Big Open At Meadowlands, Plus 2016 Debut Of Badix Hanover

Race 2 at the Meadowlands on Saturday night might be the feature, a $25,000 Open Pace which includes Jet Airway, Take It BackTerry and Rockeyed Optimist, but if you’re looking for a first-time starter who might be overlooked for a play this weekend, keep Badix Hanover in mind. The 4-year-old son of Western Ideal will make his 2016 debut on Saturday night at the Meadowlands in Race 8, a $14,000 conditioned pace.

Kevin Mc Dermott trains Badix Hanover, adding the horse to his stable last August, when Richard and Dale Julich bought him from Svanstedt Stable. Badix quickly made a positive impression on Mc Dermott, winning five of his first six starts for the trainer and taking a mark of 1:50.3f at Harrah’s Philadelphia.

“I think he’s a quality horse,” said Mc Dermott of the full brother to the accomplished Big Jim. “He was in the Progress Pace final last fall and John (Campbell) said he was going to be second to Wiggle It Jiggleit but he had to stop him because of interference. Every driver has told me he never stops. He just keeps coming.”

Earlier this year Mc Dermott’s longtime client, Fran Azur, bought Badix Hanover from the Juliches.

“The January sale was coming up and Fran said why don’t we buy a horse or two. I told him he’d be better off buying Badix, and the Juliches were older and wanted to sell him. So Fran paid $90,000.

“He’s a big horse but he gets around any size track well and I think he’ll be great on a half,” added Mc Dermott of the career winner of $150,075. “Since he’s a 4 year old, and they write the race for 4 year olds at Yonkers, I think he’ll be there and at Chester.”

Mc Dermott has 17 horses in his stable at this time. In addition to Badix Hanover, Mc Dermott is training three 2 year old, homebreds by Azur’s star pacer Hypnotic Blue Chip, plus the free-for-all trotter Melady’s Monet, who is owned by Luca Balenzano’s Melady Enterprises LLC.

Although Hypnotic Blue Chip bred 81 mares last season in Indiana, his first year in the Hoosier State, he has only seven foals from the 2013 breeding season. Mc Dermott notes that the three he is training are from quality mares. One is a colt out of the $914,683 winner Cuz She Can and another is a filly out of $504,461 winner Natalie.

As for Melady’s Monet, a winner of 12 of 27 starts last season and third in a couple of legs of the TVG series at the Meadowlands, Mc Dermott says the 7-year-old gelding with 113 career starts is better than ever and poised for an April return to the races.

“He’s just awesome right now,” offered Mc Dermott. While Mc Dermott expects Melady’s Monet to be racing in May, the trotter was not nominated to the Elitlopp Playoff at the Meadowlands, set for Mother’s Day.

“The owners got an invitation to race him in the Elitlopp last year, but they don’t want to ship him,” explained Mc Dermott of the decision. “For me as a trainer, it would be a dream to race over there, but I understand because it is a tough trip for a horse.” — By Kathy Parker
Not Afraid Keeps Showing
He Likes Racing At Yonkers

Not Afraid is in familiar territory when he’s competing at Yonkers Raceway, and it’s apparent he likes it. Last year Not Afraid won nine races at Yonkers and earned $238,020 of his $271,020 bankroll for the season at the New York track.

This year the 7-year-old gelded son of SJ’s Caviar, a career winner of $746,314 for Christina Takter, John Fielding and Goran Anderberg, has won three of five Open Trots at Yonkers, most recently on Sunday, Feb. 28, when he edged Major Athens by a nose. He’s entered to compete again Friday night, once again in the Open Handicap Trot, with a purse of $32,000 on the line.

With his resume in the Open and win Sunday, albeit by a slim margin, Not Afraid was assigned post position 8. While only 3.6 percent of the 304 starters from post 8 at Yonkers this season have won, Not Afraid has been able to overcome the handicap before. Last year he won four Yonkers Opens from post 8.

“His very good right now,” said Daniel Dube, the horse’s regular driver at Yonkers. “He can race on the front or from behind, but when he gets to the front, he’s very tough to get by. At Yonkers, of course, from the eight hole you need racing luck.”

In the race last Sunday, Not Afraid was looped leaving (from post 4) by outside starter Major Athens (George Brennan). Dube sent Not Afraid to the lead and they took control before breaking the beam in :28.4 for the opening quarter-mile. Dube rated a :58.4 second quarter before 3-5 choice Crazshana (Jason Bartlett)—who had been racing fourth—was moving again. Crazshana raced Not Afraid through the last turn but finally started to fade.

Major Athens ducked inside with every chance, but missed by a nose in 1:56.1. He’ll be starting from post 7 in Friday’s Open.—By Kathy Parker
Sire of a Champion 2-Year-Old
Control The Moment p,2,1:49.4 ($347,757), 2015 O’Brien Award winner and victorious in the $685,000 Metro Pace

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In 2015 3-year-old pacing earnings, with $3,230,481 and a crop led by multiple stakes winner and Jug runner-up Lost For Words p,3,1:49.3f-1:50.2h ($894,959)

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Competition Tough For Miami Valley Mare Open Pace

With $20,000 on the line each week, Miami Valley's $20,000 Open Pace for fillies and mares is attracting a deep field. This week 10 mares will line up behind the gate, and there was even an also eligible for the race.

One of the 10, and a 5-1 choice on the morning line, is the 9-year-old Aqua Artist, the winner of last week's Miami Valley feature for fillies and mares.

She'll be making her sixth start of the season on Friday night (Race 12, with a 9:45 p.m. post time) after 19 months on the sidelines in an attempt to become a broodmare.

Aqua Artist is trained by Steve Bauder and owned by Bauder's uncle and cousin, Harold and Harold Lee Bauder, respectively, and Harold Lee's friend Mike Dixon. The daughter of Artsplace sports a career mark of 1:51.3 and $336,346 in earnings, and she's from the fabulous producer Aquatic Yankee, also owned by the Bauders and Dixon.

The Bauders and Dixon raced Aqua Artist's dam, Aquatic Yankee. They purchased her for $3,000 at the Kentucky Standardbred Sale in 1997 and she went on to earn $751,230, winning Kentucky Sire Stakes races at ages 2 and 3 and finishing second to Eternal Camnation in the 2001 Breeders Crown Mare Pace and second to French Panicure in the 2000 Lady Liberty. Her eight foals of racing age have earned almost $1.6 million and include Fire On The Water, a winner of $410,982, and Sectionline Yankee ($350,075).

With her resume and the success of her dam as a broodmare, it is easy to see why the Bauders and Dixon wanted to give Aqua Artist a chance at motherhood. It's just that after two breeding seasons, they came up empty. Aqua Artist got in foal to Dragon Again in 2014 but aborted. She was bred to Rockin Amadeus in 2015 but did not get in foal, so she was put back in training with Steve Bauder.

“I had her about three and a half months and she was pretty much ready,” said Steve, who trains at the Greenville, Ohio, fairgrounds, a little more than an hour's ship to Miami Valley. “She was pretty heavy when she started back, but she did fine.”

Pacey Mindlin, well-known as “The Wizard,” handicaps Friday’s Open Mare Pace at MGV:

Friday night’s Race 12, the Open for fillies and mares, looks to be the toughest test this year for the best gal pacers in the Midwest. Aqua Artist, a surprise winner last week, gets post number 2 with Trace Tetrick. Joining the select 10-horse field will be Northfield Park winner last week, Lease Ness Monster, with Ronnie Wrenn coming in to drive. Key to the race is the first four horses across the gate, Native Dream (1), Safe from Terror (3) along with Aqua Artist (2) and Lease Ness Monster (4). Better-luvnextttime (7), Buckeye Thea (9) and Cast No Shadow (10) will have to come from off the pace. Wizard sees a wild finish with Safe With Terror, Aqua Artist, Native Dream and Cast No Shadow major players in a race anybody can win.

Steve said despite training down well and qualifying, Aqua Artist still needed a few races to get back to her best possible form.

“One thing that hurt is she had to start in the Open, because of the money she's earned, and that was tough,” continued Steve. “Then she bled a little in one start too and her bloodwork was off. But then she got down in class and at the same time got better.

“I told them if she keeps this up, and she stays sound, she could make $100,000 this year,” added Steve. “It might be a tough call to decide whether to breed her again or race her, but she is 9 years old. She can’t keep racing at this level forever.”

“We're going to think about breeding her again, but she's racing pretty competitive so we're probably going to keep her on the track for now,” said Harold Lee, Steve's cousin.

Meanwhile, Aqua Artist's dam, Aquatic Yankee, has a weanling colt by Pet Rock and is 20 years old and healthy, and carrying a foal by Nob Hill High.

Harold Lee said Aquatic Yankee's colt by Pet Rock is only her second colt, and “he's a very good-looking guy.”

As for breeding the mare to Nob Hill High, “We're friends with Don Robinson and Bob Mondillo and they're trying to get their stallion established and we wanted to help them out,” he explained.

“It's been a really good ride with (Aquatic Yankee) and a lot of fun with some of her horses that we kept,” Harold Lee added. “It's just been a great family. I bought a farm here in Delaware and that family really helped pay for it. My dad is in his 80s now and they just enjoy watching them, and they enjoy this horse, Aqua Artist.”

While Aqua Artist has not yet shown she can become a broodmare, Harold Lee said they have Aquatic Yankee's daughter Sectionline Yankee in foal to Rockin Amadeus.—

By Kathy Parker
Ohio Sires Stakes

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Ohio Standardbred Development Fund
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kim.rinker@re.state.oh.us 614-770-0169
Gingras, Callahan, Brett Miller
Driving Down Under

Drivers Yannick Gingras, Corey Callahan and Brett Miller will be noticeably absent from the Meadowlands the next couple of weekends as the trio travel to Australia to participate in the inaugural International All Star Series conducted by Harness Racing Victoria.

The U.S.-based trio will join New Zealanders Dexter Dunn and Anthony Butt as the World Team, taking on five local drivers that include Chris Alford, Gavin Lang, Greg Sugars, Kerryn Manning and Jason Lee. The series gets underway at Tabcorp Park Melton on Monday, March 7, and continues to Echuca on March 8, Maryborough on March 9, Ballarat on March 10, and Bendigo on March 11. The series will conclude back at Melton on Great Southern Star Night on March 12.

Gingras told Weekend Preview on Tuesday, March 1, that before he and his wife, Vicki, board a plane for Australia, they will first make a trip to Lake Placid, N.Y., to watch their 10-year-old son Jaiden play in a hockey tournament. Although the tournament isn’t scheduled to conclude until Sunday, Gingras said he along with Callahan and Miller and his wife will leave for Australia on Friday, March 4. Gingras said Vicki and Joanna Callahan will join the group in Australia on March 6.

“I will be in Lake Placid and then drive back for the flight from JFK on Friday,” said Gingras. “Jaiden plays Thursday, which I will be able to see, and then on Friday and Saturday, and if his team makes the final they play on Sunday.”

The U.S.-based contingent, along with Woodbine Entertainment Group’s Greg Gangle and his wife, Anna, will make a trip to Hamilton Island, which is part of the Great Barrier Reef, after the driving tournament before they all return home.

“Andrew McCarthy recommended this to us and it’s supposed to be beautiful, so we will enjoy a few days there and then come home,” said Gingras.

Gingras said he will be back in the sulky in the U.S. on Friday, March 18, but not at the Meadowlands. Gingras said that because of the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series and Levy Memorial Series, he will be driving at Yonkers every weekend for about two months. — By Gordon Waterstone
Nominations close March 15, 2016!

**Metro Pace**
Two-year-old open pace.
Purse $685,000 E ($300,000 A).

**She's A Great Lady Pace**
Two-year-old filly pace.
Purse $455,000 E ($250,000 A).

**Peaceful Way**
Two-year-old filly trot.
Purse $410,000 E ($175,000 A).

**William Wellwood Memorial**
Two-year-old open trot.
Purse $370,000 E ($175,000 A).

**Roses Are Red**
Three-year-olds and older fillies and mares pace.
Purse $350,000 E ($250,000 A).

**Nassagaweya**
Two-year-old open pace.
Purse $225,000 E ($175,000 A).

**Eternal Camnation**
Two-year-old filly pace.
Purse $150,000 E ($75,000 A).

**Canadian Pacing Derby**
Three-year-olds and older open pace.
Purse $685,000 E ($400,000 A).

**Maple Leaf Trot**
Three-year-olds and older open trot.
Purse $658,000 E ($400,000 A).

**Milton**
Three-year-olds and older fillies and mares pace.
Purse $300,000 E ($200,000 A).

**Armbro Flight**
Three-year-olds and older fillies and mares trot.
Purse $275,000 E ($200,000 A).

**Balanced Image**
Ontario-sired two-year-old trot.
Purse $75,000 E ($30,000 A).

**Dream of Glory**
Ontario-sired three-year-old trot.
Purse $75,000 E Final ($50,000 A).

**Kin Pace**
Ontario-sired three-year-old filly pace.
Purse $60,000 E Final ($40,000 A).

Click here for full details on these races and more, including the exciting Spring Series!
Harness Racing’s Best Honored Sunday
At Dan Patch Awards Banquet

Although the names of all the winners—both equine and human—were long ago announced, a sell-out crowd of 330 persons is expected for the U.S. Harness Writers Association’s (USHWA) annual Dan Patch Awards banquet, set for Sunday night at the Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

The annual USHWA meetings will get underway on Saturday (March 5) and conclude Sunday morning. The awards banquet kicks off with a cocktail party at 6 p.m. that evening, with the dinner beginning at approximately 7:30 p.m.

With all award winners previously announced—including Wiggle It Jiggleit as the 2015 Horse of the Year—the function will not be video streamed.

As part of the festivities, a live/silent auction will be held, with proceeds going to benefit the Harness Horse Youth Foundation. The lone live item up for bidding—which will be done halfway through the awards ceremony during the dinner break—is a week-long trip for two to the Vincent DeLaney Memorial festival in Dublin, Ireland, from Aug. 10-Aug. 16.

The Ireland tip includes $1,500 in airfare cash, a six-night hotel stay at the Hilton Dublin, all transportation for events, a trip to Oakwood Stud Farm & Training Center, and two tickets to the Aug. 12 kickoff gala dinner and VIP tent access on Aug. 13-14 for the Delaney Memorial race cards.

Included among the silent auction items are:

- A three-game Philadelphia Phillies ticket package that includes a pair of Diamond Club seats plus three $50 VISA gift cards for food and souvenirs;
- A CR Kay Suzie collection with winning blanket from her 1996 Merrie Annabelle victory and Rod Allen’s whip from her world-record win in 1994 at Freehold;
- A baseball/harness racing memorabilia collection featuring a 1998 American League/Mickey Mantle edition signed by 13 harness racing Hall of Famers; and other items such as program/tip sheets from Roosevelt Raceway and Garden State Park, a Sportsman’s Park Leroy Neiman promotional poster, and Red Mile retired logo items.

In order to bid on all the items via phone or texting, please contact Steve Wolf, e-mail stevenwolf1956@gmail.com, phone: (954) 654-3757 or Ellen Taylor, e-mail at ellen@hhyc.org, phone: (317) 867-5877.
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Merriman Hits 8,000 Win Milestone

Aaron Merriman scored the 8,000th win of his driving career with Watcha Got Abby in Northfield Park’s 6th race on Tuesday (March 1). Watcha Got Abby boldly left from the gate and led her competition from start to finish, winning by one-quarter length in 1:58.2.

Merriman, 37, keeps a torrid schedule, regularly competing at Northfield Park and The Meadows, as well as other venues.

Merriman remembered his first win as being aboard a pacing mare named Albert’s Filly at Raceway Park in Toledo, Ohio.

Although there are 8,000 to choose from, Merriman says that he has no favorite win.

“It always feels great to win a race,” explained Merriman, “I really don’t have a favorite. I have had the same elated feeling every time I have been to the winner’s circle.

“It would be hard to say the best horse I have driven. I have been truly blessed to drive a lot of nice horses in our sport’s signature races.”

Merriman has sat behind countless horses, but one sticks out to him above all others: “I love to drive Tamarind. He is small and has a lot of problems, but he gives his all each and every race.”

Merriman started driving at the age of 21 and appreciates the successful 16-year career he has experienced so far—accomplishing the 8,000-win milestone and purse earnings in excess of $46 million.

“I’ve had a great run for a long time,” said Merriman. “There are so many owners and trainers that have given me opportunities and I will be forever grateful to them. The chances I have been given are unbelievable and I wish I could thank them each individually. The horses deserve credit too—they are the ones who carry us around the track and deserve the real credit for my 8,000 wins.” — By Ayers Ratliff for Northfield Park
Bad Public Policy is Like a Disease . . . It Spreads.

Big Casinos have all but destroyed Florida harness racing. Now, they’re determined to use “decoupling” to stamp out everything we know and love about our sport for good.

What they’re not telling Florida elected officials: Harness Racing business at Pompano Park is actually UP double digits. But casinos want to keep it quiet so they can keep the money for themselves.

Just like our colleagues nationwide, Florida’s harness horsemen who remain are determined to fight and make sure the cancer of “decoupling” is stopped at Florida’s state line.

But it’s not going to be easy.

In states like West Virginia, Big Casinos hope no one realizes what’s happening, so they can get their political hooks into policymakers and their slots free and clear of purse payments.

Within days, Florida horsemen will know whether we’ve won or lost, and whether we need to step up our game and bring the fight to a whole new level.

That’s why we’re asking anyone who cares about harness racing to give what they can today, so we can mobilize now . . . because we know an even bigger fight is just ahead.

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Florida Standardbred Breeders’ and Owners’ Association
Although Northlands Plans To Close, Racing Still Alive In Alberta

After more than 100 years of hosting race meets Northlands Park in Edmonton, Alberta, has announced that 2016 will be its final racing season.

During a Feb. 17 press conference, Northlands President and CEO Tim Reid acknowledged that the non-profit organization in charge of the track's administration is cash-strapped and financially unable to operate the facility as a horse racing track beyond the end of this year.

Reid's statement seems to contradict an earlier Northlands' press announcement. In a Dec. 21 press release issued by then General Manager of Racing and Gaming, Chris Roberts, Roberts indicated that the 7,000 members of Alberta's horse racing community had reason for optimism. The track's operators were committed to racing through the 2017 season and, perhaps, beyond.

Roberts, the Ontario correspondent for The Horseman And Fair World magazine during his college days, has since left Northlands to join Great Canadian Gaming Corporation and is currently employed as the Executive Director at Casino Nova Scotia in Halifax.

Northlands’ apparent turn-around was unexpected, but not overly worrisome for Fred Gillis, executive director of the Alberta Standardbred Association.

“We've raced horses in Edmonton for over 100 years, so if they chose to go in a different direction then that's their decision,” says Gillis. “If Northlands doesn't want racing production...then maybe another area is better in the long-run for everyone. We just need Northlands to help us to make a good transition over a two-and-a-half year period.”

It is difficult to determine if Northlands can financially manage a two-year transition.

Opened in 1900 when Edmonton was a burgeoning oil-boom town, the “Alberta A-circuit” racetrack has been an annual fixture for the province's Thoroughbred and Standardbred communities. Upgraded in 1995, and again in 2005, the site features a five-eighths mile track, casino, restaurants, and an off-track betting area. It has long been a popular draw for the 1.3 million residents of the metro Edmonton area.

For almost nine decades Northlands ran the Canadian Derby—a Grade III stakes race for Thoroughbreds. It has also been a premier facility among the six tracks which comprise the Alberta Thoroughbred, Standardbred and Quarter horse racing circuits, a list that includes Alberta Downs in Lacombe, Evergreen Park in Grande Prairie, Rocky Mountain Turf Club in Lethbridge, and newest member Century Downs, located just outside Calgary.

Northlands Park is also home to the National Hockey League's Edmonton Oilers. However, the team will soon be moving to a new stadium in downtown Edmonton. The old stadium, named Rexall Place, is located on the north end of the track's property and compounding the loss of a lucrative tenant, Northlands says the stadium needs major renovations. In fact, a significant component of Northland's proposed $165 million Vision 2020 project is a complete overhaul of Rexall Place into a large-scale athletic complex with volleyball and basketball courts, fitness centers, and seven sheets of ice for community or amateur level use. Northlands’ aim, then, is to keep its facility relevant, and its coffers full, while Edmonton's new NHL ice district draws visitors to the downtown core.

Complicating matters for horse racing are the ongoing negotiations between the racing industry and the provincial government. After enjoying high oil revenues, the Alberta government is now experiencing severe cash-flow restrictions as the price of oil continues to plummet. While it has unequivocally stated that it's committed to the continuation of racing, the government is seeking a greater share of slot revenue. The province's current sharing agreement with racetracks, or Memorandum of Understanding, expires on March 31.

No one knows what Northlands’ split will be after March 31, but it's unlikely to have as much of an effect on Alberta's harness horsemen as on their Thoroughbred counterparts. Harness racing has a brand new facility just outside Calgary to call home. Opened in 2015, Century Downs appears well-financed and poised to step into the void that results when Northlands ceases racing.

At the moment, the seven-tenths of a mile oval at Century Downs presently does not have the necessary training and stabling areas for Thoroughbred racing. The track principals say they will make the needed changes, but are just waiting for Northlands to finally decide to end Edmonton's chapter in Alberta's long horse racing history.

Andrea Pietrzak was on the staff of the Canadian Sportsman magazine for 10 years until leaving to complete her education. She currently lives in London, Ont. Her column appears in HarnessRacing Weekend Preview in part through the advertising support of Woodbine Entertainment Group. Any opinions expressed in this column are her own and not necessarily those of the Horseman Publishing Company and its publications or its advertisers.
Wiggle It Jiggleit Third In Qualifier At Dover

Wiggle It Jiggleit, who will be honored as the 2015 Horse of the Year on Sunday, finished third in a qualifier at Dover Downs on Wednesday morning.

It was the first trip behind the starting gate for Wiggle It Jiggleit this year. Driven by Kevin Switzer instead of Montrell Teague, Wiggle It Jiggleit paced his own mile in 1:55.3, with a final quarter of :30.2. Teague was vacationing before attending the Dan Patch Awards dinner set for Sunday night in Florida.

“The plan was to qualify him today and back again next Wednesday,” trainer Clyde Francis told Harness Racing Communications. “Today wasn’t a good day; the wind was blowing real hard. None of the races were really going that fast.

“Tremendous amount of historic moments with racing fans,” he added. “When I warmed him up he warmed up good, so I didn’t think the shadows were going to bother him, but he took a big leap. He seems to be all right.”

Wiggle It Jiggleit finished his 2015 season on Nov. 30 with a victory in the Progress Pace at Dover. It was his 22nd win of the campaign in 26 starts.

Saratoga Opens 75th Season Friday

Friday, March 4, will mark the beginning of Saratoga Raceway’s 75th anniversary season of live harness racing. The first post for Friday is set for 6:45 p.m.

In honor of the 75th anniversary of racing, 75 cent deals on hot dogs, sodas and programs will be featured on Friday and Saturday of opening weekend. Additionally, Friday and Saturday will feature $75 Mutuel Voucher Giveaways after each race to patrons who submit an entry form found in their racing program. Sunday, March 6 will feature a commemorative t-shirt giveaway for fans. Guests will receive a coupon in each racing program which can be redeemed for a free 75th Year of Racing shirt.

On the first night of live racing 75 years ago, Lucile Glow, a 3-year old trotting filly, won the first ever race at the track with a time of 2:12.1. Since then, the harness track has featured almost 1,100 racing programs that have created a tremendous amount of historic moments with racing fans spanning generations.

Saratoga Raceway was the first pari-mutuel track constructed in the United States for the expressed purpose of racing. It is estimated that Saratoga Raceway has welcomed over 24 million guests over the course of the 75 racing years, and throughout that span of racing, total on-track handle has exceeded $1.5 billion. Simulcast of the Saratoga Harness signal continues to increase in popularity, reaching an all-time record handle of $36 million in 2015. Over 300 venues across the world will carry the signal in 2016.

“We couldn’t be more proud of the past 75 years of racing,” said John Matarazzo, Director of Racing Operations. “It’s an incredible milestone for us and we look forward to continuing the tradition of excellence that has been the track’s hallmark from the beginning.”

Saratoga Casino and Raceway’s spring schedule will consist of live racing Fridays and Saturdays at 6:45pm, Sunday matinees at 12:45pm and a 4pm twilight post for the Thursday cards. The full 2016 season schedule is available at http://www.saratogacasino.com/. As always, parking and admission on all race days are free.

Dover Increases Purses 20 Percent

Dover Downs has announced a 20 percent across-the-board purse increase for the balance of its current meet ending April 14. Concerning feature races, this means the following races will have the noted purse adjustments:

- On Mondays, the Preferred Pace will go for a $36,000 purse; the Delaware Special races for $33,000 and the Open class for a $24,000 purse.
- The Filly/Mares Open Pace will boast a $24,000 purse on Tuesdays while on Wednesdays, the Open Trot will have a $24,000 purse.

15 Trotters Nominated To Elitlopp Playoff

A total of 15 trotters have been nominated for the inaugural Elitlopp Playoff at the Meadowlands. The list of horses nominated reads like a “Who’s Who” of North American trotters with combined earnings of well over $19 million.

With an estimated purse of $150,000, the Elitlopp Playoff is a collaborative effort between executives at Solvalla Racetrack in Sweden and the Meadowlands. The race will highlight a special afternoon Mother’s Day card at the Meadowlands on Sunday, May 8. The winner will receive an automatic invitation to compete in the Elitlopp at Solvalla on Sunday, May 29. In accordance with Swedish rules, horses in the Elitlopp Playoff will not be permitted to race with the medication Lasix or with trotting hobbles.

“We are very excited to host the Elitlopp Playoff race and look forward to welcoming our guests from Sweden coming over that weekend for the event,” said Meadowlands chairman Jeff Gural. “With all the fans and all the interest, the Elitlopp reminds me of our Little Brown Jug which is my favorite racing event to go to every year.”

Here’s is the complete list of Elitlopp Playoff nominees:
Bee A Magician, Crazy Wow, Creatine, DW’s NY Yank, Flanagan Memory, Gural Hanover, Homicide Hunter, JL Cruze, Natural Herbie, Obrigado, Opulent Yankee, Resolve, Shake It Cerry, Wind Of The North, and Perfectly Enough, a Swedish Breeders Crown winner at age three who has never raced in North America but is now in training in North America with Marcus Melander.

Continues on page 14
The Eltlopp Playoff will be contested at a distance of one mile if 10 horses or less enter. The race will be at a mile-and-an-eighth if 11 or 12 horses enter. If 13 or more horses enter, the 12 highest money earners will start. Horses not nominated to the Eltlopp Playoff can be supplemented to the race at time of entry for a supplemental fee of $15,000. (Meadowlands)

58 Nominated to NA Cup

Woodbine Entertainment Group (WEG) has announced that 58 three-year-old pacers have been nominated to the 33rd edition of the Pepsi North America Cup. Last year 63 horses were nominated to the race. The $1 million Pepsi North America Cup, the richest race in Canadian harness racing, will be contested on Saturday, June 18, at Mohawk Racetrack.

The group of 58 eligible three-year-olds is led by O’Brien Award winner Control The Moment. The Brad Maxwell trainee won eight of nine starts as a rookie, including the $685,000 Metro Pace. Dan Patch Award winner Boston Red Rocks also headlines the list of nominees. The Steve Elliott trainee finished off his two-year-old campaign with victories in the Breeders Crown at Woodbine and the Governor's Cup at the Meadowlands.

Sustaining payments to the Pepsi North America Cup are due March 15, April 15, and May 16. Eliminations for the Pepsi North America Cup are scheduled for Saturday, June 11.

Nominations have also been collected for several major WEG stakes events, including the Canadian Trotting Classic (77 nominees), Elegantimage (98), Fan Hanover (63), and the Fall Four Stakes of the Governor’s Cup (199), Three Diamonds (200), Valley Victory (185) and Goldsmith Maid (184). To view the full list of nominees to these WEG stakes events and more, click here. (WEG)

Florida Decoupling Bill On Hold

Multiple news organizations in Florida have reported that Florida State Senate Appropriations Chair Tom Lee (R-Brandon) has said the gaming bill that would allow tracks to “de-couple,” and in particular Pompano Park to discontinue harness racing but still have gaming and simulcasting, is not going to be addressed by his committee. That means the entire deal with the Seminoles, which would put $3 billion in the state’s coffers over a period of time, is being postponed as well. The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel said Lee gave no reason why the bill would not be addressed by the Appropriations Committee, “but in all likelihood it lacked the votes to pass.”

If there is no gaming bill passed in the current legislative session, which ends in March, the Seminoles will still be sending money to the state under the old agreement signed under then-Gov. Charlie Crist.

The Florida Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association (FSBOA) is trying to raise funds via gofundme.com/mqq4knw. Checks may also be directly sent to the FSBOA at: 1800 S.W. 3rd Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069. Put in the memo STOP HARNESS DECOUPLING-gofundme.com/mqq4kw

FSBOA director Jerry Glantz summed up the situation on his Facebook page: “...until March 11th at 6 p.m. (end of the 2016 legislative session) we can’t really exhale. Please don’t lose sight of the fact that this will come up again next session. The casino interests have deep pockets and are not shy about throwing money to the politicians.”

Carole Dauplaise Dies In NY Accident

Carol Dauplaise, the mother of horseman Jeff Dauplaise and widow of the late Norman Dauplaise, died in Midtown Manhattan Monday morning after she was struck by a livery

Continues on page 15
cab. According to reports, Mrs. Dauplaise, 77, died despite the efforts of Good Samaritans who rushed to her aid.

According to reports, Mrs. Dauplaise was walking with a blue cart near Madison Ave. and E. 36th St.—about five blocks from her home—when a 2013 black Toyota Camry slammed into her at about 8:35 a.m., authorities and witnesses said.

**USTA Approves $250,000 For Social Media**

Funding for the social media digital marketing initiative as well as monetary support for major-race television broadcasts were approved at the final general session of the USTA Board of Directors annual meeting Monday in Columbus, Ohio.

A lengthy and emotional discussion preceded the votes for both spending measures. Directors presented their cases for and against allocating $250,000 of USTA money to work in partnership with Converseon Inc., a nationally-acclaimed New York City social marketing agency founded by Rob Key. The program will enter its third year in 2016, with goals including increasing online engagement by 80 percent and generating 2,000 leads to target for potential ownership of harness racehorses.

Some directors—who prefaced their statements by saying that they ultimately supported the project and voted as such—voiced their concerns about not seeing specific results from the first two years of the partnership with Converseon.

“This is something we’ve got to build upon and continue to impress upon Converseon as well over the next year that if we want certain metrics from them, then let’s get that information to Mike Tanner, to Dan Leary, so they can present it to Rob (Key). That way, he knows exactly what we are looking for in 2016,” said Jason Settlemoir (District 8, New York).

Gabe Wand (District 4, Wisconsin) echoed those concerns, calling for more accountability from Converseon and the USTA in the next year.

“They are really giving us no concrete metrics,” he said. “I want to know how many non-horse racing people are we reaching? Or are we just building a platform for ourselves?

“If we continue to go forward with this, if by this time next year can directors be guaranteed some type of a score sheet on how we’re doing—and if we have a plan B?”

Those who voted against the funding raised questions about spending money when the 2016 budget approved by the board shows a projected deficit in 2016. The 2015 budget projected a deficit of $108,947, but finished with a surplus of $348,357 due to decreases in office expenses and unused budgeted funds allocated to such projects as television production, Save Our Standardbreds, investigative services and Strategic Wagering shortages.

“I don’t think there is any question that we need to be in social media,” said John Brennan (District 12, New Jersey). “I think the question is: Can this be done in-house? I just don’t think that with the deficit that we have, that we are in a position to be spending this money.”

USTA executive vice president and CEO Mike Tanner explained that the USTA did not have the resources to go from managing to monetizing social media.

“There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding as to what the social media initiative is,” said Tanner. “The social media is not Allison Conte and Dan Leary and Ken Weingartner just tweeting a whole lot and posting things on Facebook. The social media initiative is doing those things while having the infrastructure to read where those messages are going, to determine who is receiving those messages, to get the demographics and build content for them so we can branch out into a CRM (customer relationship management) initiative, just like the casinos do to build customers.”

Before a roll-call vote was cast for the social media and television spending, Brennan made a motion to instead conduct a secret-ballot vote. The motion needed approval of two-thirds of the directors in attendance, but the roll call vote for that motion was defeated with 23 voting “yes” and 21 voting “no.” The roll-call vote to approve the funding for social media passed by a measure of 36-4.

Prior to the social media vote, a roll-call vote to approve a $120,000 fund to help support harness racing television broadcasts passed by a measure of 39-3. The monies in the fund would be made available to any racetrack or group that applied to coordinate the production and broadcast of one or more of their major races.

In order to address the deficit questions outlined in brief above, a price increase for selected USTA services was approved by a voice vote in both the general session and the Finance Committee meeting prior. Starting in 2018, fees for individual USTA memberships would increase from $50 to $75; and from $140 to $200 for three-year memberships. Member racetrack dues would be increased according to a scaled amount based on purses; and eTrack services would rise from $168 per day to $200 per day for most tracks. According to Chairman Ivan Axelrod, the measures would increase revenue some $600,000 per year after the third year of implementation.

The price increase was met with concerns from some directors in the Finance Committee.

“Do you think that instead of raising fees—especially in the membership category—that we could maybe go back and pick through the budget and ‘trim the fat?’” asked Mark Ford (District 8, New York). “Regardless of how you put it, a rate increase at this point in time is not going to be well-taken.”

Continues on page 16 ››››
Tanner responded by reminding directors that employee count has reduced from 60 to 49 in the past few years and any cuts to the budget would result in the elimination of the myriad sponsorships and staff support that the USTA provides across the industry.

“You can always get leaner, but you are going to lose services by doing that,” he said. “The rest of the industry is shrinking and the expectations put on the USTA are greater than ever. We jump in and we jump in quietly to provide support, doing things that 20 years ago we were never expected to do.” (USTA)

**Bold Eagle Second In Prix de Paris**

Bold Eagle failed in his attempt to sweep the Prix d’Amerique, Prix de France and Prix de Paris when he finished second in the 2 1/2-mile long Prix de Paris on Sunday at the Vincennes track in Paris. Instead, Lionel, Norwegian-owned, trained by France’s Fabrice Souloay, and driven by Swedish ace Orjan Kihlstrom, won by wearing down Bold Eagle in the stretch drive.

Bjorn Goop sent Timoko, runner-up in last fall’s Yonkers International, to the front and yielded to Bird Parker after 700 meters. That left Lionel first-over while Bold Eagle was raced second-over by Franck Nivard. Bold Eagle took command before the stretch drive but he could not sustain his effort as Kihlstrom went to work urging Lionel.

In an interview after the race with the French trotting network Equidia, Kihlstrom said, “Lionel was unbelievably good,” and noted that the distance probably suited his horse more than Bold Eagle.

Lionel is a son of Look de Star, a son of the French stallion Coktail Jet.

To view a video of the race, with an English call, click [here](#).

**Steve Oliwa Jr. Dies At 56**

Horsemanship Stephen A. Oliwa Jr., 56, of Cape Coral, Fla., passed away peacefully at his home on Feb. 25, surrounded by his family, after a long battle with cancer.

Born in Elizabeth, NJ, Mr. Oliwa resided in Florida for the past 20 years. He was a graduate of Roselle Catholic High School. He operated a public stable for more than 25 years and was a regular driver at the Meadowlands and Freehold and other East Coast tracks, as well as Pompano Park. He won more than 1,000 races. His best season was in 1999 when his horses won 169 races. Later in life, he was the owner of A&A Prompt Removal, a demolition and service company.

Mr. Oliwa is survived by his longtime loving companion, Christine Stabile; their daughter, Julia L. Oliwa; a son, Stephen A. Oliwa III of Upper Saddle River, NJ; a brother, Robert S. (Deborah) of Manalapan, NJ; a sister, Evelyn (Jeff) Burchardt of Annandale, NJ, and cherished nieces and nephew, Shannon, Megan, Erin and Robert Oliwa Jr.

A funeral Mass was held Feb. 29 at St. Genevieve Roman Catholic Church, Elizabeth, NJ, with interment at Graceland Memorial Park, Kenilworth, NJ. Memorial donations may be made to the Standardbred Retirement Fund.
### Leaders Of The Week

**Drivers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breeder</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>Winners</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanover Shoe Farms Inc.</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>$2,047,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winbak Farm</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1,529,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perretti Farms</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>669,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britanny Farms</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>644,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Chip Bloodstock Inc.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>477,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletproof Enterprises</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>443,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentuckiana Farms Gen Par</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>419,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seelster Farms Inc.</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>419,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Birch Farm</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>348,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick Hertrich III</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>337,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert McIntosh Stables Inc.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>294,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Stewart</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>270,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules &amp; Arlene Siegel</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>261,235</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diamond Creek Farm LLC</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>255,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland Acres Inc.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>247,262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leaders Of The Week**

- Ranked by wins for Feb. 24-March 1 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.
- UDR = Unique Driver Rating (based on earnings from pari-mutuel tracks).
- W-P-S = Wins - Placers - Showers.
- Earnings (wk. diff.) = Earnings from pari-mutuel tracks (week difference Feb. 24-March 1).

### Leading Money-Winning Drivers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>W-P-S</th>
<th>UDR</th>
<th>Earnings (wk. diff.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Merriman</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>164-119-103</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>$1,110,367 (172,192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Bartlett</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>93-63-39</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>984,147 (143,694)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey Callahan</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>87-81-72</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>807,690 (135,140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Palone</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>82-49-43</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>729,679 (59,840)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Tetrict</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>72-59-47</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>700,623 (84,846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Sears</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>53-42-40</td>
<td>.354</td>
<td>690,106 (68,880)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Nisonger</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55-35-43</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>550,706 (67,804)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene Vallandingham</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54-35-42</td>
<td>.311</td>
<td>550,696 (67,794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stewart</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54-35-42</td>
<td>.311</td>
<td>550,696 (67,794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Dowdell</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55-35-43</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>550,706 (67,804)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Dowdell</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55-35-43</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>550,706 (67,804)</td>
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</table>

### Leading Money-Winning Trainers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>W-P-S</th>
<th>UTR</th>
<th>Earnings (wk. diff.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ron Burke</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>89-54-46</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>$966,837 (93,164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rene Allard</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>35-32-21</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>350,261 (42,730)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen Auciello</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>34-36-27</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>343,196 (50,459)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Banca</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>40-21-17</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>341,498 (32,700)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dylan Davis</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>36-29-18</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>297,953 (40,365)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony O’Sullivan</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19-8-6</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>216,634 (33,768)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Bamond Jr.</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>16-13-11</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>213,520 (26,130)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norm Parker</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>16-18-14</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>209,172 (16,236)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wayne Givens</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21-10-9</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>207,242 (27,245)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randy Bendall</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>17-13-14</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>207,211 (26,189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Dowdell</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>27-13-20</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>206,727 (45,280)</td>
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</table>

Compiled by the USTA—through March 1, 2016 (week difference Feb. 24-March 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9 (Horseman)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23 (Horseman)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom 3FP (Wdb) DSBF 3CT (DD)</td>
<td>George Owens Mem. Pace (MVR) Petticoat F&amp;M Pace final (YR) DSBF 3FP (DD)</td>
<td>Omar Hiterman Mem. Pace (MVR) DSBF 3FP (DD)</td>
<td>DSBF 3FP (DD)</td>
<td>DSBF 3FP (DD)</td>
<td>DSBF 3CP (DD)</td>
<td>DSBF 3CP (DD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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