

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2026

Optimistic Gural still sees path to casino



WALTER WŁODARCZYK

AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali [X AtTheTrack7](#)



For 50 years, the Meadowlands Pace has been the signature night of harness racing in East Rutherford, New Jersey and over the years the supporting card around the marquee event for sophomore pacers has been built up into a tremendous event for racing.

The Hambletonian Maturity has joined the William Haughton Memorial as excellent supporting features, along with the Dorothy Haughton, Hambletonian and Oaks prep races in the Stanley Dancer and Del Miller Memorials, and more.

This year, the Meadowlands Pace itself turned out to be a tremendous race, with four horses separated by a head at the finish. Granted, the 1/5 favorite Brandon Blvd pulled off the victory, but it was one of the most compelling stretch drives in recent Meadowlands Pace history, if not all-time.

As for the card itself, it was generally chalky, which can happen on a stakes-laden program.

Ten of the 14 races were won by horses sent off at odds of 8/5 or less, seven of which were less than even-money.

The Meadowlands Pace card each year is always supremely dependent on the draw and how races split. Since the Dancer, Del Miller and Haughton races can all be split into two divisions based on the number of entries, there is a lot of luck involved in how the card comes together.

Last year, the only unfavorable split occurred in the Stanley Dancer Memorial, which had 14 horses entered, resulting in two races of seven horses. Nearly every other race was stacked with a full field. The average field size last year on Meadowlands Pace night was 9.4 horses per race as 132 horses contested the 14-race program. This year, that number fell to 8.3 horses per race with 117 horses competing. Without the 13-horse field in the Hambletonian Maturity, that number was a flat eight horses per race across the other 13 races. Obviously that is far from ideal for a race-track that was built on the idea of getting 10 noses on the gate.

The 2025 Pace card handle of \$5.1 million reflected an average handle per betting interest

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)

FREE PPs & ANALYSIS FOR PLAINRIDGE PARK



- ✓ \$300,000 Spirit of Massachusetts
- ✓ \$150,000 Clara Barton

SUNDAY, JULY 19 | 2:00 PM (EDT)

[VISIT PAGE](#)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gingras and Antognoni go for the top prize in G2 Spirit of Massachusetts

Big Ranger prepping for Hambletonian at Scioto on Saturday

Loua Dipa tackles the boys as lead dog in Burke's Adios brigade

Meadowlands Pace Night in pictures

Stoebe "excited" to start Diabolic Hill in G2 Zweig Memorial

Bourbonista gets first MGM Yonkers International Trot invite

Hawthorne sold to 'non-racing entity'

Best Bets & Analysis

Hambo winner sharp in return from injury; Track records fall at Oak Grove

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SATURDAY

**1
AUG**



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📍 Meadowlands Racetrack, East Rutherford, NJ
 🚫 Free Admission 🕒 5:00 pm

Seafood spectacle with food trucks galore and a themed Pink buffet plus \$70K Hambletonian Elims and \$35K Hambletonian Oaks Elims.

TUESDAY

**4
AUG**



HAMBO POST POSITION LUNCHEON

📍 Chateau Grande, East Brunswick, NJ
 🚫 Free Admission 🕒 2:00 pm

Post position draws for the Hambletonian Oaks and Hambletonian. Streaming on Meadowlands Facebook.

FRIDAY

**7
AUG**



HAMBLETONIAN EVE HOMECOMING

📍 Meadowlands Racetrack, East Rutherford, NJ
 🚫 By Invitation 🕒 6:00 pm

Kickoff Hambletonian Weekend in style at this invite only event. Please call 609-371-2211 for details. Racing card features \$225k NJSS Finals (2CP & 2FP), \$50k Muscle Hill (3CT), and \$30k Continentalvictory (3FT)

SATURDAY

**8
AUG**



WINNING KEY FARM HAMBLETONIAN

📍 Meadowlands Racetrack, East Rutherford, NJ
 🚫 \$5 Admission 🕒 10:00 am

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of \$38,636. This year, Pace night handle fell to \$4.05 million, or \$34,655 per betting interest. Overall handle declined 26% while handle per betting interest declined 11.5%.

The Meadowlands Pace itself sported a full field of 10 as opposed to nine horses last year when Louprint, the North America Cup winner, had to be withdrawn from the race before the field was drawn, resulting in a more balanced field from a betting standpoint.

For the first time that I can remember, the Win pool in The Meadowlands Pace this year did not reach \$100,000. Perhaps that was the result of a 1/5 favorite in the race tied into the fact that the first seven races were all won by either the favorite or second choice, with none offering a win mutuel higher than \$4.80.

While we already mentioned the luck of the draw, I did see one wagering issue that may have contributed to the decline. The Meadowlands Pace itself was not the anchor leg for any multi-race exotic wagers. In other words, there was not a Daily Double, Pick 3, Pick 4, Pick 5 or Pick 6 that ended with The Meadowlands Pace. I cannot imagine that helped wagering and is something I would change for 2027. Your marquee race can be a pivot race that concludes one Pick 4 sequence and starts another as well. Perhaps this was a decision that was made due to how the field took shape and that there would be an overwhelming favorite, but if that is the case, they probably overthought things from a wagering perspective.

As for The Meadowlands Pace itself, it attracted 13 horses, despite being the richest race for 3-year-old pacers this season, offering a purse of \$810,000 (last year the purse was \$656,000). Given that neither Beau Jangles nor Odds On Mr Mamba entered, I was very surprised that others did not take a swing.

Meadowlands Chairman Jeff Gural was very pleased with the race itself but equally as baffled by the lack of entries.

"It was great to see Andrew Harris and relatively new owners win such a thrilling race. In addition, Dexter (Dunn) is the best driver in the world right now and it was great to see him win our signature event. Beyond the race, we just offered the highest purse for a pacing race in North America and only 13 entered," said Gural.

"I am committed to do everything possible to get a referendum on the ballot next year"

-Meadowlands CEO & President Jeff Gural

That is just a microcosm of a much larger issue facing Gural and The Meadowlands and one that has been an issue since he took over operations of the racetrack.

"I think the shorter fields (on the Pace card) hurt, but this clearly shows the huge disadvantage we have being the only major standardbred track in North America that is operating without slots as a funding source," said Gural, who cited Kentucky racing as being in the complete opposite position. "Kentucky has huge money for stakes races from historical horse racing machines, and they can afford to race on Monday and Tuesday (as wagering handle means little for purse revenue). That is great for them, but it dilutes the overall product of harness racing."

The 2027 New Jersey budget was recently passed and it did include the \$20 million purse subsidy that is shared by thoroughbred and standardbred horsemen. However, Gural noted that stakes races don't factor into that equation. "The \$7 million share that is allocated for The Meadowlands can only be used for overnight purses, so all the money for stakes races at The Meadowlands come from nominating fees, sponsorships, the \$400 yearling staking payment and revenue from racing and sports wagering."

To Gural's point, even if some of the \$7 million could be used for stakes and Gural wanted to make The Meadowlands Pace a cool \$1 million again, would it matter? Other than it sounds nice, why should he? Coming out of the April 15 sustaining payment there were 33 horses still eligible for the race; therefore 20 of those horses did not enter. If the race were \$1 million, would there have been 15 horses to enter instead of 13, and if so, would that make any difference to Meadowlands business?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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Gural cited racing revenue as a source for purse revenue. It is worth reminding readers that in 2010, Governor Christie wanted the state of New Jersey out of the racing business because of how much money the state was losing and that was at a time where over \$300 million was being wagered inside The Meadowlands facility on both live racing and imported simulcast racing. That number has been declining ever since as more people wager from home, another issue Gural has had to battle for 15 years. As for the sports wagering, Gural noted a uniqueness to The Meadowlands. "I believe I am the only track owner who shares revenue from sports betting with the horsemen," said Gural.

Next, the Hambletonian is on the horizon, and right now it is possible it could be the last Hambletonian at The Meadowlands, something that I have written several times would be a body blow to the harness racing industry. I cannot emphasize enough that the Hambletonian program will simply not handle the same amount of money it handles at The Meadowlands, regardless of where it goes. The Breeders Crown handle has proven this time and time again. Fewer people watching and wagering on the Hambletonian would be detrimental to the sport, regardless of where almost all tracks get their purse money. Gural is justifiably upset with what has transpired given the extremely difficult situation The Meadowlands is in.

"The Hambletonian Society is threatening to relocate The Hambletonian to a racetrack that is subsidized by slot revenue. To be honest, that is very demoralizing. I have worked so hard, losing millions of dollars to keep The Meadowlands going all these years," said Gural, who remains hopeful that the race will stay put in New Jersey. "This is the best place for [the Hambletonian] and losing it would really hurt our chances of getting a casino."

The next comment Gural made is interesting, as it is the first time I have heard him acknowledge that a casino referendum will not be on the ballot in New Jersey in 2026.

"I am committed to do everything possible to get a referendum on the ballot next year, but first we need the state to once again give Dennis (Drazin) and I money to cover operating losses," said Gural. "Last year the purse subsidy bill included \$3.5 million to aid

operational costs for the track but so far this year the budget passed eliminated money for operating losses. I expect that to change as I am not wealthy enough to cover the \$10 million we expect to lose. Fortunately, the Governor is a friend (to racing), but the opposition from Atlantic City was too powerful this year. No one wants to see thoroughbred and standardbred racing disappear as we generate millions of dollars in economic benefits including open spaces. I learned from the unsuccessful effort this year and fully expect to get the casino referendum on the ballot next year.

"Our polling shows a casino at The Meadowlands will pass easily. I have budgeted five percent of slot machine revenue to purses and breeders' awards and I estimate that would add about \$50 million to purse money distributed. This will enable us to eliminate the post-time drag and pursue getting people to attend our live races. I would also significantly increase purses for older horses and force the drivers to help improve the racing product so that we can create new customers and new yearling buyers."

I am consistently amazed at the backlash and lack of support that Jeff Gural faces. Of course, I don't agree with everything he says and everything The Meadowlands does. When I worked for Jeff, we had disagreements like any employer/employee relationship, but that doesn't matter. I don't agree with anyone 100 percent of the time. For 15 years Gural has tried. He has introduced new wager types and has experimented with the video content The Meadowlands puts out. Despite being entirely dependent upon wagering handle, he experimented in a post-time drag reduction, an initiative he knew would cost him money but he wanted to try. He introduced his own out-of-competition testing that he has paid for. Despite no money from slot machine revenue, for 15 years The Meadowlands still carries the largest stakes program

in the country. People forget, Gural also owns two other racetracks that would not exist if not for him. Yet despite all of that, he is somehow met with resistance at every corner.

The industry can constructively criticize decisions The Meadowlands makes if they wish while still providing Gural and The Meadowlands with support. Those two things do not have to be binary. They are trying and should be applauded for their efforts and supported in any way possible.



WALTER WLODARCZYK

(left to right) Meadowlands COO/GM Jason Settlemoir with CEO/President Jeff Gural.

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Gingras, Antognoni go for the top prize in Spirit of Massachusetts

By Jay Bergman

Hall of Famer Yannick Gingras is hoping that Sunday's \$300,000 Grade 2 Spirit Of Massachusetts at Plainridge Park will prove to be a defining moment for Antognoni S, a 6-year-old son of Father Patrick that he has been an integral part of since arriving in North America. The Swedish-bred amassed 16 victories in 2025 in North America building a reputation racing, primarily at Yonkers Raceway.

In 2026, Antognoni S has picked up where he left off for trainer Ron Burke, who co-owns the horse along with Gingras and other partners Weaver-Bruscemi and FAC Racing. Victorious in all five starts this year including the Grade 3 Maxie Lee over the five-eighths mile Harrah's Philadelphia oval, Antognoni S meets his toughest test on Sunday.

"He's done everything we've asked thus far," said Gingras. "We'll see how he handles this level of competition."

For Antognoni S, the step up may not be that great with stablemate Lexus Kody (post 1) the likely favorite in the race. "He's beaten Lexus Kody in training miles," said Gingras. "But races are much different."

There is every reason to believe Antognoni S is ready to tackle the best in the sport and Gingras has witnessed firsthand the difference from January of 2025 to today.

"He's a much more relaxed horse now than he was when he first arrived," said Gingras. "Ronnie (Burke) was actually able to train him the other day and noticed the difference."

The calm is a key aspect to any trotter but in Antognoni S it is the storm that comes after it that is worth noting. "He's probably one of the fastest trotters I've driven for a short distance," said Gingras.

On Sunday, Antognoni S (post 4) meets a solid field of seven, with defending champion Up Your Deo (post 6) and the rugged Aetos Kronos S (post 7) on the outside looking in but very much solid factors in the contest. Up Your Deo pushed Lexus Kody to the limits in the Grade 3 JL Cruze at The Meadowlands on July 4, racing a long way without cover in a brisk second half and coming just a neck shy in the 1:49 4/5 mile. A 6-year-old by Walner, Up Your Deo is approaching \$1.2 million in career earnings.

Aetos Kronos S has hit the board in all four of his starts this year. The 10-year-old son of Bold Eagle finished third behind Antognoni S in the Lee while starting from post eight. The Marcus Melander-trainee with \$1.7 million banked during his career was most recently third in the JL Cruze while trapped inside much of the stretch.

Lexus Kody, the 2025 Dan Patch Award winner as Trotter of the Year, turned the corner on his 2026 campaign in the JL Cruze with his first sub-1:50 mile of the season. Tim Tetrick will reunite with the 8-year-old having driven him at The Meadowlands over two years ago. An 11-time winner in a vintage 2025 campaign, Lexus Kody went over the \$2 million mark with his 39th career triumph in the JL Cruze and looks to add to that bank account in the rich Spirit of Massachusetts, race eight of 11 on Sunday's stakes-filled program.

Rounding out the field will be Hey Porter (post 2), A New Leader (post 3) and Security Protected (post 5).



GRACE ZIMMERS

Antognoni won the Maxie Lee at Harrah's Philadelphia back in May.

Co-featured on the Plainridge program will be the \$150,000 Clara Barton, a Grade 3 event for pacing mares with six going forward, including 2024 Horse of the Year Twin B Joe Fresh (post 3). Gingras will guide Rodeo Drive Deo in the compact field.

"She's had no luck with the draw all season long," said Gingras of the Ron Burke-trained 4-year-old that drew posts nine and 10 in a pair of stakes events at The Meadowlands over the last two weeks. "She's been racing well, though I'm not sure if she can beat Twin B Joe Fresh."

Twin B Joe Fresh will likely surpass the \$3 million mark in lifetime earnings in the Clara Barton given she's just \$10K shy of that milestone. The Chris Ryder-trained 6-year-old got off to a rocky start in 2026 but has righted the ship noticeably in her last three starts. In the Grade 2 Dorothy Haughton Memorial driver and co-owner Dexter Dunn put Twin B Joe Fresh on the front end and was able to rate soft middle-half fractions on her way to a 1:48 4/5 victory over Unreasonable, a mare she'll meet again on Sunday.

Unreasonable had a spring campaign at Oak Grove racing in the Kentucky Sires program but graduated nicely to the Open class with a third- and second-place finish in the Perfect Sting and Dorothy Haughton Memorial over the last two weeks. A daughter of Huntsville trained by Andrew Harris, Unreasonable starts from post four with Todd McCarthy to drive.

Rounding out the field for the Clara Barton are Talk Curdy To Me (post 2), Rocket Deo (post 5) and Champagne Room (post 6).

First post for Sunday's Plainridge Park program is listed at 2:00 PM (EDT).



FREE PPs & ANALYSIS FOR PLAINRIDGE PARK



SUNDAY, JULY 19 | 2:00 PM (EDT)

- ✓ \$300,000 Spirit of Massachusetts
- ✓ \$150,000 Clara Barton

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Big Ranger prepping for Hambletonian at Scioto on Saturday

By Derick Gwerner

Many of the top contenders on the road to the Hambletonian were on display at The Meadowlands for the Stanley Dancer Memorial on July 11 and still more will be in action this Sunday in the Zweig Memorial at Vernon Downs, but there are many avenues a trainer can take to prepare for the most important date on the trotting calendar – some by design and others by necessity.

While it is true that many 3-year-olds use The Meadowlands as the preparatory ground for the Hambletonian, it is far from the only route to glory in that trotting classic. Recent history shows that 2022 winner Cool Papa Bell came into the race off a New York Sire Stakes win at Yonkers, Forbidden Trade (2019) off an overnight win at Woodbine Mohawk Park and Atlanta (2019) following a Sire Stakes score at Vernon. Digging deeper, back in 2005 Vivid Photo used a Tompkins-Geers victory at Scioto Downs as his springboard to a history-making win in the \$1.5 million final.

Fast forward more than 20 years and another horse will hope that lightning strikes twice as Big Ranger preps for the August 1 Hambletonian eliminations in a Buckeye Stallion Stake at Scioto Downs on Saturday. For trainer Anette Lorentzon, the colt's appearance in Ohio is more necessity rather than desire.

"He was never paid into anything until the Hambletonian," said Lorentzon, who skipped the fourth leg of the higher Sire Stakes class at Northfield Park on July 12 for the Scioto spot. "We didn't want to go on the half-mile track before the Hambletonian and it is over a five-hour ship. I was hoping when I got him that he was eligible to the Stanley Dancer, but he wasn't."

Until late May, Big Ranger was under the care of trainer/driver Ronnie Gillespie. He guided him to nine wins in 11 starts before Madison Global – Anthony Miller, Wes Beachy, Reuben Herschberger and Benjamin Shrock – elected to make the change to Lorentzon, who has more Grand Circuit experience and competed in the 2017 Hambletonian with Guardian Angel As.

Lorentzon had no prior relationship with any of the owners when she received a call one day. "They said, 'you probably don't know who I am but we got your number from someone.' Then we talked about it and I agreed. You never really get a call like that."

Big Ranger, a son of the hot Ohio sire In Range, didn't disappoint in his one and only start thus far for Lorentzon and new driver Tim Tetrick. Racing in the Ohio Sire Stakes at Scioto on June 13, he came away in the pocket, brushed to the front by the 56-second half and uncorked a sizzling 26 4/5 third quarter en route to a shut-down-late 1:50 3/5 track-record victory.

"Ronnie did a great job with him and I was just hoping we can keep him as good," said Lorentzon about the first race. "We got him and we put him on our training schedule. I know that's very different from how Ronnie trained him. Everything was new for him – environment, home, driver – and I was just hoping he would stay flat and put in a good race, but he was better than I thought [at Scioto] because we hadn't trained him up or anything."

"He's a big, strong colt that gets around the track so easily," said Tetrick about his first impressions of Big Ranger. "If I would've spoken to him [in the stretch], I think he could've gone 1:49 flat that night."

Lorentzon said she only made minor changes, mostly to the colt's shoeing and that during the last five weeks when he's been on the sidelines due to no stakes engagements, he's put on some good weight.

"He's a very like happy horse. He loves to work and he's got a great attitude," said the trainer.

While Lorentzon, who trains 28-head from her Paris, Kentucky farm and has 12 more at Magical Acres in New Jersey with her sister Anna Lorentzon, got the colt by surprise, it was her relationship with Tetrick that secured him the drive. He has driven a number of her stakes horses over the years and is no stranger to the Hambletonian, having been in the race many times and coming up victorious in 2012 with Market Share.

"I worked out on my schedule so I could go try him and I was glad I did, because that way I get to know him and try to teach him different ways of racing besides just leaving the gate and going to the front. To go against the Grand Circuit horses he has to learn the other way too," said Tetrick, who also has the Linda Toscano-trained It Could Be Worse as a potential Hambletonian horse.

Big Ranger has post six in the 15th race on the Saturday Scioto card. He is listed as the even money morning-line favorite and figured to offer odds of 1-9 at post time in the \$20,000 race. Tetrick is once again making the trip from his East Coast home to steer Big Ranger and has also picked up three drives in the four \$100,000 races on the stakes-filled card.

He'll sit behind I'm A Lou Lou in the G3 Nadia Lobell for 3-year-old pacing fillies, race 11 on the program. The pair won the G3 Park MGM Pace at Yonkers Raceway on June 26 but struggled in the G3 Jerry



Big Ranger set a track record at Scioto Downs in his first start with Tim Tetrick.

Silverman last time at The Meadowlands.

"She's just a step below some of the top ones, but most of them are a step below Loua Dipa and Be Perfect Bg," said Tetrick. "When she's in with this kind of group, she fits in pretty good."

I'm A Lou Lou starts from post two as the 3-1 morning line favorite.

In the #Senditin Invitational Pace (race 14), Tetrick will reunite with Best Chip for trainer Joe Bongiorno. The 4-year-old is exiting a sizzling 1:46 4/5 mile at The Meadowlands last week and now owns a 9-5-2-0 record in 2026.

"Joe's done a miraculous job with that horse," said Tetrick about Best Chip. "I drove him at Chester [Harrah's Philadelphia] and just trained him around there in 1:48 [3/5]. He gets around the track really easily."

Despite landing with the outside post nine in the field, Tetrick felt Best Chip (6-1) wasn't out of his element facing recent Haughton Memorial winner Lou Hill (post four, 9-2) as well as millionaires Maximus Miki (post one, 6-1), Dandy Ideal (post three, 4-1) and Prince Hal Hanover (post six, 7-2).

Tetrick picks up The Last Martini (6-1) for the first time in her career in the Cleopatra Invitational (Race 13) for older pacing mares. She drew post four and will have her hands full versus divisional leader Miki And Minnie (post three, 5-2), who seeks to rebound after a third-place finish in the G2 Dorothy Haughton at The Meadowlands. Dexter Dunn returns to the bike on the Chris Ryder trainee.

Race 12 features the G3 Moni Maker for 3-year-old trotting fillies. A wide-open group of seven will compete.

The marathon 17-race card at Scioto gets underway at 5:25 PM (EDT).

Loua Dipa tackles the boys as lead dog in Burke's Adios brigade

By Jay Bergman

There were two notable entries when the box was opened on Wednesday morning for the 60th edition of the Adios Pace at The Meadows. The \$35,000 supplemental entry of North America Cup champion Odds On Mr Mamba brought the sophomore pacer back in the spotlight after he had skipped the Meadowlands Pace. Then the sport's leading trainer Ron Burke decided that he wanted to win the biggest annual race at his home track and give himself the best chance by putting his special filly Loua Dipa in the box along with four solid sophomore colts.

"There's no dominant colt in the 3-year-old division," Burke said on Wednesday. "I like the colts that I entered but I think my filly is faster than any of them."

Thus, Loua Dipa will test the waters against male competition for the first time in her career in one of two \$25,000 eliminations for the Adios this Saturday at The Meadows. As luck would have it, the homebred daughter of Sweet Lou drew into the same division as Odds On Mr Mamba, getting post four to her soon-to-be rival's post six among seven in the race.

Fresh off a 1:48 career-equaling victory in the G2 Jerry Silverman Memorial at The Meadowlands on July 11, Loua Dipa returns home for the Adios.

"This is her home track," said Burke. "The colts are stabled in New Jersey and elsewhere, but she's been here 90 percent of the time."

The familiarity with the track matters but according to Burke the timing is right for his filly.

"She sat the two-hole and won the Fan Hanover and then she had a pretty easy time in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes," Burke said. "She had to race harder last Saturday (Silverman), but once she got the front I was confident she could hold off the other filly."

In comparing his lone filly with the four males he's entered for the Adios, Burke said, "She can carry her speed longer than the others."

Drawing in with Loua Dipa will be Frantic Hanover (post 1) and Another C Note (post 3).

"Frantic Hanover was much better in his last start than he was in the Messenger at Yonkers," said Burke. "The extra distance in the Messenger just didn't work for him. He stopped in the extra quarter."

Frantic Hanover finished a solid third pacing in 1:48 in an overnight event at Pocono on July 11.

Conversely, Another C Note didn't fire over the same Pocono surface a week ago. "That was his only bad race of the year," said Burke. "We think we figured out the issue and I'm hoping he's good enough to qualify and then will be sharper for the final."

Prior to the defeat, Another C Note, a son of Captaintreacherous, had won his first eight races this year while dominating in Pennsylvania.

Odds On Mr. Mamba put in two strong miles defeating the 2025 Horse of the Year Beau Jangles in both the North America Cup trials and the rich final on June 13 for trainer Melanie Wrenn. The homebred gelding by Odds On Equuleus came up short finishing third in an Indiana Sire Stakes event on June 26 and missed two weeks before returning with Lasix for a July 11 qualifying mile at Hoosier Park where he won in 1:51 1/5 with a final half in 54 seconds as a prep for The Adios. James MacDonald picked up the drive in Ontario and will follow Odds On Mr Mamba to The Meadows Saturday.

Burke's hard-hitting duo of Al Papi and Melillo landed good spots in the second \$25,000 elimination carded as race seven.

"Al Papi trained better than he has all year this morning," said Burke of the Meadowlands Pace runner-up. "I think that trip he went in the Pace may have broken him out."

Al Papi has been incredibly consistent racing at the top level this year



WALTER WŁODARCZYK

Loua Dipa starts from post four in the first Adios elimination on Saturday at The Meadows.

but has yet to win in seven starts. That could change given the Papi Rob Hanover-sired colt's favorable draw (post 3) on Saturday.

Al Papi brings a powerful resume into The Adios that includes a second-place finish in the Messenger at Yonkers and Meadowlands Pace, as well as a close fourth in the North America Cup final. On the board 10 times in 11 tries as a freshman, Al Papi was rated the 2-1 favorite for this division.

Melillo (post 5) didn't get the best of trips in The Meadowlands Pace but was right there on the wire, missing the board and finishing fourth in a blanket finish. "He went a big trip," said Burke of Melillo, a homebred by Sweet Lou.

A 1:48 4/5 winner in a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes this year, Melillo has shown the ability to race from on or off the pace with similar results.

Fellow supplemental entry No Waitlist (post 1) ships in for the Adios for trainer Blake MacIntosh in career form. Another sophomore that has advanced after the addition of Lasix, No Waitlist paced to a 1:50 victory at Woodbine Mohawk Park last Saturday (July 11), overcoming post nine in the process. A son of Cattlewash that was a finalist in the North America Cup, No Waitlist has an abundance of early speed.

Sweet Lovin Lou, an elimination winner of the North America Cup and more recently only a length off and fifth in The Meadowlands Pace, drew post eight for trainer Dan Lagace. Sweet Lovin Lou took his 1:48 2/5 career mark capturing a North America Cup elimination on June 6.

Five of the 15 horses entered for the Adios are by leading sire Sweet Lou and that includes Toast Of The Town, a gelding from the Noel Daley stable that drew post six. Toast Of The Town was a handy 1:48 3/5 winner at Pocono on July 11, paving the way for his return to stakes action.

The top four horses in each elimination are guaranteed a spot in the July 25 Adios final.

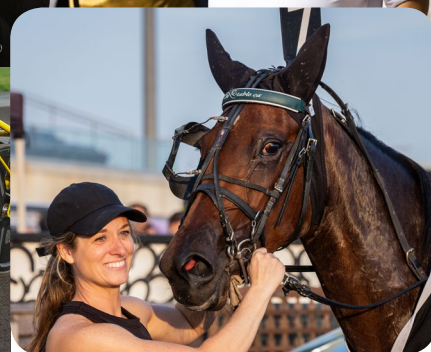
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MEADOWLANDS PACE NIGHT IN PICTURES

Photos by Nikki Sherman & Walter Wlodarczyk



Stoebe excited to start Diabolic Hill in Sunday's Zweig Memorial

The road to next month's Hambletonian and Hambletonian Oaks passes through Vernon Downs this Sunday (July 19) when the upstate New York oval hosts Grade 2 Dr. Harry M. Zweig Memorial races for 3-year-old male and female trotters.

Diabolic Hill, the No. 2-ranked horse in Meadowlands announcer/analyst Ken Warkentin's Road to the Winning Key Farm Hambletonian, is among a field of nine Zweig Memorial Open Trot participants all eligible to America's Trotting Classic for sophomore trotters, which will be held Aug. 8 (eliminations Aug. 1, if necessary) at the Meadowlands.

The Annie Stoebe-trained Diabolic Hill, with driver Todd McCarthy, will leave from post 5 in Sunday's \$300,000 Zweig Memorial Open (Race 11). The field also includes four other trotters in Warkentin's Top 10: No. 4 Magic Punk, No. 5 American Power, No. 8 Neighver Punt and No. 10 Nix Nacken.

Diabolic Hill, a son of Muscle Hill-Crysti Dream, has raced three times this year. He finished third in a leg of the New Jersey Sire Stakes Platinum Series on June 5 before registering second-place finishes in the NJSS final (a half-length behind Apex, who is No. 1 in the rankings) on June 12 and in a division of the W.N. Reynolds Memorial (a length behind Magic Punk) on July 4. All three races were at the Meadowlands.

"I'm excited to get him to the Zweig," Stoebe said about Diabolic Hill, who in the Reynolds got the lead exiting the first turn from post 9 and remained on top into deep stretch before pocket-sitting Magic Punk got by in a 1:51 4/5 mile. "His last start, he's not as game on the front; he loves having a target. He got nipped at the end but came a huge back half.

"He's raced good every start, in my opinion. I'm just hoping that tripwise it works out (Sunday) and he can get his first win of the year. He feels good coming into it."

Diabolic Hill – owned by Stoebe, Mario Mazza and AC Crawford Racing Stable – battled immaturity issues last year but still won five of 10 races, including the Grade 1 Valley Victory Stakes, and was second in the G1 Breeders Crown for freshman male trotters on his way to \$506,636 in earnings. During the offseason, he matured into a different horse.

"He's not as diabolical, like he was last year," Stoebe said with a laugh. "He's like a little sports car now; Todd can do whatever he wants with him. He's very manageable and nice to be around. I'm so happy with my horse."

Stoebe, who started her stable in 2021, has had a horse compete in the G1 Hambletonian Oaks, for 3-year-old female trotters, in the past (Instagram Model in 2023) but prior to last year never raced any male trotters. Now, she is working to get Diabolic Hill prepared for the G1 Hambletonian.

"I'm really looking forward to getting to be in that race," Stoebe said. "It's definitely a lot of stress and pressure but I'm trying to enjoy it along the way. You have to take it all into perspective. It's good pressure to have and good stress to have. It's exciting. You just focus on the horse, and he's turned into such a cool animal. You enjoy being around him and hanging out with him now. It's nice to have such a nice horse."

Following the Zweig, Diabolic Hill is eligible to the Tompkins-Geers Stakes at the Meadowlands on July 25.

"So, we're going to take this weekend, and if we need the Geers, we'll race," Stoebe said. "If not, we won't."

Neighver Punt, who won the G2 Goodtimes Stakes at Woodbine Mohawk Park on June 13, is one of three Zweig Memorial Open participants from the stable of trainer Marcus Melander, along with American Power and Nix Nacken. Neighver Punt (with driver Scott Zeron) will start Sunday from post 9 while American Power (James MacDonald) leaves from post 4 and Nix Nacken (Dexter Dunn) from post 8.

Magic Punk, who won the G3 Dexter Cup at the Meadowlands on May 2 and was second in the Goodtimes, will leave from post 2 with Yannick Gingras in the sulky for trainer Åke Svanstedt.

Also on Sunday's card is the \$139,000 Zweig Memorial Filly Trot (Race 9), with a nine-horse field made up entirely of Hambletonian Oaks eligibles.

That group includes 2025 Dan Patch Award winner Setyoursightshigh, who will start from post 4 with Dunn driving for Melander; All Time Trot S, who won last year's G1 Goldsmith Maid Stakes and leaves from post 7 with Gingras driving for Svanstedt; Busy Miss Lissy S, who won last year's G3 Kindergarten Classic Series final and starts from post 2 with trainer Svanstedt in the sulky; and Madam Cheval, who won the 2026 New Jersey Sire Stakes Platinum final and leaves from post 5 with Tim Tetrack driving for Nancy Takter.

Action at Vernon Downs begins at 6:05 p.m. (EDT) on Sunday.

-by Ken Weingartner

Hawthorne, Chicago's last racetrack, sold to 'non-racing entity'

By Matt Hegarty

The Chicago area has likely lost its last live Thoroughbred racetrack after a developer described as a "non-racing entity" acquired Hawthorne Race Course through a bankruptcy auction on Tuesday that attracted no other bids.

Though the sale needs approval from the court presiding over Hawthorne's bankruptcy filing, horsemen's officials expressed pessimism about live racing surviving beyond this year. The Illinois Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (ITHA) has filed a motion to tap into a state fund for racing purses in a bid to keep the current live meet going through Nov. 1, but the organization has received no indications that the winning bidder will look to do anything more than demolish the track and redevelop the 107-acre property.

"In the long, long term it doesn't look good, and in the long term it doesn't look good, but maybe we can get through this year," said David McCaffrey, the executive director of the ITHA, while at the Tuesday bankruptcy auction.

Hawthorne, located in Stickney, a suburb of Chicago's south side, had been struggling for years, but the track's owners held out hope they could strike a deal with a partner to develop a casino on the property after the legislature authorized racetrack casinos in 2019. No such deal ever emerged.

Even after filing for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in February, the track's longtime president and CEO, Thomas Carey, told the court that they were seeking either bids or partnerships with casino companies so that racing could continue at the track. Under the 2019 legislation, the casino license was tied to the racing license.

But at the Tuesday auction, there was still no interest from a casino operator. The Delaware-registered company that won the bid, called Allimac, faced no rivals for its \$90 million offer, which was approved

by the court as the stalking-horse bid last week.

Thomas Carey is one of dozens of descendants of Robert Carey, who bought the track in 1909, to hold equity in the track. According to sources, obtaining unanimity from the stakeholders complicated efforts to reach a deal on a casino, going all the way back to 2019.

Although the bankruptcy court could intervene in the sale and decline to approve the Allimac bid, that seems an unlikely outcome. A hearing has been scheduled for July 20 for the court to evaluate the bid.

At the same hearing, the ITHA's motion to get approval for the release of \$1.125 million from the Illinois Horse Racing Purse Equity Fund will also be heard. Horsemen believe that the release of the funds would allow racing to continue at Hawthorne on a two-day-a-week schedule through Nov. 1. Earlier in June, the court approved a separate release of funding from the track's debtor-in-possession financing that would keep the purse funds flowing through July 20.

Hawthorne's live meet this year started in April in the midst of bankruptcy negotiations. Although the meet began with racing two days a week, the track dropped Saturdays and has only run on Sundays for the last three weeks. Handle and field sizes have plummeted at the meet compared to last year.

Hawthorne has been the sole live racetrack in the Chicago area since Churchill Downs Inc. announced it had reached a deal to sell Arlington Park – one of the live-racing jewels in North American racing – to the NFL's Chicago Bears in 2021. The Bears bought the 326-acre property for \$197.2 million.

The Bears had outlined plans to build a new stadium on the site, but those plans are now competing with an offer by Indiana to provide generous tax breaks for a stadium in Hammond, just over the Illinois border.

Arlington had its own problems, but according to CDI's financial statements, the track produced positive cash flow. CDI executives said they made the decision to sell the track because the casino tax rates contained in the 2019 legislation were too onerous.

Bourbonista gets first MGM Yonkers International Trot invite

In just over eight weeks (Sept. 12), some of the best trotters in the world will gather at MGM Yonkers Raceway for the \$1,000,000 G1 MGM Yonkers International Trot. While the complete field won't be known for some time, Bourbonista S will be one of the 10 invitees after accepting an invitation from track management.

"We were just happy to get the invitation," said co-owner Jens Glud Hansen, who races under the banner of Panamera Racing, an homage to the popular Porsche sports car.

Hansen is no stranger to racing in the MGM Yonkers International Trot as his Kennedy finished fifth in the event back in 2022. It will, however, be co-owner Michael Gulotta's (Deo Volente Farms LLC) first taste of the race.

"I feel very blessed to own a horse like her," said Gulotta.

Hansen owns the Selected Sales auction company in Denmark and suggested to Gulotta that Bourbonista S would be a wise purchase. He agreed and the 50/50 partnership was made after purchasing the horse for approximately \$200,000 USD.

"She was a good horse in Scandinavia and was second and third to Allegiant as a 4-year-old," said Hansen. "I said to Mike, 'I think she can go 1:50 or maybe even 1:49 on a good day at the Red Mile.'"

As it turns out, Hansen's prediction fell well short of Bourbonista S's capability. In the Six Pack on July 4 at The Meadowlands, the 5-year-old daughter of Face Time Bourbon displayed speed at both ends of the mile en route to a 1:48 4/5 victory with Dexter Dunn in the bike. The final time made her the fastest trotting mare in North American history.

Trainer Marcus Melander, who got the horse at the start of 2026 after some lackluster results in another U.S. barn, pointed out how he tapped into Bourbonista S's raw pool of ability.

"It took about five or six weeks until she really turned things around and we could start training on the sand track and in the deep sand. When she really turned the corner and started taking to her training well, she got stronger and stronger," said Melander, who added that the decision to remove her shoes made a huge difference in her performance.

Bourbonista S raced without shoes for the first time on May 23 over a sloppy track at The Meadowlands and finished second. Since then she has won two stakes races (Six Pack and Armbro Flight), both impressively by more than three lengths.

Despite being a big filly according to Melander, Bourbonista S wears very little equipment and he expects her to get around the smaller Yonkers Raceway oval without issue. The trainer also feels that the track



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Bourbonista is a multiple stakes winner in 2026.

surface should be conducive to sticking with the "no shoes" protocol.

"I'd say the track's been good there when I've shown up for Sire Stakes and [International Trot] day they usually have the track really good," said Melander.

Bourbonista S, who was bred in Denmark to a Swedish-registered mare, will represent Sweden in the MGM Yonkers International Trot. She owns a 7-3-2-1 record and has earned \$158,240 in 2026. Her upcoming schedule includes the Miss Versatility on August 1 and Dr. John R. Steele Memorial on August 8 at The Meadowlands.

Invitations are in the works to fill out the 10-horse field for the MGM Yonkers International Trot and more horses will be announced in the coming days and weeks. The race will be the focal point of a stellar card on September 12 that starts at 11:50 a.m. (EDT) and includes the \$2.4 million New York Sire Stakes finals for 2- and 3-year-olds as well as a pair of \$200,000 Invitationals – Bob Miecuna Trot and Aria Pace.

MGM Yonkers Raceway is currently operating on a Monday through Friday racing schedule with post time at 6:45 p.m. (EDT).

Loua Dipa leads Top 10 poll

Adios-bound filly pacer Loua Dipa returned to the No. 1 spot in the Week 5 edition of the Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll released Wednesday following her victory in this past Saturday's Grade 3 Jerry Silverman Memorial at the Meadowlands.

Loua Dipa, who was No. 1 in Week 3 and no lower than No. 2 in the other weeks, won the Silverman Memorial, for sophomore filly pacers, in 1:48 to set the stakes record and equal the divisional track record. She received 17 of 35 first-place votes.

Last week's No. 1, Miki And Minnie, dropped to fourth after a third-place finish in the Grade 2 Dorothy Haughton Memorial, which was won by her stablemate, Twin B Joe Fresh. With that victory, Twin B Joe Fresh jumped up to No. 9 in rankings and was one of two newcomers to the Top 10.

Grade 1 Meadowlands Pace winner Brandon Blvd and Grade 1 Hambletonian Maturity champ On To Norway both moved up one position, to second and third, respectively, behind Loua Dipa. Odds On Mr Mamba, who was idle, completed the top five. His position was unchanged from last week. Brandon Blvd received 11 first-place votes while On To Norway got five and Miki And Minnie and Odds On Mr Mamba each got one.

Apex, who won a division of the Grade 3 Stanley Dancer Memorial, vaulted from No. 10 to sixth in the rankings. He was followed by Hambletonian Maturity runner-up Super Chapter and Endurance, who captured the other Dancer division and joined became the other Top 10 newcomer. Ervin Hanover, who was eighth in the Grade 2

William R. Haughton Memorial, fell from No. 6 to No. 10.

Bourbonista S, who was idle, and Spencer Hanover, who made a break in a division of the Stanley Dancer, dropped out of the Top 10.

The Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll, which will continue weekly on Wednesdays through the Grand Circuit season, does not determine year-end awards. The members of the U.S. Harness Writers Association vote on all Dan Patch Award division winners plus Trotter of the Year, Pacer of the Year, and Horse of the Year.

Rankings based on the votes of harness racing media representatives on a 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown Standardbred Poll: 7/15/2026

Rank	Name (1st Votes)	Age/Sex/Gait	Record	Earnings	Points	Pvs
1	Loua Dipa (17)	3fp	5-4-1-0	\$291,090	318	2
2	Brandon Blvd (11)	3cp	6-4-2-0	\$681,330	297	3
3	On To Norway (5)	4gt	7-6-1-0	\$392,250	284	4
4	Miki And Minnie (1)	4mp	6-4-0-2	\$245,414	192	1
5	Odds On Mr Mamba (1)	3gp	4-3-0-1	\$437,400	172	5
6	Apex	3ct	3-2-1-0	\$189,629	159	10
7	Super Chapter	4ht	4-2-2-0	\$193,875	96	7
8	Endurance	3ct	5-4-1-0	\$291,349	91	--
9	Twin B Joe Fresh	6mp	5-2-1-0	\$128,266	60	--
10	Ervin Hanover	6hp	4-3-0-0	\$131,604	49	6

ALSO: Bourbonista S 46; Nezuko Kamado S 32; Be Perfect BG 31; Antognoni S, Lexus Kody 21; Lou Hill 9; Captain Optimistic, Jailbird Jog, Spencer Hanover 8; Bythemissal, Periculum 5; Captain Albano, Shalom Hanover 4; Mossdale Ben N 2; Absolution, Big Ranger, My Taylors Swift 1.

-Ken Weingartner for Hambletonian Society



8 PLAINRIDGE SUN

1 Mile Trot THE SPIRIT OF MASSACHUSETTS. GRADE 2 STAKE EVENT 3 YEARS AND OLDER FREE FOR ALL. DECLARATION FEE \$2,500. Purse \$300,000

LAST LEG SPIRIT PICK 3 | LAST LEG PICK 4 | \$2 EXACTA-\$1 TRIFECTA | \$2.00 SUPERFECTA | DAILY DOUBLE (8-9) | NO SHOW WAGERING

1 LEXUS KODY (L)		br g 8, by Archangel, Lexus Helios by Ken Warkentin		Last 5 Sts-\$286,033		*1:49.4 M1		26 PRc 0 0 0 0		-26		4 2 1 0		\$109,240	
7:14.91 (7/8) *\$27,310		Burke Rqo Stb.Frdcktrwn,PA;Weaver Brusceini,Cnsbrq,PA;P Collura,Mntn Tp,PA		*1:49.1 Wbs 7/8		25 PRc 1 0 0 0		\$0 25		-21		11 3 4		*\$137,651	
3-1 Ti. Tetrick 1062-248-192-152 (234)		R. Burke 2654-534-425-329 (201)		Br.- Norm H Dunstan, ON, CA		24 PRc 0 0 0 0		-Life		94		29 12 12		*\$208,433	
4 July26	3M1	fst1855	274	55	1:23	1:49	JL Cruze-G3	131250	5	1 ⁰¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
13 Jun26	5Wbs	fst1770	264	55:1	2:22	1:50	FAA	46800	2	5 ⁶	5 ⁰⁴	4 ⁰⁰	4 ⁰⁰	4 ⁰⁰	4 ⁰⁰
16 May26	10M1	fst1750	27	54:4	2:23	1:49	Cutler-G3	150100	8	3 ⁰¹	1 ⁰¹	1 ^{hd}	4 ¹²	4 ¹²	4 ¹²
2 May26	8M1	fst1555	273	55:1	2:33	1:50	Opn Hcp	40000	5	1 ⁰¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹
18 Apr26	8M1	fst1555	283	56:1	2:24	1:52	Qua	4	4 ⁴³	4 ⁰³	3 ⁰¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹
11 Apr26	6M1	fst1555	291	56:3	1:25	1:53	Qua	2	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹
15 Nov25	10M1	gd490	271	55:3	2:33	1:51	D-FanDuel-G1	350000	6	3 ⁰¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ³¹	1 ³¹	1 ³¹
25 Oct25	7Wbs	fst1410	262	54:3	2:21	1:50	BRDRS CR-G1	600000	5	4 ⁰³	4 ⁰³	2 ⁰¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹
18 Oct25	8Wbs	fst1600	27	55:1	2:23	1:49	BRDRS CROW	25000	1	4 ⁴³	2 ⁰⁰	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
7 Oct25	5Mw	slv660	282	57:1	2:26	1:54	Qua	6	1 ¹¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²

2 HEY PORTER (L)		b g 4, by Bar Hopping, Chelseas A Winner by Big Rigs		Last 5 Sts-\$29,998		1:53.1 Prc 5/8		26 * 1 1 0 0		\$12,500 26 Tot		7 3 0 1		\$43,049	
3:15.14 (1) \$6,150		Pollack Racing LLC, Venetia, Pa		1:51.4 M1		25 PRc 0 0 0 0		-25 Tot		19		3 6 3		\$183,539	
7-1 B. Beckwith 1084-249-158-144 (230)		E. Robinson 555-94-96-81 (169)		Br.- Buck Haven Farm Inc, PA		24 PRc 0 0 0 0		-Life		33		10 7 4		\$302,838	
30 Jun26	7PRc	wf820	263	55:1	2:33	1:53	OPEN 1	25000	1	4 ⁵	4 ⁶	2 ⁰¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²
20 Jun26	12PCd	fst1760	28	55:4	2:43	1:53	W-6PM	17500	2	3 ⁰²	3 ²³	2 ⁰³	2 ^{hd}	2 ^{hd}	2 ^{hd}
12 Jun26	11M1	wf820	273	55:2	2:31	1:49	Graduate	50000	2	2 ¹¹	3 ²¹	5 ²³	5 ²³	5 ²³	5 ²³
30 May26	7Wbs	fst1590	27	55:2	2:33	1:52	Graduate	72900	9	1 ¹³	3 ¹¹	5 ⁴¹	5 ⁴¹	5 ⁴¹	5 ⁴¹
16 May26	10M1	fst1750	27	55:4	2:33	1:49	Cutler-G3	150100	5	7 ⁷	7 ⁵³	8 ⁵	6 ⁵⁴	6 ⁵⁴	6 ⁵⁴
2 May26	8M1	fst1555	273	55:1	2:33	1:50	Opn Hcp	40000	2	5 ⁵¹	5 ⁶	5 ⁴³	5 ⁴¹	5 ⁴¹	5 ⁴¹
25 Apr26	11PCdA	slv420	283	58:4	2:27	1:53	W-4PM	17500	4	2 ⁰¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ^{hd}	1 ^{hd}	1 ^{hd}
18 Apr26	8M1	fst1555	283	56:1	2:24	1:52	Qua	2	3 ³¹	3 ²³	4 ²¹	4 ²¹	4 ²¹	4 ²¹	4 ²¹
18 Dec25	10M1	fst1440	28	55:4	2:24	1:51	5u w4-nw7	37500	6	1 ⁰⁰	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
11 Dec25	9M1	fst1310	282	56:1	2:25	1:52	5u w4-nw7	29150	7	1 ⁰⁰	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹

3 A NEW LEADER (L)		b g 7, by Triton, Miss Directed by Kadabra		Last 5 Sts-\$16,750		1:52.4 Prc 5/8		26 * 8 1 2 2		\$32,250 26 Tot		10 1 2 2		\$33,487	
6:15.24 (5/8) \$3,349		Ray Lasky,Mechanicville,NY;Micheil D Cushing,Ballston Spa,NY		1:52.4 Prc 5/8		25 * 19 5 3 3		\$94,000 25 Tot		33		4 4 4		\$151,855	
15-1 M. Cushing 384-63-52-51 (164)		M. Cushing 61-9-8-6 (148)		Br.- Lyndar Stables, IN;Frontier Farms, IL		24 PRc 0 0 0 0		-Life		104		20 13 15		\$330,713	
30 Jun26	2PRc	fst1860	274	56:1	2:42	1:52	Qua T/P	27500	4	4 ⁴	4 ⁴	4 ⁰⁵	3 ⁴¹	3 ⁴¹	3 ⁴¹
23 Jun26	7PRc	fst1660	27	57:1	2:44	1:53	Opn Hcp	27500	6	7 ⁶	7 ⁶	7 ⁶	7 ⁶	7 ⁶	7 ⁶
16 Jun26	8PRc	fst1760	273	56:2	2:42	1:52	Opn Hcp	30000	6x	8 ¹⁴	8 ¹⁴	8 ¹⁴	8 ¹⁵	8 ¹⁵	8 ¹⁵
9 Jun26	8PRc	fst1820	27	56:1	2:34	1:52	Opn Hcp I	27500	7	7 ⁷	7 ⁵³	7 ⁵¹	7 ⁶¹	7 ⁶¹	7 ⁶¹
2 Jun26	7PRc	fst1730	274	56:1	2:42	1:52	Opn Hcp	27500	3	2 ¹	2 ¹	3 ¹¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹
26 May26	7PRc	fst1810	27	55:3	2:34	1:53	Opn Hcp	25000	scratched-jg-trainer entry error						
19 May26	8PRc	fst1920	27	55:3	2:34	1:53	Opn Hcp	25000	3	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ³¹	1 ³¹	1 ³¹
4 May26	8PRc	fst1680	273	56:1	2:51	1:54	Opn Hcp	25000	6	2 ¹	2 ¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹
25 Apr26	9PRc	fst1640	273	56:3	2:51	1:54	Opn Hcp	25000	4	3 ¹¹	2 ¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹
16 Apr26	8PRc	fst1790	272	57:1	2:53	1:55	Opn Hcp	25000	5	2 ²	2 ¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹	3 ¹¹

4 ANTOGNONI (S)		br g 6, by Father Patrick, Bouncing Box by Credit Winner		Last 5 Sts-\$128,000		1:50.4 Prc 5/8		26 PRc 0 0 0 0		-26		5 5 0 0		*\$126,800	
6:15.04 (5/8) \$25,360		Burke Rqo Stb.Frdcktrwn,PA;Weaver Brusceini,Cnsbrq,PA;P Collura,Mntn Tp,PA		1:51.2 Wbs 7/8		25 PRc 0 0 0 0		-25		24		16 3 5		*\$481,537	
2-1 Y. Gingras 915-147-157-127 (161)		R. Burke 2654-534-425-329 (201)		Br.- Harbor Racing Stable LLC, ON, CA		24 PRc 0 0 0 0		-Life		49		27 5 6		\$669,661	
25 Jun26	7YR	fst1770	274	57:1	2:25	1:53	Inv	43000	5	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
18 Jun26	8YR	fst1660	28	57:3	2:26	1:52	Inv	43000	6	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
24 May26	11PhI	fst1610	261	54:4	2:23	1:50	M Lee Inv-G3	100000	4	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹
2 May26	8M1	fst1555	273	55:1	2:33	1:50	Opn Hcp	40000	6	3 ²¹	3 ²¹	3 ⁰²	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
10 Apr26	10M1	fst1570	27	56:1	2:41	1:51	W/O	30000	3	3 ²³	3 ²³	3 ⁰¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²
4 Apr26	3M1	fst1720	292	59:1	2:28	1:54	Qua	25000	3	3 ²³	3 ²³	2 ⁰¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
19 Dec25	7YR	gd500	271	1:27	1:56	2:25	MGM GP F	50000	2	5 ³¹	4 ²¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²	1 ¹²
12 Dec25	6YR	fst1300	274	57:3	2:26	1:54	MGM GP L3	50000	2	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹	1 ¹¹
5 Dec25	2YR	fst1310	282	57:1	2:25	1:54	MGM GP L2	50000	2	1 ¹¹	1 ¹²	1 ¹⁴	1 ¹⁶	1 ¹⁶	1 ¹⁶
21 Nov25	5YR	fst1490	28	57:1	2:25	1:53	MGM GP L1	50000	1	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	2 ¹¹

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Adios to be featured on CBS Sports Network

Hollywood Casino at The Meadows in conjunction with the Meadows Standardbred Owners Association is proud to announce that CBS Sports Network will nationally televise the 60th edition of the Grade 1 Delvin Miller Adios Pace for the Orchids on Saturday, July 25, 2026.

Presented by 1/ST BET, the Adios will serve as the centerpiece of three hours of live race-day coverage. The day will begin with two hours of content across **Primetime Racing's** social media platforms (2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET) before transitioning to a live national, one-hour cable telecast on CBS Sports Network at 5:00 p.m. ET.

"We are very grateful to everyone who has come together to make this broadcast possible," said Michael Carter, Director of Racing at Hollywood Casino at The Meadows. "From the team at CBS Sports, to the Primetime Racing Broadcast Team, to the Meadows Standardbred Owners Association, and everyone here at The Meadows, this has truly been a collaborative effort. We are excited for the opportunity to showcase our signature event to a national audience."

The CBS Sports Network has a reach of nearly 60 million households across the United States.

The Delvin Miller Adios is one of only five Grade 1 stakes races for sophomore colt pacers in North America. Elimination races will be contested on Saturday, July 18, with the top finishers advancing to the July 25 final.

The Adios Day program will also feature a stakes-filled undercard, highlighted by the Mickey Burke Sr. Adioo Volo, the companion event to the Adios, which attracts many of the nation's top three-year-old pacing fillies.

"This is the biggest day of our racing season," Carter said. "The Adios consistently draws our largest on-track crowd and generates our highest wagering handle of the year. The race itself never disappoints, bringing together the sport's premier horses, trainers, and drivers. Having the opportunity to present this event to a national television audience is something we are incredibly proud of, and an opportunity we simply could not pass up."

Media and on-site sponsorship opportunities remain available for Adios Day. Interested parties may contact Meadow Twaddle of the Meadows Standardbred Owners Association at marketing@themsoa.com for additional information.

Post time for the July 25 race card is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. ET at Hollywood Casino at The Meadows.

-release (The Meadows)

TIGHT BATTLE DEVELOPING IN MEADOWLANDS DRIVER RACE

While The Meadowlands will take a brief hiatus from Grand Circuit racing this weekend, all eyes will shift to the race for leader drivers. With just nine race cards remaining in the Winter-Spring-Championship Meet, the battle for top driver is still very much up for grabs.

It's a two-way fight, as Brett Beckwith, whose 146 wins led The Big M in 2025, currently has 88 victories. Joe Bongiorno is in hot pursuit with 83.

The duo is incredibly close when it comes to how effective they have been for their backers. Beckwith wins at a rate of 22.1 percent, while Bongiorno scores at a 21.3 percent clip.

For some perspective, there are 22 drivers who have at least 100 starts at The Big M this year, and the only two with win percentages 20 percent or higher other than Beckwith and Bongiorno are Yannick Gingras (22 percent) and Dexter Dunn (23.6 percent).

-edited release (Meadowlands)

TRACK CLOSURES PILING UP ON THURSDAY

Four tracks announced the cancelation of live racing on Thursday due to wildfires in Canada.

Monticello Raceway, Running Aces, Woodbine Mohawk Park and Yonkers Raceway all opted to cancel either by choice or due to state mandate. The Meadows and Harrah's Philadelphia went on with their live programs on Thursday afternoon and Plainridge Park, Scioto Downs and Harrah's Hoosier Park are scheduled to race later in the afternoon or evening.

The Meadowlands, which wasn't scheduled to race on Thursday, moved its qualifiers from Friday morning to Saturday to wait for the air to clear, which is projected to happen by Friday afternoon.

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.

FRIDAY, JULY 17

RACE 6

(1) HOT FLASH KIMMY is by far the biggest money earner of these in 2026 and that's due to her being competitive with better than these. Stratton trainee drops in class again and moves from the eight hole to the rail.

-Matt Rose

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

RACE 13

(4) LIFETIME DREAMER was kind of lollygagging in third through the stretch when (1) Presidente came alongside and this guy reengaged and was never letting that foe pass. Gingras being back in the bike now is a plus.

-Derick Gwerner


MEADOWLANDS
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

RACE 7

(6) TH THEO got shuffled last week which took him out of contention. He finds an easier group tonight and should try to get out of traffic trouble.

-Kevin Plowcha

 **WOODBINE**
MOHAWK PARK

SATURDAY, JULY 18

RACE 2

(2) IN ONE FELL SWOOP was raced conservatively and sat in all kinds of stretch traffic last out. He really had no chance anyway considering the field came home in 26 seconds. Let's look for more now.

-Giwner


MEADOWLANDS
RACING & ENTERTAINMENT

FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

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

Meadowlands Analysis

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

Yonkers Analysis

[Friday](#)

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

 **INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES** 

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

TWO MORE TRACK RECORDS FALL IN 2026 OAK GROVE FINALE

Brett Pelling trainee Sea Bistro Hanover set flight past the quarter and muscled around the track to equal the fastest pacing mile ever at Oak Grove Racing, Gaming & Hotel with a 1:48 victory in the \$80,000 Kentucky Sire Stakes (KYSS) final for 3-year-old pacing colts and geldings on Wednesday (July 15).

[READ MORE](#)

SEVEALLISTO, JULIA FLORENCE SHINE IN NEW YORK SIRE STAKES

Seveallisto (\$49.90) appeared to be battling for minor awards in the stretch drive of the first \$54,750 division of the New York Sire Stakes for the 2-year-old filly trotters at Buffalo Raceway on Wednesday afternoon (July 15). However, a sudden surge by Seveallisto at the wire changed all that as she clipped a stunned French Pastry by a nose in 2:00 1/5 over the fast track.

[READ MORE](#)

DOUBLES FOR MELANDER BROS, BUTER/BUTENSCHOEN IN PA ALL-STARS

"Team Melander" - driver Mattias and trainer-brother Marcus - won two of the four \$30,000 divisions of a Pennsylvania All-Stars event for 2-year-old trotting fillies on Tuesday afternoon at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania. "Team Buterschoen" - driver Tyler Buter and trainer John Butenschoen - won the other two.

[READ MORE](#)

CARBON FIBER CONVERTS POCKET TRIP INTO TRACK RECORD IN KYSS

Carbon Fiber found a perfect trip from the pocket behind quick fractions and capitalized effortlessly in the stretch for a track-record victory in the \$80,000 Kentucky Sire Stakes final for 2-year-old trotting colts and geldings on "Tuesday at the Trots" (July 14) at Oak Grove.

[READ MORE](#)

UPSETS IN MARYLAND SIRE STAKES AT OCEAN DOWNS

The second and final preliminary leg of the Maryland Sire Stakes for 3-year-old colt and gelding trotters and pacers was contested Monday evening over the half-mile oval at Ocean Downs, setting the stage for Championship Night later this month.

[READ MORE](#)

NORDIC CATCHER S SHARP IN RETURN FROM INJURY

Nordic Catcher S did not look like a horse who was coming off a 345-day layoff, as the 2025 Hambletonian winner, who had not raced since that million dollar day, was ready for the \$27,500 featured fast-class handicap trot at Pocono Downs on Tuesday afternoon, winning in 1:51.

[READ MORE](#)

TROTTER'S GOLD IS THE HAMBLETONIAN 101 OFFICIAL BEER

- In celebration of the 101st edition of America's greatest harness race, the Hambletonian Society, Meadowlands Racetrack, and Ghost Hawk Brewing Company have again teamed up to provide fans and guests with Trotter's Gold 2026.

Labeled "Trotter's Gold", the Clifton, NJ-based brewery has produced a 5% ABV American Golden Ale brewed with GR2-ROW & Melanoidin malts and US Mittelfruh hops to create the perfect refreshing summer sipper.

The can's label features 2025 Hambletonian winner Nordic Catch S. It is available for sale at the racetrack, in all dining rooms and racetrack bars.

The \$1 million Winning Key Farm Hambletonian is slated for Saturday afternoon, August 8th.

Everything Hambletonian can be found [here](#) and [hambletonian.com](#).
-release (Meadowlands)

SOPHOMORE FILLIES COMPETE IN SECOND LEG OF MARYLAND SIRE STAKES

The second preliminary leg of the Maryland Sire Stakes for 3-year-old

filly pacers and trotters highlighted Wednesday night's card at Ocean Downs, with two pacing divisions and one trotting division contested for purses of \$10,000.

[READ MORE](#)

FOR DAYZE, BLUEBIRD KAZOOM RULE IN INDIANA SIRE STAKES

Taking care of business in the two \$48,500 divisions of the fourth leg of Indiana Sire Stakes for 3-year-old trotting fillies, For Dayze and Bluebird Kazoom coasted to the winner's circle as heavy favorites in their respective splits at Harrah's Hoosier Park on Wednesday (July 15).

[READ MORE](#)

HOMICIDE HUNTER WILL LEAD SPIRIT OF MASSACHUSETTS POST PARADE

On Sunday, July 19, Plainridge Park will once again host their signature stakes, the G2 \$300,000 Spirit of Massachusetts Trot and G3 \$150,000 Clara Barton Distaff Pace, when the Grand Circuit rolls into town. But along with all of today's trotting stars that will be on hand to compete in the Spirit, thanks to a sponsorship by Plainridge Park, the Standardbred Owners of Massachusetts and the Harness Horseman's Association of New England, another World Champion trotting star from almost a decade ago, who is now a champion in another lane, will also make an appearance.

Homicide Hunter, who became the fastest trotter in harness racing history after posting his 1:48.4 mile in a Grand Circuit event at The Red Mile in 2018, will be at Plainridge Park for a meet and greet with the fans, and to lead the post parade for the ninth edition of The Spirit of Massachusetts Trot.

That 1:48 4/5 mile time helped Homicide Hunter to be named Older Male Trotter of the Year in 2018 by the United States Harness Writers Association. He retired from racing two years later with over \$1.7 million in earnings, but almost immediately started a new career that has seen him rise back to the top.

Nancy Longobardi is a Director of the Standardbred Owners of Massachusetts and she is extremely excited for Homicide Hunter's visit.

"Jolene Andrews is one of our trainers at Plainridge and she told us about the success Homicide Hunter has had in his new career after racing, and suggested he would be a perfect fit for our Spirit Day activities. So we contacted Molly D'Aogstino and the whole thing came together rather quickly.

"We look forward to having the whole MMXX Team here along with Homi, as we continue to champion for and support a second career for all our race horses," said Longobardi.

Under the ownership of Crawford Farms Racing of Syracuse, New York, Homicide Hunter is the star of MMXX Standardbreds, a non-profit Standardbred show team and aftercare initiative that is helping to reshape what life after racing looks like for Standardbreds. His new career as a show horse has been nothing less than spectacular as he has seemingly mastered all the disciplines he competes in.

Molly D'Agostino founded MMXX Standardbreds in 2020 and they have since excelled in the transition of vetted adoptions from racing owners and trainers to riding homes. Since 2023, the program has completed 400 adoptions at no cost to the connections of the horses.

Michelle Panebianco is the Owner and CEO of Crawford Farms Racing and Homicide Hunter, and is a major supporter of MMXX Standardbreds. She has placed other horses from her racing operation with MMXX and has watched them succeed. But in an interview she did earlier this year, Crawford clearly puts "Homi" at the top of her list.

"He's just so special. On the racetrack, he was defined by speed and straight lines. In the show ring, success demands something entirely different: rhythm, softness, adjustability and expression. His transition highlights a truth that MMXX Standardbreds is working to bring into the mainstream," said Crawford.

This will be the only live meet and greet this year with Homicide Hunter, who remains one of the fastest trotters of all time.

Homicide Hunter will have his own paddock adjacent to the grandstand where he will meet his fans and you will be able to take photos with him, the MMXX team and the famous PtHA World Championship Buckle!

Post time for the first race on Spirit Sunday is 2:00 p.m.

-edited release (Tim Bojarski for Plainridge Park)