

Gingras Hopes For Best With Pierce

When driver Yannick Gingras lines up behind the gate in post 5 in Saturday night's 12th race at the Meadowlands, he will have a Pierce in front of him and a Pierce to the left of him.

In the \$12,500 conditioned pace, Gingras is driving the 3-year-old gelding Pierce for trainer Jimmy Takter, and when he looks left he will see the pacer's namesake, driver Ron Pierce, who will be in the sulky behind Recharge in post 4. Unlike Pierce the driver, who has won more than 9,000 races, Pierce the horse is still in search of his first victory after 11 attempts.

"He's a very, very fast horse but he is hard to handle," said Gingras. "He can get really grabby at times and other times he's not. It just depends what Pierce you get that night. If he lets you drive him, he's a very competitive horse. No doubt he could beat that bunch (Saturday), but it's always which one shows up."

A son of Well Said, Pierce is out of the Real Artist mare Maeve Hanover, who won the 2008 Princess Series final at Woodbine. Sold as a yearling for \$80,000 as Marvel Hanover, Takter changed

"It just depends what Pierce you get that night. If he lets you drive him, he's a very competitive horse!"

—Yannick Gingras

the name on behalf of the ownership group of Brixton Medical Ab, Joyce McClelland, RAW Equine Inc. and his wife, Christina.

Pierce's racing career began last summer on the Pennsylvania Sires Stakes trail with little success. After failing to earn a check his first four starts, Pierce finished fourth three consecutive times, including a Reynolds division at Tioga Downs and a Bluegrass division at The Red Mile. He then earned a mark of 1:50.1 with a qualifying victory in Lexington.

That led to Takter starting Pierce in the Breeders Crown eliminations at Pocono Downs, but he failed to advance to the final. The trainer then turned to Pierce the driver to direct Pierce the horse in an Oct. 27 overnight at Harrah's Philadelphia, which resulted in a second-place finish by a neck as the 3-5 betting favorite.

"He's a fast horse but he's his worst enemy," said Takter. "The reason I kept him racing is because I don't believe

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WHAT'S INSIDE . . .

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horses change on their own. You have to teach them to change. He's heading in the right direction. But he's still a project."

Takter was in the bike himself in Pierce's last start on Jan. 4 at the Meadowlands. Leaving from post 8, Pierce made the front in an opening quarter of :27.1, and then set fractions of :54.3 and 1:23.1 before getting passed late in the stretch and settling for second in a 1:51.4 mile.

"Last week Jimmy drove him and I watched him and he seemed pretty good in the post parade, but the minute he got to the gate he just charged it," said Gingras. "When he's in that kind of mood you just can't hold him. And the front is not ideally his best game." — *By Gordon Waterstone*

Saunders Has High Hopes For Sweet Justice

When the 4-year-old gelding Sweet Justice won the top trot at the Meadowlands Friday night, Jan. 3, in a career-best 1:51.1, some might have been shocked even though the horse had four straight wins at the Meadowlands going into the race.

Even before the fast mile, Sweet Justice's trainer, Bruce Saunders, had come to the conclusion that Sweet Justice might be able to compete with the very best.

"He's just a horse that has advanced every start," said Saunders, who added that the horse will be nominated to the top stakes for older trotters this year.

Sweet Justice had won four straight races in the "B" class at the Meadowlands before moving to the top-class \$30,000 contest. With John Campbell driving, the 4-1 third choice Sweet Justice was fifth before moving to the outside in the final turn and out-dueling favorite Quick Deal to the wire by three-quarters of a length.

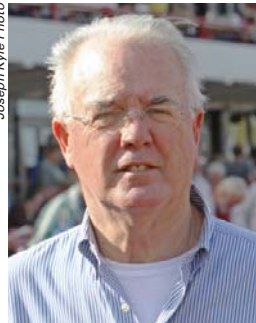
"He was very good last week and got a very good trip," said Saunders.

"John (Campbell) tugged the right line at the three-quarter pole so he didn't get trapped in as he has a lot of confidence in him. We were delighted."

While Saunders and others now see plenty of talent in Sweet Justice, the trainer said he had no expectations he was buying a free-for-all trotter when he had the final bid at \$25,000 for the horse at last fall's Standardbred Horse Sale Company auction at Harrisburg.

"I thought he was worth quite a bit more than we paid, but he had a lot of wins and so he didn't fit a lot of races, but of course I had no idea he could be this good," said Saunders of his acquisition for longtime clients Bill Matz and Cary Potkin (M & M Harness Racing LLC). "I started watching him race at Hoosier Park and he was very good in a late-closing series there."

Ohio horseman Steve Carter developed Sweet Justice, a son of Justice Hall and Sugar, a sister to Super Shann, the



Joseph Kyle Photo

"Sweet Justice was just a ready-made colt."

— Bruce Saunders



Michael Lisa/Lisa Photo

Sweet Justice

WEEKEND FEATURED RACES

Friday, January 10

All times listed are local.

7:34p M2 **F&M A2/1/A/FFA** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

8:50p YR6 **F&M Open** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

9:30p YR8 **Open** Trot [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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Saturday, January 11

8:50p YR6 **Open** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

8:51p M6 **B1/A2/A1/FFA** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

9:30p YR8 **Preferred** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

10:27p M12 **Conditioned** Pace [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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dam of top trotters Housethatruthbuilt and Master Lavec, and was racing the Indiana-sired youngster at Hoosier Park.

Sweet Justice finished second in a 2012 Indiana Sires Stakes final and then last year was fifth and sixth in the two \$200,000 contests at Hoosier Park. When he left Carter's barn to head east, Sweet Justice had four wins in 20 starts, numbers that increased to eight-for-24 at year's end.

"Sweet Justice was just a ready-made colt," added Saunders, who also enjoyed prior success with another Carter horse, Psilvuheartbreaker. "Steve did a great job with him. I only made some simple changes, changing his bridle and his trotting hobbles. He was wearing the new style trotting hobbles and some horses don't like those."

Saunders said Sweet Justice was bought to campaign mostly at Yonkers, once enough time had passed so he wouldn't be handicapped by the money on his card. When the horse stepped up his game, the plan changed.

"I really don't want to wear him out this winter," said Saunders. "Since we'll be putting him in the aged classic events, and I know it will be tough, we're going to race him with that schedule in mind."

"It will get tougher as the year goes on, but hopefully he gets a little bigger and stronger. We know he has enough speed to go with them, and he's shown courage in a few of his starts."

Sweet Justice was forced to remain in his stall at Saunders' base at Magical Acres Training Center this weekend as his Big M race didn't fill. Saunders appears content with the situation.

"The likelihood that the class will fill on a regular basis is slim, but it's not the worst thing in the world," he said. "If I can race him once or twice in a month I'd be happy. We'll just see how things come together." — By Kathy Parker

Is The Big M Answer “Blowin’ In The Wind?”

One big question regarding the change in location of the start/finish line at the Meadowlands when the new racetrack opened on Nov. 23 was the impact of wind direction on the races themselves.

The reversal of the racetrack meant the reversal of wind direction at different points in the race. But has the wind played a different role since the change? Yannick Gingras and David Miller, two of the track’s leading drivers, are still not sure.

“If you have a headwind finishing maybe you don’t want to leave, but that means you’re going to have to go into that wind coming home.”

– Yannick Gingras

Since the newly-configured Big M opened on Nov. 23, there have been 156 races contested over 12 nights of racing, and Miller has driven in all but four. Miller has 19 wins to place him third on the

standings behind Gingras, who has 33 wins in 144 starts.

The website www.biggameweather.com has done a study on the wind factor for sporting events, including conditions at the MetLife Stadium located at the Meadowlands. The study notes that winds in the area most often come from the northwest, which blows toward the horses into the homestretch. Winds less frequently come from the northeast, which would push horses home, and if they do come from that direction, they rarely are strong winds.

Although the study shows differences in wind direction, Miller and Gingras have slightly different views on the wind factor.

“I have noticed that if the wind is howling it will take a toll,” said Miller. “The first couple races I pay attention, and I’ve noticed that if the wind is blowing in your face finishing, if you used your horse pretty hard to get into position, he’s not going to finish good. Other than that, it’s hard to say you have to be here or you have to be there; as long as you have a good horse you can still race him according to how the race is going.

“I try to use it as a factor. Sometimes you just have the best horse and it doesn’t matter what you do. But it plays into my thinking.”

Gingras, who had a six-win night at the Meadowlands on Jan. 3, downplays a major role for the wind.

“Nah, I leave with everything anyway,” Gingras said with a laugh when told of Miller’s comments about the wind factor. “If you have a headwind finishing maybe you don’t want to leave, but that means you’re going to have to go into that wind coming home. One way or another, you’re going to have to face the wind. I just try to put my horses in the right spot. You have to drive a horse the way he needs to be driven.

“I don’t think it’s been a factor so far. The wind hasn’t been that bad and I think the racetrack has been playing fair. Horses have been winning from everywhere.”

Miller said he has noticed one difference in race strategy with the new racetrack: “When we raced in the other direction you didn’t want to be on top or first-over. We tried to



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not be fighting the wind and keep the horse covered. But you can’t strictly go into a race worrying about the wind. It’s like kicking a field goal into the wind, sometimes you just have to do it.” — *By Gordon Waterstone*



Say Goodbye To Super Stakes Sunday

Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association executive vice president Ron Battoni confirmed to harnessracing.com Monday afternoon (Jan. 6) that the \$2 million Super Stakes Sunday program that had been contested at Harrah's Philadelphia since 2007, and moved to Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs last August, has been taken off the 2014 schedule.

Battoni said the decision to take the Battle of the Brandywine for 3-year-old colt pacers, the Colonial for 3-year-old colt trotters, and the Valley Forge for 3-year-old filly pacers off the calendar was strictly a business decision and not as a result of any decline in Pennsylvania slots revenue.

"The races were supposed to be rotated back to Chester this year," explained Battoni. "I met with the people there over the last couple of weeks, and the problem is that they couldn't guarantee me the clubhouse would be open that day. That makes it very difficult to have people come there and not have a place to go. It's been closed for the last couple years. They opened it the year before for Super Stakes Sunday, but they no longer open it at all.

"I need a clubhouse to put people in. I explained to them nicely that we would need a commitment that that part of the facility would be open. They couldn't guarantee it but they did say we could use the event center, which is down toward the head of the stretch with no view of the racetrack. For people to get through a crowd that day to even get to the winner's circle would be a monumental task."

Battoni said there was no consideration in keeping the races at Pocono this year, mostly as a result of situations in the dining room and ballroom that arose last October on Breeders Crown Night.

"At Pocono, I would have had to stretch some dollars, but with the way the Breeders Crown went over this past year...it's just not worth the aggravation.

"We had some experiences on Breeders Crown night that we really didn't appreciate and management was very disappointed too. For people to come here and complain what table they are sitting at. We gave them the entire clubhouse and I can't sit back and decide who gets what table."

Battoni said nearly \$1.7 million in purse money was used to support Super Stakes Sunday, but he has not earmarked those funds for anything specific yet in 2014.

"That's what it roughly cost for us to move it from Harrah's to Pocono," said Battoni. "Because Harrah's didn't have it last year, the \$1.6 (million) is there, but at the same time, we have to be careful. We always like to put a little money aside for a rainy day.

"When you don't get support within the industry and the owners that come here to race, it's pretty hard for me to take \$1.6 million and put it into a stakes program everybody complains about.

"The slots revenue is down but back in June, when they did the budget, we're getting some of the money back they took in 2009. We don't get much support for us going to Harrisburg and going to fight to keep this money. It's a monumental task every year. We try to do the best job we possibly can."

Meadowlands/Tioga/Vernon Implement Cobalt Thresholds

For the past year, Meadowlands Racing & Entertainment has been conducting out of competition testing on horses racing at the Meadowlands, in part to determine if any trainers are using illegal substances, but also to gather information pertaining to what racehorses are being given prior to their races and to implement rules to keep the horses safe. This testing, performed in a joint effort by the Meadowlands and other jurisdictions, is in the form of blood samples taken from horses racing at the Meadowlands.

After a lengthy process, including researching into what Cobalt is and what it does for the horses and discussions with many veterinarians, the Meadowlands has determined that when an excessive amount of Cobalt is administered to a horse, it can be very harmful. When used in excess, the affects of Cobalt can be, but are not limited to: cardiovascular issues, potential nerve problems, thickening of the blood and thyroid toxicity.

Based on this information, the Meadowlands has determined that in excessive levels, Cobalt is both a performance enhancing substance and detrimental to the health and well-being of the horse. We are quite certain that trainers and veterinarians using Cobalt were well aware of this. Therefore, going forward the Meadowlands has established a threshold level of four times the standard deviation above the normal level of Cobalt.

If a blood sample reveals that a horse has a Cobalt level higher than four times the standard deviation above the normal level, the trainer of that horse will be deemed unable to participate at the Meadowlands, Tioga Downs and Vernon Downs. The odds of a horse having a Cobalt level that exceeds this threshold without having been administered an excessive amount of the substance are roughly 1 in 10,000.

"We are committed to providing the most integrity-driven product in harness racing," said chairman Jeff Gural. "We set out on a mission when taking over the Meadowlands to not only provide our customers with that integrity-driven product, but to do what is best for the horse and for the industry. This threshold of Cobalt being implemented for horses competing at the Meadowlands, Vernon Downs and Tioga Downs is just one step toward achieving what we set out to achieve. If you are found to be giving your horses an

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excessive amount of this substance, you are not racing at any of our three racetracks, plain and simple. This is not about catching trainers that are cheating, this is about keeping our equine athletes safe and healthy and providing our betting public and all of our participants a product that is on a level playing field." (*Meadowlands*)

Wagering, Purses Show Increase In 2013

The total wagering on harness racing at U.S. tracks in 2013 surpassed \$1.6 billion and represented more than a six percent increase from 2012 while nearly \$422 million was paid out in purses during the past 12 months, four percent more than the previous year, it was reported by the U.S. Trotting Association.

Total handle on U.S. harness racing in 2013 was \$1,604,039,996, an increase of \$91,847,989 (6.07 percent) from the \$1,512,192,077 wagered in 2012. With 12 additional race days in 2013, 3,880 versus 3,868 a year ago, the average total handle per race day was \$413,412 compared to \$390,949, an increase of 5.75 percent.

On those 3,880 race days last year, \$421,890,322 was distributed in purses compared to the 2012 total of \$405,657,174, an increase of \$16,233,148 or 4.00 percent.

Following are the comparative economic indicators for U.S. harness racing from 2013 and 2012.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS ON U.S. HARNESS RACES

	2013	2012	%Change
Total Wagered	\$1,604,039,996	\$1,512,192,007	+6.07%
Per Race avg.	\$38,469	\$37,337	+3.03%
Purses	\$421,890,322	\$405,657,174	+4.00%
Race Days	3,880	3,868	+0.31%

Includes U.S. and Canadian common and separate pool wagers on races contested in the U.S. Data source: United Tote. (*HRC*)

Purse Increase At Northfield Park

Northfield Park has announced a 10 percent overall purse increase beginning with the Thursday, Jan. 9 program. This is the first increase of several anticipated throughout 2014.

The Hard Rock Rocksino, a \$265 million gaming and entertainment facility built adjacent to Northfield Park racetrack, opened Dec. 18 and has shown strong early returns. The results have allowed for this increase despite a purse overpayment in 2013.

"Instead of waiting and having one large increase, we have chosen to raise purses gradually as money is realized from our new facility," said Dave Bianconi, executive vice president of racing and simulcasting. "This will maximize the benefit to our local horsemen who have supported our racing program throughout the pre-VLT era." (*Northfield Park*)

Purses Boosted For Battle Of Waterloo, Belles

Grand River Raceway's 2014 signature races will receive a bump in purse money over 2013 offerings, and the nomination process will return to a three-payment format. The 17th annual Battle of Waterloo and sixth annual Battle of the Belles will be raced during the track's annual Industry Day Celebration, on Monday, Aug. 4, at 1:30 p.m.

The Battle of Waterloo final (for Ontario-sired 2-year-old pacing colts) will be contested for an estimated \$180,000. In 2013, the race went for \$144,500 and was won by Three Of Clubs. In the 2013 Battle of the Belles (for Ontario-sired 2-year-old pacing fillies), Lady Shadow took the lion's share of the \$75,400 purse. In 2014, the race will be contested for an estimated \$120,000.

Both races return to a three-payment eligibility system, beginning with nominations which must be postmarked no later than Feb. 18. While both races (including the eliminations, consolations and finals) will be contested at Grand River Raceway, the Woodbine Entertainment Group will handle the stakes administration. (*Grand River*)

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RACE LINES

Harness Racing Leaders

Compiled by the USTA—through Jan. 7, 2014 (week difference Jan. 1-7).

Leading North American-Based Money-Winning Horses

	Sts.	W	P	S	Earnings
Lorrie Please (7pm)	1	1	0	0	\$15,000
Bettor's Edge (5pg)	1	1	0	0	15,000
Texican N (6pg)	1	1	0	0	15,000
Sweet Justice (4tg)	1	1	0	0	15,000
Mustang Art (7pg)	1	1	0	0	13,750
San Fran Lady N (8pm)	1	1	0	0	10,500
Spunky Jack (5tg)	1	1	0	0	10,000
Rage N Ryan (5pg)	1	1	0	0	10,000
Eddie Sweat (4ph)	1	1	0	0	10,000
Easy Again (5pr)	1	1	0	0	9,000
Bandolito (4ph)	1	1	0	0	9,000
Magic Tricks (4pg)	1	1	0	0	8,750
Freetime (4pm)	1	1	0	0	8,000
Mattie Terror Girl (4pm)	1	1	0	0	8,000
Cowgirl Hall (5tm)	1	1	0	0	8,000

Leading Money-Winning Drivers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UDR	Earnings
Corey Callahan	85	14-12-15	.302	\$157,685
Ron Pierce	57	7-9-13	.287	111,984
Yannick Gingras	25	9-4-3	.489	96,432
Ross Wolfenden	50	9-12-6	.353	86,030
Mike Wilder	37	9-6-2	.351	61,887
Allan Davis	53	8-5-6	.241	61,020
Dave Palone	37	7-6-6	.333	60,286
Aaron Merriman	42	6-5-5	.249	54,047
John Campbell	22	3-5-2	.293	52,140
Trace Tetrick	58	5-6-8	.190	47,174
Billy Davis Jr.	30	8-5-3	.393	43,843
Brett Miller	41	4-7-3	.217	42,654
Tony Hall	29	4-4-7	.295	42,379
Victor Kirby	46	4-5-5	.184	41,181
Matt Kakaley	29	1-4-7	.192	37,930

Leading Money-Winning Trainers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UTR	Earnings
Ron Burke	40	10-9-6	.425	\$134,895
Randy Bendis	16	6-2-2	.486	49,228
Peter Tritton	7	3-1-1	.556	38,555
Doug Lewis	5	3-1-0	.711	29,000
Dylan Davis	14	5-0-0	.357	27,720
Aaron Lambert	4	2-1-1	.722	27,400
Mel Givens	19	2-2-3	.216	23,490
Joe Hundertpfund Jr.	13	2-5-3	.444	22,651
Trish Foulk	10	3-2-2	.478	21,780
Mark Capone	5	2-1-2	.644	21,137
Bruce Saunders	8	2-0-0	.250	20,300
Bob Johnson	18	6-4-2	.494	19,816
Travis Cullen	13	5-3-2	.564	18,641
Nick Surick	13	2-2-2	.291	18,072
Nicholas Callahan	12	2-0-3	.250	17,716

Leading Breeders

Breeder	Starters	Winners	Wins	Earnings
Hanover Shoe Farms Inc.	174	28	28	\$197,236
Winbak Farm	135	16	16	97,283
Brittany Farms	54	8	8	76,693
Perretti Farms	46	5	5	35,949
Val D'Or Farms	3	2	2	28,400
Barry Rubenstein Farms LLC	4	2	2	27,990
Walnut Hall Limited	31	4	4	26,014
Midland Acres Inc.	9	2	2	25,490
John Egloff	13	4	4	23,041
Jules & Arlene Siegel	26	2	2	20,629
Stephen Dey	9	3	3	19,205
Seelster Farms Inc.	20	4	4	19,154
Tara Hills Stud Ltd.	18	2	2	18,200
Judy Egloff	7	3	3	17,648
Frederick Hertrich III	27	3	3	17,542

Leaders Of The Week

Ranked by wins for Jan. 1-7 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.

Drivers

Drivers	Starts	W-P-S
Corey Callahan	85	14-12-15
Tyler Smith	38	10-7-7
Mike Wilder	37	9-6-2
Ross Wolfenden	50	9-12-6
Yannick Gingras	25	9-4-3
Allan Davis	53	8-5-6
Josh Sutton	27	8-5-5
Dave Palone	37	7-6-6
Ed Hensley	23	7-2-1
Ron Pierce	57	7-9-13
Aaron Merriman	42	6-5-5
Alfred Carroll	13	6-4-2
James Kennedy	21	6-3-1
Bruce Aldrich Jr.	23	5-7-3
Cat Manzi	20	5-1-2
Jim Marohn Jr.	22	5-0-7
Lemoyne Svendsen	18	5-4-2
Luke Plano	25	5-3-5
Trace Tetrick	58	5-6-8

Trainers

Trainers	Wins
Ron Burke	10
Bob Johnson	6
Randy Bendis	6
Dario Solares	5
Dylan Davis	5
James Kennedy	4
Douglas Lewis	3
Liberio Pacheco	3
Marc Aubin	3
Marcus Marashian	3
Peter Tritton	3
Rob Harmon	3
Trish Foulk	3
Vincent Fusco Jr.	3