Communicators Hall of Famer Sam McKee, one of the most well-known and respected announcers in horse racing, died early Wednesday morning, March 8, as a result of complications after suffering a major stroke early last month. He was 54.

Mr. McKee was the announcer and simulcast director at the Meadowlands, leaving his home state of Michigan in 1998 to work on a fill-in basis at the New Jersey racetrack. Soon after he was hired as full-time announcer, later adding the title of simulcast director.

Born on March 24, 1962, in Mount Pleasant, Mich., Mr. McKee grew up on his family's 32-acre farm in Linden, Mich. Raised in a harness racing family, Mr. McKee played with toy horses and gave imaginary race calls.

"From the time I was 4 or 5 years old, I was fascinated by announcers," Mr. McKee once said. "When I was 10 I went on a big letter-writing kick, and it blew me away to get something back from a star horseman. I had a very nice handwritten note from Billy Haughton that said something like ‘In this age of jets and machinery, it’s nice to see young people interested in harness racing.’ Stanley Dancer was very nice and sent me pictures of Albatross and Super Bowl.”

At age 12, Mr. McKee began training and jogging horses over the half-mile racetrack on his family’s farm. When he was 18 he received his “P” drivers’ license, and that year he won two of 38 starts at the Michigan fairs.

It was at age 14 though that Mr. McKee’s dreams of becoming a race announcer came to fruition. In 1976, at the

Continues on page 2 ››››
Mr. McKee graduated from Lake Fenton High School and the day after he was hired as track announcer at Saginaw Valley Downs and later at Sports Creek Raceway. In 1983, he moved to Toledo’s Raceway Park, where he announced the races through 1988. In addition to his race-calling duties, Mr. McKee also worked as director of group sales, and was involved in the track’s publicity and television departments.

Mr. McKee went on to work in the publicity department and as announcer at Ladbrokes Detroit Race Course, also adding the title of simulcast director. In the early 1990s he also served as director of operations at Northville Downs. He also served for many years as the back-up announcer to Huston during Little Brown Jug week at the Delaware, Ohio fairgrounds, usually on days Huston competed in C.K.G. Billings amateur driving events.

It was while at Northville that Mr. McKee was asked if he could travel to the Meadowlands to announce on a part-time basis, which soon led to his full-time hiring.

“We were looking for an announcer to go with Ken Warkentin,” remembered Chris McErlean, the Meadowlands general manager at the time. “Sam left a very favorable impression from his first stay here. When the opportunity came up for a full-time position, he was our first choice.”

Kathy Parker, editor of The Horseman And Fair World, simply stated that Mr. McKee became “Mr. Meadowlands.”

“I remember first visiting Sam in the booth in the old Meadowlands grandstand,” said Parker. “He had not been there long and he was in awe of being in that space. He was one of the remaining veterans from the old track, and when he moved into the new building, he continued to be the face and the voice that people heard. He was really the face and voice of the Meadowlands.”

When new ownership took over the historic Red Mile, they hired Mr. McKee as announcer. He made many racing moments there iconic, including his call of Always B Miki’s record 1:46 mile last fall.

“My job satisfaction comes when the Meadowlands does well,” Mr. McKee once said. “Just to be involved in the top level of the sport is beyond my wildest dreams.

“And my favorite time of year is Lexington, Ky., in the fall.”

Mr. McKee said one of his most memorable nights came at the Meadowlands in 2012 when he interviewed former president Bill Clinton, who was at the track that night for a political fundraiser. Mr. McKee and his wife Chris were also huge NASCAR fans, so another highlight came just last year when driver Martin Truex Jr. was at the track on Hambletonian day to present the trophy.

Mr. McKee was elected to the Michigan Harness Horsemen’s Association’s Hall of Fame in 2009. In 2012, he received the sport’s highest honor when he was elected to the Communicators Hall of Fame in Goshen, N.Y.

He married Christine M. Wilson April 29, 1988, in Smiths Creek, Mich. He is survived by his wife; daughters Meagan, Melissa and Lindsey; a sister, Sally; his father, Alton, and stepmother, Theresa.
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I was poised to write strictly about breeding season. Breeding season has officially been under-
way for about two weeks, and stallions are active and mares are foaling. But then we learned
the news that Sam McKee had passed away.
It’s an understatement to say Sam was a great friend to all. He never met a stranger, and many
strangers became his friends. Sam and I first met when we were in our teens. I was at home
in Washington, Pa., working in the PR office at The Meadows. Sam and I first met when we
were in our teens. I was at home in Washington, Pa., working in the PR office at The Meadows. Sam
and I met when he was visiting Roger Huston, the an-
nouncer at The Meadows. Roger would become Sam’s men-
tor and, of course, a very close friend.
Sam realized his goal of following in Roger’s
footsteps and becoming a great race announcer,
but he also soaked up so much knowledge that
he became one of har-
ness racing’s most as-
tute observers. He knew
the right questions to
ask a driver or trainer in
an interview. He had a
great memory for big
moves by a horse or
driver, so much so that
for several years he
wrote a “Big M Big
Move Of The Week” fea-
ture for The Horseman And Fair World magazine. And in ad-
dition to being an announcer and host of the TV racing
shows at the Meadowlands and Red Mile, Sam also brought
his expertise in simulcasting and broadcasting to those
tracks. If you saw a great in-house racing video at either
track, it’s because Sam was involved in the production.
Since Sam grew up on a farm and even had a horse of his
own that he trained when he was a young man, he always
maintained his close relationship with horses. He and his
wife, Chris, and their daughters had horses at home and
Sam did a bit of barrel racing. More than once I called him
on his cell phone on a cold winter morning and he was
cleaning stalls in the small barn on his property.
When he had the time, Sam would stop by a trainer’s barn
to personally size up a horse he had come to admire on the
track. That’s what created the photo opportunity for Adam
Strom last fall in Lexington. After the long Futurity day, Sam
and his wife Chris didn’t run off to a restaurant for dinner.
They walked the backstretch at The Red Mile and visited
with Marion Marauder.
Sam certainly had the voice to become a pedigree reader,
but when offered the opportunity to become a pedigree
reader at the annual Standardbred Horse Sale auction in
Harrisburg each November, he studied and made sure he
could talk about bloodlines with the same sort of ease we
heard in his race calls.
Sam tried to read everything he could about what was
going on in the sport. If he read a story in this publication,
or in The Horseman And Fair World or another magazine, he
retained that information about horses, or owners or driv-
ers or trainers, or sires or dams, and later the nuggets were
sprinkled in post parades, or while horses were scoring
down before a race.
Sam would have been excited to hear the news that the
world champion trotting filly Mission Brief arrived at
Huntorton Farm in Paris, Ky., last Friday.
Mission Brief, a daughter of Muscle Hill-Southwind Ser-
ena, was foaled at Huntorton, so you could say she’s back home.
When Huntorton’s Steve Stewart purchased the mare (with several part-
ners), they were consid-
ering breeding Mission
Brief to Cantab Hall,
Chapter Seven or Father
Patrick. They’ve decided
on Father Patrick, who
stands at stud at Dia-
mond Creek Farm in
Pennsylvania.
“We’ve got an awful lot
of mares in foal to him,
so I know we’ll be fol-
lowing a very good crop,” said Stewart of the decision to
breed to the stallion in his third crop. “Jolene Jolene 2,
1:52.1 ($231,673) just foaled a filly by Father Patrick and
Graceful Touch (dam of Muscle Massive and Thatsnottmy-
name) is due to foal a Father Patrick this month.
“But the biggest motivation with a mare like her is to get a
foal, and to get them in foal early,” Stewart added.
Stewart said that Graceful Touch (the dam of Hamble-
tonian champion Muscle Massive and stakes winners
Muscle Mass and Thatsnottynamen) is presently spend-
ing time in a paddock with her buddy Emilie Cas El, now
25 years old and carrying a foal by Muscle Hill, thus a
full brother to Trixton.
Also, on Tuesday night Artistic Vision, the dam of Rock N
Roll Heaven, foaled a colt by Western Ideal. “I guess you
could say we went to the taproot, since for several years we
bred her to Western Ideal’s son Rocknroll Hanover,” said
Stewart.— By Kathy Parker
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Remembering Sam McKee

It was shortly after 10 a.m. on Wednesday morning (March 8) that I received a phone call from the Hambletonian Society’s Moira Fanning. First, she apologized for cutting our conversation short the afternoon before when she needed to take another call. And then she uttered the words, “I have something bad to tell you, and I can’t believe I’m saying this.”

I could tell Moira was fighting back tears, and my heart sank in anticipation of what she was going to tell me. I had a hunch then that somebody had died, but never in a million years would I have expected her to inform me that it was Sam McKee, someone I have known since the 1980s back when we were both working at racetracks in Michigan. Sam was also someone I considered a great friend.

We all knew the battle Sam was facing after suffering a major stroke on Feb. 2. While I talked to Sam’s wife, Chris, once, I relied on others to keep me informed of his recovery as I didn’t want to intrude on the family. Some in New Jersey were able to visit Sam, among them Moira and Meadowlands GM Jason Settlemoir, and it seemed encouraging when while in his initial rehab stage he was able to recognize people and was aware of his surroundings.

That’s why it was so shocking to me—and all of us—when Sam passed on Wednesday. It was about an hour after my phone call with Moira that I saw the sad news begin to filter out on social media, and it didn’t take long for my Facebook page to be filled with photos of Sam as people expressed their grief. I waited a few hours before I shared my thoughts, and I was overwhelmed by the support shown.

While I read through the Facebook postings, they easily reinforced the fact that no matter if you knew Sam for many years, as I had, or you only talked briefly to him, he made you feel as if he was your best friend. Sam listened, asked questions, and it was with sincerity.

Wednesday was filled with emails, texts and phone calls about Sam. I heard from Roger Huston, who helped give Sam his first announcing job back when Sam was just 14. Last night I received a phone call from Michigander Brad Kramer, and we talked about Sam for 20 minutes. Born and raised in Michigan, Sam was a horseman at heart and his bond with everyone in the Wolverine State was never broken.

Sam’s loss touched everybody in horse racing. T. D. Thornton of the Thoroughbred Daily News wrote a great piece about Sam, noting how he also called Thoroughbred races at the Meadowlands and Monmouth. New York Racing Association announcer Larry Collmus told Thornton that he remembered watching Sam announce a race and thought, “Oh my God, this guy’s a legend.”

Gulfstream Park announcer Peter Aiello interjected into the stretch call in Wednesday’s first race, “Sam, this one’s for you!” Gulfstream race analyst Caton Bredar also took a moment to remember Sam. TVG’s Todd Schrup tweeted about Sam’s death, linking to the obituary we posted on harnessracing.com.

Sam left Michigan for the Meadowlands in early 1998, and I also soon jumped ship when I accepted Kathy Parker’s offer to become associate editor of The Horseman And Fair World. I could go on and on about Sam and his contributions for the many stories I’ve written through the years. He will be sorely missed in that regard. I will also miss him when I make it to the Meadowlands this year and I can’t visit him in the booth. And he’ll be missed in the fall during Grand Circuit time at The Red Mile when I don’t hear his voice calling the races.

For the past 23 years I’ve joined Sam and Chris, as well as longtime Michigan horseman Lee Sattelberg and his wife, Denna, and Patty Wright Robinson, a former outrider at Hazel Park who now lives in Kentucky, for dinner. We went to Joe Bologna’s last year, and Denna has already texted me that we will all get together this fall in Sam’s honor.

For the past 23 years, since my father Alvin died on March 9, 1994, the date has been one of reflection. It was ironic last year that my “child,” my 17-year-old cat Maxie, also died on March 9. I never expected that on this March 9 I would be grieving the loss of my—our—great friend, Sam McKee. Let’s all keep in our prayers Chris, and their daughters Megan, Melissa and Lindsey, his sister Sally, and the entire McKee family.—By Gordon Waterstone
Eye On Woodbine

All eyes will be on Race 10 at Woodbine Racetrack on Saturday night as wagering on the contest includes a mandatory Jackpot Hi-5 payout. And with a carryover of $578,231, it is expected the total pool to surpass $2 million.

The Jackpot Hi-5 requires horseplayers to select the top five finishers in order. The minimum wager is 20 cents, with a takeout of 15 percent. The current Jackpot Hi-5 pool has been building since a Dec. 23 mandatory payout. A carryover that night of $548,396 led to another $2 million being wagered, with a 20-cent payout of $4,842.70.

Saturday’s race will be the seventh major mandatory payout on WEG Standardbred racing since the Jackpot Hi-5 was introduced the fall of 2013. An average of $1.7 million in new money has been wagered on each of the previous six major mandatory payouts.

A 12-horse field is scheduled to start in Saturday’s Race 10, a conditioned pace which carries an increased purse of $25,000. Interestingly, The Rev, who won the Dec. 23 Jackpot Hi-5 race, will start in Saturday’s contest, starting from post 9.

Weekend Preview’s Gordon Waterstone handicapped the Jackpot Hi-5, and he offers his selections:

I focused in on a pair of horses I believe have the best chance at winning. I found those in No. 5 Erle Dale N and No. 6 Dialamara, both dropping back in class. Erle Dale N will be driven by Doug McNair, who picked off The Rev, who is trained by his father, Gregg. The 9 year old won a lesser class two starts back on an off track from post 8, and after a non-factor seventh, drops back to a more comfortable level here. Dialamara won three starts back in a lower level, and after two attempts up in class and strong backing at the windows, should find this spot to his liking. I look for those two to race together in some fashion and hit the wire together. I also took a chance on tossing four horses, including the outside 10 horse and the two trailers.

20-CENT PLAYS:
5,6/5,6/2,3,4,7,8,9/2,3,4,7,8,9  COST: $48
5,6/2,3,4,7,8,9/5,6/2,3,4,7,8,9  COST: $48
5,6/2,3,4,7,8,9/2,3,4,7,8,9/5,6  COST: $48
TOTAL COST: $144

20-CENT ECONOMY PLAY:
5/6/2,3,4,7,8,9/2,3,4,7,8,9 COST: $24
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Inquiries to: California Sires Stakes  916-919-7469  csssc@chhaonline.com

Nomination forms can also be obtained at: chhaonline.com

Brower Handed 15-Year Suspension In Indiana

The Anderson, Ind., Herald-Bulletin has reported that the Indiana Horse Racing Commission has handed down a career-ending sentence to trainer Bobby Brower.

Brower, who has trained the stakes winners Allthatglitteresisgold, Soulful Delight, Mystical Treasure and Barryscourt, was accused of severely beating the horse B Abland in August 2016 at Pacesetter Farm in Anderson, where Brower rented stalls. Brower was accused of beating the horse to the point where the horse suffered injury, and Brower continued to whip, kick and beat the horse after it collapsed, according to the complaint filed by the commission.

Brower was issued a default judgment after he failed to request a trial by a 20-day deadline, the Commission ruled at its March 7 meeting at Hoosier Park Racing & Casino. He has received a 15-year suspension from racing and $40,000 in fines.

To read the entire story, please click here.
More Remembrances
Of Sam McKee

It is impossible to put a figure on the number of lives touched by Sam McKee. Whether through his race calls, studio interviews, work at horse sales, or personal interactions, Sam left an indelible mark on harness racing and the people in and around the sport.

And it would be difficult to find a person more respected and universally liked than Sam McKee. When news of Sam's passing at age 54 due to complications from a stroke suffered in early February filtered through the industry, the outpouring of admiration, love and support to his family on social media and beyond was a testament to Sam's ability to make, as harness racing writer Dave Briggs wrote on Harness Racing Update's Facebook page, "everyone feel like the biggest person in the room, when in truth, it was always him."

Ken Warkentin, Sam's colleague at the Meadowlands Racetrack and fellow announcer, spoke for many when he said, "This is undoubtedly one of the saddest days in the sport in a long time. Many like myself are in shock, devastated, in a state of disbelief and just plain sad. Sam was the modern day Mr. Harness Racing. It seemed like he knew everybody and everything about the sport. "And Sam could do it all. He was talented, passionate, positive and an inspiration to all. And everybody knew it. He was so much fun to work with. He just made people and everything around him better."

Hall of Fame driver John Campbell, who has called the Meadowlands home for decades, echoed those sentiments. "We were so fortunate that Sam chose harness racing," Campbell said. "With his talent, personality and knowledge, he could have been an announcer in any sport, whether it was NASCAR, football, or whatever. We were very fortunate that he turned his talents and abilities toward harness racing. He was such a shining light."

"He just had that bubbly, exuberant personality for what he was doing. When he was doing interviews, I think it rubbed off on a lot of people. I know it did me. He was always very upbeat. The interaction I had with Sam, whether it was on camera or off camera, was always fun and it was always something I felt good about. It was genuine. His enthusiasm for harness racing and people was right from his heart."

"The most important thing was the friendship I had with him. He was a very good friend."

A native of Michigan, Sam's interest in harness racing and announcing can be traced to his earliest days, virtually from the time he could speak. His family raced Standardbreds as a hobby at the county fairs and small tracks. Sam more than once told the story about being 4 or 5 years old and "calling races" with toy horses that had numbers taped to them.

When he was 10, Sam began writing letters to horsemen and others in the industry. He began a letter-writing friendship with legendary announcer Roger Huston, who became instrumental in helping launch Sam's career behind the microphone. Huston invited Sam to The Meadows, where Sam had the opportunity to call qualifiers and a junior driving championship. After hearing Sam's work, Huston persuaded Bobby Williams, the speed superintendent at the Clinton County fair in Ohio, to give the then-14-year-old Sam a job announcing races there.

"I was just flabbergasted at how good he was," Huston told hosts Mike Bozich and Mike Carter last month on a "Post Time with Mike and Mike" podcast. "He had the voice of a 13-year-old, but he was seasoned even without ever being on the PA system. He was born to be an announcer, there's no question in that. The amount of advice I had to give him was very minimal."

"It's very seldom that somebody at the age of 6 determines what they want to do in life. He made it happen. He knew what he wanted to do and we were just so happy we had a part in getting him started."

When he learned of Sam's passing, Huston posted on Facebook yesterday, "A part of me will never be the same."

A day after graduating from high school, Sam was hired as the track announcer at Saginaw Valley Downs and later Sports Creek Raceway. From there he moved to Raceway Park, where he called races and worked as director of group sales in addition to being involved in the publicity and television departments. A stint in the publicity department and announcing booth at Ladbrokes Detroit Race Course followed and in the early 1990s he served as director of operations at Northville Downs.

In the late 1990s, Sam was hired at the Meadowlands. He shared race-calling duties and soon added the role of TV coordinator at the track. In 2007, he also became the director of simulcasting.

Sam also worked the Grand Circuit meets at the Delaware County Fair, where he hosted the Little Brown Jug week simulcast, and The Red Mile. He was elected to the Michigan Harness Horsemen's Association Hall of Fame in 2009. In 2012, he received the sport's highest honor when he was elected to the Communicators Hall of Fame in Goshen, N.Y.

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Mike Tanner, the U.S. Trotting Association's executive vice president, first met Sam when he was working at Detroit Race Course. Tanner was an intern at the time.

“It was my first front-side job in racing, and I was kind of in awe of him,” Tanner said. “He was a terrific announcer, even back then. But he was so kind, encouraging, and down to earth, and we became friends. When I got hired there on a full-time basis the next year, he might have been happier for me than I was for myself. That’s just the way he was.

“I can’t think of anyone in our industry better liked or more respected. I feel badly for anyone that never had the chance to meet him, and worse for those of us that did, because we know what we’ve just lost. He was special.”

The stories of Sam helping others, encouraging others, are countless. Gabe Prewitt, the executive secretary of the Kentucky Harness Horsemen’s Association and a multiple-track announcer, first heard Sam calling races at The Red Mile in the early 2000s—Prewitt’s introduction to harness racing—and acknowledged Sam’s role as a mentor, “so supportive of me from Day One,” on last month’s Post Time with Mike and Mike podcast.

Sam’s influence stretched beyond the announcer’s booth, Prewitt said. “Just on a personal level, his kindness, his class, how he treats everyone; I learned as much from him on a personal basis—just by observing him for that matter—as I have professionally.”

Jason Settlemoir, the chief executive officer and general manager at the Meadowlands, told Mike and Mike that Sam always had the ability to sense when someone was having a bad day. And he was always there to discuss the situation and help in any way possible.

“By the time the conversation was over you always felt enlightened by him,” Settlemoir said. “You’d walk out of talking with him being much happier.”

Meadowlands broadcaster and statistical guru Bob “Hollywood” Heyden, who was inducted to the Communicators Hall of Fame with Sam, recalled seeing Sam several years ago helping a lady who had fallen in the parking lot following a snowstorm during a Saturday night card at the Big M. Because the snowstorm hit during the card, the parking lot was not yet plowed. Heyden later found out that Sam had fallen several minutes prior to helping the woman, who was a waitress at the track, and injured his back.

“The only way I found out was by seeing the pills he was taking the following weeks,” Heyden said. “He didn’t say anything, and wouldn’t, because he was once again Sam being Sam.”

Beyond the racetrack, Sam was an accomplished horseman (see sidebar following this story) and a go-to choice as a pedigree reader at the industry’s horse sales, where his knowledge, expertise and demeanor made him a natural.

“Sam had an exacting job—make a good impression for the horse in 15 seconds or less, give current update information about the horse with perfect accuracy, and be ready to jump back in at any moment if the auctioneer decides to pause the auction for emphasis,” said Russell Williams, the newly elected president of the U.S. Trotting Association as well as chairman of both the Standardbred Horse Sales Co. and Hanover Shoe Farms. “Sam’s work in this area was virtually flawless, and he did it with that wonderful voice of his.

“We at Standardbred Horse Sales Company have lost a great announcer, but we’re conscious now that we’ve lost a cherished friend. We offer our condolences to Sam’s family. You will be in our thoughts.”

Sam’s surviving family includes his wife Chris and daughters Meagan, Melissa and Lindsey.

“He was an amazing family man,” Warkentin said. “He was a true Hall of Famer; a great person, honest and pure. A true friend to many and a real gentleman.

“When I first heard of his passing I said it couldn’t be possible. And the first thing I thought was he wasn’t going anywhere. He’s always going to be here with us in so many ways. We will never forget Sam McKee.”

Sam McKee was a part of so many of harness racing’s greatest moments and biggest events. Here, we remember him with a few of our favorite Sam McKee moments, and some that were his favorites as well.—By Ken Weingartner for HRC
Sam McKee: Barrel Racer

Sam McKee was as accomplished on top of a horse as he was skilled behind a microphone. He often competed in speed events, such as barrel racing, with his retired Standardbred Who's Your Buddy, or simply, Buddy. Helene Gregory, the vice president of the Standardbred Pleasure Horse Organization of New Jersey, recounted the following story about Sam and his competition with renowned equine advocate and author Alex Brown:

“One year Sam was at the National Standardbred Show with Buddy and I had my retired Standardbred JB (Jam-balayabar Man) there as well. My friend Ellen Harvey had earlier approached me asking if a friend could get on JB. He was an exercise rider for some Thoroughbred racing trainers, but had never been on a Standardbred before. His name is Alex Brown and not only has he ridden thousands of Thoroughbreds, he is also an author of a book (Greatness and Goodness: Barbara and His Legacy) and had a big social media following. I thought it was a great idea because it would bring some attention to our Standardbreds. So we entered Alex and JB in the ‘Ride a Buck’ class, which is ridden bareback with a dollar bill under the rider’s knee.

“The riders then have to follow the commands of a judge—walk, trot and canter (if they get that far). It was a big class, always a fun class to watch. One by one the riders lost their dollar bills, but two riders were not giving up. Sam had just interviewed Alex the night before at the track about his book and less than 24 hours later they were facing each other in what quickly became a two-man contest. “They were battling it out, Sam joking with Alex to please give up because he couldn’t hold on to his dollar much longer and Alex saying he would never give up. The audience was cheering them on and the judges gave more and more commands, turn right, turn left, trot, turn without stopping and go the other way, to try to force them in to a mistake. Finally they got up to a canter and Sam’s dollar floated to the ground, while Alex’s was right where he put it. JB and Alex were victorious, but Sam was grinning from ear to ear. It was a joy to see these two grown men have fun and laugh like little kids. “This was what Sam was, always a good sport, always smiling and always had kind words to everyone he met. Whenever I would see him he always stopped for a few words, didn’t matter if he was on the run, in the TV studio at the Meadowlands or anywhere else. He always made time to listen. He will be deeply missed by the entire harness racing community.”

The following anecdote, recounted by Ellen Harvey, the director of the USTA’s Harness Racing Communications division, further demonstrates Sam’s ability, knowledge and thoughtfulness:

“In 2011, the World Trotting Conference came to the U.S. and the USTA was host for leaders of harness racing from all over the world. They visited a variety of farms in New Jersey in between meetings and I was asked to put together a demonstration of Standardbreds in other disciplines showing off their athletic ability.

“I asked Sam if he would show off his ex-racehorse Buddy’s skill in barrel racing and he very nicely obliged. Sam and Buddy were the last team in the demo; they screeched around the barrels and came to a full stop, kicking up a spray of dirt, right in front of the audience, from a dead run.

“When they got over their shock and horror at being nearly run over, the audience gave him a big round of applause.

“My then 86 year-old dad, Harry Harvey, lived near the site of the demo – at the Standardbred Retirement Foundation’s facility. I invited him and my mom to come see the demo and they were tucked away in chairs in a corner of the ring, watching. Walking on an uneven surface was hard for my dad by then.

“After Sam was finished greeting the guests, I asked him to bring Buddy over and show dad that he had controlled that horse at maximum speed with no bit – he used a bitless bridle that put pressure on the horse’s nose, not his mouth.

“Sam brought the horse so close he was almost in dad’s lap. Dad struggled to his feet to watch intently as Sam explained all the things he’d tried to control Buddy, how he finally arrived at the bitless bridle and showed dad every part of it and the mechanics of how it worked. My father was transfixed – learning something new about training horses at age 86. He talked about that day for months afterward.

“The next time I saw Sam at the track, I thanked him for taking the time to show my dad this new gizmo for riding horses. His response was typically modest, ‘I couldn’t believe that I was teaching a Hall of Fame trainer something about rigging a horse.’” — Ken Weingartner/Harness Racing Communications
Melady’s Monet set to make ’17 debut at Big M

Melady’s Monet, the pride of Esther and Luca Balenzano’s Melady Enterprises, makes his seasonal debut in the first race on Friday night at the Meadowlands, an $18,000 conditioned trot.  more

American Girl set for Yonkers debut Friday

When trainer Tyler George planned to ship his filly Angelinmyway to Yonkers Raceway for the Petticoat Series, he knew he’d have room on the trailer for another horse. Rather than waste the opportunity, George nominated aged pacing mare American Girl to the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series and planned to ship her east for the first time.  more

WEG announces 2017 stakes nominees

The lists of eligible horses for all Woodbine Entertainment Group (WEG) and Alliance stakes in 2017 has been released by the Mohawk Race Office. Nominations for most stakes events were due on Feb. 15 and with a sustaining payment quickly approaching on March 15, the full lists of nominees to each event are now available for public viewing.  more

Sky’s the limit for 3YO Stealth Bomber

Eight years ago, Frank Bellino bought a colt from the first crop of stallion Rocknroll Hanover. The pacer’s name was Rock N Roll Heaven and at age 3 the horse won 16 of 21 races, earned $2.15 million in purses, and was named Horse of the Year in the United States.  more

HHYF announces summer camp dates

Baseball training camp has started and spring is just around the corner. That can mean only one thing, the Harness Horse Youth Foundation summer camp schedule and applications are now available! Complete details are at http://hhyf.org/schedule-applications.  more

Northville Downs to host WHHC qualifier

The first of two qualifiers for the $50,000 World Harness Handicapping Championship (WHHC) held at the Meadowlands is set at Northville Downs for Friday. Registration is now open for this qualifying event.  more

New Jersey owner Joe Chnapko Sr., 95, dies

Joseph Paul Chnapko Sr., 95, of Livingston, NJ., died March 6. He owned many Standardbreds over the years, among them Hellava Hush, Escortention and Cherry Hills.  more

Bit Of A Legend, McWicked, Wakizashi in Levy

Defending champion Bit Of A Legend N leads 40 Free-For-All nominees into Yonkers Raceway’s 2017 edition of the George Morton Levy Memorial Pacing Series. The event again honors the Hall-of-Fame founder of Roosevelt Raceway. The five weeks of preliminaries begin next Saturday, March, 18, with each race in each leg worth $50,000.  more

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## Leading Money-Winning Drivers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>W-P-S</th>
<th>UTR</th>
<th>Earnings (wk. diff)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Bartlett</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>91-72-74</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>$1,600,281 ($212,125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Merriman</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>199-140-111</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>1,350,187 (151,337)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Brennan</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>62-53-45</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>1,201,048 (144,605)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Stratton</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>58-59-56</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>1,189,562 (161,685)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Kakaley</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>47-61-42</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>1,063,208 (113,525)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Zeron</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>54-47-49</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>1,019,955 (72,410)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey Callahan</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>111-81-73</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>968,102 (82,137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yannick Gingras</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>75-59-46</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>781,130 (130,624)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Palone</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>103-62-45</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>776,305 (77,370)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Dube</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>31-49-44</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>751,867 (63,680)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark MacDonald</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>31-44-42</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>727,042 (94,995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace Tetrick</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>78-54-55</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>726,984 (69,550)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Marohn Jr.</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>99-77-66</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>705,067 (79,324)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne Kauffman</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>78-58-65</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>695,380 (38,580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug McNair</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>64-48-37</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td>682,333 (57,706)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Leading Money-Winning Trainers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trainers</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>476</td>
<td>109-72-62</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>$1,393,015 ($202,516)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rene Allard</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>63-48-36</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>762,530 (82,998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Banca</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>34-32-30</td>
<td>.329</td>
<td>695,660 (93,559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Harris</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>29-28-14</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>482,046 (80,545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Di Domenico</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>29-21-23</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>431,404 (60,430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Moreau</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>38-36-37</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>431,210 (59,862)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Harmon</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>37-16-11</td>
<td>.390</td>
<td>416,077 (22,050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen Auciello</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>33-33-27</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>383,646 (42,541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dylan Davis</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>41-25-23</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>353,840 (38,528)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matias Ruiz</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>16-15-16</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>303,641 (35,265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Surick</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>73-40-31</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>279,363 (26,872)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Johnson</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>23-27-10</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td>274,642 (24,640)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Bailey Jr.</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12-13-15</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>263,418 (18,360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Ford</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>13-19-27</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>251,897 (19,470)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler George</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>27-19-14</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>248,509 (40,585)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>