

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026



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



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Gwerner
[@harnesseveguy](#)

When the crown was officially handed over is unknown but there is no question that the current King of New York harness racing in terms of handle is Saratoga Raceway.

An analysis of daily wagering totals (using ustrotting.com as the source) at the only three New York tracks racing regularly in February shows Saratoga as the leader not just in total handle but also by a fair margin in average handle per race. Bettors poured over \$9.65 million into the pools during February over 15 cards (180 races) at Saratoga, substantially more than the nearly \$8.11 million (18 cards, 177 races) bet on Yonkers Raceway or the almost \$6.35 million (15 programs, 140 races) at Monticello Raceway.

Breaking the numbers down to average handle per race, Saratoga has a healthy advantage with \$53,617, far ahead of Yonkers (\$45,818) and Monticello (\$45,341).

One has to wonder how Saratoga went from

worst to first over the last year. During February 2025 the track handled just over \$5.24 million (12 cards, 147 races) and averaged a meager \$35,674 per race. The highest single card handle in February was \$666,267. They eclipsed that mark seven times by March 1, 2026!

Year over year Saratoga has seen an amazing 50% increase in handle per race. In a time when industry handle has been in a tailspin and only a track or two showed an increase in 2025, how did Saratoga pull off this wagering comeback?

According to John Matarazzo, Director of Racing Operations at Saratoga Casino Hotel, the handle bump has emanated from several sources, including:

- Changing the betting format (adding a second Pick 5 and including Pick 4 carryovers) and increasing minimums (triple from .50 to \$1, superfecta from .10 to .20, late double from \$1 to \$3).
- Marketing-driven live product promotions (bonuses, handicapping contests) for customers through their ADW – SaratogaBets.com.
- New agreements with a few Computer Assisted Wagering groups.
- Revised racing schedule.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)



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BY **CHAPTER SEVEN** OUT OF **STEAMY WINDOWS**



“We’re always trying things in the harness industry and it is a bit of a battle,” said Matarazzo. “It’s hard to drive people to the racetrack and all of the changes we’ve made have helped us see the handle increases across the board.

“The increase in the pool sizes, I think, is drawing more people to our product. And that was the idea. If we can get our pools to be bigger, we can get more people interested in our product. So all the best stuff we’re doing combined with a few, and it’s just a few of the CAWs, not a lot of them, some creative agreements with them, those are fueling all the increases.”

Saratoga sends its signal out to 400 outlets all over the world and Matarazzo was quick to credit his staff for putting out the best product possible and positioning it properly to ensure success.

“PJ [Racing Secretary Peter Iovino] has done a great job of getting good stables and making sure our races have full fields,” said Matarazzo, who also credited Racing Development Simulcast Manager Alex Savage for “driving a lot of our initiatives with SaratogaBets and with our simulcasting partners.”

An interesting statistic from this February is the head-to-head matchup between Saratoga and Monticello. The two tracks both operate during the afternoon (12:00 PM and 12:10 PM first-race post times, respectively) and raced on seven common dates during the month. Saratoga had a higher average handle per race three times and Monticello four. That tells us that perhaps Saratoga’s success comes from positioning as much as anything else.

“Monticello, to their credit, they built a niche in matinee racing years ago,” said Matarazzo. “People got used to their product and they did really well in that spot. We moved into that spot, I’m not sure even how many years ago we did it, and we took a chunk of their business. Then other people moved in when we moved in and took a chunk of our business. So, you’re right, when Monticello and us run, we kind of split the money.”

Saratoga went from a Sunday to Wednesday schedule in 2025 to a Saturday to Tuesday schedule in 2026. Handle on Wednesday in 2025 averaged \$30,163 per race while Saturdays this year have vaulted to \$52,872, a 75% increase.

“I wasn’t sure whether it would work,” said Matarazzo. “We always raced on Saturday night. In 2025, we decided to run an experiment because we’re always trying things. Let’s get off of Saturday night and move to a weekday afternoon because it costs us a little more money to run at night. We’ve got to deal with our lights and stuff like that. And the horsemen didn’t like Saturday nights. So I said, maybe we could build some off-track money if we run on a Wednesday afternoon instead of the Saturday night.

“This year, we decided to get back on to Saturdays only to try matinee programs and see if there was any interest there. And it’s going okay. I mean, it’s still early, but it’s going good. We’ll see how it plays out.”

Saratoga currently has no competition on Sundays as the only harness track racing in the country. On Saturday’s they go up against Pocono Downs (1 PM post), beating them by over \$300,000 in handle despite one less race on February 28.

A side note to the handle surge at Saratoga is that the track set a new single-card record for handle on March 1 of \$890,024. The previous top was reached just a month earlier on February 1 when \$855,412 was wagered. Interestingly, Monticello (\$512,120) and Yonkers (\$696,725) both hit their February highs on their first program of the month.

“Pleasantly surprised,” said Matarazzo about the new handle record. “It’s very encouraging. It’s very encouraging to our horsemen to see the interest in our product. We’re going to keep on trying things just because we’re in a very competitive environment now. Legalizing sports betting in New York really had an impact on our horse betting. It’s a similar demographic, and now we also have sports betting platforms that take bets on racing. So that didn’t help us either.”

The model is changing in terms of measuring the success of racetracks. There was once a time when the “butts in seats” philosophy was the true indicator. Now tracks must embrace online outlets to engage their customers.

“A lot of people just go by on-track handle and attendance. I don’t think that’s a fair measuring stick. I really don’t,” said Matarazzo. “I hate to use this analogy because I don’t know if it’s accurate, but it’s like judging whether or not movies are successful by whether or not people are in the movie theater. The movie industry is still very vibrant, but it’s not necessarily judged by how many people go into the movie theater to watch a movie.”

“It’s very encouraging to our horsemen to see the interest in our product. We’re going to keep on trying things just because we’re in a very competitive environment now. Legalizing sports betting in New York really had an impact on our horse betting,”

-John Matarazzo, Director of Racing Operations at Saratoga Casino Hotel

Matarazzo is cognizant that the small sample size hardly indicates a trend that will continue well into the future. He also understands that competition is thin during the winter months and Saratoga will have a harder time maintaining its handle edge as tracks open around the country and Yonkers gets its stakes schedule underway.

“It’s hard to say because you don’t know what else is going to happen around you,” said Matarazzo about the possibility of continuing the good handle run. “I don’t know what the other tracks are going to do. I’m not the only person sitting here trying to figure out how to drive business. Every racetrack operator is doing it and I don’t have a crystal ball. I don’t know if it’s going to continue to grow.

“I’m hopeful that our pool sizes encourage more people to bet. And right now, when I look at our charts, I see handle increases from the vast majority of our outlets, not just from the CAW groups. So that is very encouraging to me.”

While Matarazzo is in good company in terms of his inability to predict the future, it is clear that Saratoga has risen to be the most viable wagering track in New York from a handle standpoint. Whether Yonkers Raceway can make a dent in that gap is unknown, but the numbers say for the time being Saratoga is King.



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- At 3, winner of \$200,000 E. Beal Jr Memorial cons. at Pocono (1:52.4) against **King Of The North**
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Lexington Selected Yearling Sale

Monday, October 5 – Friday, October 9, 2026

Entry Deadline: Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Harrisburg Standardbred Sale

Monday, November 2 – Friday, November 6, 2026

Yearling Portion: Monday–Wednesday

Entry Deadline: Friday, May 1, 2026

Mixed Portion: Thursday–Friday

Entry Deadline: Friday, October 2, 2026

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**ALLIANCE
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Growing Melander stable about a month away from qualifiers



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman [✕ BergmanJay](#)

Success in horse racing from a trainer's perspective often has its rewards. In the case of Marcus Melander's stable, which nearly reached the \$10 million plateau in earnings in 2025, it is being marked by a stable that has reached the number 92. For Melander, who started his own stable in 2015 after working for Jimmy Takter for one year, the depth of his stable is highlighted by a milestone.

"We've got four barns here with 92 stalls," said Melander from his New Jersey training center that has reached 100 percent capacity. "I'm grateful that owners have shown the faith in me to trust me with their horses."

That trust has been built on years of success, with Melander's stable broadening its reach from an initial singular set-up in New Jersey to a new farm and training facility in Kentucky that allows the operation to maintain its personal edge and personality.

With last year's number of starters markedly increased from 2024, Melander suggested that the growth had not stretched the stable's ability. "That we can have our horses stabled in Kentucky helps manage the numbers much better," Melander said.

Of greatest value to the success story is working within an environment that the horses are most comfortable with. While the larger operation has its advantages, especially with the enormous growth of the Kentucky program, Melander's base of operations in New Jersey is where the 92 horses are stabled for now, with hopes that many will gravitate towards Kentucky at some point this year.

A total of 62 2-year-olds are currently working towards the beginning of their racing careers and on schedule despite the rough winter we've had in the northeast.

"They haven't missed a day," Melander said when asked about the impact of the cold and snowy conditions seen quite often this winter.

"It's been a lot of extra work outside of taking care of the horses this winter," continued the trainer, pointing to keeping the track in suitable condition to get the horses moving. That said, the weather has had some impact on what Melander had hoped to accomplish this spring with some of his returning sophomores.

"I think we're about four weeks away before any of the horses will qualify," Melander said.

Some of the unproven freshman from 2025 were nominated to the Weiss Series in April at Pocono but Melander wasn't going to push them to participate.

"They've been training but because of the conditions we haven't been able to put the work into them that I would like," said Melander, who suggested that the sand track at his New Jersey facility was a victim of the winter.

With the stable increasing from roughly 80 a year ago to 92, the earnings potential grows significantly. While there are more questions than answers at this point regarding his freshman class, there is enormous reason for optimism just looking at the names that will be returning in the 4-year-old class and Open company in 2026. The recent announcement that Super Chapter – the 2025 Dan Patch Award winner as the top 3-year-old in the sport – will return to the track to race this year was the bad breeding news followed by a good news event for Melander. While Super Chapter, a son of Chapter Seven, won't be breeding in 2026, he could be making headlines on the racetrack.

"We've had him back in training for over a month now," said Melander. "I'm sure he'll be ready for the Graduate. We may skip the first leg in Canada (Woodbine Mohawk Park)."



JESSICA HALLETT PHOTO

Super Chapter is prepping now to be ready for the Graduate series in June.

As with his other 4-year-olds in the past, Melander won't subject them early to the rigors of racing in Open company and instead will point to the Graduate and Hambletonian Maturity initially with hopes that it prepares them to face older company. Joining Super Chapter in that division will be the Breeders Crown upset winner Meshuggah, a son of Greenshoe that showed himself to be more than capable at the end of his sophomore year, winning twice in 1:50 1/5, first in the Bluegrass at The Red Mile and then as a 62-1 shot in the Breeders Crown in late October.

"He came on strongly towards the end of the year and he's coming back well," said Melander of Meshuggah.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 7](#)

CAPTAIN OPTIMISTIC

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



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and the Cane Pace at age three!

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- U A **\$160,000 yearling**, his dam is a 1/2 sister to N.A. Cup winner **Fear The Dragon** p,3,1:48.4s (\$1,720,297).
- U Winner of the **Governor's Cup** at age two, as well as eliminations for the Metro Pace and Breeders Crown.
- U Winner of the **Cane Pace** and **Bluegrass Stakes** at age three, as well as his elimination for the North America Cup.

PERFECT STING

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



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1st crop of two-year-olds!

- U His first crop has earned over \$2.3 million ...an **average/starter of \$45,913**.
- U The sire of Kindergarten Series winner **BOOKIE J** p,2,1:51.1 -'25 (\$288,905).
- U The sire of NJ Classic Champion **PERFECT THOUGHT** p,2,1:51.1 -'25 (\$272,961).
- U The sire of NJSS Champion **BE PERFECT BG** p,2,1:50.1 -'25 (\$166,803).

SIX PACK

(Muscle Mass - Pleasing Lady - Cantab Hall) 3,1:49.1 (\$1,973,661)



Standing at Winbak Farm in N.Y.
2026 FEE: \$5,000 (U.S.)

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- U His 2YOs earned over \$1.2 million in 2025 ...an **average/starter of \$46,350**.
- U The sire of 2025 Hambletonian Champion **NORDIC CATHER S** 3,1:50 -'25 (\$1,124,113).
- U The sire of 2025 Peaceful Way Champion **SUGAR PACKET** 2,1:53.3s -'25 (\$327,147).

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Both Aetos Kronos S and Periculum are training back towards another season racing with the best Open trotters in North America. Aetos Kronos S was first or second in 10 of his 14 starts in North America as a 9-year-old in his first starts on the continent. The durable son of Bold Eagle took a sub-1:50 mark at Woodbine Mohawk Park earning a shade under \$300K in 2025. Periculum will be returning in 2026 following a pair of \$800K-plus campaigns in 2024-25. Now a 7-year-old son of Muscle Hill, Periculum has made the most of his opportunities when racing at the highest level. In 2025 he captured both the Crawford and Cashman at The Meadowlands and Melander hopes to have him ready for this year's Cutler Memorial at The Meadowlands scheduled for May 16.

While Melander's stable has grown and excelled over its 11-year history in North America, it has yet to capture a Hambletonian trophy. The elusive prize may very well be in reach this year with Melander perhaps under less pressure in 2026 than he was last year at this time with both Maryland and Super Chapter at the top of the winterbook favorites list. The big names for 2026 are Apex and Spencer Hanover. The former looked like a star from the start last year while Spencer Hanover took some time and emerged in the fall.

Apex, a son of Walner from Mission Brief, took home the Dan Patch Award as the top freshman in his class. "You could tell early on with him," said Melander. "He had a certain bounce."

Apex would capture the Mohawk Million and Peter Haughton Memorial and earn \$871K in his first year at the track, but it was Spencer Hanover, a son of Chapter Seven, that would spoil the party in the \$700K Breeders Crown final. After losing his first nine races Spencer Hanover won three of his last four, ending the season on the highest note.

Among the 62 babies in training are 50 eligible in Kentucky. It's way too early to make predictions at this point but Melander, when asked about first-crop horses, spoke kindly of a pair he's training from the initial offering of Temporal Hanover, eligible primarily in Indiana. There's also a colt by Gimpanzee that's a half-brother to Apex that could help elevate the stallion with his third crop hitting the track this year.



NIKKI SHERMAN PHOTO

Apex is one of the big guns that will take a shot at the Hambletonian on August 1 and 8 at The Meadowlands.

34 ENTRIES RECEIVED FOR SLOTS IN 2026 MOHAWK MILLION

Woodbine Entertainment today (3/11) announced 34 individuals and/or groups submitted a contract to purchase a slot in the 2026 Mohawk Million.

Following a buy-in format, the Mohawk Million for 2-year-old trotters offers 10 slots available for purchase in the C\$1 million race. Each slot was priced at C\$60,000 for this year's edition.

The deadline to submit a signed slot purchase contract and the first C\$30,000 of the C\$60,000 entry fee was February 17.

The following 34 individuals and/or groups have officially entered to purchase a slot.

1. Tom Rankin
2. Hudson Standardbred Stable
3. Al Libfeld
4. Ecurie CSL
5. Andrew Harris
6. Dustin Jones
7. Kathe Troy
8. Determination
9. Standardbred Breeders of Ontario Association
10. Pollack Racing LLC
11. Knox Services Inc.



12. Mark Weaver
13. Bertrand Gilhespy Stable
14. Leo Fleming & Bill Manes
15. Casie Coleman
16. Guylaine Picard
17. Anne Hooper
18. Michael Venneri
19. Gino Toscani
20. Bill Pollock
21. Karen Irwin
22. Matt Bax
23. Jim Bullock
24. Chris Bullock
25. Carl & Jody Jamieson/David & Mary Lemon
26. Brad Grant
27. Bruce Areman
28. Hunterton Farm & Partners
29. Corbeil/Fellows
30. Celebrity Farms
31. Paul Van Camp
32. Santo Vena
33. Ecurie Maguire Inc.
34. Courant Inc.

All 34 entries will now be placed in an open draw to determine the 10 slot holders for this year's Mohawk Million. The draw is scheduled to take place next week with full details for the date and time to be announced in the coming days.

The 2026 Mohawk Million is scheduled for Saturday, September 26 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

-edited release (Woodbine)



PAYMENTS DUE MARCH 15*

One list and one check keeps your horses eligible to these top events.



2-year-olds

Arden Downs
Breeder's Crown
Cane Pace
Currier & Ives
Delvin Miller Adios
Dexter Cup
Elevation
Fox
Hambletonian
Hoosier Stake
Horseman
John Simpson Sr. Memorial
Kentuckiana Stallion Mgmt
Keystone Classic
Landmark
Liberty Bell
Madison County
Matron Series
Messenger
Oak Grove Trotting Derby *NEW*
PA All-Stars
Peter Haughton/Jim Doherty
Progress Pace
Ralph Wilfong
Tompkins-Geers
W.N. Reynolds Memorial
Yonkers

Open Events

Breeder's Crown
Caesar's Trotting Classic
Clara Barton Distaff Pace
Dan Patch
Dayton Derby
Hoosier Park
Rockin Nola *NEW*
Spirit of Massachusetts



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3-year-olds

Balmoral Park
Battle Bunker Hill Trot
Breeder's Crown
Carl Erskine
Circle City Series
Colonial
Crossroads of America
Earl Beal Jr./Delmonica Hanover
Hazel Park
Jenna's Beach Boy
John Simpson Sr. Memorial
Keystone Classic
Landmark
Liberty Bell
Matron Series
Max Hempt/James Lynch
Monument Circle
Oak Grove Trotting Derby *NEW*
PA All-Stars
Paul Revere Pace
Pegasus Series
Phil Langley Memorial
Pompano Park
Thanksgiving Classic Series
Tompkins-Geers
USS Indianapolis Memorial
W.N. Reynolds Memorial

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CELEBRATING WOMEN

By Derick Giwner [X @harnessveguy](#)

International Women's Day was celebrated at both The Meadowlands and Woodbine Mohawk Park last weekend. Each track pulled out the stops in its own way and created a spotlight on many of the women who are a large part of the Standardbred industry.

Earlier on Saturday, before the Meadowlands kicked off its festivities, I had a conversation with someone who was firmly against the track offering two all-women races on the 14-race card, especially with both as part of the Pick 5. Their view focused on the unknown handicapping factors with so many unfamiliar faces in one race. This is similar to the comments from some when amateur racing began becoming a mainstay at the track and handicappers were in an uproar over the quantity of those races on the program.

Not to sound like the knight in shining armor, but I quickly defended the races, pointing out that it was great for the sport as a whole as well as the image of the industry. Plus, as handicappers, shouldn't we want more variables and potentially unpredictable outcomes?

As it turns out, the crème rose to the top and the most accomplished current-day woman driver – Lauren Tritton, who has proven capable of competing with any man on any day – dominated the two races. First she took charge and held on with Lyleground and then winning by more than 15 lengths with Ayr Dave Gb, a horse she trains with her husband Shane.

Factually, the betting public supported the two Meadowlands women races (2 and 5) very well. Removing any multi-race wagers from the equation, the two races averaged \$178,022. The four races which surrounded them (1,3,4,6) brought in an average of \$158,235. The second women's race was the highest handling race on the entire card!

Interestingly, a few races after the women's races concluded, I heard from the same person from earlier in the day. Their tune had completely changed. They lauded the efforts put forth by the broadcasting crew including some very good interviews by Heather Wilder and felt the races were fine, perhaps because the most logical driver and horses did well.

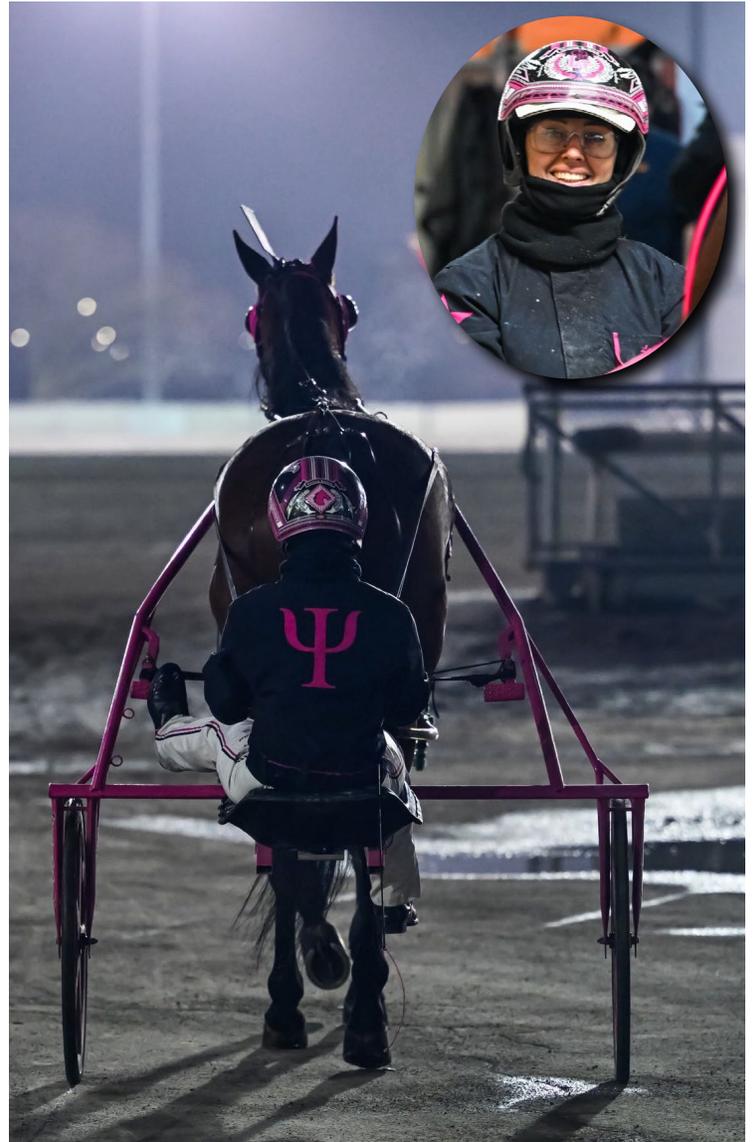
Turning the page to Sunday when Woodbine Mohawk Park presented a women's race of its own, they did something that intrigued me. On-air personality Elissa Blowe was in the paddock prior to the third race which featured 10 women and interviewed each of them. She asked about their game plan for the race and other random questions. That got me to thinking, why aren't tracks doing this all the time? Wouldn't it bring something to the table for all track broadcasts to ask a question of the connections for each horse in a race before they head out to the track?

There is certainly the three to five minutes of dead air before every race available to make it happen. For tracks that run commercials between races, perhaps instead of a 30-second spot the segment could be sponsored by that advertiser with a logo and URL or QR code.

There will certainly be those from the backstretch side that aren't crazy about the idea of being on camera race after race and I appreciate that some people don't enjoy the spotlight. But this is a visual world demanding video content. Harness racing is a sport and athletes along with managers and coaches all have media requirements. There is no reason why there can't be one representative – driver, trainer, second trainer, daily caretaker – available for a horse in each race to answer one question. The more information you provide to bettors the better chance they will risk more money!

Getting back to the women of harness racing, I'd love to see them in action more often at tracks across the country. There is no reason they can't compete with the men if given the opportunity to ply their trade and hone their skills. At the very least, given that March is International Women's month, maybe a series of races can be put together over two weeks where women from all over the world – a number of foreign-born women drove at The Meadowlands and Mohawk Park – can race at least every other day at tracks across North America to showcase what has been an underrepresented group on the track in this part of the world.

Perhaps more representation of woman on the track will lead to more participation, along the lines of "if you can see, you can be it." There is no doubt that harness racing could use a wider audience and having more women in the spotlight can only help create a brighter image and future for the sport.



JESSICA HALLETT PHOTOS

Most of the women drivers at The Meadowlands on Saturday (March 7) had the above view of driver Lauren Tritton as she went wire to wire in the first IWD race and won from the pocket in the second. (below) Jacqueline Ingrassia, who won the 2000 Yonkers Trot with Goalfish, was one of the women in competition on March 7.



2026 OHIO STAKING NOMINATIONS

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Does the USHWA name truly represent Harness Racing media?



CONFESSIONS

By Keith Gisser

I have been a member of the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA) for nearly 30 years. I remember going to my first Ohio chapter annual meeting as an aspiring freelancer. It was held at the legendary (and now defunct) Kahiki Restaurant in Columbus and I was in a room with legends – people like Dean Hoffman, Larry Evans, John Pawlak, Phil Hartman, Bob Roberts, George Smallsreed and others. I was in awe.

Back then USHWA members were primarily beat, magazine and organizational writers, photographers and track publicists. Media coverage of harness racing has changed over 30 years. The beat writers – reporters assigned by newspapers – are more endangered than the ivory billed woodpecker. The organization's membership still features freelancers, magazine personnel and photographers, but now it also includes stakes coordinators, horsemen association reps, on-air personalities, track announcers and horse owners, among others. USHWA is split into 12 regional chapters and a group of "at-large" members. There is even a Canadian chapter. I am currently serving my third stint (not third term, but third separate time) as Ohio Chapter President.

USHWA has four membership classifications: Regular (R), Associate (A), Retired (Ret), and Youth (Y), but in reality, anyone who wants to write a check and gets approval of the chapter President can become a member.

The organization's three main tasks are running voting for the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in Goshen, New York; voting for and distributing a number of awards to outstanding individuals in our sport (The Stan Bergstein Proximity Award being the highest honor); and determining the various divisional and overall champion horses each year, the Dan Patch Awards. The National organization also co-ordinates the Hervey writing and Sam McKee Media and George Smallsreed photography awards. Local chapters offer scholarships and send students to the Clyde Hirt Harness Writing Workshop during Hambletonian week.

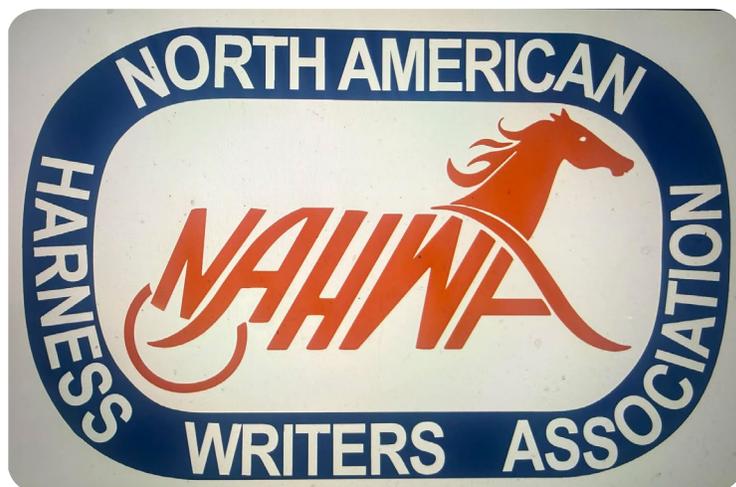
National officers and volunteers guide these processes with various committees, including an Integrity Committee and a Hall of Fame Screening Committee. The organization's annual meeting is held in February in conjunction with the Dan Patch Awards. And that is where I have a bit of an issue.

USHWA livestreams the Dan Patch Awards, even offering a glamorous red-carpet ceremony. Take that Oscars! Who needs Kate Hudson or Jessie Buckley when you have Amy Hollar and Wendy Ross? It is quite an event. But what about the nuts and bolts? Why aren't the actual meetings live-streamed so members who cannot afford airfare and expensive hotel rooms can be more involved?

I believe USHWA could really use a reboot to better represent the membership. Let's start with the "United States" moniker. As I mentioned, USHWA has a Canadian chapter. And its rules allow any horse who races in North America to win the Dan Patch Horse of the Year, as we saw this year when Beau Jangles, who never set foot in the United States, won the award. So why not change to the North American Harness Writers Association?

Maybe NAHWA doesn't roll off the tongue as well as USHWA. Our members are not just writers, they represent all aspects of media, so why not North American Harness Media Association (NAHMA)? But you say, there is more to North America than the United States and Canada. Well, when it refers to harness racing, not really. But we could become the Can-Am Harness Media Association (CAHMA). Or Am-Can Harness Media Association. (ACHMA).

We are no longer the United States Harness Writers Association even if that is what the group is named. In the past, USHWA has been slow to update policies, but that seems to be changing for the better. Questions remain. The work of the Integrity Committee can be inconsistent, in some cases seemingly allowing rumor and innuendo to influence decisions.



USHWA member Keith Gisser feels that the organization would be better served with a name change to NAHWA or NAHMA.

Don't get me wrong, I think integrity is important in considering Hall of Fame horsemen and horses. But even Major League Baseball relented and allowed the late Pete Rose to be honored in Cooperstown.

As an example, the Ohio Chapter has repeatedly nominated Tony Morgan for the Hall of Fame. He has never cleared the Integrity Committee to be considered for the ballot although his numbers clearly warrant induction (he is second all-time with 18,073 wins). Morgan has one or two (USTA's Pathway system is unclear) mediation-related violations from 1994, but no ethical or integrity violations. I know there are rumors that he was involved in race fixing, but they are just that, rumors. Meanwhile, there are certainly others in the Hall with many more listed infractions throughout their careers. I realize this is an inexact science and I also understand the need for confidentiality, but the Ohio Chapter has never been given a why on Morgan.

We can do better and I urge my leaders to look forward and move that way too.

[NOTE FROM EDITOR DERICK GIWNER: As the chairman of the Integrity Committee, while I believe in Keith Gisser's right to question the decisions (and thus why it is printed on these pages), I take exception to his accusation that the committee has acted "inconsistently" with its rulings. Each decision is made after careful deliberation with consideration given to precedent. The committee takes any action seriously and is only trying to act in the best interest of the organization.]

Getting back to the USHWA name, at the 2026 meetings a motion to change the name was overwhelmingly voted down. A livestream would help me understand the (lack of) logic in refusing to change. North American Harness Media Association (NAHMA) clearly better explains our organization than the current name. I can't think of a logical argument to vote no – okay, you gotta order new stationery. Yet, the membership did.

However, Derick Gwerner, our editor, mentioned, "I would point out there are potential hurdles to overcome in terms of rebranding, perhaps changing the official registering of the name, etc. So maybe it isn't as easy as a simple vote."

And, there's still the stationery! Rant over. Now go cash. Hopefully based on picks of an electronic media member of the United States Harness Writers Association (special thanks to Jamie Runevitch for creating the NAHMA logo).



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Standing at
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New York



Dates with the boys on the 2026 schedule for Twin B Joe Fresh

By Jay Bergman

Hall of Fame trainer Chris Ryder sounded excited about the possibilities for his stable in 2026. Ryder's enthusiasm pointed directly towards the return of the 2024 Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh to the races.

"We've started some slow jogging," Ryder said when asked about the progress of the mare that suffered an injury at the conclusion of her 2025 campaign, one that was concerning enough for Ryder and company to shut her down.

"It's not a week-to-week thing," said Ryder when asked about the nature of the injury and whether it would hamper Twin B Joe Fresh's racing career immediate or long term. Ryder continued on to hint that expectations of racing fans should remain high for the mare. "We wouldn't have brought her back if that was a concern."

Spurring Ryder's confidence in Twin B Joe Fresh's return to the track is a stakes schedule that differs somewhat from his plans over the last couple of years. Primarily that Twin B Joe Fresh has been nominated for a few races that historically have only had male competition.

"We've picked out a few races that don't conflict with the top mare races," Ryder said. "I don't think it makes sense to double stake her."

Ryder is hopeful to have Twin B Joe Fresh ready to qualify late in May if she remains on schedule but isn't certain about where she'll make her 6-year-old stakes debut.

"I don't think she'll be ready for the Betsy Ross (May 24)," Ryder said of the Harrah's Philadelphia stakes race.

A few weeks later comes the Roses Are Red at Woodbine Mohawk Park. "It's possible she could go in the Roses Are Red or maybe the Mohawk Gold Cup," Ryder said, giving fans a first potential crossroad between the sport's leading pacing mare and the best male older pacers on June 13.

A key to the equation that Ryder must balance this year depends in some ways on having a plethora of talent in one division. Miki And Minnie, the 2025 Dan Patch Award winner as the top sophomore filly pacer in North America, likely will be looking to make a mark against older mares in some of the same races Twin B Joe Fresh could be entered in.

"Miki And Minnie is coming back very well," said Ryder. "She's filled out some. She's not the same build as Twin B Joe Fresh but she's grown."

With Twin B Joe Fresh currently behind her stablemate in preparation for the coming season, Ryder is hopeful that Miki And Minnie can get the ball rolling.

"I'm hoping to have her ready for the Betsy Ross," said Ryder of the 4-year-old by Always B Miki that earned \$1.1 million as a sophomore, winning 13 times in her 15 trips to post.

The option will be open to race Twin B Joe Fresh against the boys while keeping Miki And Minnie against the girls, but much will depend on just how well Twin B Joe Fresh stacks up against the male competition.

"It's probably something I should have done last year," said Ryder in hindsight about not giving Twin B Joe Fresh the opportunity to race for more money against horses she very well may be able to contend with. That's not going to be the best case in 2026, as in addition to the Mohawk Invitational (Gold Cup), Ryder has nominated her for the Sam McKee at



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Twin B Joe Fresh won the Roses Are Red in 2025 and that could be one of her first races of 2026.

The Meadowlands, the Hoosier Park Pacing Derby as well as the Dayton Derby, Fan Duel and Breeders Crown.

"In the Dayton races, the Fan Duel and the Breeders Crown she's eligible to race in the male division for an additional fee," said Ryder, expanding the options available should Twin B Joe Fresh prove up to the task.

With 36 wins in 49 starts throughout her four years on the racetrack, Twin B Joe Fresh has shown improvement with each year and Ryder is optimistic she can continue that trajectory in her 6-year-old campaign.

While Ryder's mare pacing powerhouses work their way closer to action, he'll send out a pair on Saturday night at The Meadowlands in the tenth race \$25,000 feature, a smorgasbord of eligibility. Ryder will send two of his horses in the 10-horse field, with the 4-year-old World Of Wishes (post 5) and 5-year-old T H Tyson (post 1) facing a mixed bag.

"I was very happy with World Of Wishes' first start," said Ryder of the 1:49 2/5 career best taken at The Meadowlands in his season's debut on February 28. "He was a nice 3-year-old but we left some money on the table."

A six-time winner in 24 starts in 2025, World Of Wishes, a son of Ryder's Bettor's Wish, earned \$111K. In his seasonal debut he worked out a perfect trip and sprinted home in 27 1/5 with Patrick Ryder in the bike.

It's only March but Ryder is hopeful that World Of Wishes can continue to improve. "We've paid him into the Graduate," said Ryder.

T H Tyson has been battling a quarter crack and Ryder believes he's mended, but the winner in two of his five starts this year has not raced in four weeks and may need a start.

Much of the power in Saturday's feature is on the outside of the starting gate with the Per Engblom-trained Copperfield (post 6) making his 5-year-old debut following a wicked 1:51 qualifier on March 7 at The Meadowlands. DA Delightful (post 7) returns to The Meadowlands following a victory at Pocono on March 7 and trainer Enrico Robinson has a pair in Captain Crusader A (post 8) and Sport Secret (post 9) with 61 lifetime wins between them.

The Meadowlands hosts a 14-race program on Saturday night with first post scheduled at 6:00 p.m. (EDT).

TACTICAL APPROACH

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Pick 6/8 Carryovers at Big M

By Dave Little for The Meadowlands

Everyone who has been a lifelong horseplayer has experienced something the track provides a little too often, if you ask them.

The bad beat.

If you heard a noise Saturday (March 7) night at the conclusion of the 10th race at The Meadowlands that sounded like someone groaning in great pain, it might have been the player who was, apparently, on his or her way to cashing in big on the \$1 PK 8.

Only to have their big-money dreams crushed.

Had 2-1 favorite Four By Four held on for the victory, that punter would have been the lone winning-ticket holder for the track's new wager and cashed in for approximately \$84,000. That player settled for seven out of eight correct and collected \$1,610.00 when Captain Up burst onto the scene late and defeated Four By Four by the smallest of noses.

The wager was placed through 4njbets.com.

"That was a nasty beat," said Big M Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Jason Settlemoir. "And all of us who have played the horses can sympathize. But horseplayers know that's part of the game. That's the kind of excitement – or pain – that this wager can create. The PK 8 has the potential for six-figure carryovers, and interest in the PK 8 – as well as the amount of money carrying over – will increase as the PK 8 continues to go unhit."

When racing resumes Friday night, the PK 8 carryover will stand at \$82,301. The wager is offered on races three through 10 nightly.

The eight-leg puzzler is the brainchild of Peter Kleinhans, the renaissance man behind the \$1 PK 8 curtain. Kleinhans wanted to find a way to create some buzz at The Big M with the PK 8, and was willing to put his money where his mouth is by seeding the pool with \$50,000 of his own green.

The PK 8 debuted on Feb. 6, and was hit the second night it was offered by two players, who each cashed in for \$26,543.90. Kleinhans then reached in his pockets to seed the wager again. Since then, the bet has not been hit for seven consecutive offerings.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL: The \$1 PK 8 is not the only wager starting out with a significant amount of money in the hat. The 20-cent Pick-6 failed to yield a winning ticket for a second straight night on Saturday, and sports a carryover of \$20,356.

The 20-cent Pick-6 is available on races eight through 13.

Beau Jangles tops 54 NA Cup eligibles

Woodbine Entertainment today announced 54 3-year-old pacers have been nominated to the 43rd Pepsi North America Cup (G1).

The undefeated superstar Beau Jangles is the headliner of the 54 nominees after a perfect 12 for 12 rookie season that saw him named Horse of the Year in both Canada and the United States.

The Dr. Ian Moore trained Beau Jangles scored his biggest wins of 2025 in the Breeders Crown (G1) and Metro Pace (G1). The son of Cattlewash will look to join Tall Dark Stranger as the only horse to ever win the North America Cup at age 3 after winning both the Breeders Crown and Metro at age 2.

This year's C\$1 million Pepsi North America Cup is scheduled for Saturday, June 13 at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Eliminations will take place a week prior on Saturday, June 6.

The first sustaining payment for the North America Cup and all of Woodbine Mohawk Park's major stakes in 2026 is due March 15. To make stakes payments online, click [here](#).

To view the full list of eligibles to all of this season's major stakes, click [here](#).

The 54 sophomore pacers nominated to the North America Cup can be found [here](#).

-edited release (Woodbine)

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, MARCH 12

RACE 7

(3) TIN ROOF RAIDER A took one shot against tougher \$20,000 claimers last Wednesday and now drops back to the level where he was very sharp through January and February. He also gets post relief after he had the six-hole most recently.

-Greg Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

RACE 7

(4) EA MONEY MAKER held her own against some much tougher fillies and mares last week. She was a good winner two back at this level. If McClure gets her into play, she should have a big chance.

-Kevin Plowcha

WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

RACE 9

(6) QUEEN SUN RYSER looks to be coming off just an even mile but she most certainly had good pace at the end. I expect we'll see a more aggressive try in start two for the new barn.

-Derick Givner

MEADOWLANDS
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

RACE 12

(1) ART OF REVENGE has only one start on a mile track and it was a good second being a millionaire in 1:49 2/5. Maybe Burke is bringing him east for a reason.

-Givner

MEADOWLANDS
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

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

Stakes payments deadline approaching this weekend

HAMBLETONIAN SOCIETY STAKING PAYMENTS DUE MARCH 15

Horsemen are reminded that staking payments for the following races are due March 15.

Participants are encouraged to review the events listed below and ensure all payments are submitted to the Hambletonian Society by the deadline to maintain eligibility.

2-year-olds

Arden Downs
Breeders Crown
Cane Pace
Currier & Ives
Delvin Miller Adios
Dexter Cup
Elevation
Fox
Hambletonian
Hoosier Stake
Horseman
John Simpson Sr. Memorial
Kentuckiana Stallion Mgmt
Keystone Classic
Landmark
Liberty Bell
Madison County
Matron Series
Messenger
Oak Grove Trotting Derby *NEW*
PA All-Stars
Peter Haughton/Jim Doherty
Progress Pace
Ralph Wilfong
Tompkins-Geers
W.N. Reynolds Memorial
Yonkers

3-year-olds

Balmoral Park
Battle Bunker Hill Trot
Breeders Crown
Carl Erskine
Circle City Series
Colonial
Crossroads of America
Earl Beal Jr./Delmonica Hanover
Hazel Park
Jenna's Beach Boy
John Simpson Sr. Memorial
Keystone Classic
Landmark
Liberty Bell
Matron Series
Max Hempt/James Lynch
Monument Circle
Oak Grove Trotting Derby *NEW*
PA All-Stars
Paul Revere Pace
Pegasus Series
Phil Langley Memorial
Pompano Park
Thanksgiving Classic Series
Tompkins-Geers
USS Indianapolis Memorial
W.N. Reynolds Memorial

If you have any questions regarding staking payments or eligibility, please contact the Stakes Manager, Nadia Tarnawa 609-371-2211 or nadia@hambletonian.org

Please ensure all required payments are submitted by March 15 to avoid ineligibility.

-release (Hambletonian Society)

PAYMENT DUE MARCH 15 FOR 2027 MEADOWLANDS PACE

The \$400 sustaining payment on 2-year-olds (foals of 2024) to race in the 2027 Meadowlands Pace is due March 15 (postmarked by March 16). There is a supplemental payment of \$1,000 that may be made to gain eligibility for any foal of 2024 that was not made eligible by the yearling payment.

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

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

Sustaining payments for all 2026 Meadowlands stakes are also due on March 15 (postmarked by March 16). The list of eligible horses for all those stakes is posted on the [website](#).

-release (Meadowlands)

DELAWARE COUNTY FAIR PAYMENTS INCLUDE LITTLE BROWN JUG

Two-year-old sustaining payments for the 82nd edition of the Little Brown Jug (Grade 1), the 57th Jugette (Grade 1), the 75th Old Oaken Bucket (3-year-old open trot – Grade 3) and the 75th Buckette (3-year-old filly trot – Grade 3) are due March 16. These payments are for foals of 2024 and will be raced in 2027.

2-year-olds not nominated in the May 15, 2025 yearling payment, may be made eligible thru a supplemental nomination fee on or before the March 15, 2025 payment. This supplemental payment is in addition to the normal March 15 payment. Please visit the staking section of [ustrotting.com](#) to see the details.

Sustaining payments are also due for the 87th Standardbred two-year-old colt and filly stakes for foals of 2024 to be raced in 2026.

The \$1.2M (est.) Ohio Breeders Championships require a single \$300 (\$100 for the aged events) nomination payment due March 16, 2026 with no further sustaining payments required.

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

The Delaware County Fair is once again pleased to be a part of the Ohio Fair Racing Conference. The OFRC events require either a \$100 nomination fee for just the Delaware County Fair or \$700 for all the OFRC events. Nominations for the BSS and OFRC events must be postmarked by March 15, 2026 and sent directly to the Ohio Harness Horseman's Association, 2237 Sonora Drive, Grove City, OH 43123.

The five-day Delaware Grand Circuit meet opens Sunday, September 20 and will run through Thursday, September 24.

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

For the latest news, information and nomination forms, please visit the Little Brown Jug website: www.littlebrownjug.com.

March 16 Sustaining Fees:

Little Brown Jug No. 82 – Grade 1 (3-Year-Old Open Pace to be raced in 2027) \$500

Jugette No. 57 – Grade 1 (3-Year-Old Filly Pace to be raced in 2027) \$400
Old Oaken Bucket No. 75 – Grade 3 (3-Year-Old Open Trot to be raced in 2027) \$300

Buckette No. 75 – Grade 3 (3-Year-Old Filly Trot to be raced in 2027) \$200
Standardbred No. 87 (2-year-old Colt Pace to be raced in 2026) \$400
Standardbred No. 87 (2-year-old Colt Trot to be raced in 2026) \$400
Standardbred No. 87 (2-year-old Filly Pace to be raced in 2026) \$300
Standardbred No. 87 (2-year-old Filly Trot to be raced in 2026) \$300

March 16 Nominating Fees:

Ohio Breeders Championships (To be raced in 2027) \$300 or \$100
Buckeye Stallion Stakes* (To be raced in 2027) \$250
Ohio Fair Racing Conference* (2- and 3-Year-Old Events to be raced in 2027) \$100 or \$700

* Send payments to the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association

-release (Delaware County Fair)

VISIT DRF HARNESS ONLINE: DRF.COM/HARNESS

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

BERRY PICKS UP HIS 5,000TH DRIVING WIN ON WEDNESDAY AT DOVER

Pat Berry achieved a driving milestone by winning his 5,000th career race at Bally's Dover on Wednesday, March 11.

Berry (50) worked out a perfect journey aboard Showmemagic in the second race at Bally's Dover for owner/trainer Bobby Glassmeyer.

Berry started driving as a 17-year-old racing at the County Fairs in Illinois. In 1995 he began driving full-time at Maywood Park, Sportsman Park, Balmoral Park and Fairmount Park. Later Berry and his wife Traci, who also trains and owns horses, left Illinois for the east coast. They settled in Delaware and race mainly at Bally's Dover and Harrington Raceway.

After the race, Berry was asked who has been an influence on his racing career: "My family, especially my uncle Randy Jacobs, were a big influence on my racing career. It was great that I won with a Bobby Glassmeyer horse (Showmemagic). Bobby Glassmeyer was also a great influence on me.

"She's been with me throughout our journey," cited Berry, giving credit to his wife.

-edited release (Dover)

NEW POST TIME STARTING MARCH 13 AT MOHAWK PARK

Woodbine Mohawk Park today announced the first race post time for live Standardbred racing has been changed from 6:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. E.T.

Effective Friday, March 13, the post time for all cards of live racing is 6:30 p.m.

-edited release (Woodbine)

CARRYOVERS, GUARANTEED WAGERS HEADLINE THURSDAY HOOSIER CARD

When racing returns to Harrah's Hoosier Park on Thursday (March 12), bettors will be greeted with a quartet of guaranteed wagers on the 14-race program which includes carryovers in both the Early Pick 5 and Early High 5.

First post is 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, and the evening will begin with a \$1,991 carryover in the Early Pick 5 (races 1-5) with that pool being guaranteed at \$10,000. The Early Hoosier High 5 (race 7) features a five-figure carryover of \$13,943, with that pool guaranteed at \$40,000. In addition to the two carryovers, the card also includes the traditional Thursday guarantees of \$15,000 on the Late Pick 4 (races 11-14) and \$10,000 on the Late High 5 (race 14), with those guarantees offered weekly in partnership with the USTA's Strategic Wagering Program.

[READ MORE](#)

MEADOW TWADDLE NAMED MARKETING DIRECTOR OF MSOA

The Meadows Standardbred Owners Association (MSOA) is pleased to announce the hiring of Meadow Twaddle as its new Marketing Director.

Twaddle brings a diverse background in harness racing media, marketing, and communications to the role. She is a graduate of Washington & Jefferson College, where she studied psychology and marketing with a minor in Spanish.

Her experience within the harness racing industry spans several areas, including co-hosting the popular racing program Hot 2 Trot, serving as Social Media Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Harness Racing Association (PHRA), and guest co-hosting the Meadowlands broadcast. Over the past several years, Twaddle has also assisted the MSOA in a part-time capacity, helping with events, social media, and facility tours. She has also contributed written work to Standardbred Canada and has experience managing social media accounts for multiple racing stables.

Having grown up around Hollywood Casino at The Meadows, Twaddle has deep ties to the local racing community and a strong appreciation for the sport and the people behind it.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to step into this role with the MSOA," said Twaddle. "Having grown up around The Meadows, this track and the community behind it have always meant a lot to me. I'm grateful for the opportunity to help create events and marketing initiatives that showcase not only the excitement of harness racing, but also the people, horses, and hard work that drive the industry every day."

The MSOA looks forward to Twaddle's leadership in strengthening the association's marketing efforts, promoting harness racing, and continuing to build engagement with fans, horsemen, and the broader community.

-release (MSOA)

\$500K OAK GROVE TROTTING DERBY/\$300K OAKS PAYMENT DUE

Nominating Payments for the Inaugural \$500,000 Oak Grove Trotting Derby and \$300,000 Oak Grove Trotting Oaks are Due March 15, 2026. The payment schedule is set forth below:

Age	Date	Open	Fillies
3-Year-Olds	March 15	\$500	\$500
	April 15	\$500	\$500
	Elim Entry Fee	\$1500	\$500
	Conso Entry Fee	\$500	\$500
2-Year-Olds (for 2027 Races)	March 15, 2026	\$250	\$250

*Race conditions can be found at the US Trotting Stakes Conditions site.

Winners of The Road to the Oak Grove Trotting Derby and Road to the Oak Grove Trotting Oaks "win and you're in" automatic qualifying events that earned a fully paid, automatic spot in the corresponding elimination race for the 2026 inaugural events must nominate but will have their pre-entry and starting fees covered by the race sponsors.

Oak Grove Trotting Derby Qualifiers

Spencer Hanover
Apex
Ardonne
Diabolic Hill
Endurance
Premier Bluebird
Big Ranger
AI
Dublin Hanover
Strobe Lite

Oaks Qualifiers

Storybook Love
Atlantic Summer
Sugar Packet
Nezuko Kamado S
All Time Trot S
Country Glide
For Dayze
Setyoursightshigh
Emmas Mystery CCL
Sharp Seven
Ginger Tree Lex
Bingo Night

*Any automatic slot winner that has won more than one qualifying race is limited to only one spot for the eliminations.

-edited release (Oak Grove)

OHHA ANNOUNCES EXTENSION OF STAKING NOMINATION DEADLINE

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association has announced the extension of the nomination deadline for Ohio-hosted stakes events.

Due to postal delays and horsemen not receiving the 2026 Ohio Stakes Guide in a timely manner, the nomination deadline has been extended to March 20, 2026. To be eligible, all nominations must be postmarked by that date.

The 2026 Ohio Stakes Guide is also available [online](#).

For more information regarding nominations, contact the OHHA office at 614-221-3650.

-release (OHHA)

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