

DOWN THE STRETCH

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Blake MacIntosh's 1,000th win

Mitchell Kursner X 2

Reverse harness racing?

A rodent horseplayer

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Haddassah was brave in the stretch



Michael Burns Photo

Mohawk Million

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Scott Zeron: "This Metro Pace trophy is nice!"



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Leading Rider, Kazushi Kimura



It's probably not that important, but we're trying to come up with a good nickname for Japanese jockey, Kazushi Kimura. "Special K" is obvious, but we'd like something that more adequately reflects just how great the 23-year-old is riding.

Through the end of September, Kazushi appeared to have the jockeys' title at Woodbine wrapped up. Early in the year, he was neck and neck with Emma-Jayne Wilson, but the wins just kept coming for Kazushi. As he was closing in on 80 wins, Wilson had not

yet hit 60. Kazushi and his agent Jordan Miller met *Down The Stretch* on the morning of September 23 in the Woodbine backstretch kitchen. As difficult as it must be to learn English, the kid answered questions quickly and with a high level of articulation. First up, we wanted to know, how come he's riding so well and winning so much?

"I'm not going to change things," he says. "I'm getting good experience and I am training well. I keep in good shape, and I am getting good horses."

Kazushi's agent, Miller has only praise for his client.

"It's all of his dedication," says Miller about Kazushi's success. "It's his hard work. He lives and breathes horse racing. He's watching replays when he's at home. He's thinking about it when he's reading the form. It's all the preparation and the dedication and the execution. The more experience he gets, the better. He is learning from the mistakes he makes and improving with each ride he gets."

Kazushi echoes that. The more races he rides, the better he gets.

"Experience is the most important thing," he says. "I have been riding 3 years here. In the wintertime, I went to the States and to Saudi Arabia, which was a good experience for me. It supports improving my progress."

What kind of response is he getting from the other riders?

"I have been making good achievement here," he says. "I got the Sovereign Award (for Apprentice Jockey). Everyone is cheering me on and offering congratulations, saying, 'You're a strong rider, so keep it up.'"

We've seen this before at Woodbine. Jockeys from other countries often benefit from the jockeys' schools in their native lands.

"After I graduated junior high school, I went to racing school in Japan for 2 ½ years," he says. "I learned a lot."

For the benefit of those of us with recording devices, Kazushi advises, that in Japan, respect for the media is important.

"In Japan, the fans have stronger opinions," he says. "They criticize us more. We have to be more careful with our words."

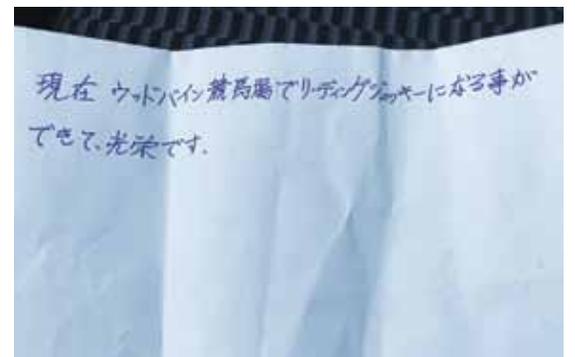
Kazushi's countryman, Daisuke Fukumoto is also having great success at Woodbine. We wondered how competitive it was between the two of them.

"I can't say that I'm not competitive with him. I am competitive with everybody," says Kimura. "I'm not so much focused on the jockey competition because this is a horse racing competition. The important thing is that I get the best horse in the race, and I ride the best for the horse. I just concentrate each race."

Even so, Fukumoto's smart ride on Town Cruise, delivering a win for that horse in the \$1 million Ricoh Mile, was worth celebrating.

"Yes, 100%," smiles Kimura. "We went to dinner on Monday with Rafael Hernandez and his family and my agent too, and we celebrated. I was happy for him. He won the Queen's Plate last year and this year, the Woodbine Mile. He deserves to be honoured."

We asked Kimura to write down in Japanese "It would



be an honour to be the leading rider at Woodbine."

Makes you wonder if any of us could be fluent in Japanese after 3 years.

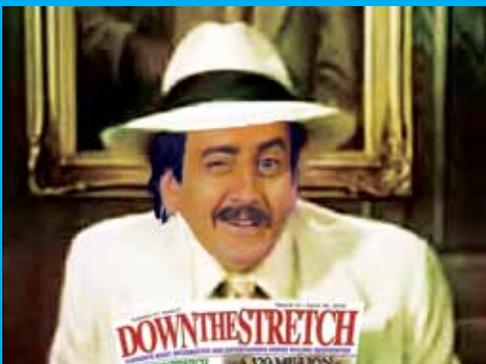
As for that nickname, maybe we stumbled on one. We asked Kimura to walk from the backstretch kitchen to the hill that overlooks the track and the Woodbine facility from the south. We wanted to take a nice picture. As he stood with the course behind him, there was a guy next to the clocker's booth. He recognized Kimura and called out to him.

"There he is. The Emperor!"

Yeah. That fits.

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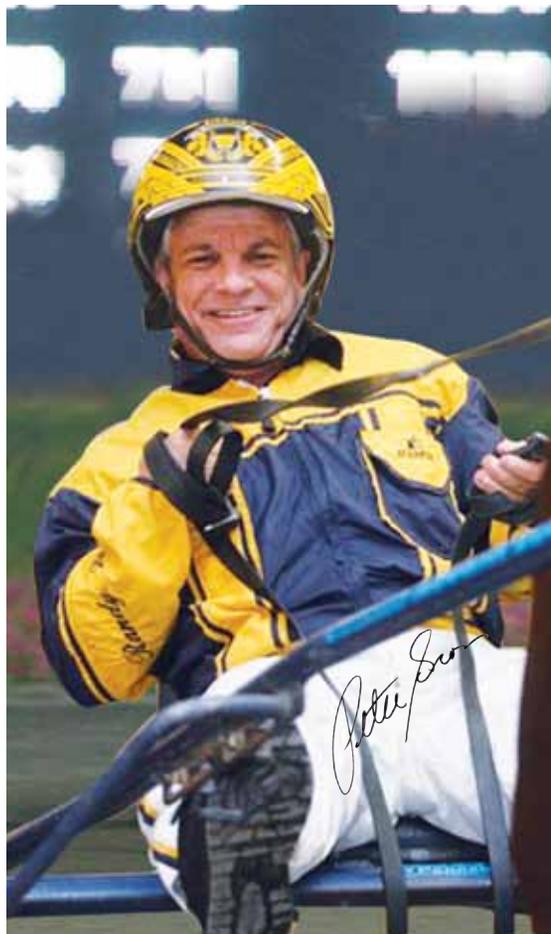
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THE EDITOR DRIVES HOME HIS POINT



Pari-mutuel Wagering is so simple, and yet so misunderstood. With regards to the latter, we had several examples in September showing that even the CPMA (Canadian Pari-Mutuel Association) – the governing body that writes and implements the rules of wagering – does not have a firm grip on the procedures.

Some say the term pari-mutuel comes from the term “Paris Mutuels”, referring to the first locality to conduct wagering in which the odds are determined by the bettors. More likely it comes from the French words *pari* and *mutuel*, which translate respectively to *bet* and *community*. Pari-mutuel wagering is a system where all the odds are created mathematically by the amounts placed by the crowd. The racetrack does not set the figures, but acts merely as the stakeholder, distributing the winnings when the race is declared official.

In virtually every case, pari-mutuels are fair and appropriate. Every imaginable bet at the track – win, place, show, exactor, triactor, daily double, pick-3s, superfectas, etc., can be easily calculated and paid out exactly according to the way the people bet.

It’s when ruling bodies write vague or uninformed rules that the pari-mutuels get bastardized. Let’s start with September 21. The 10th harness race at Mohawk offered a

High 5 bet (a bet in which the player tries to select the first 5 horses). Most players bet in increments of 20 cents. It’s a very hard wager to hit, and when it’s done successfully, the payout is generous. Just before the start of the \$16,000 pace for fillies and mares, the number 9 horse, Maretrafficon broke stride and veered inward, banging into number 8 Postscript driven by Jody Jamieson.

“It almost knocked me out of the bike,” reported Jamieson.

Postscript not only stayed on stride, but moved up gradually during the race and finished 5th. At the head of the stretch, the 8-5 betting favourite, Come Roll With Me, made an ugly break and plummeted backwards through the field. After the race, the stewards determined that Postscript had suffered an unfair start. They had no choice but to declare a complete pari-mutuel refund. Those who had Postscript 5th in their high-5 tickets did not get paid. They got their 20-cent bet back. Postscript overcame the disadvantage of being slammed before the start, raced evenly, hit the ticket, the horse and driver broke no rules of racing, yet the bettors could not collect.

Two nights later, in the 8th race, an \$8,000 pace, Monty Mono and Scott Young went off at 24-1. Just before the start, Monty Mono’s overcheck broke. The overcheck helps keep the horse’s head straight. There is no tactical advantage if it breaks. Despite the broken equipment, Monte Mono finished 3rd and those who backed the 7-year-old gelding were very pleased about their triactor and superfecta bets. Except – the stewards, guided by the official rules of the CPMA, declared that because of the broken equipment before the start, Monte Mono was a complete pari-mutuel refund. Those who had a 24-1 shot 3rd in tris and supers, got their initial bets back.

There’s a real disconnect here between what the racetrack does and what the Federal Government rules dictate. Postscript received \$800 from Woodbine’s purse structure and Monty Mono was rewarded with \$900. The racetrack recognized that both of those horses earned their finishes legitimately and found no reason for the owners, drivers and trainer to be denied their deserved portion of the purse. The CPMA had no such appreciation for the bettors.

Making this even more mind-altering, is that in each race, the affected horse was part of the Pick-3 bet. In the Pick-3, if there is a scratch in the 2nd or 3rd legs, the bettor is given the post-time favourite. The purpose here is that when a player has a live ticket, but his selection is out of the race, there is a method by which the ticket is still alive and there is still the possibility of winning. This rule was written to address a circumstance occurring *before* the 2nd or 3rd leg is run. In the case of Postscript and Monte Mono, it was decided *after* the race that the horse was

scratched and that the bettors would be assigned the post-time favourite, even though several minutes had passed since that favourite had failed to win.

So here we have two cases in the span of 3 days in which horse players saw their selections race fairly, break no rules, hit the ticket and yet they didn’t get paid. Two races in which, after the race, the Pick-3 bets were transferred to the favourites, which had already lost.

Horse racing cannot afford to have fans by the dozens feeling cheated and leaving the track knowing the game is stacked against them – fulfilling a difficult pari-mutuel equation and not getting paid because many years ago, someone who didn’t fully understand horse racing wrote a lazy rule that doesn’t address certain possibilities.

Down The Stretch can not only identify bad rules and the instances they confound the bettors. We also offer solutions. The unfair start rule should state:

In the event that the judges determine a horse is interfered with before the start of a race, they shall have the discretion to order a pari-mutuel refund. If the horse finishes in first place, no refund shall be required. In the event the inconvenienced horse finishes second, the judges shall order a refund for win betting and all combinations of wagers in which the compromised horse is involved in the winning position, but all wagers involving the horse in 2nd shall be honoured. The same principle shall be executed if the horse finishes 3rd, 4th or 5th in any relevant wagers. If the judges determine a horse has been interfered with before the start and the horse fulfills any pari-mutuel wager, those wagers shall be paid out accordingly and any position not attained by the offended horse shall result in a pari-mutuel refund.

As for the Pick-3 scratch rule, getting the favourite is a poor method because:

- 1) It gives the bettor a horse he did not select on his own.
- 2) It is subjected to ridicule when the scratch occurs after the race, and it is known that the favourite already lost.
- 3) When the favourite does win, it dilutes the payoff, requiring those who wagered on the favourite to share their profits with many who did not bet that horse.

Our solution here is to do what they do in New York. In Pick-3s where a horse has been scratched in the 2nd or 3rd leg, The NYRA pays off a consolation Pick-3. This is pure pari-mutuels because it reflects exactly what happened: the bettor had 2 winners but did not get a fair chance with his 3rd selection.

I have submitted my arguments to Lisa Foss, the Executive Director of the CPMA. Garnet Barnsdale, a contributor to this publication has set the over-under at 3 ½ years for the rule to be changed.

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British Royalty Was a Surprise



Michael Burns Photo

The bettors made Queen's Plate champion, Safe Conduct the 2-1 favourite in the \$401,600 Breeders' Stakes at 1 ½ miles on the E.P. Taylor Turf on October 3. In the third leg of the Canadian Triple Crown, there was more than just a win on the line for Safe Conduct – a victory would have all but assured a Sovereign Award as Outstanding 3-Year-Old Colt, with strong gusts towards Horse of the Year.

Unfortunately, the distance and the good turf were not in Safe Conduct's favour. With Emma-Jayne Wilson aboard, Safe Conduct led the field of 12 for the first ¼, setting seemingly benign fractions of :51.53, 1:17.49 and 1:43.76 for the mile, and 2:09.05 for the first ten furlongs.

But as the field turned for home, several others presented a serious threat, the most credible being British Royalty and Patrick Husbands. Riptide Rock (Justin Stein), second in the Plate was revving up, and Collective Force (Stephen Bahen) was collecting his forceful effort.

At the wire, it was British Royalty running away for a 4-length victory in 2:34.00. Riptide Rock hung on for second and Collective Force was third. The time was almost 9 seconds off the course record.

Trainer Barb Minshall had always looked to this race as a good place for British Royalty, but she almost screwed it up. Minshall entered the 3-year-old gelding

in a \$25,000 claim race on July 11, and trainer John Charalambous haltered him for owners Chris George and Jason McKellar. Minshall knew she had to rectify her error at first chance.

"I was looking to win a race, and I took a chance, and I was very upset with myself for taking such a chance," said Minshall who co-owns the horse with Bruce Lunsford. "And lo and behold, the horse is back in the next time, he runs two weeks later, and I couldn't get the claim form in there fast enough to get him back. I knew I made a huge mistake. So, I'm really happy."

British Royalty won his first race, a maiden special weight at a mile and 70 yards in October of last year but had gone winless in 7 subsequent efforts. That probably explains his 24-1 odds. He paid \$51.50.

This was Patrick Husbands' 5th win in the Breeders', and another example of how Husbands shines in Stakes events.



Amalfi coasted home

Michael Burns Photo

"My agent, Leroy Trotman came to my house, and he said to me, 'I got a ride for you, but will you look at the form?'" relates Husbands. "He said that Barb Minshall said, 'You can come and work the horse and if you don't like it, she won't be mad at you'. I came and breezed the horse. About 20 minutes later my agent asked me how the horse went. I said, 'Please don't tell Barbie, but this horse is light. I've ridden him the last two breezes, and he went

twice on softer turf, and he ran today the way I expected he would run."

Winning the Breeders' capped a great weekend for Bruce Lunsford, whose home-bred Art Collector took the Grade 1 Woodward at Belmont on October 2.

Passion for the Fashion by Amalfi Coast

Benefitting from a brilliant ride from Justin Stein, the 5-year-old mare, Amalfi Coast shot up the inside and pulled away late for an authoritative win in the Grade 3 \$177,700 Ontario Fashion Stakes. This was the 2nd graded Stakes win for Amalfi Coast, who was bred and is owned by Terra Racing Stable. She also scored the Grade 2 Royal North Stakes in August.

The Ontario Fashion had a compact field of six going 6 furlongs, and Stein had Amalfi Coast 5th down the backstretch, as many as 5 lengths behind the early front-runner, Ima Beast (Antonio Gallardo). Stein chose to stay inside and that was the winning strategy as Amalfi Coast squeezed along the rail and was much the best in the stretch, winning by a widening length in 1:09.40.

Nothing but kind words came from Stein for his Stakes winning partner.

"She's definitely one of my favourite horses that I've been blessed to ride," said Stein. "She's a real sweetheart and she's just got a lot of heart and a lot of try. She's always been a pleasure to be around."

Trainer Kevin Attard pointed out that a 43-day layoff just might have been the key.

"She's a special filly," he said. "She's been good to us from the get-go. She likes a little space in between her races, and she got that today."

It was Amalfi Coast's 7th win in 18 races. All the bettors got was \$3.70 on the win ticket.

Wonder Where the votes will go

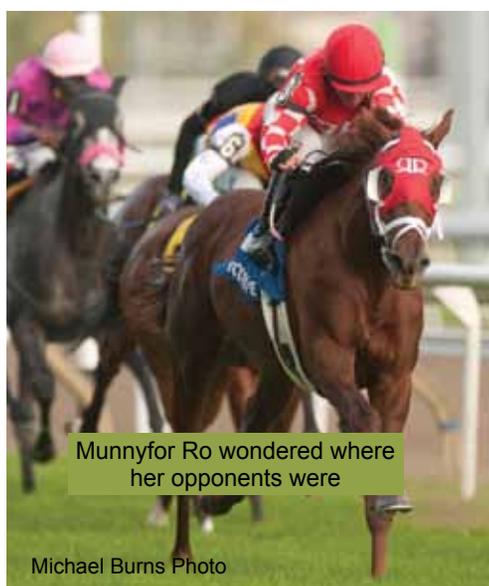
Munnyfor Ro established herself as the heavy favourite for Three Year-Old Filly of the Year in Sovereign Voting with heavy gusts in the direction of Horse of the Year. She looked powerful in a well-timed victory in the \$250,400 Wonder Where Stakes on October 2. The Wonder Where Stakes is the 3rd leg of the Canadian Triple Tiara. Munnyfor Ro won the Woodbine Canadian Oaks and skipped the middle leg, the Bison Stakes to run in the Queen's Plate, where she was 4th to Safe Conduct. Il Malocchio was the Bison City Stakes winner.

In the Wonder Where, a 1 ¼ mile grass test, Munnyfor Ro was held in 6th by Justin Stein as 66-1 shot, Youens was allowed to establish fairly slow fractions of :26.44, :52.44 and 1:17.31. Those splits were apparently so slow, all the trailing horses had plenty of gas left at the top of the long E.P. Taylor stretch. Cielo D'Oro (Antonio Gallardo) was moving well as

was Miss Marie (Shaun Bridgmohan), but Stein was the most patient rider, urging Munnyfor Ro with about an 8th of a mile to go and she responded. She had the lead at the 16th pole and opened up by almost 2 lengths at the wire ahead of Miss Marie. Time for the race was 2:05.36, hardly a threat to the course record of 1:58.88 set in 2017 by Inflexibility.

"She's all racehorse," said Stein. "Just that nice, efficient stride, and that strong kick down the stretch. Just reading the form, you could see there was no real speed, and we were forwardly placed. She was on the bridle and just had to settle her into stride and wait to turn her loose."

Munnyfor Ro is trained by Kevin Attard and the filly is owned by Rajendra Maharajh, under the name Raroma Stables. The win makes Munnyfor Ro 3 for 9 this year with 2 seconds and 2 thirds and \$475,928 in earnings. She paid \$4.60 to win.



Munnyfor Ro wondered where her opponents were

Michael Burns Photo

Haddassah's Prince of Wales Win Was Not...Bizarre

Kevin Attard's first Prince of Wales



The 86th Prince of Wales Stakes at Fort Erie on September 14 had a very perplexing, if not classic field. Of the 8 horses in the field, 6 had never run on the dirt. Not one of the 8 had ever competed on Fort Erie soil. The only horse to sport a victory at the border oval was the longest shot, Ready At Dawn, who had romped in a maiden grass race on August 9th following a dismal 30-length loss on the dirt in his previous race. HC Holiday had never won a race but went off at almost 9-2 as the 3rd betting choice. Curlins Catch, the lone filly in the field may have deserved to be the favourite – she had won on the dirt at both Gulfstream and Tampa Bay. So the bettors made her 3.45-1, even though in the 7 months since her last victory, she had lost 4 times.

So if the group lacked Hall of Fame credentials for a \$400,000 contest, it certainly didn't suffer from lack of intrigue. Every horse except Ready At Dawn (28.70-1) went off at 8-1 or less. Somewhat overlooked by the bettors was Haddassah, who finished 8th in the Queen's Plate and was 1 of 3 horses sent out by trainer Kevin Attard. Ridden by Gary Boulanger, Haddassah had good early position, 2nd for the first mile behind Ready At Dawn (Marklee Buchanan), who seemed intent on stealing the race. Before the field turned into the stretch, Ready At Dawn was finished and backing up as Haddassah found the lead 3-wide at the top of the stretch. Making a late and threatening move was Harlan Estate (Kazushi Kimura) who rushed up in mid-stretch and seemed to have sufficient momentum to pass Haddassah. The latter, however, dug in impressively and would not let Harlan Estate by. Haddassah persevered to the wire,

winning by ½ length in 1:56.15, almost 3 seconds off the record for a mile and 3/16ths. Harlan Estate is also trained by Kevin Attard. The 3rd place horse, Keep Grinding is trained by Tino Attard and owned by Kevin's son, Joshua.

"He's a horse that's really come into himself," said Boulanger after steering Haddassah to victory. Kevin said he might be the most talented 3-year-old he has, but he hadn't mentally put it together. Today, he showed he did.

"He's trained really well since, and he really matured since the Queen's Plate," said Kevin Attard. "We elected to take him off of Lasix for the Queen's Plate and he ran without the medication today as well just because I thought it was reacting negatively to him. He put it all together today."

Haddassah returned \$15.50 to win. The all-Kevin Attard exactor paid \$65 for a \$2 bet. The all-Attard tri for \$1 was \$148.40 and if the Attard family simply boxed all their horses in the superfecta, they cashed \$98.02 for each .20 bet.

There was even more Attard content on a big day at Fort Erie.

The Rondeau Bay Stakes and the Lake Erie Stakes were each part of the inaugural Ontario Sired Heritage Series, an 8-leg Stakes series open to Ontario-sired 3-year-olds, with races at both Woodbine and Fort Erie.

Jockey Christopher Husbands delivered Red Equinox in the \$80,000 Rondeau Bay Stakes at 6 furlongs. Red Equinox, a 3-year-old filly, is trained by Jamie Attard, son of Hall of Fame trainer Sid Attard.

"It's something you dream about all the time when you're growing up," said this Attard about his first Stakes win. "It's what you think about when you get into this business and learn from someone like my father."

Owned by Norsemand Racing Stable, Red Equinox paid \$7.80.

And "Red" was the colour of the day apparently, as the \$80,000 Lake Erie Stakes was captured by Red River Rebel with jockey Rafael Hernandez for trainer Kevin Attard and owners Denny Andrews and Northern Dawn Stables. Red River Rebel covered the 6 furlongs in 1:09.55 and returned \$5.10 to win.

Running the Prince of Wales on a Tuesday afternoon continues to be a good idea for Fort Erie which always has to find a time and place where the bigger tracks don't siphon away all the betting. The handle on September 14 was a very satisfying \$2 million.

The Grass Racing Was Smoking

Woodbine's Turf Festival had a sumptuous buffet of races on the lawn spanning Friday, September 17 to Sunday, September 19. The jewel of the weekend was the \$1 Million Ricoh Woodbine Mile on Saturday, and this had everything

This was for fillies and mares going a mile and an 8th on the E.P. Taylor Turf. Joel Rosario had flown in to ride La Dragontea, and that worked out well. Rosario had La Dragontea second most of the way in the 5-horse field, tipped to the outside at the



to do with a smart ride by Daisuke Fukumoto on Town Cruise. Leaving from post 1, Fukumoto spun Town Cruise to the lead, getting the first quarter mile in an easy :24.08. When none of the other 9 runners wanted to challenge for the lead, Town Cruise was able to hit the half mile in a benign :47.10. And even though 6 furlongs was passed in a competitive 1:10.41, Town Cruise had plenty left, winning by 2 ¼ lengths in 1:35.14, more than 3 seconds off the record for a mile on the E. P. Taylor Turf. This was a great moment for Brandon Greer, who owns, trains and bred the winner.

"It feels a little surreal at the moment, but I'm absolutely thrilled with him," said Greer. "This horse is amazing. I absolutely love him. I could see him digging in. That's something that he's been able to do very well this year. I found it a little difficult to believe right until the final 16th, and then I could see the other horses just didn't have enough to catch up there."

This was Town Cruise's 6th win in 14 races. The 6-year-old gelding rewarded his backers with a \$19.30 payoff.

Also on that Saturday card was the Grade 2, \$263,000 Canadian Stakes presented by the Japan Racing Association.



head of the stretch, and was much the best the rest of the way, winning by a comfortable length in 1:50.33, which is almost 8 seconds off the course record. The small field was somewhat of a concern for Rosario.

"I just want to wait for the right time to move," he said. "It's a little different when you don't have a lot of horses in a race, so we're just trying to learn something."

La Dragontea is trained by Christophe Clement and owned by Rebecca Hillen and Reeves Thoroughbred racing. With her 4th win in 12 races, La Dragontea paid \$4.40.

The 9th race Saturday was the \$600,000 Pattison Canadian International at 1½ miles on the turf. This one had a cast of 8. Legendary jockey, Frankie Dettori was aboard the 4-5 favourite, Walton Street, and he rode the horse as if he knew he was on the best. Walton Street simply pranced away in the stretch to win by 5 ¾ lengths in 2:29.07. This was Dettori's 4th win in this race. It was Walton Street's 7th win in 19 starts. He is trained by Charles Appleby for Godolphin and the win ticket was just \$3.70.

The Festival of Turf Racing kicked off on Friday, September 17 with the first race on the card as the \$100,000 Bull Page



Stakes at a mile on the inner turf for 2-year-old boys. The 7-5 favourite in the compact 5-horse field was Where's Neal, ridden by Justin Stein, and no one had to worry about Where's Neal as the gelding went right to the top and stayed there, cruising home the best in 1:40.05. Where's Neal is trained by Danny Vella, and this was his first win after a 2nd place finish in the Simcoe Stakes where he made his racing debut. Where's Neal is owned by Sea Glass Stables, and he produced a \$4.80 win ticket.

The girls got to run for \$100,000 in the Victorian Queen Stakes also at a mile on the turf. There were 6 fillies in the race and the bettors didn't think much of Swinging Mandy, who went off at almost 20-1 for Kazushi Kimura. After the race, the bettors had an improved opinion – Kimura rallied Swinging Mandy from last at the head of the stretch to win by ¾ of a length in 1:40.13. This was Swinging Mandy's 1st career win after placing 5th in each of her first two starts. That was a good score for trainer Dale Desruisseaux. It was his first Stakes victory. He shares the horse with Rustywood Stable and Solo Racing. Those who bet on Swinging Mandy got \$41.90.

Mohawk's Big Night

Saturday, August 28 at Mohawk offered a full card of Stakes and elimination heats with almost \$2,000,000 in purses. The cash for the North America Cup eliminations was just \$50,000 each, but the consequences were immense – the top 5 horses to run in the \$1,000,000 Pepsi NA Cup in 7 days.

In the first knockout race, the favourite, Bulldog Hanover had to work for it. Forced into a vicious 3rd quarter duel with Rockyroad Hanover (Dexter Dunn), Bulldog Hanover had a



pretty good excuse to slow down in the stretch. But after that wild :26.1 3rd quarter, Bulldog Hanover and Jody Jamieson were not at all done. As Rockyroad Hanover faded to 3rd in the stretch, Desperate Man (Trevor Henry) grabbed second, but was a good length behind Bulldog Hanover who was timed in 1:49. Southwind Gendry and Bettor Sun completed the top-five to advance to the final.

Jamieson is supremely confident about Bulldog Hanover.

"I just think he's the best horse on the continent," said Jamieson "When I called on him at the head of the lane, he kicked into another gear again. I don't even know what gear it was – he's just an amazing horse."

Trained by Jack Darling, Bulldog Hanover won for the 10th time in 14 races, lifting his career earnings to \$577,811 for owners Jack Darling Stables and Brad Grant. The win ticket was just \$2.60.

It appeared that Bulldog Hanover's chief rival in the NA would be Perfect Sting. Driven by David Miller, Perfect Sting went to the lead just past the ¼, dared his rivals to catch him, then paced a :25.4 final quarter to win by a ¾ of a length over a very game Whichwaytothebeach, who stuck his head in front with 1/8th of a mile to go. The time for the mile was 1:49.4. The next three, who all advanced were Abuckabett



Hanover, Simon Says Hanover and Jimmy Connor B. After a dazzling 10 for 10 rookie season, Perfect Sting improved to 4 for 9 this year. Trained by Joe Holloway for Brittany Farms and Val Dor Farms, Perfect Sting paid \$3.

The night started with a pair of OSS Golds. \$101,400 was available for 2-year-old colts and geldings in the first, and it was Stonebridge Helios pacing home for Bob McClure in 1:52.2. That was the 2nd win in 4 starts for Stonebridge Helios, trained by John Pentland who shares ownership with John Fleischman. The win ticket was worth \$4.30. The 2nd OSS Gold, worth \$100,600, went to Magical Arthur, driven by Sylvain Filion. Magical Arthur won for the 2nd time in 5 tries. He is trained by Anthony Beaton and owned by David Lumsden, and he produced a \$6.70 payoff.

The Roses Are Red final had a purse of \$316,000 for pacing fillies and mares, and the heavy favourite, Lyons Sentinel was impressive, rallying from 6th at the half to win by 1 ½ lengths in 1:49.1 for driver Tim Tetrick. The winning trainer is James King, and the horse is owned by Three Lyons Racing. Lyons Sentinel has won 18 of her 40 races and accumulated \$1,794,972, which is somewhat more than the bettors got.

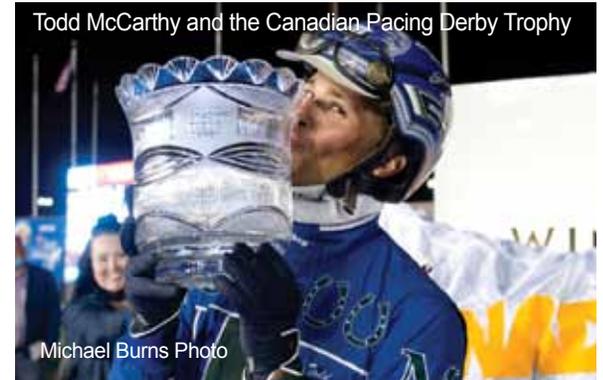


The win ticket was \$3.40.

Then it was the \$546,000 Maple Leaf Trot. The bettors



thought they had to choose between two great trotting mares, Manchego and Atlanta, who went off at 8-5 and 2-1 respectively. But Manchego broke stride just past the ¾ and Atlanta slowed dramatically in the stretch. That allowed Lindy The Great and James MacDonald to storm down the stretch, pass Forbidden Trade and win by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:51.3. The 7-year-old horse has now won 19 of 74, with \$1,581,656 in the bank for owners Andy Miller Stable, John Schmucker, John



Mehlenbacher and VIP Internet Stable. The trainer is Julie Miller, and the win price was \$17.80.

The Canadian Pacing Derby had a purse of \$590,000. Aussie Todd McCarthy was making a rare appearance at Mohawk, and he was steering the even-money choice, Allywag Hanover. McCarthy gunned the 4-year-old from post 7, led through fractions of :26.3, :54.3 and 1:22, then unleashed a discouraging final quarter of :27 to win by almost 3 lengths in 1:49. Allywag Hanover won for the 15th time in 36 starts and pushed his earnings to \$895,945 for the Allywag Stable. Brett Pelling is the trainer, and Allywag Hanover paid \$4.20.

The 13-race card at Mohawk that night produced a healthy handle of \$3,477,240.

Mohawk Million: Year 2



The 2-year-old filly, Venerable remained undefeated by winning the \$1 million Mohawk Million on September 25, but she had to earn it. Duly Resolved stuck with her all the way down the stretch, yielding only by a head at the wire after a mile trotted in 1:54.2.

Out of post 8, Paul MacDonell urged Duly Resolved to the top and that pair was first past the quarter in :27.1. Venerable and David Miller loomed up down the backstretch to assume first place and they stopped the clock in :56.3 for the half. The three-quarters was timed in a benign 1:26.1, a 3rd split of just :29. At that point, Southwind Domino (Louie-Philippe Roy) found himself parked first over and that was a bad place to be as Venerable had plenty left. Duly Resolved took on Venerable in the stretch and just missed pulling off the 24-1 surprise.

Miller admitted after the race that he wasn't quite able to steer Venerable the way he wanted to.



"My game plan was to try and get some cover," he said. "That didn't work, but she got a pretty soft middle half, and her heart and her guts got her to the wire."

Venerable is owned by Melvin Hartman of Ottawa and Americans Paul Bordogna, Steven Arnold, and David McDuffie.

"They don't get old when you race for a million dollars," laughed McDuffie. "She's been great right from the get-go – never disappointed yet. There aren't many races for a million, so this was the right place to go for her. Going against the boys is the frosting on the cake and it puts her right up there."

Steve Stewart can now brag that he bred the first two Mohawk Million champions. He also produced Venerate, who won the first Mohawk Million last year.

Venerable improved to a gaudy 8 for 8 in her sensational career. The half million-dollar first place prize increased her earnings to \$1,011,255. The bettors had to settle for slightly less – Venerable paid \$3.90.

The Mohawk Million is a unique Stakes race in that nine owners buy a spot to race in it for \$100,000. The 10th spot is awarded to the winner of the Wellwood Memorial. Tonight's race was the second year for the event.

The slots purchased by two of the country's top owners, Brad Grant and Steve Heimbecker, were used by tonight's first and second place finishers.

In the \$824,000 Metro Pace that same night, race fans were treated to one of the all-time great drives, as Scott Zeron found a way to win with Monte Miki, despite having to start from post 11 in the second tier, and despite all kinds of traffic and a potentially disastrous break of a rival in front.

Monte Miki came into the Metro Pace with a perfect 3 for 3 record, but that disadvantageous starting position discouraged the bettors who allowed him to go off at more than 15-1. Zeron could get Monte Miki no closer than 9th after a first quarter of :27. At the half, in :55.3 it was Wearingmysixshooter (Dexter Dunn) leading the bulky 12-horse field and Monte Miki seemed hopelessly out of it in 10th. As Wearingmysixshooter began to pull away from his rivals, Monte Miki was improving his position and Zeron had to make a snap decision when Bob Loblaw broke stride in front of him. Zeron wisely chose to go inside the errant horse and by doing so, maintained Monte Miki's momentum. At the top of the stretch, there were at least 8 lengths between Wearingmysixshooter and Monte Miki, who had moved to the extreme outside. With a powerful final 8th, Monte Miki not only made up the difference, but flew past, stopping the clock in 1:52.2 for a seemingly easy 2-length win. Not so, says Zeron.

“You might not have noticed, but I probably moved my horse three times before the half just because there was so much action going on,” advised Zeron. “There was a lot in the middle portion of that race, then obviously when Sylvain Filion (driving Bob Loblaw) made his break, it kind of opened the floodgates for me.”

Trained by Mark Evers for Velocity Standardbreds, Monte Miki returned \$33.70.

Elsewhere on a massive Mohawk card, Lyons Sentinel cruised home in 1:49.2 to win the \$240,000 Milton Pace for fillies and mares. Driven by Tim Tetrick, the 4-year-old mare won for the 20th time in 40 races and pushed her career earnings to \$1,932,472. She is trained by James King and owned by Threelyons Racing of Brantford Ontario. The win ticket was a paltry \$2.50.

Inaminutehanover needed just 1:52.4 to stun the field in the

\$157,975 Simcoe Stakes for trotters. Steered to a 3-length win by Louis-Philippe Roy, Inaminutehanover rang up a \$28.20 mutuel. The 3-year-old gelding is owned by Determination and trained by Luc Blais.

The \$500,000 She’s A Great Lady Final for 2-year-old fillies was a routine-looking win for the heavy favourite, Niki Hill. Dexter Dunn was along for the ride as Niki Hill prevailed by about 2 lengths in 1:50.2. Niki Hill is trained by Christopher Ryder for Tom Hill of Hamilton and by winning for the 5th time in 5 Races, Niki Hill paid just \$2.50.

In the \$155,600 OSS Gold for 3-year-old boys, Sylvain Filion put Power Train on top early, and with a :27 final quarter was able to repel the 4-5 favourite, Bulldog Hanover by about a length in 1:49.3. Power Train has won half his 10 starts for trainer Nick Galluci and owner Millar Farms. He paid \$7.40 to win.



Fire Start Hanover in the Fan Hanover

New Image Media Photo

Stonebridge Helios were assigned post 8. No problem – they went right to the top and would not be caught, winning by over 3 lengths in 1:52.1. Stonebridge Helios won for the 4th time in 6 tries. He is owned by John Fleishman and his trainer John Pentland, and he paid \$3.90 to win.

The final of the Goodtimes Stakes for 3-year-old trotters had a field of 10 and when the 4-5 favourite, Dancinginthedark broke into a gallop around the far turn, Fashion Frenzie and Louis-Philippe Roy found a clear path to victory, winning by 4 lengths over a closing Ritson, who was 97-1. Fashion Frenzie is trained by Richard Moreau for owners Ecurie Francis Richard, Mario J Bourgea, Pierre Guillemette and Sylvain Richard. Now 10 for 16, Fashion Frenzie returned \$7.

Then it was the Fan Hanover for 3-year-old fillies on the pace for a purse of \$425,000. Fire Start Hanover, the second favourite, went 1st over for Dexter Dunn and was powerful enough in the stretch to haul down the 1-2 choice, Hot Mess Express by a neck in 1:50.1. This was Nifty Norman’s second training win on the night. Fire Start Hanover is owned by Pinske Stables, David Hoese, and Lawrence Means. The win ticket was \$5.50

The 2-year-old pacing fillies had the Champlain Stakes for \$180,520. It was Silver Label and James MacDonald rallying from 6 lengths out after ¾ to cruise past Boudoir Hanover for an impressive win by almost 2 lengths in 1:52.2. That kept Silver Label perfect through her first 6 races. She is trained by



Stonebridge Helios in the boys’ Champlain

New Image Media Photo

Nick Galluci and owned by Millar Farms and all the bettors got was \$2.70.

The William Wellwood Memorial trot offered \$640,000 and, after seeing his brother James win the Champlain, Mark Macdonald said, “Watch this!”

MacDonald steered King of the North to the resounding off-the-pace win in 1:54.2 for trainer Ray Schnittker, who owns along with Homestead Stable, Nalamaura Racing and Steve Arnold. Another favourite prevailed, producing a \$3.70 win ticket.

The 13th race on September 11 was not a Stakes event, just a \$24,000 pace. But with the promise of a mandatory payout for the Super High-5, the pool swelled to \$945,695 and those who wheeled the 3-2 favourite, Groovy Joe got a very groovy



Silver Label in the girls’ Champlain

New Image Media Photo

payoff. Groovy Joe hung on for James Macdonald (his 4th win of the night). The following horses were HP Napoleon (8-1), Outlaw Aceofspades (15-1), Rockme Rollme (9-2) and Beachin Linda (26-1). That created a payoff of \$11,561 in the Super High 5.

And with such a huge card of racing, the handle for the night at Mohawk was \$5,194,278.

Mohawk’s Bigger Night

North America Cup 2021:

Desperate Man Was a Most Pleasant Surprise

Jody Jamieson had declared that Bulldog Hanover was the best 3-year-old pacer in North America, but the 3-5 favourite was not at his best in the \$1 Million Pepsi North America Cup



Trevor Henry delivered Desperate Man

New Image Media Photo

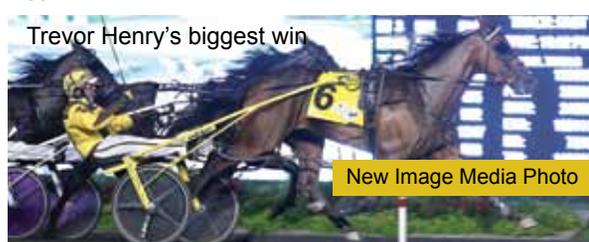
at Mohawk on September 11. Jamieson had Bulldog Hanover in front after ¾, and getting there virtually unchallenged in 1:22 seemed to give them a distinct advantage.

But Trevor Henry was in the process of giving Desperate Man a perfect trip. They were 2nd behind a live Perfect Sting as the field rocketed into the stretch, and with an 8th of a mile to go, Henry showed Desperate Man clear track and that was all they needed. Desperate Man gobbled up the leaders and surged past Perfect Sting to win by ¾ of a length in 1:49.3. Desperate Man paced his final quarter in :27.1. Whichwaytothebeach was 3rd and Bulldog Hanover faded to 4th.

The week before, Desperate Man might have tipped the bettors as he produced a huge final half to finish 2nd to Bulldog Hanover in an elimination heat. Henry felt he had to improve on that race.

“I had to get away better than what I did last week,” said Henry. “He’s a little tricky behind the car. He’s funny. Last week, he kind of ran behind the gate. I got him back pacing and I didn’t want to rush him off his feet. I was just interested in making the final. Tonight, I said we’ve got to have him closer, so you know, if he makes a mistake, he makes a mistake. But we’ve got to have him closer.”

The win by Desperate Man is being celebrated as proof that small owners and grass roots lovers of the sport can win the biggest races.



Trevor Henry’s biggest win

New Image Media Photo

Desperate Man was a \$20,000 purchase by John Cecchin and his wife Kathy, who is the horse’s trainer. In December 2018, the Cecchin’s daughter Nikki married Paul Davies. The newlyweds

were given a choice – the Cecchins would gift them a nice sum for a down payment on a house or they could have a half share in the yearling that was Desperate Man. The young couple took the gamble, accepted the share, and if they haven’t bought their house yet, the down payment is guaranteed – Desperate Man’s first place cheque was for \$500,000.

“He’s a special horse, but you know, we’ve had a lot of nice horses over the years, but nothing that makes money like this one,” said a smiling John Cecchin.

Henry has been a close friend of the Cecchins for many years and he was satisfied to see them capture the biggest race of their lives.

“It feels great,” said Henry. “These people deserve it. They’ve been in the business a long time, had some hard times, and got lucky to get this horse. I started at the bottom and now



Venerable in the Peaceful Way

New Image Media Photo

I won the biggest one, so it’s been great.”

This was just the 2nd win this year for Desperate Man who improved to 5 for 15 in his career. Since he’s a gelding, he can’t be retired to stallion duty, but his owners have long-term plans for him.

“The game plan is, he’s a Saturday night horse for two or three years,” said Cecchin. “After that we’ll buy him a saddle and ride him.”

Desperate Man paid \$17.20 to win.

Earlier in the card, there was Stakes race after Stakes race. The Peaceful Way Stakes had \$392,000 for 2-year-old trotting fillies and Venerable justified her 1-5 odds by dancing away from her rivals in the stretch to win in 1:54.3 for David Miller. Venerable, trained by Nifty Norman, is owned by David McDuffie, Melvin Hartman, Paul Bordogna and Steven Arnold. The bettors had to settle for \$2.40

Two-year-old colts and geldings paced for \$213,170 in the boys’ final of the Champlain Stakes. Bob McClure and



Fashion Frenzie had Good Time

New Image Media Photo

More Stakes from Mohawk

On a night full of Stakes action, the \$606,500 Canadian Trotting Classic for 3-year-olds was the most anticipated race of the night on September 18. Fashion Frenzie (Louis-Philippe Roy), on a 3-race win streak, was the 4-5 favourite, but he failed to hit the board. Winning Ticket and David Miller surged to the front from post 10 and cut out fractions of :26.3, 55.2 and 1:23.2, clinging to the lead as the field entered the stretch. Ahundreddollarbill



Ahundreddollarbill

New Image Media Photos

meanwhile, was getting a much-preferred journey from Andrew McCarthy. Fifth at the half, Ahundreddollarbill pulled off the rail and found cover behind Fashion Frenzie. In the stretch, Ahundreddollarbill exploded into the middle of the track and trotted past rivals with authority, winning by a length and a half in 1:52. In Ranger (Tim Tetrick) came late for 2nd and Winning Ticket stayed for 3rd.

McCarthy explained his winning tactics:

“This horse has been racing mainly on half mile tracks most of the year,” he said. “It’s kind of crazy not to send him on the halves, but he is a lot better with a trip. He rates better off a helmet, so I kind of wanted to work out a second over trip tonight if I could, but we were still trying to just find someone to follow and we ended up getting the right one.”

This was Ahundreddollarbill’s 8th win in his 10th race of 2021. He has 10 wins of 16 career races. Trained by Tony Alagna for James Crawford and Crawford Farms Racing, Ahundreddollarbill paid \$10.90.



Donna Soprano

New Image Media Photos

The 5th race that night at Mohawk was the \$414,000 Elegantimage Trot Final for 3-year-old fillies. Donna Soprano and Bob McClure at 2-1 were the second choice, but McClure handled the filly as if she was the best. Donna Soprano took the lead early, led the field to the half in :56.3, then yielded control to the 3-5 favourite, Bella Bellini (Dexter Dunn). Bella Bellini led by at least 2 lengths in the stretch, but tired after a trip that saw her mostly on the outside. With a final quarter of :27.3, Donna Soprano overhauled Bella Bellini and found the wire a head the best in 1:52.3.

“She’s a gamer. She wants to get there first,” said McClure. “I was a little worried when Bella Bellini cleared me at the

head of the lane, but luckily she showed her grit.”

Donna Soprano has won 3 of 8 in 2021 after a 5 for 7 rookie season. Her earnings now total \$962,155. She is trained by Luc Blais for Determination. Her win ticket was \$6.20.

Bob McClure was back in the winner’s circle the next race, after steering Star Power Hanover to a stunning upset in the \$159,600 OSS Gold for 2-year-old trotting colts and geldings. Star Power Hanover rallied from 4th at the top of the stretch to get the victory by a length in 1:55.1. The 26-1 odds on Star Power Hanover had to do with his failure to win any of his 6 previous races. He is owned by Determination and trained by Luc Blais, and those wise enough to back him got a \$55.20 mutuel.



Star Power Hanover

New Image Media Photos

Abuckabett Hanover was much too good for his rivals in the \$176,815 Simcoe Stake for 3-year-old pacing colts, cruising to a 4-length win in 1:49.1. Driven by Andrew McCarthy, Abuckabett Hanover surged to the front after three quarters and wasn’t threatened in the lane. That was his 6th win in 13 starts in 2021 for trainer Tony Alagna. Abuckabett Hanover is owned by Crawford Farms, Alagna Racing, Jablonsky Held Stable and Barbera Wienick Stable. The win price was just \$2.80.



Allywag Hanover

New Image Media Photos

And in the \$100,000 Mohawk Gold Cup, Allywag Hanover confirmed his position at the top of the open pacers in North America, dominating by 4 lengths over his 9 overmatched rivals. Driven by Todd McCarthy, Allywag Hanover flashed a final quarter of :26.3 to record his mile in 1:48.1. That’s not his fastest race – he went 1:47.1 at the Meadowlands to win the \$265,400 William Haughton on July 17. Allywag Hanover won the Canadian Pacing Derby on September 4. He is trained by Brett Pelling and owned by the Allywag Stable and a \$2 win bet was worth just \$2.40.

1,000 for MacIntosh



There was a bit of a wait, but 46 year-old trainer Blake MacIntosh finally notched his 1,000th win. It took an efficient driver by Doug McNair on the homebred Sports Fan in the 11th race at Mohawk on September 30 to vault MacIntosh into the 4 digit club. Off at almost 6-1 in the \$20,000 Grassroots Final, the 2 year-old Sportswriter colt was the first to take the lead, going past the quarter in :27.4. Sports Fan sat comfy in 2nd after Macho Phil (James MacDonald) went by, stopping the clock in :57.2 for the half and 1:26 for 3/4. In the stretch, McNair kept Sports Fan on the inside and found just enough to scoot up late with a :26.3 final quarter to win by a half-length in 1:53.1.

MacIntosh had been sitting on 999 since Clockwork Orange and Paul Mackenzie had scored for him on September 21 at Flamboro. He had sent out 25 other horses before Sports Fan finally got him to the magic number.

“I was thinking I was never going to win another race,” says MacIntosh. “We just sat there at 999, wondering when it was going to happen. McNair gave him a good drive, sat in the 2-hole and came up the rail. I told him, ‘If you wait until the final 8th, he’ll give you everything he’s got. He did that.”

MacIntosh is proud that he’s reached this significant plateau.

“It’s a great accomplishment, Not a lot of people get there,” he says. “There’s a lot of hard work. You sit back and think, ‘wow!’”

Sports Fan is owned by Leanne Murphy and Stuart McIntosh and the win bettors were rewarded with \$13.80.

MacIntosh has stats that go back to the year 2000 when he won his first 3 races. Horses he has trained have already exceeded \$1 million in purses this year, making it 5 consecutive years that MacIntosh has cracked the \$ million barrier.

The best horse trained by Blake MacIntosh would be Courtly Choice who won the Little Brown Jug in 2018 and stunned the bettors in 2019, taking down the Canadian Pacing Derby at odds of 34-1. Courtly Choice earned \$1,432,697 in his career with 16 victories in 47 races. Horses trained by Blake MacIntosh are closing in on \$16 million in earnings.

Apparently MacIntosh has a reputation for losing his temper, which would explain the tweet by another trainer, Jason Ryan after the landmark win:

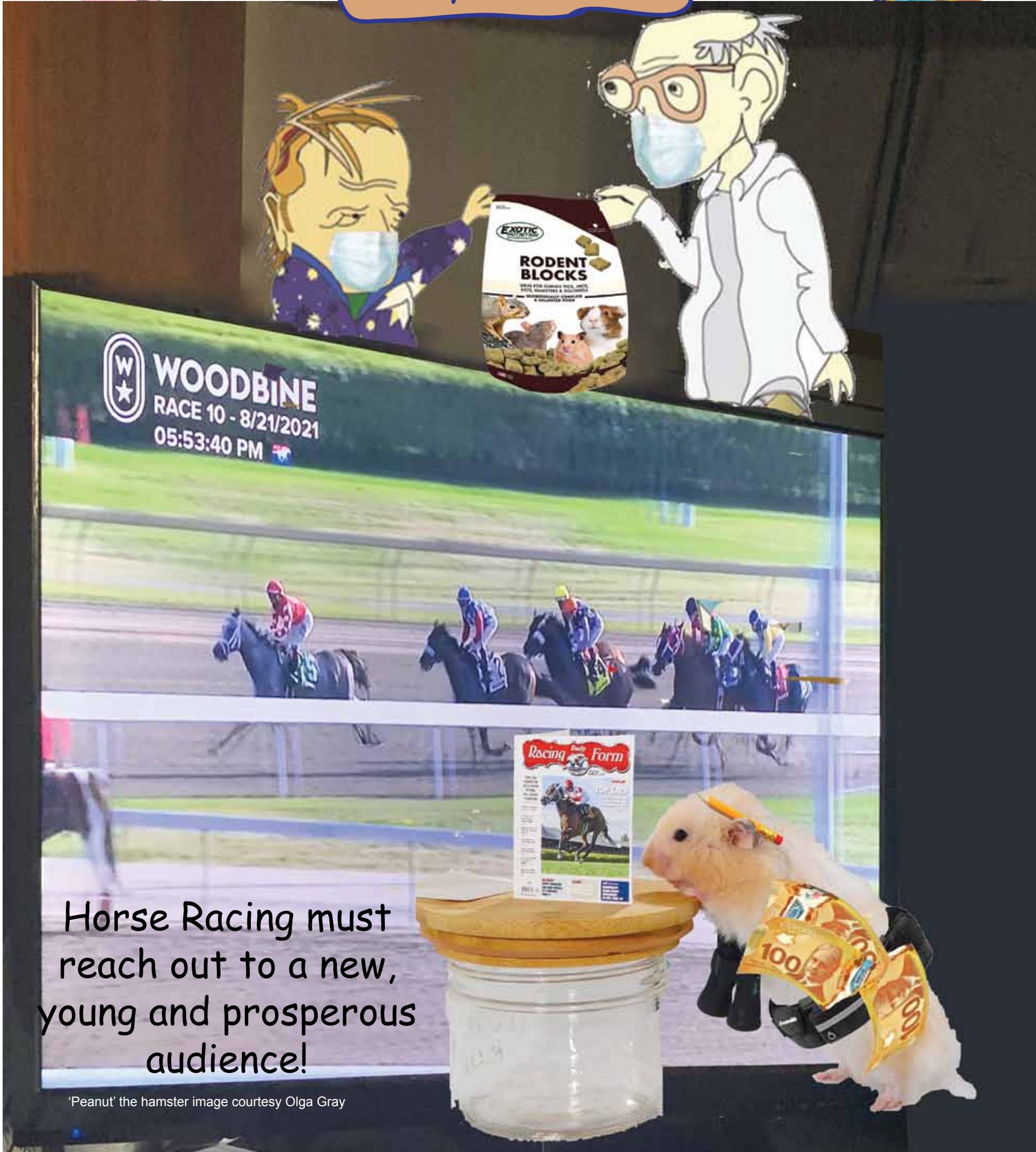
- 250 broken chairs**
- 300 fists in the wall**
- 150 broken tables**
- 500 new phones**
- 1,000 training wins ...priceless**
- Congratulations bud. It’s all worth it.**



RACETRACK HUMOUR



Perry & Mooch



Horse Racing must reach out to a new, young and prosperous audience!

'Peanut' the hamster image courtesy Olga Gray

Woodbine Stakes

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BURNS



Il Malocchio

Il Malocchio Gave Them the *Evil Eye*

The \$250,000 Bison City Stakes on August 28 was the second leg of the Triple Tiara for 3-year-old fillies, and with the absence of Munnyfor Ro, it was assured no filly would sweep the series. Il Malocchio, ridden by Patrick Husbands, pulled off a mild upset with a perfectly executed ride. Husbands had Il Malocchio in 4th after half a mile of the mile and a 16th contest. When he took her 3-wide around the far turn, she responded with enthusiasm and was the best in a drive to the wire, getting there a half length ahead of Emmeline (Emma-Jayne Wilson).

This was the 8th Stakes win of the meet for Husbands, who leads in that category.

“She ran a big race today,” said Husbands. “Last time she tricked me. By the quarter-pole I thought I had the race won, but when I asked her, she paused for about three strides and those three strides cost me the Oaks. Today, before we swung for home, I made sure I had her in gear.”

Il Malocchio (Italian for “the evil eye”) is trained by Marty Drexler and is owned by her breeder, Franco Meli.

“She’s special,” said Drexler. “In my barn we run a lot of cheaper, middle claimers. We don’t have a lot of horses like this. It’s nice to get one that you can play on this stage.”

Il Malocchio returned \$11.50.

Lorena in the Algoma



Lorena

Tap It To Win

There were 4 Stakes races at Woodbine on August 29, all dedicated to graduates of the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society’s sales.

The Algoma Stakes was worth \$100,000 and attracted a field of 9 3-year-old fillies going 7 furlongs. The 3-5 choice was Lorena, and she got a nicely timed ride from Gary Boulanger. Boulanger kept Lorena 3rd most of the way, made a menacing move on the turn and took over the lead in the final 16th to win by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:23.79.

This was Lorena’s 4th win in 5 races – her only loss was an 8th place finish in the Woodbine Oaks.

“She got a little rubbery. She didn’t switch leads today, but she was running and I wasn’t too concerned,” said Boulanger. “She’s a pretty gutsy filly. She gives you everything she has.”

Stuart Simon trains Lorena and owns a share with Gerry Olguin, Russell McClellan, and Brent McClellan. Lorena paid \$3.50.

Plenty in Reserve



Secret Reserve

The \$100,000 Elgin Stakes for 3-year-olds had 7 colts and geldings going 7 furlongs and when Secret Reserve was asked, he had plenty for Rafael Hernandez. Third at the half, Secret Reserve powered up 3-wide coming into the stretch and found the wire almost 4 lengths the best in 1:22.30.

“He was perfect,” praised Hernandez. “We got two good horses to make the pace for us and then he just came running. He felt super great.”

Owned by Stacey Van Camp and Carlo D’Amato, Secret Reserve is trained by Michael Mattine. He was purchased for \$9,000 at the 2019 CTHS Canadian-Bred Yearling Sale. This was his 3rd win in 4 tries and he paid \$3.20.

Sheesh! She Won Easily!



Baksheesh

The \$201,600 Muskoka Stakes had twelve 2-year-old fillies competing at 6 ½ furlongs, and Baksheesh made an eye-catching rally from 11th after a quarter to a resounding victory by 4 lengths in 1:17.91 for Woodbine’s leading jockey, Kazushi Kimura.

“She didn’t have speed at the beginning. That’s why I was very focused that if I have a chance to get out that’s it and I did,” said Kazushi Kimura. “That was a pretty smooth trip. When I was at the three-eighths I was like ‘She’s going to win for sure’, and she did.”

Baksheesh is owned by Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners and Gary Barber, and she is trained by Ralph Biamonte. This was her maiden breaking score in her 3rd lifetime race, and she paid \$4.50.

Everybody Must Get Stoned

In the \$201,200 Simcoe Stakes for 2-year-old colts and geldings, Ironstone ran as if he was the only horse in the race, although there were 10 others. Ademar Santos had Baksheesh on the lead from the start, and when a couple of rivals indicated they might run after him, Baksheesh scampered away in the stretch to win by over 8 lengths in 1:16.61 for the 6 ½ furlongs.

“I knew the track wasn’t playing to speed, but when I looked on the lead nobody wanted to go and so turning for home I had a ton of horse,” said Santos. “He’s just amazing.”

Willie Armata trains Ironstone, who won the first time in his 3rd start. The owners are Tequesta Racing and Jupiter Leasing. Ironstone was bought for just \$7,000 at the select sale. His win in



Ironstone

the Simcoe earned his owners \$120,000. The win ticket was \$6.20.

Mighty Heart Upset in the Seagram



Tap It To Win

Mighty Heart, the 2020 Queen’s Plate Champion likes to taunt his foes from the front of the bus, but never got that chance in the \$180,000 Seagram Stakes at a mile and a 16th on September 11. Jockey Rafael Hernandez was able to put Tap It To Win on the lead right out of the gate, and that pair was able to run comfortable splits of :49.05, 1:12.96 and 1:37.39, as Mighty Heart pursued from about 2 lengths behind. In the final 16th, Tap It To Win strolled to a confident and unstressed win by 1 ¾ lengths in 1:43.79. Hernandez said that all he did was what he was instructed to do.

“They told me, ‘Raffi, just put him on the lead and the rest is up to the horse.’ When I looked back turning for home, I said, ‘If they have something, they have to run faster than me because I still have plenty.’”

Tap It To Win is trained by Mark Casse for Live Oak Plantation. This was the 5th win in 14 starts for the horse who paid \$11.40.

Shhh! I’m Coming Up the Rail



Not So Quiet

After leaving sluggishly from the gate, Not So Quiet, the 3-2 favourite, stormed up the hedge for Rafael Hernandez to take the \$150,000 Vice Regent Stakes, which was run at 5 furlongs on the turf.

“The horse next to me, the seven (City Boy) in the gate, he was acting a little weird and then my horse started to get nervous,” said Hernandez. “They opened the gate, and he came out a little bit slowly from what we wanted to do, but we came up with Plan B, and then everything came out good.”

Plan B produced Not So Quiet’s 7th win in 15 starts. This gave both Hernandez and Mark Casse a sweep of the Stakes races that Saturday. Not So Quiet is owned by Heste Sport and paid \$5 to win.

Godolphin's Huge Weekend

When the 2-year-old gelding, Albahr romped home in the Grade 1 \$404,400 Summer Stakes at Woodbine on September 19, it topped a perfect weekend for the powerful Godolphin



Albahr

Michael Burns Photo

stable and its trainer Charlie Appleby. Godolphin had sent 3 horses to Canada for Woodbine's Turf Festival and all three were victorious. All three were ridden by legendary jockey Frankie Dettori.

In the Summer Stakes, Albahr tracked from the back of the field for the one-mile turf test, as First Empire (Patrick Husbands) led the field of 9 through fractions of :47.93 and 1:12.17. It was about 6 furlongs in when Dettori asked Albahr, and he got an appropriate response as the horse surged immediately past rivals and had the lead with 1/8th of a mile to go. Looking a bit green in the stretch, Albahr drifted from the centre of the track towards the rail, but without consequence, since he found the wire 2 1/4 lengths the best in 1:35.77.

Albahr had traffic problems in his first race, but since then has won 4 in a row. He paid just \$3.30. The victory earned Albahr a free pass to the Breeders' Cup.

The Summer Stakes followed the Grade 1 \$401,600



Wild Beauty

Michael Burns Photo

Natalma Stakes at a mile on the grass for 2-year-old fillies and it was Godolphin's Wild Beauty who roared from off the pace to capture that one. With Dettori aboard, Wild Beauty was patient in 7th at the half, as the leader, Cardio Princess reached her cardio maximum with difficult fractions of :47.03 and 1:11.44. That worked in Wild Beauty's favour as she unleashed a powerful kick to find the top, winning by 2 1/4 lengths in 1:35.08, which would be faster than the boys would go in their Stakes race. This will get Wild Beauty a fees-paid entry to the Grade 1 \$1 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies at Del Mar on November 5.

"For my luck, they went way too fast," said Dettori. "By the time we got to the quarter pole, it all just fell into my lap, and she picked up really well."

The Natalma and the Summer Stakes added to the Godolphin win by Walton Street the day before in the \$720,000 Pattison Canadian International. Wild Beauty, winning for the 3rd time in 6 starts, returned \$4.90.

Also on the September 19 card was the \$130,750 Ontario

Racing Stakes. This was for 2-year-olds at 5 furlongs on the grass. Diamond City, ridden by Emma-Jayne Wilson, was bet down to 4-5, and the colt justified that by winning easily, 1 3/4 lengths the best in :57.68. Diamond City is trained by Mark Casse for D.J. Stable, and this was his first win after a pair of 3rds in maiden special weights. The win ticket was \$3.60.

The Woodbine Cares Stakes was 5 grassy furlongs for the 2-year-old fillies, and again the girls went faster than the boys as Derrynane, under Joel Rosario came thundering through the stretch to win by 2 3/4 lengths in :57.04. This was Derrynane's 2nd win in three tries. She is trained by Christophe Clement for her owner/breeder Waterville Lake Stable. On an afternoon when all 4 Stakes races were won by favourites, Derrynane paid \$5.50.

Speedy Indeed



Miss Speedy

Michael Burns Photo

On September 25, the Duchess Stakes offered \$150,800 for 3-year-old fillies and 10 of them were required to run 7 furlongs for the cash. It was Miss Speedy who certainly lived up to her name under Rafael Hernandez. Miss Speedy ripped to the lead by the quarter pole in :22.82, passed the half mile in :45.41 and was timed in 1:08.71 for 6 furlongs. (That's a remarkable clocking as the course record for 6 furlongs is 1:08.05 set in 2018 by Pink Lloyd and when you read about the Bold Venture Stakes, you will notice that 4-time Male Sprinter of the Year, Pink Lloyd went past 6 furlongs in 1:09.22).

Undeterred by her gasping pace, Miss Speedy poured it on with a final 8th of a mile in 12:39 to win by 2 lengths in 1:21.10 (just over a second off the record of 1:20.07 set 11 years ago by Hollywood Hit).

Miss Speedy is owned by Gary Barber and the three Kerbels, Ryan, Shane, and Barry. This was her 3rd win in 4 races and she paid \$6.60.

He's Still the Boss!



Pink Lloyd

Michael Burns Photo

The irrepressible Pink Lloyd came out to defend his title in the Grade 3 Bold Venture Stakes worth \$180,000

at 6 1/2 furlongs, and incredibly, the 9-year-old gelding is as good as he ever was. Jockey Hernandez took Pink Lloyd right to the front when it appeared none of the other 4 runners wanted to set the pace. Pink Lloyd went a very comfortable :46.68 to the half and, as previously mentioned, 1:09.22 to 6 furlongs. At the head of the stretch, Lucky Curlin (Antonio Gallardo) appeared to be a threat and got within maybe a long neck, but Pink Lloyd ran the final 16th of a mile in 5.91, which discouraged Lucky Curlin and determined the victory by 3/4 of a length in 1:15.13. The record for 6 1/2 furlongs is 1:14.44 set in 2016 by Noholdingbackbear.

This was Pink Lloyd's 27th win in 36 races, and he now has an unprecedented 24 Stakes wins. And the bettors might have gotten much luckier than Lucky Curlin. As they were loading, Pink Lloyd was 1-5, but a considerable amount of late money poured in on Lucky Curlin and the 3rd place horse, Lookin to Strike (Emma-Jayne Wilson). As a result, Pink Lloyd went off at even money. Anytime you get \$4.10 on Pink Lloyd in a 5-horse race, it's a good day. The wonderful horse is trained by the wonderful Robert Tiller and owned by the Entourage Stable.

At Windfield's Farm, Canada's greatest jockey will be honoured



Mitchell Kursner: The Man Who Created a Queen's Plate Winner



Mitchell Kursner is the breeder of Safe Conduct, winner of the 2021 Queen's Plate. Because neither the owner, Dr. Robert Vukovich of Wellspring Stables, nor Phil Serpe, the trainer of Safe Conduct, were able to get to Woodbine, Kursner was the frontman, representing all interests in the horse. The 51-year-old horseman confides that at the beginning, he really didn't think he was mixing the genetics of a potential Queen's Plate winner.

"I was always a very big Bodemeister fan," says Kursner. "I guess the knock on him was he couldn't get the mile and a quarter. He appeared home free in the Kentucky Derby and got caught, and the same thing happened in the Preakness. But I really liked him."

Kursner's appreciation of Bodemeister the stallion is certainly justified. Bodemeister raced just 6 times and never finished worse than 2nd. On April 14, 2012, he won the Arkansas Derby by over 9 lengths.

"I had a lot of faith in him. I took two mares and I bred them to Bodemeister," he continues. "For this particular foal, I was hoping that breeding Bodemeister to my mare, Duchess Dancer, who is a half to Fatal Bullet, that we'd get a really fast miler. Of course, you do all the research and what happens? I've got a really nice Bodemeister that can go a mile and a quarter."

Safe Conduct was placed in the Keeneland November Yearling Sale, consigned by Kursner's agent, Bernard McCormack of Cara Bloodstock, and Dr. Vukovich purchased him for \$45,000.

"Bodemeister commercially was a little soft at the time, but he was really nice, very mature and we entered him in the sale," says Kursner. "I think we did very well. Dr. Vukovich really liked the colt."

Dr. Vukovich would grow to like the colt a lot more. In just his second start, on August 30, 2020, Safe Conduct was entered in a maiden special weight at Saratoga. It was a mile and a 16th on the grass with a purse of \$72,000.

"He broke his maiden at Saratoga," says Kursner, "which is any horseman's dream. I mean, absolutely unbelievable. With the Covid restrictions, I wasn't able to attend in person, so I watched it on TV and it was absolutely sensational."

Safe Conduct went off at 16-1 that day, but with Jose Lezcano in the saddle, the two-year-old had the lead after a quarter mile, stayed comfortably ahead of his 9 rivals, and pranced away in the stretch to win by 1 ¼ lengths in an easy 1:45.95. Even after 2 starts, it appeared Safe Conduct would be able to handle a 10-furlong race.

If winning at 16-1 was a surprise, two starts later, Safe Conduct really blew up the tote board. It was in May of 2021, and he was 38-1 in a mile and a 16th grass allowance race at Belmont. Lezcano was aboard again, kept Safe Conduct close in 2nd most of the way, challenged for the lead in the upper stretch and romped home by 2 ½ lengths. That was exciting for the bettors who got a \$79 mutuel, but more telling was the time – 1:40.71, more than 5 seconds faster than his first mile and a 16th win.

Kursner confirms that he closely follows the progress of all the horses he breeds, and he was very pleased with the progress of Safe Conduct.

"I knew immediately we were in good hands," he says. "You don't know if a horse is going to be any good or not. The way that Phil Serpe was breezing the horse and

working him, I was very happy."

Because he was Canadian-bred, Safe Conduct was eligible for the Queen's Plate, but just how significant would that be to an American owner?

"Dr. Vukovich knew everything there was to know about the Queen's Plate," says Kursner. "I was extremely impressed to see how knowledgeable he was regarding the race. It might not have meant so much to other American owners, but he knew just how prestigious and how important this race is. He was absolutely heartbroken, but he said he wanted me to represent him on behalf of Wellspring, and I said I would be honoured to do so. As a breeder, I am forever grateful to Dr. Vukovich for pulling out all the stops to ensure that Safe Conduct had the best opportunity to win."

And, of course, the 2021 Queen's Plate did turn out to be the race of a lifetime for Kursner.

"Did you see how that horse broke?" declares Kursner. "What can you say about Irad Ortiz? All you have to do is watch the first 80 yards of that race and you see why he's an outstanding ride. It was absolutely imperative that he break sharp. Keep in mind that Safe Conduct drew the number one post which is a very difficult spot to break from, and then you consider how long it took with thirteen horses to load."

As he watched the race from his box at the finish line, Kursner describes a 122 second experience that was very dreamlike.

"It feels like you're stopped in time," he says. "You don't hear any of the noise around you. You feel your heart pounding. Take a Chance actually did us a favour by setting a decent honest pace. Time stood still. He got the lead, and he was fighting off Keep Grinding who's got a heart as big as the entire city. All of a sudden, I saw the Stronach horse closing late on the outside. I didn't think he could make up that ground, but what a stone-cold closer he is. But my box was right at the finish line, and I knew we had it by a head. It was just sensational."

See also page 17 for more on Mitchell Kursner

How Julia Carey Sent Out a Plate Winner



Trainer Julia Carey and her grandson, Shamar

Julia Carey has been training horses at Woodbine for over 20 years, but her 2021 Queen's Plate may just have been the greatest thrill she has ever had in the game. Because Safe Conduct's trainer, Phil Serpe, could not make it to Woodbine, Carey was asked to take care of the horse and have it ready for Canada's most prestigious race.

"I've known Phil from Florida and I am very good friends with him and his partner, Lisa Bartkowski," says Carey. "And he asked me if I would look after the horse because he wasn't sure if he or Lisa could come, and I said, 'You have no worries. We will look after the horse.' It turned out that Lisa got her passport in time and she was

able to come. So it all worked out."

Carey got Safe Conduct on Friday and was given a detailed script to follow.

"We greeted him off the van and made sure he was good and walked him," she says. "And the next morning Lisa came, and she got on the horse and took him out. She is a very good exercise girl. Phil gave us specific instructions on exactly how he wanted it done and what his routine was. We did exactly what he wanted, so basically, we were just babysitters. Safe Conduct is a cool dude, very easy to look after, and fortunately, everything went well."

Even with her short time with the horse, Carey had a positive inkling something special was about to happen.

"Just looking at the field and with ordinary handicapping, I thought he'd run real big," she says. "Plus, with the help of North America's leading rider, Irad Ortiz, that gave us a very good chance. I wasn't worried about the 1-hole – that can always be a little bit of a concern, but I thought if anyone's going to handle that, it'll be Irad."

Safe Conduct's breeder, Mitchell Kursner has a box at Woodbine right over the finish line, and Carey joined Kursner's group and Lisa Bartkowski to watch the race.

"They were ecstatic," she says. "They were so thrilled. They were watching and watching and hoping he would hang on and they were over the moon. At the wire, Lisa

was like, 'Did we win? Did we win?' And I had to tell her, 'Lisa, don't worry, we won.' And we watched the replay and of course, he won by a head."

Aside from the extraordinary experience of being involved with a Queen's Plate Champion, Carey had another emotionally uplifting story on Plate day.

"My 16-year-old grandson, Shamar was there," she says. "He walked the horse in the morning. He got dressed up and wore a tie. He got to shake Irad's hand. It was a lifetime experience for him."

Carey has trained some good horses in her career. In 2008, Disfunction won the Vigil Stakes, and the next year captured the Jacques Cartier. Disfunction won 9 of 24 races and \$477,330. She also trained Bobcageon, a winner 7 times out of 34 starts with a bankroll of \$377,004. In 2016, Midnight Miley won the Sovereign Award as Champion Older Mare. She had won both the Grade 3 Ontario Matron and the Grade 3 Seaway Stakes that year. Like pretty well every trainer at Woodbine, she can still dream of galloping into the winner's circle after a Queen's Plate.

"I told one of my very good friends that this is just a rehearsal for us next year," she says laughing. "We have a nice little 2-year-old, who hasn't even started. He's a Canadian-bred and you never know. That would be kind of exciting."

Ashlee Brnjas 1981-2021

Ashlee Brnjas and her father, John, when Johnny Bear won the Northern Dancer Stakes in 2018



Trainer Ashlee Brnjas was found dead on Saturday, September 25. The cause of her passing is not clear. We do know it wasn't Covid, nor was there anything suspicious or violent. We're left with the possibility it could have had something to do with personal problems.

Four years ago, Brnjas was featured in a *Down The Stretch* story. The following is an excerpt from that item:

"Ashlee Brnjas has a lot on her plate. In the winter, she was stabled at Tampa Bay with many of the Colebrook horses, owned by her father, John. Although Colebrook Farms is a major operation, entering horses at multiple tracks, with a training facility, breeding operation and extensive broodmare activity, it wasn't necessarily Ashlee's calling.

"I was really involved with the show jumpers for my entire life," says the 36-year-old Brnjas. "The decision was made to leave the show jumpers because there was a lot of money spent for not a lot of gain. I worked in the event planning industry for awhile, but I missed the horses so much and I knew my dad was looking for a new trainer."

Dad took her on as an assistant trainer, but that didn't last very long.

"Within a month of being at the track, my father and his trainer parted ways," she says. "My dad basically said, 'Here's 15 horses. Go figure it out. It was kind of a baptism by fire situation. I had to sink or swim.'"

Brnjas gives credit to one person who guided her through the embryonic stages of training.

"I had Tommy Bowden, the trainer at our training centre," she says. "He was a tremendous help. When I didn't know what to do, I could always pick up the phone and talk to him."

Brnjas' stats on Equibase go back to 2007, when she would have been 26. That year she sent out 180 horses, won with 17 of them and earned \$615,418.

"Sues Regent was my first official win," she recalls. "Emma-Jayne Wilson rode the horse.

Sue's Regent, running for just the second time in his career went off at 5-1 in a maiden special weight and Wilson rode the gelding from off the pace to win by a neck in 1:00.81 for the five furlongs.

"I was shaking and crying at the same time," laughs Brnjas. "I was shouting, 'Oh my God! I can't believe I just won!' Emma still teases me about it to this day."

The years 2011 and 2012 were very good to Brnjas. She and Jack Boem were married on September 10, 2011, and it turns out the bride may actually have been blushing, distracted as she was. Brnjas had a horse named Reconnect entered in the La Prevoyante Stakes on the same afternoon as she was exchanging vows.

"We had a TV in the house where the wedding reception was being held," says Brnjas. "We were trying to take all these romantic pictures and all of sudden my bridesmaids come running out of the house, *screaming*."

The noise was justified. As Ashlee and Jack were being connected, Reconnect at 70 -1 was winning the La Prevoyante Stakes, getting up by neck for jockey Omar Moreno. Nice wedding gift. The share of the purse was \$75,000. She paid \$142.90 to win.

And Reconnect is part of a theme that carried over into 2012, which, statistically is Brnjas' best year as a trainer. She won 29 races, had 25 seconds and 27 thirds from 212 starters, and Colebrook won \$1,025,642. Reconnect is a daughter of Niigon, the 2004 Queen's Plate champion who stands as a stallion at Colebrook Farms.

"2012 was the year that all of the Niigons came full bloom," she says. "All the Niigons came into themselves as three-year-olds - strong two turn horses."

Recently, Brnjas had a winner at Tampa Bay with the six-year-old Johnny Bear which is owned jointly by Colebrook and Bear Stable. Johnny Bear got a sensational ride from Pablo Morales to shoot up the hedge, capturing a \$32,000 claim race on the grass.

Brnjas subscribes to the theory that you are only as good

as the people around you and she pays props to her crew.

"I have a wonderful team of assistants," she says. "I have Rob Johnson. He runs the training centre up in Uxbridge. Chad Elder travels with me. Between the two of us, one of us is always running the shop racing wise. If I come down to Tampa early, he stays in Canada. When I come back, he'll come down here. He's been with me for three or four years. He started off as a gallop rider for me, then moved his way up to be an assistant. He is a life saver."

Brnjas seems to relish talking about her relationship with John Burness (yes he spells the last name differently!).

"My dad runs the whole show. He's so hands on it's crazy."

Well, how crazy?

"We can have the biggest screaming matches," she admits. "But five minutes later, we are totally cool. My father is without exception, the hardest working person I have ever met. He's 77 and he still ships all the horses himself. He works in the barn. He harrows the track every day. He doesn't just sit at the desk and call the shots. You can't put anything by him... and lord knows I have tried."

If there is some necessary friction between the father and his offspring, it very often has a happy ending.

"For all the fighting," she says in earnest, "when you lead a horse into the Stakes circle that he's bred and I have trained... you can't beat that."

There was a bittersweet result to the 7th race at Fort Erie on September 27. The winner of the maiden claiming (\$4,500) race at 6 ½ furlongs was Hit This Town, ridden by Helen Vanek. Hit This Town is a 3-year-old gelding owned by Colebrook Farms and trained by Ashlee Brnjas. It was the horse's first win in 5 tries.

Through 15 years as a trainer, Ashlee Brnjas sent out 2,852 horses and recorded 317 wins. This year was going well for her - 150 starters, with 16 winners and purses worth \$581,504.

At Almost 88, Bill Megens Can Still Win a Harness Race

87 year-old Bill Megens winning with Opas Faith



Bill Megens was born November 13, 1933. That means on September 5, 2021, he was 87 years and 297 days old. That's important information, because in the 2nd race that evening at Flamboro Downs, Megens took the 2-year-old filly, Opas Faith wire to wire and in doing so, became the oldest person to steer a winner at Flamboro. Since no one has come forth since then to argue otherwise, we're stipulating this win makes Megens the oldest ever to win a pari-mutuel race in Canada.

Down The Stretch had to wonder. Two weeks before Opas Faith's win, American driver, Tony Dandeo won a race at Freehold Raceway. Dandeo is 86, so did Megens feel he had to one-up that guy?

"No, not really," he says. "I did hear about it. I did read a bit about it. It was about the filly. She hadn't been racing quite up to par. She made a break, and the driver couldn't tell me what happened. I just wanted to see what she was like."

Most of us, when we reach our late 80s, would probably be grateful if we're able to put on our pants by ourselves. Was Megens physically fit enough to steer an animal around a racetrack?

"Oh yeah. I wouldn't drive if I wasn't comfortable," he says. "It was the same as it always was. We just kept turning left."

The win by Opas Faith was actually not too difficult. There were only 5 trotters in the \$6,500 race and 2 of them broke stride shortly after the start. Megens took Opas Faith right to the front, got her to cut out very benign fractions of :30.4, 1:03.1 and 1:33.1. She was tiring in the final quarter, which was trotted in :31.1, but lasted by a head. The mile was timed in 2:04.2. Megens considers his drive in the next race that night to have been a more worthy effort.

He was in the bike behind Denise, a 3-year-old trotter who had failed to win in her first 10 starts. Denise went off at almost 12-1, but got a bright drive from Megens to finish 2nd.

"I was much more proud of that race," says Megens. "It was a full field, and she was a long-shot. I had to move and re-move. There was a lot more strategy. I had to go to Plan B and even Plan C".

Megens points out that fitness seems to run in his

family.

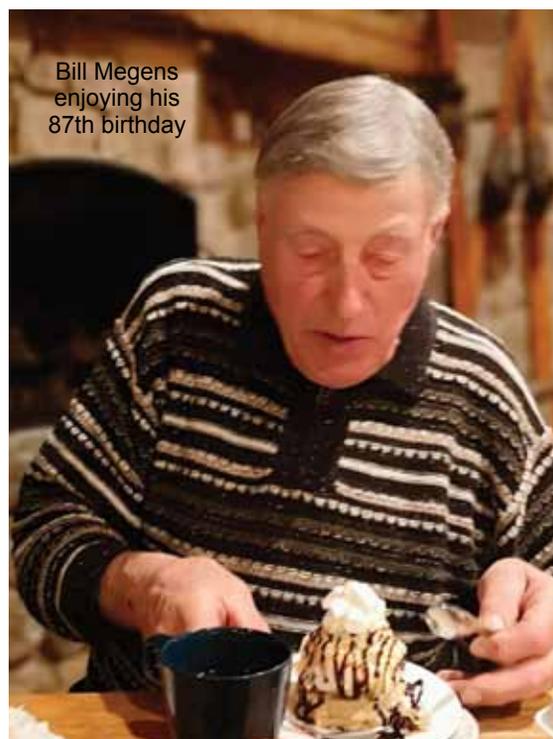
"My father, when he was my age, got remarried after mother died and he lived for another 12 years," he says. "I just happen to be in pretty good shape. And the horse does all the work. I don't. If I had to do the running, that would be a problem."

The win by Opas Faith has a sweet back story to it.

"I named her after my youngest granddaughter, whose first name is Faith," says Megens. "She calls me Opa, which is Dutch for grandfather."

Opas Faith is also remarkable because not only did she win her first race for a man who was 32,074 days old (yes, we added in 22 leap days!), but the filly was also bred, trained, and owned by Megens. The rarity gets even more rare.

In harness racing, there's this convoluted statistic called Universal Driving Rating System. It assigns a number to a driver that encompasses all 1^{sts}, 2^{nds} and 3^{rds}. It's comparable to baseball in that any U.D.R.S. over .280 is excellent.



Bill Megens enjoying his 87th birthday

So let's consider Megens' U.D.R.S. Since Standardbred Canada began compiling figures in 1977, Megens is credited with 1188 wins, 655 seconds and 534 thirds. His lifetime U.D.R.S. is .307. Coincidentally, from the 8 drives he has had in 2021, the figure is the same. To realize how good that mark is, consider that, of all the drivers at Woodbine, only James MacDonald at .321 has a better mark. Megens' U.D.R.S. of .307 tops Sylvain Filion (.279), Doug McNair (.304), Jody Jamieson (.254) and Bob McClure (.259).

To that point, Megens just shrugs. He doesn't accept that the driver really matters as much as other elements.

"Sometimes the driver gets too much credit," he says. "The trainer is a lot more important, putting them in the right class and having them in right condition. If you have the best horse, it's easy to win. It's when you're 20 or 30 to 1, then it's trouble trying to get a check. A driver like Filion, if you're 30-1, he'll still get you a check. That takes talent."

Driving a harness horse obviously requires strength,

but Megens thinks mental preparation is paramount.

"People say it's in the hands," he says. "But it's mostly in the brain. You got to stay cool, know what you're up against and how you're rating your horse, making the right move at the right time. If you're scared or too excited or worrying about getting hurt, then it's time to quit."

Megens' driving career began at a racetrack that doesn't even exist anymore.

"I started with the horses in 1951 at old Dufferin Park," he says. "I was just a groom. Buddy Gilmour was just 18 and he was driving horses there. Then I went to Quebec City and trained some horses there. In 1954, there was no money in it, so I quit the horses and went back to the farm. I had a dairy farm. You name it, I did it. When night racing came along, I saw where Buddy was doing very well, and I thought maybe I could make it. So I got back in it in 1967."

Megens says Buddy Gilmour was among the best drivers he has ever seen.

"Herve Filion is another one," he adds. "Mike LaChance was good. You've got a lot of good drivers today. Sylvain Filion, James MacDonald and Jody Jamieson."

The reason that Megens was confident he was still fit to drive is probably because he trains his own horses almost every morning.

"I have 3 yearlings that I'm breaking in right now," he says. "And I have 3 broodmares with foals. It keeps me busy. I lost my wife 25 years ago, so the only thing I have is the horses. Well, I have my family – 5 sons and 2 daughters. That helps too."

On November 13, 2023, Bill Megens will turn 90. There is no history of a 90-year-old driver winning a pari-mutuel race in North America. Is there a chance we'll be talking about this in a little more than 2 years?

"Well they keep giving me my licence," he laughs. "So far, I'm lucky. I still have some strength and my mental ability. And my eyesight is still 20-20. All my bones are still pretty good, except for my back. I still shoe my own horses most of the time and that's a little hard on the old back."

Winner's circle photo with 88-year-old Ken Saunders, Opas Faith, September 5, 2021, at Flamboro Downs



Ontario Sires Stakes Futurity

By Jennifer Morrison



First Cold Wave

First Cold Wave rolls to victory in \$65,520 Ontario Sires Stakes Futurity. Ajax Downs, September 15, 2021 - Stamping himself as a rising star, First Cold Wave rolled over the field in the \$65,520 Ontario Sires Stakes Futurity for 2-year-old Quarter Horses at Ajax Downs on September 15. The attractive sorrel gelding, sent off as the heavy 3 to 5 favourite in the

field of eight, broke like a bullet under jockey Brian Bell and strolled to a 1 1/2 length victory in the 330-yard dash for juveniles sired by Ontario stallions.

John Wilson and Scott Reid's Night Leader, winner of the Ontario Bred Futurity in August, was a fast-closing second with Keeper of the Stars, owned by Belinda Taggart, another three-quarters of a length back

in third.

First Cold Wave, owned and bred by Robert Bailey of Oakwood, ON and trained by Jason Pascoe, stopped the teletimer in 17.146 for an 88 speed index. It was the third win from five starts for the son of first-year sire Cold Hard Dash, who was brought to Ontario by a syndicate of local horsepeople including Bailey, Pascoe, Taggart, Milena Kwiecien, and Amelie Aubut.

"He just did it himself, it's amazing to be on a horse like that," said Bell. "He's really focussed from the post parade and in the gate. Honestly, I don't think we have seen the best of him." First Cold Wave, who was produced from the Wave Carver mare Cassies Carver, has earned \$51,559.

Pascoe, who trains his horses on his Pontypool, ON farm with partner Bryanne Langford, won four races on the eight-race card, padding his lead in the trainer standings. Pascoe has 29 wins while Craig Spada is second with 14. Alberta jockey Ricardo Moreno won three races on the day, all for Pascoe.

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Ajax Downs - Maryland Magic Grabs 3rd Leg of the Sprint Series *by Jennifer Morrison*



The seven-year-old stallion Maryland Magic, who does double duty as a stud and racehorse, posted a mild upset in the 3rd leg of the \$20,760 QROOI Sprint Series at Ajax Downs on September 8. Owned by Milena

Kwicien and trained by Jason Pascoe, Maryland Magic was making his first appearance in the Sprint Series in 2021 and had only raced as short as 250 yards once in his previous 39 races, a fourth-place finish in his debut in 2016.

The handsome son of top U.S. stallion Pyc Paint Your Wagon was quick out of the gate under jockey Ismael Mosquera, duelled his stablemate Careros briefly before edging clear to win by 3/4 of a length over even-money favourite Jess A Sweet Surprise, who had won the first two legs of the Sprint Series. Careros was a nose back in third. The time for the 250-yards was 13.044 for a 105 speed index.

It was the first stakes victory for Maryland Magic who paid \$9.60 to win as the third choice.

"I had always ridden against him," said Mosquera, who won two races on the day. "I was a little scared of Jess A Sweet Surprise and Careros and a bit about the short distance, but on post parade he was very sharp. He

broke on top and never came back."

Maryland Magic now has 12 victories in 40 career races and earnings of over \$127,000. As per his spring job, Maryland Magic has two winning 2-year-olds this year from his first four foals to race.

There was a consolation for Jess A Sweet Surprise, a five-year-old mare owned and trained by Craig Spada. With two wins and a second in the three-race Sprint Series, Jess A Sweet Surprise will be honoured as the series champion at the annual awards dinner early in 2022.

Jockey **Cory Spataro** of Innisfil continued his hot streak in the saddle with his second consecutive four-win day. Spataro won two races each for trainers Craig Spada and Joe Tavares on the nine-race card. He has ridden eight winners in the last 18 races and his 22 victories led all jockeys after 13 days of the season. Mosquera rode a pair of winners to stay in second place with 18 wins. After the September 8 card, there were 8 remaining days of racing at Ajax Downs.



Andy was handy

Amanda Stephens Photo

Early in the 7th race at the Red Mile on September 7, there was an accident and driver Devon Tharps was dislodged from his horse, Odds On Delta. As the rest of the pacers continued, Odds On Delta ran into the infield and was galloping towards the others as they came down the stretch. There was no subsequent collision because, after winning the race with Captain Butler (\$5.80), driver Andy McCarthy demonstrated some awesome physical skills, latching on to the truant horse and saving everyone from danger. Photographer Amanda Stephens should enter this in any and all year-old awards.

This photograph seems to be proof that they actually conducted reverse harness racing many years ago at Freehold Raceway. What is not answered here is....why?



Gordon Waterstone

50m · 🧑

Ouch! A little bit TMI about Julien Leparoux?

KENTUCKY DOWNS RACE 8 MTP 24 TURF Firm 3:51 PM

FANUEL REPLAY

Outs	EX 4& DD 4&	90	156
1 14	38	-	-
2 39	49	76	-
3 20	-	226	-
4 1	29	-	-
5 25	40	55	-
6 25	13	16	-
7 3	-	7	-
8 Scr	12	48	-
9 7/2	32	55	-
10 10	-	13	-
11	-	-	-

BENTUCKY DOWNS SEP 8 2021 RACE 7

BEAT LE BON (FR) JOCKEY: JULIEN LEPAROUX, GELDING ...



When Safe Conduct won the 2021 Queen's Plate on August 22, it was the highest point in a life around horse racing for Mitchell Kursner. He bred Safe Conduct who was created from a mating between Kursner's mare, Duchess Dancer, and the stallion Bodemeister. Kursner deeply enjoys the science of breeding winners, but like many in the sport, he started modestly as an owner.

"I've loved the game ever since I was a young guy," says the 51-year-old Kursner. "It's an interesting story how I officially bought my first horse in 1987. Along with a friend, we claimed a horse for \$10,000 named King Roberto. He was a well-bred, Winfield's horse, and they had high hopes for him originally, but unfortunately, he got injured and that cheapened him up. My first trainer was a gentleman named Howard Yanofsky, and in his barn was an assistant trainer named Julia Carey who's an excellent trainer now."

King Roberto won just 5 of 65 starts. On March 23, 1991, at Philadelphia Park, he out-sprinted 5 others in a 7-furlong dash, carrying rider Mario Verge to the finish line in 1:11.72 at odds of 7-1. That was the last win of his career, although he did run 12 more times.

"Yanofsky, my trainer, claimed for me a really nice Geiger Counter filly named Quiet Drama for \$15,000," says Kursner. "She went on to win 6 in a row that winter."

That impressive streak started on November 7, 1992, when Quiet Drama trounced 7 others by almost 8 lengths in a 6 1/2 furlong race at Philadelphia. The jockey was Kathryn Ryan. After 2 more wins at that same track, Quiet Drama was entered in the \$28,550 New Hope Handicap. With Ryan still aboard, the 5-year-old mare won by 3/4 of a length in 1:11 for 6 furlongs. Quiet Drama paid \$16.60 that day. She won for the 6th straight time on February 4, 1993, burying 5 others by almost 2 lengths in allowance company and paying \$9.60 to win.

"That would have been the best horse I ever owned," says Kursner. "Back then, I had claimers and I got lucky. She was a really nice horse and she moved up under Howard's care. Quiet Drama was named Horse of the Winter at the Philadelphia meet. Everything changed when I re-booted the program and started buying yearlings and better-quality stock."

These days, Kursner owns just one racehorse, and seeing this one in the racing form would make anyone smile.

"His name is Split My Pants," says Kursner, and of course, we beg for an explanation.

"It was bred by my friend Doug Anderson, and I own



it with Doug and another friend, Peter Mosakos," says Kursner. "It was a Victor's Cry, and the mare is Miss Hot Pants. Since we split the horse up, it's called Split My Pants. I thought it was a pretty good name. I have to give Doug all the credit for coming up with that."

Split My Pants is already a 7-year-old. He shows 4 wins from 30 starts, the most impressive being a record setting win at a mile on the inner turf at Woodbine on June 29, 2019 (we won't tarnish that record by noting that was just the 2nd day of the new inner turf). Split My Pants was ridden by Emma-Jayne Wilson and stopped the clock in 1:38.15, paying \$8.20. Since then, the owners of Split My Pants have not suffered from split pants as the result of excessive purse winnings. Split My Pants has gone 0 for 9 in subsequent races.

As a breeder, it's obvious that Kursner's most satisfying outcome is the Plate victory by Safe Conduct. But as an owner, he was involved with a 3-year-old filly named Neshama who pulled off a 15-1 upset in the 2016 Woodbine Oaks. Neshama's owners that day are listed as Kingfield Racing Stable, John Fielding, Anderson Farms and Kursner's Carnegie Hill Stable.

Now, about that name...

"Neshama means spirit or soul in Yiddish," says Kursner. "She was foaled a couple days after my mother's Yahrzeit date. I was thinking about my mother. That's how I got it."

(In the Jewish religion, Yahrzeit is the anniversary of someone who has died).

"She was picked out for us by Catherine Day-Phillips," Kursner. "She was a beautiful filly. She had a lot of heart. In the Oaks, she ran the absolute race of her lifetime. Jim Bannon told me she peaked 50 yards from the finish line. She got a great trip from Eurico Rosa da Silva. It was a blessing from above. At that point in time, it was the greatest day of my life other than my daughter being born."

Halee-Maris Kursner is now 22 years old.

Neshama and the 4-5 favourite, Gamble's Ghost appeared to hit the wire together, but the photo showed Neshama winning by a nose. Imagine a filly ridden by da Silva paying \$32.30!

"She was a price," says Kursner. "But I knew she was sitting on a big race. I told some friends, 'I know we're up against Caren and Gamble's Ghost, two outstanding fillies, but this one is going to run out of her bridle. Put her on your ticket.' I walked out with the super that day and it was substantial."

Kursner wouldn't reveal how much he won that day, but Equibase is easy to research. The superfecta for the 2016 Woodbine Oaks paid \$1,148.10.

And the question we pose to all our Owners of the Month – "What is it that you love about this sport?"

"My answer would be sitting at the training track rail on a Saturday morning, watching the horses," he says warmly. "Going to the races, being able to handicap the horses and just watching the animals. Watching them do their thing. They are absolute athletes. It's the love of the horse, the love of the equine spirit that they have."



There's nothing wrong in the universe when millionaire horse owners take down an important Stakes race. They've gambled with huge amounts and have often sustained significant losses in the game. But when someone at the lower end of the financial spectrum wins a big purse, it reminds us that the game is not completely controlled by the big shooters.

When Desperate Man roared up late in the stretch to win the \$1 million North America Pace, it was the most thrilling moment possible for Kathy and John Cecchin, daughter Nikki and her husband Paul Davies. Desperate Man went off at over 7-1, but he was hardly the most unlikely winner. As a 2-year-old, he had won 3 straight \$100,000 OSS Golds. And he came into the N.A. Cup off 3 consecutive seconds, including a loss by a length to Bulldog Hanover in an elimination for the N.A. Cup. In that race, Desperate Man was 5 lengths out at the half and paced his last half in a remarkable :51.3.

The nicest part about Desperate Man's story is how he became the best wedding gift ever.

Nikki Cecchin married Paul Davies in December 2018. They had their wedding in Las Vegas. We're guessing they had a great time.

"We had a destination wedding," says Nikki, "About 70 people came for it.

It was a lot of fun and I think a lot of us got into more trouble than we'd like to."

Nikki's mom and dad sprang for the buffet in Vegas, but for some reason, felt that wasn't a sufficient wedding gift. They offered the newlyweds a choice – a substantial contribution towards a down payment for a house, or a half share in a yearling they had just purchased.

"They insisted they wanted to do something," says Nikki. "We already had everything in order with the house. We were always going to take the horse."

There's a real symmetry happening here. The yearling, Desperate Man was obtained by John and Kathy because of the success of a horse already owned by the daughter and her husband

"I bought Desperate Man because Nikki and Paul have a horse named Outlawgrabbingears," says Kathy.

Outlawgrabbingears, now a 5-year-old, has an impressive resume – 27 wins in 64 starts and over \$330,000 earned. The Cecchins loved his bloodlines.

"I was looking for a horse from that family," continues Kathy. "I found a Dreamlands Latte colt on sale in Lexington. Dreamlands Latte and the dam of Outlawgrabbingears, Grand Slam Woman, are full sisters, both mares by Artsplace. I was searching for a yearling strictly based on that pedigree. Our driver, Trevor Henry was there. He's a great horseman. He confirmed that he



Paul & Nikki Davies and 19 month-old Deacon, Kathy & John Cecchin

looked good, decent size, stood correct. We paid \$20,000 U.S."

So, if you're following the bouncing ball, Nikki and Paul had a very good pacer. Nikki's mother found a yearling with very similar bloodlines and bought it. Kathy and John gave half the horse to Nikki and Paul.

Early on in his career, there was no reason to suggest Desperate Man would be good enough to win a \$1 million race.

"He was not flashy at all training down," says Kathy. "He's very lazy. He's laid back. He never does really any more than he has to do."

"He was good," adds Nikki. "He was always doing everything right, but he was just kind of making bobbles around the farm track. It's a half mile and he wasn't handling the tighter turns because he was such a big 2-year-old. We were asking him for more speed, but he was on the track with another one of ours and he wasn't even keeping up with him. So we thought, 'maybe he's a good Grassroots, horse'. That would have been great. Then he saw the wings in his first qualifier, and it was just like a switch flipped on."

In that first qualifier, Desperate Man, driven by Henry, came from 4th at the head of the stretch and overhauled the leaders to win in 1:57.2. He flashed a final quarter of :26. In his first pari-mutuel race, Desperate Man won a \$104,800 OSS Gold with a final quarter of :26.3.

The North America Cup was to be the most formidable race Desperate Man would ever tackle. On multiple occasions, he had charged late to lose to Bulldog Hanover. The powerful Perfect Sting came into the race with 10 straight races timed in under 1:50 and had never missed the board in 19 career starts. In the Somebeachsomewhere Stakes, Desperate Man was unable to haul down the winner, Whichwaytothebeach.

Because Desperate Man was notorious for slow starts, Kathy Cecchin finds it difficult to watch, at least the first half of his races.

"Everyone knows he's a hider, not a watcher," laughs Nikki.

"He doesn't like to go up to the gate. You know, he's sort of shy. So I don't like to watch the beginning. I never saw any of the first half miles," says Kathy. "There can only be one crazy person in every relationship, and obviously it's not John."

Apparently, as the North America Cup got underway, Kathy Cecchin was buried in the paddock. After Trevor Henry put Desperate Man safely into 5th place around the first turn, Nikki was able to retrieve her mom and make her watch the rest of the race. From that point on, a perfect trip orchestrated by Henry turned into the win of a lifetime.

"We were screaming. We just acted like fools," says Kathy. "We were just jumping up and down, not acting like we had ever been there before. Nikki and I were hugging, I was crying my eyes out."

The winners share of the North America Cup was \$500,000. Even split 4 ways, that's a nice haul. Kathy Cecchin considers that the lesser part of a great moment.

"It didn't have anything to do with the money," she says. "It was the horse, I'm so proud of him."

It needs to be pointed out that Kathy Cecchin is the trainer of Desperate Man and as such, is the 5th female trainer in the last 7 years to send out a North America Cup winner. Before this year, it was Joann Looney-King with Wakizashi Hanover (2015), Casie Coleman and Betting Line (2016), Nancy Johansson with Captain Crunch (2019) and Nancy Takter last year with Tall Dark Stranger.

Winning a \$1 million purse is a long way from the little tracks in Saskatchewan where Kathy grew up.

"My mom and dad owned racehorses," she says. "I have pictures on the wall in our living room from 1949 when my grandfather won a race in 2:29. We were racing on fair tracks and at Assiniboia Downs, Moose Jaw, Regina and Saskatoon, so I grew up in it."

Not surprisingly, Nikki met Paul through harness racing. He's the son of Brent Davies, who piled up 1922 wins as a driver. Also not too unusual, both ladies love the sport for similar reasons.

"It's first and foremost the horses," says Nikki. "They're so likeable. Nothing fills your day more than getting to spend it with them. They all have such great personalities and it's so rewarding when you see all that hard work come to fruition on the track."

As for Mom...

"I was always horse crazy," says Kathy. "When I was a kid, I memorized the first page to Black Beauty. I just loved horses so much. I was amazed when I found out that they would just pay you to look after horses. I just thought I should be able to do it for free."

Quarter Horse
Owner of the
Month:
**Amanda
McCormack**



It has always been about the horses for Amanda McCormack. Now 32, she can't remember when she wasn't involved with the animals.

"I started taking riding lessons when I was six," she says. "I did a bit of showing, mostly English, and then I quit for awhile because of college. And then, I started working for trainer Greg Watson and when I really got back into it, I discovered it was my thing."

McCormack worked as a groom and pony rider and then as an assistant trainer, and then apparently needed a shove from the trainer to become an owner.

"It was basically when Greg told me that I needed to get into it more," she says. "So he helped me buy my first horse, and then after a year of owning my first horse, he told me that I needed to get into the breeding. He helped me get a broodmare and now I'm up to four broodmares."

McCormack's first quarter horse was Gch Byall Means Luvy. Now 17, the gelding ran from 2006 to 2011. He won just twice in 37 starts but picked up a lot of cheques with 11 seconds and 6 thirds. His last win, and probably his best race, came on June 21, 2011, when he sprinted away from 9 others in a 330-yard dash at Ajax Downs. Under rider Ramon Dominguez, Gch Byall Means Luvy won by a length in 17.010 seconds, which earned him an 86 speed index.

"My first mare is Rambling Strawfly," McCormack says. "She's semi-retired now, but she produced my first foal, which was Itsallaboutrambling, and then Not Whistling Dixie, a mare that I'm racing right now."

Itsallaboutrambling passed away 3 years ago, but through a 5-year racing career, earned \$32,093. Itsallaboutrambling won 4 of 23 starts and earned his best speed index of 90 with a narrow victory on September 18, 2017. That race was at 330 yards for a purse of \$16,000, and urged on by Tony Phillips, Itsallaboutrambling prevailed by a head in 17.030.

Not Whistling Dixie is one of 3 horses that McCormack is actively racing this year. With 5 wins from 21 starts and earnings of \$77,776, this 6-year-old mare has been the most productive in the barn. Through the end of September, she was winless in 2020, but had hit the board in 3 of her 5 starts.

"Two years ago, she was tied for the QROOI distance champion," says McCormack. "My plan is to breed her next year."

McCormack identifies the 4-year-old gelding, Red Wagon Dust as the sharpest horse in her barn.



Amanda McCormack and her broodmare, Ramblin Strawfly

"We had a little bit of a rocky start to this year, but he's got two wins this year."

On August 18, Red Wagon Dust showed his dust to 6 others, winning at 350 yards in a speed index race and getting an 83 rating for his work under Tony Phillips. Three weeks later, at the shorter distance of 250 yards, Red Wagon Dust won a 5-horse photo by a neck in 13.687, for which he earned a 78 speed figure.

"Gary McNicholl bred him, and I bought him as an unstarted two-year-old for \$3,500," says McCormack. So far, Red Wagon Dust has earned \$30,408.

The third racehorse in McCormack's barn has the unusual name of Bodacious Tataz. Not to reveal our own arrested development, we needed to know the origin of that name.

"Her sire is Bodacious Jess," says McCormack. "And one of my friends was drinking with her aunt and they were talking about how hilarious it would be to name a horse Bodacious Tataz. I decided I liked the name, so we did it. I didn't think it would be approved, but it was. She's just a 2-year-old filly, just getting the lay of the land."

McCormack is married, with a 4-year-old son, Gunner. "He keeps me busy," she says. "It's kind of nice right now because he started school, so it frees up my days now."

Of the three breeds of horses that race in Ontario, it's obvious that quarter horse racing is where McCormack

should be.

"I just I love the excitement of it," she says. "I've always loved quarter horses and when I found out you could race them, that was even better. I love the fast races. When I go to the Thoroughbred or Standardbred races, I'm bored because all the races are so long."

You can see her point. A 6-furlong thoroughbred race can take 1:10.

"That feels like forever," she laughs. "I guess I'm into instant gratification."

When asked to cite her most thrilling moment in quarter horse racing, McCormack takes us back to October 26, 2015.

"That was my biggest moment because it was my first training win," she says.

It was a 300-yard speed index race for a purse of \$9,600. Brian Bell was aboard Itsallaboutrambling, and he delivered the then 3-year-old gelding to victory by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a length.

For McCormack, the horses are obviously the most important element of her endeavours. But she's grateful for the human relationships she's forging at the track as well.

"It was always great to be with Greg Watson before he retired," she says. "And I really enjoy being around Chantelle Bourgeois. She's very funny. I get a kick out of her."



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#84 August 30:

There was a huge Sunday card at Woodbine – 4 Stakes races, all for horses that went through the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society sales. And this came the day after Mohawk presented 7 Stakes races. All these in this podcast. Host **Peter Gross** speaks with **Mitchell Kursner**, who didn't really think he was breeding a Queen's Plate horse when he took his mare, Duchess Dancer to Bodemeister. We also have trainer **Julia Carey**, who inherited **Safe Conduct** for the Plate weekend when the horse's trainer couldn't make it. It was **Essential Quality** winning the Travers Stakes Saratoga and have you ever seen a horse try to bite a rival in a race? It happened during the stretch run of a \$600,000 Stakes race, also at Saratoga. And when we heard that **Tony Dandeo**, an 86 year-old harness driver, won a race at Freehold, we got the race and his comments.

#85 September 6:

This podcast features millions of dollars of Stakes races Friday and Saturday at Mohawk. We find out from trainer **Phil Serpe** why Queen's Plate Champion **Safe Conduct** won't run in the Prince of Wales. There's a great conversation with jockey **Isabelle Wenc**. She's beaten the odds just to be a professional rider and most of her winners beat the odds as well. Her agent **Alan Raymond** tells us about her 'impeccable' work out routines. **Garnet Barnsdale** was at Clinton Raceway on Sunday. He saw **Trevor Henry** win the Drivers' Charity Challenge and he also saw driver **Natasha Day** make history. Ever hear of a jockey getting punished for not using his whip enough? It happened in Singapore. And at The Meadowlands Friday night, Super Heroes and Villains battled for supremacy.

#86 September 13:

The favourites were upset in the **\$1Million Pepsi North America Cup** at Mohawk and the back story of the winner is wonderful. This podcast has a monster package of Stakes races from Mohawk and a few more of the thoroughbreds from Woodbine. Fort Erie's **Frank Salive** handicaps the Prince of Wales Stakes and irrepressible trainer, **Darryl Ezra**, explains why his wild longshot just might win. **Chantal Sutherland** makes this podcast again, thanks to her 3 wins last Thursday. We've got the weekly wrap-up from Ajax Downs, a chat with 87 year-old **Bill Megens**, who we think is the oldest person ever to win a harness race in Canada, and a special guest appearance by **Supertramp**.

#87 September 20:

Has horse racing in Ontario ever looked better? It was a week full of huge Stakes races – **The Pattison International** and the **Ricoh Mile** at Woodbine, the **Canadian Trotting Classic** and the **Elegant Image** among a buffet of Stakes races at Mohawk and the **\$400,000 Prince of Wales Stakes** at Fort Erie. **Kevin Attard** and **Gary Boulanger** talk about winning the second jewel of the Triple Crown with **Haddassah**. We have **Kathy Cecchin**, the trainer of North America Cup champion **Desperate Man** and Kathy's daughter **Nikki Davies** talking about their amazing win. Included in this podcast is a wrap of the weekly card at Ajax Downs, an insane sequence that produced two dead heats within 25 minutes on Racing Night Live and two consecutive races at Monticello Raceway that only **Trump's** base could love. All of this plus **Elvis** and **Prince**.

#88 September 27:

The richest trot of the year in Canada – the Mohawk Million – is featured in this week's podcast, along with several other harness racing and thoroughbred Stakes races. Leading jockey **Kazushi Kimura** came out of the weekend with a 25 race lead on **Emma-Jayne Wilson**. We talk with him and his agent **Jordan Miller**. What was it like for **Brandon Greer** to win the Ricoh Woodbine Mile with a horse he bred, owns and trains? We have the sensational finish to the Littler Brown Jug in Delaware, Ohio, and there was Canadian content in the Jugette. And they have right to be furious - bettors at Mohawk last week were cheated out of payoffs that they deserved.

Little Brown Jug, 2021

The 76th Little Brown Jug at the Delaware Fairgrounds had a sensational finish and, as the 20th race on the card on September 23, it topped an amazing week for trainer Ron Burke. The winners of the two elimination heats were allowed to choose the two inside post positions for the \$397,080 final. Lous Perlman, driven by Yannick Gingras powered home in the stretch to win the first elimination in 1:54, and it was Perfect Sting taking down the second heat for David Miller, a head better than a determined I'll Drink To That (Tim Tetrick). The time for that was 1:54.1. Even though Perfect Sting's race was a tick slower than Lous Perlman, it was Perfect Sting bet down to 3-5 in the final, while Lous Perlman went postward at 8-5.

In the final, Perfect Sting assumed the lead to the quarter in :28.1 as the field followed in post position order. Lous Perlman was certainly getting a comfortable trip in



Little Brown Jug week.

"I would have rather been on the front, but that's just the way that the cards were dealt," said Gingras after the race. "I wasn't going to get locked in. I wasn't so keen about pulling the deuce that early, but he seemed pretty confident, so I went with his gut feeling. All the credit goes to the Burke Brigade – they've had him on his toes for over a month now and I'm looking forward to the rest of the year with him."

Lous Perlman is trained and part-owned by Ron Burke. The other owners are Weaver Buscemi, Elizabeth Novak and Howard Taylor. The 76th Little Brown Jug winner paid \$5.20. As for Burke winning 13 times during the week at the Delaware Fairgrounds:



2nd. It was Perfect Sting in charge to the half in :57.2 and to three-quarters in 1:25.1. As the field turned for home, Lous Perlman began to threaten outside Perfect Sting and Whichwaytothebeach (Andrew McCarthy) was forced three-wide. In the stretch, the two favourites started to pull away, both refusing to yield. Track announcer Roger Houston was unable to call a winner at the wire, as both horses appeared to find the line simultaneously. The photo gave the victory to Lous Perlman by a nose. With that, Burke ended up with a record 13 training wins during



"Yeah, but I probably lost 15 races too, so I doubt anybody else has done that either," said Burke. "I raced a lot and I expect to win some, but it's been a magical week, you know, it's just incredible. I'm so proud of this horse, it's a homebred – our sire, our mare. We get a lot of people telling us that we're gonna go broke breeding to Sweet Lou. I don't think it's going to happen. I'm really happy and I'm proud of the guys."

This was Lous Perlman's 5th straight win and improved his record to 12 wins in 25 races with over \$700,000 earned. The second-place finish for Perfect Sting means that through 22 races, that one has never missed the board. Perfect Sting earned \$66,180 for winning his elim and \$97,284 for his nasal defeat. His career earnings are now \$1,402,697.

The day before, Scarlett Hanover, a horse with significant Canadian connections, won the Juette, the fillies' version of the Little Brown Jug. Driver Tim Tetrick steered Scarlett Hanover first up in the opening elimination heat and she romped home unchallenged at 3-2. The second elimination was won by Test of Faith and David Miller and the bettors weren't fooled there – Test of Faith paid \$2.60.

In the final, Scarlett Hanover got cover down the backstretch courtesy of a first-up Test of Faith and that made a huge difference. Scarlett Hanover rocketed past a tiring Test of Faith to win comfortably in 1:56. Like the Jug winner, Scarlett Hanover is trained by Ron Burke, who shares the filly with other Americans, but this filly has raced mostly in Ontario. Her past performance record shows her pacing 13 times at Woodbine, 4 times at Grand River, as well as visits to Georgian Downs and Rideau Carlton. When Scarlett Hanover races in Ontario, she is handled by Ed and Ashleigh Hensley.

The Juette win by Scarlett Hanover gave Tetrick 5 wins on the 20-race card. Scarlett Hanover paid \$7.80.

Stupid Jockey Tricks

The question had to be, "What was he thinking?"



On September 3rd, a horse with the somewhat ironic name Strongerthanuknow won the 7th race at Monmouth Park. It was an allowance race at 5 furlongs on the turf with an attractive purse of \$57,500. The winning jockey was Tomas Mejia. Strongerthanuknow paid \$11 after winning by a neck. But as Mejia was pulling up the 4-year-old filly in the backstretch, a track photographer snapped an image of the jockey with some very disturbing evidence. Mejia's left hand is grasping the reins

with two fingers, and you can clearly see something protruding beneath his palm. It's a device with two prongs, known on the racetrack as a buzzer or battery or machine.

Monmouth Park stewards reacted quickly after viewing the picture. They removed Mejia from the rest of his mounts that day and instructed him to attend a hearing. Based on the ruling that emerged from that hearing, Mejia didn't have much of an explanation. In part, the ruling stated:

Upon entering the winner's circle and prior to dismounting from the horse, Strongerthanuknow, Tomas Mejia was in possession of a prohibited electrical device.

Having considered the photographic evidence presented to the Board of Stewards, Tomas Mejia is hereby suspended for a period of ten years and fined the sum of \$5,000. During the period of suspension, Mr. Mejia is hereby denied access to all grounds that are under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Racing Commission for any and all purposes.

What makes this even more disturbing is the theory that jockeys don't use buzzers in a race unless that have already determined that it's effective during a training run. When used for the first time on an amped up thoroughbred, the horse can react in a number of dangerous ways – by bolting or veering

in and impeding other horses or panicking and bucking the jockey. Speculation is that Strongerthanuknow was probably subjected to an electrical charge more than once.

Strongerthanuknow was trained by Jorge Duarte Jr. for owner Colts Neck Stables. These are prominent connections in the industry. Mejia is not a long-time performer – 2021 was just his 3rd year of riding. He does have a unique record on his resumé. On September 26, 2020, Mejia rode Andrez Conquist, a 3-year-old colt to a shocking win in a \$20,000 maiden race. Andrez Conquist, who never hit the board in any of his other 16 starts, went off at 158-1 and paid \$319.80, the highest win price in the history of Monmouth Park.

The Mejia banishment is just another dark chapter for this racetrack. Monmouth Park was home to trainer Jorge Navarro, who recently copped a guilty plea in Federal Court for juicing horses. Another Monmouth Park regular, Jason Servis is facing similar charges.

And what do you do if you bet the favourite, Mumbai, who at 4-5, finished 2nd to Strongerthanuknow in that race? You were clearly cheated because the winning horse was zapped in the stretch. The bad news is, there is little recourse. The race was declared official, and good luck suing the jockey.

Isabelle Wenc Defies the Odds



On August 28, Isabelle Wenc rode first timer Twisted Path to an emphatic win at a mile and a 16th at Woodbine. Twisted Path, a 3-year-old filly, trained by Saul McHugh, paid \$22.10. Earlier in August, Wenc delivered Call Her Joey for trainer Zeljko Krcmar and that one produced a \$24.90 win ticket. That was Wenc's second win with Call Her Joey –the 5-year-old mare paid \$31.80 in June after winning at 6 ½ furlongs.

Not being part of the handful of jockeys who get pretty well all the live horses, Wenc has to struggle to get on a thoroughbred that can run faster than the rest. When she wins, she does so on an animal that, like her, is underappreciated by the players. But beating the odds is what Isabelle Wenc does. Even on the first day of her life, her departure from the starting gate was not ideal.

"When I was born, I was three months premature," she says. "So I was like barely two pounds. I had 6 toes on each foot and had to have surgery as a baby. I had to have my legs braced and casted and doctors always told my parents that I probably wouldn't be able to do sports or anything like that. My parents have always been the type of people that wouldn't let you use anything as an excuse. So my mom put me in dance. I did ballet my whole life. I did everything that the doctors said I couldn't do. I even wrestled in high school."

Wenc began "wrestling" pent-up thoroughbreds at (now defunct) Marquis Downs in Saskatoon. She was 19 when her first riding assignments came in August of 2014. She lost her first 29 races before winning on a 3-year-old colt called Misty's Last Storm, who got up by nose in the remarkably slow time of 1:17.15 for 6 furlongs. Misty's Last Storm, to continue our story line, was the longest shot in the field of 9, paying \$42.20 to win.

Wenc rode in Saskatoon and at Northlands Park in Edmonton until late summer of 2017, at which point she ventured east. Her 3rd assignment at Woodbine was on a 4-year-old filly, that, needless to say, was a longshot. She won the mile and a 16th race by almost 2 lengths.

"I was still a bug at the time," she says. "The horse was Tornado Cat for Shelly Fitzgerald, and that also happened

to be Kazushi Kimura's first winner as well."

Tornado Cat paid \$34.70 when Wenc won. Maybe we should have kept betting that one. When Kimura broke through on June 9, 2018, Tornado Cat paid \$142.10.

Unfortunately, Wenc's career has been interrupted by injury.

"I was anticipating coming to Woodbine in 2016 while I still had the bug and I was actually kind of on a little bit of a roll in Alberta," she says. "I believe it was on September 9th that I had a morning training accident. My horse went down with me, and I ended up breaking four vertebrae in my back and having a pretty bad concussion. The doctors told me I would never ride a horse again."

Apparently, the doctors need to stop telling Wenc what she can't do.

"Being that I am stubborn," she says with emphasis, "I was in a back brace for about four months. And then that February, I went to B.C. with a few trainers that sent horses from Alberta to a training centre, and I galloped all February and got fit again, and came back and I won my first race back in Alberta."

The 3-year-old filly's name was Mislemonattraction, and Wenc got her to win by a head in a 3 ½ furlong dash for a purse of \$11,500. The win ticket was worth \$19.10.

There was a 2nd calamity that certainly slowed down her progress in Ontario.

"I ended up getting hurt at Fort Erie in October 2017," she says. "I walked to the paramedics' shack and when I tried to take my flak jacket off, I could feel my collarbone sticking out through my shoulder. I was like, 'Guys, I think my collarbone is broken.'"

And if bad things do happen in threes, Wenc is evidence of that.

"I did a lot of rehab throughout that whole winter," she continues. "I came back again. I worked my butt off during the spring, getting on probably 15 horses a day for all sorts of different trainers. Actually, opening day of the Woodbine meet that year, I had an accident in the morning, and I rode that afternoon thinking I was fine. I rode 2 and even though I felt some pain, I was still in denial. In fact, it turned out I needed a called from Robbie King, the Jockeys Benefit President, telling me to go to the hospital, because the clocker had told him he was surprised I was riding after what happened that morning. That time, I had fractured my left humerus bone."

Ok, enough with the carnage. Wenc's agent, Alan Raymond is blown away by his jockey's determination.

"She's a very hard-working, very underrate rider," says Raymond. "Her work ethic is impeccable. She's in the gym 5 days a week. She works on the equicizer. She's striving to do much better than the bottom quarter of the jocks. I've been an agent for 30 years. I had Stevie Bahen for 17 years, I had David Clark for 10, I had Justin Stein. I have had a lot of young bugs, but Isabelle is the hardest working jock of any that I have had. You can quote me on that."

We just did. Raymond has a plan to get Wenc on a more

productive course.

"She needs to ride more horses," he says. "She needs to be seen more. So we'll be going to Fort Erie."

Let's get back to Twisted Path, not only a winning racehorse, but the potential title of Isabelle Wenc's life story. This was a case of her hard work in the morning paying off in the afternoon. Trainer Saul McHugh liked what he saw.

"I guess he saw me galloping horses and one day on the rail, he told me 'I'm going to find you one,'" says Wenc. "Then, this year, he called my agent and said, 'I've got one who is hard to get along with, and I think she's perfect for Isabelle.'"

The bettors see a longshot win and shrug their shoulders, turn a page in the racing form and move on. But a victory that takes 1:49 at a mile and a 16th can be many hours in the making.

"I got on her in the mornings and then it was time for her to get her gate card," says Wenc. "We just worked together for probably about a month and half getting her ready. And then the last time I worked her before she ran, I was so confident in her. It was like a light went off in her head and she just did everything perfect."

With just 3 wins by the end of August, Wenc certainly enjoys every moment of her victories, but the Twisted Path race was especially thrilling.

"This one was emotional because my dad was up here, visiting from Saskatchewan," she says. "So he was invited into the winner's circle. Nobody in my family has anything to do with horses, so they kind of look at me like I'm insane. But my dad's my biggest fan ever. You can always hear him screaming on the replays. Getting him in the picture was really special to me."

Wenc relies on the thoughtfulness of trainers to get on good horses.

"Bob Tiller has given me some of the best horses I've ridden," she says. "I gallop for him in the mornings and in return he's graciously given me some live horses such as Miss Savvy and Checkerboard Floor whom I've had some success with."

Two years ago, Wenc won with Miss Savvy in a \$72,500 allowance race at 6 furlongs on the grass. No surprise here – Miss Savvy paid \$25.80. And last November, she delivered Checkerboard Floor for Tiller, winning a \$40,000 claim race 5 furlongs by a nose. The \$6.80 win price only tells us that good trainers, like Tiller, trust Wenc on a likely horse.

Into September, Wenc's 3 wins from 29 rides showed that her horses had earned \$108,815. Calculate that a rider gets 10% of that, minus a share for the agent and the valet and it's obvious, she won't be buying her yacht this year. But she loves what she does and in her line of work, there's always the dream.

"All it takes is one horse to change everything," she says pleasantly. "When I do get horses in the afternoon, whether it's at Woodbine or Fort Erie, I just try to make the most of the opportunities and make a good impression. And just wait until I get that one great horse."

ODDITIES & ENTITIES

Firenze Fire ‘savaging’ Yaopon in the Forego Stakes at Saratoga



Ouch!

It was the 7 furlong Grade I Forego Stakes at Saratoga on August 28 and it was not a foregone conclusion that nothing bizarre would occur in the stretch. With about a 16th of a mile to go, the 2-1 favourite, Yaupon (Ricardo Santana), was maintaining a very short lead over Firenze Fire (Jose Ortiz). Perhaps sensing he was a defeated horse, Firenze Fire turned his head and started biting the head of Yaupon. A desperate jockey Ortiz tried repeatedly to yank Firenze Fire away, but the hungry horse got in several chomps before being pulled. Yaupon survived the attack and won the race, and because the offending horse finished second, there was no need for an objection or a steward’s ruling. In horse racing terms, when one animal bites another, it’s called savaging.

Hay! That’s Ademar Santos with Simcoe Stakes winner Ironstone



Jockey Banned Two Years for Not Trying

With much discussion and debate over the use of the whip in North America, we may have stumbled upon a circumstance from the other side of the world where a jockey has been severely punished, in part because he *didn’t* use his whip enough.

The race was on August 22 at the Kranji Racecourse in Singapore, a field of 12 going 1200 metres on Polytrack for a purse of €20,000 (\$29,800 Canadian). Joseph See was on a horse called Smoke And Mirrors, and after a 5th place finish in which the horse was about 2 lengths from the winner, the judges took a very close look at the replay and did not like what they saw.

It was determined that the jockey did not take “all reasonable and permissible measures throughout the race to ensure that Smoke And Mirrors was given full opportunity of winning or of obtaining the best possible placing.”

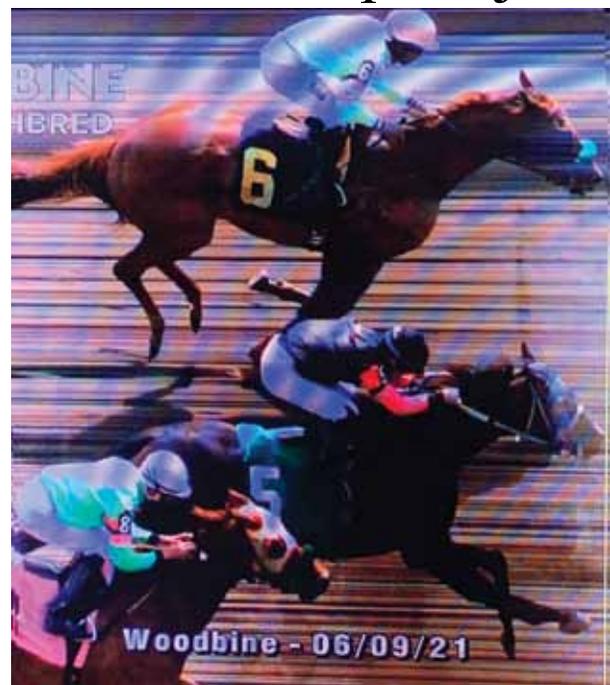
Specifically, the judges observed that from the 500m mark until the 400m mark, See failed to shift outwards from behind a horse in front to give his horse an opportunity to find a clear path. Then, from the 400m mark to the 200m mark, See again did not shift outwards when it was safe to do so and could have managed that to improve his horse’s position. The judges also concluded that from the 400m mark to the finish line, See did not apply sufficient vigour or determination as the bettors had a right to expect. The judges felt that See, on several occasions, made motions with the whip, but did not contact the horse.

When imposing the penalty on Joseph See, the judges took into consideration the jockey’s personal circumstances and his poor disciplinary record.

The result of the hearing into this race was that Joseph See was disqualified from riding for 2 years and fined \$50,000.

Although previous incidents appear to have mitigated against See in this hearing, he was essentially punished for *not* using his whip.

He can keep his job



How good is Woodbine’s race caller Robert Geller? Here’s how good. Look at the photo finish for 2nd in race 2 on September 6. The inside horse, #6 is Pugin, the outside horse, #5 is Hell Bent. If you look very closely, you will see that Hell Bent (Sahin Civaci) has his nose on the wire about the width of your baby finger ahead of Pugin (Tony Maragh).

While calling the race, Geller declared,

“Torah’s Blessing by a length wins it. It’s close for second, It looks like Hell Bent narrowly from Pugin.”

Give Geller his props. He was able to see the difference of less than an inch between thoroughbreds thrusting their heads at the wire.