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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Loua Dipa had throat surgery

Hambletonian Day in pictures

**Burke holds top pair in \$300,000
Milstein Memorial at Northfield**

**Jay Bergman: Four-year-old party
could be on menu for Mardi Gras Man**

**Jessica Hallett: Seeking out the
human side of the racing community**

**Dan Patch starter Prince Hal Hanover
proving himself against older crowd**

Best Bets & Analysis

**Apex climbs to top of weekly poll;
Only Saturday at Big M this week;
Hanover to sell yearlings online**

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

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2026

That's a wrap!
2026

HAMBLETONIAN



*Editor Derick Giwner takes you on his Hambo Day journey and conversations
while providing insights into what's next for some star horses*



EDITOR'S EYE

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

Every Hambletonian Day adventure is a bit unique. I call it an adventure because my travels take me all over the facility and typically the next stop during the day is unknown. Less familiar people – though very relevant – are going to be the theme of this column if you can hang in there for a few paragraphs, as I prefer to zig when others zag.

Traffic to the track was pleasantly light this year, though I ran into a roadblock trying to enter the track as the guard at the door was hesitant to allow me entrance without a hat (having a hat means you paid the \$5 entrance fee). I attempted to explain that press passes were available just inside the door and typically that gets me instant access, but he insisted on calling someone for approval. Maybe I simply look sketchy.

Interestingly, once I made it in the door and got my press pass I never took it out of my pocket. That was a first for me as usually some guard somewhere questions my presence. Maybe that means everyone simply knows my face by now after spending quite a bit more time at The Meadowlands in the last few years than in the past.

At this point no one really needs a race-by-race examination of the card. You all saw them. Of note was Best Chip overshadowing his fellow pacers with an eye-popping 1:46 1/5 win in an Open, seconds faster than the 1:48 2/5 and 1:48 3/5 Sam McKee Memorial splits.

"He's a special horse – the best I've ever trained by far," said Joe Bongiorno. "It is so cool how he can win in 1:46 and go in the winner's circle and be so docile. He loves to be loved on."

It's a shame that Best Chip hasn't been eligible to any stakes races this year but his connections are going to put their money on the line going forward.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)

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APEX

2,1:51.4; 3,1:49.2-'26 (\$1,611,514)

Walner - Mission Brief - Muscle Hill

Owned by: Jeffrey Snyder, S R F Stable, Steve Stewart
Trained by: Marcus Melander • Driven by: Dexter Dunn

Bred by: Mission Brief Stable

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NEZUKO KAMADO S

2,1:52.4; 3,1:50.1-'26 (\$1,052,969)

Chapter Seven - Zefira Kronos It - Muscle Hill

Owned & bred by: Courant Inc.

Trained by: Marcus Melander

Driven by: Yannick Gingras

Raised by Hunterton Farm

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“We are supplementing him to the Canadian Pacing Derby [eliminations at Woodbine Mohawk Park on August 29] and hoping to get an invite to the \$200,000 Aria Pace at Yonkers on International Trot Day [Sept. 12]. Then he’s already supplemented to the Dayton Pacing Derby and we are thinking about the supplementing to the Breeders Crown,” said Bongiorno.

The other notable pacing moment came in the Cane Pace where Sweet Lovin Lou continued the merry-go-round of winners in the 3-year-old colt/gelding ranks. We’ve now seen Odds On Mr Mamba, Brandon Blvd, Al Papi and Sweet Lovin Lou win the “big” stakes this year. Just when it seemed like Brandon Blvd was going to stamp himself as the clear leader, he came up a bit flat off what seemed like a winning trip. What happened?

If you examine the replay, Brandon Blvd took some awkward steps when driver Dexter Dunn moved him off the pylons on the final turn. For whatever reason he wasn’t able to hit top gear again.

“Dex [Dunn] thinks he just got him crooked when he was accelerating. We looked him over and can’t find any reason why he did it, so we just have to think it was a freak thing,” said trainer Andrew Harris, who added that the Max Hempt on Saturday, August 22 would be Brandon Blvd’s next start.

Sweet Lovin Lou was one of three horses on the card (including Oaks winner Nezuko Kamado) and even more on the weekend that won without Scott Zeron, who had to miss his drives due to an on-track accident on August 6 at Yonkers Raceway. You had to feel for him but also respect that he showed up for the Oaks and took pictures in the winner’s circle.

Of course, the reason we all made the trek to The Meadowlands on August 8 or at least tuned in from the comfort of our homes is the Hambletonian. There were compelling reasons to root for most of the horses and connections but I have to admit to being happy for trainer Marcus Melander. It cannot be easy finishing second in the Hambletonian three of the last four years and now, courtesy of Apex’s inch-long record-setting 1:49 2/5 win over Big Ranger, he finally has the monkey off his back. Yes, he gets top quality horses to work with each year, but think of the accomplishment to get them all to the big dance and the disappointment of falling short.

While Marcus is in the spotlight as the trainer with the pressure of



WALTER WŁODARCZYK

Best Chip (with Daniel Hernandez) was a Hambletonian Day star courtesy of a 1:46 1/5 victory.

performance weighing down, his brother Mattias is a key figure in the operation as well.

“We’ve been out to get this race for a long time and to win both the Oaks [Nezuko Kamado] and the Hambletonian today, it’s amazing,” said Mattias, who also spoke about the toll the losses have taken on his brother. “It’s been a little rough on him. We’ve been second so many times

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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now, and it really hasn't gone the way we wanted it to. Eventually it did today, and I think it's a big relief."

Mattias is happy being in the background on "Team Melander" and said he enjoys working with his brother on a daily basis. He admits that they have disagreements at times but said they are rare and typically resolved quickly.

Mattias' ability to get into the bike and drive, especially considering they have mostly 2- and 3-year-olds, makes him a key cog in the operation. While the 30-year-old has only averaged 133 starts per year since 2021, he has an exceptional 17.7% win rate and often rewards his followers with big mutuels.

"Definitely," said Mattias when asked if he felt he has improved as a driver over the years. "When you race against these guys, it's hard not to evolve."

As Apex became the fastest 3-year-old trotter in Meadowlands history and the second-fastest of all time in North America (Six Pack went in 1:49 1/5 in 2018 at The Red Mile), Ohio-bred Big Ranger was on the short end of that very narrow defeat. Despite the outcome, two of the four Madison Global owners in attendance on Hambletonian Day were quite pleased.

"I feel absolutely nothing but pride," said Wes Beachy. "We made it here and finished in the top three. I don't think that I would have dared ask for anything more. Yes, first place would have been great, but we're here."

"I totally agree with Wes," said fellow owner Anthony Miller. "All along I said, I just want to be in the final and I just want the horse to race good. It was an absolutely epic race and I couldn't be prouder of the horse."

Madison Global took plenty of heat on social media leading up to the Hambletonian after they pulled Big Ranger from trainer/driver Ronnie Gillespie back in late May and gave the colt to Anette Lorentzon. When asked about the decision, Beachy said there would be a future time for further explanation but it wasn't on Saturday.

"Today it's all about Big Ranger, it's all about Apex, it's all about the Hambletonian," said Beachy, who has been a broodmare owner for some time but only got into racehorses a couple of years ago. "There's multiple people that helped us get here. I'm super, super thankful."

Interestingly enough, Beachy and Miller sat one table away from Apex co-owner Jeff Snyder and his family. Beachy said he had no idea what the photo would reveal as they waited about four minutes for the results. Snyder felt he had it at the wire but became more confident when he saw a shot of Melander putting the blanket on Apex before the official results went up. Almost an hour after the race, amid all of the hoopla, Snyder still hadn't seen how close the photo was.

Apex will head to the New Jersey Classic eliminations (Sept. 4 at The Meadowlands) and hopefully to the final the following weekend according to Marcus Melander, while Lorentzon relayed that Big Ranger will get a month off and prepare for the Ohio Sire Stakes finals at Scioto Downs on September 12. The owners of Big Ranger also suggested that he will be supplemented to the Kentucky Futurity and that they are looking forward to competing in the Breeders Crown back at Scioto in late October.

Each Hambletonian Day is a bit different and 2026 certainly provided plenty of thrills and storylines that will keep fans of harness racing engaged through the rest of summer and fall months. I'm certainly locked in!



WALTER WŁODARCZYK

Mattias Melander was adorned in flowers after Nezuko Kamado S won the Hambletonian Oaks.

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Loua Dipa on the mend after surgery

Star 3-year-old pacing filly Loua Dipa, who took an unsuccessful run against the boys in the Adios Pace at The Meadows in July, is recovering from throat surgery performed after the race.

A four-time winner in seven starts this year and last year's Dan Patch Award winner for 2-year-old pacing fillies, Loua Dipa leads her division with \$293,090 in earnings this year for trainer Ron Burke and owners Burke Racing Stable LLC and Weaver Brussemi.

The hope is that she'll be ready to return to the track in time for her divisional \$300,000 Pennsylvania Sire Stakes final on September 6 at Harrah's Philadelphia.

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	☐ Cane Pace	#2609	\$125		☐ Dexter Cup Stakes.....	#2624	\$125
	☐ Fox Stake No. 101***	#2626	\$75		☐ Hambletonian.....	#2633	\$125
	☐ Hoosier Stake No. 91	#2653	\$75		☐ Hoosier Stake No. 91.....	#2653	\$75
	☐ Horseman No. 119	#2650	\$75		☐ Horseman No. 119	#2650	\$75
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HAMBLETONIAN PHOTO FINISH



(ABOVE) WALTER WŁODARCZYK / (BELOW) CHRIS TULLY

An inside and outside view of the Hambletonian final as drivers Dexter Dunn (Apex) and Tim Tetrick (Big Ranger) check out the record mile on the tele-timer as well as the finish on the infield video board.

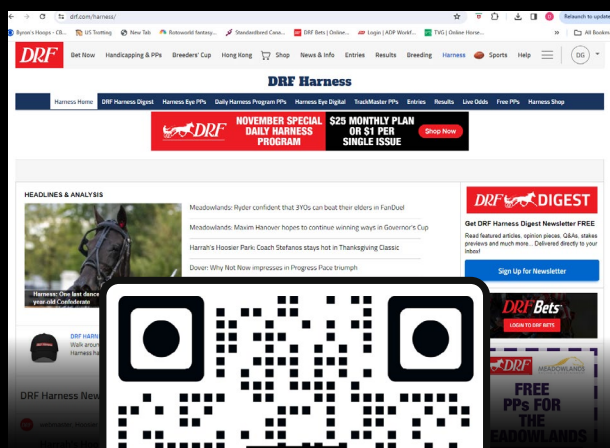






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Burke holds top pair in \$300K Milstein

By Jay Bergman

The \$300,000 Grade 2 Carl Milstein Memorial, set to go postward on Saturday night at Northfield Park, brings together sophomore pacers from regional programs throughout North America for the first time this summer, with nine set to do battle.

The sport's leading trainer Ron Burke will likely send out the favorite in Melillo, a Pennsylvania-sired homebred that is more than battle tested in a series of Grade 1 events this year. Burke also has a relatively new horse in Aces And Cinches that will meet mixed company for the first time in the Milstein.

"He's a brother to Sabonis," said Burke describing Aces And Cinches, a son of Odds On Equuleus bred in Indiana. "We picked him up about five weeks ago and he's just been getting better and better with each start."

Aces And Cinches went winless in nine starts as a freshman and had only one win when Burke's connections took over in mid-June. Since that time Aces And Cinches has captured a pair of Indiana Sire Stakes events including a 1:48 1/5 career best effort on July 3 at Hoosier Park.

Yannick Gingras will pick up the driving assignment behind Aces And Cinches for the first time as the colt not only makes his half-mile track debut but must start from post nine in the second tier.

"I'm going to warm him up myself," said Burke. "I'm pretty sure he'll have no problem since I know he's trained on a half-miler in the past."

As for the potential disadvantage of starting from the second-tier, Burke said: "This is a very competitive field. You have those two on the outside (Borderline Mobby and Redland Rocket Man) that are going to be moving early. There's going to be plenty of pace."

As for Melillo, already a \$271K winner this year with brilliant performances in the Adios and Meadowlands Pace, "He's been great all year long," said Burke. "He came out of the Adios in good shape and I expect him to race well again."

Melillo drew post two with regular pilot Ronnie Wrenn Jr. in the bike.

"I think it's a big advantage having Ronnie behind him over his home track," said Burke.

Trainer David Menary will send out Borderline Mobby (post 6) in the Milstein. The Ontario-bred comes off a huge effort in an Ontario Sire Stakes Gold division at Grand River on August 3.

"He was first over for a long way in that race and didn't give an inch," said Menary of the second-place finish behind another Milstein entrant in Redland Rocket Man.

Menary is confident Borderline Mobby will be able to handle the track with leading driver Dan Noble in the bike. "He got around the five-eighths at Grand River well," said Menary. "He's the fastest 3-year-old in Canada this year."

Borderline Mobby has finished first or second in eight of his 10 starts as a sophomore, including his 1:48 1/5 score at Woodbine Mohawk Park on June 20.

Redland Rocket Man had gone winless in eight starts this season before his signature-race win on August 3 at Grand River. The Bulldog Hanover-sired colt trained by John Pentland perhaps put in one of the biggest miles any 3-year-old pacing colt has had in 2026. He jetted to the front in 25 4/5 that afternoon and did not stop while first encountering heavy pressure from the 2025 Horse of the Year Beau Jangles in a sizzling 52 3/5 opening half clocking. Borderline Mobby picked up the chase the rest of the way and the two matched strides hitting three quarters in 1:20 1/5 and pacing out the mile in 28 1/5, with Redland Rocket Man earning the 1:48 2/5 track record mile.

The Tony Alagna-trained Myboypank is one of three Ohio-breds in the field. A gelded son of Catch The Fire, Myboypank is riding a three-race win streak including a victory in the Ohio Fair Stakes at Scioto Downs on August 1 where he wired the field in a 1:50 3/5 mile. Myboypank starts from post five.

Trainer Erv Miller will be sending out another son of Catch The Fire in Fire Run (post 1), with the gelding returning in just six days after competing in the contentious Kentucky Sire Stakes Championship division on August 9 at The Red Mile. The dual-eligible Fire Run finished second behind Myboypank in his prior start.

Tsunami Seas (post 8) has been first or second in seven of his eight

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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starts this year racing within Ohio and finished second in an Ohio Sire Stakes over the Northfield surface on July 6 for trainer Virgil Morgan Jr.

C Millertimeagain has shown plenty of ability racing in the Delaware Sire Stakes program this year, with four of his five wins coming over Harrington Raceway's half-mile oval. Corey Callahan will make a rare trip to Ohio to drive for trainer Molly Gara from post four

Ballroom Affair has been racing below the top level in Pennsylvania for trainer Joe Bongiorno this year and has managed five wins in six appearances as a sophomore. The son of Papi Rob Hanover toured the Yonkers half-mile track on August 3 in preparation for the Milstein. Ballroom Affair landed post three.

The Milstein is the highlight on the Northfield program going as race 12. One race earlier a solid field of Ohio-Sired pacers clash in the \$100,000 Myron Charna President's Pace with Burke sending out a pair in Rick Wink (post 7) and Swingtowntown (post 8) in the field of nine.

Swingtowntown returns to Ohio following a series of races at The Meadowlands, most recently finishing fifth in the Sam McKee on Hambletonian Day. The son of Downbytheseaside has career earnings of \$1.1 million.

Rick Wink needed some time to freshen up and Burke expects him to put forth a big effort in his first race since July 18.

The 8-year-old Charlie May adds a big-name performer to the Charna field, with the now 8-year-old son of McArdle starting from post nine in the second tier following a solid victory over the Northfield surface on August 9.

First post is 6:00 p.m. for Northfield's 15-race card on Saturday night.



NEW IMAGE MEDIA

Melillo is likely to be a heavy favorite in Saturday's Milstein Memorial at Northfield Park.

\$300,000 GRADE 2 CARL MILSTEIN MEMORIAL PACE - RACE 12

1-Fire Run	Atlee Bender	6-Borderline Mobby	Dan Noble
2-Melillo	Ronnie Wrenn Jr.	7-Redland Rocket Man	Brett Miller
3-Ballroom Affair	Aaron Merriman	8-Tsunami Seas	David Miller
4-C Millertimeagain	Corey Callahan	9-Aces And Cinches	Yannick Gingras
5-MyboyPank	Marvin Luna		



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POST TIME 6:00PM

Four-year-old party could be on the menu for Mardi Gras Man



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman X [BergmanJay](#)

There is a huge gap between having a horse that is extremely fast and one that is an extremely fast racehorse. The idea that every horse that shows speed becomes a racehorse is fictional since natural ability does not always translate to racetrack success. The frustration for trainers that must deal with horses that don't just fall into line and veer off the path is too numerous. Training and racing are two quite different parts to this sport and succeeding at the first is no guarantee you will succeed at the second.

For trainer Stacy Chiodo there was little doubt in her mind that she had a horse with speed when she began training the homebred Mardi Gras Man for his freshman season in 2025. Chiodo had campaigned his dam Sweeter Lulu during her racing career that included an impressive 2-year-old season facing the likes of Warrawee Ubeaut on the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes circuit. While Sweeter Lulu would have issues with soundness during a long and prosperous racing career, she stood out in other ways.

"She had a tremendous heart and desire," said Chiodo.

Given Sweeter Lulu's characteristics, Mardi Gras Man, a son of Stay Hungry that Chiodo gelded at an early stage of training to keep him composed, had the bloodlines to become a stakes horse should all the pieces fit together.

Chiodo debuted Mardi Gras Man in July of 2025 and saw him make a break in a qualifier at Harrah's Philadelphia. He would return the following week with a flat line that allowed Mardi Gras Man to make his career debut on August 10 and it was the kind of mile that every trainer loves to see. Mardi Gras Man rallied from far off the pace and stormed home in 27 2/5, pacing a solid final half and giving Chiodo the inspiration to try stakes company in the Kindergarten series, one of only a few stakes races he was eligible to. Mardi Gras Man raced well in defeat but was 10 lengths behind the winner even though he paced a final quarter in 26 3/5.

"We brought him back to race at Chester (Harrah's Philadelphia) and he made breaks in his last two starts, so we quit with him," said Chiodo. "He had talent but mentally he just couldn't handle it."

With some time and education Chiodo was hopeful that the proverbial bell would go off and her claims to ownership that there was a special horse inside Mardi Gras Man would be revealed.

Those hopes seemed doomed from the start of Mardi Gras Man's sophomore season with the gelding making miscues in two of his first three starts of the year. A fourth-place finish to Bookie J at The Meadowlands came in between the breaks, but clearly little had changed.

"He was making breaks in the same spot on the track," said Chiodo. "I just decided to give him a bit more time and bring him back."

When Mardi Gras Man returned on July 14 to qualify at Harrah's Philadelphia, Chiodo had not made any equipment changes but there was a difference in the horse. Mardi Gras Man stayed flat and paced home strongly in his qualifier, and then returned five days later on July 19 with

an eye-catching performance winning for the first time in eight career starts. Young driver Trae Porter took Mardi Gras Man well off the pace and then saw him fire off a wicked final half to get up in time in a 1:55 mile.

One start doesn't make a success story and given all the previous experiences, Mardi Gras Man needed to get over the hump so to speak. With Porter in the bike over the last four weeks Mardi Gras Man has shifted from a fast horse into a potentially gifted racehorse. He worked his way out of non-winners of one race on July 26 at Harrah's Philadelphia with another off-the-pace romp in 1:53 then moved up in class with a 1:50 3/5 blowout on August 2.

As visually imposing as his victories had been, Mardi Gras Man's transition to complete racehorse could only come if he could be versatile on the track. Porter tested Mardi Gras Man in last Sunday's (August 9) non-winners of 3 event at Harrah's and found out a lot more. Mardi Gras Man was vicious, leaving in 27 1/5 and pacing a 54 3/5 back half en route to a 1:50 2/5 personal best.

"I'd have to say it's been Trae that's made the difference with this horse," said Chiodo in admiration for the 25-year-old. "I didn't put any pressure on him. I told him to race the horse the way he was comfortable with."

Chiodo had a connection with the Porter family. "I worked with his grandfather Jim Porter for Eugene Landy back in the day," said Chiodo.

"Jim had a great pair of hands and so does Trae."

There won't be any stakes races this year for Mardi Gras Man, but Chiodo is hoping for long-term success for a horse that appears to have untapped potential. "I think he should be able to work his way up the classes here," said Chiodo of keeping Mardi Gras Man at Harrah's Philadelphia through the season. "Then we'll figure out the next steps as a 4-year-old."

HAMBO MUSINGS: Without question, Saturday's (August 8) Hambletonian finish was riveting, with a slim nose separating Apex from Big Ranger for the first

prize in the \$1 million contest. The Hambletonian became a match race when two potential front-runners in It Could Be Worse and Magic Punk made breaks in stride at the start. Magic Punk's break also wiped out American Power's chances, with James MacDonald forced to check and go even wider into the first turn.

That it took some time – roughly five minutes or so – to determine that Apex had in fact won the race and given both his trainer Marcus Melander and driver Dexter Dunn their first Hambletonian victory must have seemed like an eternity for the previously snake-bitten pair. Given the disappointments of past years, it was easy to understand how the two were likely not optimistic following the all-too-close finish.

In a world where we all try to draw conclusions with absolutes and no room for error it's hard to imagine that a margin as minimal as a nostril could be a defining moment for either horse or their connections.

The 2026 Hambletonian was an epic performance by two horses with both arriving at the finish line in a stakes record 1:49 2/5 mile clocking. It was fitting that Melander and Dunn would find the winner's circle following years of racing top contenders. Big Ranger brought his "A" game to East Rutherford and was brilliant in his elimination and final for trainer Anette Lorentzon and driver Tim Tetrick.

As a racing fan there can only be hope that the Hambletonian finish spurs a rivalry with exceptional trainers, drivers and horses providing thrilling, competitive and dramatic racing for all to enjoy.



GRACE ZIMMERS

Mardi Gras Man has gone back to back wins in sub 1:51 at Harrah's Philadelphia.

Seeking out the human side of the racing community



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett [X @JHallettPhoto](#)

The world of harness racing is generally confined inside the fences surrounding the track and perhaps includes small glimpses into the paddock on race nights. What happens on the racetrack in the five-minute post parade and two-minute race does not nearly define the breadth of the 24/7 life of a horseperson.

Harness racing has plenty of stories about races, wins, horses, horsemen, and records. There are hundreds of thousands of photos of the sport from every angle, and more and more there are new types of videos surfacing from the regular race feed to the racing broadcasts and so on.

The value of this content cannot be overstated. Being able to reach people outside of the fences surrounding the track through social media is the most valuable asset for promoting racing and growing a fanbase.

Last year, the cameras from the perspective of the drivers really took off. In the Spring of 2025, I purchased a pair of Meta glasses so I could wear sunglasses on the track and listen to music with open ear technology that still allowed me to be alert to the races and my surroundings while shooting the races. One day, I decided to ask Brett Beckwith to try them out and the video gained a lot of traction on social media, with comments asking to hear the original audio as opposed to music overlayed on top.

As time went on, the videos grew more and more popular. The only downside was the three minute recording limit in which drivers had to physically turn the recording on before going to the gate – a task that proved difficult with some drivers, as if you don't hold the record button long enough you would simply take a photo instead. Let's just say, I have many photos of drivers legs in the bike.

After posting many of these videos, trainer Ivar Hyngstrom suggested

I switch from the Meta glasses to the InstaGo3s and that changed everything. Drivers did not have to touch the camera at all and the recordings lasted for 30 minutes.

Going into the North America Cup last year, I had a plan to ask one of the drivers to wear the glasses and one of the drivers to wear the helmet cam, as I had named it. The one driver I had asked about the helmet cam did not feel comfortable in such a high-stakes race and the other driver I had asked about the Meta glasses, Braxten Boyd, didn't feel comfortable starting the glasses while turning for the gate because of nerves. And so, Boyd became the driver to wear the helmet cam. His drive in that race with all of his colorful commentary as a 25-year-old going for the chance at a million-dollars purse, plus finishing second in that race, created a ton of visibility for the sport.

I ended up buying four helmet cams and they captured Sylvia Hanover's world record at Plainridge and Corey MacPherson's win in the Gold Cup and Saucer, and numerous other top moments in racing.

I still have them and I still use them, but this year I wanted something different. Every year I like to try something different to generate new fans and followers to the sport. And this year, I wanted something big and I wanted something personal that was in line to the message I always spread about racing with a focus on the community, the horses, and the horsemen.

The sport has always been full of personalities. It's a big melting pot of people that come from all walks of life with all different kinds of backgrounds. I always like to emphasize the stories of the horses and their personalities and stories, but behind all of the horses – the races, the wins and records – are people with stories, rivalries, friendships, quirks, and a very particular sense of humor.

Thus, in addition to the stories and posts featuring the horsemen, the best way to showcase these people behind the races was to put them in front of the camera in a way that shows more than a photo or a proper interview ever could.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 13](#)

WINBAK FARM

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What started out as an introduction to the new season at Saratoga with each driver giving a set quote turned into “questions of the day” and “silly games and quirky trends”.

The idea of the video compilations is to portray the horsemen in a different light besides just being horsemen, besides just being a name on a program or on a leaderboard.

One interview video with multiple questions for one horseman is not a bad idea, but giving one question to multiple horsemen in one video really illuminated the differing – or even similar – opinions of the participants.

The first compilation reel, posted on March 1, drew in nearly 30,000 views and 600 reactions as I asked the drivers how they chose their colors. The drivers answered swiftly and easily, and with the interest in the content, the “Question of the Day” at Saratoga was created.

I come up with the questions off the top of my head, things that would spark interest to any inquiring mind about a driver or horseman regardless of whether they are new to the sport, a lifelong fan, or even a horseman. Sometimes the questions also come from people in the comments or through messages, or as part of a TikTok trend depending on what it is.

Some of those trends include the grip strength test, which I filmed in mid-March at Saratoga, as well as the walkout songs for drivers, which I filmed at both Saratoga and Yonkers. Speaking of Yonkers, the trip to that track was for the Charles ‘Do Bronx’ Oliveira Drivers Challenge and so, as a special treat, the question of the day for those drivers was: “Which driver would you take on in an MMA ring?”

Each track I travel to I tailor the questions to that track for that event. For International Women’s Day at the Meadowlands, I asked each woman driver to give not only a walkout song, but also to give advice to the next generation of girls. At Clinton Raceway for Legends Day and the National Driving Championship, I asked the legends to talk about their past in racing and their favorite memories and I asked the NDC drivers to talk about their opportunity to represent Canada, how they chose their colors, and which of the legends that they would go to for advice. And for one more example, at the Hambletonian this year at The Meadowlands, I asked various people for their Hambletonian experiences and I asked a few of the drivers in the Hambletonian to talk about what it’s like to get into the marquee race.

Every holiday, event or related occasion, I incorporate each horseman as part of a compilation video, too. For instance, on the anniversary of Hunter Myers’ passing, I asked each horseman to say Hunter’s phrase, God Bless. On Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, I asked the horsemen to either say a personal word to their own family or to say a general statement for the occasion. Even after Brett Beckwith’s accident on April 12, I had each horseman say a few words of encouragement for him. The only time this idea failed to come to fruition was after the tragic barn fire here at Saratoga on June 16. I had wanted each horseman to give some words of comfort or support, but truthfully, there were no words that could be said.

After that barn fire, it did take me a long time to get back into filming the fun content in the paddock. It took me a long time to go back to the paddock at all. A few weeks before the fire, I remember receiving compliments for making racing at Saratoga look like so much fun. The last “question of the day” was on June 14, a joke question: “Which driver would you not let your daughter date?”

After that fire, I couldn’t imagine making any fun content. I was writing stories for the horses and horsemen, eulogies for each horse, filming the tributes to the horses, helping raise money, creating artwork and



JESSICA HALLETT

Jim Devaux (left) and Leon Bailey (right) square off in thumb wars while Jason Bartlett looks on.

shirts, and more. I just could not imagine posting anything with humor or of that nature.

On June 21, I did go ahead with the Father’s Day video for respect of the holiday. I produced a video of the official memorial ceremony on June 28 for the barn fire and realized that we all needed some of the good and happy content back. Slowly but surely, three weeks after the fire, I returned to the paddock. I asked the horsemen, “What is your favorite harness horse name?” I went through my regular horsemen that I always ask, but I avoided driver Chris Long. I didn’t want to put him on camera after what had happened. and then after Wally Hennessey had the mic, he turned and handed it to Long to answer. to which he replied, “No I can’t. I have 11 names I could give you though” for the 11 horses he lost in the fire, a comment that was gut-wrenching. But, later, he found me again and said he wanted to answer. His answer was Uncle Rat, a horse that won three straight races for him after the fire and after an on-track incident, a horse that didn’t have a spectacular name, but was a shining light for him in what was the worst time in his life.

And so, the “Question of the Day” was brought back with new installments each week at Saratoga and on the road to other tracks for their races, too.

The horsemen see the camera and the mic now and they know what is coming, but it’s all in good humor and good fun. If anything, this year at Saratoga has been a reminder of how short life is and how quick something can happen, so these videos have brought everyone together even more and kept everything lighthearted and fun.

At the end of the day, the videos are only a few seconds or a few minutes long. They might make someone laugh while scrolling through their phone, give a fan a glimpse of a horseman they have always wanted to know more about, or capture a moment that would otherwise disappear as soon as everyone walks away.

For me, that’s the best part. I get to stand on the other side of the camera and watch people who are usually defined by what they do on the race-track simply be themselves.

Sometimes they’re serious. Sometimes they’re competitive. Sometimes they’re unexpectedly sentimental. And sometimes they say something so completely ridiculous that I know before I even stop recording that it is going into the compilation, or at least the bloop reel.

Those moments may not show up in the race results, but they are part of the story of this sport, too. So I’ll keep asking the questions, hitting record and occasionally putting horsemen in situations where they wonder what they agreed to. Whether it’s a genuine “Question of the Day” or a silly game of Thumb Wars between grown men, it’s all in good fun. Sometimes, it’s just fun to see what they’ll agree to!

Because the best part of making these videos isn’t just getting the answer. It’s getting to know the person giving it.

Prince Hal Hanover proving himself against the older crowd

By Ken Weingartner

Sometimes 4-year-olds can struggle a little bit when making the transition to facing older horses in open company, but Prince Hal Hanover has held his own this season, right from the start.

Prince Hal Hanover, a 4-year-old pacing stallion trained and co-owned by Dr. Ian Moore, began his campaign in May by beating a field of nine older rivals in the Pacey Mindlin Memorial Invitational (Grade 3) at Miami Valley Raceway. He has competed against older foes in four graded stakes/invitations since then, with three second-place finishes and a third to show for his efforts.

One of those setbacks, to Mossdale Ben N in the Battle of Lake Erie (G2), was by a nose. Most recently, he was beaten by a neck by Captain Albano in a division of the Sam McKee Memorial (G2) this past Saturday at the Meadowlands.

For the year, Prince Hal Hanover has hit the board in all 11 of his races, winning four and earning \$373,981. His other wins this season include the Charles Juravinski Memorial Cup (G2), an event restricted to 4-year-olds, at Flamboro Downs in May. He was second in the Graduate Series final (G2), also for 4-year-olds, at the Meadowlands in July.

"He has become one of my favorite horses of all time," said Moore, who co-owns Prince Hal Hanover with five others under the Prince Hal Hanover Stable banner. "Just his whole demeanor and the way he is so ultra-consistent. He can race any way – from a hole, from the back, on the front – and he gives you all he's got every time out. I don't even recall the last time he's gone a poor race for us. And that's (racing) all over the place. We're at different tracks every week with him. That says a lot too."

Last season as a 3-year-old, Prince Hal Hanover won eight of 21 races, including the Adios (G1), Carl Milstein Memorial (G2), and divisions of the Bluegrass and Somebeachsomewhere stakes (both G3). He hit the board an additional seven times and earned \$830,560. At the end of the campaign, the ownership group considered all its options for the horse – who has hit the board in 33 of 42 career races, winning 14 and earning \$1.49 million – and decided to bring him back in 2026. "Three-year-olds coming 4, a lot of them, maybe eight or nine of 10, struggle a bit until they get acclimatized," Moore said. "I've had 4-year-olds struggle in recent years, so that was a concern. But I made the push to race him as a 4-year-old. I said this what we buy yearlings for every fall, to get a horse like him. He had a record of (1):47 2/5 last year and competed at the top level all year, so why not give him another chance. I'm glad it turned out because no matter what happens now he's already got his year paid for. It's been good."

What qualities have helped the son of Captaintreacherous-Percy Bluechip adjust quickly to facing older rivals?

"I think just his toughness, his durability, and his desire to win," Moore said. "It doesn't seem to matter if I train him or just jog him; week in and week out he gives you all he's got every time he's out there, no matter what."



LISA PHOTO

Prince Hal Hanover landed post seven in the Dan Patch on Friday.

He's a pleasure to be around in every way, shape or form. We just love him."

On Friday (Aug. 14), Prince Hal Hanover will visit Harrah's Hoosier Park – his seventh different track this season – for the \$300,000 Dan Patch Stakes (G1). He is one of six 4-year-olds in the free-for-all event, which will go behind the gate with a field of 11 horses. Prince Hal Hanover will leave from post 7 with regular driver Todd McCarthy and is 7-1 on the morning line.

The 3-1 morning-line favorite in the Dan Patch is 4-year-old Dandy Ideal, who will start from post 4 with Tyler Buter driving for Hunter Oakes. In six races this season, the son of American Ideal-OK Heavenly has four wins and a second, with \$74,750 in earnings.

Graduate Series champion Captain Optimistic (driver Dexter Dunn, trainer Nancy Takter) will leave from post 6 and is the 7-2 second choice followed by Bythemissal (Ronnie Wrenn Jr.-Ron Burke) at 6-1. Last week, Bythemissal finished third in the McKee division won by Captain Albano, just missing out on second place as Prince Hal Hanover rallied for the spot with a race-best 26 1/5 last quarter.

"I haven't been out to Indiana for a couple of years now, and it's a nice spot," said Moore, who won the 2020 Dan Patch Stakes with Century Farroh. "I love racing there. We're looking forward to it. It's a big field and it's a lot of good horses. We'll see what happens."

In addition to the Dan Patch Stakes, Hoosier Park hosts the \$100,000 Rockin Nola (G3) for older female pacers. Three Times Bettor, who has won seven of nine races this year, is the 9-5 morning-line favorite in the field of seven. The daughter of Bettor's Delight-Three Times A Lady will leave from post 7 with Dunn driving for Brett Pelling.

Racing begins at 5:30 p.m. (EDT).

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1 FIRE RUN

31:50 (5/8) Q \$6,293 OH-SEL \$28,000
10-1 A. Bender 1184-172-158-170 (145)

9 Aug 26	5Lx1	fst80 ⁺	264	:53 ¹	1:20 ³	1:47 ²	KYSS	80000	7	8 ¹⁰	8 ⁹	6 ⁰⁵	7 ³⁴	6 ²	AtBender	ErvMiller	284	263	261	261	1:474	115	77.42	FunkyBdha	SeBstrHrv	SnekySoky	-9
1 Aug 26	75cD	fst76 ⁺	262	:55 ¹	1:22 ³	1:50 ³	OSF 3C	53394	4	4 ⁴	4 ⁴	3 ⁰²	2 ¹	2 ³	AtBender	ErvMiller	271	284	27	274	1:504	106	1.50	Myboypark	FireRun	HrZCrnth	-10
25 July 26	45cD	fst81 ⁺	264	:54 ¹	1:22 ²	1:50	HGNW6PMRLT	17000	[10	44 ¹	45 ¹	4 ⁰³	1 ¹	1 ⁶	MaLuna	ErvMiller	273	281	271	27	1:50	109	6.90	FireRun	OddsOnRpi	YachtRock	-10
15 July 26	70aG	fst84 ⁺	26	:54 ¹	1:21 ¹	1:48	KYSS-3CG-A	80000	3	6 ⁸	7 ⁷	7 ⁰³	7 ⁶	7 ⁸	MaLuna	ErvMiller	273	282	263	27	1:493	111	54.25	SeBstrHrv	PapRck	BenyBhl	-8
8 July 26	40aG	fst83 ⁺	263	:54 ¹	1:22 ¹	1:50 ³	KYSS-3CG-B	40000	6	4 ⁰⁴	4 ⁵	4 ⁴	4 ³	1 ^{nk}	MaLuna	ErvMiller	273	282	27	273	1:503	107	21.65	FireRun	ThsBStrDe	ProfcBld	-8
24 Jun 26	60aG	fst84 ⁺	261	:54	1:21 ²	1:49	KYSS-3CG	40000	5be	6 ¹⁹	6 ⁰⁵	6 ⁰⁴	5 ⁴	1 ^{nk}	AtBender	ErvMiller	30						12.60	ShowMyRc	Viczaya	ThiagoHrv	-6
11 Jun 26	14ScD	fst87 ⁺	263	:55 ¹	1:22 ³	1:51	HGNW4PMRLT	15500	1	2 ¹	2 ²	2 ²	3 ²	1 ¹	MaLuna	ErvMiller	27	283	272	28	1:51	103	3.80	FireRun	CurvSrn	OddsOnRpi	-9

b g 3, by Catch The Fire, Rose Run Vanity by McArdle
Envin Miller Stable Inc, Debarry FL, Steppystep Racing, Davenport, FL, Mark D Winship, Canton, IL
E. Miller 589-127-104-84 (216)
Br - Ct Stables LLC, OH

Last 4 Sts-\$21,848	1:50 ScD 5/8	26 Nfd	0	0	0	0	- 26 Tot	11	4	2	1	\$69,223
	1:56.4 HoP 7/8	25 Nfd	1	0	0	0	\$0 25 Tot	13	1	3	3	\$26,104
		24 Nfd	0	0	0	0	- Life	24	5	5	4	\$95,327

2 MELILLO

31:48.4 (5/8) Q \$27,137
7-5 R. Wrenn Jr. 1246-313-225-163 (251)

25 July 26	16Mw	fst80 ⁺	263	:54 ¹	1:20 ²	1:48 ¹	ADIOS-G1	420500	9	4 ⁵	4 ⁴	4 ³	4 ²	2 ^{hd}	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	273	273	254	271	1:481	118	8.70	AI Papi	Melillo	OdsMmmba	-9	
18 July 26	7Mw	fst81 ⁺	253	:54 ¹	1:20 ³	1:47 ²	ADIOS ELIM	25000	5	2 ¹	2 ¹	4 ⁰⁴	3 ⁴	2 ²	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	254	284	27	261	1:474	120	1.10	AI Papi	Melillo	SwtLnLn	-8	
11 July 26	10M1	fst77 ⁺	263	:54 ¹	1:21 ⁴	1:48 ¹	D1 Mile Pace F-G1	810000	5	5 ³	3 ¹	2 ⁹	2 ¹	4 ^{hd}	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	271	273	27	262	1:481	114	+5.8w	26.60	BmndrBlvd	AI Papi	GentlmnC	1st up, balld, pace In-10
26 Jun 26	8YR	fst82 ⁺	281	:57 ¹	1:26 ²	2:14	MGM G M F-G2	200000	7	7 ⁹	7 ⁹	5 ⁰	4 ¹	4 ³	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	30	29	28	2:223			+7.4w	6.86	Fragment	AI Papi	MightyMat	11 Trail, 2nd ov, no bid-7
13 Jun 26	11Wbs	fst77 ⁺	261	:54 ¹	1:21 ¹	1:48 ¹	NA CUP-G1	715500	1	3 ¹	5 ¹	7 ⁵	6 ⁵	5 ⁴	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	263	282	271	264	1:49	109	+10.3w	42.45	OdsMmmba	BmndrBlvd	BeauJngls	No rally-10
6 Jun 26	9Wbs	fst88 ⁺	262	:54 ¹	1:21 ¹	1:48 ²	NA CUP	36000	3	1 ⁰	2 ¹	4 ²	4 ³	4 ³	RonWmnrJr	RoBurke	262	28	271	262	1:49	111	+7.5w	25.00	OdsMmmba	BmndrBlvd	BeauJngls	Yld, pkt, little-8
24 May 26	7PhA	fst61 ⁺	271	:544	1:214	1:484	PASS-3YOCG	37335	6	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ²	1 ³	TTitetrck	RoBurke	271	273	27	27	1:484	114	+5.5w	+7.0	Melillo	EasyBreeze	TablAndr	-6

b c 3, by Sweet Lou, Rosemary Rose by Foreclosure N
Burke Rcg Stb LLC, Fredericktown, PA, J V Melillo, Powell, OH, Weaver Brusconi LLC, Canonsburg, PA
R. Burke 3221-625-510-409 (194)
Br - Burke Rcg Stb, PA, J Melillo, OH, Weaver Brusconi

Last 4 Sts-\$192,175	1:48.4 Phl 5/8	26 Nfd	0	0	0	0	- 26 Tot	10	2	4	0	\$271,365
	*1:48.4 Lx1	25 Nfd	0	0	0	0	- 25 Tot	14	3	6	3	\$380,357
		24 Nfd	0	0	0	0	- Life	24	5	10	3	\$651,722

3 BALLROOM AFFAIR

31:51.3 (5/8) Q \$20,919
15-1 A. Merriman 1476-310-253-214 (210)

15-1 A. Mørriman 1476-310-253-214																													
4 Aug 26	3YR	fst80 ⁺	281	:571	1:25 ⁴	1:53 ¹	CHGNW2PM	21000	6	2 ¹⁰	2 ¹	1 ¹	1 ²	1 ¹	BrHolland	JoBongirn	281	29	283	272	1:531	98	+10.4w	+5.8	BalmAlar	Cmbggs	SwtL	Usd pst 1/4,ld,handy-7	
28 July 26	11Phl	fst79 ⁺	273	:57	1:24	1:504	Qua	20000	6	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	BrChishlm	JoBongirn	274	294	27	264	1:51				1.10	AI Papi	Melillo	SwtLnLn	-8
24 May 26	6Phl	fst61 ⁺	271	:553	1:231	1:501	TSS-3YOCGP	20000	2	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	JoBongirn	JoBongirn	273	281	273	264	1:504	105	+5.5w	1.50	SpunkyHrv	BalmAlar	Justinian	Own clip, all out-7	
16 May 26	11PcD	fst78 ⁺	282	:564	1:241	1:52	TSS-3YOCG	20000	3	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ²	JoBongirn	JoBongirn	282	282	273	272	1:51	97	+5.6w	+4.40	BalmAlar	GtLp	Spsta	Solidarity	-7
2 May 26	9Mw	fst48 ⁺	281	:56	1:241	1:513	TSS-3YOCG	20000	7	4 ⁴	4 ⁵	2 ¹	1 ²	1 ²	TTitetrck	JoBongirn	29	28	271	272	1:513	103		1.70	BalmAlar	CvCade	PapRck	-7	
19 Apr 26	1Phl	fst49 ⁺	272	:562	1:241	1:521	CGNW3PM	12000	5	4 ⁷	4 ⁵	1 ¹	1 ⁵	1 ⁵	JoBongirn	JoBongirn	284	283	264	28	1:521	95	+8.4w	+4.05	BalmAlar	EdgarHrv	Strmtb	Bl	-6
28 Mar 26	2M1	fst38 ⁺	29	:572	1:254	1:54	Mdn	13500	6	4 ⁴	4 ⁰³	2 ⁰	1 ²	1 ¹	JoBongirn	JoBongirn	284	281	274	281	1:54	84	+1.7w	+4.40	BmAlr	Jmnp	ckDTh	SbStrD	1st up,ld,lane,handy-7

b g 3, by Papi Rob Hanover, Discofadorlar by American Ideal
Let It Ride Stables Inc, Boca Raton, FL, Alberg Racing LLC, Washington, NJ
J. Bongiorno 574-142-105-83 (247)
Br - Let It Ride Stbs Inc & Bottom Line Rcg LLC, FL

Line Rca 11 C F										
Last 4 Sts-\$35,500		1:51.3 Mw 5/8	26 Nfd	0 0 0 0	- 26 *	6	5	1	0	\$48,115
			25 Nfd	0 0 0 0	- 25 Tot	2	0	1	0	\$6,500
			24 Nfd	0 0 0 0	- Life	8	5	2	0	\$54,715

4 C MILLERTIMEAGAIN

31:51.4 (5/8) Q \$14,833
12-1 Co. Callahan 1059-146-147-151 (138)

5 Aug 26	3OD	fst86 ⁺	273	:563	1:252	1:534	Qua	110000	1	1 ³	1 ⁶	1 ¹⁰	1 ¹²	1 ¹	CoCallahn	MoGara	273	29	284	282	1:534				rb	Cmlrtmg	LuckyStrk	MaryPuls	-4
23 July 26	7Har	fst70 ⁺	274	:561	1:241	1:522	DSBF FINAL-R3	110000	1	1 ¹	1 ²	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	CoCallahn	MoGara	274	282	28	281	1:522	103			.80	Cmlrtmg	WchtEnW	RomanRad	-8
15 July 26	4OD	fst89 ⁺	281	:583	1:264	1:55	Qua	20000	4	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	CoCallahn	MoGara	281	302	281	281	1:55				rb	Cmlrtmg	SagWlr	MmnvCmn	-5
29 Jun 26	2Har	fst80 ⁺	27	:56	1:24	1:514	DSBF ELIM	20000	5	2 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ³	1 ³	CoCallahn	MoGara	272	283	28	274	1:514	104			+0.05	Cmlrtmg	SgrOnDck	MyBoyBrms	-7
22 Jun 26	4Har	fst78 ⁺	273	:553	1:25	1:531	DSBF ELIM	20000	1	1 ⁰	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	CoCallahn	MoGara	273	28	292	281	1:531	99			*30	WchtEnW	Cmlrtmg	SgrOnDck	-7
15 Jun 26	2Har	fst73 ⁺	274	:564	1:252	1:532	HGNW4PMRLT	10000	4	1 ²	1 ²	1 ¹	1 ²	1 ¹	CoCallahn	MoGara	274	29	283	281	1:532	98			+0.05	Cmlrtmg	RomanRad	SbrdPdb	-8
8 Jun 26	4Har	fst63 ⁺	281	:57	1:254	1:533	HGNW4PMRLT	10000	8	2 ⁰	1 ³	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	CoCallahn	MoGara	282	283	284	274	1:533	97			+0.30	Cmlrtmg	RomanRad	StandGlas	-8

b g 3, by Roddy's Bags Again, Total Conviction by Somebeachsomewhere
Envin Miller Stb, Dory, FL, J Frawley, Richnd Ctr, WI, J Knowlton, Richnd Ctr, WI
M. Gara 23-6-3-2 (261)
Br - Pamela M Schott, DE

ongirn	29 ⁴	28 ¹	27 ⁴	28 ¹	1:54	84	+1/w	*40	BirmAltrmpchckJMissSnd	1st up,ld lane,handy/f				
Last 4 Sts-\$75,000	1:51.4	Har	26	Nfd	0	0	0	0	- 26	* 6	5	1	0	\$89,000
	1:53.1	Har	25	Nfd	0	0	0	0	- 25 Tot	10	2	3	4	\$112,605
			24	Nfd	0	0	0	0	- Life	16	7	4	4	\$201,605

5 MYBOYPANK

31:50 (5/8) Q \$13,966 OH-SEL \$20,000
6-1 M. Luna 836-108-112 (123)

6-1 M. Luna 836-103-98-112 (123)																													
1 Aug26	7ScD	fst7 ^{6°}	262	:551	1:222	1:503	OSF 3C	53394	7	1 ⁰	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	MaLuna	ToAlagna	262	284	272	28	1:503	107			+5.0	Myboypark	FireRun	HrZCrnth	-10
25 July26	9ScD	fst7 ^{5°}	27	:552	1:221	1:50	NW1150L4	16500	6	5 ⁶	2 ¹	2 ⁰	2 ¹	2 ¹	MaLuna	ToAlagna	281	273	262	274	1:50	113			4.50	Myboypark	JoelsHrv	HghGrnd	-10
6 July26	6Nfd	fst7 ^{7°}	27	:564	1:25	1:522	OHS3 3C	75000	4	2 ¹	2 ¹	2 ¹	3 ¹	1 ¹	MaLuna	ToAlagna	271	30	28	271	1:522	100			2.80	Myboypark	TsmnSeas	WhnlsPrde	-7
20 Jun26	11Nfd	fst8 ^{8°}	264	:553	1:232	1:52	OHS3 3C	75000	5	6 ¹⁶	6 ¹⁸	5 ⁰⁶	4 ⁵	4 ²	MaLuna	ToAlagna	30	271	272	274	1:522	102	+6.7w	1.70	SkuLnCrsb	PotRd	MyBoyBrms	-7	
8 Jun26	70aG	wf8 ^{3°}	261	:552	1:24	1:514	NW 6600 L4	16000	4	4 ³	4 ⁰³	2 ⁰	1 ¹	2 ^{nk}	MaLuna	ToAlagna	264	291	281	273	1:514	104			+3.3	SerisMki	Myboypark	Mankat	-9
25 May26	85cD	fst7 ^{4°}	252	:533	1:201	1:50	OSS 3C	85000	7	7 ⁷	7 ⁰⁷	7 ⁰⁸	7 ⁸	1 ^{hd}	MaLuna	ToAlagna	264	281	264	281	1:50	110			6.90	Myboypark	LnYDragn	PeJtPct	-8
18 May26	30aG	fst8 ^{9°}	261	:544	1:22	1:51	NW3/4ExPM	16000	3	5 ⁵	5 ⁵	1 ⁰	1 ²	1 ²	MaLuna	ToAlagna	271	283	261	29	1:51	107			+5.7	Myboypark	MankgHstr	HstLnTnt	-8

b g 3, by Catch The Fire, Baz

Saturday only at Big M this week; Beckwith, Engblom win titles

It figures that after a Hambletonian Day (Saturday, Aug. 8) of racing that was pulse pounding and breathtaking – not to mention record breaking – that The Meadowlands would ease up on the throttle some the week after.

The New York Jets are at MetLife Stadium Friday (Aug. 14) night hosting the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in an NFL preseason game at 7 p.m., and, as a result, The Meadowlands will not offer live harness that night and race only once this week, on Saturday (Aug. 15).

Saturday afternoon, the Giants host the Minnesota Vikings, but because the game begins at 1 p.m., the track will have live action that evening, but will start the 13-race card 40 minutes later than usual, at 7 p.m.

Moving forward, live harness racing at The Big M will be conducted on a Friday-Saturday basis through Sept. 12 with a first-race post time of 6:20 p.m.

But take note, that in addition to this Friday night, there will be no live racing Friday, Aug. 28, when the Giants and Jets faceoff at 7:30 p.m. at MetLife Stadium.

BECKWITH, ENGBLOM WIN DASH CROWNS: Driver Brett Beckwith and Trainer Per Engblom walked away with the dash-win titles for their respective occupations at the Winter-Spring-Championship Meet that concluded Hambletonian Day.

Beckwith finished with 101 wins, which were 10 more than runner-up Joe Bongiorno. Beckwith has now won back-to-back W-S-C crowns, and is also seeking a second straight yearly title. During 2025, Beckwith recorded 146 victories, but may have trouble equaling that number in 2026, since the 23-year-old pilot spent two months earlier this year recovering from injuries suffered in a spill.

With 54 wins, Engblom finished atop the trainer standings, racking up nine more walks down victory lane than Bongiorno, who was second best with 45.

After guiding Bourbonista S (in the Vincennes), Super Chapter (John Cashman) and Apex (Hambletonian) to the winner's circle, Dexter Dunn padded his earnings at the meeting to \$3.24 million, tops in the driver standings. Yannick Gingras was next with \$2.08 million.

Marcus Melander conditioned the victorious Bourbonista S, Super Chapter, Apex and Nezuko Kamado S (Hambletonian Oaks) to lift his trainer earnings to a colony best \$2.42 million. Ron Burke finished second with \$1.72 million.

-edited release (by Dave Little for Meadowlands)

HANOVER TO SELL YEARLINGS ONLINE AGAIN IN 2026

Hanover Shoe Farms will present 21 yearlings to be sold August 31, 2026 on the Preferred Equine Online platform. This decision is driven by a strategic effort to optimize revenue in alignment with current economic conditions. Transitioning these yearlings to an online platform allows the streamlining of inventory to more efficiently manage the 2026 Harrisburg consignment.

In 2025 Hanover Shoe Farms sold 19 yearlings online. From that group, 2026 starters include:

- > Whoopdedoo Hanover T \$5,000 2,1:55 4/5 winner NJSS Silver
- > Mr. Green Hanover T \$6,500 BBT 1:55 3/5f 3rd in PASS
- > Cabaletta Hanover T \$9,500 2,1:58 3/5f, BBT 1:54 4/5f, 2nd in PA All-Stars, 3rd in PASS, \$29,136
- > Dame Hanover T \$13,000 2,Q2:02 2/5h BBT 1:58 4/5f 2nd in Stallion Series
- > Tempt Me Hanover P \$24,000 BBT 1:54 2/5f 3rd in Stallion Series
- > Allmymoni Hanover T \$23,000 2,2:02 2/5h BBT 1:58 2/5f, 3 wins, \$12,847
- > Lucas Hanover P \$8,600 p,2,1:58 4/5h BBT 1:57 2/5f, 5 wins, \$19,376
- > Captain Brody P \$8,500 BBT 1:54 4/5f
- > Sir Galloway P \$11,000 p,2,Q1:59f BBT 1:55 3/5

The 2026 online yearlings include brothers and sisters to:

Odds On Equuleus p,5,1:47 3/5 \$935,816 and last year's Lucas Hanover

Ideation Hanover p,3,1:50 3/5 \$408,754

Austral Hanover 3,1:54 1/5f \$358,506

Maya Patel Hanover 3,1:54 2/5 \$170,581

Ladysassin p,3,1:51 4/5f \$74,650

The 2026 Hanover yearlings selling online will be available for inspection at the Hanover Fairgrounds the week of August 24. Videos will also be available. For a complete listing of the 2026 yearlings, visit Hanoverpa.com/yearlings.php. For more information, please contact Patti Murphy pmurphy@hanoverpa.com or Mark Loewe mloewe@hanoverpa.com.

-edited release (Hanover Shoe Farms)

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, AUGUST 13

RACE 10

(4) HILLEXOTIC is on a quick turnaround after he raced in a stakes event at the Meadowlands on Saturday, but he's very fast off the gate and his form in the top class at Scioto speaks for itself.

-Greg Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

RACE 1

(8) UPTO LAURA HANOVER took a logical step forward second back and produced a career best win. I think she shows us a similar performance tonight.

-Kevin Plowcha



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

RACE 6

(5) LLOYD'S LOVES dropped and popped last out at Saratoga and the mare has been a winning machine here the last few years; veteran picks up Marohn and gets the call.

-Matt Rose

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

RACE 9

(3) WATER SPORTS TEEN is one of a few in here dropping in class. This is the type of spot where he usually wings it on the engine and marches down the road. Should provide Down Under import Rixon with a chance to pick up a win while here on vacation.

-Giwner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

Mohawk Park Analysis

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

Meadowlands Analysis

[Saturday](#)

Yonkers Analysis

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

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

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

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

APEX CLIMBS TO THE TOP OF WEEKLY POLL

This time, it wasn't as close.

Apex, who won the Grade 1 Winning Key Farm Hambletonian this past Saturday by a nose in a stakes-record 1:49 2/5 at the Meadowlands, came out comfortably on top of the Week 9 Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll released Wednesday. The 3-year-old colt trotter received 22 of 35 first-place votes and a total of 330 points, putting him 44 ahead of No. 2-ranked Miki And Minnie as he moved from fifth to first in the rankings.

Miki And Minnie, who won the Lady Liberty (G2) by a half-length over stablemate Twin B Joe Fresh (No. 10 in the poll this week) moved from third to second in a swap of positions with Harrah's Hoosier Park Open Trot winner On To Norway.

Brandon Blvd, who held the No. 1 spot for three weeks, dropped to fourth this week after a third-place finish in the Cane Pace (G2). Hambletonian runner-up Big Ranger completed the top five, gaining a spot following his narrow loss.

Three newcomers occupied positions six through eight: Super Chapter, who won the John Cashman Memorial (G1); Nezuko Kamado S, who captured the Hambletonian Oaks (G1); and Bourbonista S, who defeated male rivals in the Vincennes for her third consecutive victory.

Odds On Mr Mamba, who finished fourth in the Cane Pace, dropped from fourth to ninth in the poll. Loua Dipa, Al Papi, and Endurance 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: Week 9

Rank-Name (1st Votes)	Age/Sex/Gait	Record	Earnings	Points	Pvs
1-Apex (22)	3ct	5-4-1-0	\$739,716	330	5
2-Miki And Minnie (5)	4mp	8-6-0-2	\$372,099	286	3
3-On To Norway (7)	4gt	8-7-1-0	\$403,250	254	2
4-Brandon Blvd	3cp	8-5-2-1	\$745,695	172	1
5-Big Ranger	3ct	8-5-1-0	\$402,337	169	6
6-Super Chapter	4ht	5-3-2-0	\$330,257	153	—
7-Nezuko Kamado S	3ft	6-5-1-0	\$503,905	152	—
8-Bourbonista S (1)	5mt	8-4-2-1	\$185,840	95	—
9-Odds On Mr Mamba	3gp	7-4-0-2	\$525,220	80	4
10-Twin B Joe Fresh	6mp	7-3-2-0	\$240,858	78	8

ALSO: Loua Dipa 52; Al Papi 41; Walspea 13; Lexus Kody 11; Lifetime Dreamer, Shalom Hanover 8; Sweet Lovin Lou 5; Be Perfect BG, Best Chip, Endurance 3; Captain Albano, Captain Optimistic, Wall Of Fame 2; Antognoni S, Carve, Southwind Chaska 1.

-Ken Weingartner for Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown

DECLARATIONS DUE MONDAY FOR SUN STAKES SATURDAY

Horsemen with Grand Circuit-caliber 3-year-olds and free-for-allers of both gaits are reminded that the draw will be held on August 17 for Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania's annual highlight of the campaign, SUN STAKES SATURDAY, which will be contested on Saturday, August 22, with a 2:30 p.m. first post.

The top eight divisional money-winners in 2026 at time of declaration will race in the four signature sophomore events – the \$300,000 Earl Beal Memorial Trot and the \$300,000 Max C. Hempt Memorial Pace, both for males, and their companion races for fillies, the \$250,000 James Lynch Memorial Pace and the \$250,000 Delmonica Hanover Trot. For each "main event," two AEs will also be drawn.

Those just outside of the top eight in each division will contest Consolation I events, worth \$200,000 for the males and \$125,000 for the females; two AEs for these races will also be drawn. Should there be enough declarations in the divisions, there will also be Consolation II races, of \$100,000 for colts and geldings and \$75,000 for fillies. Declaration fees are spelled

out in the Sun Stakes Saturday stakes eligibility conditions.

Sun Stakes Saturday also features two \$100,000 Free-For-All events, one for the very best on each gait – the \$100,000 Sebastian K S Trot and the \$100,000 Always B Miki Pace. The top eight money earners in 2026 who enter will go to post. Should all these events fill, they alone would be worth \$2.3M, and could go a long way to detangling the various contenders for current supremacy in their six respective divisions.

Owners should also be aware that Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association will be sponsoring a limited amount of seating and a buffet lunch starting at 1:30 p.m. in the track's Pacer's Clubhouse. After the draw, owners whose horses are racing on Saturday's card should make immediate RSVPs with Rachel Olszewski of the PHHA (rolszewski@phha.org).

Any questions about entries can be directed to Pocono's Director Of Racing Rick Kane through the Race Office at 570 831 2228.

-release (PHHA / Pocono)

PRIMACY STATION TRIUMPHS OVER BASTONATA BLUECHIP IN NYSS

Primacy Station (American Ideal-Preeminence) moved to the head of his class after winning the \$110,200 New York Sire Stake for 2-year-old pacing colts and geldings at Batavia Downs on Wednesday (Aug. 12) night.

READ MORE

COMMAND CENTER SCORES IN KENTUCKY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

Regally-bred Command Center rebounded from a lapped-on break disqualification in his debut for a 1:54 1/5 victory in the \$80,000 second preliminary of the Kentucky Championship Series for 2-year-old trotting colts and geldings on Wednesday (Aug. 12) at The Red Mile.

READ MORE

MAKE IT RIGHT PRODUCES TRACK RECORD AT OCEAN DOWNS

The Maryland Standardbred Race Fund program produced a night to remember Wednesday at Ocean Downs. Make It Right, a 3-year-old pacing filly, turned in a spectacular 1:52 1/5 performance in the second division of the Maryland Standardbred Fund.

READ MORE

DREAM FOR PEACE UPSETS IN OSS GOLD SERIES

Dream For Peace's first win since April came at an opportune time, as he was a 1:54 4/5 victor in Wednesday night's C\$150,000 Ontario Sires Stakes Gold Series tilt for 3-year-old male trotters at Grand River Raceway.

READ MORE

HOOSIER CANCELS WEDNESDAY, CARRYOVER INTO THURSDAY CARD

Due to immense rainfall and flash flooding in the area, Harrah's Hoosier Park cancelled live racing on Wednesday, Aug. 12. Racing and will resume on Thursday, Aug. 13 with a 14-race program set to get underway at 5:30 p.m.

When racing resumes on Thursday, the first race on the card will feature a carryover of \$4,973 into the Early Pick 5 (races 1-5), with that pool guaranteed at \$20,000. Additionally, the Thursday program will offer the traditional \$10,000 guarantees in the Late Pick 4 (races 11-14) and Late High 5 (race 14) in partnership with the USTA's Strategic Wagering Program.

The Thursday card will serve as the final appetizer before Dan Patch Stakes night on Friday, Aug. 14. In addition to the \$300,000 Dan Patch Stakes (G1) presented by Indiana Standardbred Breed Development featuring 11 of the top older pacers in North America, the Friday card will include the following guarantees:

- \$10,000 Guaranteed Early Pick 5 (Races 1-5)
- \$10,000 Guaranteed Pick 4 (Races 6-9)
- \$30,000 Guaranteed Late Pick 4 (Races 12-15)
- \$10,000 Guaranteed Late High 5 (Race 15)

For more information on the 2026 live racing season at Harrah's Hoosier Park, guests are encouraged to visit www.harrahshoosierpark.com.

-edited release (Hoosier)