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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2026



*Are higher minimums
the wave of the future?*



EDITOR'S EYE

By Derick Giwner

[X HarnessEyeGuy](#)

Everyone loves to follow a trend regardless of the industry or audience. I'm dating myself, but when Skidz was in vogue in the late 1980s, at least in New York, you couldn't walk a few feet down the street without seeing a handful of people wearing the somewhat loud pants. When fidget spinners were the must-have for every kid (and some adults as well) in 2017, everyone jumped on board and had a bunch of them around the house.

Horse racing is no different. When multi-race wagering (Pick 4/Pick 5) became all the rage some 25-30 years ago, every track eventually followed suit and the bets became a featured attraction. Tracks like Woodbine Mohawk Park (\$75K Guaranteed Early Pick 5) and The Meadowlands (\$50K GTD Pick 4s) still have these wagers as highlights of their programs. Fast forward 10 to 15 years and there was a Jackpot craze. Almost every track in the country added one of these churn-killing bets that grow daily from the masses and typically reward a few at the end of the rainbow on mandatory payout days. Unlike the Pick 4/5, many of the Jackpot wagers have died off and just a few of these remain as prominent options.

In 2026, the latest wagering craze is the higher-minimum bet. Tracks of all breeds and locations have been experimenting with \$3 Pick 3s and \$5 Doubles, raising the minimum amount it costs to make these wagers as much as 500% in the process. Kentucky Downs even launched a \$5 minimum for Win/Place/Show wagers placed during its current seven-day meet that started August 29. According to statistics provided by Ed DeRosa on X, WPS bets during the first two cards accounted for 32.1% of total handle, up 1.7% and the highest total over the last nine years.

Closer to home on the harness racing front, The Meadowlands began its experiment with higher minimums on July 11 (Meadowlands Pace Night) with a \$3 Pick 3 on the final three races of the night and a \$5 late double on the last two races on the card. The results are interesting.

Through 14 cards (July 11 to August 29), the Pick 3 has a pool average of \$17,367, compared to \$16,015 over the same period (13 dates) in 2025, an 8.4% increase. The late double hasn't been as fortunate, seeing a decline from \$24,592 to \$18,694, a 23.9% decrease.

In a vacuum we could say that the Pick 3 experiment worked and the double failed, but wagering involves many outside variables that need to be considered. First, it's fair to say that raising the

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3](#)

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Pick 3 minimum from \$1 to \$3 and making it a more featured attraction has hurt the double, which went from a \$2 base to \$5. The issue here is that if you invest in the Pick 3 and make it past the first leg, where is the logic in reinvesting more money into the double unless you "love" a horse?

It is difficult to say where the Pick 3 would be better situated since the track has been adjusting its wagering menu almost weekly of late, but the last three races is the wrong spot if the late double is to remain as-is. Maybe the play is to revert the late double to \$2 and make the new mid-card double (races 7 & 8 this week) a \$5 wager.

Other factors to consider when it comes to the numbers is the overall drop in handle at The Meadowlands this year, how races line up with competitors (harness and thoroughbred), weather, etc.

The Meadowlands isn't the only track to play around with higher minimums. The Meadows offered a \$3 Pick 3 on Adios Day and handled a very credible \$16,944 and approximately \$2,700 more than the late double that overlapped two of the races (The Meadows is offering two more on Saturday (6-8 and 9-11) as part of their Stallion Series Finals card). Woodbine Mohawk Park has its own spin on the Pick 3 where it cherry picks three stakes races and makes it a standalone wager apart from the regular wagering program (there is a \$5 Pick 3 on Saturday with the Milton, Canadian Pacing Deby and Maple Leaf Trot). While it has also done well, I don't love that bettors who wager remotely have to locate the proper designation on their ADW to play it.

The big question is whether the high minimum trend is a fad or a model for the future. I lean towards the latter for a few reasons:

1) Lack of growth – If there is anything the sport has proven over the last couple of decades it is that our handle and audience is shrinking. Maybe the time has come to ask our current customers to accept the higher minimums (and higher returns when they win) to create a larger overall handle. Yes, it's an optical illusion of sorts if it works, but maybe that entices other outside gamblers to dip their toes in our pools.

2) Everything is more expensive now – Remember when you could buy

a slice of pizza or a bagel with cream cheese for under \$2? It isn't that long again. While the cost of everything has increased and people have accepted that reality, harness racing is still charging the same price for a WIN or EXACTA bet. And in some cases we've gone backwards, offering minimum bet amounts as low as a dime.

3) The value of a dollar – A \$2 WIN bet 50 years ago would be the equivalent of an \$11.75 wager today. If you go to a major Las Vegas casino you'd be hard-pressed to find a table with a minimum bet under \$10 and some don't even have an option lower than \$25. Even when I was at Pocono Downs in August the table minimum was \$5. Why are racing's lowest bets not in sync?

For what it's worth, we put up a poll on X asking whether people were in favor, against it or didn't care about higher minimums. 47.3% liked the idea, 43.6% were not in favor of higher minimums, and 9.1% said they didn't care.

Admittedly, as a younger bettor I preferred lower minimums because it allowed me to spread further and increase my chances of cashing a ticket. With age it has become clear that is the wrong mindset. If you can't pare down your ticket cost to fit your budget – while still feeling confident in the wager – then you shouldn't be making that bet.

Even as a less sophisticated bettor in my early years, I don't recall ever making \$2 WIN wagers with frequency. A win bet was always at least double that amount and typically in the \$10 to \$20 range.

So here is hoping that we are not looking at just an experiment in higher minimums but an industry shift. Let's see what the environment looks like if you have to pay more to play. Maybe it's the one time where paying more isn't a bad thing.



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Tetrick seeks Grade 1 double at Woodbine Mohawk Park

By Jay Bergman

Hall of Fame driver Tim Tetrick finds himself in two prime spots on Saturday night hoping to find the winner's circle in a pair of Grade 1 finals at Woodbine Mohawk Park in both the C\$705,000 Canadian Pacing Derby and the C\$620,000 Maple Leaf Trot.

Tetrick will guide Best Chip, a supplement to the Pacing Derby that finished a solid second in his elimination a week ago, and in the Maple Leaf, he gets the call once again – as he did on July 19 – for trainer Ron Burke to sit behind Lexus Kody. The defending Trotter of the Year last won for Tetrick capturing the Spirit Of Massachusetts and has since been defeated in three straight races, including a fifth in last week's Maple Leaf trials.

"He raced great in the elimination," said Tetrick of Best Chip, who starts from post four in the Canadian Pacing Derby carded as race 10 on the Woodbine Mohawk Park program. "He just got out-tripped in the end."

For Once Inmy Life tracked Best Chip throughout the mile and was able to go by in a 1:47 mile. Best Chip, trained by Joe Bongiorno, lost very little luster in defeat.

"He raced great for me on Hambletonian Day," Tetrick said of the 1:46 1/5 victory, the fastest mile in North America in 2026. "He was coming back after three weeks off."

A 4-year-old by Heston Blue Chip, Best Chip has blossomed this year, winning seven of his 13 starts in the process. Tetrick believes he's got plenty of options in the Canadian Pacing Derby final. "He raced great for me from off the pace at Scioto," Tetrick said. "He's easy to handle and doesn't grab on."

The Canadian Pacing Derby draw worked out well for Best Chip considering he did not get post preference from winning an elimination. From post four Best Chip will be directly inside For Once In My Life (post 5) and Prince Hal Hanover (post 6), the trial winners. For Once Inmy Life is looking for his third straight win following his career best 1:47 mile last week (August 29). Prince Hal Hanover was parked a long way before clearing the lead and was incredibly brave capturing his division in 1:48 while taking on rivals on all sides through the final stages of his race. Dr. Ian Moore conditions the 4-year-old by Captaintreacherous and Todd McCarthy will be in the bike.

Last year's Canadian Pacing Derby runner-up Ervin Hanover hadn't raced competitively in over a month heading into last week's eliminations and raced well to be lapped on the winner at the wire. The 2025 Dan Patch Award winner in this class has won four of his six starts leading up to Saturday's final and should be a key player despite drawing post nine.

Also returning from last year's Canadian Pacing Derby was the third-place finisher Oakwood Ardan IR for trainer Bob Cleary. The 7-year-old gelding had to close from an impossible spot in his elimination heat and rallied for fifth to reach the final. Oakwood Ardan IR rallied from post nine in last year's final and gets the benefit of post three in this Saturday's contest with James MacDonald in the bike.

Coaches Corner reached the final again in 2026 following a third-place finish in his elimination for driver Jason Bartlett. The 6-year-old son of Always A Virgin will have to overcome post 10.

Tetrick will try to turn around the fortunes of Lexus Kody as he looks to capture his second straight Maple Leaf Trot (race 8) for trainer Ron Burke.

"He raced great for me at Plainridge," Tetrick said of the 1:49 4/5 effort over a five-eighths track back in July. "But I know he hasn't raced that well since."

Lexus Kody has received an invitation to compete in the \$1 million MGM Yonkers International Trot at Yonkers on September 12 and that could be foremost on his trainer's mind.

"I'm already conceding he's not going to be as sharp as he can be by this week," said Burke when asked about Lexus Kody. "But I'm pretty sure he'll be perfect in two weeks."

Lexus Kody has been battling back from a minor virus according to the conditioner.



WALTER WŁODARCZYK PHOTO

Best Chip reached the wire in 1:46 1/5 at The Meadowlands on August 8, making him the fastest horse of 2026.

Trainer Marcus Melander sent out Periculum to capture the 2024 Maple Leaf Trot and he could again be in prime position to take down this classic on Saturday with a pair that landed on the inside of the starting car. Most notably, Super Chapter (post 2) has returned this year as a 4-year-old and shined brightly for the stable. In last week's elimination, driver Dexter Dunn put him in prime position coming first over and then sprinted home in 27 flat to score in 1:49 4/5. With four wins and two seconds in six starts this year Super Chapter, a son of Chapter Seven, will be looking for another Grade 1 victory, having previously annexed the John Cashman Memorial on August 8 at The Meadowlands.

Melander will also send out Aetos Kronos S (post 1), a solid second behind French Wine in his elimination, with the 10-year-old by Bold Eagle still in search of his first win in 2026.

French Wine's biggest win last year came in the Breeders Crown over this surface, and the connections appear to have the veteran son of Bar Hopping ready for the Maple Leaf. Driver Jason Bartlett raced French Wine from well off the pace, but the Nancy Takter-trained horse exploded to pass all his rivals in the stretch with a 1:50 3/5 mile his first victory of the year. French Wine drew post six.

The oft-winning Swedish-bred Antognoni finished fifth as the pacesetter in his Maple Leaf elimination, but trainer Ron Burke understood why. "He was wild in the post parade and I knew we were in trouble," Burke said, specifying some equipment adjustments that were made prior to the race. "He'll be better and he'll be more controllable this week."

Antognoni will need to be at his best to overcome post 10 against this company.

Perhaps sneaking a bit under the radar coming into the Maple Leaf Trot final is Emoticon Legacy for trainer Luc Blais and driver Bob McClure. One of last year's top sophomore trotters, Emoticon Legacy has remained in Canada for his five 2026 starts, winning just once and finishing second on four occasions. The son of Walner defeated Super Chapter from post 10 in last year's Kentucky Futurity and was a solid closing second behind him in last week's elimination heat. Emoticon Legacy drew post three.

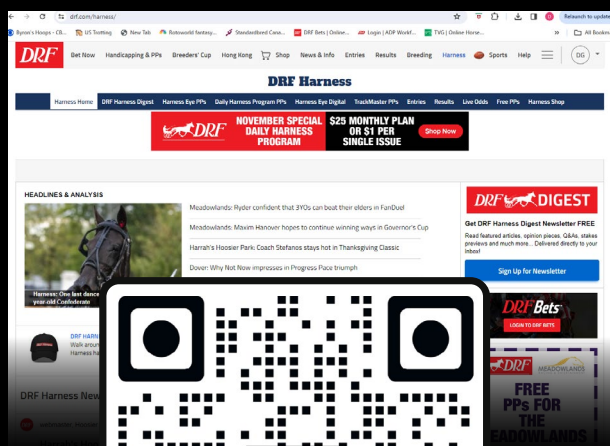
The C\$255,000 Grade 2 Milton Stakes is a co-feature as race five on the 13-race stakes-filled Woodbine Mohawk Park Saturday card, with Twin B Joe Fresh looking for her third straight victory in the event but up against it starting from post nine. In her first race in three weeks, Twin B Joe Fresh cut the pace in last week's prep for the Milton and succumbed in the stretch to supplemental entry Francent N in a 1:48 1/5 clocking. The two will lock horns again in the Milton, with Francent N landing post six. Two other major 2026 stakes winners – Unreasonable (post 1) and Louies Girl N (post 3) – make the Milton a compelling affair.

Saturday post time is scheduled for 6:30 PM (EDT).



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Hambo champ, undefeated rookie highlight NJ Classic elims

By Derick Gwerner

Two stars of Harness Racing – one firmly established and the other one budding – will be in action at The Meadowlands on Friday (Sept. 4) as the track hosts the elimination round of the New Jersey Classic series. Hambletonian winner Apex and the undefeated Wall Of Fame will compete in consecutive races as prohibitive favorites in the 3-year-old colt and gelding trot and 2-year-old filly trot, respectively.

Eliminations are scheduled on the Friday card for four of the eight divisions. The 2-year-old colt and gelding pace as well as all both 3-year-old filly splits (trot and pace) and the 3-year-old colt and gelding pace will go straight to the finals (entrants can be found below).

Apex makes his first trip to the track since his thrilling Hambletonian victory by a nose over Big Ranger on August 8 at The Meadowlands. The Marcus Melander trainee stopped the timer in 1:49 2/5, becoming the first sub-1:50 winner in the history of America's Trotting Classic.

"He's fantastic," said Melander. "He came out of the race great and he's ready to race again. He probably could have raced in the Beal [at Pocono] because he came out of the Hambletonian so good, but we made the decision to skip that and just gave him an extra week or two."

Owned by Jeff Snyder, S R F Stable and Steve Stewart, Apex has won four of five starts in 2026 and 10 of 14 career races. His career earnings sit at just over \$1.6 million, a number that is sure to rise over the next six weeks with a number of races on his schedule.

"We might take a trip up to Canada for the Canadian Trotting Classic [eliminations on Sept. 19 and final on Sept. 26]. Obviously, we'll take this New Jersey Classic race first and then we'll see after that," said Melander, who added that whether that race has eliminations could decide whether Apex goes in the Kentucky Futurity at The Red Mile on October 3. "We'll see if it has an elimination or not. If we're not going to Canada, we'll just go for the Kentucky Futurity."

Apex starts from post three in the eighth event on the 14-race card. Regular driver Dexter Dunn will be in the bike guiding the likely 1-9 post-time favorite.

Short odds are also in store for the backers of Wall Of Fame one race later. That is because the Julie Miller-trained filly has never come close to tasting defeat in six career starts, winning all of them by a combined total of more than 18 lengths. The accomplishments are already impressive and Miller is thrilled.

"I have some amazement, but by the same token, she's a nice, big horse. She doesn't have any really wasted motion. She just seems to do it with ease," said Miller. "When I watch Andy [Miller] or Tyler [Miller] train her, I have the watch out. It looks like she's going a mile at 2:40 and she's going a mile at 2:10 on our farm. That's more amazing in that she doesn't look like she's going fast, but she is."

Following a sweep of the New Jersey Sire Stakes Platinum series at The Meadowlands, Wall Of Fame went on to The Red Mile and has added consecutive Kentucky Sire Stakes scores to set up a likely appearance in that final on September 20. Proving her consistency, each of her past five wins have seen her stop the clock between 1:52 and 1:52 3/5.

"Andy's never really called on her. She's doing all her work by herself. And as of right now, she really does enjoy her work," said Julie. "We've never popped her ear plugs and he's never really had to encourage her down the lane."

A daughter of Walner-Saadet purchased for \$60,000 at the Lexington Selected Sale by Andy Miller Stable, Jean Goehlen, Hutchison Harness LLC and Rick Huffman, Wall Of Fame has earned \$230,000 in her career. She starts from post one with Andy Miller in the bike.

"The biggest thing last year is I kind of went in [to the sales] with a business model of not getting caught up that you have to buy horses that are \$500,000 because they're always nice horses on the page and conformation. That's a lot of money you have to recoup if you're making it as a business model for your horses," said Julie. "So I really tried this year to keep my budget under \$200,000 for any horse we bought, and I just seemed to get really lucky that I bought a handful in the \$20,000 to \$80,000 range that have turned out okay."

Assuming Wall Of Fame qualifies for the New Jersey Classic final, she will compete in that race on September 11 before heading to the Kentucky Sire Stakes final. Then she has the Bluegrass and International Stallion Stakes at The Red Mile on her schedule ahead of the Goldsmith Maid



(ABOVE) CHRIS TULLY PHOTO / (BELOW) WALTER WŁODARCZYK PHOTO
(above) Apex (inside) held off Big Ranger in the Hambletonian.
(below) Wall Of Fame cruising to victory in the NJ Sire Stakes final.



(elims on November 8 and final on November 15) at The Meadowlands. She is not eligible to the Breeders Crown.

"If Andy and I have horses that are dual eligible, we really take advantage of those programs. So we didn't even make her eligible to the Breeders Crown because there's so much opportunity with the New Jersey Sire Stakes program and Kentucky Sire Stakes program," said Julie. "We own a lot of pieces of our horses and we have to be conscious. I just don't check yes to every horse's box on Bluegrass [Staking Service]. When you look at how much the Breeders Crown payments cost – Scioto is a great place to race and I think she'd be great on a five-eighths . . . we elected to not put her in the Breeders Crown. I don't know if that was a good decision or not, but it's the one we made."

Post time for Friday is 6:30 PM (EDT).

The four divisions going directly to the final are as follows:

3-year-old colt and gelding pace – Bookie J, Sonofanutcracker, Corvette Stingray, Thisbeestings Deo, Callmebigpapi, Rocknacious, Dancin Daddy

3-year-old filly pace – Be Perfect Bg, Car Keys, Perfect Thought, She Stings, Napalm, Ladysassin, Greenstreet

3-year-old filly trot – Isabella Bi, Southwind Chaska, Leading Lady, Emmas Mysery CCL, Custom, Whatarace Hanover, Sugar Packet, Sparks, Grand Prix Deo, Adios My Lindy

2-year-old colt pace – Aintmyfirstro Deo, Five Alarm Fire, Goal Oriented, Whiskey Stinger, Yellow Jacket, BC's Odds On, King Of Sting, We Want Eazy, Whodouthinkuriam

Marquee matchups set for PA Sire Stakes championships



JAYWALKING

By Jay Bergman ✕ [BergmanJay](#)

The Pennsylvania Sire Stakes will hold eight \$300,000 championship events on Sunday and Monday, with sophomores getting the ball rolling first at Harrah's Philadelphia. The top freshmen will be on display on Labor Day at Pocono Downs with four finals pitting the best in each division. In a few cases, the stars have aligned giving racing fans the best of the best.

On Sunday the 3-year-old pacing filly final finds four of the best in North America going to the starting gate, with last year's Pennsylvania Sire Stakes champion and Dan Patch Award winner Loua Dipa returning to action for the first time since racing against the boys in the Adios at The Meadows on July 25. Loua Dipa will face the only filly to defeat her in 2026 in Miss Jum Jabber. The two met on just one occasion this year and that came over the same surface four months ago on May 1 when Miss Jum Jabber rallied incredibly to catch Loua Dipa on the wire in a 1:51 3/5 clocking.

The Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Final for sophomore pacing fillies looked to be a two-filly race at some point this summer, but while Loua Dipa was idle and Miss Jum Jabber took her tack to Lexington's Red Mile for a pair of Kentucky Championship victories, two other fillies have been knocking heads in the Northeast. Sangria Summer shipped in from Ontario on Hambletonian Day for trainer Luc Blais and proceeded to upset a stellar field in the Shady Daisy, pacing to a personal best 1:48 1/5 clocking at the expense of quality fillies Darlin's Angel and Be Perfect BG. Sangria Summer, a daughter of Captaintreacherous, came back two weeks later with another major triumph, converting on a pocket trip to capture the James Lynch, a Grade 1 affair on Sun Stakes Day at Pocono in a 1:48 4/5 clocking. Just six days following that score, Sangria Summer overcame post eight and racing a long way without cover in capturing the final leg of the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes preliminaries at The Meadows in game fashion.

Darlin's Angel, a Captaintreacherous-sired filly, is the 11th foal from the \$2.9 million winner Darlin's Delight and a three-quarter sister to the millionaire Darlinonthebeach, who also raced in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes championship in 2016 as a sophomore but finished third. Darlin's Angel has been brilliant all season long for trainer Juan Cano and regular pilot Lauren Tritton while finishing first or second in seven of her eight seasonal starts. On Sunday her extreme early speed will likely be on display since she'll be starting from post eight. Darlin's Angel has been in front at the quarter nearly every race this year and has shown 26-second early speed.

While the breadth of this field is extraordinary, the post draw points significantly to the pair of fillies on the inside, with Miss Jum Jabber and Loua Dipa starting from posts three and four, respectively. Each have had some form of setback in the last few weeks, with Loua Dipa undergoing throat surgery for the Burke stable following a seventh-place finish in the Adios and only returning this past Tuesday (September 1), winning a qualifier at The Meadows in 1:53 1/5. Miss Jum Jabber shipped to the Red Mile for a Kentucky Championship leg and took a 1:48 3/5 lifetime best on August 10 but never quite made it back to the winner's circle. The Bettor's Wish-sired filly looked to be in distress as driver Andrew McCarthy got out of the sulky on the opening bend and awaited assistance. Though vanned off the track, Miss Jum Jabber came back to herself soon after. A return to racing this past Monday (August 31) in a four-filly field was just the tune-up trainer Brett Pelling was looking for as the explosive filly sat chilly in the pocket in the \$80,000 Kentucky Championship leg and scored in 1:48 3/5 with a final quarter in 25 4/5 with driver Andy McCarthy taking a firm hold coming to the finish.

Miss Jum Jabber has raced predominantly from off the pace while rival Loua Dipa has shown more versatility during her brilliant two seasons of racing. Loua Dipa's speed has never been questioned but what set her

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 8](#)



NIKKI SHERMAN PHOTO

Loua Dipa qualified well in-hand at The Meadows on Sept. 1 in preparation for her \$300,000 Sire Stakes final on Sept. 6.



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apart from many in this division was her toughness that was on display when she turned back Be Perfect BG in both the Grade 1 Fan Hanover on June at Woodbine Mohawk Park and the Grade 3 Jerry Silverman at The Meadowlands on July 11.

On Monday, two undefeated pacing colts will put their records on the line in the \$300,000 Pennsylvania Sire Stakes championship at Pocono Downs, with the Dr. Ian Moore trained Shalom Hanover (post 1) meeting the Noel Daley-trained Starstruck Dreamer (post 8) for the first time. While the pair are on a different end on the spectrum behind the starting car, they have been equally imposing in the Sire Stakes legs leading up to the final. On August 3 when the two last competed at Pocono, Starstruck Dreamer struck first, setting the track record while winning his division in 1:49 4/5 by open lengths. A few races later, Shalom Hanover one-upped his rival with a 1:49 2/5 division win that made him the new track record holder.

Shalom Hanover returned to Ontario for his next two starts but Starstruck Dreamer headed to Harrah's Philadelphia where he set the World

Record winning his Sire Stakes in a blistering 1:48 4/5 mile for driver Todd McCarthy.

Shalom Hanover's final prep for the Sire Stakes final came on August 29 when driver Louis Roy kept him in reserve for the first half and then dominated rivals in the Nassagaweya at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The son of Papi Rob Hanover cruised to a 1:51 mile with a 26 2/5 final quarter.

Starstruck Dreamer logged an easier prep, waltzing to a 1:53 1/5 mile at The Meadowlands on August 29 in a leg of the Kindergarten Series.

Joining Shalom Hanover and Starstruck Dreamer in the eight-horse field as the only other six-figure winner is Eastie Boy (post 7), one of three from the Ron Burke stable in the final. Eastie Boy took advantage of the absence of the unbeaten colts in capturing the final Sire Stakes preliminary on August 21 at The Meadows in 1:50 2/5, a fast mile in any other year but this one.

Through elimination races we've managed to see how fast many of these horses are. Championship finals tend to be decided by speed and heart. The Sunday-Monday Pennsylvania Sire Stakes finals are marquee events for racing fans and

those that wish to wager on races that never shape up the way they look on paper.



GRACE ZIMMERS PHOTO

Starstruck Dreamer is the fastest 2-year-old on a five-eighths track at 1:48 4/5.

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Stark providing a second life for retired Standardbreds



HARNESS FOCUS

By Jessica Hallett [X @JHallettPhoto](#)

In the hours between work and the rest of everyday life, Randi Stark returns to the animals that once defined her days as a caretaker. Only now, instead of getting horses ready to race, she is teaching them how to leave the racetrack behind.

It is a transition she understands in her own way. Like the horses she retrains, Stark has moved into a different career without forgetting where she came from and she is using everything racing taught her to help them find their own next chapter.

Practically born in a stable, her father is John Stark, a Hall of Fame and well-decorated harness racing trainer as well as driver. In addition to several USHWA Trainer of the Year Awards in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Stark is most well-known for training and driving USHWA Horse of the Year and double millionaire Bunny Lake. Randi's late mother Danielle rode and showed hunter jumpers.

For as long as she can remember, Randi Stark could be found in a saddle or on top of a horse. Her riding and showing career started in both English and Western, but she later directed her focus only to English riding, in which she had a very successful career in the hunter jumpers.

"I've traveled around the country to show and have qualified for some of the top finals," Stark said. "When my mom passed last September, I didn't want to show anymore because that was my and her thing we did together. I still wanted to ride and be involved in horses, so I purchased two-barrel horses and have competed in rodeos this summer and had a pretty successful first season."

Stark's personal achievements extend far beyond the show world, whether English or Western, as she was awarded the Caretaker of the Year Award at the Saratoga Harness Track in 2023. Her racing résumé is just as lengthy as her showing and riding resumes. At the age of 14, she was able to start paddocking and traveling for Sire Stakes with her dad. She worked



JESSICA HALLETT PHOTO

Randi Stark has a love of horses.

for many years as a caretaker for the Beckwith Stable until stepping away at the conclusion of the 2024 season at Saratoga.

Now, she works a full-time job at the Adirondack Trust Company in the mortgage and loans department. Her hours extend from 8 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, but her days start and end long before and long after the hours she clocks in and out. She still finds herself in the stable for the rest of her time. She helps in the barn on the weekends, takes catch-paddocks, and owns a couple harness horses, too.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 10](#)

WINBAK FARM

Congratulates

MIND ON MY MONI

**WINNER OF \$75,000 OHIO SIRES STAKES IN 1:54.2
AT SCIOTO DOWNS! 3X OHSS LEG WINNER IN 2026!**

**Ready For Moni-Jj's Jordyn-Angus Hall
2, 1:53.3f -'26 (\$161,000)**

Trainer: Vernon Beachy / **Driver:** Ronnie Wrenn Jr.

Owners: 518 Group LLC, Gitup Racing, Ryan Smith & Todd's Auto

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On a day-to-day basis, before work, she rushes around turning horses out and getting everything set up for the afternoon. When she gets off work, she rushes around again to help feed the farm, then either rides multiple horses or loads the trailer to go somewhere.

"My coworkers probably hear me say I'm tired 100 times a day," said Stark. "I'm lucky to have a great office job right in downtown Saratoga. My coworkers are great and supportive and have interests in the horses. They have even come out to watch me multiple times. They love when the horses I own win because I bring donuts to the office for everyone and that sparks weekly conversations of how the horses are racing and what days. All my vacation days I get are used for horse related events, of course. It's definitely a balance of working all day then getting home and getting done what you need to do with the horses before it gets dark, but I make it work."

And somehow, between all of that, she manages to break and train racehorses for careers after racing, too.

"I didn't really decide to retrain racehorses to ride. When a horse was ready to retire and find a new home, it was always 'call Randi so she can get on this horse and we can get a good video,'" Stark explained. "Our horses come off the track so levelheaded and laid back. They are easier than any other breed I have dealt with.

"I start by saddling a horse in the stall. I will hang on the side of the saddle, so they get used to the pressure and weight of holding someone, then I honestly just jump on. I do some circles in each direction of the stall, so they get used to the difference of steering being on their back than being behind them. Some do get a little nervous with the leg pressure as they aren't used to it, but no horse has ever given me a problem. Then I open the gate and go. I just go right for it. I'm not really one to take my time. If a horse was going to do something, they would do it right when I got on."

Stark has had experience retraining both standardbreds and thoroughbreds and with that experience, she can certainly pinpoint a difference in the retraining process of both breeds.

"This is very easy for me to answer as my last year of showing I took a free thoroughbred off the track. I think I cried every day trying to retrain this horse," said Stark. "Thoroughbreds are hot and just the complete opposite of Standardbreds. All around just different attitudes. I can't complain too much because that thoroughbred did go on with me to make the National Take2 Finals, which we were required to be Top 40 in the country, and we went on to compete in Kentucky. The difference is you're taking a horse that's focus is on just galloping rather than a Standardbred's focus on just trotting or pacing. You're taking both out of their element and completely reteaching what they only know. I will stick to helping retrain Standardbreds, though."

While the level of difficulty of retraining can vary from horse to horse and breed to breed, Stark believes that any of them can be broke and ridden, especially Standardbreds.

"Every trotter over the age of 3 in my dad's barn is broke to ride. Any new ones that come in are broke right away," said Stark. "Last month I recently claimed a horse named Sylvester. The next day I had a saddle on him and was riding him all around the farm. They truly enjoy it. He dropped his head, had his ears forward and just happily walked along. I think there's multiple things that make them such good riding horses.

They are so levelheaded, they don't get phased by anything. They have been there done that. They are safe. I would put a child on a retrained racehorse any day over my barrel horse. Once you get them to figure out their canter you won't find better."

Amid all of Stark's responsibilities, jobs, hobbies, and shows, she still found time to retrain a Standardbred as a Racing Under Saddle (RUS) horse. With the summer winding down and the change in racing seasons at Saratoga, the harness track showcased the fourth annual Charity Match Race at the end of August. In previous years, the race has featured a thoroughbred jockey racing against a harness driver in a regular harness race in the bike in addition to a thoroughbred jockey riding against a harness horseman in a RUS-style trot race. This year, only the latter option was showcased at the event, with Stark riding in her first RUS against jockey Katie Davis.

After a few qualifying sessions in front of the judges and a written test, Stark earned her RUS license. As she had mentioned, all of her dad's horses have been broke to ride, but it was necessary for there to be two trotters of equal talents to compete against each other. One of Stark's former horses, Tobern, fit the bill. He was already broke to ride and was well-tempered with good speed. Now, the challenge was to find a second horse.

John and Michelle Hallett offered up their trotter Oh Brother to be

tried. He had never been ridden, but he was well-mannered and had great speed with his better performances. And so, Stark showed up and jumped on and away they went.

"We started in the stall with the process I talked about before. We went right out to the jog track and went a couple laps. While you are out there, you know right away what you have under you and if the horse is going to act up. He showed no signs of that," Stark said. "I had confidence with him the first time we went behind the gate. He was hot the first time as he didn't exactly know



JESSICA HALLETT

Katie Davis and Oh Brother hold off Randi Stark and Tobern in a charity race at Saratoga.

what was going on. I will get on any horse, I really don't have fear when it comes to that. I've ridden over hundreds of horses so it's just like an everyday thing to me. I will say when we made a couple small tweaks to his equipment, he was an absolute professional. Sometimes we have to make those changes as it's very different being behind them rather than on their back leaning over their neck. It's a different control.

"Tobern was able to train and race under saddle in the same equipment he races in," Stark continued. "He is a horse I had more experience with as my dad purchased him as a yearling and trained him for years before he was sold. He was previously broke a year before by me. My sister showed him in the Saratoga County Fair in the off-the-track classes and was reserve champion."

After only three sessions of less than a half-hour apiece, Katie Davis took Oh Brother behind the gate to compete against Tobern in the match race on Saturday, Aug. 29. Oh Brother took right to the front and never looked back. Stark and Tobern sprinted in the stretch, but Oh Brother prevailed.

Without Stark's fearlessness and dedication, no one would have known of Oh Brother's ability under saddle. And thanks to Stark, another successful charity match race was competed with all funds raised going to worthy causes and charities, as this year's funds went to the horsemen affected by the Saratoga barn fire and to a charity named Faith's House.

Everyone only has 24 hours in a day, but Stark has managed to stretch hers to fit a full-time job, farm chores, catch paddocks, barn duties, riding, training, showing, shipping, charity racing, and most importantly, retraining racehorses to a new career.

Tempting Flames impresses with hot freshman season

By Wes Mayberry

Ask trainer Michael Hitchcock about Tempting Flames, and you'll likely hear high praise.

"I'm very pleased with her," he said. "She's done everything anybody would want."

That includes hitting the board in all seven starts thus far in her freshman campaign, with five wins, two seconds, and \$228,100 earned. And the competition hasn't been easy. The Catch The Fire filly out of Hotshot Temptress made her debut purse start in the \$150,000 Next Generation at Eldorado Scioto Downs and has raced in the Ohio State Fair Stake and all five legs of the Ohio Sires Stakes. But Hitchcock, of South Vienna, Ohio, saw shades of what the filly could become early on.

"Training her down, I thought she was going to be a pretty nice filly," he said. "She's very powerful. She has a very nice build to her — she's built very strong. She's very muscular and rugged."

Bred by Ivy Holdings, of Apple Creek, Ohio, Tempting Flames was a \$52,000 purchase by William Hartt, of Carmel, Maine, at the Ohio Selected Jug Sale in September 2025. As a member of Hitchcock's stable, the filly pacer finished second and first in a pair of qualifiers leading up to the Next Generation race on July 4. She put her racing talents on display that night, tripping the wire in 1:52 3/5 in a photo finish with winner Real Classy.

Next came a runner-up finish to Party Up in the first leg of the OSS at Northfield Park, but much to the delight of her connections, it's been nothing but wins ever since.

"She's very well behaved and doesn't do anything wrong. She's almost like an aged racehorse in the barn and in training," Hitchcock said. "She gets a little high-strung in the paddock, but other than that, she seems pretty perfect."

Tempting Flames followed a win in the second leg of the OSS at Scioto Downs in 1:51 3/5 with a one-length victory over Real Classy in 1:52 in the Ohio State Fair Stake at the same track. She was victorious in the third leg of the OSS at Northfield in 1:52 3/5, and then came the start that put her in the record books.

With Hall of Famer David Miller in the sulky for Tempting Flames' fourth-leg race back at Scioto Downs, the filly stretched a two-length lead at the halfway mark into a victory by seven and a half lengths in 1:50 on Aug. 18. That performance not only broke the track record for 2-year-old filly pacers, it equaled the world record for a five-eighths mile track.

"To be honest, I was kind of not believing it because I didn't think the fractions were right, but we'll take it," Hitchcock said.

Breadnbuttez led at the quarter pole in 28 that night, but Tempting Flames went in front going to the 54 2/5 half and passed the three-quarter mark in 1:22 1/5. While that performance was certainly impressive, Hitchcock liked what he saw in her next race — the fifth leg of the OSS at Scioto Downs on Aug. 29 — even better.

"To me, her last start was more impressive than the start she went in 50 just because we raced her out of a hole, and she was so manageable," he said. "Dave (Miller) was very, very happy with her."

That night, Thought I Had It, who went off as a 61-1 longshot, led the field past the first three calls in 26 3/5, 56 2/5 and 1:25 as Tempting Flames sat in fourth place between three and four lengths back. But the Hitchcock trainee used a late burst of speed to take command down the stretch and win by three and a half lengths in 1:52 1/5.

There's no doubt that Tempting Flames is carrying plenty of positive momentum into the OSS Scarlet Championship on Sept. 12 at Scioto Downs. She finished the five legs with 230 points in the series, well ahead of second-place Party Up (188), with Cleveland Darby (160), Breadnbuttez (125), and Moni N The Safe (83) rounding out the top five in the standings. But Hitchcock isn't making her the prohibitive favorite just yet.

"They're all very good horses, so everybody has a chance," he said. "We'll just take it one week at a time and hope for a good post and see what happens."

But to her competitors' connections, Tempting Flames appears to be the one to beat.

"It doesn't look like we're going to beat that killer of Hitchcock's right now — that might be the best filly in the country from what I've seen," said Party Up trainer Joe Bongiorno. "I think that we might be second best."

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EST. 1959

North American-based trio complete International Trot field

Three North American-based trotters from different parts of the globe will complete the field for the Grade 1 MGM Yonkers International Trot. Lexus Kody (Canada), Antognoni (Sweden) and Super Chapter (U.S.) become the eighth, ninth and tenth horses to join the \$1,000,000 race at MGM Yonkers Raceway on September 12.

Defending champion Lexus Kody led at every call in a 2:24 4/5 victory over a fast-charging Diva Ek in 2025. The victory contributed to his Dan Patch Trotter of the Year campaign for trainer Ron Burke and owners Burke Racing Stable LLC, Weaver Brussemi and Phillip Collura.

"It's a million-dollar race. We tried to win it numerous times and could not get it done. It was very fun," said Burke on his excitement after the 2025 victory.

This year Lexus Kody has continued the success, winning three of eight starts including the Grade 3 JL Cruze and Grade 2 Spirit of Massachusetts Trot. The 8-year-old, who was also second in the G2 Cashman Memorial, was most recently fifth in the Maple Leaf Trot eliminations and will start from post four in the C\$620,000 final on September 5 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

"He's been really good until the last couple weeks," said Burke. "It just seems like the wrong time for him to have his first lull in forever. I think I have a grasp on the situation and hopefully I have him turned around by September 12."

Burke will also be represented in the MGM Yonkers International Trot by track specialist Antognoni. The 6-year-old Swedish import has 14 wins in 18 starts over the Yonkers surface, including a couple at the 1 1/4 distance of the MGM Yonkers International Trot.

"I've never seen a horse that gets around that track better than he does," said Burke.

Driven by Yannick Gingras, who shares ownership with Burke Racing Stable LLC, Weaver Brussemi and FAC Racing, Antognoni has put together a quality year despite a lighter stakes season than some of his counterparts. He won the Grade 3 Maxie Lee in May and was second behind his stablemate Lexus Kody in the Spirit of Massachusetts. He also competed in the Maple Leaf Trot eliminations and advanced to the final with a fifth-place finish. He'll start from post 10.

"We put him back to the way he was [equipment-wise] when he was in Sweden, when he wasn't a good horse. It wasn't one of our brighter moves. We overthought it and tried something," said Burke on the Maple Leaf Trot performance.

With Gingras part owner on Antognoni, he will have to drive that one and Lexus Kody will need a replacement. "I think I'm going to use Jason [Bartlett], but I haven't committed to that," said Burke.

Super Chapter also moved on to the Maple Leaf Trot final following an impressive 1:49 4/5 victory in the elimination round for driver Dexter Dunn and trainer Marcus Melander. The 4-year-old Dan Patch Award winner from 2025 hasn't missed a beat this year, with four wins and two seconds from six starts, including a victory against older foes in the Grade 1 Cashman Memorial.

"I was pretty confident in him going into that Cashman race. Obviously he's been great all season," said Melander, who was very happy with his Maple Leaf Trot effort. "He raced great in the elimination. Hopefully he'll race great in the final too. He seems to have come out of it good."

Owned by Jeffrey Snyder, Arthur Pronti and Hanover Shoe Farms Inc., Super Chapter is no stranger to the half mile track at Yonkers, having won the MGM Yonkers Trot over the surface in 2025. The son of New York super-sire Chapter Seven has earned over \$2 million in his career and only been worse than third three times in 30 career starts.



MIKE LIZZI PHOTO

Lexus Kody will try to defend his title in the International Trot.

According to Melander, Dunn will drive Super Chapter in the MGM Yonkers International Trot and Scott Zeron will get the assignment behind Bourbonista.

"She will qualify on Friday [Sept. 4] at The Meadowlands and Scott will drive her in the qualifier and he'll pick her up in the International," said Melander. "They're both good enough to be able to win that race if we get some luck with the draw."

A native of Sweden, Melander is familiar with many of the foreign horses and sees it as a competitive group. "I think it's a pretty even field coming from Europe. They're all good horses but none of them stand out above the others."

Below is the complete field (alphabetical order) with expected drivers for the MGM Yonkers International Trot. Country of origin is listed in parenthesis.

Antognoni – Yannick Gingras (Sweden)
Betting Pacer – Björn Goop (Sweden)
Bourbonista – Scott Zeron (Sweden)
Diva Ek – Alessandro Gocciadoro (Italy)
Gio Cash – Robin Bakker (Germany)
Hooker Berry – Antoine Lhéreté (France)
Lexus Kody – TBD (Canada)
Mellby Jinx – Daniel Wäjersten (Sweden)
Powwow – Ake Svanstedt (Norway)
Super Chapter – Dexter Dunn (United States)

The \$1,000,000 race will be the focal point of a stellar card on September 12 that starts at 11:50 a.m. (EDT) and includes the \$2.4 million New York Sire Stakes finals for 2- and 3-year-olds, as well as a pair of \$200,000 Invitationals - the Bob Miecuna Trot and Aria Pace.

MGM Yonkers Raceway is currently offering live racing on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday, with post time at 6:45 p.m. (EDT) every night except Saturday when post time is 3:30 p.m. There will be no live racing on Friday, September 11.

-release (Yonkers Raceway Media)

Ocean Storm, Athena's Girl secure spots in 2027 Oak Grove Trotting Derby, Oaks

Grade 1 William Wellwood Memorial winner Ocean Storm secured his spot in the eliminations to the 2027 \$500,000 Oak Grove Trotting Derby with a stakes-record equalling performance of 1:52 4/5 on Saturday night at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Driver Yannick Gingras won the Wellwood for the fifth time in his career. This Chapter Seven colt was an \$80,000 Lexington Selected yearling and is owned by ADH Holding, LLC, Paul Kautz, Jeff Gural and Jean Pierre Barjon.

Athena's Girl, a \$300,000 daughter by Walner, out of Fashion Athena, also secured her "Win and You're In" automation spot the eliminations to the \$300,000 Oak Grove Trotting Oaks by winning the Grade 1 Peaceful Way at Woodbine Mohawk Park on Saturday night. Trained by Marcus Melander for owner Brad Grant, Athena's Girl established a new lifetime mark of 1:53.

The "Road to..." series was established to reward top 2-year-old trotting performances and enrich Oak Grove's premier events. A series of designated Grand Circuit and Sire Stakes races serve as automatic qualifying events to the Derby and Oaks eliminations.

-edited release (Oak Grove)

RACE OF THE WEEK

10 MOHAWK PARK SAT

1 Mile Pace CANADIAN PACING DERBY FINAL: (GR 1). 3 YEAR OLDS & OLDER. Purse \$705,000

DAILY DOUBLE (RACES 10 and 11) | EXACTA | START OF SWINGER | START OF \$0.20 SUPERFECTA | \$0.20 TRIFECTA | START OF \$0.20 PICK 4

1 WOMEN LAYER(L)

41:47.3 (5/8) \$20,083
6-1 D. R. McNair 906-190-148-124 (209)

b g 5, by Sweet Lou, Loreenas Ruffian by McArdle
Let It Ride Stables Inc, Boca Raton, FL-Jeff Fought Racing, East Bernstadt, Ky-Larry Wills, Columbus, Oh-Jesmeral Stable, New Rochel
V. Morgan, Jr. 1013-228-163-145 (225)

		Last 5 Sts		\$108,436	1:48.2 M1	26 Wbs	1 0 1 0	\$12,500 26 Tot	12 6 3 0	\$240,993	
					1:47.3 Scd 5/8	25 Wbs	0 0 0 0	- 25 + 18 13 2 2		\$595,488	
						24 Wbs	0 0 0 0	- Life		\$1,399,366	
3r- Carl T Howard, OH											
2no	DMcna	VMorgan	274	27	271	26	1:48	115	+11 3w	L735 PmchHnvr WmLnLr EvnnHnvr	3d ov just miss-9
11	DMcna	VMorgnLr	272	284	274	264	1:504	104		L*20 WomenLayer WmLnODraw HigherGround	-7
651	DaMiller	VMorgnLr	27	262	274	271	1:482	117		L1380 Dandydel PmchHnvr CptmOptm	-11
1hd	DaMiller	VMorgnLr	271	282	262	262	1:482	111	+5 4w	L1790 WomenLayer CptmSldi	1st up, ld lane, gamely-8
21	DDunn	VMorgnLr	263	281	27	271	1:49	113		L*60 Surrealdeal WomenLayer AmericanFling	-8

2 LOU HILL(L)

51:47.2 (1) \$27,176
10-1 Y. Gingras 1236-217-208-187 (167)

b g 5, by Sweet Lou, Pretty Katherine by Rocknroll Hanover
Tom Hill, Hamilton, On
Pe. Engblom 205-32-45-23 (156)

		Last 5 Sts		\$158,133	1:47.2 M1	26 Wbs	2 0 1 0	\$20,500	26 Tot	17 9 5 0	\$461,996					
					1:49 M1	25 Wbs	0 0 0 0		- 25 Tot	24 3 9 5	\$293,259					
						24 Wbs	0 0 0 0		- Life		\$919,367					
Y	Gingras	P	Engblom	263	272	272	263	1:48	114	+11 3w	L540	PrncHnvr	WmLn	ErnnHnvr	Shuff, flatened-9	
Y	Gingras		Engblom	P	26	274	281	27	1:49	111	L*30	CaptainAurovico	LouHill	LeavellToLeo	-9	
Y	Gingras		P	Engblom	264	282	27	264	1:49	107	+5 4w	L*140	WomenLayer	CptmSldi	Ust pst 1/4, ld, try-8	
Y	Gingras		P	Engblom	P	263	28	264	27	1:482	122	L*150	LouHill	PrncHnvr	Hanover BestChip	-8
Y	aGingras		P	eEngblom	271	262	271	263	1:472	114	+5 8w	L440	LouHill	KenHnvr	CptmAlbn	Shld, 2w btl 3/4, handy-8

3 OAKWOOD ARDAN IR(L)

61:47.3 (1) \$9,930
20-1 Ja. A Macdonald 1256-238-209-153 (189)

b g 7, by Sweet Lou, Trend Setter by Grinfromeartoar
Royal Wire Products Inc, North Royalton, Oh
R. Cleary 196-41-29-39 (209)

		Last 5 Sts-\$74,241		1:49 M1Q	26 Wbs	6 0 0 0	\$2,500 26 Tot	11 1 3 0	\$109,227																			
		1:47.3 M1			25 Wbs	6 0 0 3	\$72,584 25 Tot	15 2 0 4	\$231,863																			
					24 Wts	5 0 2 1	\$67,304 Life		\$262,642																			
Oakwood Stud,IR																												
29 Aug 26	5Wbs	fst180	263	542	1:221	1:49	Cdn Derby	50000	9	912	991	972	99	573	JMacdonld	RCleary	281	28	261	26	1:482	113	+11 3w	L5355	ForOncmlyMyLife	BestChip	CoachesCorner	Late, little-9
21 Aug 26	4M1	fst	281	553	1:221	1:49	Inv	94444	5	12	111	111	111	111	BBeckwith	RCleary	281	272	271	261	1:49			Lrb	OakwoodArdanIr	Vkfs	TwnBjFrsh	Ld, won handily-5
8 Aug 26	12M1A	fst	264	55	1:214	1:482	D-McKeeMemG2	192569	5	653	663	605	634	53	JMacdonld	RCleary	28	281	263	254	1:483	109	+5 4w	L2010	WmLn	CptmAlbn	Smlld	3rd ov, gpad, pace in-8
25 Jul 26	10PcDA	fst	253	543	1:202	1:48	wo25000It	41549	6	65	533	323	543	58	JStratton	RoCleary	263	273	264	283	1:493	109	+5 4w	L1390	RuthlessHanover	KenHnvr	Cngrrsln	Unc, chase, fold-6
11 Jul 26	11M1	fst770	27	531	1:202	1:472	D-WRHghtn-G2	135700	1	67	603	7003	834	834	JaMacdonld	RoCleary	282	26	27	263	1:48	112	+5 8w	L640	LouHill	KenHnvr	CptmAlbn	Took bk, bad cov, no bid-8

4 BEST CHIP(L)

41:46.1 (1) \$12,575
9-2 Ti. Tetrick 1475-320-265-204 (217)

b h 4, by Heston Blue Chip, Place Your Best by Cambest
El Dorado Stables, Ft Myers, Fl
J. Bongiorno 657-159-119-94 (242)

		Last 5 Sts		\$106,827		1:52 VD 7/8		25 Wbs		0 0 0 0		- 25 Tot		26 4 3 3		\$71,260			
								24 Wbs		0 0 0 0		- Life				\$253,786			
bak Farm,MD																			
Ttetrick		JBongiorno		254		283 263		262		1:472		119		+11 3w		L*105 ForOncmlyLbStChpCchsCmnr		Gave way,2d best-9	
Ttetrick		JBongiorno		271		262 263		261		1:461		123				L*40 BestChpCptnHnmmdAFthAndFv		Ust pst 1/2,ld,handy-8	
BHolland		JBongiorno		27		291 273		263		1:502		112		+10 4w		L*111 BestChpMcSdghtnHwnHills		Ust pst 1/4,ld,handy-6	
Ttetrick		JBongiorno		273		272 264		264		1:483		122				L830 LouHillPrncHnvrHanover BestShip		-8	
JBongiorno		JBongiorno		262		263 274		26		1:464		116		+5 8w		L*60 BestChpCtsSprtNFFthAndFv		Brsh,ld btl 1/2,handy-8	
tor's Delight		Last 5 Sts		\$180,388		1:47 Wbs 7/8		26		* 1 0 0 0		\$25,000 26 Tot		21 10 2 3		\$347,544			

5 FOR ONCE INMY LIFE

61:47 (7/8) \$16,550
7-2 J. Stratton 1307-144-172-180 (110)

b g 6, by Downbytheseaside, Flyme To The Moon by Bettor's Delight
Writers Racing Stable, Foxboro, Ma
C. Stratton 1307-184-177-199 (141)

Last 5 Sts-\$180,389		1:50.3 M1		25 Wbs		0 0 0 0		- 25 Tot		12 6 3 0		\$180,185			
								- Life				\$905,809			
on	CStratton	254	284	263	254	1:47	119	+11 3w	1.60	ForOncmlyMyLife	BstChp	CchsCmnr	Yld, pkt, going away-9		
on	CoStratton	27	283	264	262	1:484	110	+7 3w	18.90	ForOncmlyMyLife	Surrealdeal	Dandydel	Pkt, all out-8		
er	CoStratton	26	282	273	264	1:484	106	+5 4w	10.40	CptmAlbn	PmchHnvr	Bythmsl	Ld, yld, pkt, even in-10		
	StrattonC	27	29	271	263	1:494	109		1.30	HarrisburgHeist	ForOncmlyMyLife	RoseRunZane	-8		
	StrattonC	26	281	271	273	1:49	116		*30	ForOncmlyMyLife	JacksonCooper	StillRollin	-8		
Last 5 Sts-\$204,633		1:48 Wbs 7/8		26 Wbs		4 1 0 3		\$47,668		26 Tot		13 5 5 3		\$364,974	
								\$97,500				26 Tot		\$347,872	

6 PRINCE HAL HANOVER

31:47.2 (1) * \$49,844
4-1 T. McCarthy 759-121-91-110 (159)

b h 4, by Captaintreacherous, Percy Bluechip by Shadow Play
Prince Hal Hanover Stable, Cambridge, On
I. Moore 142-41-24-17 (289)

Shoe Farms Inc, Hanover, Pa				1:47.2 L1		23 Wbs		6 2 2 0		\$103,447 23 Tot		21 8 5 2		\$214,023	
						24 Wbs		4 1 0 3		\$260,330 Life				\$2,100,168	
TMcCarthy	IMoore	27	262	272	271	1:48	115	+11 3w	6.15	PrncHnvr	WmLn	ErnnHnvr	Pts, Inl, all out-9		
TMcCarthy	Moore	264	262	273	271	1:48	121		3.10	Dandydel	PrncHnvr	Hanover CaptainOptimistic	-11		
TMcCarthy	IaMoore	262	273	272	261	1:483	109	+5 4w	4.20	CptmAlbn	PmchHnvr	Bythmsl	3rd ov, land out, pace-10		
MMacdonld	DrMoore	263	272	274	264	1:483	113	+8 6w	*130	CrackShot	ChrshpDnDn	PmchHnvr	Brush, tired-8		
DMiller	Moore	272	272	263	271	1:483	125		1.60	LouHill	PrncHnvr	Hanover BestChip	-8		
Last 5 Sts		\$19,730		1:47.3 Wbs 7/8		26 Wbs		3 1 1 3		\$97,595 26 Tot		14 3 2 3		\$136,339	
				1:49.2 Wbs 7/8		25 Wbs		7 3 2 2		\$69,790 25 Tot		19 5 4 4		\$231,438	

7 AYEAYE CAPTAIN DEO

41:47.3 (7/8) \$9,739
15-1 Ma. Macdonald 637-60-48-64 (094)

b h 4, by Captaintreacherous, Oceania by Rock N Roll Heaven
Gino Tascini, Mount Hope, On
G. Merner 387-67-48-45 (173)

ite Farms LLC, Flemington, NJ		24 Wbs 7 2 1 2										\$67,760 Life				\$453,644													
MMacdonld	GMerner	282	27	264	254	1:48	114	+11 3w	27.60	PrncHnvr	WmLn	ErnnHnvr	Wld, gdt, finish-9																
BMcclure	GMerner	27	272	272	264	1:483	111	+9 4w	*150	DelrayBeach	AnyCptmD	JckPnc	Btm, outkicked-9																
MMacdonld	GMerner	284	282	261	254	1:491	110	+10 6w	2.35	CjckHnvr	VssmN	AnyCptmD	3d ov, gdt, finish-10																
MMacdonld	GMerner	282	282	264	251	1:494	106	+9 4w	8.00	CrackShot	CntyCornodo	VessemN	Cover, timing-7																
MMacdonld	GMerner	29	281	284	263	1:523			rb	VessemN	UncleShankz	AllstarManiac																	
Somewhere town,OWn,ON		Last 5 Sts-\$51,520				1:48 Wbs 7/8				26 Wbs				3 0 0 0				\$62,320 26 Tot				11 4 4 1				\$120,311			
						1:48.2 Wbs 7/8				25 Wbs				5 13 6 2				\$376,672 25 Tot				16 6 4 1				\$305,267			

Handicapping contest, Pick 6 carryover at Big M

With the four-week break from harness racing at The Meadowlands coming up soon, Leg 9 of the \$1,000 Big M Monthly Handicapping Contest takes place this Saturday (Sept. 5) just two weeks since the previous leg, instead of the usual four.

A pair of handicappers have done exceptionally well throughout the preliminaries, as both Stefan Ferrara and John Skladany, who finished first and second, respectively in August, now have three entries in the hat for the contest's invitation-only final.

It's important to finish at or near the top of the leaderboard, as the four players with the highest bankrolls at the end of the night win some cash (on a \$500-\$250-\$150-\$100 basis), but only the top two finishers earn spots in the \$10,000 final, which takes place on Saturday, Dec. 12.

"It really doesn't make sense for anyone in attendance at the track not to play," said contest regular Patrick O'Malley, who has earned two entries into the final. "It's free money. It's the same as going to the teller and buying a \$100 voucher. If you hit something big you can win some of the contest money."

Both Ferrara and Skladany seek to become the first players ever to have four entries in the final. That field will be limited to 22 entries.

Big Pick 6 Carryover

What do multi-leg players at The Meadowlands like more than a carryover? A double carryover, of course, and that's the pool they will be swimming in Friday night when the 20-cent Pick-6 is offered on races eight through 13.

The carryover stands at \$10,673.

-edited release (Dave Little for The Meadowlands)

2026 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale catalogue now available

The catalogue for the 2026 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale is now available on multiple platforms. It may be viewed or downloaded at lexingtonselected.com and on the EquineLine Sales Catalog app. The print catalogue will be mailed next week.

To request a print catalogue, visit lexingtonselected.com/year-sale-form.html.

The sale will be held as usual at the beautiful and spacious Fasig-Tipton Newtown Paddocks. For those unable to attend, the sale will be livestreamed with live bidding offered at proxibid.com.

The yearling auction — which produced this year's Meadowlands Pace winner, five of the last seven renewals of the \$1 million Hambletonian and two of the last four Hambletonian Oaks — gets underway Monday, October 5, with a 7 p.m. evening session. The sale continues Tuesday, October 6, and Wednesday, October 7, with day sessions beginning at a new starting time of 11 a.m., then concludes Thursday, October 8, with a final evening session getting underway at 7 p.m.

READ MORE

Roster now available for 88th Standardbred Horse Sale

Standardbred Horse Sales Company today announced that its 88th Annual Yearling Sale Preview is now available on their website, www.theblackbook.com, including a sortable roster. Pedigrees will be coming soon. Yearling video links will be posted as they are made available.

As always, Standardbred provides multiple "Search" functions and downloadable PDF packets on our website to help in finding your next champion. Our convenient "My Black Book" feature allows customers to store lists of yearling prospects with pedigrees, video links, and personal notes in a confidential format that is accessible from any Internet-capable device.

READ MORE

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, SEPTEMBER 3

RACE 8

(4) KILDARE KING gets to partner with Bartlett for the first time and was in sharp form prior to last week when he wound up with the eight-hole. He moves in on the gate to post four tonight.

-Greg Reinhart

EMPIRE CITY.
CASINO
YONKERS RACEWAY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

RACE 7

(5) D A JOHNNY CASH was under a snug hold by McNair at the wire in his latest and draws well tonight. He has been excellent when he has minded his manners.

-Kevin Plowcha



WOODBINE
MOHAWK PARK

RACE 8

(3) APEX makes his first start since winning the Hambletonian in the fastest time in the race's history. Well-bred colt is going to win tonight at 1-9 barring something crazy happening.

-Derick Givner



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

RACE 14

(2) MANSERTIVE makes his second start back after a five-week break, drops in class and gets post relief. The triple-threat of angles will be enough to get him to the winner's circle.

-Givner



FULL CARD ANALYSIS / PAST PERFORMANCES

The Meadows Analysis

[Saturday](#)

Mohawk Park Analysis

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

Meadowlands Analysis

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

Yonkers Analysis

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

DHP PPS

HARNESS EYE PPS

TRACKMASTER PPS

FREE PPS

INSTANT RACING UPDATES VIA TWITTER: @DRFHARNES

NEWS FROM AROUND THE HARNESS INDUSTRY

SUPER CHAPTER MOVES UP IN HAMBO SOCIETY/BREEDERS CROWN POLL

The top three spots were unchanged in the Week 12 Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll released Wednesday (Sept. 2) while Super Chapter moved up to his highest ranking of the season.

Super Chapter, who won his Maple Leaf Trot elimination in 1:49.4 at Woodbine Mohawk Park last week and is the 6-5 morning-line favorite in Saturday's (Sept. 5) Grade 1 final, vaulted from sixth to fourth in the Top 10 and received one first-place vote. He followed Apex, Brandon Blvd, and On To Norway – who were all idle – in the rankings.

Apex, who garnered 20 of 35 first-place votes, remained No. 1 for the fourth consecutive week. His next start is slated for Saturday at the Meadowlands, where he is the even-money morning-line favorite in an elimination for the New Jersey Classic for 3-year-old male trotters.

Miki And Minnie dropped from fourth to fifth in the poll and was followed by Nezuko Kamado S, Big Ranger, Bourbonista S, Twin B Joe Fresh, and Loua Dipa. Only two horses from that group raced last week – Nezuko Kamado S won the third preliminary leg of the Kentucky Championship Series for 3-year-old female trotters last week while Twin B Joe Fresh finished third in the Open for fillies and mares at Mohawk ahead of Saturday's Grade 2 Milton Stakes.

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.

Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown Standardbred Poll: 9/2/2026

Rank	Name (1st Votes)	Age/Sex/Gait	Record	Earnings	Points	Pvs
1	Apex (20)	3ct	5-4-1-0	\$739,716	328	1
2	Brandon Blvd (7)	3cp	9-6-2-1	\$895,695	280	2
3	On To Norway (6)	4gt	9-8-1-0	\$413,250	255	3
4	Super Chapter (1)	4ht	6-4-2-0	\$348,507	186	6
5	Miki And Minnie (1)	4mp	8-6-0-2	\$372,099	178	4
6	Nezuko Kamado S	3ft	7-6-1-0	\$543,905	175	7
7	Big Ranger	3ct	8-5-1-0	\$402,337	144	5
8	Bourbonista S	5mt	8-4-2-1	\$185,840	81	8
9	Twin B Joe Fresh	6mp	8-3-2-1	\$245,178	46	9
10	Loua Dipa	3fp	7-4-1-0	\$293,090	33	10

ALSO: Al Papi 32; Starstruck Dreamer 31; Shalom Hanover 28; Wall Of Fame 26; Odds On Mr Mamba 25; Sangria Summer 18; Victorianas Secret 12; Nordic Catcher S 11; Melillo 10; Lexus Kody 8; Prince Hal Hanover 6; Francent N 5; Inexpressable 3; Beau Jangles, Miss Jum Jabber, Sea Bistro Hanover, Woodmere Rock It 1.

-Ken Weingartner for Hambletonian Society

YONKERS RACEWAY DISTRIBUTES NEARLY \$500K IN BONUSES

When MGM Yonkers Raceway created a bonus program to lure new horses to the track, few could have anticipated such a large turnout. From May 18 to August 21 this year, 355 new horses made their way to Yonkers to compete at the New York half-mile track for the first time in 2026.

The program, which awarded \$2,400 to any new horses which started at least three times at MGM Yonkers Raceway during the three-month period, saw 189 horses qualify. That total produced a \$453,600 payout to owners which took advantage of the plan.

Created in tandem by Race Secretary Joe Frasure, SOA of NY President Joe Faraldo and DRF's Derick Giwner as a way to increase the horse population, the program was a resounding success.

"We couldn't have asked for a better response," said Frasure. "We may even do it again in the fall."

-edited release (Yonkers Raceway Media)

\$6,676 CARRYOVER, \$35,000 GUARANTEED POOL AT YONKERS THURSDAY

Thursday night's (September 3) program at MGM Yonkers Raceway got a boost to the wagering menu when no one hit the Pick 5 on Tuesday (September 1), triggering a \$6,676.44 carryover and a \$35,000 pool in the sequence.

[READ MORE](#)

USTA ADDS ACH ONLINE AND DISCOVER CARD TO PAYMENT OPTIONS

In an effort to enhance the services provided to the harness racing industry, the U.S. Trotting Association announced Tuesday (Sept. 1) that starting on Oct. 1 free online ACH payments will be available and Discover card has been added as a new payment option. In addition, the USTA will be updating its payment processing procedures to include a 3% processing fee for all credit or debit card transactions.

[READ MORE](#)

PA SIRE STAKES FINALS OFFER \$2.8 MILLION IN PURSE MONEY

Harrah's Philadelphia and Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania, the two harness racing tracks in eastern Pennsylvania, will be hosting back-to-back \$1.4 million cards this Labor Day Weekend, with Philly (Sunday, 12:40) providing the stage for the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Championships for 3-year-olds and their respective consolation races, while on Monday at 1 p.m., Pocono will be offering the same bounty for Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Championships for 2-year-olds.

[READ MORE](#)

NEW LOOK LONDON CLASSIC YEARLING SALE ROSTER AVAILABLE ONLINE

The London Classic Yearling Sale website now features its complete 2026 roster in a new layout and format which is sortable by sire and consignor and also includes pedigree pages, TrackIT links (updated daily) and yearling videos as they are posted.

[READ MORE](#)

HARNESS RACING IN GOSHEN ON LABOR DAY WEEKEND

The Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame in Goshen, New York will be open during the races at Goshen Historic Track on Sunday, September 6, and also on Labor Day, Monday, September 7. Museum hours on Sunday will be 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Labor Day hours will be 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Museum admission will be free on both days.

Goshen Historic Track gates open at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday for the New York County Fair Finals. Post time 1:00 p.m. Admission \$10. Children 12 and under are free. Call (845) 294-5333 or visit www.goshenhistorictrack.com for more information.

The Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame is located at 240 Main Street in Goshen, New York and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For information on the Museum, please call (845) 294-6330 or visit www.harnessmuseum.com.

-release (Harness Museum)

CHAPTER GEO J CONQUERS IN NEW YORK SIRE STAKES

After getting a perfect pocket trip, Chapter Geo J (Chapter Seven-Miss Vet Hanover) held off three opponents to capture the lone \$115,500 NYSS division for 3-year-old male trotters that was held at Batavia Downs. In other action on the Wednesday program, driver Drew Monti won half the races with his five-victory performance.

[READ MORE](#)

CAPTAIN KENNY J POUNCES OUT OF THE POCKET IN KYSS

Todd McCarthy zipped Captain Kenny J through an inside seam off a pocket ride to land the winning blow on tempo-setter Command Center and pull a 14-1 upset in the \$80,000 Kentucky Championship Series fourth preliminary for 2-year-old trotting colts and geldings on Wednesday (Sept. 2) at The Red Mile.

[READ MORE](#)

FIFTY AND FAMOUS FASTEST IN INDIANA SIRE STAKES

Two-year-old male trotters faced off in three Indiana Sire Stakes splits on Wednesday's program at Harrah's Hoosier Park.

[READ MORE](#)