

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026

DAN NOBLE is... *on fire*
in the zone *dialed in* *on a roll*

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DIANE WISE PHOTO



EDITOR'S EYE

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

Those familiar with video games over the last two to three decades know the “in the zone” concept. It involves an on-screen visual indicator that a player is feeling so good about themselves that they can seemingly make any shot, hit any ball or perform any task. While we lack that glaring optical sign in reality, if harness racing was a video game, that would be the current status of driver Dan Noble a couple of weeks into 2026.

Through just eight programs (114 races - through January 13) Noble has amassed an amazing 48 wins. He is currently reaching the winner's circle at a 42.1% clip. If Noble just raced at Northfield Park all year and continued at the same rate he would compete in about 2,900 races

and win right around 1,200 of them. The win total and percentage would earn him a place in history.

Consider that the single-season 1,000 win barrier has only been breached five times in North America. Tim Tetrick holds the record at 1,189 (2007), followed by Aaron Merriman with 1,144 (2018) and 1,095 (2017), then Walter Case Jr. at 1,077 (1998), and Anthony Morgan with a 1,004 (2006) tally. There are a number of things to unpack from this group and with these numbers.

First off, only four drivers appear among the top 10 names in terms of single-season wins, and if you expand to the top 20, Dave Malone with 885 (2008) and Ronnie Wrenn Jr. at 847 (2014) are the only others in history to eclipse 840 wins in a year. Merriman has done it an astounding 11 times. Morgan is next with four appearances while Tetrick and Case show up twice.

Despite all of the impressive statistics of the six

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Early Closing Events

EVENTS CLOSE FEB 15

3 YEAR OLDS

\$800,000 Meadowlands Pace
\$300,000 Stanley Dancer Memorial Colt Trot
\$300,000 Del Miller Memorial Filly Trot
\$200,000 Jerry Silverman Memorial Filly Pace

NEW JERSEY CLASSIC SERIES

\$250,000 Trot Finals for Colt & Fillies
\$25,000 Elims / \$100,000 Consolations
\$150,000 Pace Finals for Colts & Fillies
\$15,000 Elims / \$50,000 Consolations

4 YEAR OLDS

GRADUATE SERIES

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

OLDER HORSES

\$1,000,000 FANDUEL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

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

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

EVENTS CLOSE MARCH 15

2 YEAR OLDS

NEW JERSEY CLASSIC SERIES
\$250,000 Trot Finals for Colt & Fillies
\$25,000 Elims / \$100,000 Consolations
\$150,000 Pace Finals for Colts & Fillies
\$15,000 Elims / \$50,000 Consolations

KINDERGARTEN SERIES

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

FRESHMAN FALL FINAL FOUR

No Eliminations/Top Money Winners Format
\$400,000 Valley Victory 2YO Colt Trot
\$400,000 Goldsmith Maid 2YO Filly Trot
\$400,000 Governor's Cup 2YO Colt Pace
\$400,000 Three Diamonds 2YO Filly Pace

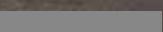
NEW FOR 2026

DUE BY FEBRUARY 15: Any horse by a sire who is listed as eligible MUST make a one-time \$400 Meadowlands EC Participation payment by February 15, 2026 to gain the option of nominating to Meadowlands 2YO Early Closers for the 2026 season and continuing for the life of the horse. View the list of stallions at playmeadowlands.com/stallions



 [VIEW ALL EARLY CLOSING EVENTS](#)

 [VIEW LIST OF ELIGIBLE STALLIONS](#)

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ALL PURSES ESTIMATED

men listed above, the only somewhat equal comparison to what Noble could potentially accomplish in 2026 is Case's 1998 campaign. This is due to the fact that Case drove almost exclusively at Yonkers Raceway (978 of his wins came there that year) and is the only driver to break 1,000 wins in under 4,100 starts. He sat in the bike just 2,993 times in 1998 and recorded an unfathomable 36% win rate, quite a bit higher than the 23-25% numbers of his fellow top-fivers.

Noble actually shares a record with Case and a few others (Greg Grismore, Aaron Merriman and Brett Miller) as the only drivers to win 10 races on one card at Northfield Park. Noble posted that lofty total on November 30 and December 30 at the Ohio oval.

While you can argue that a few January dates is hardly a viable sample size to place him on the road to a record-breaking year, Noble's December figures also back it up. During that month he drove 79 winners in 235 starts at Northfield (33.6%).

"If I can stay healthy and all goes well, I think I can get to 1,500 [winners]. I don't think that is something outside of possibility," said Noble, who also has his sights set on another record. "I think I can get more than 10 winners on a card. I'm the only guy other than Walter Case to win 10 twice in the same meet. I honestly don't think it is outside the box. It might not even be impossible that I can sweep the whole card. I'm just waiting on that day; taking it one program at a time and hoping things work right."

"I believe it happens in spurts. When things are going right you can do no wrong and I keep telling myself that I might have a month when it feels like I can't do anything right. You have to try not to overdrive or overthink a race."

There is no denying that Noble has always been a good driver. He began his career in 1999 and won the national driving wins title in 2011 with 773 victories. The 43-year-old has over 8,600 career wins and an 18.6% success rate. Those numbers aside, Noble kicked it up a notch in 2025, going from 566 wins the year prior to 713 last year. The horses he drove earned \$9,140,095, a career-best total for the Ohio native.

"I've seen so many comments from people asking how I got this good. Well, I probably always have been this good. About 11 years ago I lost my dad and I wanted to keep the family tradition going. My wife [Christi Noble] and I worked so hard to get where we were at; with about 30 to 40 head," Noble explained about how the barn took precedent over his catch-driving career but is now down to 15 horses.

One has to wonder what changed in his thinking to loft up his 2025 numbers and how Noble is winning so many races at Northfield in the moment. How has he been able to dominate while perennial leading driver Aaron Merriman, who had 578 victories at Northfield in 2025 and led all drivers nationally (922), is just six for 102 in the Northfield win column this year?

Noble tracks everything back to a couple of key moments which changed his driving mindset.

"I broke my ring finger last Thanksgiving week and that is when I told [Christi] I'm done doing the barn," said Noble. "I didn't want to be a one-time wonder like in 2011 when I was leading driver in the country. I told her that I believe I can do it again and you can run the barn."

"I don't know any good driver who can succeed with three to four hours of sleep every night. Now I get my eight or nine hours of sleep and all I have to do is focus on driving and spending time with my kids when I can. I think that has made a big difference. I drive clear-minded."

"I think I can get more than 10 winners on a card. I'm the only guy other than Walter Case to win 10 twice in the same meet. I honestly don't think it is outside the box. It might not even be impossible that I can sweep the whole card. I'm just waiting on that day; taking it one program at a time and hoping things work right."

-Driver Dan Noble

The second change for Noble was more on the mental side. His Ohio Hall of Fame dad Sam "Chip" Noble passed away almost exactly 12 years ago and Dan admits he never really let it sink in and it weighed on him emotionally.

"I didn't grieve when my old man passed and about a year-and-a-half ago I went to his grave and finally let things loose," said Noble.

Often when a driver controls the standings by winning even 20-25% of the races at a track it is because he is hooked up with one or two trainers that win at a high rate. Noble's dominance defies that logic. During the week of January 6 to 11 at Northfield he won 22 races for 18 different trainers. There are probably catch-drivers who haven't won for 18 trainers in months, no less one week.

"On the Ohio circuit as a catch-driver, there is nowhere tougher to drive than Ohio. There are numerous good drivers and trainers that could probably compete anywhere in the country but stay here for their family," said Noble, who has won driving titles at almost all of the state's tracks. "I'm starting to get a lot of respect [at Northfield] because I'm not just doing it with my wife's barn or our family barn. In some races I have three to four horses to choose from and I'm questioned by my wife, 'honey you took the wrong horse.' I respond, 'well, honey, I probably did, but

I'm thinking it is first-time me and it has back class. Maybe the horse just didn't like something about the other driver."

The theory of having a "new set of hands in the bike" has been a key handicapping angle for well over a half-century. Horses react differently to each driver and most certainly can tell who is holding the lines. For Noble, he sees his talent for getting the most out of a horse as partially God-given and also embedded from his childhood.

"I'm fourth generation and my wife is fifth. I've been around horses since I was 2 years old running around. I sat on my father's lap from the time I was 4 until I couldn't anymore. I feel what's inside the horses. I feel what the horse feels," said Noble. "I believe it is a talent that the Lord gave to me and only he can take it away. I can't really explain it. I can usually tell [how the horse feels] when I'm scoring down."

As "one with the horse" as Noble feels, even his sixth sense fails him

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Nominating 2YOs to Meadowlands 2026 Early Closers

Early Closer Payment Schedule

DATE	AGE	TO DO
Now thru Feb 15	2YO	Review info; prepare submission materials
February 15	2YO	One Time \$400 Early Closer Participation Payment
March 15	2YO	Nomination Payments for Meadowlands 2YO Early Closers Begin



Eligible Stallions for Foals of 2024

NEW FOR 2026

DUE BY FEBRUARY 15: Any horse by a sire who is listed as eligible MUST make a one-time \$400 Meadowlands EC Participation payment by February 15, 2026 to gain the option of nominating to Meadowlands 2YO Early Closers for the 2026 season and continuing for the life of the horse.

Only those 2-year-olds who have made the one-time \$400 Meadowlands EC Participation payment by February 15, 2026 will be permitted to race in the 2-year-old baby races and eligible for nomination to Meadowlands Early Closers in subsequent seasons for the life of the horse.

The entire series of nominating and sustaining payments must then be made for the horse to be eligible to race in the chosen races.

Nomination and sustaining payments on Meadowlands Early Closers for 2YOs will be pushed back to begin on March 15 and adjusted accordingly.

This proposal will be reconsidered for future seasons, and revision is possible.



For complete information including dates and conditions please visit playmeadowlands.com |

from time to time. He was emotional when bringing up the loss of Magic Four N, who went down after the wire for him a few days ago.

"I've been blaming myself because I misjudged how that horse felt. I know it's a tragedy and sometimes things happen but I blame myself," said Noble.

It is impossible to tell the Northfield success story of Noble without touching on the reason he is even racing at the northern Ohio oval. After all, he won the driving title at Dayton Raceway in late 2024 and captured the Miami Valley crown in 2025 but was a no-show at those facilities when they re-opened in September 2025 and January 2026, respectively.

While no track has issued an official release on the subject, according to Noble, he is not welcome as a driver and his wife may not participate as a trainer at Dayton or Miami Valley, and that ban will extend to Scioto Downs where the trouble began for the pair.

"My understanding is that some people didn't like what they saw the last night at Scioto Downs," said Noble, referring to four races where he, driving for his wife, won four races in times of 1:46 4/5, 1:47, 1:47 and 1:46 4/5, all lifetime marks. "All of those horse were imports purchased for between \$100,000 and \$300,000. They all came over with agreements that they would be able to achieve a certain level here or be taken back. They were all staked to big races like the Meadowlands Pace but had some hiccups along the way; some had surgery. They just never had a chance to compete at those levels."

Noble said he was approached by a Scioto official after the card and informed they would no longer take his entries. Being the last night of the meet for the year and the track not reopening until May, Scioto has not officially denied Noble the right to drive or his wife the chance to enter horses, but the fact that Dayton and Miami Valley followed suit speaks to the likelihood that it will occur.

Scioto Downs officials did not want to comment on the matter and the Ohio Harness Horseman's Association said it is taking a neutral position, pointing out that the tracks are private entities and have the right to deny anyone.

From the outside looking in there appears to be two completely separate issues at play – Dan Noble as a driver and Christi Noble as a trainer. While in a perfect world he would love to go back in time to how things were before, he seems content with the idea of simply being a driver and owner while having his horses trained by someone else.

"At this point the only place I can go in Ohio is Northfield and I'm not allowed to own horses anywhere but Northfield Park. I can't even own horses and send them to another trainer like Ronnie Burke or Virgil Morgan to race on the southern [circuit] here in Ohio," said Noble, who can't get a grasp on why other Ohio tracks won't let him drive. "They just tell me you're just too good. Do they do this to LeBron James? Do they do it to Michael Jordan? If you are just too good in any sport do they kick you out?"

"As a driver I should be allowed to race anywhere I want and own any horses I want with anybody as trainer."

With all the success, Noble said he's been searched and questioned about having a device in his bike or boot to get more out of horses, similar to controversy that has occurred with jockeys at times in the Thoroughbred racing world. His problems extend beyond the Buckeye State as the Kentucky Horse Racing and Gaming Board handed him a \$500 fine for a positive urine test for amphetamines and marijuana. He appealed stating that both are prescribed legal medications.

Miami Valley, Dayton and Scioto are all within 60 miles of Noble's home in Xenia, Ohio. Since Northfield Park and the Ohio fair circuit are likely the only driving options available for Noble in the state, he is considering all avenues. Northfield is a 200 mile haul according to the driver. That means three hours in the car each way and more time away from his two young kids and family, which will play a huge factor in whether Noble elects to seek work in other jurisdictions.

"I only have a handful of family left and I want to do what's right by them," said Noble, who mentioned The Meadows and Yonkers Raceway as possibilities.

The Meadows is interesting because the travel distance (215 miles) for Noble is similar to Northfield Park. According to a source, the rules are also different in Pennsylvania than Ohio in that the Pennsylvania Horse Racing Commission would have to approve the banning of a driver. The Meadows also races in the afternoon, which would allow Noble to do doubleheaders and race at night at Northfield, similar to the schedule mapped out by Merriman for years.

Yonkers Raceway is a bit more complex because it is 450 miles away from



NIKKI SHERMAN/DRF HARNESS

Dan and Christi Noble won the Breeders Crown Open Pace in 2021 at The Meadowlands with Ocean Rock.

Northfield Park and some 600 miles from his home. Noble mentioned the possibility of driving at Northfield on Saturday and Sunday before heading to Yonkers for a Monday to Thursday week. That would allow him Friday to be with family. While he said he couldn't speak for the track or even as President of the Standardbred Owners Association of New York since he has to consider all members first, Joe Faraldo was intrigued by the possibility of Noble coming to Yonkers.

"He's one of the best drivers in the world and I think he can drive rings around anybody," said Faraldo, who added that if Noble made a multiple-month commitment as he suggested, he believes the driver would likely be welcome at Yonkers Raceway. "That guy should be here. I overwhelmingly would want to see him come here."

There are of course economics to consider. There is a substantial cost in gas, tolls and lodging that comes with weekly trips back and forth from Ohio to New York. Assuming Noble is successful enough to win two races a night in New York at an average purse of \$20,000 and picked up a few more checks along the way, he would walk away with about \$10,000 a week before expenses. So far in 2026 he is earning \$2,051 on average per night in driving commissions at Northfield.

Of course there is the possibility that he can be even more successful at Yonkers, which would tip the scales towards it being the best place to race. The track also has some lucrative stakes races in March and April that could appeal to Noble's bank account.

As much as these are extraordinary times in the life of Noble as a driver, he clearly has difficult decisions ahead that could shape his future in harness racing.

"I don't know how I'm driving this good right now with all this on my mind," said Noble about his current situation.

For now all we can do is watch in amazement as Noble wins races in bundles at Northfield. He picked up seven wins in 13 starts on Tuesday (January 13) and increased his lead in the driver standings to 35 over Justin Irvine in second. He also tops the national leaderboard with 28 more victories (in 36 more starts) than Brett Beckwith.

Are we watching history in the making? Will Noble branch out to other locations? If he does, will he be able to dominate the standings wherever he lands?

The questions mount in what could be an intriguing story to follow throughout the year.



Stallions for Foals of 2025

Sires

In appreciation of the efforts made toward this initiative, the Stallion Restriction Condition (Gural rule) will be waived for those stallions nominated to this plan so that their foals of 2025 may be nominated for Meadowlands Stakes & Early Closers for the life of the horse including the 2028 Meadowlands Pace.

Participation in the Meadowlands Early Closing program for foals of 2025 will be contingent upon the sire having been nominated by payment of 50% of the cost of one 2024 breeding by February 15, 2026.

If a stallion is NOT nominated by the February 15, 2026 payment, the 2025 foals of that sire will be ineligible to race in Meadowlands Stakes & Early Closers for the life of the horse.

How To Make Your Stallion Eligible

DATE	AGE	TO DO
Now thru Feb 15	Stallion	Review information; prepare submission materials
February 15	Stallion	50% of cost of one 2024 breeding due



2024 Stallion Fees on Foals of 2025



For complete information including dates and conditions please visit playmeadowlands.com |

Class drops could be true key to prompting movement at Yonkers



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman  [BergmanJay](#)

With the 2026 Yonkers Raceway racing season soon to get underway there is still time to recommend changes to the status quo that may prove beneficial to the product long term. The recently invoked second-quarter rule that prohibits drivers from rating a second quarter in 30 seconds or slower could induce modest changes to the way races are run. At the same time, it may be hard to see the fruits of such labor if the focus is just on the second quarter, or for that part, a half-minute that somehow equalizes times whether the race is for \$20,000 claiming trotters or Open class pacers.

For my money, any structure that looks at only one horse of eight in a particular race doesn't address the complete issue of how races have become imbalanced at Yonkers and why all too often the front-end dominates, producing short-priced winners. That the races lack much action is the by-product of a system that has done little to reward activity by the other drivers and now will de-incentivize the driver of the horse on the lead from rating a horse to victory.

Despite the purse money that has been at an industry high for close to two decades now, the Yonkers condition sheet and subsequent racing patterns have remained relatively constant, with the 30-second rule now offering a glimmer of hope for a minuscule change.

Reality suggests we will not know the benefits of the new rule until it plays out in the future, but it's hard to imagine any short- or long-term study will see a rise in betting or that any focus group would somehow conclude the races are more exciting due to the adjustment.

Perhaps it's time to consider other options that could help alter the dynamics of individual races at Yonkers that put more emphasis on the other drivers in the race and reward behavior that increases the action not just in the opening quarter of a race but into the second quarter. No matter who you talk to about races at Yonkers the topic always returns to the theoretical impossibility of overcoming post seven and eight. Those posts are without question challenging, with many drivers/horses unable to navigate the first turn three or four wide and live to talk about it. Thus, on some occasions drivers will try to step out from the outside only to retreat before the horses make the first turn. Better to live to fight another day than run the risk of getting parked endlessly and coming home without a check.

For me the problem is that we have accepted the status quo and done

very little to put incentives in place for both drivers and trainers when horses land outside post positions. Saving a horse for next week or helping earn a drop in class by going to the back of an eight-horse contingent is a pattern that plays out every night. Essentially the conditioned system rewards those that don't take chances with drops in class that work favorably for the horsemen and owners but take the competitive-ness out of the existing races.

There is a way for those who care enough to alter the situation and that would be to create incentives to drivers who actively get involved in the race despite posts seven and eight and press forward. I would not automatically allow horses to drop in class if they take back from the outside posts and trail at the back of the pack in a particular race. Conversely, I would reward any horse that starts from post seven or eight and finds themselves either first or second at the quarter pole. The reward would be freedom to drop in class in their next start. What this minor modification might lead to is more horses leaving the gate and thus increasing the pace of the opening quarter and perhaps beyond. Horses and horsemen would be rewarded for activity. More notably, those making wagers on horses from the outside post will get the benefit of seeing their horses actively motivated in the early stages. If the practice takes hold and more drivers move forward, the entire picture of the way races are run at Yonkers can be changed.

As a bettor it's been painful to see single-file races. It's hard to imagine that I or any of the other 20,000 fans that attended Roosevelt and Yonkers Raceways nightly in the '70's would have put up with the type of overnight action we've seen in the last 10 years. It wasn't easy to win from post positions seven and eight back then either, but races did not fall into line and remain single file for over a half the race as they do today. No matter what the sport people wish to bet on, it is imperative that they at least have hope to have a chance to win. Erasing the possibility when horses draw posts seven and eight at Yonkers has an instant negative impact on handle and it's time for the issue to be addressed.

There have been others we've spoken to that insist that more races at Yonkers need to be handicapped, essentially admitting that it takes a stronger horse on the outside to overcome the obstacles. While I believe those options may be true, too often handicap races promote inactivity as drivers look towards the next start when they are not handicapped.

While allowing horses to drop in future weeks is one incentive the race office could use to promote activity from posts seven and eight, they could also reward those that leave the gate with guarantees of inside posts in the following weeks. We've seen major races reward winners with assured inside draws and there's no reason why a formula couldn't be put into place to benefit horses that try to get involved as opposed to those that willingly take a back seat.

If we're looking to motivate change, I prefer the carrot to the stick.



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Big Box Hanover has earned a place in Stalbaum's heart



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett X [@JHallettPhoto](#)

There are horses who have careers that burn bright and there are horses who have careers that burn long. And then, there is that horse that stands out among the rest and does both.

For seven straight years, every year of his racing career to date, Big Box Hanover has had one of those careers that burn bright and long, earning over \$100,000 every single season.

Bred by Hanover Shoe Farms Inc., the 9-year-old gelded son of Uncle Peter and the Donerail mare Box Of Dreams was foaled in Hanover, PA. In 2018, he was sold through the Ohio Select Sale for \$13,000 and trainer Dalton Walls handled the conditioning for his first 17 months of racing.

As a 2-year-old, Big Box Hanover had just seven starts, yielding over \$140,000 including a second-place finish in the Ohio Sire Stakes Final for 2-year-old colts and geldings. The following year, Big Box Hanover competed in a range of classes from trying his hand in conditioned trots to the Buckeye Stallion Series to the Ohio Fair Stakes, leading to just over \$100,000 banked as a sophomore.

In October 2020, Keith Kash Jr. took over the training of Big Box Hanover until the end of July 2021 when Shane Tritton was his conditioner. He earned just shy of \$120,000 during his 4-year-old campaign in 2021.

In November of that year, Big Box Hanover moved to Larry Stalbaum's barn in Saratoga Springs, New York and that became his forever home, where he would become a stable star.

Becoming a stable star in the Stalbaum barn is no easy feat. Stalbaum, a veteran reinsman and trainer, has over 1,500 training wins and nearly \$9 million earned. The past three seasons, Stalbaum's students have reined in over \$1 million each year. He has a healthy lineup of trotters and pacers, with Rocknroll Runa A [9; 145: 40-23-18; \$799,929], Mr Huggins [4; 46: 8-13-8; \$138,407], Blazing Home N [7; 72: 22-13-6; \$332,042], and SS Superstar [5; 57: 17-6-9; \$140,550] among the group.

"He's unbelievable," Stalbaum said of Big Box Hanover. "I thought he was done earlier [in 2025]. He had a couple hiccups and then he came back as good as ever. He's just phenomenal. Everyone that has ever had him has loved him. If there's ever a horse that deserves something written up about him to say how unbelievable he is, it's him. He's not the soundest horse in the world and he just keeps overcoming everything every year."

Big Box Hanover wasted little time becoming comfortable in his new home. Piloted by Stalbaum, he excelled over his \$100,000 mark competing in the Open at Saratoga.

"I love all my horses to death but he's one of my favorite horses in the world," Stalbaum explained. "He can do anything you want him to do. He can leave, he can come from behind. He likes being up in the hunt more than dragging off the gate, but still he'll do anything. He is such a great horse. I've had many great horses, but if there's ever a horse, if I'm never going to race again and I want a horse just to hang out with, it would be him."

"He has so much personality and he loves me to death. I yell his name and he talks right back to me. He knows me. He's just a special, special horse."

Big Box Hanover stands tall and proud with a sleek and shiny brown coat complete with an unmistakable white blaze and a pair of white ankles behind. On the track, he wears the trademark Stalbaum uniform with a white bridle and buxton to compliment his blaze. In the barn, Big Box reserves the first stall, as most barn favorites do.

"He's in the first stall as soon as you walk in the barn. He has a window that he hangs his head out. When I walk up every morning, I yell out his name and he just starts talking," Stalbaum said. "He always talks to me. When we're in the paddock, like at Plainridge, I'll yell his name. Even if he can't see me, I could be clear across the paddock and yell his name and he'll start nickering."

In 2023, Stalbaum shipped a few more starts to Plainridge than the previous year with Big Box Hanover and he showed up, winning the \$25,000 Open Trot on one of those occasions. The majority of his 6-year-old campaign's starts, though, were home at Saratoga, where he tallied up half-a-dozen wins in the top class and overall produced his fifth straight year over \$100,000 earned.

In 2024, Big Box Hanover had a career year with over \$143,000 earned. Besides his ongoing and climbing record, Big Box Hanover showed up in a way that Stalbaum didn't realize he had needed, when, in the fall of 2024, Stalbaum was involved in a near-fatal accident at Saratoga, one that sidelined and hospitalized him for months. While Stalbaum was recovering from numerous broken bones and internal injuries, Big Box Hanover continued to race and provide therapy in a way.

"It was extra special last year because after Larry's accident, he won three Open Trots at Plainridge. It was like he knew," Larry's girlfriend and Big Box's caretaker Brittany said.

When Stalbaum was released from the hospital, his first stop was



Big Box Hanover, pictured at Saratoga, earned almost \$150,000 for Stalbaum in 2025.

JESSICA HALLETT

his barn to see his horses. The first horse he walked up to was Big Box Hanover, who was excited to see his friend back again as captured in an emotional video.

Big Box Hanover and Stalbaum both came back in 2025 even stronger. Stalbaum piloted about half of his 38 starts and the then 8-year-old gelding finished the year with a record of 9-6-5 and \$146,875 earned. He also took his career mark of 1:52 3/5 at Plainridge in the Open Trot.

"When he's brave, it's unbelievable what he can do. When Big Box Hanover gets beat, he gets mad. He wants to fight. He wants to race. I know him so well."

"If there's ever a horse that can make over \$100,000 every year until he's 14, it's him. He takes such good care of himself. He doesn't take a lot of work. He's had a lot of issues in his life and he's overcome all of them. He's just phenomenal. If he was ever a 100% sound horse, I never would have been able to own him, he'd have millions of dollars earned. He's a total freak and he's just such a great horse."

If there's ever a horse that has a career that burns bright and burns long, it's Big Box Hanover.

MacKenzie seeks better trips, results on Big M Saturday card

By Jay Bergman

Veteran New Jersey trainer Bill MacKenzie is generally a strong supporter of the driving colony, but even he had a hard time explaining some of the difficult trips his horses received most recently. MacKenzie hopes for a major rebound on Saturday night with five from his stable seeing action on the 14-race program at The Meadowlands.

Sono Confuso, a 5-year-old son of Lazarus, was overly aggressive during the first half of his mile on January 10. That troubled trip as the favorite led to a third-place finish that was reduced to tenth following a disqualification. Sono Confuso returns this week from a solid post with a new pilot in the 6:20 PM (ET) opener on the 14-race card.

"He's in a good spot and in the right class," said MacKenzie of the Trackmaster Rating 71 condition that Sono Confuso was able to win at on December 13 under more conservative handling.

Having been out of action for two months, Dance It Out (post 8) may need a start of two before he can regain top form. "I thought he qualified well but may need a start," said MacKenzie of the 8-year-old that races in Saturday's third event for non-winners of \$5,000 in last 5 starts.

Look for Peter Petrify N (post 4) to put forth an improved effort this week.

"I think he would have been fine sitting third last week but that's not what happened," said MacKenzie of the multiple-move effort that saw the \$17,500 claimer working overtime to reach three quarters in 1:23 and change only to weaken near the wire. "He's definitely going to be raced differently this week and hopefully reserved from off the pace."

Peter Petrify N goes in race six, a \$17,500-20,000 claiming handicap that could favor Diamondbeach (post 9), one of three in for the \$20,000 tag. A 9-year-old by Somebeachsomewhere, Diamondbeach has won two of his last three starts with a second-place finish in between from post 10.

An inside draw could prove the difference for Dance Partner, MacKenzie's charge in race 11, a Trackmaster rating of 83.5 event for horses and geldings. Saddled with post nine in his race against the same class on January 10, Dance Partner finished fourth.

"I thought he charged home nicely," said MacKenzie with optimism that a better draw this week could have Dance Partner closer to the action and ripe for a win.

A troubled trip spoiled the party for National Sport on January 10, with dull cover shuffling him out of contention in the early stretch. Once free the 9-year-old by Sportswriter kicked in strongly. National Sport was dropping in class for that race and the odds reflected it as he disappointed the bettors as well at 9-5.

"He just needs a better trip," MacKenzie said bluntly when asked about his chances. National Sport drew post six in Saturday's 13th affair for the same Trackmaster Rated 74.5 horses he met a week earlier.

Known predominantly for having a racehorse stable, MacKenzie hit the big-time a few years ago with the sensational sophomore Southwind Ozzi who captured the 2019 Little Brown Jug. Now a stallion, Southwind Ozzi serviced mares for two seasons in New Jersey with numbers that were relatively light and just a few foals to hit the racetrack. Now standing in Ohio at Cool Winds Farm, Southwind Ozzi's third crop are yearlings.

"We'll find out whether he's going to be a sire or not with his third crop," said MacKenzie. "We've only bred a few mares to him each year."

MacKenzie's focus is more on racing operations and maintaining his farm and its half-mile track in Cranbury, New Jersey.

"I've got a 3-year-old that's ok," said MacKenzie of Ozzies Crazy Train that raced just a few times in 2025 as a freshman. There's a homebred filly named B Still My Art that should race this year as a sophomore as well.

MacKenzie noted that he has six babies in training among the 27 or so currently in his stable.

"I've got a Captain Crunch, a Father Patrick, a Papi Rob Hanover that I like and a Stay Hungry that I bought on the first day at Harrisburg," said MacKenzie. "It was the first day, but I still kept within my budget and paid \$40,000."

Cyrus Hanover is the Stay Hungry colt's name and he's from a near-100 percent producing dam named Current Hanover. As for the Father Patrick he's training in a stable dominated by pacers MacKenzie said, "I started with Gary Messenger. He asked me to take the horse and I said of course." MacKenzie said the freshman will return to Messenger when ready to race, hopefully by June.

MacKenzie suggested that he's going to slow down in the next few years with an eye on retirement and enjoying his family and young daughter. "I'll probably just look to buy a few horses each year," MacKenzie said, still hoping to come away with a champion from the yearling sales.

Meadowlands 2026 standards for participation announced

(Following is a press release from The Meadowlands)

All owners and trainers in 2026, the New Meadowlands Racetrack exclusionary policy and "Standards for Participation in All Meadowlands Stakes" will apply to the Hambletonian Stakes races that are held at the New Meadowlands Racetrack. These races are subject to the Standards for Participation in All Meadowlands Stakes; see the Meadowlands website for details. Sadly, over 280 people are unable to participate at the Gural properties due to our strong stance on integrity.

A minimum of seven (7) separate interests may be required in any event, or the event may be cancelled (Hambletonian Matrility, Hambletonian, and Hambletonian Oaks are excluded from this part). All owners, trainers, and drivers of horses nominated to this event must be accepted to participate at the Host Track, or the nomination/ entry may be denied without refund of previous payments. Any change of trainers made fewer than 30 days or within four starts of the date of this race will be reviewed by the sponsor and, if not accepted, may result in refusal of entry. The choice of drivers for this event will be limited to those drivers who have applied and been approved to drive in Meadowlands stakes and early-closing events.

The list of approved drivers will be available from the Racing Office. Any horse nominated to any Meadowlands stakes/event must be in the care of an approved trainer by April 15th of the year of the stake for any stake/event raced during the month of

May, and by May 15th for all other stakes/events. In addition, any owner who participates in a Meadowlands Stake or Early Closing event (with added money greater than \$25,000) with a trainer who has an outstanding Class 1, Class 2 or TC02 positive test having occurred on or after January 1, 2019 and under appeal in any jurisdiction will be declared ineligible to participate in any Meadowlands Stake or Early Closing event for 12 months following the conviction if such trainer is subsequently found guilty relating to the Class 1, Class 2 or TC02 positive test. Nominator also agrees that any horse paid into any Meadowlands stake/event may be required to be stabled for up to 14 days at an approved facility within a 150 mile radius of The Meadowlands or the Tioga Downs or Vernon Downs stable area or an approved facility in a state that agrees to cooperate in an out of competition testing protocol by the date set by The Meadowlands for that stake/event for the purpose of out of competition testing. All starters are subject to the Host Track's detention policy.

The standards can be found by clicking on the following link:

[Meadowlands Participation Standards](#)

Additionally, all owners and trainers are bound by the following 2026 racing rules and regulations and the racing application, which are also available on the Meadowlands Racetrack website.

[2026-Racing-Rules-Regs.pdf](#)

[Racing Application](#)

Food4Kids Halton shares the impact of the Breeders Crown Charity Challenge

In the short time since Food4Kids Halton took home the winning cheque in Woodbine Mohawk Park's Breeders Crown Charity Challenge, the donation has already been put to work.

Represented in the charity challenge by Team Millar (owner Millar Farms and driver James MacDonald), Food4Kids Halton received a total donation of \$95,000.

Jennifer Sully-Ferraro, Executive Director of Food4kids Halton, was out of the country for the cheque presentation, but she was following along with excitement.

"I literally screamed; I couldn't believe it. For us, as a small grassroots agency, this is huge."

Spearheaded by prominent owner Marvin Katz, the Breeders Crown Charity Challenge began in 2019 and has annually raised funds within the racing community for charities in the Breeders Crown host surrounding area.

Each of this year's four charities partnered with a leading owner and driver, whose performance on the racetrack (in addition to other metrics) helped determine the donation received. In addition to Food4Kids Halton, Kids Help Phone, the Milton District Hospital Foundation, and the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre were also participants.

"I've seen how much money Marvin Katz and this challenge has raised over the past few years," commented George Millar of Millar Farms. "It's substantial and I'm sure has helped a lot of people, so kudos to him, and I was pretty happy to be a part of it this year with Food4Kids Halton".

Food4Kids Halton partners with local public elementary schools to identify families facing food insecurity, then volunteers discretely provide children with bags of food to take home. In the summers, the organization supports families with grocery gift cards. As Sully-Ferraro shared, the need for this service remains strong.

"Our program continues to grow, which is unfortunate, because it means more kids in our community are facing food insecurity. Our big goal is to keep going without a wait list so that every time a school calls us, we can say yes to another child in need."

Despite the affluence in the area, the Halton Region is seeing an increase in poverty.

"Last school year we saw an 18 per cent increase in the number of kids we were serving from the previous year, and we gave out 46,048 bags of food," Sully-Ferraro said. "Looking at the current year and how trends are going, we're likely to see a similar increase this year."

Food4Kids Halton reminded owner George Millar of another charity close to his heart.

"My daughter runs a charity in South Africa called the Protea Project that I donate to. It's all to do with feeding children and making sure they get health care and dental work," said Millar. "I've always supported organizations that help children. I was really surprised, at first, that kids here at home needed a food program."

Food4Kids Halton gives families experiencing unexpected circumstances a little extra help.

"We find people are on our program for an average of two years," Sully-Ferraro explained. "The majority of people we help would much rather be able to buy their own groceries. We're grateful to be there to support them in their time of need, and then we always celebrate when people exit the program because of financial stability. That's always the best."

There are 4,500 children in Ontario in a Food4Kids program, and over 1,200 of them are in Halton, making Food4Kids Halton one of the largest chapters. Funding comes directly from individuals and businesses in the community.

"We were just so blown away by all of you folks and the way you brought the community together. It's been a really special experience for all of us," Sully-Ferraro shared.

The 2025 Breeders Crown Charity Challenge at Woodbine Mohawk Park raised a total of \$450,000 for local causes. Over \$2.4 million has been donated since the initiative's inception in 2019.

Marvin Katz has recently been recognised with the Cam Fella Award, a high industry honour, for his creation and leadership of the Breeders Crown Charity Challenge and its meaningful impact on the communities of Breeders Crown host tracks.

-release (Woodbine)

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. TO BE HONORED SATURDAY AT BIG M

By Dave Little for The Meadowlands

Saturday (Jan. 17) night's fourth race at The Meadowlands is, by racetrack standards, ordinary. But the man the race honors was anything but.

The TrackMaster 74.5 pace is the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Remembrance Race, named for the slain civil rights leader. It is a dash that features all African-American drivers.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Martin Luther King, Jr. was born January 15, 1929, and died April 4, 1968. He was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination.

His leadership was fundamental to that movement's success in ending the legal segregation of African-Americans in the South and other parts of the United States. King rose to national prominence as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which promoted non-violent tactics, such as the massive March on Washington (in 1963) to achieve civil rights.

Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Despite the fact that Dr. King was killed almost 40 years ago, his legacy lives on, even with young African-Americans.

William Carter is a driver who has distinguished himself on the Maryland circuit. He won 170 races during 2023 and added another 181 victories a year ago. Pretty good for someone who won't turn 22 until this summer.

He's a harness racing lifer, who won the MLK Pace at The Big M at age 18.

And he is well aware of the history associated with Dr. King.

"He's had a lot of significance [on my life]," said Carter. "He wanted everyone to be equal. [With regard to race relations in this country] It's getting better. We try to treat everyone the way we want to be treated."

His father, Billy, got William interested in the game at a very early age. "I always wanted to be a driver from Day One," said William.

William will go for his second MLK win with Warrawee Exceed, who has been performing steadily of late at Harrah's Philadelphia.

The young pilot is optimistic that more African-American drivers will be seen in the sulky down the road. "There are a lot of black drivers in Mississippi that are coming up and they have as much talent as anybody else," said William. "What it takes is opportunity. There are also several drivers that are doing well in Kentucky."

There's little doubt, though, that whoever lines up alongside him Saturday, William will be trying his best to win another MLK Pace. "There was so much going through my mind [in deep stretch with Maddox Hanover]," said William. "It was my first drive at The Meadowlands. That was a great feeling."

KERN TOP 'CAPPER: Del Kern hit the 20-cent Pick-5 and that was the catalyst in him taking the first of 11 monthly installments of the 2026 Meadowlands Monthly Handicapping Contest on Saturday (Jan. 10) night.

He finished the evening with a bankroll of \$934.01 to not only take that money home, but also the \$500 first prize in the \$1,000 competition. Stefan Ferrara's final tally of \$840.76 was good for second and \$250 in prize money.

By finishing 1-2, Kern and Ferrara earned spots in the end-of-the-year, \$10,000 invitation-only contest "final", where only the 11 monthly top-two finishers will be eligible to participate.

The next \$1,000 "qualifier" is on Friday, Feb. 20.

THE SCHEDULE: During the month of January, live racing will be conducted on a Friday-Saturday-Sunday basis.

Post time on Friday and Saturday is 6:20 p.m. while Sunday racing will begin at 12:30 p.m.

The final Sunday race card takes place on Feb. 1.

-edited release

Dan Patch weekend to include Saturday outdoor reception & country concert

The U.S. Harness Writers Association (USHWA) and Diamond Creek Farm would like to invite all attendees to the Dan Patch Awards weekend at Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando, Fla., to an outdoor cocktail reception on Saturday, Feb. 21.

USHWA is also excited to announce that Team Beau Jangles will be presenting country singer Mitch Rossell, who will be performing during the second half of the two-hour cocktail party, which gets underway on the Lake Toho Deck at Rosen Shingle Creek at 5 pm.

Rossell performed during last year's opening Dan Patch reception, and he didn't hesitate to say yes when asked if would return for this year's festivities.

"We are elated that Adam Bowden and Diamond Creek Farm will once again be sponsoring Saturday's welcome reception, and we are equally as thrilled that Team Beau Jangles will be sponsoring the concert by Mitch Rossell, who was a huge hit last year," said USHWA president Michael Carter.

Rossell is a singer-songwriter, penning songs for country superstar Garth Brooks, including the number-one hit "Ask Me How I Know," as well as other songs such as "Dive Bar" and "That's What Cowboys Do." When Rossell performed for the first time at Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, he was surprised when Brooks came out to do the introduction.

Rossell, who was an opening act for Brooks on his 2022 Stadium Tour, also performed in 2023 on America's Got Talent, with his initial audition receiving a "yes" from all four judges and his song "Son" rocketing to the top spot on the iTunes all genres chart.

The cocktail reception is very casual attire, with an open bar and selection of light appetizers. Attendees will receive further information about the weekend's activities in a welcome envelope that will be handed out upon check-in at Rosen Shingle Creek. Any horsepeople who are wintering in the area are also invited to the Diamond Creek reception.

"The reception is very casual and the timing still allows attendees to make dinner plans," said Carter. "This will be a great start to a great weekend, culminating in the Dan Patch Awards dinner, presented by Caesars Entertainment, on Sunday night."

Tickets for the Dan Patch Awards banquet are \$230. There is also a reduced-price menu option for children 12 and under. Dinner tickets can be ordered until Feb. 16 by contacting Judy Davis-Wilson at zoe8874@aol.com or (302) 359-3630 or Liz Cheesman at Elizabeth.lewis-house@winbakfarm.com. For a dinner ticket form please [click here](#).

-release (U.S. Harness Writers)

ROSECROFT READIES FOR 2026 WINTER-SPRING MEET

Horsepeople competing at the 2026 winter-spring harness racing meeting at Rosecroft Raceway are advised of the following items:

Racing, Qualifying and Draw Schedules

Racing will be conducted on Mondays and Thursdays from Monday, Jan. 19, through and including Thursday, April 30; followed by programs on Saturday, May 2; Thursday, May 7; Thursday, May 14; and Saturday, May 16. Post time is 7:15 p.m. (ET).

Once the meet begins, qualifiers will be held on Thursdays beginning at 5:30 p.m. Entries for qualifiers close on Wednesdays at 9 a.m.

Monday programs will be drawn on the preceding Thursday; Thursday programs will be drawn on Monday. The entry box will close promptly at 9 a.m. with the exception of the draw for Jan. 19, which will close at noon on Thursday, Jan. 15, to accommodate for horses qualifying that morning.

Horsepeople are encouraged to utilize the USTA's Online Entry platform.

Racing Application

All horsepeople competing at Rosecroft are required to submit a racing application, either [electronically via this link](#) or by completing the form at <https://www.rosecroft.com/horsemen> and emailing to rosecroft6336@gmail.com.

Health Certificate Requirement

Per a directive from the Maryland Department of Agriculture, every horse shipping onto the backstretch at Rosecroft Raceway will be required to have a certified veterinary inspection health certificate issued within the past 30 days.

-edited release (Rosecroft Raceway)

DRF HANICAPPER'S CORNER

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 head to your nearest ADW and simply make a win bet.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16

RACE 13

(1) DEFAMATION went a very credible mile in his first start for new connections. She moves to the inside of the gate and seems ready to pop off a big mile versus a soft group.

-Derick Giwner



RACE 9

(8) KELLINA DIAMOND was a sharp winner last week on the front end. That was her first win in the last couple of seasons, but she looked good doing so. Plante gives her the nod; I'll do the same.

-Kevin Plowcha



SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

RACE 7

(8) MOMAS SON BYRNE blew away lesser a couple of weeks back and has now won two of three tries since switching barns. There is certainly enough class on this 8-year-old to think he can handle a small class bump.

-Giwner



RACE 5

(3) ERINWOOD BIG MACK was one of a few horses who benefitted from a wicked pace being set up front. He just got picked off in the final few strides, but raced well again.

-Plowcha



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FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

Friday Saturday

Meadowlands Analysis

Friday Saturday

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

YR CONDITION SHEET UP FOR '26 OPENER; NEW DRIVING RULES ENACTED

MGM Yonkers Raceway is set to kick off the 2026 meet on Monday (January 19) and some important changes are also in store.

[READ MORE](#)

UPDATE ON 2027 MEADOWLANDS PACE ELIGIBILITY

Please note the Meadowlands Racetrack is walking back the earlier notification stating that the February 15 \$400 Early Closer Participation (ECP) payment on foals of 2024 would be required to maintain eligibility for the 2027 Meadowlands Pace.

The Meadowlands Pace 2027, as a "stake" will be excluded from the Meadowlands Early Closer Participation program.

Any horse paid into the 2027 Meadowlands Pace by the [yearling nomination payment](#) (listed here) last year will NOT be required to make the \$400 ECP payment to continue to sustain to the race.

Payment of the [2-year-old February 15 \\$400 ECP](#) is required for participation in all Meadowlands Early Closers and baby races for the life of the horse.

[-release \(Meadowlands\)](#)

CATTLEWASH SYNDICATE TO DONATE THREE BREEDINGS

David Heffering, Manager of the Cattlewash Syndicate, announced Tuesday (1/13) that the Syndicate is donating three breedings to Cattlewash to three worthy non-profits.

From just two crops to race, Cattlewash has sired the superstar colt and major Horse of the Year contender Beau Jangles. His first crop dominated the New Jersey Sire Stakes and after moving to Ontario. His second crop simply overwhelmed the Sire Stakes competition there, earning more purse monies than the 2-year-old foals of all other Ontario pacing stallions combined. Cattlewash's 2026 book was opened in November and within days was pronounced "Full and Closed". He stands at Tara Hills Stud in Port Perry, Ontario for an advertised fee of USD \$10,000. Those breeders who were shut out now have an opportunity to secure a breeding from one of the three donated bookings. The donations were made to:

The Harness Horse Youth Foundation (HHYF)

HHYF's mission is to provide young people and their families information and experiences with harness horses in order to foster the next generation of fans and participants. Their initiatives include hands-on summer programs as well as educational literature/video development and distribution. In addition, HHYF offers racing-related scholarships. Since 1976 (thus celebrating its golden anniversary this year), HHYF has been building the future of harness racing - connecting talent to opportunity and passion to purpose.

The breeding donated to HHYF will be sold compliments of Preferred Equine Online at their auction site JANUARY 26, 2026. Further info available at: [preferredequineonline.com](#)

New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program

New Vocations has grown from a single horse farm in Ohio to become the oldest and largest racehorse adoption program in the country. New Vocations is dedicated to rehabilitating, retraining and rehoming racehorses. The program has served over 9,000 thoroughbred and standardbred racehorses since 1992 and currently helps find new careers and homes for 600+ horses each year. The program's mission is to serve the racing industry by providing retired racehorses a quality life and career after racing.

Each year, through the generosity of "onGait", New Vocations offers an auction for donated stallion breedings. The donated breeding for Cattlewash will be sold online on Tuesday, February 3, 2026. Watch for the listing to be posted soon at [ongait.com](#).

The Standardbred Breeders of Ontario (SBOA)

The SBOA is an organization dedicated to supporting the growth of a sustainable breeding industry for Standardbred horses in Ontario. Its mission includes advocating for breeders' interests, providing resources for communication and education, and representing the breeders' position on major issues facing the industry. The SBOA provides a leadership

role as an advocate of breeders' priorities and interests with the government, regulators and other industry participants.

Annually, the SBOA sponsors an auction for donated stud services by Ontario stallions. Once again, Preferred Equine Online graciously accommodates the sale of these breedings on their online site. In 2026, the auction will be held February 9th on [preferredequineonline.com](#).

[-release \(Cattlewash Syndicate\)](#)

KING OF THE NORTH'S BOOK FULL AND CLOSED

We are thrilled to announce that KING OF THE NORTH's stallion book is full & closed. Special thanks to everyone who supported him. King Of The North's first 2-year-olds will hit the stakes trail this summer!

[-release \(David Heffering - Tara Hills Stud\)](#)

KARL'S BOOK FULL AND CLOSED

The Karl Syndicate is pleased to announce that Karl's inaugural 2026 season book of 140 mares is now full and closed.

The Karl Syndicate wishes to thank the top breeders in North America and in Europe who purchased shares and booked their best mares to Karl. Their incredible level of support has insured that Karl will begin his stallion career at the highest level.

Karl stands his first season at Southwind Farms, New Jersey.

[-release \(Karl Syndicate\)](#)

EILEEN CONNORS PASSES AWAY AT 74

Eileen Connors, wife of Communicators Hall of Famer Jerry Connors and office manager for Hall of Famer Max C. Hempt at Hempt Farms, passed away January 13 of the inevitable ongoing complications of dementia. She was 74.

Eileen first saw harness racing when her mother Mary Jane took her and her brother David to their hometown York (PA) County Fair (both predeceased her, as did her father, World War II veteran Richard Gay).

After graduating from York Suburban High School (where she played the flute in the school band), Eileen primarily worked in retail in the York-Harrisburg area, then took a job at Harrisburg's Telegraph Press, printer of the Harness Horse magazine and other industry publications, where she worked for Hall of Famers Bowman Brown and Les Ford. She was then recommended to Hempt at Hempt Farms, "the home of the Keystones," where her knowledge of the farm's horses and the industry, combined with her inherent intelligence, helpfulness and friendliness, contributed to keeping the farm running efficiently under the direction of Hall of Famer Hempt.

Her final job combined many of these same qualities: in administration, especially as switchboard operator, for the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory, part of the PA Department of Agriculture and located across the street from her husband when he worked for the State Harness Racing Commission. Eileen specialized in finding correct information and delivering it quickly and clearly to a customer or a coworker.

Eileen was an unofficial member of the Chamber Of Commerce of Las Vegas, her favorite city; she was well-traveled. She enjoyed antiques, flea markets (a trait which she inherited from her parents), and police procedurals, whether in print or video form. Eileen also enjoyed all things Disney, and marveled at the great season posted by champion Miki And Minnie.

Eileen has no blood survivors. Missing her will be her husband, his family, and the many friends who enjoyed her laughter and perspective.

Her sister-in-law Theresa Connors, a teacher of anatomy at Philadelphia's Drexel University, persuaded Eileen to donate her body to science, so she will be giving to the world even after her passing, helping to instruct the doctors of tomorrow.

There will be no memorial service. Those who might want to honor her memory could donate to Capitol Rehabilitation, 4100 Linglestown Road, Harrisburg PA 17112, the nursing home where Eileen spent her two+ years and where she spread much joy into her fellow residents' lives. At her instruction, please include a note for Capitol to use any gift to staff more workers on weekends, especially people to talk to residents along with their medical treatment.

The photo on the last cover of the Harness Horse magazine, of racing at Holly Hurst Training Center (PA), was taken by Eileen Connors.