- Delaware Standardbred Owners Association
- Finger Lake HBPA, New York
- Florida Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association
- Harness Horse Association of Central New York
- Harness Horsemen's Association of New England
- Illinois Harness Horseman Association
- Illinois HBPA
- Indiana HBPA
- Meadows Standardbred Owners Association, Pennsylvania
- Minnesota Harness Racing, Inc.
- Minnesota HBPA
- Monticello Harness Horsemen's Association, Inc., New York
- Nebraska HBPA
- Oregon HBPA
- Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association
- Pennsylvania HBPA
- Standardbred Owners Association of New York
- Tampa Bay HBPA, Florida
- Virginia HBPA
- Washington HBPA
- Western New York Harness Horsemen's Association

-release (USTA Communications)



SOPHOMORE STAKES BOOST AT THE MEADOWS

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

LOUPRINT, TWISTED DESTINY TO CLASH IN SATURDAY'S PA SIRE STAKES

The Pennsylvania Sire Stakes and Stallion Series start their 2025 series of races at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania on Saturday afternoon, as \$260,566 will be contested by the sport's "glamour division," the 3-year-old pacing males.

[READ MORE](#)

FIVE HAMBO HOPEFULS TO START IN PLAINRIDGE'S BUNKER HILL TROT

The Grand Circuit's second stop of the season at Plainridge Park features the Grade 3 \$100,000 Bunker Hill Open Trot for 3-year-olds on Thursday (May 15) afternoon. A full field of 10 will go postward and feature five horses who are eligible to the 100th edition of the Grade 1 \$1.2 million Hambletonian Stake on August 2 at The Meadowlands.

[READ MORE](#)

MIKI AND MINNIE PICKS UP WHERE SHE LEFT OFF IN SEASONAL BOW

Miki And Minnie, Dan Patch Award winner for the 2-year-old pacing fillies last year, made her 2025 debut Monday afternoon at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania in one of four \$30,000 Pennsylvania All-Stars divisions, and she couldn't have been more impressive in a 1:51 victory.

[READ MORE](#)

JURAVINSKI MEMORIAL ELIMINATIONS TOOK PLACE AT FLAMBORO

Captain Fear Not and Calicojack Hanover emerged with the wins from a pair of C\$35,000 Charles Juravinski Memorial Cup eliminations for 4-year-old male pacers on Sunday evening at Flamboro Downs.

[READ MORE](#)

FORMER CONTEST WINNER LEADS TRAINER STANDINGS AT SHENANDOAH

Former VHHA "Own a Horse for a Day" promotional contest winner and local resident Steve Wetzel --- now an actual harness owner and trainer --- won four races at Shenandoah Downs over the weekend to soar to the top of the trainer standings.

[READ MORE](#)

OHIO SIRE STAKES KICK OFF AT SCIOTO DOWNS ON FRIDAY

Two Ohio freshman divisional winners will start the defense of their titles in the Ohio Sires Stakes opening leg on Friday, May 16 at Eldorado Scioto Downs. Mocha Hill, the 2024 2-Year-Old Filly Trotter of the Year, will make her second seasonal appearance, while Odds On Hialeah, the previous 2-Year-Old Filly Pacer of the Year, will make her first start of the year.

There will be two \$65,000 divisions each for filly trotters and pacers.

Mocha Hill and seven of her rivals will highlight the first filly trot division in race one. Trained by Ron Burke, the daughter of What The Hill will look to redeem herself after a break in the James K. Hackett Memorial Final. As the 4-1 third choice, Mocha Hill will leave from the seventh post position with Chris Page in the bike.

[READ MORE](#)

'RUTHLESS' AND 'MAXIMUS' VICTORIOUS IN PHILLY QUALIFIERS

Once again the "Cancelliere Breakfast Special" was on the menu of the Tuesday morning qualifiers at Harrah's Philadelphia, with Maximus Miki and then Ruthless Hanover easily winning the first two of the qualifiers for the team of trainer Tom Cancelliere and owner John Cancelliere.

Ruthless Hanover was again the main entrée, as the eight-year-old roared through fractions of 28, 55 2/5, and 1:23 en route to a 6 3/4 length victory in 1:51 with the guidance of George Napolitano Jr. The Somebeachsomewhere gelding went the fastest mile ever on a 5/8-mile track when he won here in the 2023 Joseph Auger Memorial, stopping the clock in 1:46 3/5. Last year he defending his Auger title successfully, in 1:47 2/5.

But the Auger was his fifth start of 2023 and second of 2024, and with his 2025 card showing nothing but this qualifier and a Q win on April 29 in 1:53.1, it will be interesting if "Ruthless" tries for a three-peat on "Super Sunday" just twelve days hence.

Maximus Miki, an altered son of Always B Miki and a multiple Open-level winner, is quite the "opening course" himself, and he followed up on his 1:55 3/5 qualifier of April 29 with a success involving fractions of 28 1/5, 56 1/5, and 1:24 4/5 en route to an 18 length triumph in 1:52 2/5, also with Napolitano driving.

There was good trotting action as well during the qualifying session. The \$1.2M-winning French Wine (in his career a winner in the Pennsylvania and Kentucky programs, second in the Futurity and the Hambletonian Maturity, and 2-3 in the Breeders Crown) rallied in 1:55 in his five-year-old bow, the son of Bar Hopping a half-length ahead of Super Duper Cooper (second to Sir Pinocchio in the NYSS final last year), for Team Orange Crush.

Also looking good was the sophomore Gimpanzee filly Voguish, a nose off What A Bid Hanover in the Goldsmith Maid in her previous start, winning in 1:54 3/5, with Todd McCarthy doing the driving for trainer Andrew Harris and connections.

Replays of the Philly qualifiers are available at www.phha.org.

-release (PHHA/Philadelphia)

CREEKSIDE CHAT HAS JUST DROPPED A BRAND NEW EPISODE FOR MAY

Creekside Chat focuses on going behind the barn doors, with on farm news, and segments on the harness racing industry at large.

The May episode is sponsored by Harness Racing Update.

The goal of Creekside Chat is to approach all industry topics, even the controversial ones, and to promote harness racing to the public. Creekside Chat is the brainchild of Diamond Creek Farm and produced by an Emmy winning production company. In 2024 we had over 350,000 views on our YouTube channel, growing subscribers at a rate of 100 per month, making Creekside Chat currently one of the most successful harness racing media shows.

The show can be streamed on [Youtube](#), Apple Podcast and Spotify.

-release (Diamond Creek)

BUSY MAY WEEKEND AT THE MEADOWLANDS RACETRACK

The Meadowlands Racetrack Championship Meet continues on Friday and Saturday night with a 6:20 pm post time. Friday features an \$11,399 Hi-5 carryover in race 14, while the Arthur J. Cutler Memorial for older trotters, sponsored by Allerge Farm, highlights Saturday. Saturday is also the Preakness Simulcast for those looking to get in some Thoroughbred racing action.

The track's monthly handicapping contest schedule continues on Friday, May 16. There is no entry fee (a \$100 live money bankroll is required) for players, and the prize pool, guaranteed at \$1,000 and funded by the track, will be paid out to the top four finishers. Full details are available [here](#).

Then, on Saturday, May 17, the track has combined two fan-favorite food truck events—the BBQ Extravaganza and the Best Burger Battle—into one outrageous event: the Battle of the Meats! Full details can be found [here](#).

Chow down on some delicious BBQ and burgers from the best food trucks and restaurants in the area. This pay-as-you-go event takes place from 5 to 11 p.m., with live racing beginning at 6:20 p.m. Fans can also vote for their favorite food truck, enter to win a spot at the judges' table, and those 21+ can enjoy the Shanky's Whip Pineapple Trotter cocktail at the Backyard Bar.

-edited release (Meadowlands)

OHHA'S FRESHMAN FOCUS TURNS THE SPOTLIGHT ON JEFF NISONGER

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association (OHHA) will feature Jeff Nisonger and his Ohio 2-year-olds in training in this week's edition of Freshman Focus. The show will air at 7 PM on Thursday (May 15) on the OHHA's [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

-edited release (OHHA)