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# Harness Racing

## WEEKEND PREVIEW

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2016

Inside  
Weekly  
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News Digest

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### Wiggle It Jiggleit Tops Levy Nominations

The George Morton Levy Memorial Series for older pacers gets underway on Saturday, March 19, at Yonkers Raceway, and this year's renewal has attracted 50 nominations. Trainer Ron Burke told Weekend Preview he has five Levy eligibles, including two-time Levy champ Foiled Again (2009-2010), the all-time richest pacer with \$7,338,988 in earnings.



News Image Media Photo

**"He was jumping shadows. It happens so there is no big story behind that one."**

—George Teague Jr.

Arguably the most prominent name on the Levy eligible list is 2015 Horse of the Year Wiggle It Jiggleit. The winner of 22 races and \$2.18 million in purses last year will likely miss the opening round of the six-week series because of a sub-par qualifier on March 2 at Dover Downs where he finished third.

With owner George Teague Jr. and regular driver Montrell Teague on a family vacation, trainer Clyde Francis turned to Kevin Switzer to drive the gelding in the qualifier. After cruising through fractions of :28.2, :56.1 and 1:25.1 while opening up a seven-length lead, Wiggle It Jiggleit suddenly slowed and was passed by two horses by the

stretch call. He finished 1 3/4 lengths behind the winning Getitofyourchest in a 1:55.1 mile.

The Teague family and Francis were in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., last Sunday night at the U.S. Harness Writers Association's annual Dan Patch Awards banquet, accepting the E. Roland Harriman Horse of the Year trophy earned by the now 4-year-old gelding.

"He was jumping shadows. It happens so there is no big story behind that one," explained George Teague shortly after the Horse of the Year photographs were taken and while still clutching the famed trophy.

Teague said while he hoped Wiggle It Jiggleit could have made the Levy opener, he and trainer Francis will now contemplate some equipment changes before a second qualifier.

"We'll probably qualify him again," said Teague. "He probably won't make the first leg and we'll see where we go from there. We'll see how he qualifies. It all hinges on how he qualifies, and if he's not sharp enough he won't go."

As of this time last year, Wiggle It Jiggleit already had five wins under his belt, including a sweep of the three-week

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### WHAT'S INSIDE . . .

**NJ casino initiative vote on Monday—pg. 2**  
**Tetrick and Rockeyed Optimist ready—pg. 2**  
**Baillargeon bets on Musical Rhythm—pg. 4**  
**Backstretch with Gordon—pg. 6**  
**Breeding Banter—pg. 7**

Buddy Gilmour Series at the Meadowlands. Teague said he doesn't have a "Plan B" if Wiggle It Jiggleit doesn't compete in the Levy Series.

"That's the problem. You don't have a whole lot of other racing," he said. "I would have to search high and low to see if I can find any opportunities for him to race. They don't write races with the conditions of non-winners of 24 races or \$2.5 million."

Teague hasn't wavered from his belief that Wiggle It Jiggleit is ready for a stellar 4-year-old season.

"It's the same as it was for him as a 3 year old," said Teague. "He's a great horse. Not just a good horse—a great horse. My expectations aren't going to change too much, all he has to do is deliver." —By Gordon Waterstone

## Northern NJ Casino Initiative To Be Considered Monday

On Monday, New Jersey lawmakers are scheduled to vote on a bill that would ask New Jersey voters to approve up to two casinos in the northern part of the state. The Meadowlands is being discussed as a site.

The bill must pass both houses of the legislature by a three-fifths majority to be placed on the November ballot.

The bill calls for the two northern New Jersey casinos to be located at least 72 miles from Atlantic City and in separate counties. Some tax revenue will go to redeveloping Atlantic City.

According to a survey by Rutgers Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, support for casinos in northern New Jersey continues to grow.

## Tetrick Ready For Another Race With Rockeyed Optimist

With only two days of racing a week and Hall of Famers David Miller and Ron Pierce currently out of the rotation, the driving colony at the Meadowlands definitely has a lower average age this season.

Although 34, with 20 years of experience and more than 46,000 drives, Tim Tetrick is certainly a veteran by any standard. He's tied with 34-year-old Anthony Napolitano as the leading dash-winning driver at the Meadowlands

with 29 wins. Overall, through March 9, Tetrick had piled up \$878,200 in 432 starts to rank fourth in money-winnings in North America, while his 86 wins put him 11th in the standings.

"It's definitely not the same here this meet," said Tetrick of the reduction of dates at the Meadowlands to just Friday and Saturday.

One of Tetrick's regular drives is the Steve Elliott-trained pacer Rockeyed Optimist, who will start from post 7 in the \$25,000 Open Handicap Pace (Race 11). He's the 5-2 morning line favorite.

(Don't forget that the Meadowlands

moved its post time from 6:35 p.m. to 7:15, so Race 11 is estimated to go off at 10:45 p.m.)

Last year Tetrick and Rockeyed Optimist won the \$59,000 Clyde Hirt final at the Meadowlands on March 28 and then moved on to the Graduate, where the horse took a mark of 1:48 in winning a leg over JK Endofanera.

"He's pretty much the same horse as last year," said Tetrick of Rockeyed Optimist, who has two wins in three starts thus



Stallitz.se/Adam Strom Photo

**"I think he's a better closer than he is on the front."**

—Tim Tetrick



## THIS WEEKEND'S FEATURED RACES

All times listed are local.

### Friday, March 11

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

9:50p Wdb8 **HIPBet.com Mares Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

[Click here to download all Friday PPs](#)

### Saturday, March 12

7:30p Wdb1 **WEGZ Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

8:10p Wdb3 **Preferred Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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

10:45p M11 **Open Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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far this season. "At the end of last year, he was pretty tired, and he's better on a mile track than a five-eighths.

"He's racing good right now, and I think he's a better closer than he is on the front," added Tetrick. "But you've got to make him do the work."

Last Saturday Andrew McCarthy drove Rockeyed Optimist to a 1:50.2 win in the Meadowlands Open since Tetrick was competing in a driving competition at Pompano Park.

"I enjoyed the trip to Florida, and I've been to Pinehurst twice and trained some for Linda (Toscano) and I'm going to try to get to Pinehurst for the matinee day," said Tetrick. — By Kathy Parker



Control The Moment  
winner of the 2015 Metro Pace. Photo by Nere Image Media.

# 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 (\$75,000 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 \$680,000 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 \$78,000 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).



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## Baillargeon Hopes Rhythm Is Going To Get You

Gloria Estefan may have had a hit song in 1987 with "Rhythm is Going To Get You," but Ontario-based trainer Ben Baillargeon has his own hit going in 2016 with Musical Rhythm, who has certainly been feeling the beat since last fall.

A 4-year-old son of Cantab Hall, Musical Rhythm is riding a seven-race win streak, including a sweep of the three-week General Brock Series and the Preferred Trot on Monday (March 7) at Woodbine Racetrack. His 1:52 victory in the Preferred is the fastest mile by a trotter in North America thus far in 2016, with his \$25,500 check bringing his seasonal earnings to \$51,660—the most banked by a trotter this year.

"He's the talk of the town and we haven't seen the bottom of him yet," said Mario Baillargeon, who drives the trotter for his brother Ben. "I haven't even pulled the earplugs on him yet. I don't know where he's going to take us, but right now it's a hell of a ride."

Since being purchased for \$33,000 at last November's mixed sale in Harrisburg and entering Ben Baillargeon's stable, Musical Rhythm is nine-for-10, his lone blemish when hobble problems caused him to break.

"I thought the hobbles were going to break before the race so had to attach them with tape and put the bike close to Mario, and he hit Mario on the leg behind the gate and that's why he ran," remembered Ben Baillargeon. "Besides that, he's been nothing but great."

Originally a \$35,000 yearling purchase, Musical Rhythm is out of the Valley Victory mare Musical Victory, a winner of more than \$500,000 whose biggest victory came in the 1998 Breeders Crown 2-Year-Old Filly Trot at Colonial Downs. Musical Victory's prior foals include the Cantab Hall filly Musical Mystery 3, Q1:55.2 (\$290,952) and the SJ's Photo gelding Photo King 1:53.2 (\$299,357), who won the American National 2-Year-Old Filly Trot and an International Stallion Stake division in 2008 for trainer Ron Gurfein. Now nine, Photo King is still racing, most recently on March 5 at Saratoga.

"I had three picked (at the mixed sale) and I wanted one under \$40,000," Baillargeon recalled. "This one was my last hope and I got him for \$33,000. In my mind, he was the best of three and the one with the best speed. I knew he had speed because he threw a quarter in :26.4 as a 2 year old. I was looking to buy a horse that fit the General Brock and the Don Mills, and he fit the General Brock by 200 bucks."

Baillargeon said he started from scratch with Musical Rhythm, who up to the sale had five wins in 18 starts and a mark of 1:56.1f taken at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs while in the barn of trainer Tony Alagna.

"I didn't know what he wore," said Baillargeon, who purchased the trotter in partnership with Santo Vena, Nunzio Vena and Claude Hamel. "I don't want to know what they wear so I start from scratch. I changed shoes and added a blind bridle. He had flip-flop shoes on and I put on regular full swedge in front. That's all I did."

## Musical Rhythm



New Image Media Photo

Musical Rhythm made his first start for his new connections at Pocono Downs two weeks after the sale and it took just that one start—a 1:54.2 victory—to convince Baillargeon he bought the correct trotter.

"I said, 'Geez, what kind of horse is this?'" said Baillargeon. "He's not that big of horse but he covers the ground very nice."

Baillargeon said Musical Rhythm will get a short break before returning for the Don Mills Series that gets underway at Woodbine on April 8. He said the trotter's stakes schedule got a bit fuller as a result of his current win binge.

"He's got the Graduate Series and the Meadowlands Maturity," said Baillargeon. "I just now put him in the Maple Leaf Trot and Allerage. First we'll go against the 4 year olds but I think he deserves a shot to race against the top ones." — *By Gordon Waterstone*

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# *Ohio Sires Stakes*



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## BACKSTRETCH with GORDON FROM SUNSHINE MEADOWS



Being in Florida for last weekend's U.S. Harness Writers Association meetings and Dan Patch Awards banquet in Fort Lauderdale, it was a no-brainer I make a trip to a nearby training center. The Hambletonian Society's Moira Fanning also wanted to go, and we were joined by Lexington Selected Yearling Sale manager Randy Manges, so off we went to Sunshine Meadows on a Chamber of Commerce day on Friday (March 4).

Because of traffic, it took a bit of time to make it to Sunshine Meadows. Although it was Moira's birthday—I'll keep the number to myself—she drove and when we arrived she was able to find a parking spot near the training track, one that was pretty close to what has become known as "The Deck" this year. Built by horseman Billy Bigler and near the Tony Alagna Stable, it has become the go-to place. There were plenty of people congregated on The Deck when we arrived, including Frank Antonacci, Myron Bell, Murray Brown, David Reid, Adriano Sorella and Tom Hicks. Even Dan Coon, the husband of Boss Kathy, was on hand.

I walked over to say hello to Tony, who told me he had eight eligible for the North America Cup. Tony had one of those GoPro cameras fastened to the top of his helmet, which recorded his training trips. Boss Kathy's nephew, Kyle Bolon, is working for Tony and as he came off the track he went by and said hello.

My trip also included a personal barn tour from Myron in which we went through the Alagna Stable and he gave me a quick update on each of the 40-plus horses. It was fascinating to listen to Myron reciting by memory the in-depth pedigrees of each. I wish I had enough space to go through each individual and what Myron told me, but Boss Kathy—despite my asking—wouldn't allow me to use 10 pages.

I left Moira and Randy at The Deck and started my walk-through. Deshawn Minor waved me over and I paid my condolences to him on the recent loss of his father, Tom. I've known the Minor family for virtually my entire 37 years in the business as they too are native Detroiters. I later saw Deshawn's brother, Dewayne, and I did the same, noting how glad I was to see Dewayne and his father last fall one night eating steak at Logan's near The Red Mile.

Peter Wrenn was nearby but as I walked over a loose horse suddenly went flying past us. Several people tried waving their hands to slow down the runaway, but it was to no avail. The horse went around the corner of the barn so I don't know how or when it was finally corralled.

It was great seeing Pete, another former Michigander. He said I just missed Tim Buter, who had come to Sunshine

Meadows to visit. I didn't miss another Buter though as I had a chance to see Meegan, who is Tim's niece.

Actually, Fred Grant came by in a golf cart so I jumped aboard for the ride to their stable. I had to slide over Fred and Meegan's two dogs, Oscar and AJ (named for Alan J. Leavitt, by the way), but both climbed onto my lap for the trip.

Meegan said she had something to show me, and she went into the office and came back out with a bag full of magazines. They were The Horseman And Fair World copies from the 1970s, which she said her father Terry sent her. Fred picked one up and starting thumbing through it, showing me story after story and adding what he remembered about each.

Other Michiganders I saw included Bucky Goldschmidt, Kelly Walker, Steve Oldford and Marty Cooper. Tina Duer was there helping out. Dr. John Cummins was also there.

Joe Holloway was in Florida to accept the award for Divine Caroline as 3-Year-Old Filly Pacer of the Year, and he was making the rounds at Sunshine as well. We talked for a few minutes while at Bob Bencal's barn. Bob was celebrating his 76th birthday so I wished him well. Also there was Lexington-based Terry Miller, the former NFL player who now insures horses.

Three hours later we tried to leave, but Myron insisted on lunch. Adriano Sorella came along too, and Myron called his wife Stephanie to join us. We sat on a patio at a Greek restaurant and had great food and conversation. Thanks Myron for picking up the tab!

Oh yeah....gas prices were all over the board, ranging from the \$1.80s to one place I swear had a gallon at \$3.09 (cash, with credit at \$2.97).



Above: The birthday duo: Bob Bencal and Moira Fanning.  
Left: Fred Grant and Meegan Sattelberg are avid readers of The Horseman And Fair World.



## BREEDING *Banter*

Breeding season is well underway and with the warm temperatures this week, farm managers are expecting mares who are due or overdue to complete the cycle of nature and deliver their foals.

On Tuesday, March 8, Brittany Farms welcomed a filly by Captaintreacherous out of Ravinia Hanover p,2, 1:54, on a beautiful, warm early spring day in central Kentucky.

"Wow!" exclaimed Brittany Farms manager Art Zubrod when asked about the new arrival.

"She's really a nice, good-looking foal."

Ravinia Hanover, a daughter of Bettor's Delight, is out of the family of World Order, so her Captaintreacherous filly has a cross that has proven very successful for Brittany, a double-dose of a top female. The new filly has a 3x4 cross to World Order, who has produced the winners of \$1.9 million.

World Order is the second dam of Captaintreacherous and the third dam in Ravinia Hanover's family tree.

"This is the way we bred American Jewel," noted Zubrod of Brittany's champion pacing filly, who carried a double dose of Three Diamonds, Brittany's great race performer and producer, in her blood.

Ravinia Hanover's colt by Captaintreacherous is her second foal. Her first, a yearling colt named Life Major, is by Art Major and thus carries a 2x5 cross to Rodine Hanover.

White Birch Farm bred and raised Captaintreacherous and the New Jersey farm welcomed a full brother to the Captain early on Sunday morning, March 6.

"He's a really nice colt," said White Birch manager Steve Williams on Wednesday morning, March 9.

Since April and May are the peak foaling months for Standardbreds, Brittany, White Birch and other farms are really just getting started with foaling season.

After Ravinia Hanover foaled on Tuesday at Brittany, the Artiscape mare Good Stuff delivered a colt by American Ideal, which Zubrod said left about 48 more mares yet to foal at Brittany. In addition to the Ravinia Hanover and Good Stuff foals at Brittany, the farm's early foals include a Father Patrick colt out of Flirting Filly 2, 1:54.3, who it co-owns with Al Libfeld and Marvin Katz. The colt is the mare's first foal.

Williams said on March 9 that while White Birch had nine foals on the ground, eight of them colts, 10 mares were overdue.

**"With these 70-degree temperatures, I'm expecting them to pop soon!"**

—Steve Williams



*This filly, born on March 8 at Brittany Farms, is a daughter of Captaintreacherous and Ravinia Hanover. The young foal carries a double dose of the blood of World Order. (Photo courtesy Brittany Farms)*

"With these 70-degree temperatures, I'm expecting them to pop soon," he said.

Meanwhile, Crawford Farms in New York has had a tough week. At 2 a.m. on Wednesday morning, March 9, two mares at the farm went into labor. By 5 a.m. Crawford had a healthy Muscle Hill colt out of the Crazy-sired Crazy Grigio 4, 1:54.3f, but had lost a Trixton colt out of Wygant Lady, who was left battling for her life and had to be shipped to Cornell University's equine hospital.

"She was a big, beautiful Credit Winner mare and it was as bad as a dystocia as you could get," said Michelle Crawford, who operates the farm with her husband, Al, on Thursday morning. "We had our vet, Dr. Miller, and another vet and all farm hands there to help for three hours, but we lost the foal. That was going to be our first Trixton."

As for Thursday morning, Michelle said Wygant Lady was in stable condition at Cornell but would be given a year off from breeding.

Just two weeks earlier Crawford Farms lost the 10-year-old mare Pleasecometoboston and her colt by Credit Winner.

"She had a cyst, and we got her to Cornell but they knew she wasn't going to make it," shared Michelle. "She stayed alive for two days and they did a C-section for the foal and the foal was alive for two weeks but he got pneumonia. He fought so hard."

On a brighter note, Michelle said she was thrilled that their mare Air Miles Hanover foaled a filly by Sweet Lou that has her daddy's famous blaze.

"We've got 27 mares left to foal, so hopefully the bad things are behind us," she added. — By Kathy Parker



## Waterstone, Wolf Named To Communicators Hall Of Fame Ballot

The U.S. Harness Writers Association conducted its annual two days of business meetings this past weekend in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The weekend culminated in the Sunday evening celebration of the sport's best, both human and equine, at the annual Dan Patch Awards Banquet.

Per its usual two-year rotation policy, the presidency of USHWA changed. Tim Bojarski, publicist at Batavia Downs and the webmaster for the organization's website, <http://www.ushwa.org/>, ascended from the first vice presidency chair to become president of USHWA, succeeding Chris Tully, who will become the USHWA chairman of the board.

Shawn Wiles, the point person for all racing-related activities at Monticello Raceway, moved up to the first vice presidency position while Kim Rinker, now directing the Ohio Sires Stakes efforts, was elected second vice president. Judy Davis-Wilson elected not to stand for her treasurer position after years of vital service to the group so the directors elected Barry Lefkowitz, former Roosevelt publicist and the head of USHWA's Audit and Finance Committee, as overseer of the organization's finances. Jerry Connors was returned as USHWA secretary.

The most important piece of USHWA business took place early in the two days of sessions as Gordon Waterstone and Steve Wolf were chosen to be on the summer ballot for election to the sport's Communicators Hall of Fame.

Waterstone made his mark in his native Michigan and environs, primarily at Detroit's Hazel Park, before becoming assistant editor at *The Horseman and Fair World*, and if elected will join the magazine's editor Kathy Parker, and the late editor Bob Hackett as Communicators Hall members. Wolf was an innovative publicist and dedicated USHWA in his home area of New Jersey and metro Philadelphia before coming to Florida, where he ascended to the racing general manager position of Pompano Park. Today he works as a media consultant in the sport.

## Can Perfectly Enough Tackle Top American Trotters?

Eight-year-old Swedish trotter Perfectly Enough arrived in trainer Marcus Melander's New Jersey stable in early January with the hopes of competing this year against the best older trotters in North America. A return trip home in May, however, would be perfectly OK with his connections.

Perfectly Enough, who won the Swedish Breeders Crown at age 3 and has earned 3.08 million Swedish krona (\$453,219 U.S.) during his career, was among 15 horses nominated to the inaugural Elitlopp Playoff at the

Meadowlands Racetrack. The winner of the May 8 event will receive an automatic invitation to compete in the world-renowned Elitlopp at Sweden's Solvalla track on May 29.

"The owner's dream is to be in the Elitlopp," Melander said, referring to Lars Enochson. "He would race there in that case. But it's one step at a time. There are many good horses in (the Elitlopp Playoff). He's in there, but we need to see if he's good enough to race. We're not going to race there just to be in the race."

Unraced at two, Perfectly Enough won eight of 37 races and hit the board a total of 20 times at ages 3 through 5, but was winless in 13 starts the past two years because of knee woes. He last raced July 30, prior to having knee surgery for the second time. He was most recently trained by Bjorn Goop, but also spent time in the stables of Stefan Hultman and Stig H. Johansson.

"So far he feels very good; he feels very sound," Melander said. "I have another horse for the owner and we talked about (Perfectly Enough) a little bit last summer. After the season last year, after he had surgery, Bjorn thought it was a good idea to try him over here now. The owner was excited to bring him over."

In addition to his Swedish Breeders Crown win, Perfectly Enough's victories include the 2013 Gavle Stora Pris, a Group 2 event, and the 2013 Gotlandsloppning, a Group 3 race. He finished third in the 2012 Group 1 Swedish Trotting Derby.

"Maybe he'll get a kick out of it being over here," said Melander, who is in his second full year of training in the US and has a stable of 21 horses in New Egypt. "It seems like he thinks it's fun so far. He's 8 years old now, but every time we go out to train or jog him, he acts very young. He really loves to do his work."

"It's important that he really likes to do this, otherwise it's not that easy. Even if they can go, it's not that easy if they don't think it's so fun to race and train. He's a very happy horse."

Melander has lightly staked Perfectly Enough, with an eye toward keeping the horse close to home. He hopes the trotter will be ready to qualify in a month.

"I didn't put him in too much because we don't really know how good he will be over here," Melander said. "We just staked him very easy, even though they're good races. I didn't want to go too far with him."

"I love to race at the Meadowlands because it's such a good track. That's why I want to keep him around here. I think a mile track will be a good fit for him. I hope he is better now with his knees. With a big track, I think it will be good. It will be interesting to see how good he can be." — *By Ken Weingartner/Harness Racing Communications*

*Continues on page 9 >>>>*



## Bongiorno Off To Fast Start In 2016

Joe Bongiorno is sitting behind more horses than ever this year, which has the 22-year-old driver on the verge of a breakout season. Bongiorno, who entered Thursday ranked fifth in wins among all drivers in North America, is on pace to shatter his career highs for starts, victories, and purses.

Bongiorno has visited the winner's circle 104 times this year, which puts him only 88 victories shy of the career-best 192 he posted in 2015. He is on pace for 560 wins and \$2.94 million in purses. His previous high for earnings, also established last year, is \$1.97 million.

In addition, the New Jersey native sits among the top five drivers in wins at three different racetracks—Freehold the Meadowlands in his home state, plus Northfield Park.

"It's been an excellent start to the year," Bongiorno said. "I've just been driving quality horses. I'm traveling a lot, just trying to sit behind as many horses as I possibly can. It's a struggle at times. Traveling is exhausting and takes a toll on your body, but it's worth it, a hundred percent. When you're racking up wins, it's exciting.

"I'm very fortunate to drive for a number of great trainers and I'm getting a lot of very good mounts now. I didn't expect to get off to such a great start this year. I expected to do well, but not as well as I'm doing. But I also didn't expect to be going to Northfield. That was a last-minute thing and so far it's paying off very well."

Bongiorno was the 2010 Amateur Driver of the Year, awarded by the U.S. Harness Writers Association, and was the USHWA Monticello-Goshen chapter's 2011 Rising Star Award winner. He is the grandson of horseman Harold "Sonny" Dancer, who passed away earlier this week, and joined his parents, Barbara and Bob, in getting involved in harness racing. He has won 775 races in his career and \$5.95 million in purses.

This year, Bongiorno is second in wins at Freehold, tied for fourth at the Meadowlands, and fifth at Northfield Park. His 26.4 win percentage at Freehold leads all regulars and his 22.5 win percentage at Northfield trails only Ronnie Wrenn Jr. and Aaron Merriman.

"I just try to improve each year," Bongiorno said. "When I was first starting out, I wasn't as patient as I should have been. Over the years, I've become a lot calmer. That's what I've learned the most.

"It's not that you're young, it's that you're not driving many horses. When you're only driving two races on a card, you're pressing to do good and impress people. That's when you make mistakes. You have to race horses the way they like to be raced."

Bongiorno's career highlight so far came just last November when he won, in a dead heat, the \$489,400 Valley Vic-

tory Stakes for 2-year-old trotters with Make Or Miss for trainer Ron Burke. It was Bongiorno's first drive in a race worth more than \$150,000.

On Saturday night, Bongiorno will drive millionaire pacer Bettor's Edge in the Open Handicap at the Meadowlands. It will be the Burke-trained 7-year-old gelding's seasonal debut. Bongiorno drove Bettor's Edge four times last year, with the results including a win in a conditioned race at the Meadowlands and a third-place finish in the American-National Stakes at Balmoral Park.

"It seems like he came back excellent," Bongiorno said about Bettor's Edge. "I was very impressed with his last qualifier. That was the best he's ever been since I've sat behind him. He seemed super sound and steered great. I love the horse. He's always tried his hardest for me. He's just a very, very nice horse."

Bongiorno is hoping to continue his strong season, but not looking too far ahead.

"I take it slow," Bongiorno said. "I try to drive every race the same. I don't really panic over if it's a bigger race, or just a regular claiming race. It's all the same and you just try to stay calm and poised, that's it. I'm going to give a horse the best shot they've got to win. I'll put horses in play and try to get them up close and hopefully it works out.

"But as good as the year has started out it definitely could be a breakout year. Hopefully, I keep getting opportunities and the results are there." *(Ken Weingartner for HRC)*

## Yonkers Increases Purses Up To 25 Percent

Yonkers Raceway has announced an across-the-board purse increases, beginning with next week's condition sheet. The significant (up to 25 percent) hikes raise the overnight purse range from \$8,000 (for \$12,500 claimers) to \$40,000 (weekly Opens/Open Handicaps). The current structure is \$6,500 to \$32,000.

The new scale takes effect Monday, March 14. For more information, please contact the race office at (914) 457-2627. *(Yonkers)*

## HHI Meetings Conclude In Florida

Harness Horsemen International's annual meetings concluded Wednesday, March 9, at the Embassy Suites Deerfield Beach Resort & Spa, Deerfield Beach, Fla.

The Wednesday session included a presentation from Joe Pennacchio, president and executive director of Florida's SBOA, who discussed "de-coupling," an issue which recently threatened the existence of harness racing in the Sunshine State.

Later that morning, HHI members voted to meet in Las Vegas in 2017, along with the USTA and United States Har-

*Continues on page 10 >>>>*



ness Writers Association's annual meetings. HHI elections then ensued.

Re-elected to serve new three-year terms to the HHI board are president Tom Luchento (SBOANJ); Kim Hankins (Meadows HHA) as first vice president; Tony Somone (Illinois HHA) as second vice president; Mike Izzo (PHHA) as treasurer; and Sal DiMario (DSOA) as secretary.

Tim Powers (Maine HHA) and Gabe Prewitt (Kentucky HHA) were both re-elected to one-year terms as at-large directors, as were Peter Maranari (PHHA) and Andrew Markano (DSOA), who replace retiring directors Ron Battoni (PHHA) and Jerry Knappenberger (OHHA). Both Battoni and Knappenberger were honored as HHI Directors Emeritus via unanimous vote for their many years of service to the organization.

USTA executive vice president Mike Tanner, PHHA's retiring executive director Battoni and Harness Racing Communications' Ken Weingartner were honored at HHI's annual awards luncheon that afternoon. Tanner was presented with the Dominic Frinzi Person of the Year Award; Battoni with the HHI Appreciation Award; and Weingartner with the Clyde Hirt Media Award. (HHI)

## Isle International Amateur Races Set For Pompano

Amateur driver Dein Spriggs is looking forward to this weekend's Isle International Amateur competition at Pompano Park this weekend.

"This competition will be highly competitive—yet friendly—with eyes throughout the world on our sport in this highly anticipated event," said Spriggs.

The seven race competition—four races on Saturday and three on Sunday—will feature the best amateur drivers from nine European countries, New Zealand and the United States with charities throughout the world the beneficiaries from the generosity of The Florida Amateur Driving Club and further contributions of driver's fees earned from the event.

Spriggs, whose full time profession is in real estate investment, has been a harness racing participant for some four decades and has driven well over 400 winners.

The Florida Amateur Driving Club has donated over \$150,000 to worthwhile charitable causes since its inception.

A few of the charities to benefit from this competition are New Zealand's Kidz Kartz North Island, Norway's Children's Cancer Association and Russia's The Red Cross, as well as Germany's SOS Kinderdorfer and Austria's Kinderhilfe, among others.

The draw for the seven International seven races event was held Wednesday with Finland's Tapio Hoikka and Denmark's Michael Holmer officiating at the draw.

The first of four Saturday events has a field of seven and track morning line maker John Berry has made Mr. Wizard, to be driven by Jaime Bassa, the 5-2 morning line favorite.

Princess Crown, having competed in \$10,000 claiming events recently, is the 7-2 second choice and will have Andrea Fazekas, the only female in the competition, in the sulky. Fazekas has 135 lifetime wins in her homeland of Hungary and is highly regarded as a superior horsewoman.

New Zealand's Danny Blakemore is listed at 4-1 with Witty's Winner, who has been hampered by poor positions in his last two outings but has drawn post two for the opener.

This trio will be joined by Baby Boy Grin (Spriggs), Super Duke (Nils-Olav Holm from Norway), Vacation Day (Johann Preining Jr. from Austria) and Berkshire (Tapio Hoikka from Finland).

The competition will feature race calls by Roger Huston, Pompano Park announcer from 1967 to 1975, who has since gone on to call over 160,000 races in several foreign countries. The competition winds up Sunday night with that trio of International events determining the winner. (Pompano Park)

## Stakes Payments Due; Milstein Now An Invitational

March sustaining and nominating payments for Hambletonian Society stake events are due Tuesday, March 15, and per USTA Rule 12 section 2, must be postmarked by midnight on Wednesday, March 16.

The Carl Milstein Memorial at Northfield Park has been changed from a stakes to an Invitational event, open to 3-year-old pacers regardless of gender. The field will be limited to eight starters and race for a minimum of \$300,000 on Saturday, Aug. 13. Any stakes payments received for this race will be refunded by the Hambletonian Society.

Please note that there is a separate Breeders Crown 2-year-old future eligibility payment of \$500 due March 15 that maintains eligibility for the Breeders Crown 3-year-old events of 2017, hosted by Hoosier Park.

The Hambletonian Society services 129 of harness racing's richest and most prestigious events and provides one-stop shopping for your staking needs. The web site Hambletonian.org contains all the tools and information necessary to stake your horse yourself.

All forms are available on the web site and are PDF fillable. Race conditions, payment forms and much more information are now available online, as well as eligibility lists for races that had a final payment on Feb. 15, 2015.

Continues on page 11 >>>>



For additional information call the Society offices at (609) 371-2211.

Listed below are the stakes with payments due for all ages due March 15.

### MARCH 2016

Delvin Miller Adios (and Adioo Volo Filly Division)  
 Arden Downs Stakes  
 Battle of Lake Erie  
 Breeders Crown  
 Cane Pace (and Shady Daisy)  
 The Carl Erskine  
 Centaur Stakes  
 Circle City  
 Cleveland Trotting Classic  
 Courageous Lady Filly Pace  
 Currier & Ives Trot (and Filly Trot)  
 Dan Patch  
 Dayton Derby Trot and Pace  
 Dexter Cup (and Lady Suffolk Trot)  
 The Elevation  
 Fox Stake  
 Hambletonian (and Hambletonian Oaks)  
 Hoosier Stakes  
 Hoosier Park Pacing Derby (previously the Indiana Pacing Derby)  
 The Horseman  
 Kentuckiana Stallion Mgt. Filly Pace & Trot (for 2YO Fillies)  
 Keystone Classics  
 Landmark Stakes  
 Liberty Bell (Early closer 3YOs)  
 Liberty Bell 2-year-olds  
 Madison County (previously the Circle City for 2YOs)  
 Matron Series  
 Meadows Maturity  
 Miami Valley Distaff  
 Messenger Stakes (and Lady Maud)  
 Monument Circle  
 Progress Pace  
 W. N. Reynolds Memorial Stakes  
 Art Rooney Pace (and Lismore Filly Division)  
 John Simpson Memorial Early Closer Colt & Filly  
 The Crossroads of America  
 The USS Indianapolis Memorial  
 Tompkins Memorial & Geers Stake  
 Ralph Wilfong  
 Yonkers Trot  
 (*Hambletonian Society*)

## Harold “Sonny” Dancer Dies

Harold “Sonny” Dancer, 80, a trainer/driver since 1954 from the esteemed Dancer family, died March 6.

Over the years, he trained and drove many top level horses. He broke and trained the 2-year-old world champion pacing colt of 1972, Ricci Reenie Time, 1:56.1. He went on to capture many stakes races with that colt, including the 1973 Adios. He also conditioned and drove world champion trotting filly Ginger Belle.

Mr. Dancer was born Oct. 10, 1935. He was the son of Harold R. and Marion E. Dancer. He graduated from Red Bank High School in 1954. He won his first race that same year at Freehold Raceway and later that year won his first race at Yonkers behind Toodles Hanover.

Other notable horses he conditioned and drove were Golden Money Maker, Gee Lee Hanover, Tarport Joe, Worthy Jimmy, Swaps, Texan Hanover, Panther Hanover, Chin Whiskers and Rays Roughneck, just to name a few. One mare that was his sentimental favorite was his Open pacing mare, Get Over Lil, whom he conditioned for his daughter Linda.

Anyone who was fortunate enough to know Mr. Dancer could tell you that his word was his bond and he did business on a handshake. He was a true gentleman and a true horseman.

He enjoyed farming when he wasn't training his horses. He loved to get on his tractor and bale hay or plant corn and soybeans. He loved to tend to his garden where he grew far too many vegetables for one man to consume, but he loved giving the vegetables away so that many other people could enjoy them. He also got great joy out of watching his grandson, Joe, carry on the family legacy of driving horses.

Mr. Dancer leaves behind his beloved children and their spouses, Tommy (fiancée Jaime Topinka), Barbara (Bob) Bongiorno and Linda (Bob) Condon; grandchildren who he was extremely proud of, Robert Condon III, Jennifer Bongiorno and Joe Bongiorno; sister, Lois (John) Simpson; long-time lady friend, Mary Pullen; former wife, Sandie; and his faithful employee of many years, James (Jim Bob) Doane Jr.

A funeral service was held Thursday (March 10) at the Freeman Funeral Home, with his last trip around Freehold Racetrack taking place after the service and family and friends gathered in the winner's circle. Mr. Dancer was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Freehold.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Christian Harness Horsemen's Association, 157 North Main St., Salem, N.H. 03079 or to the Standardbred Retirement Foundation (<http://www.adoptahorse.org/>), 353 Sweetmans Lane, Suite. 101, Millstone Township, N.J. 08535.

**RACE LINES**

**Harness Racing Leaders**

Compiled by the USTA—through March 8, 2016 (week difference March 2-8).

**Leading North American-Based Money-Winning Horses**

	Sts.	W	P	S	Earnings
Bushwacker (5pg)	9	5	0	2	\$74,700
Nickle Bag (6pg)	8	6	0	2	70,835
Regil Elektra (6pm)	8	4	1	1	69,600
Velocity Vespa (6pm)	8	6	1	0	69,125
Mustang Art (9pg)	10	3	2	1	64,050
Polak A (8pg)	6	4	1	1	60,400
Musical Rhythm (4th)	5	5	0	0	51,660
Major Athens (6th)	6	2	3	0	51,435
Set Me Up (7pm)	9	2	5	1	51,375
Spreester (5pm)	9	4	1	2	51,075
Not Afraid (7tg)	6	3	0	0	50,560
Atta Boy Dan (7pg)	6	2	1	1	49,050
Trustworthy Kid (7tg)	7	3	2	1	48,700
Phil Your Boots (6pg)	7	2	2	0	47,560
Class Six (5pg)	8	6	1	0	46,985

**Leading Money-Winning Drivers**

	Sts.	W-P-S	UDR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Aaron Merriman	783	175-128-112	.362	\$1,207,494 ( <b>\$97,127</b> )
Jason Bartlett	411	111-69-47	.401	1,149,639 ( <b>165,465</b> )
Dave Palone	412	98-54-49	.350	848,827 ( <b>119,148</b> )
Tim Tetrick	420	82-69-54	.329	844,430 ( <b>143,807</b> )
Corey Callahan	547	91-81-78	.296	836,280 ( <b>28,590</b> )
Brian Sears	285	60-46-43	.350	781,921 ( <b>91,815</b> )
George Brennan	341	56-50-47	.292	742,951 ( <b>133,120</b> )
Jim Pantaleano	461	66-71-52	.266	723,719 ( <b>69,548</b> )
Tony Hall	482	65-63-60	.249	685,453 ( <b>74,166</b> )
Mike Wilder	454	62-68-71	.272	676,244 ( <b>63,547</b> )
Josh Sutton	484	88-66-49	.291	661,161 ( <b>82,685</b> )
Matt Kakaley	403	39-53-54	.215	645,109 ( <b>99,460</b> )
Eric Goodell	432	59-59-65	.263	627,176 ( <b>60,138</b> )
Allan Davis	519	57-69-77	.233	614,193 ( <b>61,287</b> )
Tyler Buter	324	40-45-37	.239	587,280 ( <b>69,710</b> )

**Leading Money-Winning Trainers**

	Sts.	W-P-S	UTR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Ron Burke	442	104-61-54	.353	\$1,151,022 ( <b>\$184,185</b> )
Richard Moreau	223	38-32-22	.283	398,246 ( <b>43,831</b> )
Richard Banca	183	46-24-22	.364	397,508 ( <b>56,010</b> )
Rene Allard	230	41-37-33	.315	397,018 ( <b>46,757</b> )
Carmen Auciello	267	35-45-30	.262	382,834 ( <b>39,638</b> )
Dylan Davis	154	40-30-19	.409	331,168 ( <b>33,215</b> )
Scott Di Domenico	130	27-29-15	.370	306,285 ( <b>41,780</b> )
Jim King Jr.	141	23-21-23	.300	273,520 ( <b>22,815</b> )
Tony O'Sullivan	83	24-9-8	.382	262,037 ( <b>45,403</b> )
Wayne Givens	111	25-11-10	.310	253,662 ( <b>46,420</b> )
Julie Miller	74	22-12-10	.432	249,587 ( <b>10,290</b> )
Randy Bendis	125	19-18-16	.275	240,878 ( <b>33,667</b> )
Norm Parker	125	17-22-18	.282	237,463 ( <b>28,291</b> )
Jeffrey Bamond Jr.	126	18-14-14	.242	236,845 ( <b>23,325</b> )
Michael Dowdall	150	30-14-21	.299	228,217 ( <b>21,490</b> )

**Leading Breeders**

Breeder	Starters	Winners	Wins	Earnings
Hanover Shoe Farms Inc.	487	197	295	\$2,302,562
Winbak Farm	469	157	235	1,702,261
Perretti Farms	148	66	98	781,335
Brittany Farms	135	52	77	777,964
Bulletproof Enterprises	89	44	77	531,175
Blue Chip Bloodstock Inc.	88	35	62	524,489
Seelster Farms Inc.	100	38	68	486,937
Kentuckiana Farms Gen Par	113	38	62	464,021
White Birch Farm	74	27	48	410,835
Frederick Hertrich III	79	35	44	396,859
Robert McIntosh Stables Inc.	76	31	51	335,834
Steve Stewart	62	26	40	328,695
Diamond Creek Farm LLC	49	21	42	295,128
Midland Acres Inc.	59	25	40	290,445
Arlene & Jules Siegel	51	19	29	289,622

**Leaders Of The Week**

Ranked by wins for March 2-8 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.

**Drivers**

Drivers	Starts	W-P-S
Joe Bongiorno	68	19-11-7
Jason Bartlett	52	18-6-8
Dave Palone	43	16-6-6
Bob McClure	39	14-3-7
Wally Hennessey	41	14-9-2
Bruce Aldrich Jr.	66	13-8-8
George Brennan	46	12-6-7
Jim Morrill Jr.	22	12-3-3
Josh Sutton	64	12-10-8
Aaron Merriman	62	11-9-9
Alfred Carroll	56	11-10-11
Chris Page	58	11-6-6
Jim DeVaux	64	10-9-8
Ronnie Wrenn Jr.	67	10-21-7
Tim Tetrick	46	10-10-7
Kayne Kauffman	59	9-8-4
Larry Stalbaum	42	9-8-5
Jim Marohn Jr.	53	8-4-7
Kurt Sugg	51	8-4-13
Paul MacKenzie	35	8-3-4
Scott Zeron	47	8-5-4

**Trainers**

Trainers	Wins
Ron Burke	15
J.D. Perrin	7
Rene Allard	6
Richard Banca	6
Vincent Fusco Jr.	6
Melissa Beckwith	5
Richard Moreau	5
Thomas Milici	5
Tony O'Sullivan	5
Dylan Davis	4
Gerard Demers	4
Gilbert Garcia-Herrera	4
Jeff Brewer	4
Paul Kennedy	4
Scott Di Domenico	4
Victor Puddy	4
Walter Haynes Jr	4
Wayne Givens	4