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Brandon Blvd remains atop Top 10; Page reaches 8,000 wins; Post time change for The Meadowlands

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

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2026



(left to right/top to bottom) Endurance, Apex, Big Ranger and Jailbird Jog.

By Jay Bergman

A total of 19 horses were entered on Tuesday morning (July 28), forcing a pair of \$100,175 eliminations this Saturday for the 101st Hambletonian, a Grade 1 event at The Meadowlands on August 8.

Jason Bartlett, the 2025 Driver of the Year, finds himself in a position he has not seen before in his illustrious career. Bartlett has a mount in each elimination, with Captain Naughty making his Meadowlands pari-mutuel debut in the seventh race and first division and Spencer Hanover, the 2025 Breeders Crown champion, going to post in the second division carded as race nine.

Could Bartlett have imagined five years ago that he would be in this position?

"No," said Bartlett bluntly. "It would have been something just to have one horse in an elimination but to be driving two is special."

While neither of Bartlett's horses are likely to be favored in their eliminations, there is plenty of room for optimism that they have the capacity to reach the final.

For Spencer Hanover, his sophomore season was moving along quite smoothly with four wins in four starts including a win in the inaugural Oak Grove Trotting Derby. Then in his last two starts the Chapter Seven-sired colt made miscues

in both the Yonkers Trot and Stanley Dancer. The first over a half-mile track wasn't much of a surprise to trainer Marcus Melander, who



Jason Bartlett has drives in both Hambletonian eliminations and two Oaks elims.

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HAMBLETONIAN FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

SATURDAY

**1
AUG**



SEAFOOD FEST AND ELIMINATIONS

📍 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

The greatest day in harness racing! \$3.5 Million in undercard races with a post time of 12 Noon. Plus rides & games, \$2,500 Best Dressed Contest judged by Emmy Award-Winning TV Star Carson Kressley and Caitlyn Warakowski of @howdoyouwearthat, plus a \$1,000 Hat Contest also judged by Carson.

3M



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FARM



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HAMBLETONIAN
 AT THE MEADOWLANDS



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recognized that Spencer Hanover was not always comfortable on four turns. The break in the Dancer was different.

"He was tracking nicely," said Bartlett of the Dancer. "I thought I was going to be right there on the wire with him before he made the break."

Spencer Hanover qualified back on July 18 with trainer Melander in the bike. "Marcus made a few changes and said he was fine in the qualifier," Bartlett said of his conversation with the conditioner.

As for Saturday's elimination race, Bartlett likes where Spencer Hanover drew (post 3) in the field of 10, with much of the power coming on the outside of the starting gate.

"It looks like there's plenty of speed in this race and that it should set up nicely for us," said Bartlett.

Trainer Noel Daley will send out Minoan (post 2) in the same division.

"I was kind of on the fence with him before last week," Daley said. "But he earned his starting fee so we put him in."

Minoan captured the Tompkins-Geers on the front end on July 25 at The Meadowlands in a solid wire-to-wire mile.

"He's got great early speed and can put himself in position," said Daley, who thinks that although Minoan may not be the best horse on paper, he could find his way into the final.

"He reminds me a bit of Broad Bahn," Daley said, recalling his 2011 Hambletonian winner. "Broad Bahn wasn't the best of the group, but he had great speed and that made the difference."

Trainer Annette Lorentzon will be in search of her first Hambletonian with Big Ranger, a horse that came into her stable late in May. Undefeated as a 2-year-old, Big Ranger has won four of his six starts this year including the last two for Lorentzon.

On June 13 he flew around the Scioto Downs oval in a 1:50 3/5 mile that captured the attention of everyone in North America and instantly made Big Ranger a Hambletonian threat. Lorentzon made a few more changes to the colt's equipment afterwards and then raced him again at Scioto on July 18.

"I didn't want to put him on the half-mile track in his last race before the Hambletonian," Lorentzon said when asked of her decision to race Big

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

HAMBLETONIAN ELIM #1 - RACE 7

1-PRACTICAL MAN	JORDAN STRATTON	TOM FANNING	12-1
2-CAPTAIN NAUGHTY	JASON BARTLETT	PER ENGBLOM	12-1
3-INEXPRESSABLE	SCOTT ZERON	LUCAS WALLIN	9-2
4-HIGHLAND DESTINY	TIM TETRICK	NANCY TAKTER	15-1
5-ARDONNE	AKE SVANSTEDT	AKE SVANSTEDT	15-1
6-AI	YANNICK GINGRAS	RON BURKE	8-1
7-APEX	DEXTER DUNN	MARCUS MELANDER	5-2
8-AMERICAN POWER	JAMES MACDONALD	MARCUS MELANDER	7-2
9-ENDURANCE	ANDY MCCARTHY	CHRIS BEAVER	4-1

HAMBLETONIAN ELIM #2 - RACE 9

1-IT COULD BE WORSE	SCOTT ZERON	LINDA TOSCANO	4-1
2-MINOAN	ANDY MCCARTHY	NOEL DALEY	10-1
3-SPENCER HANOVER	JASON BARTLETT	MARCUS MELANDER	10-1
4-KINGMEN	JAMES MACDONALD	PER ENGBLOM	20-1
5-NIX NACKEN	DEXTER DUNN	MARCUS MELANDER	5-1
6-REQUIEM	RONNIE WRENN JR.	MATT BURKHOLDER	12-1
7-MAGIC PUNK	YANNICK GINGRAS	AKE SVANSTEDT	8-1
8-BIG RANGER	TIM TETRICK	ANETTE LORENTZON	3-1
9-DIABOLIC HILL	TODD MCCARTHY	ANNIE STOEBE	7-2
10-WOLFPACK CROWN	TROY BEYER	VICTORIA STRATTON	20-1



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**WINNER OF THE JACK WALLS MEMORIAL
(\$110,000 DELAWARE STANDARD BRED
BREEDERS FUND FINAL) AT HARRINGTON!**

**2, 1:59.2f; 3, Q1:56.3f -'26 (\$165,820)
E L Platinum-Tui-Windsong's Legacy**

Trainer: David Wiest

Driver: Corey Callahan

Owners: Donald Wiest & David Wiest

Breeders: Edward Kimmel & Donald Wiest



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Ranger against weaker Ohio-breds for just a \$20,000 purse. Big Ranger scored by open lengths in a 1:51 4/5 clocking.

Lorentzon says that Big Ranger has a great disposition and gets turned out every morning. She will train him on Wednesday (July 29) and then ship to New Jersey on Thursday in advance of Saturday's elimination race.

Captain Naughty (post 2, first elim) will be making his first start for new trainer Per Engblom on Saturday and Bartlett is excited following an impressive qualifier at The Meadowlands on July 24.

"He was very sharp in the qualifier," Bartlett said. "Per has been telling me how much he liked this colt since he got him."

Captain Naughty showed talent as a freshman winning four of his nine starts, but has gone winless in five tries this year heading into Saturday's contest.

"It's a tough field with Apex and American Power on the outside," said Bartlett.

It won't just be Apex (post 7) and American Power (post 8), the solid Marcus Melander-trained tandem in the field, that Bartlett must contend with. Endurance (post 9) has won four of his five starts this year for trainer Chris Beaver and driver Andrew McCarthy. His Meadowlands debut was a solid victory in the Stanley Dancer. Endurance has also won 10 of 13 career starts, finishing second in two others.

Apex was an easy winner in his division of the Stanley Dancer in 1:52 and prior to that took the New Jersey Sire Stakes Platinum final. A winner of eight races in 12 career starts, he's widely considered the Hambletonian favorite.

American Power enters the contest following a career-best 1:50 victory in the Zweig Memorial at Vernon Downs on July 19. The son of Walner is out of the 2017 Hambletonian Oaks winner Ariana G.

Yonkers Trot upsetter Inexpressable (post 3) trotted his final quarter in 25 4/5 in the Dancer on July 11 but could only get third behind Apex in that Meadowlands contest. The Lucas Wallin-trained colt drew post three in what appears to be the stronger of the two elimination divisions.

The Hambletonian eliminations go as races seven and nine on the 14-race card that starts at 6:20 PM (EDT).

Daley has representation in two of the three \$50,175 Hambletonian Oaks eliminations with Carve (pp 5) entered in the first division (race 1) and Emmas Mystery CCL (pp 7) going in the second division carded as race four.

"Carve is a bit like Minoan in that she's got speed and can get herself into position," said Daley of the Captain Corey-sired filly that was a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes winner on July 10 at Harrah's Philadelphia in a career-best 1:51 3/5 clocking.

Carve will face likely favorite Jailbird Jog in her division. The daughter of Tactical Landing has won five of eight starts in 2026 including the Oak Grove Trotting Oaks back in May.

Emmas Mystery CCL is a Muscle Hill-sired filly that Daley is extremely high on. "She went an incredible last three quarters in the Tompkins Geers," said Daley, noting the filly traveled that distance in 1:22 racing on the outside. "I think I can make her a little faster by taking off the shoes."

Daley is hopeful that Emmas Mystery CCL, who will meet up with undefeated-in-2026 Nezuko Kamado S on Saturday, will advance to the August 8 final and can race in front of owner Patty Key, who is also sponsoring this year's Hambletonian.

The final Oaks elimination (race 6) sees a resurgent Setyoursight-high drawing pylon position for trainer Marcus Melander on a two-race winning streak. The race will hardly be a walkover as she tackles a number of talented and sharp fillies.

The first five horses in each Hambletonian elimination will advance to the \$1,000,000 August 8 final on the Meadowlands afternoon program. The \$500,000 Hambletonian Oaks final field will be decided with the first three finishers in each of its eliminations guaranteed a spot in the final and the tenth horse determined by the fourth-place finisher with the highest lifetime earnings.



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**WINNER OF THE BEN STAFFORD JR MEMORIAL
(\$110,000 DELAWARE STANDARD BRED
BREEDERS FUND FINAL) AT HARRINGTON!**

p, 2, 1:55.4f -'25 (\$130,162)

Sports Column-Speaker Pelosi-Western Hanover

Trainer: Kristyann Rash

Driver: Brandon Givens

Owner: Anthony Carson Jr.

Breeder: Willow Mill Stables



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EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner X [@harnesseveguy](#)

Thrill of your first time

There is nothing like the first time and I've been lucky enough to experience many firsts during my harness racing career. There was my first Little Brown Jug in 2009, the first time I had press credentials to The Meadowslands in 2001 when Varenne won the Breeders Crown, and now my first Adios Pace for the Orchids.

There is no official bucket list hanging in my office, but I've been wanting to get to the Adios for some time. Unfortunately it tends to fall on the same date as the Hambletonian eliminations and that has made the trip difficult to accomplish. Luckily the stars aligned this year in many ways, so it can join my list of stakes attended along with the Hambletonian, Meadowlands Pace, Breeders Crown, North America Cup, Sun Stakes and many others.

Interestingly I had been to The Meadows once before back in 1998 when I did a driving tour of tracks. That trip included Saratoga, Vernon, Northfield, Thistledown, Mountaineer and The Meadows. I really don't recall much about my night at The Meadows 28 years ago other than I was almost escorted off the grounds for taking too many pictures. Anyway, safe to say that the facility looks a lot different now.

I entered through the main casino and despite not seeing any signs (my wife tells me there was one), I was able to navigate my way to the apron. The layout of the track is excellent for watching the races. Fans can get right up to the track and almost lean over the rail to touch the racing surface. That's a big plus for me. There is also ample covered seating on the second floor overlooking the track. This is a great feature as too many tracks force their fans to either bake in the sun or get wet when it rains.

Many fans took advantage of the second-level seating while some



DERICK GIWNER

The Meadows has a video toteboard and a picturesque backdrop of grass and mountains.

utilized the apron benches, and many others brought their own chairs to enjoy the action. The weather was beautiful and I was impressed with not only the size of the crowd but its longevity. The card started at 11:30 AM and it built over the next few hours, remaining at the peak levels through the six-plus hour racing showcase that culminated with the Adios at 5:42 PM.

The track had a tent set up for "special guests" and I'm thankful to have been included. It was great to have a seat and the opportunity to grab some food in between walks around the facility and chats with friends, new and old. On that front, I met a number of people for the first time in person, including Ryan and Jeff Zidek. I saw Jeff while speaking with

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 6](#)

OHIO STATE FAIR

FIRST LEG OF THE OHIO TRIPLE CROWN

ELDORADO SCIOTO DOWNS
POST TIME 5:25 PM



THURSDAY, JULY 30 –
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

OHIO
TRIPLE
CROWN



my buddies Mike Pribozie and Edison Hatter just outside the announcers booth. It is always great to see Mike and shmooze about handicapping and racing. Jeff is in his 39th year at The Meadows and he was sitting in the booth with Roger Huston, who I'm told was in the midst of his 51st Adios. It's probably safe to say that I'll never make it to 51 editions of any race since my highest number is probably the Hambletonian at about 25, but I guess anything is possible.

The Meadows does a first-rate job when it comes to the broadcasting team for Adios Day. Between Jeff, Roger and Mike, along with Kevin Plowcha and Ashley Wood on the track apron, there was no shortage of voices and opinions. I love that Kevin and Ashley were right at the rail outside the winner's circle and appropriately looking at the track so they could see the horses. Every track should have a capable observer of horses watching warm-ups and post parades to pick out valuable details for the bettors on major racing days.

I got to do an on-air segment with Ashley (of Penn Horse Racing fame) when I stopped by one time and it is always a pleasure to chat with her. I bluffed to Kevin when he came back that he was fired and I took his place and he chuckled "fine by me". Glad he didn't take me seriously.

There were plenty of other conversations with people like Hall of Famer Tom Charters and Adios-winning co-owners Mark Weaver and Mike Brussemi. I give Mark credit for running a Facebook contest to draw attention to Adios Day. It had people answer easy questions related to the racing day and some general local sports contests. He vowed to put up as much as \$25,000 of his own money if the winners met certain criteria and ultimately about 250 people participated. One person got 11 of 12 winners correct and was rewarded with \$1,500. Had he taken a selfie of himself watching the card remotely he would've gotten double that number and if he took the picture live at the track it would've been \$7,500. See, it pays to come to the track sometimes. If he took the live selfie and would've gotten 12 of 12 (he missed "will Sweet Lou be the sire of more than 3.5 winners on the card? Lou got shut out), the payout would've been \$25,000. I performed quite poorly with just four correct (it should've been six but I transposed one of my Ys and Ns). Oh well!



DERICK GIWNER

A good crowd was on hand for Adios Day at The Meadows.

My longest conversation of the afternoon took place with Odds On Mr Mamba owner Dana Parham. It was an enlightening conversation on many topics. It was refreshing to hear an owner who wasn't wearing rose-colored glasses about his horse. The majority of the conversation with Parham centered around horse ownership and you can expect a follow-up column on that topic in the near future.

All-in-all I thoroughly enjoyed my Adios Day experience. Would it be better if the paddock was next to the fans? Yes. Would my wallet be fatter if Melillo would've won the Adios? Absolutely! But I did win a few dollars on 3-card-poker in the casino so I made up for it there.

With the Adios in the rearview mirror, Hambletonian Day is up next. I hope to see you there, and down the road at Scioto Downs on October 23 and 24 for the Breeders Crown as it will be another first for me since I've never been to the Central Ohio track. It's comforting to know there are still new experiences out there for a 30-year veteran of the sport.



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(\$110,000 DELAWARE STANDARD BRED
BREEDERS FUND FINAL) AT HARRINGTON!**

**2, 2:01.4h; 3, 1:56f -'26 (\$137,832)
Top Flight Angel-Js Foxy Lady-Semper Fi Hall**

Trainer/Driver: Eddie Dennis

Owners: E & K Stable Inc & Robert Niblett Jr.

Breeders: Marvin Miller & Nathan Miller



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Male sophomore pacers providing true on-track excitement



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman ✕ [BergmanJay](#)

By virtue of all prediction markets the results we're seeing in this year's 3-year-old pacing colt division hardly appear to be playing out along expectations. Prior to the season starting it was the undefeated Beau Jangles that created the buzz and behind the noise was the anticipation that the son of Cattlewash would leave the sophomore group in his dust, continuing his domination.

Following Saturday's thrilling finish to the Grade 1 Adios at The Meadows, it is now apparent that racing fans have a lot more to root for than just one superstar. The blanket finishes we've witnessed in all three of the Grade 1 events contested this year is music to the ears of anyone that has become complacent with boring one-sided events. Harness racing may look for unbeatable horses but racing fans live to see exciting contests with dramatic endings, and the 2026 season is shaping up nicely for those that do.

For "Team Burke," the \$420,500 Adios went on script until it didn't. With five of the nine on the starting gate and favored Al Papi in the middle, the odds were always in favor of the sport's leading trainer and none of his drivers failed him in getting things in motion in an orderly fashion. With four of the first five post positions going to the "Burke Brigade" and a fifth finding Melillo in post nine, it was hardly a surprise when Frantic Hanover (post 2) and Al Papi (post 4) pushed out hard from the start and forced the hand of James MacDonald behind North America Cup winner Odds On Mr Mamba. Putting MacDonald in a three-hole had to be a major part of the strategy, especially when Ronnie Wrenn Jr. got Melillo into a friendly four-hole tuck before the quarter had rung up in a moderate 26 3/5 for these horses.

Yannick Gingras followed the playbook perfectly with Al Papi, who had earned rightful favoritism following a vicious 1:47 2/5 elimination score, guiding the son of Papi Rob Hanover to a well-rated 54 2/5 as Wrenn was half-in-half-out with Melillo trying to bait MacDonald and Odds On Mr Mamba well before the half.

Odds On Mr Mamba had no choice but to take the bait at the half with the monumental task of overcoming a rated favorite while at the same time surrounded literally and figuratively by Burke horses on all sides. A wicked 26-flat third quarter sprint clearly put the ball in Al Papi's court as he looked to turn back the first-over bid and go on to a potential blowout victory. Going into the final turn the race looked to be a one-horse affair with Al Papi gaining separation and Odds On Mr Mamba struggling to maintain contact with the leader. That image changed in an instant when Al Papi took a series of bad steps with Gingras first getting him steadied and then applying the stick to regain whatever momentum had been sacrificed.

The sudden change put Odds On Mr Mamba back in the race for MacDonald but caused driver Wrenn to alter his tactics with Melillo, who had looked to go inside briefly on the final turn for racing room and likely to salvage a check. Wrenn saw the race differently in the stretch but was squeezed by Sweet Lovin Lou, who despite being parked the duration was still in the battle. Melillo would get free but too late for the win. At the wire just a head separated Al Papi from his stablemate, with a nose back to Odds On Mamba.

The Adios only had three horses across the wire at the finish as opposed to the Meadowlands Pace on July 11 where four horses were separated by just a head, with Brandon Blvd gamely holding on the front end with Al Papi, Gentleman's Club and Melillo not that far behind.

The June 13 North America Cup had three horses on the line, with Odds On Mr Mamba on that occasion receiving the ideal cover trip and rolling past the uncovered Brandon Blvd to a half-length victory with Beau Jangles not that far back in third.

Great finishes make the sport what it is but for us to get them with regularity there needs to be a level that multiple horses can reach. What we've witnessed thus far in 2026 is that it does not resemble how this class behaved in 2025 but in fact how some have developed and improved their stock and how others have until this date not.

For Beau Jangles, the defending Horse of the Year, Friday (July 24) was

the first time he's been seen in public since his fifth-place finish in a leg of the Ontario Sire Stakes on June 27. A 1:50 victory in a qualifier at Woodbine Mohawk Park was accomplished by Beau Jangles, with regular pilot Bob McClure guiding the colt for Dr. Ian Moore. Perhaps a decade ago the masses would have reveled in that clocking, but in today's age it was just a fast training mile.

Brandon Blvd is set to return to stakes action at The Meadowlands with engagements in the Tompkins-Geers this Saturday at The Meadowlands and then the Cane Pace on August 8, Hambletonian Day. For the Burke Brigade, a well-deserved rest is likely



CHRIS GOODEN

Al Papi (4) held off stablemate Melillo and Odds On Mr Mamba to win the 2026 Adios.

to follow four consecutive weeks of hard-nose racing in eliminations and finals at The Meadowlands and The Meadows. None of Burke's contingent is eligible to the Cane Pace, with just 14 nominees, though supplements are permitted.

If there is a predictable location to see all the best sophomore pacing colts in action, it should be Sun Stakes Day at Pocono on August 22 for the \$300,000 Max Hempt. The Hempt has all the main players eligible and likely to have the earnings necessary to make it into the seeded top division. That said, there's still a few weeks of racing ahead and the progress of Beau Jangles in those coming weeks will be a tell as to whether he'll be a part of the action in Pennsylvania or a bystander.

We've come a long way from what appeared to be predictable six months ago to a crowded sophomore pacing colt division that while lacking a dominating force is overwhelmingly entertaining. Great racing action with competitive fields and races that see action from start to finish have been missing for too long. This year's sophomore pacing colt and gelding crop offers the substance that racing fans and gamblers can collectively embrace.



AT THE TRACK

By Darin Zoccali  [AtTheTrack7](#)

No time for Harness Racing to delay action

Over the past decade, I have written about harness racing handle on several occasions. Last year was not a good year for betting handle. For the year, North American harness handle declined 9.4%, or \$180.5 million. In 2024, harness racing handle declined 6.7%, or \$138.9 million in North America.

In 2023, there was \$2.07 billion wagered on harness racing in North America. In 2025, that number was \$1.74 billion.

At the halfway point of 2026, harness racing handle in North America has declined 1.5% or \$14.8 million. It is worth noting that the per race average is up in the U.S. by just under 1% and in Canada by more than 10 percent.

I suppose an optimist would point to the overall decline percentage improving since 2024, but I am more of a realist. Declines that follow prior year declines are not good.

Sure, tracks have closed and other tracks are racing less. In fact, through the end of June there were more than 900 fewer harness races contested in North America than at the same point of 2025.

The overall performance of racetracks certainly coincides with the number of races offered compared to the previous year. From the top 15 racetracks by wagering handle, every track that has contested more races has shown a handle increase compared to the previous year and every track that has contested fewer races has shown a handle decrease.

Sure, that makes sense, but included in that are tracks that have held only three or nine more races from a total of 1,300 races. In other words, some of those race increases are minute compared to the total number of races the track has run.

There have been other impacts as well. The Meadowlands, for example, lost multiple weekend days to cancellations and the World Cup, and held

more races on Sundays and Thursdays than the previous year. That is going to result in handle declines.

It's been a decade since I wrote a column about harness racing becoming too dependent on slot machine revenue and not concerned enough about handle declines, and other than a false inflation of handle coming out of the COVID pandemic when racing gained handle that it was unable to hold onto, these declines have been steady for some time.

There have been positive steps taken by some tracks. The Meadowlands is always trying new things and coordinating post times. Hoosier is acutely aware of wagering handle and also implements a strategy to try and maximize dollars bet. The Meadows has been much more prominent in pushing its signal and is seeing gains in wagering dollars as well.

But when you look closely at the numbers, the wagering handle is just shifting around. From the top 15 tracks by handle, the numbers are essentially flat. Eight of the tracks are down, seven of the tracks are up. The money bet is just moving around.

What that tells me is a few tracks trying new things and paying close attention to trends is not enough. It will take the entire industry in order to reverse the downward handle trend. Otherwise, the tracks who are focusing on handle and implementing ideas will benefit from handle shifting to them, while other tracks will realize declines. But that does not benefit the industry as a whole.

It is admittedly frustrating to watch an industry that generally speaking has done the same thing for years and not adapted to what the results are saying. I am encouraged by tracks who do try new things and clearly pay close attention to what is happening, but I become discouraged by the industry as a whole because not enough tracks are taking part in new initiatives.

Horse racing had a quasi-monopoly for a long time in this country when it came to gambling dollars. That monopoly started to diminish decade by decade as new opportunities to gamble arose. First, it was Las Vegas. Then, it was Atlantic City. Soon, state lotteries swept the country. Not long after that, casinos began opening up in states all over the country, so you no longer had to travel to find a casino. Then, online gaming and sports betting joined the party.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 10](#)

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**Cattleshaw-Ideal Talker-Western Ideal
p, 2, 1:50s; 3, 1:49.3s -'26 (\$734,726) CAD**

Trainer: Kyle Fellows

Driver: Doug McNair

Owners: N. Yolanda Fellows, Blair Corbeil, Windermere Stable LLC & James Ross

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James Ladwig, Yearling Manager / 410.885.3059 / [www.winbakfarm.com](#) /   

Furthermore, horse racing has not changed much. There have been new wagers added to the menu and not all of them are good, but the game is too slow. Gamblers want action. People would not play poker if a hand took 30 minutes. The same can be said for blackjack, craps, roulette, or any other casino game.

The adaptation of sports wagering is a great example. Not too long ago, when a game began, betting was closed. Now, you can bet in-game on the outcome of any play, any at-bat, any trip up and down the court, etc. It is rapid and constant action.

From the moment the horses cross the finish line, unless you are wagering on other tracks simultaneously, you will be waiting for nearly a half-hour on the average for the next race to begin.

Friends that I take to the track enjoy it, but they are not hanging around for six hours for all of the races.

We can go down the rabbit hole of takeout rates, host fees and wager minimums, all of which have been debated ad nauseum and none of which have a consensus in the industry.

Here is one off-the-wall idea I had for thoroughbred racing that is not connected to any of the above. I would like a racetrack to build two paddocks. When the horses leave the paddock for race one, the horses arrive in the paddock for race two. You can cut the time between races in half.

The ironic thing is, harness racing does not even need to do that. A harness racetrack paddock lines up all the horses by race number who are competing on the card. A harness track can speed up its card easily. Instead, we have done the opposite and slowed it down even more with post time drags. Last week, when the horses came on the track for the Adios it showed zero minutes to post on the top of the screen, but on the bottom of the screen it showed seven minutes to the race. Imagine explaining that to someone going to the track for the first time.

There are plenty of things we can debate and I admit that there are legitimate points that support the opposite view from many of my opinions, but maybe we can all start from the idea that the racing card and the races need to be run faster, and work backwards from there?

Brandon Blvd remains atop Top 10

Brandon Blvd remained No. 1 in the Week 7 Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll released Wednesday (July 29) while two winners from the past weekend vaulted into the Top 10.

Al Papi, who captured this past Saturday's Grade 1 Delvin Miller Adios at Hollywood Casino at The Meadows, joined the Top 10 at No. 8. Another Adios Day winner, Be Perfect BG, who took a division of the Grade 3 Mickey Burke Adios Volo, moved in at No. 10.

The Adios result also affected other horses in the poll, with idle Miki And Minnie moving from No. 5 to No. 3 ahead of Odds On Mr Mamba (third in the Adios) and Loua Dipa (seventh in the Adios).

Loua Dipa and Odds On Mr Mamba were the only horses from Week 6's Top 10 in action last week. Brandon Blvd (16 of 35 first-place votes) and On To Norway (13) were unchanged in the rankings, at No. 1 and No. 2. Lexus Kody and Super Chapter dropped out of the Top 10.

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: 7/29/26

Rank-Name (1st Votes)	Age/Sex/Gait	Record	Earnings	Points	Pvs
1-Brandon Blvd (16)	3cp	6-4-2-0	\$681,330	297	1
2-On To Norway (13)	4gt	7-6-1-0	\$392,250	288	2
3-Miki And Minnie (3)	4mp	7-5-0-2	\$295,414	234	5
4-Odds On Mr Mamba	3gp	6-4-0-2	\$500,360	189	4
5-Loua Dipa	3fp	7-4-1-0	\$293,090	155	3
6-Apex	3ct	3-2-1-0	\$189,629	152	6
7-Twin B Joe Fresh	6mp	6-3-1-0	\$202,516	121	7
8-Al Papi (2)	3cp	9-2-3-2	\$538,843	115	--
9-Endurance	3ct	5-4-1-0	\$291,349	76	8
10-Be Perfect BG (1)	3fp	7-5-2-0	\$271,345	73	--

ALSO: Lexus Kody 72; Super Chapter 42; Ervin Hanover 28; Bourbonista S 21; Jailbird Jog 14; Nezuko Kamado S 11; American Power 9; Lou Hill 8; Antognoni S, Shalom Hanover 5; Big Ranger 4; Periculum 3; Logan Park 2, Primacy Station 1. **-by Ken Weingartner**

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Southwind Chaska looks to make her mark in Hambletonian Oaks

By Ken Weingartner

Southwind Chaska produced the best performance of her season when she raced at the Meadowlands three weeks ago, and trainer Jim Oscarsson thinks that should bode well for his filly's next visit to the Big M for Saturday's Hambletonian Oaks eliminations.

Southwind Chaska, a multiple graded stakes winner and fastest 2-year-old female trotter (1:51 4/5) of 2025, will compete in the third of three \$50,175 elims for the Hambletonian Oaks, for 3-year-old female trotters, on Saturday. The top three finishers from each elim plus the fourth-place finisher with the highest lifetime earnings will advance to the \$500,000 Grade 1 Hambletonian Oaks final on Hambletonian Day, Aug. 8, at the Meadowlands.

In her most recent start, on July 11 at the Big M, Southwind Chaska came her last quarter in a race-best 26 3/5 to rally for a second-place finish behind Nezuko Kamado S in a division of the Grade 2 Del Miller Memorial. Southwind Chaska was a half-length behind the winner in a race timed in 1:50 1/5 – the fastest mile of the year for sophomore filly trotters.

"She was really good in her last start," said Oscarsson, who saw Southwind Chaska's only two previous races this season end with a sixth-place finish in a preliminary leg of the New Jersey Sire Stakes on June 5 at the Meadowlands and a third-place finish in a conditioned race against older male rivals on June 20 at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania.

"She trained good all winter, I was happy with her, but she was a little bit too heavy at the start of the season and was not too good the first two starts. I think she needed those two races. I think she is in good shape now. I'm looking forward to Saturday to see what she can do."

HAMBLETONIAN OAKS ELIM #3 - RACE 6

1-SETOURSIGHTSHIGH	DEXTER DUNN	MARCUS MELANDER	7-2
2-VICTORIANAS SECRET	RONNIE WRENN JR.	VERNON BEACHY	3-1
3-SOUTHWIND CHASKA	TIM TETRICK	JIM OSCARSSON	5-2
4-ONE BELLE	SCOTT ZERON	MATT BAX	12-1
5-LEADING LADY	MATT KAKALEY	NANCY TAKTER	4-1
6-CUSTOM	JASON BARTLETT	PER ENGBLOM	5-1
7-ISLANDGIRL HANOVER	TROND SMEDSHAMMER (TRAINER/DRIVER)		12-1

Southwind Chaska is the 5-2 morning-line favorite in her Hambletonian Oaks elimination, which also includes 2025 Dan Patch Award winner Setyoursightshigh, Victorianas Secret, and Leading Lady. Setyoursightshigh defeated Leading Lady by a neck in the Grade 2 Dr. Harry M. Zweig Memorial Filly Trot at Vernon Downs on July 19, one day after Victorianas Secret won the Grade 3 Moni Maker Stakes at Eldorado Scioto Downs.

Tim Tetrick will be in the sulky behind Southwind Chaska, who leaves from post 3 in the seven-filly field.

"She has a good post," Oscarsson said. "If she has a good day, she can beat them; she's a really good horse. I'm happy to have her."

A daughter of Tactical Landing-Southwind Chai, Southwind Chaska was purchased for \$15,000 at the 2024 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale. Last year, she hit the board in 10 of 13 races, winning six, and earned \$245,842. Her victories included divisions of the Bluegrass (in her 1:51 4/5 mile) and International Stallion stakes, both Grade 3, at Lexington's Red Mile.

"She's a strong, speedy horse," said Oscarsson, who trains Southwind Chaska for the ownership group of Oscarsson Racing Stable, John Cummins, and Sven H Racing. "She grew a lot (over the winter). She's more of a horse. I'm happy about that."

"If she has a helmet to follow, she can go fast in the last quarter. But (last year) in Kentucky, she was on the lead, and she was really nice too."

The third Hambletonian Oaks elimination is race 6.

In the first elim (race 1), Jailbird Jog is the 8-5 morning-line favorite for driver James MacDonald and trainer Jason McGinnis. She will leave from post 4. The daughter of Tactical Landing-Miss Don Fanucci S has five wins and two seconds in eight races this season, with her victories including the inaugural Oak Grove Trotting Oaks on May 16 at Oak Grove Racing & Gaming, her division of the Del Miller Memorial on July 11, and the Tompkins-Geers Stakes in a career-best 1:51 2/5 on July 25 at the Meadowlands.

Nezuko Kamado S is the 9-5 morning-line favorite in the second elimination (race 4) for driver Scott Zeron and trainer Marcus Melander. The daughter of Chapter Seven-Zefira Kronos IT is unbeaten in four races this year.

Also on Saturday, the Meadowlands will host two eliminations for America's Trotting Classic, the Hambletonian Stakes, with the top five finishers from each elim returning for the \$1 million Grade 1 final on Aug. 8. Dan Patch Award winner Apex is the 5-2 morning-line favorite in the first (race 7) and Big Ranger, Ohio's 2025 Horse of the Year, is the 3-1 choice in the second (race 9).

Racing begins at 6:20 p.m. (EDT).

Eight is great for teen driver Detweiler

By Ken Weingartner

Kevin Detweiler thought he had a chance to win a couple races Wednesday (July 29) at the Fayette County Free Fair in Connersville, Ind.

He was wrong. He won them all.

Detweiler, an 18-year-old driver from Milroy, Ind., swept all eight races at Connersville on Wednesday. He won the opener with Sassytemper by a neck but there was little other drama in his remaining seven triumphs on the non-wagering card. All were by at least 2-1/2 lengths, and he capped the day with a 19-length romp behind Vel See You Later.

"I didn't know if I would win all of them, but I thought I might have a chance in a couple of them," Detweiler said. "I just couldn't believe it. I never thought I'd do that in a day."

Detweiler won the first four races with horses trained by Joseph Wagler – Sassytemper, Brookview Holiday, Bests Swans Rocker, and Rita's Girl. He captured the final four with horses trained by Larry King – Velgetthisstraight, Vel Im Good, Vel Big Shocker, and Vel See You Later. The fastest mile of the day was by 3-year-old male pacer Vel See You Later, who triumphed in 1:57 4/5, one second off the track record.

"That last race, I didn't expect to go that fast," Detweiler said. "I figured we'd go around (1):59, or so. But then they said (1):57, and I was surprised. It didn't feel like we were going that fast."

Detweiler, whose father, Michael, also is a driver, has won 104 races since beginning his career last year. He got his first victory in June 2025 at Converse, with Chrome Rose, and in August notched his most lucrative triumph, winning a \$15,850 division of the Dr. H.M. Parshall Memorial Stakes for 2-year-old trotters with Don't Tell Anyone at Greenville.

This year, he has won 69 races, including three at Harrah's Hoosier Park, and leads the Indiana fair circuit with 60. Twice prior to Wednesday he had won seven races in a day.

"It's going pretty good," Detweiler said. "This is what I always wanted to do. I like it, everything about it. I've worked with horses since I was young, around (age) 9 or 10. I kind of want to be a catch driver. That's what I would like to do."

Detweiler, who works on a construction crew when he's not with the horses, said he doesn't expect to get his next opportunity to drive until sometime next week. What could he do for an encore? Win nine of nine?

"I kind of doubt that day is going to come," Detweiler said with a laugh. "But I hope."

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Earlier post time for The Big M

With just nine days remaining until the 101st edition of the Winning Key Farms Hambletonian, The Meadowlands will continue to make changes designed to make the track experience better for the bettor as well as the horsemen and horsewomen who compete on a consistent basis at The Big M.

First and foremost, management at the mile oval has decided that an earlier start would be a good move, so, effective immediately, post time will be 15 minutes earlier than what it has been for some time, with the first race now scheduled to go at 6:20 p.m.

Racing will be conducted this weekend on the usual Friday (July 31)-Saturday (Aug. 1) basis.

"We have been trying to finish earlier by decreasing the time between races," said track Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Jason Settlemyre. "And for the last several weeks, we have had an entry box that's been supporting 15-race programs.

"At the end of the day, we have decided on the earlier post time in an effort to complete our race cards before midnight. We also will eventually go back to 14-race programs on a consistent basis, but if we have enough horses to go with 15 races, we will then offer our horsemen and women the opportunity to race."

The new post time goes into effect just in time for the third leg of the New Jersey Sire Stakes. There will be nine leg three divisions for 2-year-olds contested on the 15-race Friday card, with an additional pair of non-betting events that will take place during the live simulcast show (at 6 p.m. and 6:10 p.m.).

Only one horse on the betting program is two-for-two in the NJSS. The Julie Miller-trained Wall Of Fame has won her two dashes by a combined 7½ lengths facing Platinum level filly trotters. Miller's husband, Andy, will be in the bike.

There is also a horse in the second non-bettor who has two wins in as many NJSS tries. The Megan Scran-schooled Aintmyfirstro Deo, who has been competing in the Platinum level colt and gelding pacing division, is a gelded son of Perfect Sting-Some Renditions who will be driven by Scran's significant other, Scott Zeron.

THE SCHEDULE: Live harness racing at The Meadowlands will be conducted on a Friday-Saturday basis through Sept. 12 with a first-race post time of 6:20 p.m.

There are some exceptions to those rules.

The 101st edition of the \$1-million Hambletonian is on Saturday, Aug. 8, and that card begins at noon.

On Saturday, Aug. 15, racing will begin at 7 p.m.

In addition, there is a Thursday program scheduled. It will take place on Aug. 6.

Finally, there will be no live racing at The Meadowlands on Friday, Aug. 14, and Friday, Aug. 28, due to preseason football at MetLife Stadium.

COME TO THE DRAW: Head for the Chateau Grande in East Brunswick, NJ, on Tuesday, Aug. 4, and catch a special event on the harness racing calendar when the post position draws for the \$1-million Hambletonian and \$500,000 Hambletonian Oaks are conducted, and while you are there, enjoy some great food.

The luncheon begins at 2 p.m., with the draws for the Hambo and Oaks kicking off at 3 p.m.

The Big M's TV production team will be there, with a special appearance by former Big M simulcast show personality – and current FOX Sports harness racing analyst – Jessica Otten serving as host with Ken Warkentin assisting providing interviews.

The post draw can be viewed live on The Meadowlands Facebook page as well as The Meadowlands YouTube Channel for those who cannot attend.

The event is open to the public, but please RSVP [here](#).

-edited release (Dave Little for Meadowlands)

DRF HANDICAPPER'S CORNER

At DRF Harness we strive to provide the best handicapping information in the sport. Each week we'll use this space to bring you some of our handicappers' best bets and value plays. Use this information as one of your tools when wagering or head to your nearest ADW and simply make a win bet.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

RACE 6

(1) DRIBBLING BI won handily the last time he raced in this class on June 4 and exits the top level down at Harrah's Philadelphia.

-Greg Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

FRIDAY, JULY 31

RACE 7

(2) A BETS A BET is second back after a strong second last week. A similar mile puts her right there.

-Kevin Plowcha



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

RACE 9

(7) MYSTIC WAVE was up against it from post 10 and then chasing slow fractions from the back of the pack in his debut. I believe there is more in the tank and he'll need a win or a second to secure a spot in the final.

-Derick Gwerner



SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

RACE 8

(7) UBRUTE raced big in the Meadowlands Pace elimination and then was unlucky to draw post 10 in the final. There doesn't seem to be too much separating the best from many of the other top 10 in this division and I can see this guy being sent to the front and pulling off the upset.

-Gwerner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis [Thursday](#) [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

Meadowlands Analysis [Friday](#) [Saturday](#)

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

PAGE JOINS 8,000 WIN CLUB FOR DRIVERS

Chris Page hit a huge driving milestone of 8,000 lifetime wins when he piloted Later Dudes to victory in the fifth race at Eldorado Scioto Downs on Tuesday (July 28). Win #8,000 came nearly 25 years to the week of his first lifetime victory.

[READ MORE](#)

DE LONG ROLLS A SEVEN, INCLUDING INDIANA SIRE STAKES TALLY

A pair of \$66,000 Indiana Sire Stakes events for rookie pacing fillies headlined the Tuesday (July 28) night card at Harrah's Hoosier Park, and Kountry Legacy and Fitterjake got the job done. Kountry Legacy was the third of John De Long's seven driving wins on the program.

[READ MORE](#)

UNCLE ROB, GIO'S HOPE SHINE IN NEW YORK SIRE STAKES

Uncle Rob and Gio's Hope went home with top honors from two New York Sire Stakes contests for 2-year-old male trotters on Tuesday afternoon at Saratoga Casino Hotel.

Driven by Andy Miller in the first \$77,300 split, Uncle Rob led through fractions of 28 2/5, 59 and 1:28 4/5 en route to a three length victory in 1:57 3/5.

[READ MORE](#)

PINSKE PUPILS PERFECT IN KENTUCKY SIRE STAKES TROTS

Odds-on favorite Go Dog Go perched behind tempo-setter Gimpanzee Dancer and pounced in the stretch for a simple 1:50 3/5 victory in the opening round of Kentucky Sire Stakes (KYSS) for 4-year-old trotting males on Tuesday (July 28) at The Red Mile.

[READ MORE](#)

JODY JAMIESON WINS 2026 NATIONAL DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jody Jamieson will represent Canada in the 2027 World Driving Championship after winning the 2026 National Driving Championship (NDC), presented by Standardbred Canada, on Sunday, July 26 at Clinton Raceway in Clinton, Ont.

[READ MORE](#)

OHIO STATE FAIR ON TAP AT SCIOTO DOWNS

Lots of activities aimed at kids and families are on tap for Saturday, August 1, at Eldorado Scioto Downs in order to create a fair environment as the State Fair Races head to the track for the weekend.

Each of the following will be located near the program stand on Saturday:

- a bounce house (also available Friday, July 30)
- the 'Bring the Farm to You' petting zoo
- 'Paint a Horse' station
- 'Name the Foal' contest
- horseshoe decorating station

The 1st Annual Corgi Races will be held trackside with the first Corgi race to be held after the first harness horse race. Pre-registration is required and can be done through the event created from the [Eldorado Scioto Downs Facebook page](#). Dog check-in begins at 5:00 p.m.

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association will also be conducting their TV & Tickets give-a-way. Enter for a chance to win one of five grand prizes, including a 55" tv, Roku stick, 1 month subscription for RTN (to watch harness racing from tracks across North America) and tickets to a local college football game.

On the racetrack, Ohio State Fair races will be front and center during three live racing days this week, running concurrently with the Ohio State Fair which takes place July 29-August 9 at the Ohio Expo Center. Total purses for all 12 divisions will be just over \$1.5-million.

The 2-year-old trotting races for fillies and colts will take place Thursday (July 29). The Ohio State Trot for colts will go off as races 4, 5 and 10 with purses totaling \$167,200. The Ohio Fairs Trot for fillies totals \$163,500 in purses, with races going off as 1, 7 and 11.

For the first time in the history of Ohio State Fair races, there will be aged events. Aged mare trotters will go for \$65,000 in the Don Millar Trot and aged mare pacers for \$67,500 in the Senator Max H. Dennis Pace on Friday. Filly Friday will also host two divisions of the State Fair Managers Pace for 2-year-olds going for \$161,700; three divisions of 3-year-olds going for \$152,200 in the Ohio First Lady Pace; and the Pride of Ohio Trot splitting into two divisions going for a total of \$146,700.

Saturday is for the colts, with the Jim Buchy Aged Trot and the Robert Schmitz Aged Pace, joining the 3-year-old colts and 2-year-old pacing colt divisions. The Director of Agriculture Pace for 3-year-olds is split into three divisions, going for a total of \$159,482, as races 5, 7 and 8. The Governors Cup for 3-year-old trotters split into two divisions, races 3 and 6, going for \$147,000. Two divisions of the Buckeye State Pace for 2-year-old pacers will go for \$164,540 as races 1 and 10.

The 91-day 2026 Eldorado Scioto Downs regular season runs through Saturday, September 19. Races are held Tuesday-Saturday, with a special holiday card on Labor Day instead of the Tuesday card that week. The track will then re-open for the Breeders Crown, with eliminations held October 16-17 and the finals October 23-24.

-release (Scioto)

DINING & SEATING OPTIONS FOR WINNING KEY FARMS HAMBLETONIAN

Eliminations for the Winning Key Farms Hambletonian and Hambletonian Oaks highlight this Saturday's (August 1) race card.

Dining for the Pink buffet is still available, and reservations can be made by calling 201-The-BigM.

Saturday, August 1 is also the track's annual seafood food truck festival. Thirty-two vendors will be dishing up some delicious food – everything from lobster rolls, to fried clams to ceviche and crab fries. There will also be plenty of non-seafood items available including BBQ, empanadas, burgers, rice balls and more. Full truck listing can be found [here](#).

Table and dining options are limited for the greatest day in harness racing – Hambletonian Day, Saturday, August 8th.

Admission is just \$5 and includes a commemorative Hambletonian hat for adults and kids. Doors open at 10 am with the first race at 12 noon. Parking is free.

While Café and Lounge tables have sold out, there are still a few remaining bar seats and promenade tables available for purchase. Bar seating is \$75 (the \$75 is a food and beverage credit), and promenade tables seat four; admission is included with the \$300 ticket.

Admission and promenade tables can be purchased at <https://events.ticketleap.com/tickets/meadowlandsracetrack/2026-hambletonian>.

Those looking for outdoor dining can now make reservations for the West Apron VIP tent. The \$74.95 menu includes a fresh corn salad, grilled flank steak, sausage three ways, creamy lemon pasta, BBQ chicken and mac & cheese. Diners can end the meal with homemade brownies, cookies and ice cream. Reservations can be made by calling 201-TheBigM (843-2446).

Outdoor dining is also available at the Backyard Bar & Grill. The BBQ menu features pulled pork, mac and cheese, hot dogs, hamburgers, and more. The umbrella-covered tables are \$100 and seat 4 people. Tables can be purchased at <https://events.ticketleap.com/tickets/meadowlandsracetrack/2026-hambletonian>.

All things Hambletonian can be found at <https://playmeadowlands.com/hambletonian-news/>

-edited release (Meadowlands)

NORTHFIELD MOVES POST TO 5:00PM TO ACCOMMODATE 20-RACE CARD

Saturday night (August 1) at Northfield Park features the special Summit County Fair race card with 20 live races on tap. With the added races, first post has been moved up to 5:00 p.m. Along with the racing, fans can enjoy a Fair Food Festival on the apron, a live DJ, a T-shirt toss, free face painting and balloon animals for the kids. Fans will also have the chance to meet a racehorse up close, making it a fun evening for the whole family.

Northfield will get back to traditional overnights on Sunday (August 2nd) with a \$7,069 Pick 6 carryover and an estimated \$20,000 pool. The Pick-6 is offered in conjunction with the U.S. Trotting Association's Strategic Wagering Program as well as the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association.

-edited release (Northfield Park)