

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026

BOB DAVIS ENJOYING HIS SECOND CAREER IN HARNESS RACING



JESSICA HALLETT PHOTO



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett

[@HallettPhoto](#)

The average person spends about 50 years in the workforce. Clocking in, clocking out. Workdays starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. Success is measured in paychecks and promotions.

Bob Davis has spent the last 50 years chasing adrenaline and wins on the racetrack. There is no clocking in and there is never any clocking out. Workdays start at 4 a.m. and never have a set end time. His success has been measured by his own personal gratification.

While others work to live, Davis lives to work. The average person may spend about 50 years working but Davis spent them living – in harness racing.

Bob Davis was born on July 20, 1946. He had no ties to harness racing or the horse community and up until the 1970's, Davis had his focus fully on his own home improvement business. In 1975, he was introduced to harness racing.

"A friend of mine suggested we get a horse," Davis explained. "He was already into it and so, we bought a horse and it was a lot of fun. To me, it

was kind of new at the time. The horse did good."

While continuing to make a living with his regular gig, Davis' routine expanded to visiting the track to watch his horse race. Early success led to even more involvement with the married training team of Reynold and Connie Spagnola along with his co-owner Larry Spagnola. That's when one horse began multiple horses and Davis found a new passion on the track.

"In 1976, we got really lucky. We bought a horse called Little Price. He went on to be a real champion," said Davis. "In 1977, he made more money than any other horse ever made in Saratoga and ended up winning the July Trotting Championship. Then he set a world record at a mile and a half. It was just a lot of fun. I think he won 12 or 13 races and was Trotter of the Year. I was hooked."

Davis spent about five years owning horses with the Spagnolos. In the 1980s, he became partners with Percy Davis, finding great success with a horse named Streetwise.

"I mean he just kept winning and winning," Davis said. "He was just another horse that you just got hooked on. So, I ended up with a barn full of horses with Percy in the '80s, like from 1982 through 1986."

In that time, Davis ventured into the world of driving, getting his fair license.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)

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Comments? Questions?
Email the Editor DGiwner@DRF.com

After spending some time driving at fairs and enjoying the new adventure, Percy Davis convinced him to drive at Saratoga and get his P license.

"I got my 'P' license and he put a bunch of horses in for me to qualify. I had my 'A' license in about two or three weeks. Back in those days you needed 12 qualifying drives and you needed five guys to sign for you. So I had [Percy Davis], Harold Story, Bill O'Donnell and a couple other guys – real top names signed for me. And I had all good horses to drive back then. So I got my 'A' license, I would say, within a month," recalled Davis.

In 1987, Davis had a career-defining driving opportunity with Determined Chase for trainer Dave Corlew. He only got the opportunity to drive from time to time but it was an opportunity for him to compete outside of Saratoga and on the Grand Circuit.

"He was in at Buffalo in a Grand Circuit race [W.N. Reynolds]. Either Harold Story or Herve Fillion drove him [regularly]. Harold drove him at Saratoga, Herve drove him at Yonkers. Neither one could make it out to Buffalo for one reason or another so Dave came to me and said, 'you're the only other guy that has sat behind this horse.' He was kind of quirky to drive. He told me he wanted me to go out there and drive him in this big race. It was an \$87,000 purse and in 1987, that was a lot of money back then," said Davis, who would start from post seven at odds of 9-1 in the Buffalo stakes affair.

According to Davis, Clint Galbraith had a horse in the race that was 1-9 and unbeaten, drawn inside with a 10-for-10 record.

"To make a long story short, we got to the front and held him off and we won the race. After that, I had the nickname Buffalo Bob for a while," Davis laughed. "It was really exciting. Probably the most exciting part of harness racing for me. That's stuck with me all these years. I mean it's just something you never forget, winning a race like that. I mean, when I look at the win picture, I see guys like Ron Pierce and Clint Galbraith and Ted Wing. I mean I see all guys that are in the Hall of Fame that I beat. I still had my 'P' license at the time, I hadn't gotten my 'A' license yet, so that really got me off on the right foot."

Davis continued driving but just for fun. He considered himself a part-time horseman and in 1991, despite just recently getting his training license, got out of the harness racing industry as an active participant to concentrate on his real-world business.

It wasn't until 2011 when Davis found his way back into the realm of harness racing.

"I would come up [to the track] in the morning, in the afternoon and at night. Most of the races were at night back then. So I would come to the races all I could, while still running my business," said Davis, who closed his business in 2016 and retired from one world at age 69 to become a full-time trainer in another.

"Training has never been my passion. My passion has always been to drive a horse. I mean, the most fun I've ever had in harness racing was driving," said Davis. "When I first came back in 2011, my friend Danny Mitchell said to me, 'you know, you haven't driven in 10 years, you can be an amateur driver now.' So, I said I'd give it a try."

At the time, the amateur races were known as the Billings where a weekly series was held at different tracks. As Davis explained, there were two different kinds of Billings – one, you brought your own horse and the other, the Billings Travel, you would go to a track and the trainers would



Bob Davis picked up his first driving victory in 1987.

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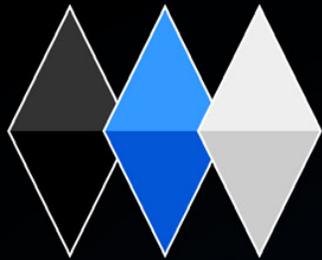

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2, 1:58.1h; 3, 1:54.3h; 1:52.3f (\$993,615)
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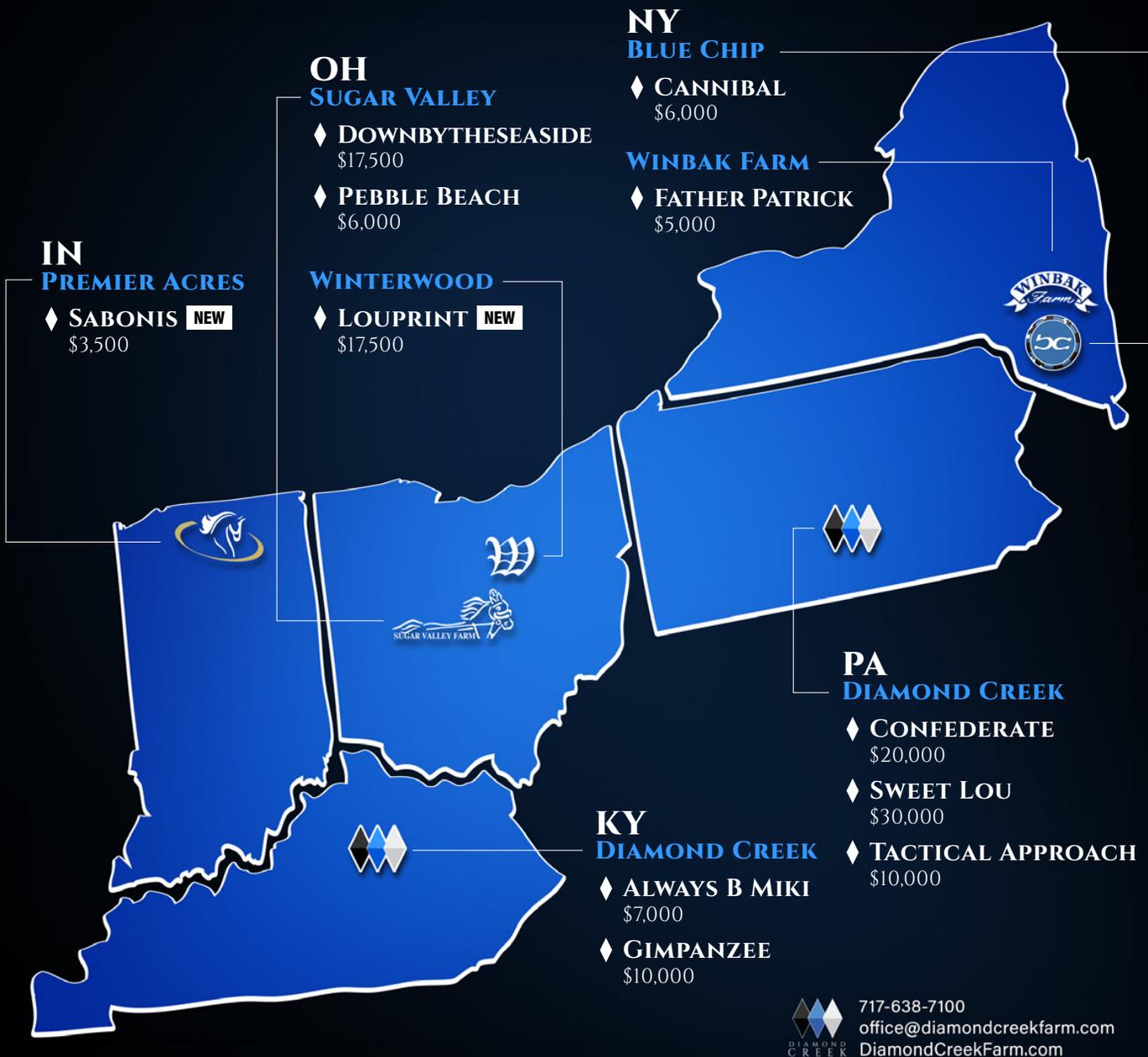
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“The first one was at Yonkers and I had a horse that I thought I’d try in them and boom, we win the race. And again, I’m into it,” Davis said. “It was great. I got to drive at virtually every track on the East Coast and did really well. I won the Billings Travel like three out of four years in a row. It was pretty good because back then there were some really good drivers – Hannah Miller, Joe Lee, and some other excellent drivers – so it was really rewarding for me to win.

“The Billings Travel was different because you were always driving a horse that you didn’t know. The most fun I’ve had in harness racing is amateur driving. And I’m still not done doing it.”

This year, Davis turns 80 years old in July. He has operated a full stable since 2016 at the Saratoga Springs half-mile harness track while also driving his own and picking up a catch drive now and then. He plans to reduce his stable to between two and four horses, with a couple of them being amateur horses.

“I’m going to do a little more amateur driving before I’m done,” Davis said. “Every year I say I’m getting older and I must be almost at the end of my driving career, but I feel so good. And, knock on wood, I have no problems. I still have all my senses, sound body and mind. So I’m going to do a little more driving until I think I can’t. Everybody tells you when you get to be 70, 80 years old that you got to stop driving, but my eyesight is 20/20, my hearing is perfect, my reflexes are good, so I’m going to keep driving until I see some of that stuff fail,” said Davis.

Right now, Davis gets up at 4 a.m. every day. His schedule includes letting his dog out, eating breakfast and heading to the track around 6 a.m. He checks his horses out and then gets to Mark Beckwith’s stable by 7 a.m. where he helps jog, train and tow horses throughout the morning. He usually handles eight to 10 horses for Beckwith and finishes around 9:30 a.m. before heading back across to his own barn.

He has four horses in the barn now and says he can handle them pretty quickly, getting done by 11 a.m., in time to run up to the paddock and start warming up. The days can vary, but sometimes he warms up 10 horses for one card at Saratoga.

“It goes back to keeping busy. It’s a labor of love. I’m not working myself to death. I feel great,” Davis said. “You just got to keep active. You got to have a reason for living.”

In between his lengthy harness racing career and running his own business, Davis drove race cars, too.

“My mother used to always say to me, you have a need for speed. When I was 10 years old, I was driving go-karts, racing them. I graduated from that into cars and then I drove dragsters. I’ve always had a need for competition and speed. When I got out of harness racing, I was driving race cars from 1991 to 2011,” said Davis. “My philosophy has always been,

if you don’t risk your life once in a while, you don’t value your life. To me, that’s what value your life means. Risk it once in a while and then, you really appreciate it.

“There’s nothing more exhilarating than when the gate springs and everybody dashes for the front and looks for position. It really just gets you going and that’s what I live for. I love the thrill of racing.”

Davis’ thrill of racing dates back decades and he even recalls his first time driving in a race with Freddy’s Sister at the Rutland Fair for Pat McGrath.

“That was my first race and I’ll never forget it. It seemed like it went so fast that I can’t even remember what I was doing. But after you drive a little bit, after driving 20, 30, 100 times, the race slows down and then you realize the timing and everything,” said Davis. “When it goes fast, you feel like a passenger and you sit there and hope everything goes well, but as you drive a lot, it really does come to you after a while. You get your timing, how to rate a horse better and everything.”

With his experience, Davis enjoys watching the races and seeing which drivers can rate their horses and which ones just take up space. The difference he says is what separates a leading driver like Brett Beckwith or Jacob Cutting from other drivers.

“There’s so much more to driving in a race than meets the eye,” said Davis. “The average person sitting out at the races watches and thinks I jump in a sulky and go around the track, but there’s way more to it than that.”

Davis explained that keeping healthy throughout his life has helped him to live a full life and keep going stronger even at the age of 80. He stays busy, eats right, and avoids things like smoking and other bad habits.

“It’s been a great run. I’ve had a great life. I really have. I’ve enjoyed just about everything I’ve done in my life. I have a nice family, I’ve got three grand-

kids that I love to death. It’s just been a great life for me,” said Davis.

Overall, Davis enjoys the business as much now as he had when he was first introduced in the 70s. He has seen the transformation of the sport and of the Saratoga Springs harness track over the years and is glad that Saratoga has hung in all these years to keep going today.

“If I had to summarize it, I would just say, I just do whatever I have to do so I can sit behind horses and occasionally drive in a race. Even when I’m warming up horses and jogging for Mark, it’s fun. All the things I do, it’s the way I spend retirement. I would just say I’m just really enjoying life and enjoying my retirement,” Bob Davis concluded.



JESSICA HALLETT

Bob Davis can typically be found driving his horses at Saratoga Raceway in New York.

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CAPTAIN OPTIMISTIC

(Captaintreacherous - Cinamony - Art Official) p,2,1:49; 3,1:48 -'25 (\$1,573,723)



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Snow, Hambletonian & more were topics on Dan Patch weekend



EDITOR'S EYE

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

Here I am still sitting in Florida a few days after the annual Dan Patch Awards banquet. It is difficult to describe my situation as “stranded” since I have a comfy bed and the temperatures are 30-40 degrees higher than they would be back at home in New York, but in the end, as Dorothy said, there’s no place like home.

The “Blizzard of 2026” was certainly a common discussion during the weekend from the 350-plus people in attendance to honor the best of 2025. Some people were scrambling to find alternatives to their intended flight plans while others were lucky enough to face no such hardships.

Personally I’m on my fourth itinerary and planning to be home about 56 hours after my original arrival time. Some others booked an extra flight for Wednesday just in case their Monday flights got canceled (good thinking!). Marcus Melander told me his plan was to fly to Washington DC and rent a car to drive back to New Jersey. I heard someone else was taking the train to DC and taking a similar rental car approach.

The timing of the storm that dumped one to three feet of snow from Virginia to New England may’ve weighed on some minds during the Dan Patch Awards banquet, but for the most part it was smiles all around the room. While I freely admit that Beau Jangles did not get my vote for Horse of the Year, he was certainly a worthy winner and I salute him. That nine horses received votes tells you how good a year it was for the sport.

Hambletonian chatter

There were definitely a number of conversations about where the Hambletonian may be contested come 2027. Hoosier Park has already expressed a desire to host the event for at least three years and The Meadowlands said it will bid. We hear that Woodbine Mohawk Park will join the mix as well.

The overall consensus is that the race should stay at The Meadowlands and even Caesars’ Joe Morris mentioned that to me in a December interview. Whether that will occur is another matter. Will a one-year Meadowlands offer be more enticing than a three-year one from another track? Keep in mind that The Meadowlands has many advantages, including the strong likelihood of higher handle, close proximity to the Hambletonian Society offices and located within a stone’s throw of New York City, to name a few.

For Meadowlands President and CEO Jeff Gural, he still doesn’t understand why the Hambletonian Society wouldn’t give him a bit more runway before making its decision to place the rights to the race up for bidding.

“I don’t understand why when I am trying to get a casino which would benefit their members and the industry they would consider moving it,” said Gural via email. “At least having a casino would ensure our major stakes program continues, which is critical to industry.”

If the Hambletonian moves away from The Meadowlands and a casino is approved for 2027, does the track get the race back in a few years? Does it have the potential purse account fueled by the casino to create a new million-dollar race for trotters?

These are all interesting questions, as is what would happen to the stakes landscape if the Hambletonian left The Meadowlands and a casino doesn’t arrive in Northern New Jersey in the future? Would other tracks pick up the ball and run stakes like the Stanley Dancer, Del Miller and William Haughton Memorial? Could even more of the bigger Grand Circuit barns on the east coast relocate west if Hoosier lands the Hambletonian?

At this point we don’t know what the Hambletonian Society Board of Directors will decide with regard to the Hambletonian in 2027 and beyond. What we do know is that Gural remains confident that the track will get a casino.

“I think we will be ok,” said Gural.

For the sake of the industry as a whole, let’s hope that the casino gets approved. Whether the Hambletonian is at The Meadowlands or not, the



NIKKI SHERMAN/DRF HARNNESS

Will the 2025 Hambletonian be the penultimate edition of the race held at The Meadowlands?

sport will be better off with a well-funded purse account providing extra racing dates and many stakes races for those on the east coast.

An Ohio Breeders Crown

I felt plenty of excitement for the Breeders Crown at Scioto Downs in October. Whether it was Jason Roth on the track side or Ohio Harness Horseman Association representatives Frank Fraas and Scott Mogan, everyone was excited about the two-night finals. It should be a first-rate event that all fans of the sport should plan on attending.

New slate of USHWA officers



DEAN GILLETTE PHOTO

USHWA’s newest slate of officers include Michael Carter, Jerry Connors, Bill MacDonald, Heather Vitale, Derick Giwner and Heather Wilder.

On the USHWA agenda was electing of officers and I’d like to congratulate Heather Vitale on moving up to the role of President and Heather Wilder for being elected 2nd Vice President. I was elected Vice President and within a few hours was given a number of suggestions about changes. So much for settling in!

New partners on Beau Jangles?

There was definitely some talk about a looming deal involving now Horse of the Year Beau Jangles. We’ve heard reports that it was worth anywhere from \$11 to \$15 million. According to trainer Dr. Ian Moore, something is on the table but nothing has been signed as of this moment. Stay tuned!

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Ducharme stable warming up in Florida for a big season



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [X BergmanJay](#)

The weather was unseasonably chilly on Tuesday (February 24) morning in Florida, but trainer George Ducharme wasn't complaining. The veteran conditioner had started early in the morning when it was but 30 degrees and by the time he finished training his 2 and 3-year-olds the temperature was more than comfortably above 60. It's a far cry from the northeast where Ducharme still owns a house in Massachusetts.

"I can't complain. It's going to be 80 later in the week," Ducharme said.

With just over six weeks before Ducharme and his stable of 36 head north to Vernon Downs from their Spring Garden Ranch locale this winter, the serious training has begun with some top-flight sophomore trotters hoping to graduate from Sire Stakes company into major Grand Circuit players.

The \$400K winning Sharp Seven was a dominant performer in New York capturing the rich final for Ducharme at Batavia. Just a \$65,000 yearling daughter of the sport's leading sire Chapter Seven, Sharp Seven won five times in 11 starts, earning a juvenile record of 1:55 taken over Ducharme's base track at Vernon.

"She was great over the smaller tracks," Ducharme said of Sharp Seven. "I think towards the end she got a little tired and maybe that had something to do with her size and racing over the big tracks."

The diminutive filly had the advantage on New York's smaller ovals but in her last two starts in the Big Apple at Vernon she couldn't threaten, finishing third in the \$250,000 final on October 11 behind two solid fillies.

"We were going to send her to the Breeders Crown," said Ducharme, who added that the efforts in her last two starts convinced them to quit and bring Sharp Seven back as a 3-year-old in 2026.

"The two horses that beat her in the Big Apple finished one-two in the Breeders Crown," Ducharme said, quite aware of the depth of the New York Sire Stakes program with Storybook Love and Nezuko Kamado S shining brightest in the Crown.

The Breeders Crown results as well as a very different-looking filly has Ducharme more than optimistic about Sharp Seven this year.

"She's grown a lot and filled out," said Ducharme, hoping that a bigger and stronger filly will have the capacity to elevate her game for the bigger Grand Circuit races.

"We've paid her into some Grand Circuit races," he continued, touching on Sharp Seven's schedule that could include a trip to The Meadowlands on the first Saturday in August for the Hambletonian Oaks.

Ducharme had another quality filly he raced as a freshman in 2025 and perhaps Cashout Express was somewhat under the radar while earning \$133K on the season.

"We had trouble with her behind the gate racing in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes," Ducharme said about Cashout Express, a daughter of International Moni.

Cashout Express was good enough to reach the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes final on September 5 at Harrah's Philadelphia but that wouldn't be her best day as she broke stride at the start and lost all chance.

"I was really happy with the way she finished the season. She was trotting in (1):55 or better at Plainridge every week," said Ducharme.

The dual-eligible Cashout Express won a pair of Massachusetts Sire Stakes events including a 1:54 1/5 personal best on October 6 before finishing a close second in the \$150,000 final at the end of the month. In that final she was defeated by Lindy In My Dreams, a daughter of Ready For Moni that also happens to be Cashout Express' maternal aunt, being a sister to her dam Lindy Of My Dreams.

With the Pennsylvania Sire stakes early and the Mass Stakes late in the season there is plenty of available purse money for Cashout Express, giving Ducharme the ability to cash in if things work out.

Ducharme has another dual eligible that he has seen train back this winter with more purpose and vigor. False Dogma, a son of Captain Corey, showed talent as a freshman but didn't have all the pieces in place.



(ABOVE) WENDY J. LOWERY PHOTO / (BELOW) MARK HALL/USTA

Sharp Seven (above) was a big winner on the New York Sire Stakes scene in 2025 for trainer George Ducharme (below).

Ducharme quit early with the colt believing he had talent but wasn't ready for the big time.

"He's a June foal and I kind of thought training him down that I didn't want to push him as a 2-year-old," Ducharme said.

That decision meant just five starts as a freshman and still enough points to make it to the Sire Stakes consolation. False Dogma had finished second to one of the year's outstanding colts – Breeders Crown third-place finisher Mr Big Spender – in an early Pennsylvania Sire Stakes appearance but had trouble putting things together in his last few starts. With time to mature, Ducharme has high hopes for False Dogma.

"He's eligible in Kentucky as well," said Ducharme of False Dogma, who along with Ducharme's other sophomores is likely to be ready to qualify when the stable ships north in April.

Ducharme is happy with the way most of his 2-year-olds are working, with the group having considerably more time to prepare than the sophomores. "We've been in around 2:30 with all of them," said Ducharme of the stable that is top heavy in well-bred trotting talent. "We've got some nicely bred horses. I've got five by Chapter Seven, five by Captain Corey and three by Walner."

Ducharme has enjoyed much success over the years with the Massachusetts program and is training a pair of juvenile trotting fillies with solid bloodlines and more important eligibility in his home state. Cant Buy Happiness was a \$175,000 purchase at the 2025 Lexington Selected sale and that's more than a fair price given the filly is out of a daughter of the great Moni Maker. Wanda Polissen's Purple Haze Stable has entrusted Ducharme with some six-figure types by Chapter Seven that are doing everything right at this stage of their development.

Ducharme is coming off what must be considered one of his best years in 2025, with the stable earning \$1.6 million but improving on its already high win percentage with 54 wins from just 195 starts. Even more impressive was his \$8,205 earnings per start figure. Clearly 2026 is shaping up quite nicely.

Ducharme is optimistic about the near future as well. "It's going to be 80 down here later this week," said Ducharme, who hopes to be as hot as the weather when stakes season approaches.



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Bongiorno crew looks to continue Big M success on Saturday

By Jay Bergman

With a predominant racehorse stable, trainer Joe Bongiorno's stock has been making the scene at Yonkers and The Meadowlands this winter with a high degree of success. Bongiorno has a talented group going to post Saturday night at the East Rutherford mile track where the stable has been in high gear.

"It's taken a little while to get going at Yonkers," said Bongiorno while in the middle of training miles on Wednesday (Feb. 25). "At The Meadowlands I've been very happy with the success we're having."

Bongiorno's stable should be ready to connect in Saturday's second race with Curbside Pickup. The 8-year-old by Somebeachsomewhere ships over from Yonkers making just his second start in the Bongiorno stable after coming over from conditioner Ron Burke.

"Ron knows we've had success with this horse in the past, so he gave him back to us," said Bongiorno. The move could have sparked immediate dividends on February 17 at Yonkers except for a minor glitch.

"He made a break timing the gate," said Bongiorno. "He was vicious finishing."

Bongiorno expects Curbside Pickup to enjoy the significant drop in company on Saturday.

Rockme Rollme (post 10, race 4) makes his first start for Bongiorno following a claim but isn't in exactly where the trainer had hoped. "We entered him looking for a \$17,500-20,000 claiming handicap," said Bongiorno.

Unfortunately, the race filled differently, putting Rockme Rollme on the outside of a \$15,000-17,500 handicap. Rockme Rollme has won for two different trainers at this level this year but with better draws on both occasions.

Bongiorno will guide Nuclear for trainer Burke in Saturday's fifth race. "I think I have the key to getting the most out of him," said Bongiorno of his record steering the son of Always B Miki. A winner in 1:49 2/5 over this surface last Saturday (February 21), Nuclear drew post seven while moving up in class significantly.

Bongiorno thought that Lovers Trouble was a victim of a slower pace in his last outing. "I probably should have strung the other horse out," Bongiorno said of his decision to yield the lead and then get backed into. Lovers Trouble made a second move but ultimately fell a bit short, finishing third in a claiming handicap on February 21.

In Saturday's sixth race Lovers Trouble drew the pole in a straight \$25,000 claimer and that likely will give his driver a chance to make amends.

Betting On Caesar is probably one of the sharpest horses racing on Saturday night for Bongiorno and beyond given his most recent two wins. "I think getting him on the big track has allowed him to stretch out. He's really finding himself," said Bongiorno, who said he hasn't changed anything with the 4-year-old by Lazarus N that didn't race as a fresh-

man but has improved remarkably in the last few months.

Betting On Caesar (post 7, race 9) faces a solid field with a ton of class on Saturday and will be looking for his third straight win coming off a 1:50 3/5 score on February 21. Ignatius A (post 6) is an \$800K career earner with a post edge in the \$17,500 conditioned affair that is carded as the ninth race.

Bongiorno guided the \$3.2 million winner This Is The Plan in a qualifier on February 21 over The Meadowlands surface and will sit behind the 11-year-old for his first 2026 venture, a non-winners of \$5,000 event in the 12th race.

"He qualified ok and will probably need a few starts, but with him you never know," said Bongiorno, giving a ton of respect to the 35-time winner that now races against lower company than in the past but does compete.

Bongiorno's stable is top heavy with racehorses but has 15 babies in training and is getting some quality sophomores prepared for stakes action.

"I'd say Apocalypsebluechip is probably my best colt," said Bongiorno of last year's Matron Stakes runner-up, a son of Papi Rob Hanover that was a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes championship finalist.

Ballroom Affair is another son of Papi Rob Hanover that Bongiorno hopes will elevate his game this year. "He showed high speed and he's training back well," said Bongiorno.

The sophomore filly Sundownsomewhere made only a couple of starts last year but could be ready for a solid sophomore campaign. "I liked her a lot last year, but she had an injury and we stopped with her," Bongiorno said about the daughter of Tall Dark Stranger that is in-to-go in a qualifier on Saturday at The Meadowlands.

Papis Dream is another by Papi Rob Hanover that could develop. The filly was unraced as a freshman but was a solid second in her career debut on February 20 at The Meadowlands, hinting at better things to come.



CONRAD PHOTO
Joe Bongiorno set a new career high in 2025 with 197 training wins and \$3.3 million in stable earnings.

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Glaser, Issa earn seats at \$10K Meadowlands handicapping contest

Robert Glaser ended the night with a bankroll of \$592.50 to win the second leg of the Meadowlands Monthly Handicapping Contest on Friday (Feb. 20), which offered \$1,000 in cash prizes.

Finishing second was Emile Issa, who completed the evening with a bankroll of \$500.00, so not only did he walk away with the \$500 he cashed handicapping the races, but also the second-place prize of \$250.

Glaser took down the first-place prize of \$500, and because he prefers to play multiple entries, had betting cards that were third- (\$105.40) and fourth-best (\$88.40) in the contest, also giving him the \$150 and \$100 prizes, respectively. The top four finishers in the contest cash.

By finishing first and second, Glaser and Issa have now qualified for the year-end contest "final", where the limited-to-22-entries competition offers prize money totaling \$10,000.

The first leg of the contest took place on Saturday, Jan. 10, with Del Kern and Stefan Ferrara finishing 1-2 to earn spots in the year-end test.

2026 contest schedule:

- Leg 3 – Saturday, March 21
- Leg 4 – Friday, April 17
- Leg 5 – Saturday, May 23
- Leg 6 – Friday, June 12
- Leg 7 – Friday, July 24
- Leg 8 – Saturday, Aug. 22
- Leg 9 – Saturday, Sept. 5
- Leg 10 – Friday, Oct. 23
- Leg 11 – Saturday, Nov. 14
- Invitation-only \$10,000 contest final: Saturday, Dec. 12

There is no entry fee (a \$100 live-money bankroll is required) for players, and the prize pool is guaranteed at \$1,000, funded by The Meadowlands.

On the night of the contest, players must register/check-in at the Club-house Lobby by 6 p.m. A \$100 betting card must be purchased to participate, as this is a live money/wagering contest.

The top two finishers from each contest earn spots in the \$10,000 tournament "final" on Dec. 12 (22 total players).

To register for the contest, go [here](#).

CARRYOVER REPORT: The \$1 PK 8 went unhit for a third consecutive offering on Saturday, Feb. 21, creating a carryover of \$61,232 for when racing resumes Friday. Winner's odds for the sequence were 2-1, 20-1, 3-5, 4-1, 8-1, 5-2, 3-1 and 12-1. Those with six correct collected \$448.20.

A double 20-cent Pick-6 carryover of \$11,632 coaxed players to pour \$43,490 of "new money" into the pool, and after a sequence where winner's odds were 5-2, 3-1, 12-1, 1-1, 9-5 and 6-1, three winning tickets were exchanged for \$16,199.74.

SEE ANNIE AND DEBBIE: The continually rotating chairs on the Sam McKee Memorial Broadcast Set will remain in motion this weekend.

On Friday, Dave Little, back after serving as one of the emcees of the Dan Patch Awards dinner in Florida, will be back in his usual spot serving as host of the simulcast show.

Sitting alongside Little will be trainer Annie Stoebe, who is back on set for a third time. Stoebe is one of the better trotting trainers in the game. During 2025, her older mare trotter Elista Hanover banked over \$500,000 during a successful campaign that was highlighted by a win in the \$425,000 Hambletonian Maturity.

Stoebe has Hambletonian hopes with Diabolic Hill, who also earned over a half-million dollars a year ago. His big win came in the \$421,000 Valley Victory, when he took down Breeders Crown champion Spencer Hanover.

As if those two stars weren't enough for a smaller-sized barn, Stoebe is adding Rattle My Cage to her lineup in 2026. The son of Love You-Caress The Senses earned over \$250,000 in both 2022 and 2023, and Stoebe is hoping to bring him back to his previous glory. Rattle My Cage will qualify next month.

On Saturday, it will be the next edition of the "Dueling Littles", as married Communicators Hall-of-Famers Dave and Debbie will be side-by-side.

Dave will shift one chair to the right and be the co-host while Debbie will serve as host of the presentation.

The Big M's pregame show gets underway nightly at 5:25 p.m.

Ken Warkentin and Joe Romanelli will serve in their usual capacities, as track announcer, and paddock interviewer and FanDuel Television (FDTV) analyst, respectively, on both Friday and Saturday.

-edited release (Meadowlands)

DRF HANDICAPPER'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.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

RACE 3

(2) SWISS HOUSE ONFIRE was third after he cut the mile two weeks ago and then had a poor trip last week from the eight-hole. He moves way inside on the gate here in his third start back off the bench, and I'll give him top billing.

-Greg Reinhart



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

RACE 4

(6) KELLINA DIAMOND finds a good spot for her return after a winning qualifier. Her gate speed has been her biggest asset against horses like this.

-Kevin Plowcha



RACE 13

(8) BACARDI has lost his last two starts by 17 1/2 lengths and now gets a key class drop. Last year a similar situation occurred (lost last two by 20 lengths and dropped) and the result was a win by more than seven lengths.

-Derick Gwerner



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

RACE 2

(4) CURBSIDE PICKUP moved back into the Bongiorno barn last time and made an early break that compromised his chances. Note that he won multiple races for this barn in 2025 in higher classes than this one.

-Gwerner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

[Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Meadowlands Analysis

[Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Yonkers Analysis

[Thursday](#) [Friday](#)

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

BEAU JANGLES CROWNED 2025 HORSE OF THE YEAR

Beau Jangles still is undefeated.

The colt, who was a perfect 12-for-12 in his 2-year-old season and honored as a divisional Dan Patch Award winner this past December, on Sunday (Feb. 22) was named the 2025 Pacer of the Year and Horse of the Year to conclude the U.S. Harness Writers Association's Dan Patch Awards banquet. A crowd of 350 attended the event, presented by Caesars Entertainment, at Rosen Shingle Creek resort.

[READ MORE](#)

RINKER, LEFKOWITZ MAKE BALLOT FOR COMMUNICATORS HALL OF FAME

Kim Rinker and the late Barry Lefkowitz were selected as the two candidates advancing to this summer's balloting for the Communicators Hall Of Fame, as determined during the Saturday directors meeting of the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA).

[READ MORE](#)

USHWA CONCLUDES SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL MEETINGS

The United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA) held its annual meetings this past Saturday and Sunday, returning to the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in this central Florida city. The Dan Patch Awards Banquet, presented by Caesars Entertainment, on Sunday evening again provided the highlights of the weekend, with Horse of the Year Beau Jangles taking top honors.

[READ MORE](#)

NEW VOCATIONS ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program, the nation's oldest and largest racehorse adoption organization, announced today that founder Dot Morgan will step down from her role as Executive Director. Longtime leader Anna Ford will transition into the Executive Director role, ensuring continuity of mission and vision as the organization enters its next chapter.

[READ MORE](#)

BRUCE ALDRICH, JR. WINS 9,000TH RACE

On Wednesday February 25th, the aptly named Win And Dream gave Bruce Aldrich Jr. his 9,000th career win. The winner is trained and owned by Steven Ray of New Berlin, NY and the 8 year-old gelding won in 2:01 3/5 paying \$17.80.

Born into a family of rich New England Harness Racing heritage, his

father Basil Aldrich had been competing long before the USTA even began record keeping. With Bruce being indoctrinated at an early age, it didn't take long before Bruce got the harness racing itch and started his own career.

His first year of racing was 1985, finishing third in his only start. Gradually from there he continued his journey. In a short span of five years he had 189 wins and earnings of \$172,803. Bruce has been a mainstay at Monticello Raceway for decades and the 57-year-old Aldrich is a six-time leading dash-winning driver at Monticello Raceway. In his career he has been behind the starting gate 53,666 times, with 7,993 place finishes and 7,179 times finishing third, and career earnings of \$37,250,000. He has earned over a million per year in purses an amazing 17 times thus far in his career. His best year was 2015 - 663 wins and \$3,361,218 in purse earnings.

In his 41 year career, Bruce has driven many horses but one that sticks outs for him was Royal Heart, who set a world record at Saratoga that was only broken by Wiggle It Jiggleit. Royal Heart also paced one of the fastest miles ever at Monticello Raceway in 1:51 4/5.

Following the epic win, Bruce was greeted in the winner's circle by friends and drivers, Bruce wasted no time in his quest for his 10,000 wins, scoring with Kenobi, just two races later.

-edited release (Monticello Raceway)

REQUIREMENTS FOR OSS-ELIGIBLE YEARLINGS BEFORE NOMINATING

The Ontario Sires Stakes (OSS) program coordinator would like to remind all participants with OSS-eligible yearlings that yearlings must be registered at the time of nomination and Standardbred Canada requires that the DNA and microchipping be completed before the foal is registered. The nomination deadline for OSS No. 55 is May 15, 2026.

Foal owners looking to have DNA and microchipping completed are advised to contact the Standardbred Canada Identification Technician in their region:

Maritimes provinces: Stephen MacLeod (902) 897-5156

Quebec and Ontario East of Napanee: Daniel St-Jacques (514) 290-4114

Ontario (West of Napanee): Mike Pennington (416) 580-3683

Manitoba: Darryl Mason (204) 523-6069

Alberta: Evelyn Sabraw (403) 830-4190

British Columbia: Petra Janzen (604) 341-2566

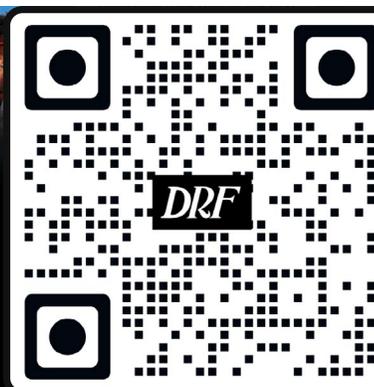
For more information click [here](#).

The OSS Yearling Nomination payment - \$100 CDN (\$80 USD), due on Friday, May 15, 2026 - nominates foals of 2025 to OSS No. 55 to race at two (2) in 2027 and at three (3) in 2028. Yearling nomination payments received after May 15, 2026 are considered late and increase to a fee of \$500 CDN prior to Aug. 17, 2026.

-release (OSS)



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