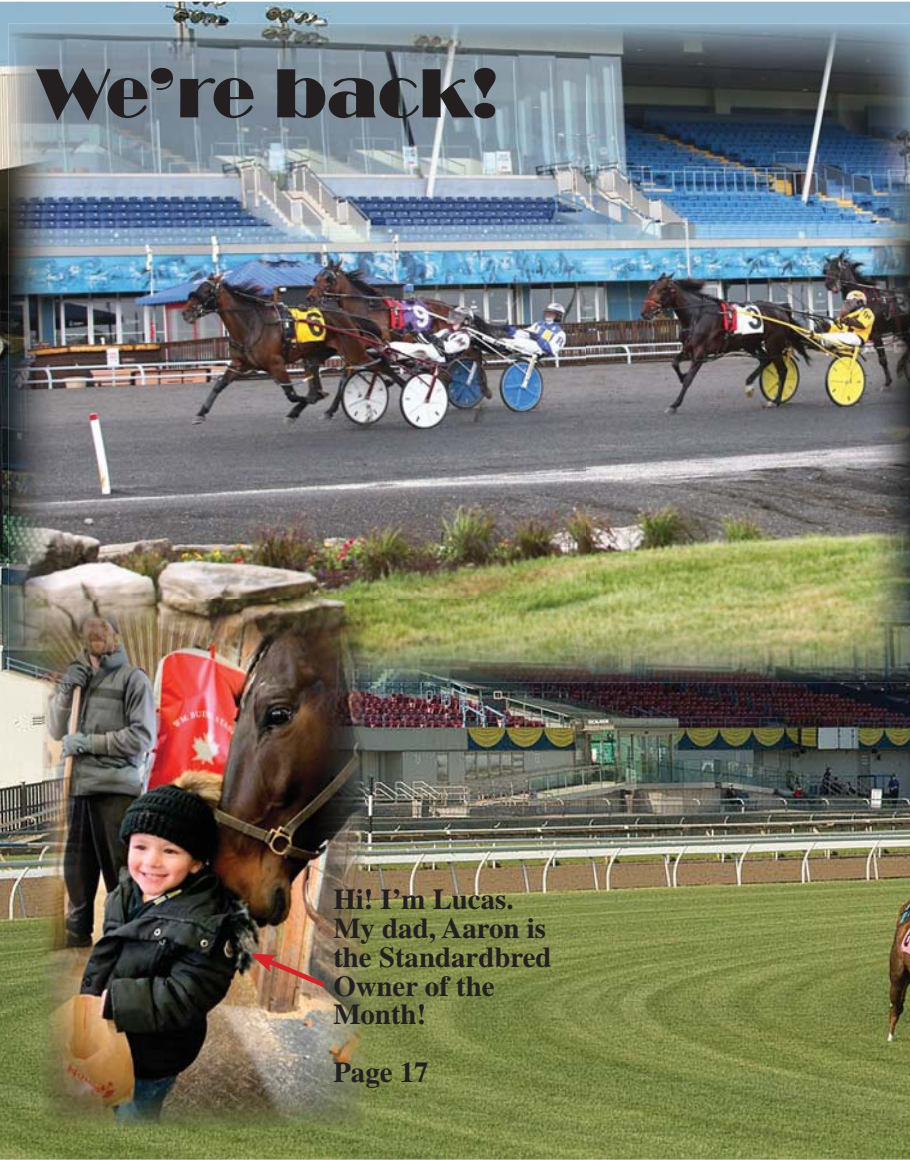


DOWN THE STRETCH

CANADA'S MOST INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING HORSE RACING NEWSPAPER

We're back!

The 152nd Belmont Page 5
Down The Stretch Podcasts
Page 8



Hi! I'm Lucas.
My dad, Aaron is
the Standardbred
Owner of the
Month!

Page 17



...and we're back!

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**It was a wonderful night at the
(virtual) Sovereign Awards for
Sam Son Farm:**

Outstanding Breeder



Outstanding Owner



**Desert Ride Outstanding
Three Year-Old Female**



**El Tormenta Outstanding
Male Turf Horse**



**Sam-Son Farm wishes to thank Gail Cox, Malcolm Pierce,
Neil Howard and Graham Motion and all of their staff for
making 2019 a very special year for us.**



THE EDITOR WEIGHTS IN



Are we having fun yet?

We had several weeks where almost every racetrack in the western hemisphere was closed down, but now HPI has a full board, and the underappreciated horse player now has options. That's not going to get this degenerate to Saratoga this summer which means a 30 year tradition will have a glaring gap in its history.

Strangely, horse racing may have reaped a significant benefit in this pandemic. The sport has shown that it can be conducted safely, provide entertainment, and keep the purse money churning through the industry. With no baseball, football, basketball, soccer, or hockey, the desperate sports fan turns his lonely head to horse racing. TSN, bereft of major league conflicts to present, struck a 13-week deal with Woodbine to present two hours of live racing every Thursday. Clearly there's some bright minds

at work here as we document on page 11.

We love interviewing trainer Bob Tiller. The guy has been around forever and he's goofy, down to earth, and still rocking in the free world as he veers into the eighth decade of his life. On June 19, Tiller sent out the 2,000th winner of his career. Find that on page 4.

Garnet Barnsdale has been raving about Hanover Raceway. On page 24 he tells us how that little track is going young and creative, and exploring ways of selling the game that many others might be ignoring.

Keeping with this theme, we have another submission from Ric Chapman. Chapman was a player in the Australian horse racing scene and he keeps making the same point that his native country has a population of around 25 million, yet has about 360 registered racetracks, and at least 5,500 off-track shops. On page 22, Chapman pitches some more ideas to make horse racing in this

jurisdiction more fan friendly.

The Belmont went on June 20. For those who like dramatic change, this fit the bill. The third leg of the U.S. Triple Crown batted leadoff and was run at the very untraditional distance of a mile and an eighth. No doubt about the winner as you will read on page 5.

Thirteen years ago when **Down The Stretch** burst enthusiastically out of the metaphorical starting gate, David Willmot, then the CEO of Woodbine, made the point that it is the owners who make the greatest gamble in horse racing. Willmot suggested that if **Down The Stretch** were to profile owners in every issue, Woodbine would be pleased to sponsor such an initiative. Since then, we have sculpted more than 100 thoroughbred and 100 standardbred Owners of the Month. Recently, Bob Broadstock of the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario asked, "Where's the props for us?" To which I responded, "Check our next issue!" And on page 18, Craig Spada is our first quarter horse Owner of the Month. You will also find, on page 16, the story on Leonard Zenith, the thoroughbred Owner of the Month and on page 17, our standardbred Owner of the Month, Aaron Waxman, whose horse, Saskatoon, won the first race when Mohawk resumed action.

It was a pleasure meeting English jockey, Darryll Holland. Agent Mike Luider hooked up with the veteran who will be riding full-time at Woodbine. That story is on page 13, and just to punch the account up, Holland won his first race on opening day.

Brilliant horse player Tommy Massis may still be pinching himself to determine if it really happened. On April 29, he hit a Six Up bet on Hong Kong racing that was worth over \$1 million. We have that amazing tale on page 12.

When the pandemic closed down most racetracks, Fonner Park, a modest operation in Grand Island Nebraska, stayed open. Two great things happened: their handle erupted from an average of \$200,000 a card to over \$3 million a day, and the gamble also proved that horse racing could be conducted safely without the spread of a virus. Read how they did it on page 19.

We have a lovely story on page 21. Shana Lopez is a trainer who never met a horse she didn't love. When she found out her favourite horse was hours away from slaughter, she went into overdrive and rescued him. Now Chocolateforlunch is safe and adored.

And more neat stuff in this issue – Ryan Clements (page 20) talks about Catch Driver, the harness racing app that puts you in the sulky. Katie Larsen (page 7) updates the status of Southern Belle Thoroughbreds, a home for retired race horses. There's our cartoon on page 9 and, once again, we have filled a whole page 26 with our Oddities and Entities, a wide-ranging variety of silly, weird, and wonderful things that can only happen in the sport of horse racing.

(By the way, if you're reading this on-line and wondering why your subscription hasn't been coming... since we can't get into the tracks and fill the bins, we're not publishing hard copy. If you are a subscriber, or know one, I promise that when we get back to slapping ink on paper, your paid subscription will be appropriately extended.)

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A Souper Milestone for Bob Tiller

By Chris Lomon



Michael Burns Photo

The seventh race at Woodbine on June 19 asked six maidens to go 7 furlongs for a purse of \$64,300 and Rafael Hernandez took the heavy favourite Have a Souper Day right to the front and never looked back. Have a Souper Day crushed by almost 2 lengths, and though it was the gelding's first career win, it was #2,000 for trainer Robert Tiller.

Tiller launched his horse racing career over 54 years ago and is still very much at the top of his game, as meticulous and motivated as he has ever been.

He's also busy.

When the 2020 Woodbine thoroughbred campaign finally got underway, Tiller had 45 horses in his barn as he was readying his charges for what he hopes will be another productive year at the Toronto oval.

And while his main focus is mapping out winning strategies for each horse in Barn 36 on the Woodbine backstretch, Tiller found a few moments to reflect on a career that spans six decades.

At 15, Tiller began his life in horse racing, walking hots. His training career started in 1972. When he won 21 races from 89 starts as a rookie, others quickly took notice.

The early success earned him accolades as well as a nickname.

"They called me 'Wonder Boy' for a while," said Tiller, who won his first race with Royal Greek Ship. "And then I became 'Wonder-something else.'"

In 1975, his Near the High Sea, a 53-1 longshot in the Queen's Plate, finished second behind favourite and future Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame inductee, L'Enjoleur.

If there were questions about Tiller's odds to be a long-term success story, he answered them with consistent trips to winners circle year after year. He's won 60 or more races on eight occasions, and was Woodbine's leading trainer in 1994, 1997, 2001, and 2003, the year his horses earned just over \$4 million.

Initially known for his astute claiming abilities, Tiller, over time, developed an eye for seeking out and acquiring inexpensive yearlings, and coaching them to become top talents.

His Sovereign Award winners include Rare Friends, a multiple Stakes winner and top two-year-old colt in 2001; Simply Lovely, the top two-year-old filly of 2004; and Win City, Horse of the Year in 2001 and champion three-year-old colt with triumphs in the Prince of Wales, Queenston, Marine, Plate Trial, Col. McLaughlin Stakes, and Autumn Handicap.

Other notable Tiller trainees include Domasca Dan, Elated Guy, Talk Back, Brass in Pocket, Winter Garden, Forever Grand, Twisted Wit, Cheap Talk, Top Ten List, Are You Serious, Spread The News, Midnight Shadow, Dancer's Bajan, and Dave The Knave, who delivered him his 100th career Stakes victory.

Tiller is a three-time Sovereign Award winner himself, earning top trainer recognition in 2001, 2003, and 2004.

Consistency has been the hallmark of a highlight-laden career that also includes induction into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 2008.

A big reason behind his many accomplishments has been, in Tiller's own words, attention to the small details. It's an approach he put into practice early in his career.

"Lou [trainer, Cavalaris], he was a very good horseman, probably one of the greatest trainers we've had here, in my opinion, and he liked me. He told me, 'Everybody trains horses, but it's a game of details... that's the difference.'"

I tried not to forget that over the 54 years I've been here."

Now 70, Tiller isn't quite ready to call it a day.

"Most people my age are enjoying their retirement, or they're in a rocking chair. Or maybe they aren't enjoying their retirement at all. But I'm still here, and I have a lot of horses to take care of. I guess they won't take me alive. I've been lucky in a lot of ways. I've met a lot of great people, had a lot of great years, had a lot of great owners, and a lot of great horses."

Pink Lloyd, an Ontario-bred son of Old Forester, is no doubt the top horse Tiller has campaigned. Owned by Entourage Stable, the chestnut has won 22 of 27 starts. In 2017, the gelding, undefeated in eight starts, delivered his connections three Sovereign Awards, including Canadian Horse of the Year honours. In 2018, he extended his win streak to 11 with victories in the Jacques Cartier, New Providence, and Achievement Stakes. At season's end, he was named Canada's champion sprinter.

In May, at the virtual Sovereign Awards, Pink Lloyd was voted top male sprinter for the third straight year. Unbeaten in six Stakes starts in 2019, he also won his second Sovereign as champion older male main-track runner.

"I've had a lot of great horses over the years, and won some really nice races. Pink Lloyd is the gem of all gems. He's eight years old, and he's just like me... he's getting old. I think he's really doing well right now. This will probably be his last year. As they say, all good things must come to an end. As long as he's okay, he's going to go to LongRun [Thoroughbred Retirement Society], and live his life there. But we're not looking at that right now. He's doing great. He's had little injuries here and there, and then you think it's all over, but he keeps bouncing back. He has a big spot in my heart. I absolutely love him and I'll never forget him. He's an icon. I'm not a guy who is left speechless, but he's done that for me."

Tiller is proud that a majority of his victories occurred at his home track.

"It's a great accomplishment because 95 per cent of the wins have come at Woodbine. I didn't go year-round, maybe just a few in the early days. I've won races at Saratoga, I've won races at Aqueduct, and I've won races at Belmont. Those 2,000 wins have been done over many years, but only racing on the average of nine or 10 months out of the year. And it's right here at Woodbine. I'm proud of that. It's wonderful."

Tom Lottridge has been Tiller's assistant trainer for 35 years.

"Bob is successful because he's hands-on, and he knows all his horses, and every horse in detail," said Lottridge. "The horses talk to him – it's amazing. It's an honour to know him. I've been with him a long time and he still amazes me."

The last word goes to Tiller.

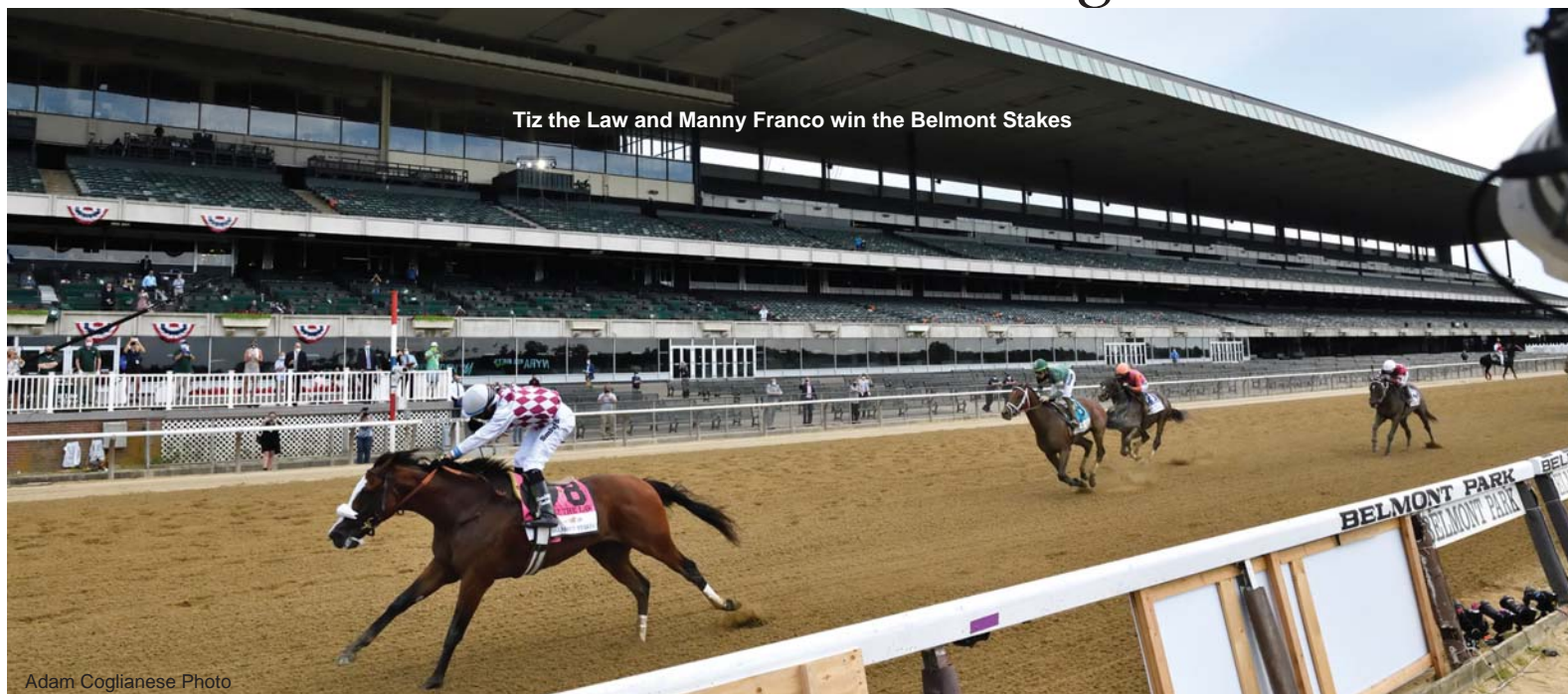
"I've always been honest with my owners and the regulators. I've always been good to my staff, which is very important to me. I've had very loyal people and I've been loyal to them. At the end of the day, I have no regrets. My career, it will come to a bit of a simmer over the next few years. But we'll just see how it goes."

Have a Souper Day, now just 1,999 wins behind his trainer, paid \$2.90 to win



Bob Tiller and Pink Lloyd

Tiz the Law ran an *arresting* Belmont



Adam Coglianese Photo

It was the fastest Belmont of all time, conducted in front of the smallest crowd of all time. Two gags in one sentence - please excuse - these are different days.

Tiz the Law, bet down to 4-5, looked magnificent as he punished nine rivals with an awesome athletic performance, winning the 152nd Belmont Stakes, run for the first time at 1 1/8th miles and, on June 20, for the first time as the opening leg of the Triple Crown.

Jockey Manny Franco orchestrated a perfect journey for the bay colt. The pair was third at the quarter as Tap It to Win (John Velazquez) had a one length lead over Fore Left (José Ortiz). Tap It to Win got the field to the half in a snappy :46.16 and by hitting the 3/4 mark in 1:09.94, started to wilt badly. As they came into the stretch, Tiz the Law struck with authority, sweeping to the front, and seemingly in the blink of an eye, opening up a 4 length lead. There was no challenge down the lane and, with a sharp final quarter of 12.07, Tiz the Law was all alone by 3 3/4 lengths at the wire in 1:46.53, just over a second off the track record and the fastest 1 1/8th mile ever run in the Belmont Stakes (also, the only 1 1/8th mile Belmont).

Dr. Post (Irad Ortiz) was second and Max Player (Joel Rosario) was third.

This was Tiz the Law's fifth win in 6 starts. He is trained by 82 year-old Barclay Tagg and his owners are the Sackatoga Stable who made a lot of noise back in

2003 when their Funny Cide won the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness, before a third place finish to Empire Maker in the Belmont, back in the good old days when the Belmont was run at 1 1/2 miles and was the third and final jewel.

Tiz the Law is a New York bred and, strangely, is the first New York bred to win the Belmont since Forrester in 1882.

A typical Belmont day attracts around 100,000 fans, but on June 20, there might have been 100 people at the track, including the jockeys, the media, and necessary track staff.

"I'm not trying to be a jerk about it," said the winning trainer Tagg. "But I thought the quiet, to me, was very nice."

Masks were mandated for all but the horses -- even the jockeys wore face coverings.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued the traditional "Riders, up!" via video from another location. Bugler Sam Grossman pulled down his face mask to tap out "Call to the Post," and horses strolled onto the track to a recording of Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York." A PA announcer introduced them to empty grandstands.

Signs outside the locked-down venue instructed gamblers that if they wanted to wager on this Belmont Stakes, their best bet was to download an app and do it

on their phones.

"Everything just went like clockwork," said Tagg, who needed the win to complete his own Triple Crown - he trained Funny Cide to the first two gems.

"I'm just glad I lived long enough that I got another horse like this," added Tagg.

Jack Knowlton, from New York's Sackatoga Stable, noted this race was a little different from the one 17 years ago, when he and the Sackatoga crew took a school bus to watch their colt Funny Cide try to wrap up a Triple Crown sweep at Belmont Park.

"It's tremendous," Knowlton said. "We just buy New York-breds, that's our game. We don't spend a lot of money. We've been with Barclay Tagg for 25 years. I keep telling everybody Barclay doesn't get a lot of big horses and big opportunities, but when he gets them, he knows what to do."

It was Manny Franco's first Belmont victory.

"It means a lot to me," Franco said. "This is my home track. I've ridden here for about six years already. One leg of the Triple Crown is the dream of any jockey. I'm happy with the opportunity I have right now."

Tiz the Law earned \$535,000 for his owners and there was another horse racing rarity. The top four horses all earned points towards Kentucky Derby eligibility. The Kentucky Derby is booked for Saturday September 5.



Belmont Stakes Order of Finish

| Horse | Post | Jockey | Trainer |
|--------------------|------|---------------------|------------------|
| <u>Tiz the Law</u> | 8 | Manuel Franco | Barclay Tagg |
| Dr Post | 9 | Irada Ortiz Jr. | Todd Pletcher |
| Max Player | 3 | Joel Rosario | Linda Rice |
| Pneumatic | 10 | Ricardo Santana Jr. | Steve Asmussen |
| Tap It to Win | 1 | John Velazquez | Mark Casse |
| Sole Volante | 2 | Luca Panici | Patrick Biancone |
| Modernist | 4 | Junior Alvarado | Bill Mott |
| Farmington Road | 5 | Javier Castellano | Todd Pletcher |
| Fore Left | 6 | José Ortiz | Doug O'Neill |



The Sovereigns *virtual* style

“That’s a wonderful mare,” conceded Tiller. “It’s well deserved. Kevin’s done an absolutely wonderful job with her. We didn’t lose to no slouch. That’s for sure.”

Starship Jubilee also took down the Sovereign Award as Champion Female Turf Horse.

Pink Lloyd did not go home empty handed. He was honoured as Champion Male Sprinter and Champion Older Horse. Even so, Tiller was a little amused that as many as 70 voters cast their opinions for other horses in the category. Weird, because Pink Lloyd won all six of his races and defeated runner-up Yorkton by 8 lengths in their only official meeting.

“Can you believe that,” said Tiller when the vote totals were released. Actually, we can’t.

The most bling on the night went to Sam Son Farm. They got trophies for Desert Isle as Champion Three Year-old Female and for El Tormenta as Male Turf. Desert Ride won two legs of the Triple Tiara – the Woodbine Oaks and the Wonder Where Stakes with a fifth-place finish in between those races in the Queen’s Plate. El Tormenta was hard to ignore after his stunning score at 44-1 in the Woodbine Ricoh Mile. Since Sam Son Farm also bred both Desert Ride and El Tormenta, the award for Outstanding Breeder made sense as did the announcement that Sam Son Farm was the Outstanding Owner.

“You’re lucky to get one,” said Sam Son Farm manager David Whitford. “But to go four for four is incredible. It was a big surprise.”

Jockey Kazushi Kimura pulled off a difficult accomplishment. He was named the Champion Apprentice for the second year running. Last jockey to grab this trophy two years running was Omar Moreno (2009-2010).

No surprise that Eurico Rosa da Silva was named – for the seventh time – as Canada’s Outstanding Jockey. It would have been understandable if voters checked boxes with their hearts because da Silva retired at the end of the

2019 season, but he won this time because of his numbers – he had more wins (182), more earnings (\$7,452,567), a higher win mark (24%), and more horses in the money (60%) than any other Woodbine regular.

And if there was an *anyone but Casse* movement, it didn’t work. Mark Casse was named the Outstanding Trainer for the ninth straight year and for the twelfth time. Apparently Casse never gets bored with success.

“I was thinking when the Yankees won the World Series and came back the next year,” he said. “It’s what drives you. Once you’ve done it, you want to do it again.”

One might wonder what the trunk of Mark Casse’s car looks like; an old saddle, some jugs of window washing fluid, old copies of the Racing Form, some crumpled up **Down The Stretch** newspapers, two or three trophies in a corner...

“Actually, my Sovereign Awards are in my office,” he says chuckling. “I’m very proud of them.”



Eurico Rosa da Silva did not attend the Sovereigns, but this is what it would have looked like if he did

Complete list of winners with vote totals:

Outstanding Photograph:

MICHAEL R. BYE

Cyclone Dan Winner of the 3rd Race J. Gomez up

Published, August 24th, hbpabc.ca

Outstanding Writing:

DAVE BRIGGS

Royal victory for the quintessential “small guy”

Published, August/September 2019 Issue of Canadian Thoroughbred Magazine

Outstanding Digital Audio/Visual & Broadcast:

WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT

The Queen’s Plate

<https://bcove.video/2sfG0RH>

Outstanding Groom Award: Michael Williams

Outstanding Handicapper: Paul Shurman

Special Sovereign Award: Harvey Warner

Outstanding Broodmare: Loving Vindication

Loving Vindication (135), Cumulonimble (63), Avie’s Empire (45)

Outstanding Apprentice Jockey: Kazushi Kimura

Kazushi Kimura (182), Daisuke Fukumoto (91), Shavon Belle (27)

Champion Older Main Track Male: Pink Lloyd

Pink Lloyd (134), Mr. Ritz (85), Special Forces (52)

Champion Older Main Track Female: Here’s Hannah

Here’s Hannah (132), Lift Up (128), She’s the Berries (36)

Outstanding Trainer: Mark Casse

Mark Casse (142), Kevin Attard (108), Norman McKnight (31)

Champion Male Turf Horse: El Tormenta

El Tormenta (170), Tiz a Slam (78), Global Access (23)

Champion Female Turf Horse: Starship Jubilee

Starship Jubilee (170), Holy Helena (70), Amalfi Coast (35)

Outstanding Breeder: Sam-Son Farm

Sam-Son Farm (121), Tall Oaks Farm (91), Chiefswood Stables Limited (55)

Champion Two-Year-Old Male: Mr. Hustle

Mr. Hustle (122), Muskoka Gold (95), Dotted Line (64)

Champion Two-Year-Old Female: Curlin’s Voyage

Curlin’s Voyage (115), Infinite Patience (100), Owlette (42)

Outstanding Jockey: Eurico Rosa Da Silva

Eurico Rosa Da Silva (182), Rafael Hernandez (64), Patrick Husbands (32)

Champion Male Sprinter: Pink Lloyd

Pink Lloyd (180), Silent Poet (43), Yorkton (27)

Champion Female Sprinter: Summer Sunday

Summer Sunday (152), Amalfi Coast (82), Here’s Hannah (23), Sister Peacock (23)

Outstanding Owner: Sam-Son Farm

Sam-Son Farm (117), Chiefswood Stables Limited (115), Stronach Stables (25)

E. P. Taylor Award of Merit: Charles E. Fipke

Champion Three-Year-Old Male: Global Access

Global Access (141), Tone Broke (125), Explode (40)

Champion Three-Year-Old Female: Desert Ride

Desert Ride (133), Amalfi Coast (110), Hidden Grace (28)

Horse of The Year: Starship Jubilee

Starship Jubilee (108), Pink Lloyd (105), El Tormenta (53)



Southern Belle Thoroughbreds

By Katie Larsen



In March of 2018, **Down the Stretch** newspaper published an article on “Southern Belle Thoroughbreds” who, at the time, had found homes for almost 100 race horses out of Fort Erie and Woodbine racetracks. Since that date, we have nearly tripled that number as the demand and impact has grown significantly.

Myself and my team - Chelsea Clouter who covers the retirees out of Woodbine, and Lamar Squires who trains horses out of Fort Erie - have always believed in the athleticism and heart that these thoroughbreds exude, both during their racing careers and also once transitioned to sport horse disciplines. It seems the rest of the equestrian community is on board with the movement as well because warmbloods are no longer the predominant breed making waves in the show ring.

We have reputable show trainers contacting us from

across the province who are seeking that project horse with plans to move them up the ranks in the Trillium and “A” circuit competitions. In addition, the 2019 Kentucky Retired Racehorse Project was attended by a vast number of Southern Belle retirees, many who had great success at the event. One of the very first racehorses I ever rehomed, Saffiano, picked up a first-place prize in the in-hand division at the prestigious Royal Winter Fair and that day really hit home for me.

Seeing how versatile these animals are and the potential they have outside of racing is why we continue to push for the cause, despite the ups and downs we face on the social media platform.

Just like any athlete participating in hard core sports, not every thoroughbred will be sound or capable to press forward into a demanding sport horse career which is why we have to be extra careful when prospecting new homes for the cheaper horses. There has always been a looming threat of kill buyers using the internet in search of bargain horses, but I’m quick to identify the red flags and have preventative measures in place to keep horses out of a compromising situation.

Not everyone is looking for an eventing or jumper mount, so many of the thoroughbreds who are limited due to previous injury or other reasons have gone on to be trail/pleasure horses and ultimately live out the relaxing lifestyle of leisure.

I’ve indicated on both my Facebook page and website that although we have been around horses for most of our life, we are not veterinarians. What is written in the ads

is a summary of information provided by the trainers or owners, along with our opinion from a visual perspective after an in-person visit with the horse. The majority of prospective buyers we work with understand that there is always risk involved when purchasing from the racetrack, usually sight unseen, but most are willing to put in the work and dedication towards ensuring these athletes receive the attention they need when transitioning to a new life. Those are the types of buyers we want.

The year of 2020 has proven to be a whirlwind as COVID-19 put a hold on horse racing at the major tracks. As a result, we have had very few retirement listings on our page in comparison to this time last year. On a positive note, with tentative racing dates finally being announced, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we suspect an influx of horse listings being posted throughout mid summer and into fall. My inbox has been flooded with inquiries regarding potential horses coming up, so I’m confident that we will be able to find a safe home for each and every one of these magnificent thoroughbreds. We have been grateful enough to have the sponsorship support in 2019 and 2020 from the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society who have recognized the need for our services. Having such a reputable board of directors behind us, backing our movement, is an incredible feeling.

Thank you to everyone who has given one of these off-track thoroughbreds a second chance at a new career! It’s because of you that we keep on keeping on.

You can find us on Facebook or visit our website at: www.southernbellethoroughbreds.com

Stradivarius...like a perfectly tuned instrument



The brilliant six year-old Stradivarius simply added to historic greatness with a smashing conquest of the \$332,000 Group 1 Gold Cup at Ascot on June 18. With no fans in the stands to cheer him on, Stradivarius, ridden by Frankie Dettori, cooled his jets in mid-pack for most of the 2½ mile race on the Ascot turf, but at the right moment in the stretch, he galloped past the long-time leader, Nayef Road, and bid that one a good afternoon, opening up his lead with every stride until he hit the wire an intimidating 10 lengths the winner.

This was the third straight Gold Cup win for Stradivarius, his 14th win in 21 starts and his 13th Graded Stakes win.

Soft turf is not considered his preferred surface and 20 mm of rain over the previous 24 hours had put a lot of give in the grass, but that did not seem to bother Stradivarius. Before the race, trainer John Gosden channelled Muhammad Ali,

suggesting that instead of Stradivarius’ typical “float-like-a-butterfly” approach, the strategy on the very wet grass would be switched to “rope-a-dope”, suggesting the other animals would simply tire. That may have been the case, but Stradivarius certainly stung like a bee in the disdainful way he dispatched his seven opponents.

Stradivarius’ triple in the Gold Cup is rare. The race was first run at Ascot 1807 and only Sagaro (1975-77) and Yeats (2006-2009), have won three in a row; Sagaro as an eight year-old took down the Gold Cup for a fourth time.

“Sagaro was trained by a great friend of mine, François Boutin, and ridden by Lester Piggott,” Gosden said. “I remember watching all his races and he was something. Yeats was a phenomenon. To have a horse mentioned in that bracket is what it is all about.”

As Stradivarius powered his way to the finish line, race caller Simon Holt declared the horse to be the “world’s greatest stayer” and it’s hard to argue with that. Stradivarius has won 10 races that were run at two miles or further. Apparently, an attempt at a fourth straight Gold Cup is not a certainty. Stradivarius is giving signs he might be more interested in other employment.

“I must change my aftershave,” Gosden said, “because he got quite coltish when I was saddling him.”

As much fun as burying all your rivals might be, a second career in stud is probably an attractive thought,

and the great racehorse occasionally indicates his mind is in that direction.

Though there were no visitors to Royal Ascot for that race, millions were bet around England and in over 100 other countries showing the race and seems some punters were a little concerned about the soft going. Stradivarius ended up going off at 4-5, a rather generous price for a horse that had already proven many times over how good he could be at that distance.

“I was worried about the rain,” Dettori admitted. “On this ground, they can empty on you. He actually really surprised me because he went like a hot knife through butter, really. I had everybody covered by the four, then was surprised that I didn’t have anyone to challenge me. There is always a scary moment when you get to the furlong marker, whether you will pick up or not, but he did and stretched away by 10.”

Dettori has a great following with the fans, but even with no one to cheer him, he still gave the tv viewers a flying dismount in the winner’s enclosure.

“Even with no crowd, I’m feeling quite emotional,” he said.

Whether or not Stradivarius returns for an historic fourth win in the Gold Cup rests mostly with Bjorn Nielson, his owner and breeder, but there’s still lots to look forward to this year. There’s an excellent chance he will compete in the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe in October. That race is run at almost two and a half miles.

DOWN THE STRETCH PODCAST

#16 May 4

In this episode of the **Down The Stretch Podcast**, **Jennifer Morrison** expands on the history of quarter horse racing in Ontario and former NHL star **Eddie Olczyk** talks about cancer, fighting **Bob Probert**, and some of the huge scores he's pulled off betting on the horses. **Anthony MacDonald** of thestable.ca explains why having well-known hockey players investing in harness horses helps promote the sport. We have races won by Canadians from Gulfstream and Tampa Bay and, of course, the brilliant call of the 'virtual' Kentucky Derby. And Woodbine CEO, **Jim Lawson**, in his weekly appearance, talks about the return of horse racing and accuses host **Peter Gross** of being a 'sophisticated bettor.'

#17 May 11

In this episode of the **Down The Stretch Podcast**, Woodbine CEO **Jim Lawson** explains what Historical Horse Racing is. We play for you the spine-tingling Kentucky Turtle Derby, and quarter horse racing caller **Frank Ferrari** reveals how he's spending his down time. **Emma-Jayne Wilson's** agent **Mike Luider** reveals how he has stayed with the same jockey for over 16 years and what new rider he is planning to import. **Jim McKenny**, former NHL star and a close friend of this podcast, developed a pari-mutuel crush on jockey **Ademar Santos** at Tampa Bay and we will tell you how much he cashed when Santos went on a longshot streak. And if you enjoy hearing stories of massive scores at the racetrack, your brain will explode when you find out what **Tommy 'The Hammer' Massis** did in a Pick-6 at Happy Valley in Hong Kong.

#18 May 18

This episode of the **Down The Stretch Podcast** has many exciting segments. The temporarily reclusive **Bob McCown** reveals his connection to harness racing and his affection for enjoying the races in the dining room. **Jim Lawson** sounds relieved that both thoroughbred and standardbred racing will return the first week of June. **Adriano Sorella** talks about his latest idea to promote harness racing, and writer **Dave Briggs** tells us which horses his money is on for the virtual Sovereign Awards. From Ajax Downs, jockey **Cassandra Jeschke** says she's really anxious to get back on a quarter horse. Harness race handicapper and lasagna maestro Garnet Barnsdale offers some insightful ideas on how to bet horses we haven't seen for weeks, and with the first weekend in June welcoming the return of horse racing on two fronts, we search through the annals of history for the greatest events of June 5 and June 6.

#19 May 25

A podcast designed to make you feel better about the world. Host **Peter Gross** breaks down the Virtual Sovereigns with real interviews with **Kevin Attard**, **Bob Tiller**, and **David Whitford** of Sam Son Farm. We have three races from the U.S. in which Canadian-owned horses win and pay large. Quarter horse owner **Craig Spada** tells us how training two year-olds is similar to the hockey players he had to control when he was an NHL referee. **Garnet Barnsdale** hooks up with harness driver **Doug McNair** who is looking to continue the winning ways he was executing before racing was turned off. We touch base with **Keith McCalmont** of the NYRA to find out if there will be racing at Saratoga this summer. Trainer **Shana Lopez** has a heart-warming story about saving her favourite horse from slaughter. And you have to listen to the response of Woodbine CEO **Jim Lawson** when our host accuses him of being "out to lunch."

#20 June 1

In this jam-packed podcast, host **Peter Gross** actually has calls of Canadian horse races. Woodbine CEO **Jim Lawson** informs what racing will look like when Mohawk's standard-breds kick back in on June 5 and the thoroughbreds go on June 6. Australian horse racing expert **Ric Chapman** explains why we should consider 'fixed odds' wagering. **Ryan Clements** talks about his creation, Catch Driver, a phone app that puts you in the sulky. Ajax Downs General Manager **Emilio Trotta** warms us up for some quarter horse racing. When Mohawk race caller Ken Middleton was a little insecure about describing the action after being quiet for so long, he turned to us for a little race calling 'refreshing.' And after little Fonner Park completed the most remarkable meet in its history, its CEO **Chris Kotulak** looks back at the extraordinary circumstances that multiplied the handle by 900%.

#21 June 8

On this far-ranging **Down The Stretch Podcast**, host **Peter Gross** welcomes back horse racing to Ontario with many race calls from Woodbine and Mohawk. Woodbine CEO **Jim Lawson** flips the narrative by grilling Peter. **Garnet Barnsdale** provides an interview with driver **Jonathan Drury**, and **Jennifer Morrison** sets up the quarter horse season at Ajax Downs. We have two jockeys on this show – **Darryll Holland** has come over from England to ride at Woodbine and all he did was win the first race he was in, and **Tony Phillips** shows why he's possibly the most entertaining jockey at Ajax Downs. Only on this **Down The Stretch Podcast** will you hear Tony's latest rap! **Frank Salive** has called races at 75 tracks, but he's never too busy to talk about Fort Erie with his long-time friend, Peter Gross. And this was perfect timing for **Santino Di Paola** and his wonderful Letter to Horse Racing which is getting hearts pounding on Facebook and YouTube.

#22 June 15

Horse races from all over in this podcast: The first two Stakes races of the year at Woodbine, the first mile under 1:50 from Mohawk, an amazing night on the track for trainer **Dr. Ian Moore**, the whole card from the first day of racing at Ajax Downs, and one of the most bizarre races ever, though you had to be in France to see it. We have had several weeks of Woodbine CEO **Jim Lawson** on the show, but we flip the script with **Brodie Lawson** who talks about the first Racing Night Live on TSN. **Garnet Barnsdale** reports on some innovative thinking at Hanover Raceway and **Keith McCalmont** of the New York Racing Association previews next Saturday's Belmont Stakes. And you may wonder, why are we playing **The Guess Who** and the **Reklaws** in this podcast? You'll have to listen to find out!

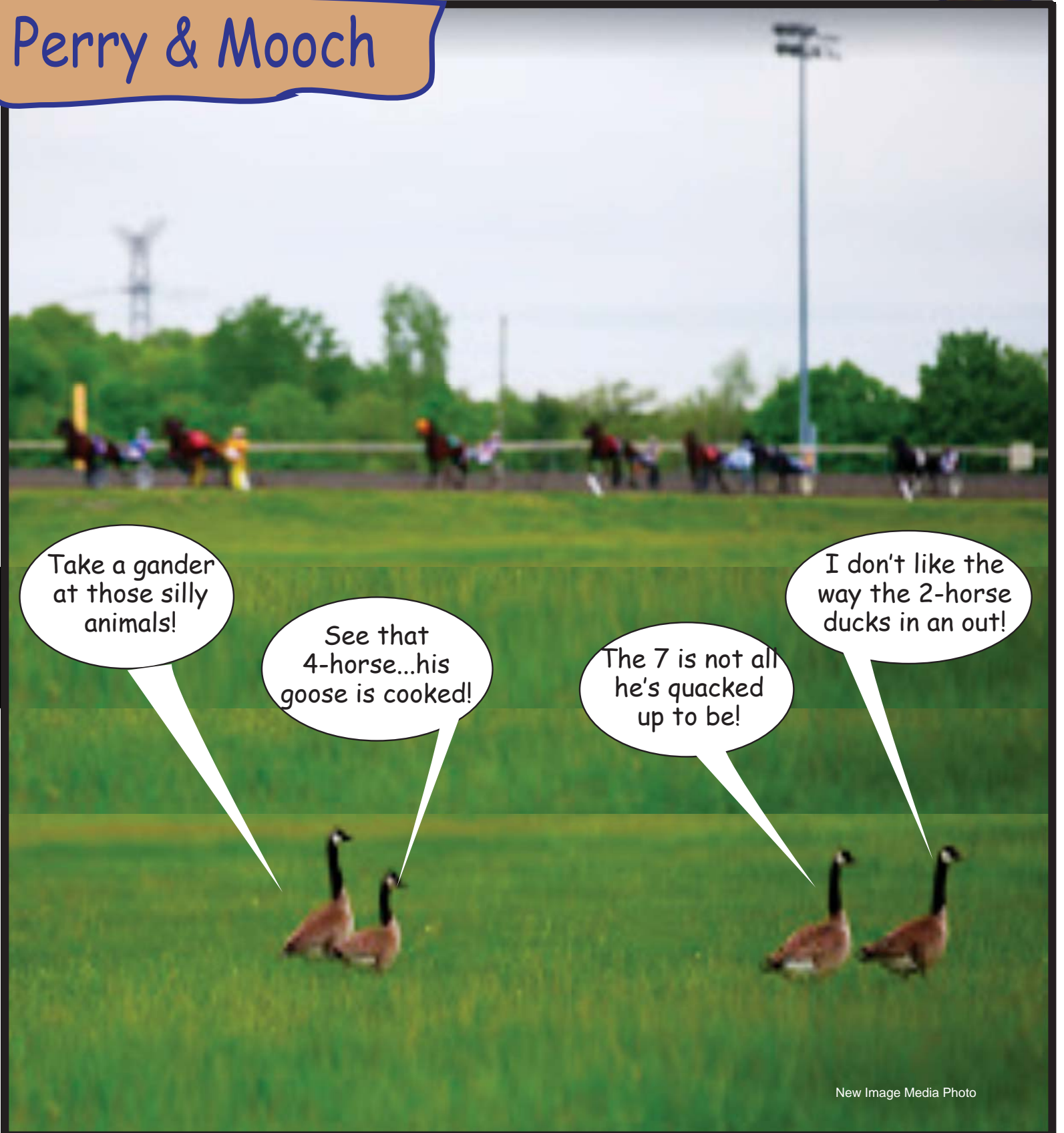
#23 June 22

Host **Peter Gross** plays the stretch call of the 152nd Belmont Stakes. This podcast features long-time harness racing trainer/owner **Jack Darling** who owns **Beaumont Hanover**, right now the fastest three year-old pacer in Canada. Right after trainer **Bob Tiller** won a thoroughbred race for 2,000th time, we got him on the phone. Veteran jockey **Helen Vanek** chats about her decision to ride full-time at Ajax Downs and Fort Erie. Contributor **Garnet Barnsdale** tells us that behind every great harness race trainer...there's a great woman, in this case, **Ben Baillargeon's daughter, Sara**. And, only by listening to this podcast will you understand how a rocking good version of a Jewish song by the **Maccabeats** has anything to do with the sport of horse racing. Wait until you hear that call.

RACETRACK HUMOUR



Perry & Mooch



Take a gander
at those silly
animals!

See that
4-horse...his
goose is cooked!

The 7 is not all
he's quacked
up to be!

I don't like the
way the 2-horse
ducks in an out!

New Image Media Photo

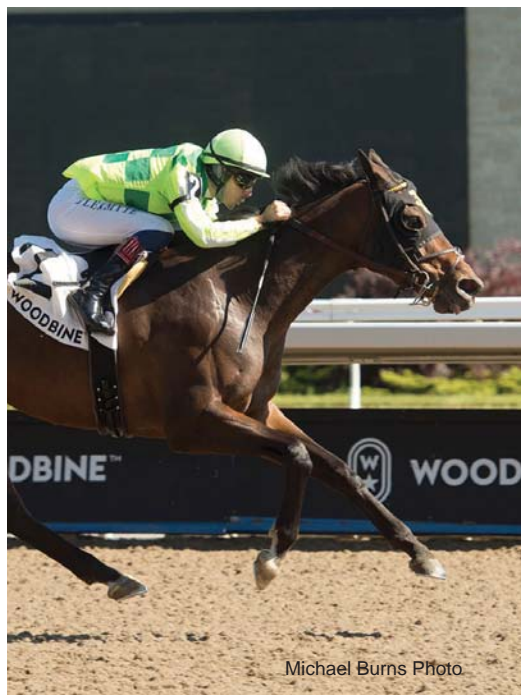
Woodbine Stakes

Spread the news!



On Saturday, June 13, Woodbine conducted its first Stakes races of the year. There were two 6 furlong dashes, each with a \$100,000 purse. The three year-old colts went first in the Woodstock Stakes. The crowd pounded Untitled down to 1-2, but it was Newstome, ridden by Luis Contreras, who stormed home much the best, winning by over 5 lengths in 1:09.99. Newstome is trained by Michael Trombetta and owned by Marie Trombetta, and he recorded his fourth win in eight tries, posting \$13.90 on the tote board. The Woodstock is a logical stepping stone to the Queen's Plate, but the five who finished behind Newstome don't need to worry; Newstome is a Pennsylvania-bred and not eligible for the Canadian Triple Crown.

Owlette is a very good filly



Michael Burns Photo

The fillies contested the Star Shoot Stakes and the excellent Owlette knew she was the best and ran accordingly. Jerome Lermyte put her on top early and eight others chased in vain as Owlette was almost 2 lengths safe at the wire. She ran the 6 furlongs in 1:09.55, which was faster than the boys did in the Woodstock. Owlette won the Victorian Queen and the South Ocean Stakes last year and is now four for six in her career. She is owned by Tem Broek Farm and trained by Wesley Ward. She returned \$6.50.

The Whimsical – Jean Elizabeth took it seriously



The feature race on the first full day of summer, Sunday June 21, was the \$125,000 Whimsical Stakes for fillies and mares at 6 furlongs. Jean Elizabeth was bet down to 3-5 and jockey David Moran rode her as if she was much the best. He gunned Jean Elizabeth right to the front from Post 1 and, for the entire race, none of her 9 opponents got a sniff. The five year-old mare whistled to the half in a torrid 44:78 and was well in front with a sixteenth to go. Painting, under Kazushi Kimura, came flying from way back, but Jean Elizabeth was safe by just over a length in 1:09.86.

Jean Elizabeth is one terrific horse. This was her 15th win in just 21 starts. Talk about versatility. She has won at Arlington, Hawthorne, Turfway, Gulfstream, and Tampa Bay. She's come first on traditional dirt, synthetic, and turf, and she has never been worse than third.

That would explain her \$3.40 win price and the \$2.20 to show.

Larry Rivelli is the winning trainer and he shares ownership with Richard Ravin and Patricia's Hope LLC.

The other species trilogy:

After the race, a jockey claimed foul...against the cat!



The hare was clearly first!



Sometimes the tortoise does win!



Racing Night Live on TSN

It was exactly halfway through the first episode of Racing Night Live on TSN on June 11 when my phone announced a tweet. It was from Garnet Barnsdale, a qualified expert on horse racing, and a notorious grumbler when something displeases him:

This TSN broadcast is tremendous beyond my wildest dreams – including somehow flying a drone right next to the airport. They thought of everything and the on-air talent is a perfect mix. I am so impressed. And you know me. I complain about everything!

That's pretty well all you need to know about Woodbine's presentation of thoroughbred and standardbred racing on a national network...but I'm tossing in several hundred more words.

There was a perfect storm at work here. TSN would normally be showing hockey and basketball playoffs and a lot of baseball, but with those sports grounded, the premise of live horse racing must have been appealing. Woodbine chose Thursday night with the brave premise of three thoroughbred races and three harness races from Mohawk Park. The deal with TSN is for 13 weeks, each show from 6-8pm.

But what was it that worked so well? What happened in the two hour live broadcast that had the irascible Barnsdale tweeting more furiously than Trump?

First of all, both Woodbine and Mohawk Park looked sensational. Thumbs up to the production team that chose the camera angles and a special shoutout to Curtis MacDonald who operated the drone at Woodbine. The distant overhead shots of the horses thundering along the grass course were magnificent; this was something radically new, even to hardened racing fans who have been watching the sport for 50 years.

And the premise to show both breeds of racing is both brilliant and daring. I can't recall if I have ever seen a national horse racing show that fairly balanced the thoroughbred and standardbred content.

As for the on-air talent. The most important thing is that they appeared to be having fun. The veteran Jason Portuondo always comes across as Jason Portuondo (well, I know the guy

and he's as personable on the phone as he is on-air) and his expertise and sense of humour was instrumental in making the show entertaining. His co-host is Laura Diakun who is also at ease on camera. She's got years of experience on her résumé as a reporter and anchor for Sportscentre. She's apparently got a sassy side as well. At one point Portuondo was revealing that a certain horse had a tendency to quit in the stretch, to which Diakun commented:

"Keep your thoughts to yourself."

This was actually a nifty play on words because the 9-horse in that race was... Keep Your Thoughts.

It was a slam dunk night for Chaz Rozema as well. His area of expertise is with the standardbreds, but he picked three straight winners at Woodbine – Forester's Turn (\$11.90) who won the sixth with Kazushi Kimura aboard, Silent Poet (\$5.60) and Gary Boulanger in the seventh, and Pierian, also with Boulanger, who upset the eighth race at 11-1.

Rozema also nailed it when, after the first race at Mohawk, he was asked how the track was playing and he pointed out that front runners were prevailing, adding that a strong west wind made it hard for trailers to rally in the stretch. The next two winners both led from the outset and dominated in the stretch.

The fresh face in the group is Brodie Lawson. She has less on-camera history than the others, but you couldn't tell. The camera likes her, she has a great smile, and her manner was relaxed and playful, which fit in well with the others. At 29, she is the youngest member of the broadcast crew and has a pretty good feel for what is expected of her.

"My hope is that I bring a bit of levity to the broadcast," she says. "Jason and Laura and Chad have such a huge depth of knowledge and I'm still on my way up. I want to be the voice that is accessible to novices racing fans. Ideally, there's new viewers tuning in and I want them along for the ride with me."

Lawson got less face time than the others, but she presented a tightly edited feature called 5 Things to Know About Horse Racing. To us grizzled old-timers, this did not present any new information, but the thrust of this show has

to be to a new and younger audience and information about the difference between thoroughbreds and standardbreds is perfectly relevant if fresh fans are to be attracted.

All the on-air talent is expected to make predictions for each race. Laura had a very good night, picking winners in three of the six presented races. For a relative newcomer, Lawson finds trying to predict a winner a frightening proposition.

"Yes. Absolutely. Are you kidding me?" she laughs. "It's scary every time but I think that's part of the fun of racing, being able to play along and to bet and make your picks. It sure makes you vulnerable. If I totally suck one night and I don't make any good picks, those watching at home will probably identify with me. But it is nerve wracking because I'm super competitive and kind of a perfectionist. I was pretty delighted with those picks the first night, but I wouldn't expect that every week for me, that's for sure."

Upping the ante on the entertainment side, the show featured a special music video by the Canadian country duo, the Reklaws. They did an acoustic version of "Where I'm From." A video of this performance was created to help raise funds to go to the LongRun Thoroughbred Retirement Fund and the Ontario Standardbred Adoption Society. Woodbine's CEO Jim Lawson kicked off the fund-raising campaign by making a personal donation of \$2,500 to each of those worthwhile charities.

Racing Night Live is a collaboration between TSN and Woodbine. For TSN, the producer is Peter Buchanan, and for Woodbine, it's Rob Platts.

One of the metrics one can use to determine the success of a horse racing show is the money wagered. The June 11 handle on the premiere of Racing Night Live was \$2,763,951. The first Wednesday evening program of 2019, on May 29 produced \$2,044,970.

The handle at Mohawk was \$1,807,067. Two nights earlier, with no network exposure, the total was \$1,664,051. You can play around and extrapolate those numbers many ways, but it's just a little more evidence that Racing Night Live has burst from the gate with front-running energy.

Mark your calendar

Horse racing took several steps towards a semblance of normalcy in mid-May. Woodbine Entertainment announced that The Queen's Plate, originally scheduled for June 27, will now be run on Saturday, September 12. The COVID-19 pandemic was not able to interrupt the streak of Canada's most notable race.

"The history of The Queen's Plate is so rich and the fact that it's been held every year since the inaugural race in 1860 is remarkable," said Jim Lawson, CEO, Woodbine Entertainment. "We are honoured to be able to continue this rich history in face of adversity by hosting the race for the 161st consecutive year."

Thoroughbred racing at Woodbine was supposed to start on April 18; with provincial permission, the first card took place on June 6 without fans in the stands. This was one night after harness racing returned to Mohawk Raceway. Woodbine Entertainment will continue to take its cues from government and public health officials. As yet, no decision has been made on spectators attending events.

As part of the preparations for The Queen's Plate, the Woodbine Oaks (presented by Budweiser) and The Plate Trial will be held on Saturday, August 15.

Racing at Fort Erie resumed on Tuesday, June 2. The live racing calendar will have a revised schedule this season, running on Mondays and Tuesdays at 1:20 p.m. through to October 13. The grandstand will be empty during racing for the first time in its 123-year history.

"Since we will be required to race without fans to start out the year, we decided to move live racing to Monday and Tuesday at 1:20 p.m. in order to reduce our competition in the simulcast market and maximize our revenue from simulcast wagering," said Tom Valiquette, Chief Operating and Financial Officer of the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium.

The second leg of the Canadian Triple Crown, the Prince of Wales Stakes, has been rescheduled for Tuesday, September 29. The \$400,000 race will feature Canada's finest three year-old thoroughbreds, running 1 mile and 3/16 on Fort Erie's dirt track.

The Province of Ontario gave horse racing approval to begin without spectators in Stage 1 of their framework to reopen the Province. Fort Erie Race Track has been working closely with Ontario Racing, the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, as well as all governing agencies for racing in Ontario in order to put strict safety policies in place and reduce the impact of COVID-19.

The \$1 million Pepsi North America Cup for three year-old pacers has also not been lost to the pandemic. It will now be contested on Saturday, August 20 at Woodbine Mohawk Park in Milton, Ontario. Eliminations for the race will be held a week before, on Saturday, August 22.

"Mohawk Park in the fall is always packed full of action and now we are adding our signature event, the Pepsi North America Cup, to the end of the summer schedule which will only add even more excitement heading into the fall Stakes

season," said Lawson.

The quarter horse racing season at Ajax Downs began on Wednesday, June 10. A total of 21 cards will be conducted and, since no fans will be permitted, the track has deviated from its popular Sunday assembly and will race every Wednesday through September 2 and on Monday afternoons starting September 7. Ajax Downs General Manager Emilio Trotta is happy that live racing has returned, but disappointed that the local community won't get to experience it in person.

"Unfortunately, we will be without crowds for awhile, thus the move to Wednesdays and Mondays to take advantage of a lighter day with less competition," said Trotta. "Sundays have been a long tradition at the track and we are going to miss the family community events. We have always had events that attracted thousands like Family Day when we raise funds for the local hospitals, United Way Day, and Durham Caribbean festival that raises awareness of other ethnic communities."

The Ajax Downs website has been enhanced to direct fans to HPI for maximum exposure and to encourage more betting on the quarter horses.

In the United States, the Triple Crown will have a very untraditional look. The Belmont, typically the final leg, was run on June 20 (see page 5). The Kentucky Derby, which for only 145 years kicked off the Triple Crown is booked for Saturday, September 5, and the Preakness at Pimlico, which racing fans always anticipated two weeks after the Derby, is to be held on Saturday October 3.

Wagering on horse racing in Ontario will only be available through www.HPIbet.com

How Tommy 'Hammered' it

Toronto guy cashed for over \$1 million

The first point we need to make is...it wasn't a fluke (despite the name of his first winner). We've written about Tommy 'The Hammer' Massis before. We've documented his wins in handicapping tournaments and his monster scores in exotic pools. But what he did on April 29 needs to live forever in the annals of horse playing.

Look at it. The deposit that slipped into Massis' HPI account on the morning of April 29: \$1,176,978.30.

Tommy Massis won over a million dollars in the Six Up bet at Happy Valley in Hong Kong. This had practically nothing to do with luck and everything to do with skill.

Massis has always been direct about the way he plays the races.

"I don't really care to win \$1,000 or \$2,000," he insists. "I go for the home run."

In the early hours that day, he handicapped the Six Up and poured \$810 into the wager. As each race came to its conclusion, Massis was closing in on a phenomenal score. How did he do it? That's what you're here for.

In the first leg, he had three horses, and even though he had Simply Fluke, the 2-1 shot that came late to nail longshot Management Supreme, Massis was pissed off.

"I watched some replays before I bet," he says. "The five-horse, Management Supreme, really didn't get a chance to run in its first race. To be honest, I almost keyed him when he was 35-1 and he just got run down by one of the other horses I had, which was just the 2-1 favourite. So, even though I was alive for the pick six, I was pretty upset with that photo finish."

Massis' genius – and his courage – stands out clearly in the second leg. He singled one horse, Sky Show.

"That was another one that had run only once at Hong Kong," he explains. "And the jockey gave him no chance. The horse was green. It was a total catastrophe, even though the horse kept coming and coming. Here's a horse 4-1 morning line that opened up like 4-5 or 6-5 and floated up right at the end and paid \$9.70."

Still four more races to go, but the third leg definitely changed the math. It looked like a wide-open affair, so Massis took five horses. This one had a ferociously wild finish with horses flying from everywhere and, when a 60-1 shot named Delightful Laos surged for the victory in the final strides, Tommy Massis was still alive, while the vast majority of the players were scratching their heads.

"That huge bomb was a second time starter," says Massis. "And it actually ran sneakily good the first time out. He had a top trainer and was 8-1 morning line. And this horse goes off at almost 60-1. Believe me I came close to singling him and I didn't bet him straight just because of that crazy price going in the gate."

In the fourth leg, Massis went with three horses. The winner was Shining Gem and, at this point, the fact that the horse paid just \$5.90 didn't matter.

"Yeah, that was a pretty easy race; I had all the obvious horses," he says. "This horse was 12-1 in the morning line and goes off at 9-5 and should have probably been a lot lower than that."

By singling one horse in the second leg, Massis allowed

The screenshot shows the HPIbet.com website with the 'MY TRANSACTIONS' section active. At the top, a large green box displays a credit of \$1,176,978.30. Below this is a table of transactions. The table has columns for TIME, TYPE, TRANSACTION #, DETAILS, CREDIT AMT, and DEBIT AMT. The transactions listed are bets placed on various horses in different races, with the largest credit being \$1,176,978.30 on April 29, 2020.

| TIME | TYPE | TRANSACTION # | DETAILS | CREDIT AMT | DEBIT AMT | ACTION |
|-----------------------|------|----------------|---|----------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Apr 29, 2020 7:48 AM | Bet | 6792249057076 | HK - Happy Valley Race 4, \$1.00 P/W 2.5/7 / 5/2.3.8.10 / 1.8.7 / 4.5.7.9.11 / 1.7.12 | \$1,176,978.30 | \$810.00 | [Twitter] [Facebook] |
| Apr 26, 2020 11:18 PM | Bet | 91866104254571 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 9, \$20.00 EXA 2.5 / 2.5 | \$40.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 11:18 PM | Bet | 90994004338570 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 9, \$20.00 EXA 2.5 / 2.5 | \$40.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 11:06 PM | Bet | 18460361882820 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 8, \$20.00 EXA 5 / 1.5 | \$20.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 11:06 PM | Bet | 56754672733184 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 8, \$20.00 EXA 1.5 / 1.5 | \$40.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 11:05 PM | Bet | 52154016664170 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 8, \$20.00 DBL 1 / 2.5 | \$40.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 9:52 PM | Bet | 63235199125088 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 5, \$2.00 SFC 4 / 1.5 / 2 / 1-6 | \$12.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 9:52 PM | Bet | 94299435585806 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 5, \$2.00 SFC 4 / 1.5 / 1.5 / 2 | \$4.00 | | |
| Apr 26, 2020 9:51 PM | Bet | 9899622519491 | Los Alamitos QH, Race 5, \$2.00 SFC 4 / 1.5 / 1.5 / 1-6 | \$12.00 | | |

himself plenty of wiggle room for races that didn't stand out. He put in six horses in the second last leg. Another good move. Acclaimed Light took the lead with less than 100 metres to go and stayed by about half a length. That one paid \$15.70.

"I took six and threw out the chalk and I got very lucky to hang on," says Massis. "So that's another race where the horse was 40-1 in the morning line, but goes off at 6-1."

It's way too easy a pun, but the sixth and deciding race turned out very good for Tommy Massis, who decided to include a longshot called Good For You among his three picks. The rider on Good For You exercised great patience, found a hole deep in the stretch, and burst home an easy winner. If there had been more than one live ticket on the Six Up before that, this one pushed the entire pool over to Massis. Good For You paid \$32.40.

"It made me the ticket," says Massis, just a little too casually. "It was a race where I was almost just going to go with the two favourites, but a friend of mine told me why to like the 12, and an on-air handicapper also mentioned it, so I threw him them in there and he ran down the other horses before the wire."

Knowing he was very much alive going into the last leg, Massis tried to see what the probable payoffs were on each of his three horses, but was not able to find that information. So, when his last horse won, he figured he had done well. He just didn't realize how well. In less than 10 minutes, the mind-blowing amount showed up in his HPI account.

"I got a bit emotional," he says in his typical deadpan manner. "But I was really tired at the same time, so I was kind of just a bit stunned for a while."

Just to break it down, Massis was the only one to hit the Six Up. For that, he scored \$1,172,830. Lost in the commotion is that he also won four shares of the Six Up place pool awarded to any bettors whose horses come at least second in all six legs. Each of those shares returned \$1,037.

Massis sent **Down The Stretch** a cell capture of the moment his monumental score showed up on his HPI account. Try and imagine seeing that amount deposited on your behalf.

"Yes, it was exciting," he says. "But at that point in the morning, I was so sleep deprived, I wasn't really bouncing off the walls."

Massis has always had some level of investment with horses. He might increase his stake in ownership.

"I've got three thoroughbreds already locked and loaded," he says. "And I've got money in my horsemen's account to get a few more. I like to get in a few other people involved in the game so, yeah, I could see myself owning a lot of horses."

Massis likes to refer to himself as the Dave Kingman of horse players. Kingman hit 442 home runs in his 16-year major league career, but he struck out 1,816 times.

"There was a guy that struck out a lot because, every time he's at the plate, he was trying to hit a home run."

So, we asked Tommy Massis. Now that you've hit possibly the most massive home run in horse playing history, would you consider quitting?

"I've thought about that," he says. "I'll have to figure out how much I am still enjoying it. Will I still have the motivation to do the work, or is it going to be like the B. B. King song, The Thrill is Gone?"

Massis pauses to consider what he's saying...

"Then it will be time to park my account."



Tommy Massis won over \$1million on a Wednesday morning

Woodbine's latest arrival - Darryll Holland



You can't get off to a better start than this. Englishman Darryll Holland has decided somewhat late in his career to ride permanently at Woodbine and his first mount was on a seven year-old gelding named Majestic Fever in the opening race on June 6, the day thoroughbred racing resumed at Woodbine.

Majestic Fever didn't make much of an impact on the bettors, who saw he had won just twice in 29 previous starts. When the gates opened, Majestic Fever was over 14-1. Holland let his horse start comfortably and the pair was fifth of eight down the backstretch of this 5 furlong dash for \$7,500 claimers. As the field turned into the stretch, Majestic Fever went five-wide and found a much better stride, passed a few of his rivals, and surged to the front just before the wire, winning by a length in :59.34.

Those who recognized that the horse was in the hands of a veteran experienced jockey cashed win tickets worth \$30.80.

Darryll Holland turned 48 just eight days after that win and, apparently, he is at that stage of his life where coming to the same track each racing day per week is precisely the way to extend his career. And he really wants to know Canada much better.

"This is a country I had only flying visits to," he says. "I had only seen Pearson Airport, rode in the International, and then flew back that night to start racing in England the following day. It was a country in which I had never rode a winner, albeit from just three rides here. It was on my bucket list, and now I have taken the plunge."

Holland was introduced to jockey agent Mike Luider who, wisely, chose to pick the jockey up after an overseas flight.

"It was through a mutual friend, a very prominent owner in England," says Holland, explaining the match making. "He's also got horses running in the United States and he had a racing manager there. He knew Mike in Canada."

Luider has been booking rides for Emma-Jayne Wilson for that jockey's entire 17-year career, but he needed another journeyman to complete his dance card.

"So, Mike picked me up at the airport," says Holland. "And after a spot of lunch he said, 'Would you like me to book your rides?' And I said, 'Yeah.' We shook hands and that was it."

Luider had no concerns about Holland's age. The guy's résumé is stunning. More than 1,700 wins worldwide. He's won 30 Group 1 races and has conquered major Stakes events in England, Germany, France, Ireland, and Italy.

"And don't forget Hong Kong," he teases. "I also rode in Japan for Godolphin. I've been around a long time."

In 1991, when he was still a teenager, Holland was named the British Champion Apprentice as well as Apprentice Jockey of the Year for which he claimed the Lester Award. In 2000, he won the Singapore Derby and the Kranji Mile in Singapore. He was aboard Dupont when he took down the Primo Parioli in Italy in 2002, and he rode Chorist to victory in the Pretty Polly Stakes in Ireland in 2004.

Holland has won many major races in England, including The Yorkshire Oaks in 1997 with My Emma, the July Cup with Continent in 2002, the Coronation Cup on Warrsan in 2004, and the Eclipse Stakes twice – first time with Compton Admiral (1999) and then with Falbrav (2003).

It was with the sensational Falbrav that Holland pulled off what he considers to be his

most significant victory, a romp in the 2003 Juddmonte International Stakes at York.

"Just the way he went down to post, it's not very often a jockey gets that feeling," recalls Holland. "I just thought as long as he behaves in the gate and he jumps out ok we're going to win."

Falbrav ran comfortably maybe 3 lengths off the lead for most of the mile and 5/16ths, and when Holland asked him to go, the horse was much the best, powering away from all his rivals in the stretch to win by 3 lengths.

"He was unstoppable that day," says Holland.

Falbrav carved out a magnificent career, recording 13 wins in 26 starts and earning \$5,825,517. After winning the Juddmonte International, he also captured the Group 1 Queen Elizabeth II Stakes at Ascot. Holland rode him that day and Falbrav's time, 1:38.99 for the mile was, at the time, the fastest ever since the race was first held in 1955. Falbrav finished his racing tenure with a victory in the Group 1 Hong Kong Cup and that day he was ridden by Frankie Dettori.

As agent Mike Luider shops his riders around in the backstretch, it's understandable that Emma-Jayne Wilson might get first shot at a live horse. Right now, she is the better-known commodity. Holland isn't worried that he might end up with lesser mounts.

"Not at all," he shrugs. "Emma is a good jockey in her own right. They have had a good working relationship for a long time and I think that's a positive. I can bounce off her and she can bounce off me in terms of getting rides. She gets a lot of calls. If she gets two or three calls and Mike offers me up, then why not? Also, it keeps it in our camp."



Horse racing is a sport where the athletes tend to defy the aging process. Holland points out that Mike Smith is closing in on 55 and Frankie Dettori is almost 50.

"I'm still enjoying it," he says. "I have had less wear and tear on my body since 2013, because I wasn't riding in the U.K. and going up and down the length and breadth of the country. Mentally, I am quite sound because I'm going to fewer tracks and riding fewer races. And now that I am living in Woodbridge, it's just five kilometres going to Woodbine. For me, it's not work. I like going to the track every morning and keeping busy."

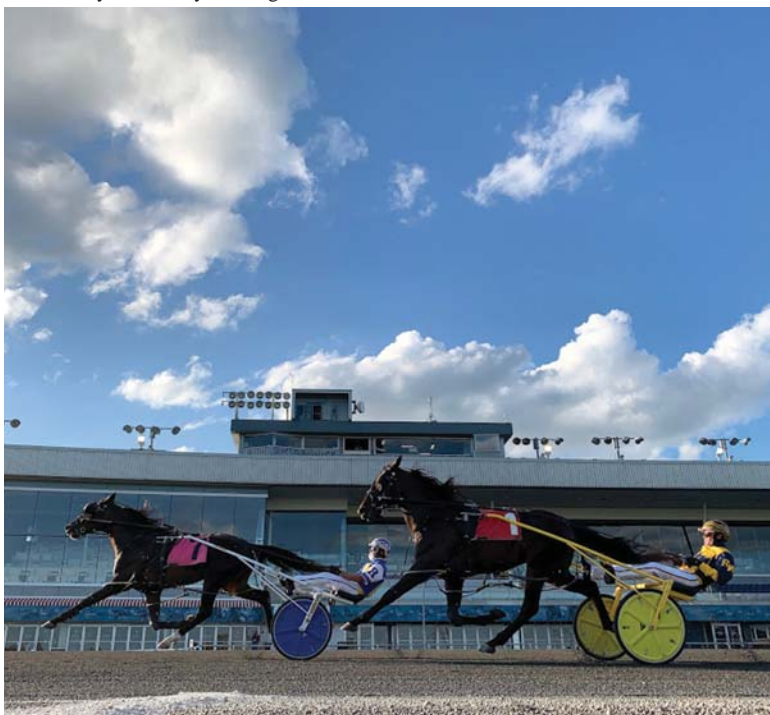
There was another example of Holland's experience on the first day of racing at Woodbine. In the fourth race on longshot Candy's Dream, Holland gave the three year-old filly an excellent start in the 6 furlong grass race, putting her close down the backstretch. Into the stretch, Candy's Dream was pinned along the inside and, when she tried to squeeze past along the hedge, the leader angled in, cutting her off. Holland was forced to pull his horse out of trouble and into the middle of the track and Candy's Dream picked it up nicely in the final 50 yards to finish second. At over 49-1, she paid \$29.30 to place and \$9.30 to show, and finished off a \$273 payoff on a \$1 exactor.

Holland has been waiting in a basically unfurnished townhouse near Woodbine for his partner, Jasmine, and their three year-old son, Rocco. Those two need to pass all the COVID quarantine restrictions to join the jockey. Holland also has six year-old twins from a previous relationship.

Back at Mohawk

by Mark McKelvie

Aspectator-free Woodbine Mohawk Park played host to its first card of live racing in 78 days on Friday evening, June 5.



Saskatoon, a four year-old pacing mare, was the first horse since March 19 to visit the winners circle, scoring a mild 7-1 upset in the evening's first race for driver Doug McNair and trainer Carmen Auciello.

The evening's action consisted of 10 races, with the \$32,000 Mares Preferred Pace headlining the card. Last year's Ontario Sires Stakes Super Final champion, Boadicea, came through in her four year-old debut with a stunning 1:50 victory in the feature race. Sylvain Filion guided the Bill Budd trainee to front-stepping victory, which included

a powerful :26.2 final-quarter. Early-season standout, So Much More, rallied to grab second, while Sunny Dee was third in her 2020 debut.

Boadicea won eight of 14 starts and made \$417,652 last season for owners C E Lawrence Stable Inc. and G A Lawrence Stable Inc. Her 2020 debut victory gives her 12 for her career. She paid \$9 to win.

Friday's card also saw another former OSS star secure a milestone victory. Five-year-old pacing mare, Kendall Seelster, went coast-to-coast in 1:51.4 to win the evening's \$26,000 seventh race. The victory pushed her over \$1 million in career earnings for owners 1187422 Ontario Inc. Kendall Seelster is trained by Rod Boyd and was driven to her 25th career victory by Robert Shepherd. She paid \$4.70 to win.

Driver Sylvain Filion led the way among reinsmen with three wins on the card. Trainer Bob McIntosh led all conditioners with a pair of wins from three year-old pacing fillies Perfect Storm (\$3.80) and Sex Appeal (\$6.70).

The handle for the night was \$1,891,905.



And back at Woodbine

by Brittney Mayotte



Live thoroughbred racing returned to Woodbine Racetrack on Saturday June 6 with an 11-race card.

Originally scheduled to begin on April 18, the reduced 109-day meet got underway spectator-free following public health guidelines with strict physical distancing protocols in place for the safety of all racing participants, officials, and employees. A newcomer to the Woodbine jockey colony this year, veteran British jockey Darryll Holland was a winner right out of the gate as he guided Majestic Fever to a rallying 14-1 upset in the opener for trainer Vito Armata and owner Alpine Stable Ltd. Gasconade and Count Forest finished second and third, respectively, in the 5 furlong claiming race contested on the main track. Majestic Fever, a seven year-old Majestic Warrior gelding who is just a three-time winner in 30 career starts, returned \$30.80 for a \$2 win ticket.

"Well, he made hard work of it," said Holland of his winning ride. "I think he had 10 starts last year and never won so he doesn't know how to get his head in front, but I just kept at him. At the top of the stretch, he just hung for a little bit. He responded and I knew he still had a bit left in him, so I just saved that to pass the last horse, and he just got there in the end. I'm very happy for all the connections.

"This means a lot to me because it's my first win in Canada," said the 47-year-old U.K. native, who has ridden multiple Group 1 winners in his career. "I've only had a hat full of rides here for the International race meeting several years ago, so it was nice to win on my first run. I've been well received by all the trainers. They've been very kind to me and helped me. I've been galloping all week because I was in self-isolation for 14 days before that, so it's not been easy. I've had to get fit very quickly and take off a bit of weight, but I'm sure there's better to come from me."

Holland made three prior starts in Graded Stakes at Woodbine more than a decade ago, with his previous best result a fourth-place finish in the 2000 E. P. Taylor Stakes (GI) aboard Irish-bred Alexis. Having competed with success around the world, Holland has set his sights on the Woodbine competition in hopes of completing some "unfinished business."

"It's not quite finished business, but it's nice to ride a winner and get the monkey off my back so-to-speak, and to ride a winner for a good trainer as well. He had faith in putting me up even though he probably didn't know me."

Holland's agent is Mike Luider, who also books horses for veteran Emma-Jayne Wilson. When Wilson brought home the three year-old filly, Purple Scooter by 1½ lengths in the second race, it was an all-Luider daily double that paid \$265. Purple Scooter off at 7-1, is owned by Leonard Zenith and trained by Rachel Halden.

The first turf race of the season, a \$123,200 maiden allowance for fillies and mares over 6 furlongs on the E. P. Taylor course, was won by Fairywren (\$12.10) and jockey Luis Contreras for trainer Josie Carroll and owner/breeder Nicholas Lotz. After hitting the board in her first two career starts at Fair Grounds this winter, the four-year-old daughter of Goldencents overtook the front-striding favourite, Feeling Funny, in deep stretch to score in 1:08.22. Candy's Dream, with Holland aboard, edged out Feeling Funny for the

runner-up honours.

Facing Stakes caliber fillies and mares, Hoolie Racing Stable's Another Time (\$15.30), set a new inner turf course record of 1:28.11 for 7 1/2 furlongs when she won a \$112,500 allowance with Jerome Lermyte aboard. Trained by Barb Minshall, the four-year-old Munnings filly defeated pacesetter Souper Escape by a length, with Nantucket Red rounding out the top three.



Contreras led all jockeys on the program with three wins, while Armata was the top trainer of the day with a pair of victories. Lermyte and Emma-Jayne Wilson each doubled up.

Prior to the race card, Woodbine jockeys came together to take a knee in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada and across the globe.

And the bettors expressed their solidarity for the sport by pouring \$5,553,787 through the mutuels. Was racing missed in April and May...sure was – the Opening Day handle in 2019 was \$4,084,000.



Arrogate (2013-2020) was North America's biggest money earner



just before the wire and, less than three months later, he was the best in the \$12 million Pegasus Stakes at Gulfstream, for which Juddmonte received \$7 million. After that, Arrogate took down the Dubai World Cup at Meydan. He lost his final three contests, and his connections recognized that the fiery comet had burned out and it was time to retire the great horse.

"He just didn't want to run," Baffert said.

Arrogate ended his career with seven wins in 11 races and earnings of \$17,442,600, most ever by a North American horse.

According to Juddmonte, Arrogate was doing fine during the breeding season, but his stallion duties were stopped when he exhibited symptoms of a sore neck. After a fall in his stall, attempts to get him back up were unsuccessful.

"Unfortunately, Arrogate was still unable to stand after four exhausting days for him," said a statement from Juddmonte. "His will to fight, so valuable to him on the racetrack, became a challenge in his care. When serious secondary health issues set in, the decision was made to put him to sleep."

Arrogate was bred in Kentucky and purchased for \$560,000 by Juddmonte Farms, the racing operation of Prince Khalid bin Abdullah, a member of Saudi Arabia's royal family. As a yearling, Arrogate's front teeth were knocked back, likely the result of being kicked by another horse. One tooth became infected and removed, which had little impact.

"He was truly amazing and I'm going to miss him with all my heart," tweeted Hall of Fame jockey Mike Smith. "The fastest mile and a quarter I've ever gone!"

"It takes a lot to make me cry, but I cried this morning when I heard the news," Baffert said from his base at Santa Anita in California. "I've never had a horse that threw in four magical races in a row that were off the charts. He was just brilliant."

Baffert has long regarded 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat as the standard bearer for great horses.

"I would've thrown Arrogate against that horse," he said. "I would never say that at the time, it's sacrilegious, but believe me, he was that kind of horse."

When Arrogate was running at his best, his fitness amazed even his trainer.

"He was like iron," said Baffert. "I couldn't get that horse tired. He was never blowing (after a race), he would just take a deep breath. Even in Dubai, he came back like it was nothing."

Arrogate sired three crops at stud, and Baffert is looking forward to seeing his offspring.

"I really believed in that horse," he said. "I bred my own mares to him."

Said Douglas Erskine Crum, CEO of Juddmonte Group, "His physical and personality traits are passing very strongly to his offspring."

Arrogate, whose amazing racing career spanned just 19 months, has died at the age of 7. He was euthanized on June 2 at the Juddmonte Farms' breeding facility in Kentucky. All that was revealed is that the horse became ill.

Arrogate burst on the thoroughbred scene like an unexpected comet. Trained by Bob Baffert for Juddmonte, he broke his maiden at Santa Anita on June 5, 2016 with an eye-popping 4½ length win at a mile and a sixteenth. After a couple of allowance victories, he was entered into the Travers Stakes at Saratoga. With a fairly thin résumé, Arrogate was allowed to go off at odds of more than 11-1, but he had a little surprise for his 12 opponents. Jockey Mike Smith took him right to the front and they cut out intimidating fractions of 1:10.85 and 1:35.52. Instead of fading as most other horses might after those splits, Arrogate simply pulled away; he led by 7 lengths entering the stretch and was alone at the wire, some 13½ lengths ahead. In his wake were Preakness champion Exaggerator, and Belmont winner Creator. Arrogate's time for the mile and a quarter was 1:58.36, the fastest ever 10 furlongs ever run in 147 years at Saratoga.

He went on to win the Breeders' Cup Classic at Santa Anita, nailing California Chrome


WOODBINE

presented by WEG

Leonard Zenith, 74, grew up in Winnipeg and has been in horse racing for more than 58 years. He owns and operates Uphill Stable and for the last several years, he has sent very few horses to Woodbine, but may be more inclined to do so after winning the second race on June 6, Opening Day. His three year-old filly, Purple Scooter, she grabbed the lead early and galloped home the winner by 1½ lengths in 1:18.99 for the 6½ furlongs. Purple Scooter is trained by Rachel Halden and broke her maiden on her second try.

"She was an absolutely perfect yearling," says Zenith. "She had some size and she was extremely well conformed and she had a good walk. She did not grow into what we thought she would be. She ended up being a rather narrow individual and actually has a shortish stride. Not a really short stride but she doesn't reach for ground. And those are the negatives. What she lacks in talent she makes up for with that competitive spirit."

Zenith was pleasantly surprised at the early win.

"I thought that she would be challenged by the distance," he says frankly. "The pedigree screams on the bottom that 6 furlongs would be a stretch, but her gameness carried her home against what probably wasn't the best of stock."

Zenith has five horses right now. There's a two year-old in Kentucky and the other four are with Halden at Woodbine.

He was just 16 when he started hanging out at Assiniboia Downs.

"A friend of mine who is still a close friend worked a booth at the front of the race track," he recalls. "He sold the racing form and rented binoculars. It was a different world then. There were no TV sets, so good high-powered binoculars was a good business. I hung around with him and helped. In those days the racing form was 50 cents and I think binoculars were a dollar. We liked the environment, so we got jobs in the backstretch in the mornings, walking hots, and the romance evolved from that."

Zenith is a lawyer, so it's not surprising his memory is razor sharp. There's no thrashing in the fog when asked about the first horse he bought when he was just 18.

"It was an Ontario-bred," he says. "His name was Thorny Crown by Rounders out of Crown The Thorn, bred by J. Sebastian. We didn't have any success and we didn't know what we were doing."

A second horse named Bearded Acres did well enough to allow Zenith to purchase a horse that evokes sweet memories.

"We hit Game Boy and that was magic," he says. "It was 1970. My wife, Helen, was a teacher and she was pregnant.

Zenith hasn't quite reached his peak



Leonard Zenith with the very fast Clearly Now

She had the job, I didn't. In those days, there wasn't credit cards and the banks wouldn't look at you. But there were finance shops. One was called Beneficial Finance. Their ads used to say, 'The Big OL.' We borrowed \$600 and, with partners, bought the horse and he won three in a row and got claimed. He paid our household bills back then. It was an amazing experience which I will never forget."

Game Boy meant so much to Zenith that when the opportunity arose to buy him back, there was no second thinking.

"After I graduated in 1971, we moved to Calgary," he says. "And I found that Game Boy was running at Sandown, a racetrack in Victoria. They used to ferry the horses across from Vancouver for a three week meet. So, we bought him back and I remember so clearly that he won opening day here in Calgary. He won again before he was claimed."

Zenith formed another relationship that became even more important. Wishing to broaden his horizons, he travelled to New York in 1974.

"Allen Jerkens had a horse for sale. An old classy beautiful cripple that he bought from Calumet Farms," says Zenith. "His name was Our Cadet. Allen loved to rehabilitate them. He was an extraordinary horseman. In those days there was very little veterinary diagnostic. I bought the horse for \$12,500; Jerkens said he would train him for me until transport could be arranged. One morning he called me and said, 'The horse came back lame, so we will cancel the deal,' and I said, 'No, that wouldn't be right.' We ended up with a compromise and the compromise was \$9,500 because I wanted not only a classy race horse but if he didn't make it, I wanted a stallion to stand in Alberta because that was the new dimension for me."

With that was born a long friendship and a newly coined phrase.

"He put the label on it that we were *reverse negotiating*," chuckles Zenith. "I'm trying to make the new deal better for him and he was trying to make the new deal better for me."

Zenith estimates that he got together with Jerkens at least 40 times after that first meeting in 1974.

"Not one time did he omit to bring up reverse negotiating," says Zenith. "That was so unusual for New York."

Zenith likes to make the point that his horse purchasing was never an exact science and he's the first to point out his mistakes. When he formed Uphill Stable in 2005, the name was possibly a description of his own challenges within the game. You can make him smile, though, by talking about a horse named Clearly Now.

"That was certainly the best horse we ever owned," he says. "You must mention that Ron and Irma Desrochers

are the greatest partners in the world. They have been my partners in Uphill Stable since 2008."

Zenith is famous for underselling himself and he admits that when he was persuading the Desrochers to team up with him, he told them,

"It's inevitable that you will lose all your money," he says. "The only question is how much fun you have doing it."

"Clearly Now is the most accomplished horse that has no recognition," he states emphatically.

So, let's give him some recognition.

As a two year-old, Clearly Now won his first two races at Woodbine for the Uphill Stable. Emma-Jayne Wilson was the pilot on September 26 when Clearly Now strolled home by 1½ lengths in a special maiden weight at 6 furlongs. Then, in allowance company, Wilson and Clearly Now repeated, this time running the 6 furlongs in 1:09.68. The dark bay horse hit the board in each of his first 10 races, winning the Swale Stakes at Gulfstream in March of 2013, then the Grade III Bold Ruler Handicap at Belmont that fall. In that race, under José Lezcano, Clearly Now covered 7 furlongs in 1:21.52, but on July 5, 2014 in the Grade III Belmont Sprint Championship, Clearly Now punished 8 rivals by 6¼ lengths in the remarkable time of 1:19.96, the fastest 7 furlongs ever run at a New York Racetrack.

Then there's Lightstream who earned \$525,320.

"She was amazing," says Zenith. "She won her first race at 7 furlongs at Gulfstream and earned a 103 Beyer."

Lightstream's career was ended by a strange ligament injury in her foot, but Uphill's \$55,000 investment produced a happy ending.

"We sold her in the fall sale for \$900,000," says Zenith. "All the Beyer's got out unscathed."

Zenith just shrugs at the reality that there are very few Lightstreams and Clearly Nows in the racing world.

"I haven't had one good one in the last four years," he says. "It's been dry."

The history of Leonard Zenith and his horses is not one of amazing successes, but it is a narrative of a man who knows exactly what he enjoys.

"I love the mornings on the backside more than anything else," he says. "It's a different world. All the troubles in the real world just disappear. For me, a good cup of coffee on the backside in the morning is way better than horse racing in the afternoon. I love to watch them train and I love to get to know their personalities. There's those with skills or talent that under-perform and those with lack of talent that over-perform. You just never know what you're going to get."



Racing resumed at Woodbine Mohawk Park on Friday, June 5 and Aaron Waxman didn't have to wait in line to visit the winners circle. His horse Saskatoon, driven by Doug McNair, powered down the stretch for the 7-1 upset in the very first race.

"It was a great relief," says Waxman. "And very, very exciting. We actually had two in that race. I had one and my wife, Kelly, had another named Saulsbrook Raven. So, we had a couple of kicks at the can and it was exciting to break the ice."

Saskatoon stopped the clock in 1:52.4 and that was the four year-old's sixth win in her 29th start. Saulsbrook Raven, steered by James MacDonald, got up to be third at 23-1. So, a couple of cheques for the Waxmans.

"We bought Saskatoon back in February off of a trainer in Michigan," says Waxman. "I actually never asked them how they came up with the name. My wife's family is from Saskatchewan, so there was some geographical symmetry there. I liked the horse. She'd shown that she was a pretty versatile type and I thought she'd fit the circuit here. And the name was just kind of a coincidence."

Like many of our Owners of the Month, Waxman inherited the love of racing from his elders.

"As a kid, I was at Flamboro Downs a lot with my dad, Warren, and Chester, my grandfather," he says.

Waxman suggests an interesting theory and it's clear he does so with a sense of humour.

"I was a great math student all through elementary school and in high school and university. And I give gambling full credit for that because I was handicapping races and I understood the odds board by the time I was five years old. So, when I showed up for my grade two math test, no one else had the preparation I did. And that was from betting the horses. If it was up to me, I would include harness race handicapping and wagering as part of the school curriculum."

Waxman began owning horses shortly after he graduated from University in 2001.

"At the time my dad was racing horses as was my grandfather," he says. "I had a lot of success in my late twenties and early thirties. I had Dali. He made about a million and a half and went on to be a pretty good sire."

Dali was a great horse. He raced 77 times, with 21 wins and 41 in the money finishes. A career best mile of 1:48.2. Waxman doesn't need much prompting to identify his



most exciting experience as an owner.

"In 2007, as a two year-old, Dali won the Woodrow Wilson Pace," he says.

Luc Ouellette drove that night. Three front runners sizzled through gasping fractions of :26.3 and :54.2 and Ouellette was able to slingshot Dali from out of the pack to a convincing victory by over 2 lengths in 1:50.2. Waxman was at the Meadowlands that night.

"That would be my greatest moment," he says. "The purse was \$415,000. I was just 28, so that was a massive win. He was a great horse, but it's also heartbreaking because he set Stakes records and looked like the fastest two year-old the sport had ever seen."

If timing is everything, Dali's biggest mistake was being born in 2005.

"He was 1-9 in his elimination heat of the Metro Pace," says Waxman, and you can almost see him cringing. "He hooked up with the horse named Somebeachsomewhere and we found out pretty quickly that even with his precocious speed, Dali was no match for the absolute freak that showed up the same year."

Waxman actually has two Woodrow Wilson trophies. He had the pleasure on August 20, 2011 of watching Major Bombay pull Brian Sears to victory in 1:51.3. Major Bombay completed his athletic life with 10 wins in 49 starts and \$575,000 in the bank.

Waxman makes a point of mentioning another fine horse he owned, because there is an emotional context to this one.

"We had a horse, Rivershark," he says. "He made over a million."

Rivershark was a formidable pacing gelding who went postward 141 times, with 35 wins, 18 seconds, and 22 thirds. He won a lot of invitational and elimination heats; his biggest cheque was \$140,000 for finishing second in the 2009 Confederation Cup at Flamboro.

"My one partner on him was Carmine Fusco," says Waxman warmly. "Carmine actually passed away of the coronavirus just last March. He was only 55."

The harness racing passion clearly runs through Waxman's family.

"Yeah. My brother, Isaac, trains and drives," he says. "I'm an owner. I like studying the pedigree and I still like the math side. I take my three year-old son, Lucas, to the farm every Saturday. My wife, Kelly, has shares in several

horses."

The Waxmans are close friends with horse owner Frank Cirillo whose teenage daughter, Lori, shares ownership with several standardbreds.

"The families are very close," says Waxman. "And we're very close with Lori. We actually have a thoroughbred that Lori and Kelly own named Lucas n' Lori named after our son and Lori."

Lori and Kelly own Points North which Waxman thinks has a great future.

"Points North looks like a legitimate open horse here," he says. "He's one of the leading money-winning horses in Canada so far this year. We also own a part of Sintra and he's coming back and we're hoping for good things. He's just had bad luck after bad luck. But hopefully, he'll have a good year."

With as many as 15 horses in his barn, Waxman has many reasons to be optimistic.

"That three year-old filly, Saulsbrook Raven that ran third to Saskatoon," says Waxman.

"I'm excited about her prospects as a gold series filly this year. Mass Fortune K ran on June 8 and he was second in the top condition trot. That was his first start for us, so I was very pleased with him."

One two year-old has a special interest for Waxman.

"I have one with Tony Alagna," he says. "My grandfather on my mother's side flew Lancaster bombers in World War Two and this colt is by Captaintreacherous. So, I thought it was appropriate to name him Lancaster Bomber. Maybe we'll have some luck because of the name."

As a big sports fan, Aaron Waxman knows he'll never sink the winning basket for the Raptors or score the overtime goal for the Maple Leafs, but as a horse owner, he gets to call the big league shots.

"It's hard as a 41 year-old guy to have the thrill of being involved in professional sports," he says. "But this is like running my own little sports franchise and stock portfolio kind of blended into one. There's the financial analysis that goes into it. But then it's the thrill of the win and you also have the horse component to it that really brings it to life and gives something for my whole family to connect to. So, it's a very well-rounded hobby that provides excitement that otherwise I don't think I could ever have."

Quarter Horse Owner of the Month: Craig Spada



Craig Spada's journey into quarter horse ownership and training was quite the ride. It started with his dad, Peter.

"I was barrel racing for a number of years," says Spada. "My dad had horses in his background and, when we came over from Italy, we naturally got into some horses here. My dad went to a horse sale down in Oklahoma and bought a couple of horses and that's how we got into the sport. Meanwhile, I got too big for barrel racing. I just got too heavy to ride."

Down The Stretch needed to know...*just how big is Craig Spada now?*

"I'm at 240 pounds," he says.

Is that inconvenient for the horse?

"It's not too inconvenient on the ground because it gives you some strength," he says. "But it's certainly inconvenient if you're on their back."

We don't mean to suggest that Craig Spada is out of shape. In fact, he was an NHL referee for seven years. The players shift every 45 seconds, but the officials are on the ice for the entire game.

"Yeah, we were certainly in shape," says Spada. "Just like a player, we had training camps, working out two hours a day. It was a very intense training. We maintained a low body fat."

Does Spada see any similarity between a high maintenance hockey player and a fractious quarter horse?

"There are certainly times with an NHL player you have to be aggressive," he says. "A person has to be highly intensive to be able to play at that level and the referee is there to control things. The horses – especially the young ones – are much the same. They need to be taught and trained and sometimes they don't like what you're doing. So, the business of refereeing hockey probably never hurt me. I needed to have patience with players and now I need to have patience with horses. It certainly goes hand in hand."

(Well, at least with the horses, you don't have to worry about them going out drinking all night and chasing girls!)

The quarter horse racing season of 2012, statistically, was Spada's best year. He had 13 wins from 83 starts for earnings of \$204,938. Three of those wins came from Heros Valiant Lark who won at 11-1 at 250 yards under Danielle Dibert to open the season. Later in the year, he scored at 400 yards for rider Marty Mercieca, and just 10 days later won again, this time at 350 yards as the 8-5 choice for Mercieca.



Craig Spada with
Charlie H. Rider is
Matt Storms

Unfortunately, family difficulties dictated that Spada step back from the sport after 2012.

"My dad, Peter, was sick for a number of years and passed away from cancer," says Spada. "So, when he passed away, I was completely out of the business. Also, my wife did have two serious bouts of cancer. Brain tumor. Thanks to the NHL, I had coverage in the States. Allison had two surgeries and today is cancer free and doing really well. We've certainly had our share of setbacks, but we're looking forward to a very successful and fun year in the horse business."

As Spada anticipated the quarter horse season resuming, he had 12 horses in his barn, 10 of which he owns.

"I have a horse called Sweet Night Fever," says Spada. "He ran just four times last year and was third in the Alex Picov Futurity. He's looking like a pretty strong durable horse. I also have one by the name of Do You Good."

Do You Good is now a three year-old gelding and he got the most out of three starts in 2019. His first race produced a third at 300 yards. He was second in his next start, beaten just a head at 300 yards and, just two weeks later, carried Cory Spataro to victory at the same distance.

"I also have a filly named Jess A Sweet Supriz," he adds. "She's done really well for us in the past couple of years. There's a spring series here with Ajax from 100 and 110 yards starting to 220 and 250 That will set up really nice for her, so I know she's going to be very difficult to beat."

Jess A Sweet Supriz had one win in 2019. Under rider Cassandra Jeschke, she flew home at 300 yards to win by half a length in 15.510, paying \$5.20 and enriching Spada by \$5,060 in purse money.

In so much as Peter Spada passed on the love of quarter horse racing to his son, Craig is doing the same to his 19 year-old daughter, Lauren.

"My daughter's very involved now," he says. "She does all the ponying and some galloping. She certainly has the bug, just like I do, and it's exciting to have her involved in the horses. She's starting to give me a little too much direction at times, but other than that, we're doing pretty good together."

Spada has brought in a full-time exercise guy to handle all his horses this summer.

"His name is Matt Storms," says Spada. "He's from a barrel racing background and he's been doing a great job. It's nice to have a full-time person, especially with the 12 horses at the track here. Our full-time rider will be Cory Spataro. He'll do all the race riding for us."

The pandemic is merely the third crisis in the last 10 years to befall quarter horse racing. In 2013, the Liberals ended the Slots At Racetracks Program and that turned off a great flow of cash. Then, just before the last Provincial election, the Liberals threatened to close down Ajax Downs in favour of a larger casino in nearby Pickering. When Doug Ford was elected, one of the first things he did was assure that the Ajax Downs slots and the quarter horse racing would remain in place. And then, of course, there is the pandemic. One wonders if the sport can survive massive hit after hit. Spada thinks it can.

"The big part of the quarter horse business is that it consists of middle-class families that don't necessarily rely mainly on the business for their income," he says. "Some people do it full-time, but I believe there is a vast majority of us that have companies and jobs and this is secondary income for us."

Spada has done well in the real estate world, but he'd be the first to tell you that the speedballs at Ajax Downs is the best way to get to his happy place.

"It's the equivalent of drag racing," he claims. "The thrill of the stretch run – that's what makes quarter horse racing great!"

Fonner Park's glorious two months



Ellis Collibns photo

On Wednesday, May 27, the five year-old mare, Ebony Nights, carried jockey Armando Martinez to victory in the ninth and final race and that is how the 40 day meet at Fonner Park came to an end. It was two months of racing that vaulted the little racetrack to international attention. On March 23, while many other racetracks in North America elected to suspend racing because of COVID-19, Fonner Park found a way to let the horses run, while keeping fans from entering the track. As a result, the racing channels, including Canada's HPI, picked up the Fonner signal and horse players around the world began funnelling their action into the Grand Island, Nebraska track.

"We have been delighted and flattered, specifically with the Canadians who have been playing and watching our racing, and that that has made us very proud," says Chris Kotulak, the CEO of Fonner Park. "It's really has been a heck of a ride. We have coined quite a few phrases along the way - 'The little track that could' - certainly being one of them. We had some terrific highlights and mutuel handles, specifically, that will never be repeated and we understand that. We certainly relished it along the way and the party started to wind down in the last couple of weeks when other racetracks came online and we knew that would happen. But, we sure enjoyed it and embraced it and we're

grateful for it."

With tracks like Woodbine, Aqueduct, Churchill Downs, and Santa Anita not taking action, Fonner Park was the beneficiary of the bettors' interests.

"On May 26, around the sixth or the seventh race, our 2020 all sources mutuel handle exceeded \$100 million," says Kotulak. "Last year in 2019, our all sources mutuel handle was just over \$12 million."

The response from around the world to Fonner Park was so spectacular that an extra 12 days was added to its normal schedule.

"Well, it was extremely important to us," says Kotulak. "It came about because we first started this racing with no spectators and shifting from a Friday, Saturday, Sunday schedule over to the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. That was only on a two-week trial period because we didn't know if we were going to be accepted or if we were going to have our head handed to us. The very first day, we had \$1.3 million wagered and that broke all of our mutuel handle records in the first day, so we knew we were onto something. After that first week of racing, our next six or seven weeks of racing, the average mutuel handle was \$3.5 million, so we had found our niche. We had an all-time record high betting day on April 7 with \$7.2 million.

That included a \$4.1 million total pool in our Dinsdale Late Pick Five Jackpot Wager."

One thing that made a good impression on people tuning into the Fonner Park product was the work of track announcer Steve Anderson. The race calls were energetic, accurate, and professional. Apparently, the people who run the track are prepared to overlook some of Anderson's idiosyncratic behaviour to get his skilled announcing.

"This was the 16th or 17th year that he's called our races," says Kotulak about Anderson. "He's a guy that every day is delighted that he is the race caller at Fonner Park. He grew up in Grand Island. He started going to the races as a kid. He is certainly not your conventional announcer. He'll carry on a narrative throughout the day, the year, the decade. He just sort of rambles on and prattles on and we give him a lot of stick for it. But he has so much passion and interest in our operation, so we just kind of let it go. You know we say, 'That's our boy Steve.'"

It was an amazing two months of very positive attention for Fonner Park and there should be the small benefit of thousands of race fans who, at least, now know about this competent little racetrack. Kotulak admits the notoriety was a once in a lifetime event.

"As far as the betting, next year's racing will, without a doubt, be anti-climax," he conceded. "We will be hoping that we can get close to that \$12 million mark that we did in 2019. Even so, Fonner Park is still very special. We sell out every Saturday here at the races and there are very few racetracks in the United States and Canada that routinely sell out every Saturday of their race meet. And we do that here in the park. We had not even begun to get into the big promotions, the big high attendance days at our race track. And so, actually, it won't be an anti-climax next year because we didn't have those events this year."

There's a real Rocky Balboa theme to Fonner Park. Against all odds and, in a circumstance, no one could have predicted it jumped to the front of the line and went toe to toe with the biggest racetracks in the world.

"I think what I'm most proud of is when we showed ourselves and our product to the world, people realized, 'Hey Fonner Park is not some bush track in the middle of somewhere in the United States'," says Kotulak. "Yes, we are a little track and our racing quality is certainly inferior to most, but we are a tidy, efficient, well-run operation here. People saw us and said, 'Hey, Fonner Park, I think I'll give them a look sometime again.'"



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Get into a harness race with Catch Driver



Ryan Clements,
creator of Catch Driver

If anyone has the DNA to create a realistic harness racing app, it's 34 year-old Ryan Clements. Clements is the grandson of Norm Clements, who owned the sensational Cam Fella. Cam Fella was a two-time Horse of the Year in North America. As a three year-old he won 12 of 14 starts; then as a four year-old, he finished first 30 times in 36 races. He ended his career on a 28-race win streak, the last win coming in the fall of 1983 at Greenwood.

"My dad and my grandfather would have been there,"

says Clements. "It was three years before I was born, so I wish I could have been there."

The game is called Catch Driver and it allows the player to sit in the sulky and control a harness horse against several other competitors.

"It's a mobile game on your phone," says Clements. "You can play it just by going to your app store or Google play store and typing in Catch Driver and it'll come up. It's free to download and it is a mobile multiplayer harness racing game. You push the go

button and it pairs you up with people from all around the world and you are operating the sulky. You've got two reins. You got one to use with your left thumb and one that you use with your right thumb. You control it just like you would if you were sitting in a sulky. You pull back on the lines to slow down and pull on the left line to turn left, just like if you were actually in a race."

And though he wasn't around when Cam Fella was terrorizing his competition, Clements can still get you behind that famous pacer.

"We've a whole collection of horses," he says. "We have Cam Fella in the game and we have Foiled Again. We have a lot of those legendary horses and we've also got some made up ones."

If you get very good in Catch Driver, you might find yourself actually competing against the very best harness drivers in the world.

"In our biggest championship, you have to be a Pro Series driver. These are our elite," says Clements. "Every month, the top qualifying drivers get to compete in the Catch Driver championships. It's like the Breeders Crown of the virtual racing world. In one of the Catch Driver Championships, half the field was comprised of actual top drivers like Tim Tetrick and Aaron Merriman."

Like the real sport of harness racing, Catch Driver is gaining momentum around the globe.

"We have now had over 100,000 downloads," says Clements. "It's been popular in places we never expected. There have been thousands of uses in Italy and it's been played everywhere Europe, Australia, New Zealand and, of course, North America is still the biggest for us."



New dates for Standardbred Stakes

On May 25, Woodbine Entertainment announced new dates for several Standardbred Stakes to be held this season at Woodbine Mohawk Park. The Stakes rescheduling only impacts events that were originally slated for May or June. All other races remain the same on the 2020 Stakes calendar.

As previously announced, the \$1 million Pepsi North America Cup for three year-old pacers has been rescheduled to Saturday, August 29.

The Fan Hanover (Three Year-Old Filly Pace), Roses Are Red (Mare Pace), and Armbrø Flight (Mare Trot) have all been rescheduled to join the Pepsi North America

Cup on Saturday, August 29.

Eliminations (if necessary) for all four events will take place on Saturday, August 22.

The Goodtimes for three year-old trotting colts has been rescheduled to Saturday, September 5. Eliminations (if necessary) will be held on Friday, August 28.

The Somebeachsomewhere for three year-old pacers has been rescheduled to Saturday, September 12.

The final event to be rescheduled is the SBOA Stakes for Ontario sired three-year-old fillies. The SBOA will now take place on Saturday, November 14 with eliminations (if necessary) scheduled for Saturday,

November 7.

Woodbine Mohawk Park will no longer play host to a leg of The Meadowlands administrated Miss Versatility Series (originally scheduled May 29) or Graduate Series (originally scheduled June 6) in 2020.

The Meadowlands has confirmed with Woodbine their intentions to reschedule the Mohawk Park leg of the Miss Versatility for later this season at the New Jersey track, while the Graduate Series leg has been cancelled due to scheduling constraints.

Live Racing, without spectators, resumed on Friday, June 5 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

For love of Chocolate



between horse and rider. So much so that wherever Chocolateforlunch went, so did Shana Lopez.

"It just so happened that she got claimed from a couple of different barns and whatever barn she ended up in, I followed her, and I ended up making a deal with the trainer so that I could continue to gallop her," recalls Lopez. "I wanted to follow her career. There was just a connection between me and her."

Although Chocolateforlunch raced primarily in claiming races, she ended up carving out a pretty impressive career. Between September 2008 and October 2009, she raced 12 times, posting seven wins and four second-place finishes. On September 21, 2008, with Melanie Pinto aboard, the four year-old scored at 6 furlongs at Fort Erie. It was a \$7,000 claim race, but the following year, in July, Chocolateforlunch carried Rui Pimentel to victory in the \$28,750 Fort Erie Slots Cup, also at 6 furlongs. Her final race came in the fall of 2010 and her record shows nine wins in 36 starts with \$123,080 in the bank.

"She ended up winning as Champion Older Mare and Champion Sprinter down at Fort Erie," says Lopez. "After she was retired, I assumed she went off to breed and I sort of lost track of her."

Chocolateforlunch ran for the last time in August 2010. Four years later, Lopez got some distressing news.

"In 2014 I got a call from a good friend of mine, Alison McDougall," says Lopez. "She said, 'I think we found a horse that you used to know in a kill pen'. She'd been purchased by a slaughter buyer from the Olex auction and Alison sent me a picture. I knew right away that it was Chocolateforlunch, so I said, 'What do we have to do to get her?'"

There was a serious time issue here. If Chocolateforlunch was not rescued, a truck would be taking the unfortunate animal to slaughter. Lopez needed to raise 'bail' money and she had to find a safe place for the mare.

"Being a single mom at the time, I didn't have the funds," says Lopez.

She did however have the connections.

"Mike and Lorraine Fletcher had contacted me," she says. "They're small time breeders and said that they've been trying to purchase her and were unsuccessful. So, they said that if they paid the bail, they would keep her and do some breeding. And when she was ready to retire, they would contact me."

At that moment, it was time to play 'beat the clock'.

"We probably had two to three hours to get the money to the kill buyer before that truck would load up," says Lopez. "Two hours, three hours tops, before she would have been loaded onto the trailer and headed for slaughter."

Saving a horse from being killed is a mixed bag. Not exactly Spiderman swooping in to catch the young lady before she plummets from a skyscraper.

"A lot of these kill buyers - what they tend to do is hold the horses purposely to get them sold for bail money," says Lopez. "It's all a money game. One hand washes the other. We pay the bail because it pulls on our heartstrings, but we're actually putting money in the pockets of the meat buyers so they can buy some more."

Lopez certainly had mixed emotions when she was reunited with Chocolateforlunch.

"She was covered head to toe in lice," she says. "We had to put hazmat suits on. She was extremely malnourished and very weak. But when I walked around the corner and called 'Chocolate,' you could just see the light still in her eyes and she knew that she was safe."

For about five years, Chocolateforlunch had a much more comfortable and fruitful existence. She was bred a few times and treated appropriately.

"Mike and Lorraine did a wonderful job in a re-feeding program and getting her healthy and happy before they bred her," says Lopez. "They maintained an amazing nutrition program with her."

So, let's bring this story full circle. Chocolateforlunch is now 16 and, in the process of down-sizing their operation, Mike and Lorraine Fletcher decided that her career as a broodmare was coming to an end. They asked Shana Lopez if she would like to have the mare. She didn't have to think twice.

"She's fat and round and happy and healthy," says Lopez with a huge smile. "Her status now is that she is enjoying things. She may be 16, but she looks and acts like a six year-old."

This story is ample proof that Shana Lopez loves horses. But here's some more evidence. Lopez has a seven year-old daughter, whom she named....after a famous racehorse.

"Her name is Zenaiya," says Lopez. "Every one who knows me knows that horses are my heart. Zenyatta was a magnificent creature and an amazing racehorse and I could say none the less of my daughter."

Shana Lopez describes herself as 'lovestruck for horses.' This story will do nothing to contradict that.

"I began as a groom, exercise rider, and hot walker," she says. "I do it all."

In 2006, when she was just 26, Lopez met a charismatic, if high-strung, filly named Chocolateforlunch.

"I was galloping that winter up at Buttigieg's training center," she says. "It was time to start up all the two year-olds and she was just this little thing that still had a way to grow and I ended up being her rider. I continued to exercise her when I was freelancing down at the track for Steve Attard."

Chocolateforlunch was apparently a handful, but Lopez finds herself attracted to the feisty ones.

"She was weird," laughs Lopez. "She had her ways. She wasn't easy to ride. She wasn't easy to get to and from the track and really needed somebody who knew her. She was just a quirky filly and I tended to get along with the quirky ones."

There was an emotional and physical bond

Tweaking the Woodbine product By Ric Chapman

The one obvious thing that Woodbine CEO Jim Lawson and his family members employed by WEG have done is get our sport back up and running, oh, and find TSN as an ally.

For instance, we saw day one of the nation-wide TSN Racing Night Live coverage of the dual code Thursday night reach 123,000 fans and that grew the following week. Jason Portuondo, Laura Diakun, Chad Rozema, and Jim Lawson's daughter Brodie, work well in keeping us and the new watchers, informed and entertained.

The release of the app Dark Horse, which I've downloaded and recommend at the same time, has been intriguingly helpful, too.

When you throw in the countless media pit stops Lawson has undertaken as additional helpful reasons to get the sport up and going during this difficult, historic time, you see committed people who love the sport in action.

Now, when all that's combined and looked at – it has worked. The success, of course, has been helped by the fact horse racing has pretty much no other rival in North America for the wagering dollar or for the eyes of the sports-hungry fans during that time.

At the comparable time last year, mid week Woodbine thoroughbred races were turning over with both on and off-track handles, around \$2,212,657. So far Thursday night racing (comparing apples with apples as mid week racing) without the benefit of a live crowd feeding the machines, is up a staggering \$600,000!

And even better the first Sunday back, when compared with the corresponding Sunday last year, was up \$1million!

So, we have, ostensibly, a return to the good old days when thoroughbred racing was actually thriving. Handle was up 25 years ago, people watching was up back then in similar numbers as they are today, and once the Ontario government allows fans back to the track, even more money should flow in.

Or will it?

By then, of course, other sports will be back and the eyes of sports fans will turn to them. With no main stream media coverage planned to help keep the healthy fan attention on racing continuing there is, historically, every reason we will go back to losing money.

So, how do we keep this newly acquired, cashed-up fanbase interested in thoroughbred racing in Canada?

Well, a few tweaks and we can.

Firstly, tidy up and open up off track Champions Lounges. Make them places of comfort. Turn the volume of the racing up so punters can get engaged. Simple, but effective, move.

Secondly, WEG needs to pay money if it has to, but get the major newspapers to cover racing regularly. That would be the Saturday fields published in the papers every Saturday morning, along with tips. Then post-meeting stories covering the horses and people who had success over the weekend in Monday morning's edition.

But thirdly, and this is the most important one – adapt to the landscape/culture of sport watching.

I believe the days of racing on Saturday and Sunday starting at 1 pm, like every other racetrack in North America, are over. It cannibalizes our sport.

Statistics undertaken in the U.S., specifically regarding the wagering desires of punters, clearly shows we need to change race scheduling on the weekend.

And Woodbine can and should do it. It's one thing to stick out your chests and pat yourself on the back about leading the way in important areas of racing change, it's another to actually be brave enough to do it.

Look at the findings which would be pertinent to Woodbine going forward.

- A major dilution of the wagering dollar problem is found in overlapping race schedules, which make it hard for off-track bettors and fans to bet in time. For example, in 2010 more than 77% of races at top tracks – like Woodbine, Belmont, Churchill

Downs, Del Mar, etc.–occurred within five minutes of a race at another major track on the weekend.

- These overlaps considerably reduce handle. As an example, stunning results showed up when analyzing three Grade I Stakes races that occurred within 22 minutes of each other at Oaklawn, Keeneland, and Aqueduct last year. Had these races been spaced out to occur at least 25 minutes apart, they would have generated 7% more handle in total, with each participating track significantly better off.

Here we are in 2020 with handle up as racetracks re-open, and what is Woodbine doing? It's running its races at the same weekend time slot as per normal, when other tracks are already racing or about to start racing. They are taking attention from each other, confusing fans and bettors, and devaluing our product.

And what's the point of being an agent provocateur if you have no solutions?

So here is my idea.

Race when no-one else does on the weekend.

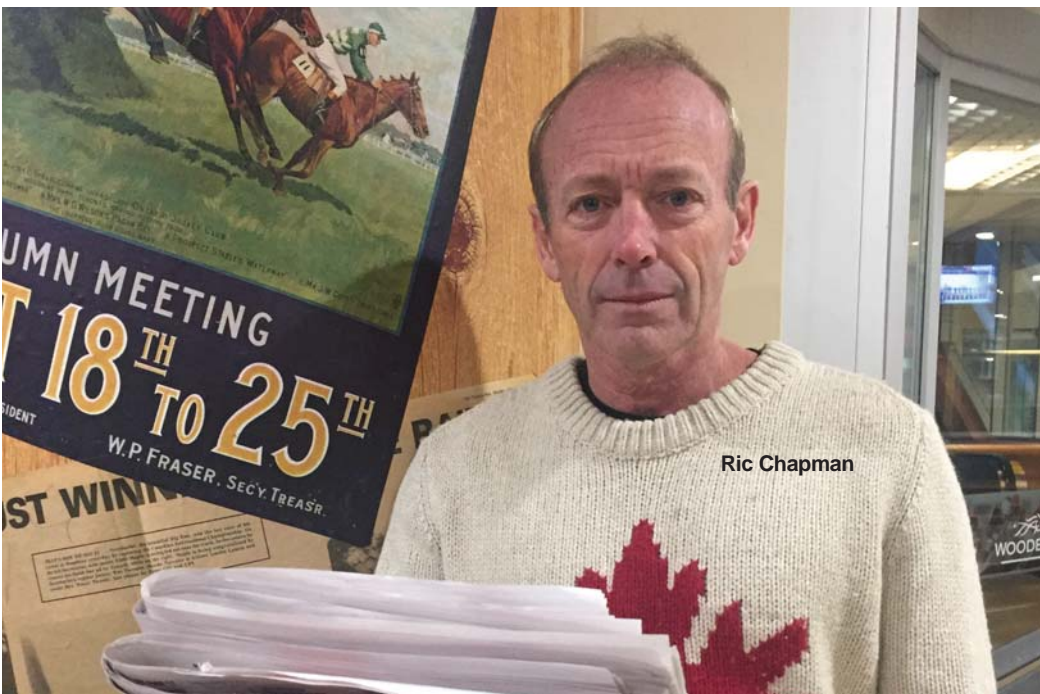
Start the card at 6:45pm both days. There is brilliant daylight in Ontario until just past 9pm each summer night, so a twilight meeting would serve many purposes.

1. It would attract people who are looking to have a night out. They would join the regular racegoers, bolstering attendance and handle.
2. There would be minimum overlap as we've seen in the above study, thus bolstering handle significantly.
3. It would have Woodbine racing in a time slot on the other side of the world where they would be alone. In huge betting countries like Australia, Hong Kong, and even little New Zealand, scheduling weekend racing to start at 6:45pm would mean it starts at 8:45am in Australia; 11:45am New Zealand. And it would be 6:45am in Hong Kong. And in each time slot – with no rivals for the competing dollar. With all three of those betting nations relying heavily on their many and spectacular off-track betting shops, Woodbine international handle percentage would sky-rocket.
4. And as we have seen on the TSN Thursday production, Woodbine looks spectacular in the late afternoon sun.

Those are ways to generate significant increase in revenue for WEG – which then can be turned into purse money increases for Ontario owners, trainers etc.

And then there's the domino effect – greater interest at yearling sales - and that helps the Ontario breeders.

It's a simple fix. We have our largest audience in years now watching the Woodbine thoroughbred product. What would it hurt to just reschedule the weekend races, once other sports and other American racetracks start competing, and avail yourself of guaranteed handle?





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Little Hanover thinking big

by Garnet Barnsdale



Nobody has worked harder in Ontario in 2020 to promote their on-track product than the new management team at Hanover Raceway and it's paid off handsomely so far.

General Manager Steve Fitzsimmons indicated he is elated with the response to several new promotional initiatives which have led to handle jumping by more than double, even though the racing is happening in front of empty stands.

"We're quite thrilled with the interest in our product in the first two race dates and our handles," Fitzsimmons beamed. "There's no question that our Board of Directors' decision to move to the 2 pm afternoon post time and away from some of the bigger players on Saturday night has paid dividends."

Consider that Hanover Raceway's typical Saturday night crowd bet an average of \$26,000 last year. Through two weeks of the 2020 meet - with betting only available online through the Horseplayer Interactive website - the 1/2-mile track handled an average of \$66,000. Those wagering numbers represent the highest bet at Hanover since 1991. In addition to moving to an afternoon post time and not having to compete with big guns Meadowlands Racetrack and Woodbine Mohawk Park, here's how they are doing it:

- Hanover has embraced and utilized every form of media they could find, starting with switching their video feed to High Definition. They have also been extremely active on social media and are showing the race feed on Facebook Live, starting with a pre-game show at 1:30 p.m.
- They have partnered with Ryan Clements of Farm Games - creator of racing game apps Catch Driver and Off and Pacing - to create a \$2,000 guaranteed "Catch Driver Pick 4" which starts in Race One. They heavily promote this Pick 4 on social media utilizing local star bettors like Tommy "Hammer" Massis who recently took down a \$1.17 million pot on a multi-race bet on Hong Kong Races. The pool drew \$2,900 in its first go, close to 50% more than the guarantee.
- They hired a young assistant - Tony Elliott - who is social media savvy, passionate, and energetic; and tirelessly promotes the track's product and new features and innovations.
- They've added contests such as the weekly Survivor which offers a prize of a \$100 HPI deposit to whoever can pick a horse that finishes in the money in the most consecutive races starting with the first, and Ryan Clements Catch Driver Showdown competition which offers prizes to the drivers based on mutuel prices paid on horses that they drive.
- Because they race in the afternoon, they have attracted some star power: Mohawk Park drivers like Doug McNair - who leads the nation in earnings - and Scott Young.

They may have been a bit lucky at the start of their meet, Fitzsimmons admitted.

"We've been fortunate to have no direct competition from the U.S. in the first two weeks, which changes this week with both Pocono Downs and the Meadows coming back on stream," he explained. "That said, we've worked very hard on increasing both the content level, as well as the quality of our broadcast product. With my television background, I knew coming to this job that it was an area I wanted to address, as far as what I wanted our product to look like. To accomplish my goals, we built a new TV studio and have upgraded to streaming our product in HD on Facebook, YouTube, as well as our website. We had a goal to make our product as accessible as we could and at the highest level of quality we could."

Fitzsimmons was quick to heap praise on Elliott for his efforts.

"If the secret isn't out on Tony Elliott yet, I expect it won't be much longer before the industry realizes what a bright, young future star he's going to be," he said of the 20 year-old. "His passion for this industry and Hanover Raceway have been a pleasure to be around and he's had some great ideas that we've implemented and that have made our track better. He's done a very nice job in his first chance to be an on-air broadcaster and he'll continue to improve and grow, as he gets more experience."

Clements also gets some love from Fitzsimmons.

"We've been very happy to partner with Ryan Clements and Farm Games on a few ventures this season. They bring tremendous value to the table for us and we're both interested in growing the sport and our business."

Realizing that the handle jump is nice, but at well under \$100,000 per card, where does Hanover Raceway go from here to try to get to that elusive number? Fitzsimmons thinks they will get a handle boost by default when they open the doors to their regular clientele again and he probably isn't wrong, considering the demographics involved. A typical crowd at the track is elderly and sits on their lawn chairs by the rail, enjoying a summer night out at the races, betting \$2 or \$5 a race. Hanover's show pools have often been bigger than their win pools in the past. Much of the \$66,000 being bet online likely isn't coming from this crowd during the pandemic.

"We believe that a significant portion of our fans have either been unable or unwilling to sign up for an HPI Bet account and when our business returns to normal, we'll receive a bump in handle from them returning," Fitzsimmons noted. "We also believe that introducing the 15% low takeout Pick 4 has and will continue to bring us a different segment of wagering customer that we've never had before, sampling our product, and we're hopeful they will enjoy it and make some money and return to bet again."

One thing seems certain. If the desired subsequent handle increases don't come, it won't be because of a lack of effort from Hanover Raceway's dynamic new management team.



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ODDITIES & ENTITIES

She got the message

The four year-old filly, Socially Astray, demonstrated the correct behaviour in the first race at Gulfstream on May 16. It was a maiden claimer for fillies and mares at a distance of 5½ furlongs and, with jockey Mario Fuentes calling the shots, Socially Astray stayed conveniently wide around the far turn. In the stretch, as per all health protocols, she moved more than six feet ahead of all her rivals, winning by 1¼ lengths in 1:07.24. She paid \$6.20 which will buy about six disposable three-layer facemasks at the local Walmart.

Track photographer Clive Cohen took this intimidating shot of driver Doug McNair, playing it safe during qualifying at Mohawk



Tampa Bay trainer Joseph Arboritanza is clearly the Greatest Of All Trainers. He even lets his goat have an ice bath



Kentucky Derby 2020



Jockey outwits his competition

During a 2400 metre grass race on June 8 at Dieppe in France, veteran jockey Pierre-Charles Boudot employed some extraordinary insight, purposely taking Tancarville to the extreme outside where he knew the turf was much more receptive. The ploy worked brilliantly, as Tancarville gained several lengths on his rivals and ended up winning by 7 lengths.

“That was an enterprising move by P-C Boudot,” praised the announcer. “Take a bow. What a ride!”



Bet on science...or not

A two year-old colt, Fauci, named after the well-known doctor and immunologist who has been advising about the COVID-19 pandemic, ran for the first time on June 3, opening day at Belmont. It was a maiden race at 5 furlongs with a purse of \$64,000. Under rider Tyler Gaffalione, Fauci went off as the even-money favourite, but lost by almost 5 lengths when the second choice, Prisoner (Irad Ortiz), led all the way and refused to be restrained. Many cynics of science believe the 1-2 finish of Prisoner-Fauci is an apt description of the current news cycle.