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Did Dunn make the right NA Cup call?

Should handicappers follow suit?



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner
X @harnessveguy

The news of the moment is that Dexter Dunn elected to stick with Brandon Blvd and pass up on the drive behind Odds On Mr Mamba in their North America Cup elimination on Saturday at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Social media was abuzz with comments like "What was he thinking?" or "That decision really says a lot" and maybe they have a point, or maybe not.

With all due respect to Odds On Mr Mamba as the fastest 2-year-old in history on the power of his 1:47 4/5 win at Harrah's Hoosier Park last year, has he really separated himself from Brandon Blvd in 2025 or 2026 to say which is the better horse? And that is only the horsepower issue. There are other aspects at play with respect to Dunn's decision. He is certainly going to have more opportunity on the Grand Circuit with trainer Andrew Harris than for the Melanie Wrenn stable.

At this point we don't know whether Dunn has made the right decision or not. Even he doesn't know for sure whether it was the correct decision. In the end it may be the wrong decision for the short term but the correct one long term, or vice versa. Consider that there is a long list of drivers who made the wrong call in the moment in some of the biggest races in the sport. Which brings us to an interesting topic: Do most handicappers place too much weight on driver choices?

There are many potential angles when it comes to handicapping a harness race. Some people focus heavily on pure speed while others look at trips or class, but there is no stronger odds-manipulator than change.

Change can refer to the new use of medication like Lasix, the addition or removal of equipment, or a horse moving to a new trainer. All are viable angles that have the potential to produce improved results. Then you have driver changes, which frankly are the most overhyped and overbet approach to handicapping.

You may be confused and I know my younger

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self would be perplexed by the thought that driver changes aren't a major angle to be considered. After all, I made plenty of cash with the first-time Walter Case Jr. angle at Yonkers Raceway in the 1990s. But to be fair, many of those winners came at a short price because everyone was on board and Case was simply more talented than the competition in most cases and perhaps just more willing to do whatever it takes to win.

Don't get me wrong, driver changes can be a vital angle to consider, but switching to a much higher percentage pilot often comes at a short price. The other issue is that the difference between a top driver and a mid-level one in an overnight race is often not as great as the earnings or win percentage statistics would have you believe. Then there are a number of other issues behind the scenes that you don't even realize are factors.

Oops, I forgot

Did you ever mean to do something at work but got tied up with other tasks and missed the deadline? Often enough it is a loose deadline and you can still address the situation. If you are a driver and forget to call the Judges before the cutoff time then you are subject to their discretion. Instead of driving the favorite, maybe you are now on a longshot. This happens much more often than you would think.

Drivers have families and other things on their mind that sometimes get in the way of making these decisions. So the next time you think that a top catch-driver made a key decision to steer a horse, consider that they may not have made the decision at all.

Wrong horse

Did you ever stop to consider that the driver picked the wrong horse by accident. While this doesn't happen as much as forgetting to call in, I've definitely heard from drivers that they confused two horses that a trainer had on a card and picked the wrong one.

Wasn't their decision

I know of one former top driver who didn't even choose his own horses and instead had someone he trusted handle it. So here you are

putting your faith in the driver to make the best decision based on how the horse felt and they aren't even making the call.

Barn loyalty

Many of the decisions made by drivers are with the future in mind. Rather than taking the best horse to win today, they could be looking at a race down the road or an opportunity to build a relationship so they can drive more for a barn at a later date.

All of the above reasons – along with the reality that some drivers are bad handicappers – are why I handicap most races prior to getting the driver changes and put very little weight into the each person's choice. Think about it, if you are playing The Meadowlands, does it really matter if you have Tim Tetrick or Yannick Gingras? In most cases I would say no.

Pivoting back to Dunn's North America Cup choice for a second, even the morning-line oddsmaker had trouble deciding between the pair, making Brandon Blvd 3-1 and Odds On Mr Mamba 7-2. For what it's worth, Beau Jangles is the 4-5 early choice, so maybe Dunn's decision was based on who will finish second in the North America Cup. Then again, the morning line is less important than driver choice in the overall spectrum of handicapping.

The most interesting and lucrative driver change scenario which rarely gets attention is the second time a new driver takes the assignment. Everyone is often on board in start one hoping for an instant turnaround. When it doesn't occur, the bandwagon thins out dramatically. What people are missing is something I call the Avatar effect. Let me explain.

In the movie Avatar the term Tsaheylu is used to describe the connection between the Na'vi and a banshee. It is basically a neural bond that allows the two to seamlessly communicate with each other. While there is no physical connection between driver and horse, there can often be a "feeling out" start where a driver will get a feel for the equine. The result could be a patient steer in start one and a more aggressive try the next time around. You'll see this quite often when a driver takes over a young or a dull horse.

While there is no denying that the driver is a key component in any winning equation, in most cases it ranks near the bottom of my "angles" list. Choosing the horse that has the best chance of winning at the best possible price – almost regardless of driver – is a much better formula for winning consistently.

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Allegiant's surprise world record was something to behold



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman ✕ [BergmanJay](#)

The stars aligned for Allegiant and her connections this past Sunday (May 31) when the 5-year-old American-bred daughter of Tactical Landing did the unthinkable in capturing the famed Elitlopp over the incredibly maintained five-eighths mile oval. The translated time of 1:48 obliterated the world standards, all taken on American soil.

While pacing records tend to be lowered with each passing year, the same cannot be said when it comes to trotting, where maintaining speed and gait at a high rate for distance has a greater failure than success record. Allegiant, who raced to millionaire status in the States in 2023-24 and won the Breeders Crown, showed the speed and class on this side of the Atlantic but did so wearing trotting hobbles. That she competed free-legged and without shoes in the Elitlopp final shows just how much she has developed over time with well-deserved credit to her conditioner Daniel Redén.

That Allegiant started fast and managed to finish a mile without coming to a complete stop is a testament to training methods that have elevated the strength of the trotters. Over the last 20-25 years the Euro influence on American turf has led to the improvement in the trotting blood and the speed records that came with it. For years it almost seemed unfair to me that all the speed records were set in the U.S. while some of the bloodlines and many of the conditioners had roots from Sweden.

Sunday's epic performance by Allegiant was a vivid example of what we've come to take for granted here on a regular basis. The explosion at the outset, something that can only surface when trainers and drivers have the utmost confidence that horse's gait is letter perfect, is precision that comes from constant refinement and attention to detail. Not all horses are capable of what Allegiant and driver Örjan Kilström were able to put together on Sunday. That said, Allegiant herself was likely not mature enough a few years ago to ensure confidence, with hobbles necessary to safeguard miscues.

Yes, all records were made to be broken. When it comes to the fastest trotting mile of all time it's nice to know at least for the moment that the record resides in Sweden over a racetrack that is set up so well that trainers can routinely take the shoes off without much worry.

From a pedigree perspective, Allegiant is largely a "made in America" wonder with only the Varenne-sired mare Southwind Serena present in five generations of her pedigree. Southwind Serena not only produced her sire Tactical Landing but also his full sister, the champion Mission Brief.

In a different time, the performance of Allegiant in the second heat versus the elimination race may have been somewhat controversial, especially to those who wagered on her. Kilström willingly settled for a pocket trip that could have gotten him in trouble in the elimination heat. Fortunately, he found room in the stretch to get Allegiant home fourth and qualified for the rich final. Given her capacity to trot a mile in 1:48 hours after that fourth-place finish, there had to be some in the crowd wondering why they were tearing up pari-mutuel tickets. More than likely those fans will see this as a learning experience, as many have already adjusted to the fact that elimination races and finals are judged differently by horsemen, with most looking to save as much as they can the first time around and then let it all hang out in the final.

There was speed of a different kind last Saturday (May 30) in the Somebeachsomewhere at Woodbine Mohawk Park, with one of last year's brightest 2-year-old pacers – Brandon Blvd – offering hope that a meaningful rival to the undefeated Beau Jangles could arise. His 1:48 1/5 victory, with Jason Bartlett subbing for Dexter Dunn on assignment in Sweden, was a strong indication that trainer Andrew Harris has him prepared for battle. Unlike the 1:48 mile by a trotter a day later in a different country, Brandon Blvd's time itself is only a story of his condition, and likely

since it was taken in a prep race, is harder to gauge when looking towards the North America Cup trials slated for Saturday (June 6). Conditions seemed ideal at Woodbine Mohawk Park, with fast miles the norm on the evening, culminating in a 1:47 3/5 performance by AyeAye Captain in the first round of the Graduate for 4-year-old pacers.

If there was one takeaway from Brandon Blvd's performance, it was that in today's harness racing horses can be primed for big races without having actual races in between. Brandon Blvd had only started once this year four weeks earlier in the Paul Revere at Plain-

ridge Park. Sandwiched around the races were three qualifying miles, with the Downbytheseaside-sired colt a 1:50 3/5 winner at The Meadows two weeks in advance of the Somebeachsomewhere.

As we should all know by now it's not how fast you go but who you defeat and Brandon Blvd is pretty much in the same company with all his sophomore rivals at the elite level who have yet to be tested against horses believed to be in their league. Beau Jangles toyed with Ontario competition in advance of the North America Cup as did Odds On Mr Mamba, a 1:49 winner in his initial sophomore appearance at Hoosier Park on May 25. Odds On Mr Mamba has the same aura as Beau Jangles in that he raced exclusively in Indiana last year, winning his last seven in a row including a world record 1:47 4/5 Indiana Sire Stakes victory.

The mile by Allegiant caught me and I'm assuming many others by surprise, a world record for 3-year-old pacers in the coming weeks at Woodbine Mohawk Park is certainly something well within reach when you see how easily the top class has made it look in just the past few weeks. Whether records are broken or win streaks fall, the next few weeks should bring out the best our sport has to offer.



EDISON HATTER PHOTO

Allegiant went in 1:48 in the 2026 Elitlopp at Solvalla on May 31.

Harris eyes spots in North America Cup and Fan Hanover finals

By Jay Bergman

By now it's no secret that trainer Andrew Harris and his ownership connection are in the market for the best horses no matter whether they are at yearling sales or during the stakes season. For those deals to pay dividends the horses must show up in the sport's biggest events.

This Saturday Harris has four sophomore pacers in action in elimination races for the prestigious North America Cup and Fan Hanover stakes. Brandon Blvd, a \$425,000 yearling purchase, has already proven his value as a freshman and a victory in the C\$1 million North America Cup will go a long way towards establishing credentials as a future stallion.

Harris has three pacing fillies, one in each of the C\$35,000 Fan Hanover preliminaries on Saturday. Both Topville Lucky and Gala, the one-two finishers in last year's \$400,000 Kentucky Championship for freshman female pacers, were both mid-year purchases. The \$550,000 yearling Naughty Beauty is a daughter of Bettor's Delight that is bred very much like the 2020 North America Cup champion Tall Dark Stranger.

Brandon Blvd was a seven-time winner as a freshman, finishing second on two occasions during a 10-race campaign. His only off the board appearance came in last year's Breeders Crown over the same Woodbine Mohawk surface he'll be navigating on Saturday.

"He came back sick from that race," said Harris when asked about the sub-par performance.

Coincidentally the timing of that illness and performance came during the coronation of Beau Jangles. The son of Cattlewash was a dominant presence in the Crown, finishing his season unbeaten and named Horse of the Year both in Canada and the United States.

For Harris and the rest of the harness racing world, Saturday's first match-up of sophomores between Beau Jangles and Brandon Blvd in the ninth race and second C\$50,000 elimination will be a test to see how close both are more than seven months since they last met. Brandon Blvd will be making his third start of the year and according to Harris he's right on schedule.

"This is what we mapped out for him before the season," said Harris of the schedule that saw Brandon Blvd capture the Paul Revere at Plainridge Park on May 2 and then return last Saturday (May 30) to capture the Somebeachsomewhere in a career best 1:48 1/5 clocking."

The Somebeachsomewhere saw Brandon Blvd pace home without much encouragement from Jason Bartlett in 26 3/5, looking very much within himself.

"He's much bigger this year," said Harris. "We let out the hobbles to 63 inches."

Bartlett was subbing for regular pilot Dexter Dunn who was on assignment in Sweden. The connections of once-beaten Odds On Mr Mamba, an Indiana-bred that set a world record 1:47 4/5 as a freshman, also listed Dunn to drive in this division.

"Dexter (Dunn) is driving," Harris confirmed.

Brandon Blvd will start outside of Beau Jangles behind the starting gate from post eight with Odds On Mr Mamba landing post four. Governor's Cup winner Gentleman's Club (post 1) and Breeders Crown third-place finisher Melillo (post 3), as well as the sub-1:50 performer Ubrute (post 5), make up what is clearly the tougher of the two elimination races.

Of the eight horses entered in the first North America Cup elimination (race 7) race, only two have been victorious in 2026, with Azrael Blue Chip the lone stakes winner as a sophomore in the octet.

Harris sounded enthusiastic about Topville Lucky, a daughter of Sweet Lou that will be making just her second start of the year in the second race and first C\$35,000 Fan Hanover elimination heat.

"She had a virus and bled a little bit in her first race," said Harris of the sixth-place finish by Topville Lucky in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes on May 1 at Harrah's Philadelphia. "We put her on Lasix and she was super qualifying."



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Jason Bartlett drove Brandon Blvd in the Somebeachsomewhere but Dexter Dunn is back in the bike on Saturday.

Topville Lucky prepped for the Fan Hanover with a solid 1:51 mile on May 22 at The Meadowlands, storming home in 26 flat for regular pilot Dexter Dunn. A winner in six of seven starts as a freshman, Topville Lucky faces six rivals with significantly less top-level stakes appearances.

Gala (post 2) was a five-time winner in seven starts as a freshman. The daughter of Downbytheseaside impressed in her season's debut winning in 1:51 at Pocono on May 18. A world champion over a five-eighths mile track in 2025, Gala tests the big track in Saturday's fourth race.

"She's really at her best over the smaller tracks," said Harris. "She's very quick on the turns."

Whether Gala can step up or not remains to be seen. She'll need to be at her best against a field of seven that includes the unbeaten New Jersey Sire Stakes champion Be Perfect BG, who brings an eight-race winning streak to the Fan Hanover. Be Perfect BG landed post six.

This division also includes Easy Station (post 1), a daughter of Captain-teacherous with three wins in as many starts this year, as well as Shacarri (post 7), a half-sister to Louprint, the 2025 North America Cup winner.

Naughty Beauty has yet to hit the board in two tries this year and could be in a bit deep in her sixth race and final Fan Hanover elimination. "She got into some traffic last time," said Harris of the fifth-place finish in an Ontario Sire Stakes Gold division on May 23.

Traffic may not be a problem this week in what shapes up as the toughest of the three Fan Hanover divisions, with Breeders Crown champion Loua Dipa (post 5) and the nine-time winner in 10 starts, A Clean Deal (post 4), the major divisional powers. A Clean Deal has been flawless in three Ontario-sired events this Spring for trainer Rob Fellows. A 1:50 winner as a 2-year-old, A Clean Deal has come back just as strong this year.

Loua Dipa put in a big effort in a second-place finish on debut this year for trainer Ron Burke on May 1 in a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes. The home-bred by Sweet Lou prepped for this event on May 20 with a 1:54 qualifying mile over a sloppy track at The Meadows.

The 13-race Woodbine Mohawk Park card for Saturday gets underway at 6:30 p.m. (EDT) and also includes two eliminations for the Roses Are Red where former Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh makes her return from a 2025 late-season injury.

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Captain Albano set to fire his shot in Battle of Lake Erie

By Ken Weingartner

After enjoying a lighter workload in the weeks since winning the MGM Borgata Pacing Series championship in early May, Captain Albano is ready to get back to serious business this weekend.

Captain Albano is the 3-1 morning-line favorite in Saturday's (May 6) \$250,000 Battle of Lake Erie at Northfield Park in Ohio. The two-time Dan Patch Award winner will leave from post 3 in a field of nine in the Grade 2 invitational for older pacers, with regular driver Todd McCarthy in the sulky for trainer Noel Daley.

The 5-year-old son of Captaintreacherous-Angelou prepped for the Battle by winning a qualifier in 1:50 2/5 (last quarter of 26 1/5) on May 29 at the Meadowlands. He won the \$478,000 Borgata final (G2) May 8 on MGM Yonkers Raceway's half-mile oval, where also posted two victories in the event's five preliminary rounds.

"I gave him a little bit of an easy time after the Borgata because he'd raced six weeks in a row there," Daley said. "We didn't let him down completely; he stayed training the whole time, we just eased off. He's in good spirits and in good shape. If anything, he might have put on a little weight during his time off. Racing six weeks in a row at Yonkers catches up with them a little. I'm happy with where he's at."

Captain Albano, who received Dan Patch divisional honors at ages 2 and 3, has three wins and a third in his six races this season and his \$303,000 in earnings lead all male pacers. Last year, the stallion hit the board in 12 of 18 starts, winning seven and banking \$597,775 for owners Patricia Stables, L.A. Express Stable, Sjoblom Racing, and Michael Dolan.

He raced into mid-December last year, capping his campaign with a second-place finish in the \$250,000 MGM Grand Prix Pacing Series final at Yonkers after winning three preliminary legs.

"He didn't have too much of a break from last year," Daley said about Captain Albano, who made his first 2026 start on March 30 in the Borgata. "He's good on a half, and (the Borgata) is such a good money race, that we had to have him ready for it."

"Now I'm just going to pick my spots with him, and we'll try to work our way through the year. We'll go to the big dances when they're there. (The Battle of Lake Erie) is a great race, it's \$250,000, no pay-ups, just an invite. He drew OK; (post) 3 is pretty good. It's better than anything outside of there. Hopefully, we can just be up close somewhere."

For his career, Captain Albano has won 29 of 51 races, hit the board another 12 times, and earned \$2.47 million. He was poised to retire to the



MIKE LIZZI PHOTO

breeding shed after his 3-year-old season, but after initial testing and looming deadlines, the connections decided to continue racing.

"When we brought him back at 4, I said if we're going to do 4, we should do 5," Daley said. "Then we can retest him and see if he's good enough to go to stud. But I'm happy to get the two years of racing with him. He's a great-looking horse and he's got a good personality to him. He knows he's a stud, but he's easy to deal with. And he gets around all size tracks, so that's a big help."

"He's just a very cool horse and a pleasure to have around."

The \$250,000 purse for the 40th Battle of Lake Erie is the highest in its history. Ken Hanover, who won last year's \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie and captured the \$100,000 Joseph Auger Memorial (G3) on May 24 at Harrah's Philadelphia, is the 7-2 second choice on the morning line in Saturday's race. He will start from post 6 with Brett Miller driving for trainer Roland "Polie" Mallar.

The field also includes 2025 Borgata champion Mossdale Ben N, who will leave from post 2 with Jim Marohn Jr. in the sulky for trainer Peter Tritton and is 4-1. Prince Hal Hanover, who already has two graded stakes victories in four starts this season, is 9-2 and will have Matt Kakaley at the lines for Dr. Ian Moore.

"It's a good field," Daley said. "You put the money out there, they're going to come. We're all very agreeable there."

Saturday's card also includes the \$100,000 Buckeye Distaff, for Ohio-sired pacing mares.

Racing begins at 6 p.m. (EDT). The Buckeye Distaff is race 10 and the Battle of Lake Erie is race 12.

Date change proposed for 2026 Kentucky Futurity at The Red Mile

The Red Mile has announced proposed adjustments to its 2026 Grand Circuit racing schedule, highlighted by a move of the historic Kentucky Futurity from Sunday, October 11 to Saturday, October 3, pending approval by the Kentucky Horse Racing and Gaming Corporation at its July meeting.

Additionally, the second week of the Grand Circuit meet would transition from its previously scheduled dates of Friday, October 9, Saturday, October 10, and Sunday, October 11 to Thursday, October 8, Friday, October 9, and Saturday, October 10.

The proposed changes are designed to better position horses competing in the sport's premier stakes events while continuing to elevate the Kentucky Futurity and the Grand Circuit experience for horsemen, owners, fans, and industry participants.

The Kentucky Futurity, first contested in 1893, remains one of the most prestigious events in harness racing and serves as the third jewel of the Trotting Triple Crown. Moving the race to the opening Saturday of the Grand Circuit meet is expected to enhance attendance, increase visibility, and further showcase one of the sport's most celebrated championships.

"The Kentucky Futurity is one of the defining races in our sport, and we believe positioning it on the opening Saturday of our Grand Circuit meet creates an even bigger stage for the race, its participants, and our fans," said Shannon Cobb, Chief Operating Officer of The Red Mile. "At the same time, we feel these schedule adjustments will benefit horsemen competing in Breeders Crown events. As we continue preparing

to welcome the sport's biggest championships back to Lexington, it is important that we create a schedule that supports our horsemen while elevating the fan experience. We believe these changes strengthen both objectives and ensure the Kentucky Futurity receives the attention and celebration a race of its stature deserves."

The Red Mile's Grand Circuit meet annually represents the pinnacle of the Lexington racing season, attracting many of the sport's top horses, owners, trainers, and drivers. Widely regarded as one of the highlights of the North American stakes calendar, the meet showcases future champions and many of the industry's most prestigious races.

Further information regarding The Red Mile's 2026 and 2027 stakes schedules will be forthcoming as soon as that information becomes available. Date changes remain pending approval by the Kentucky Horse Racing and Gaming Corporation at its July meeting.

The announcement comes as anticipation continues to build for the 2026 live racing season at The Red Mile. The countdown is on for the return of live harness racing, with Opening Day scheduled for Sunday, July 26. Racing will continue through Saturday, October 10 and will follow a Sunday through Wednesday schedule with a post time of 5:05 p.m. on Sundays and a 1:00 p.m. post on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

Proposed 2026 Grand Circuit Schedule

Week One: Thursday - Saturday (October 1-3)

Week Two: Thursday - Saturday (October 8-10)

-release (Red Mile)

Northfield Late Pick 4 Analysis

By Derick Giwner

Annually one of the most exciting Standardbred races of the year, the Battle of Lake Erie at Northfield Park on Saturday (6/6) is back in 2026 with a bigger purse of \$250,000 and one of the most competitive fields in its history. The races kicks off a \$20,000 (estimated) Pick 4 pool which we'll examine below.

RACE 12: BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

(2) MOSSDALE BEN N looks for retribution in this event after making a break as the favorite in the race last year. He's a different horse now, with early speed in his arsenal and much more versatility to his game. Drawing inside gives him the option of trying to fire off the gate or float away and make an early move to the top. (5) PRINCE HAL HANOVER shows a lot of ones on his lines in the early part of the race but really hasn't proven to be that fast off the gate. What he has proven is the ability to win on a small track and he has raw speed. He'll also likely be a playable price on the board. (1) Women Layer is a bit of a question mark here for me. He's got big early speed but has never been on the half. If he can fire out into the turn the pace could be insane. (6) Ken Hanover is a very capable horse that won this race last year. He'll need a big pace up front to set him up. (3) Captain Albano deserves plenty of respect but doesn't seem worth the expected price.

RACE 13: BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES

(2) THE EBONY DRAGON is one of those subtle stand-outs. His form doesn't look great and he hasn't won a race in months, but there is a huge difference between the NW4 foes he's facing and the NW1 or NW2 conditions the others are competing in. Expect an aggressive effort tonight.

RACE 14: BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES

(3) TIME HAS COME has a nose for the wire and doesn't mind taking a little air on the rim. He gets the narrow call in a field with a number of potential win players. (4) ECKERT HILL BRADY needs to prove his early speed on the smaller track tonight but has a real chance of making the front since the horses to his inside tend to get away more slowly. (8) BITCOIN KING was a wire-to-wire winner in the first BSS leg this year. The post isn't ideal but the early zip is there to gain position and Dan Noble can create speed.

RACE 15: BUCKEYE CLAIMING SERIES

(1) SUMMA'S LEGACY won the opening leg of this series and now lucks into pylon position for round two. He's certainly the one to beat but not unbeatable. (4) FIELD TRIP got caught in a fast mile last time and was a decent third behind the top pick a few starts back. His early speed makes him worth consideration on the smaller track. (5) PUMPKIN SKIN is the big question mark as he moves into a high percentage barn and gets a 27% driver in the bike.

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BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE
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BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

G2 POST TIME - 6:00PM

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- \$20,000 Estimated Pick 4 Pool
Beginning with the Battle of Lake Erie in Race 12)



MMXX Standardbreds taking aftercare to the next level



CONFESSIONS

By Keith Gisser

There are many organizations who do great work with Standardbred aftercare. The Standardbred Retirement Fund, New Vocations, and even the USTA with its Standardbred Transition Alliance and Full Circle option. But nobody is doing aftercare in as innovative a manner as MMXX Standardbreds. They rescue from kill pens, they arrange homes for horses right off the racetrack, and they train Standardbreds for the show ring.

The non-profit actually fields its own team of show riders, which has been wildly successful. Their top Standardbred show horse is the fastest male trotter of all time (and was the fastest in history until last weekend's Elitlopp when Allegiant went a mile rate of 1:48) Homicide Hunter (1:48 4/5), who was the 2025 Standardbred Pleasure Horse Owners United States Horse of the Year. The team boasts over two dozen 2025 titles. If you caught any of the Washington D.C. Memorial Day Parade on TV on May 25, you saw six of their horses.

And 2026 has started out strong, too. Last weekend, competing at the PHHA World Show, a record seven Standardbreds competed in the largest open show in New England. Over 200 horses were entered and Standardbreds ended with 12 wins and four championships.

The top performer was (again) Homicide Hunter with four wins (including classes with 15+ entries) and two championships. Next up was Maxie Man with three wins and one championship. Standardbreds swept the top three spots in three classes.

Next week, Homicide Hunter heads to Tulsa for the PTHA World Championships.

MMXX (the Latin numerals for 2020) Standardbreds is the brainchild of Molly D'Agostino, a Harness Horse Youth Foundation alumnus and a lifelong harness racing participant.

"My family has been in it on my mom's side forever. My uncle was a driver at Vernon Downs. Mom and her sister got into it. They got my dad into it and then I got involved," said 31-year-old Syracuse native. "I got my groom's license at 14. I bought my first racehorse in my 20s.

"I moved to Connecticut and bought some property that had room for two horses. We had Fox Valley Photog, who raced until he was 14, and when he retired I brought him home with me," she continued. "My neighbor was a Quarterhorse person and she helped me break him to ride and I started taking him to shows; just for fun. The show people saw him – he was what they call fancy. First they asked what breed he was, then they asked where they could get a Standardbred."

That was the genesis of the MMXX program - getting retired Standardbreds into the show ring to promote the breed. And it has certainly been successful.

"We do all the same things the other programs do – regular check-ins, applications and so on – but we have come up with a model that is scalable and inexpensive. In our program, the owners keep the horse until he is adopted. This allows us to only charge \$125 for adoptions and to get the horses heading toward their possible second careers," D'Agostino explained.

D'Agostino, a Syracuse University graduate, is also an attorney, so all the contract I's are dotted and the T's are crossed.

D'Agostino received a call a couple years back that a horse her family had been involved with was in trouble (a euphemism for being in a kill pen). She bailed him out and so began another aspect of the MMXX mission. Some of their kill pen rescues have gone on to success in the show ring.

The show team is unique and that is a word that is grossly overused. Not here. D'Agostino saw a way to market the breed.

"The first year I had two riders and one horse. Because of our success, it attracted a lot of people. At the end of last year, we put out an open call. We got over 60 applicants from all over the country," said D'Agostino. "Breed bias is really breaking down. People see the Standardbreds perform and they want one. The team membership changes based on what needs to be done.

"Riders usually have to pay their own way. We pay the horse expenses, which is why fundraising is so important. The show team is a huge marketing tool and without it we couldn't do 400 adoptions in 2.5 years. Yes, we are marketing MMXX, but we are also marketing the breed."

D'Agostino trains and breaks most of the horses herself, but recently, Candace DesRochers, a nationally acclaimed Quarterhorse Congress-level trainer has donated a lot of time to the organization.

"I'm still learning," said DesRochers, "and I appreciate the help"

In fact, DesRochers' 10-year-old son will be riding Homicide Hunter in one class at Tulsa.

And how did MMXX get such a great horse as Homicide Hunter? He is owned by Crawford Farms Racing and they owned him when he was racing and setting world records.

"Michelle Panebianco is a huge proponent of aftercare and is one of our biggest sponsors (Deja Blu Farms)," D'Agostino said. "She has been



P GRIFFIN PHOTO

Former fastest-ever trotter Homicide Hunter has made a new career in the Show Horse world.

amazing and she's the one who got us the opportunity to show him. She has 'a million' retirees. She said that he's bored out of his mind. Even if he wasn't good at this new job, it would still be great publicity. He loves having a job. He's all business. The Judges love him and he's really good at what he does, "

D'Agostino is a multi-faceted, driven individual. She is also a talented musician, who toured for over 10 years with bands including the All American Rejects and country artist Frankie Ballard. She even recorded an album several years back.

"Most of my work was on guitar, but I wasn't the boss so I wanted to try to be a singer. I didn't like it that much. I still play as a fill-in sometimes, but the horses take most of my time," said D'Agostino, who has a goal in mind when it comes to showing horses. "The eventual goal is to win a World Championship with a Standardbred, which is something they are not bred to do. I am so much in my own lane. It is important to make this accessible. It really is for the racing people."

That's it for this time. Now go cash. I know you can't wager on horse shows, but maybe Homicide Hunter on Kalshi? See you next time.

Ryder's former Horse of the Year ready for a 'Fresh' start

By Ken Weingartner

Only twice since 2004 have fans seen successive Dan Patch Horse of the Year Award winners in action in the same season, but with Saturday's return of female pacer Twin B Joe Fresh, that will change.

Twin B Joe Fresh, the 2024 Dan Patch Horse of the Year, will make her 2026 debut Saturday (June 6) in the first of two C\$35,000 eliminations for the Roses Are Red Stakes at Ontario's Woodbine Mohawk Park. The 6-year-old mare, who saw her campaign last season cut short because of an injury in late October, has won the past two editions of the Grade 1 event for older female pacers.

One race after Twin B Joe Fresh's elim, 2025 Dan Patch (as well as O'Brien) Horse of the Year Beau Jangles puts his perfect 15-for-15 career record on the line in the second of two C\$50,000 eliminations for the Pepsi North America Cup. The previous successive Dan Patch Horse of the Year honorees to return in the same season most recently were McWicked and Hannelore Hanover, in 2019, and JK She'salady and Bee A Magician, in 2015.

Twin B Joe Fresh, who in addition to being named Horse of the Year in 2024 received the Dan Patch Award for best older female pacer in 2025, has won 36 of 49 races and earned \$2.86 million. The Chris Ryder-trained daughter of Roll With Joe-Fresh Breeze has finished worse than third only twice.

"She's as good as ever, I believe; she's doing great," Ryder said about Twin B Joe Fresh, who had surgery in November for a hairline cannon bone fracture. "Everything is pretty much copacetic. She just needs to go a race, but I'm quite confident with her. She's bright. We're always hanging on to her (in training). She's looking to go."

Ryder owns Twin B Joe Fresh with driver Dexter Dunn, longtime assistant trainer Peter Trebotica, and Barry Spak. Last year, the mare hit the board in all nine of her races, winning six and earning \$526,714. Her triumphs included five graded stakes – the Roses Are Red, Dayton Distaff Derby (G1), Milton Pace (G2), Dorothy Haughton Memorial (G2) and Betsy Ross Invitational (G3).

In addition to winning the Roses Are Red twice in her career, she has captured the Dayton Distaff Derby and Dorothy Haughton Memorial on two occasions and was the Breeders Crown Mare Pace (G1) champion in 2024. Overall, she has won 21 graded stakes, with six being Grade 1 and seven Grade 2.

She heads to her Roses Are Red elimination off two qualifiers, the most recent a 1:51 2/5 (last quarter in 26 2/5) on May 22 at the Meadowlands. She will start from post 4 on Saturday, with Dunn in the sulky, and is the 4-5 morning-line favorite. The top five finishers from each elimination will return for the Grade 1 final on June 13.

"I've had so many great races with her, it seems like you're in the wilderness when she's not racing," Ryder said. "But here we are, lucky enough to have her back and ready to go again. It's a treat to have her racing. You've just got to enjoy the ride."

"A lot of people follow her, and it's a real honor."

Ryder also will send out the morning-line favorite in the second Roses Are Red elimination, two-time Dan Patch Award divisional champion Miki And Minnie. The 4-year-old daughter of Always B Miki-That's The Ticket has finished in the top three in all 27 of her career races, with 19 wins, six seconds and two thirds, on her way to \$1.96 million in earnings.

Last year, Miki And Minnie had 13 victories and two seconds in 15 races, good for \$1.12 million in purses. Three wins came in Grade 1 stakes – the Breeders Crown, James M. Lynch Memorial and Fan Hanover – and she finished her campaign by defeating older horses in the FanDuel Mare Pace Championship (G2).

"She had just two narrow losses and I was really proud of her winning the FanDuel," Ryder said. "I thought that was really great."

Miki And Minnie heads to her Roses Are Red elimination with one start under her belt, a third-place finish in the Besty Ross Invitational (G3) on May 24 at five-eighths-mile Harrah's Philadelphia. She will start from post 5 on Saturday, with James MacDonald taking over for Dunn in the sulky, and is the 7-5 morning-line favorite.

"I suppose she might be slightly in the shadows of Joe Fresh, but she has come back really well," said Ryder, who trains Miki And Minnie for breeders/owners Craig Henderson, Robert Mondillo, and Lawrence Minowitz. "The race (at Philly), I'll admit I was slightly disappointed. Maybe I'm expecting too much, but I definitely think she's better for the race. I'm sure



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Twin B Joe Fresh seeks her third straight Roses Are Red victory this year.

she will thrive on racing. And the five-eighths is not her ideal track; she's better on a bigger track because she's got a good, long, run to her. She is more of a grinder, but she finds a way. She just doesn't give up.

"It's going to be a little bit of a different feeling not having Dexter on her because Dexter has always done so well with her, but obviously he's got to drive the other mare. I'm doing what I can to have Miki And Minnie on her toes, to get the best out of her."

The Roses Are Red eliminations are part of a loaded 13-race card at Mohawk, which in addition to the aforementioned North America Cup elim hosts three eliminations for the Fan Hanover Stakes for 3-year-old female pacers.

Racing begins at 6:30 p.m. (EDT) at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

Knoxville knocks off Fragment in NYSS

Knoxville (\$19.32) was able to find racing room down the passing lane and used it to perfection to stun the defending 2-year-old champion Fragment by a length in the \$121,800 New York Sire Stakes for the 3-year-old colt and gelding pacers at Buffalo Raceway on a sparkling Wednesday afternoon (June 3). Knoxville covered the mile in 1:53 2/5 over the fast track in pinning the loss on Fragment.

It was a three-way battle for the lead as Hunthehunter De Vie (Mark Herschberger), Knoxville (Tyler Buter) and Unmatched Wisdom (Leon Bailey) all tried to take early supremacy. Unmatched Wisdom managed to take control as Knoxville found a spot in second and Hunthehunter De Vie third. Meanwhile, Fragment (Jason Bartlett) was content in fourth place.

[READ MORE](#)

RACE OF THE WEEK

12 NORTHFIELD SAT

1 Mile Pace, \$20,000 ESTIMATED PICK 4 POOL, THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE, FREE-FOR-ALL (BY INVITATION) Purse \$250,000

EXACTA, TRIFECTA, 20 CENT SUPERFECTA & \$1.00 PICK FOUR (12-13-14-15)

1 WOMEN LAYER(L)

4:17.3 (5/8) Q \$10,667 LEX-SEL \$72,000

6-1 L. Hanners 1080-165-157-132 (153)

b g 5, by Sweet Lou, Loreenas Ruffian by McArdle
Let It Ride Sibs FL/Jeff Fought Rqg KY/L Wills OH/Jesmeral Sibs NY

V. Morgan, Jr. 440-97-73-61 (220)

Last 4 Sts		-\$57,000		1:49.2 ScD 5/8		26 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 26 Tot		3 2 1 0		\$32,000															
				1:47.3 ScD 5/8		25 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 25		* 18 13 2 2		\$430,500															
						24 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- Life		42 27 8 4		\$848,579															
30 May26	11ScD	fst650	264	:551	1:23	1:49	2	Opn	26000	3	2 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	13 3/4	LuHanners	ViMorgJr	27	28	27	26	2	1:49	111	L*1.10	WomenLayr	WinLSOrdR	OakwdHymk	-6
23 May26	10ScD	fst690	284	:561	1:26	2:14	2	Opn	26000	7	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	2no	AuHanners	ViMorgJr	26	28	27	27	2	1:49	111	L*8.0	RacingRebl	WomenLayr	rsrunaze	-7
1 May26	10ScD	fst720	251	:542	1:22	1:49	4	Opn	25000	4	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	AuHanners	ViMorgJr	25	29	28	27	2	1:49	111	L*8.0	WomenLayr	WckdChrc	GrantmWsh	-6
1 May26	3ScD	gd590	283	:573	1:25	1:54	1	Qua	7	1	1	1	1	1	11.5	DaMiller	ViMorgJr	29	27	28	28	1	1:49	111	Lrb	WomenLayr	HardtCI	LgndryLr	-7
18 Apr26	11MVR	slr680	281	:562	1:25	1:53	2	Qua	4	1	1	1	1	1	17.1	DaMiller	ViMorgJr	28	28	28	28	1	1:53	2	Lrb	WomenLayr	AlwaysBng	WShalSea	-9
11 Apr26	1WCT	gd570	291	:574	1:25	1:54	2	Qua	5	1	1	1	1	1	11.3	DaMiller	ViMorgJr	28	29	27	28	1	1:54	1	Lrb	WomenLayr	GlDgKng	ImTheOn	-9
4 Nov25	1CbR	fst610	263	:552	1:21	1:49	1	Qua	50000	5	1	1	1	1	15.3	DeDunn	ViMorgJr	26	28	26	27	1	1:49	1	L*0.5	WomenLayr	LouHill	BeOnBjg	-5

2 MOSSDALE BEN N(L)

8:15.0 \$15,583

4-1 J. Marohn, Jr. 501-65-48-49 (130)

b g 8, by A Rocknroll Dance, Mossdale Sue by Bettor's Delight
Pit Investments LLC/Madison CT

P. Tritton 79-14-15-9 (177)

Last 4 Sts		-\$100,740		1:50.1 YR		26 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 26 Tot		12 4 4 0		\$187,000																
				1:51.1 YR		25 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 25		* 16 10 25 Tot		12 9 2 3																
						24 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- Life		76 21 16 7		\$777,693																
24 May26	13Phl	fst610	262	:542	1:21	1:49	2	Auger Inv-G3	100000	5	1 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/2	4 1/2	2nk	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	26	28	27	27	1	1:49	109	+5.5w	L8.60	KenHvr	MossdaleBen	ForOnclm	-8
8 May26	8YR	fst620	284	:561	1:26	2:14	2	D-BORG F-G2	478000	7	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	4 1/2	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	30	27	28	28	1	2:23	1	+5.5w	L7.42	CptrAlbrnHntrHts	CchsCmrr	11 Sat,bk,dull cv,no bid-8	
27 Apr26	3YR	fst630	273	:562	1:24	1:51	1	BORG #5	50000	1	3 3/4	3 3/4	3 2 1/2	2 1/2	2no	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	28	28	27	26	1	1:51	106	+6.3w	L*5.9	HuntnHtsMsdBn	ChtsCprt	Sat,wb,3/4,pace-6	
20 Apr26	5YR	fst460	274	:562	1:24	1:52	1	BORG #4	50000	4	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1nk	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	27	29	27	27	1	1:52	103	+1.4w	L*1.32	MossdaleBen	CochsCmrr	DongLthr	Ld,dug in,gamely-7
13 Apr26	6YR	fst760	264	:55	1:22	1:50	1	BORG #3	50000	3	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	26	28	27	27	1	1:51	113	+7.6w	L2.24	MossdaleBen	HuntnHts	CptMkore	Ld, won handily-7
6 Apr26	4YR	fst500	28	:57	1:25	1:52	2	BORG #2	50000	4	4	4	4	4	2hd	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	28	29	28	27	1	1:52	99	+2.4w	L1.79	HntrHtsMsdBn	ChtsCprt	2nd ang,ang ltr,pace-6	
30 Mar26	6YR	fst650	27	:56	1:24	1:52	1	BORG #1	50000	6	2 1/2	2 1/2	3 1/2	2 1/2	2 1/2	JiMarhnJr	PeTritton	27	29	28	27	1	1:52	101	+4.7w	L7.00	DongLthr	MossdaleBen	CptrAlbrn	Ld,y,dkt,even-6

3 CAPTAIN ALBANO(L)

3:148.1 (1) * \$50,500 SHS-HBG \$150,000

3-1 T. McCarthy 250-43-24-38 (172)

b h 5, by Captainreacherous, Angelou by American Ideal
Patricia Sibs NY/LA Express Sibs PA/Sjoblom Rqg M/Dolan FL

N. Daley 224-39-30-37 (174)

Last 4 Sts		-\$272,000		1:50.2 M1Q		26 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 26 Tot		6 3 0 1		*\$303,000																
				1:48.2 Pd 5/8		25 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 25 Tot		18 7 4 1		*\$597,775																
						24 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- Life		51 29 8 4		*\$247,528																
29 May26	6M1	fst770	291	:571	1:24	1:50	2	Qua	4	1	1	1	1	1	18	ToMcCrthy	NoDaley	29	28	27	26	1	1:50	2	Lrb	CptrAlbrn	ArndnSrtSrt	8sd	1/4,l,d,handy-5	
8 May26	8YR	fst620	284	:561	1:26	2:14	2	D-BORG F-G2	478000	4	2no	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	ToMcCrthy	NoDaley	28	28	29	2	2:21	1	1	+5.5w	L1.62	CptrAlbrnHntrHts	CchsCmrr	11 Usd, pst 1/2,l,d,handy-8	
27 Apr26	6YR	fst630	28	:561	1:23	1:51	1	BORG #5	50000	6	6	6	6	6	5 3/4	JoStratt	NoDaley	30	28	26	27	1	1:52	106	+6.3w	L4.41	CchsCmrr	HntrHts	AnyAYCpt	2nd ang,in,pace-7
20 Apr26	7YR	fst460	274	:572	1:25	1:52	1	BORG #4	50000	1	2 1/2	2 1/2	2 1/2	2 1/2	1nk	NoDaley	NoDaley	28	29	27	26	1	1:52	102	+1.4w	L*1.32	MossdaleBen	SwBchLle	ShrFrstne	Pkt,ang in,saley-7
13 Apr26	6YR	fst760	264	:55	1:22	1:50	1	BORG #3	50000	7	4	4	4	4	4	ToMcCrthy	NoDaley	28	28	27	27	1	1:50	110	+7.6w	L*1.94	MossdaleBen	HntrHts	CptMkore	1st, won gap,d,sty in-7
6 Apr26	6YR	fst500	27	:561	1:23	1:51	1	BORG #2	50000	5	4	4	4	4	3 1/2	ToMcCrthy	NoDaley	29	28	27	27	1	1:51	105	+2.4w	L2.73	CptrAlbrn	RdwhHv	SwBchLfl	2nd up,grnd,saley-5
30 Mar26	6YR	fst650	27	:56	1:24	1:52	1	BORG #1	50000	1	4	4	4	4	3	ToMcCrthy	NoDaley	27	29	27	27	1	1:52	101	+4.7w	L*3.9	DngLthr	MsdBn	CptrAlbrn	2nd ang, lstr,md,sty-6

4 HELIUM N(L)

6:146.4 (5/8) \$8,412

12-1 Da. Noble 850-229-1410 (269)

b g 7, by Sky Major, Cooking With Gas by Bettor's Delight
James F Morris,Chillicothe,OH/Dennis R Owens,Hamilton,OH

C. Noble 44-15-6-6 (341)

Last 4 Sts		-\$51,737		1:50.2 Wld		26 Nfd		12 7 2 2		-\$7,664		26 Tot		13 7 3 2		\$10,380															
				1:46.4 ScD 5/8		25 Nfd		3 1 1 0		-\$5,000		25 Tot		19 7 2 3		\$124,537															
						24 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- Life		74 21 13 7		\$294,679																	
29 May26	10Lcn	fst680	263	:544	1:22	1:51	2	CAMLUCK-G3	108450	1	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/2	DaNoble	ChrNoble	26	28	28	28	1	1:51	107	+8.7w	L4.40	LouHill	HeliumN	ClojchHv	-8	
10 May26	11Nfd	fst530	261	:541	1:21	1:50	1	Opn Hcp	19500	7	5	4 3/4	4 2 1/2	2 2 1/2	2 1/2	DaNoble	ChrNoble	27	27	27	28	1	1:50	114	+8.7w	L*4.0	HeliumN	Helabalou	BacknMyD	-7	
3 May26	13Nfd	fst520	261	:542	1:22	1:50	1	Opn Hcp	20000	7	3 1/4	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	1 1/2	DaNoble	ChrNoble	26	28	28	28	1	1:50	111	+7.7w	L*2.0	HeliumN	Helabalou	MstrYsn	-9	
26 Apr26	11Nfd	fst530	261	:544	1:22	1:51	1	Opn Hcp	19500	8	3	3 1/4	1 1/2	1 1/2	1no	DaNoble	ChrNoble	26	27	28	29	1	1:52	105	+8.6w	L*9.0	Notoday	HeliumN	Amro	-8	
19 Apr26	11Nfd	fst410	261	:541	1:22	1:51	1	Opn Hcp	19500	1	4	4	4	4	4	scratched-jg-trans	DaNoble	ChrNoble	27	27	27	29	1	1:51	107	+5.5w	L*1.00	HeliumN	Amro	MkiShanN	-6
6 Apr26	6Nfd	fst480	261	:541	1:22	1:51	1	Opn Hcp	19000	6	4	4	4	4	4	DaNoble	ChrNoble	26	28	27	28	1	1:52	112	+8.9w	L*3.0	HeliumN	MkiShanN	BismarkduplessisN	-5	
29 Mar26	2Nfd	fst	264	:544	1:22	1:50	2	Opn	26389	1	12	11	12	12	13	DNoble	ChrNoble	26	28	27	28	1	1:52	112	+8.9w	L*3.0	HeliumN	MkiShanN	BismarkduplessisN	-5	

5 PRINCE HAL HANOVER

3:147.2 (1) \$40,935 LEX-SEL \$130,000

9-2 Ma. Kakale 986-111-158-151 (113)

b h 4, by Captainreacherous, Percy Bluechip by Shadow Play
Prince Hal Hanover Stable,Cambridge,ON,CA

la. Moore 19-7-4-2 (368)

Last 4 Sts		-\$166,241		1:49.2 FID		26 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- 26		4 3 0 1		\$163,741																
				1:47.2 Lxt		25 Nfd		1 1 0 0		-\$150,000		25 Tot		18 7 2 3																
						24 Nfd		0 0 0 0		- Life		31 13 9 4		*\$1281,620																
30 May26	9Wbs	fst590	26	:541	1:20	1:47	3	Graduate	72900	3	3	3	3	3	3 1/2	ToMcCrthy	laMoore	26	27	26	27	1	1:48	113	+8.5w	1.65	AnyCptr	DfthN	NvFvePrnHv	Brush,pst,tring-10
17 May26	10FID	fst770	271	:551	1:22	1:50	1	JURAVINSKI-G2	189435	3	2	1	1	1	1	ToMcCrthy	laMoore	27	28	27	27	1	1:50	115	+9.9w					

OHHA's Harness Racing Fantasy League is back for 2026

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association's Harness Racing Fantasy League is back for 2026 with big changes and more ways to win.

Entries are currently being accepted for the 2026 Fantasy League and are due June 15. The contest runs from July 1 through Oct. 31.

The Harness Racing Fantasy League affords everyone the opportunity to experience the sport from an ownership perspective by selecting horses for their personal fantasy stable. Each stable consists of six horses comprised of five Ohio-sired 2-year-olds sold at a public auction and an Ohio-sired "wild card" horse of any age, sex, or gait. Stables will be ranked based on total earnings, and the standings will be posted to the [OHHA Fantasy League page](#).

A total of \$5,000 in cash prizes is up for grabs this year. The winner will receive the grand prize of \$1,500. Second place will receive \$800, and third place will receive \$400. Fourth through 10th place will each receive \$100, and the lowest-earning stable will also receive \$100. New this year will be cash payouts at the quarter, half, and three-quarter poles with \$500 going to the leading stable on Aug. 1, Sept. 1, and Oct. 1. Other prizes include OHHA swag for any fantasy stable owner whose horse sets a track record or wins an Ohio Sires Stakes final.

The Fantasy League is also introducing a "Beat the Experts" competition, pitting participants against the OHHA's four experts — Matt Clark, Ashley Dailey, Roger Huston, and Stephen Taylor — who met some of this year's eligible horses while filming the Freshman Focus series. Anyone who tops them all in the final standings will be entered into a drawing, and one lucky winner will receive two tickets to an Ohio professional sporting event. The 2026 Freshman Focus series is available on the [OHHA YouTube channel](#).

For more information on the Fantasy League and to access entry forms and a list of eligible horses, visit the OHHA Fantasy League page. Entries are limited to one per person, and a current valid email address is required. Completed forms must be emailed to the OHHA's Kim Poma at kpoma@ohha.com or faxed to 614-221-8726. No phone entries will be accepted.

-release (OHHA)

BREAKFAST WITH THE BABIES BEGINS THIS SATURDAY AT THE BIG M

The Meadowlands Racetrack's Breakfast with the Babies returns for 2026 this Saturday, June 6th at 9 am.

This year the two year old baby races are sponsored the Tactical Land- ing Syndicate, Ecurie D Syndicate, and Karl Syndicate, standing at Southwind Farms of New Jersey.

The dates for the baby races will be the following, but are subject to change due to conflicts at MetLife Stadium with the World Cup:

- Saturday, June 6th at 9:00 am.
- Friday, June 12th at 9:00 am.
- Saturday, June 20th at 9:00 am.
- Friday, June 26th at 9:00 am.

A free continental breakfast with pastries and beverages, along with programs for the day will be available in Trotters.

As always, the races will be live-streamed on PlayMeadowlands.com, and an announcer will be on hand to call the action.

-release (Meadowlands)

APEX, DIABOLIC HILL TO MEET IN NJSS

The top horse in Ken Warkentin's Road to the Hambletonian will make his debut in race eight at The Meadowlands on Friday where he'll face #4 contender Diabolic Hill in his initial race of the year as well.

Apex starts from post 11 while Diabolic Hill has post one.

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DRF Harness



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, JUNE 4

RACE 5

(7) SIR PINOCCHIO returns to his favorite track off a fourth in the Maxie Lee at Harrah's Philadelphia in his 2026 debut and normally not even outside posts are a big issue for him.

-Greg Reinhart



FRIDAY, JUNE 5

RACE 7

(4) ROMANTIC BEAUTY should thrive on the drop in class. It's not like she was posting bad miles against the likes of A Clean Deal either. I fully expect her to be driven like the best filly in this field.

-Kevin Plowcha



RACE 3

(1) NAKED AND FAMOUS rolled in the elimination round of the Oak Grove Oaks but was hopelessly boxed in and broke in the final. I won't hold that one mistake against her.

-Derick Givner



SATURDAY, JUNE 6

RACE 2

(8) SECRET SOCIETY was trapped along the cones and had no chance to truly stretch his legs last week. Prior to that he was charging home on an off track and made a speed break. There is some ability here and best of all the chance to play him at a price.

-Givner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

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

Meadowlands Analysis

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

Yonkers Analysis

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

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

1/ST BET TO SERVE AS PRESENTING SPONSOR OF GRADE 1 ADIOS

Hollywood Casino at The Meadows is pleased to announce that 1/ST BET, powered by Xpressbet, will be the presenting sponsor of the 2026 Grade 1 Delvin Miller Adios Pace for the Orchids. The 60th edition of the race will be contested over two weekends, with elimination races on Saturday, July 18 and the \$350,000 final set for Saturday, July 25.

"We are extremely proud to partner with 1/ST BET on this year's Adios," said Michael Carter, Director of Racing at Hollywood Casino at The Meadows. "1/ST BET and Xpressbet have long supported The Adios and other events locally, and this expansion of our partnership is a win for everyone, including our local racing community and horseplayers that will watch and wager on The Adios from across the country," he added.

1/ST BET is an industry leader in horse racing account wagering and has had a two decade long association with The Meadows.

Dustin Fabian, Senior Director of Marketing for 1/ST BET, added, "At 1/ST BET and Xpressbet, we believe in harness racing, and we strongly support any and all initiatives to increase exposure and wagering for the sport. 1/ST BET, Xpressbet and The Meadows have a longstanding collaborative history of bringing world-class harness racing to horseplayers and racing fans, and we're honored to be part of the 60th anniversary of the Adios. Over the next few months, be on the lookout for exclusive Adios promotions and offers on our platforms."

The Adios has a rich history of crowning champions and is one of only five Grade 1 events for three-year-old pacers in North America. Over the years, many of the sport's top sophomores have won the Adios, including Albatross, Abercrombie, Ralph Hanover, McWicked, and, in 2025, Prince Hal Hanover.

The final of the Grade 1 Delvin Miller Adios Pace for the Orchids, presented by 1/ST BET, will highlight a fan and family friendly day of activities, starting at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 25.

-release (Meadows)

2026 COMMUNICATORS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Derick Giwner and Tara Ellen Taylor will be officially inducted into harness racing's Communicators Hall of Fame on Hall of Fame Day, Sunday, July 5, 2026 at the Harness Racing Museum's annual dinner.

Derick Giwner is an award-winning harness racing journalist and the longtime editor of DRF Harness at the Daily Racing Form, where he has delivered in-depth analysis and major event coverage since launching the brand in 2012. After beginning his career at Sports Eye in 1996, Giwner established himself as a premier industry voice, notably through his essential weekly DRF Harness Digest Newsletter. His prominent media contributions have earned him multiple honors, including three John Hervey Awards (2020, 2023, 2025), the Phil Pines and Clyde Hirt Media Awards, and the 2020 USHWAN of the Year title. Beyond journalism, he actively serves the New York City Chapter of the U.S. Harness Writers Association as a multi-term Chapter Director and current chair of the Integrity Committee.

Tara Ellen Taylor has led the Harness Horse Youth Foundation (HHYF) as executive director for over 30 years, driving its mission to introduce young people to harness racing through hands-on equine experiences. Since 1996, she has spearheaded the foundation's annual summer camps, collaborating with racetracks and horsemen's organizations while regularly contributing to educational materials and industry trade publications. Her extensive contributions earned her an election to the Indiana Harness Racing Hall of Fame, adding to a long list of honors that includes the prestigious 2009 Stan Bergstein Proximity Award. With these achievements, Taylor continues a proud family legacy established by her mother, Margot, an Immortal member of the Harness Racing Hall of Fame.

For information on attending the dinner and induction ceremonies, please contact the Harness Racing Museum at 845-294-6330.

-release (Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame)

MITCHELL CUSHING REACHES 1,500 WINS AND \$15 MILLION EARNED

It was a big day for driver Mitchell Cushing on Tuesday (June 2) at Plainridge Park as he scored his 1,500th career win and eclipsed \$15 million in career earnings on the strength of winning five races on the

card, including the featured \$27,500 Open Handicap trot with his own trainee, A New Leader, who gave him the milestone victory.

A New Leader got away second behind Kazio DK (Kevin Switzer Jr.) who trotted to the half without a challenge in 56 2/5. Then Big Box Hanover (Nick Graffam) tipped from third and rushed towards the front, drawing near Kazio DK as they passed three-quarters in 1:24.

Kazio DK held Big Box Hanover at bay through the last turn and when he finally faded, Cushing pulled A New Leader and barreled right by Kazio DK in deep stretch to win by 1-½ lengths in 1:52 4/5, which tied his lifetime mark.

It was the 20th career win for A New Leader (\$41.00), who is owned by Ray Laksy and Mitchell Cushing.

Mitchell Cushing, who has been driving since 2014, now has 1,501 wins, 1,541 seconds and 1,524 thirds from 11,687 starts and \$15,026,397 in earnings and is currently the third leading driver at the Plainridge Park meet.

-edited release (Tim Bojarski for Plainridge Park)

SBOANJ SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE

The Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of New Jersey and the Backstretch Community Assistance Program of New Jersey will award scholarships to qualified students currently enrolled in or plan to attend a two- or four-year college or university.

Candidates must be either a son or daughter of a full-time participant in New Jersey harness racing and SBOANJ member or are themselves a full-time participant. Only one candidate per household will be considered, and there is a lifetime cap of \$10,000 per individual.

The complete list of qualifications and instructions can be found on the SBOANJ website along with the [application](#). The deadline to apply is Friday, June 26, 2026.

-release (SBOANJ)

OHHA AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO 13 OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association is awarding 13 scholarships, totaling \$25,000, to college students for the 2026-27 academic year.

This year's recipients are Sydney Ater, Garrett Bateson, Andrew Collins, Hannah Dingleline, Ryan King, Mason Konesky, Sarah Martin, Samantha Mayhugh, Sylvia Mayhugh, Alexa Nisonger, Kyra Suleski, Parker Twaddle, and Kamden Wolfe.

The OHHA Scholarship is available to graduating high school seniors and students enrolled in a degree or certificate program. Graduate students are eligible if they are enrolled in a harness racing-specific graduate or professional-level program. The scholarships are based on academic merit and must be used towards the cost and expenses related to coursework and a degree being pursued at a college or university. In addition, the applicant or a family member must be an OHHA member.

To read full bios for each winner, [click here](#).

-edited release (OHHA)

NORDIC CATCHER S TOPS BIG QUALIFYING SESSION FOR SVANSTEDT

Hambletonian winner Nordic Catcher S, who hadn't raced since capturing the million-dollar classic last August 2, showed no rust at all from his time away, winning a qualifier by 14 lengths in 1:55 1/5 Wednesday at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania.

[READ MORE](#)

MCEVOY TAKES ON MONTICELLO HANDICAPPING ROLE

Monticello Raceway is proud to announce the addition of Brian McEvoy as its new track handicapper. He replaces Catskill Steve, who was a mainstay for many years as the track handicapper at the Mighty M.

McEvoy is the current track handicapper for Pocono Downs, a position he has held for the last seven years.

"I appreciate this opportunity to be making my picks daily for the king of daytime racing for many, many years, Monticello Raceway," said McEvoy.

-edited release (Monticello)