Burke Talks Yonkers’ “Burke Rule”

While conditions for the George Morton Levy Memorial and Blue Chip Matchmaker series at Yonkers Raceway already precluded a trainer and/or owner from having more than two entries in the final, a new clause was added this year regarding the preliminaries, one which many call “The Ron Burke Rule.”

As a result of multiple entries and domination by the Burke Brigade over the past few years in the two series, Yonkers has added the clause: “A trainer/owner will be limited to one declaration per division for each preliminary.”

And as a result of the new condition, trainer Burke limited his nominations. Burke entered four mares in the Matchmaker Series and five older males in the Levy, down from 10 last year. While last year’s opening round of the Levy featured a pair of Burke horses in each of the five divisions, the new conditions led to just one Burke horse in each of this year’s five opening-round splits.

“I only put in five (in the Levy) because I knew that was the most I could possibly get raced,” said Burke. “What remains to be seen is will it be better racing and better betting races having only one of mine in? It’s a possibility, and I never disputed that fact. But the idea that I’ve become so big it’s keeping other people out of the races, it’s ridiculous.”

While there were 39 Matchmaker entries last year, there were just 23 in 2015. Last year’s Levy attracted 47 nominations; this year there were 38. The only other trainer with near-maximum entries is Jeff Bambod Jr., who entered three in the Matchmaker and four in the Levy.

“The numbers are down,” said Burke. “The idea that they thought it would lead to more participation is ridiculous. The idea that I’m stopping other people from entering their horses is ludicrous.”

Burke said with 23 Matchmaker entries he knew there could be no more than three divisions, so he elected to sit Sayitall BB out for the first week.

“I knew right off the bat that we were going to have to sit one,” he said. “So I sat Sayitall BB this week because she wasn’t good last week. It made a hard decision easy.”

Burke also expects the number of Levy splits to decrease as the six-week series continues.

“Everybody is going to have to take a leg off,” said Burke. “Having two in the finals and two in the consolations, if I get that done I will be thrilled. I just have to do well enough that they qualify for the final, then I’ll be happy with the whole series.” —By Gordon Waterstone

With Sayitall BB on the sidelines this week, Burke has three Matchmaker entries on Friday night. Here are his comments on the trio:

1st division, Race 4—CHARISMA HANOVER

“She qualified super, her first start awful, and her second start super again. She still hasn’t gained the consistency of her 3-year-old year.”

2nd division, Race 5—CAMILLE

“One of the toughest mares I’ve ever had. She’s one of my favorite horses. She’s ready to go.”

3rd division, Race 6—MEDUSA

“It was a little bit disappointing with her last start at Yonkers. I scoped her last week and we think we found some issues with her. I expect her to be better.”
The fastest performer ever by Rocknroll Hanover - 1:47
Current World Champion on a five-eighths - 1:47.2f
Current World Champion on a half - 1:48.1h
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*It’s no surprise his book is full & closed for 2015!*

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p,2,1:52.3; 3,1:50; 4,1:47-1:47.2f-1:48.1h ($1,984,204) • Rocknroll Hanover-Casual Beauty-Artsplace

Midland Acres is proud to stand this exceptional stallion and we’d like to thank everyone who has booked mares to him in 2015. His first crop of foals are now dropping and will sell as yearlings in 2016.

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Foiled Again, the richest pacer of all-time with earnings of $6,902,781, makes his 2015 debut on Saturday night at Yonkers, drawing post 7 in the third of five $50,000 divisions of the opening round of the George Morton Levy Memorial Series. Regular driver Yannick Gingras will be in the sulky, most likely freshened up after spending a few days in Las Vegas.

This will be Foiled Again’s seventh consecutive Levy appearance, a series in which he has garnered spoils that would constitute a big career for any other horse. Now 11, Foiled Again has 22 wins, seven seconds and three thirds in 33 Levy starts, with earnings of $1,337,190, 19.3 percent of his career total.

Foiled Again won the 2009 and 2010 Levy finals, but the photo finish camera hasn’t been kind to him the last four years. Last year he finished third by three-quarters of a length; in 2013 he was second by a neck; in 2012 he was second by a head; and in 2011 he was third by a half-length.

Foiled Again—one of five Ron Burke-trained entries—drew into arguably the toughest split among the five Levy openers. Starting from post 1 is the 2014 Levy champ PH Supercam, who has two wins and two seconds in his last four starts in high conditioned races at Yonkers. Also in the field is Apprentice Hanover, who brought a nine-race winning streak from Canada into last year’s Levy Series but this time around is winless in three attempts this year north of the border. Apprentice Hanover did win his final start of 2014 back on Nov. 15. Jody Jamieson ships in to direct Apprentice Hanover from post 2. — By Gordon Waterstone

Burke gave Weekend Preview a glimpse into each of his Levy contenders:

1st division, Race 4—BEACH MEMORIES
“He does good at Yonkers. It was a little bit rough his last start, but I expect he will be competitive.”

2nd division, Race 6—TAKE IT BACK TERRY
“The all-time overachiever, in my book. No matter where you put him he finds a way. He just grinds it out.”

3rd division, Race 7—FOILED AGAIN
“What more can you say? Every time he steps on the track he’s setting history. He’s never been sharper than he is now. He seems as good as ever.”

4th division, Race 9—CLEAR VISION
“That was a great qualifier (a win in 1:53 on March 7) as the track was horrible. Yannick (driver Yannick Gingras) has never gotten along with this horse, but I think he’s figuring out how better to race him.”

5th division, Race 10—BETTOR’S EDGE
“He looks like the next one to carry the mantel for our stable. I think he’s the one with the best chance to step up and give Foiled troubles.”

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**FOILED AGAIN**

Foiled Again Makes Seventh Levy Appearance

Mike Lizzi Photo

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Stalbaum Returns Full-Time To Pocono

Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs opens its 2015 race meet on Saturday night, with $192,500 in total purses offered on the 14-race card that gets underway at 6:30 p.m.

Featured on the initial program of the track’s 50th anniversary season are three divisions of the opening round of the Bobby Weiss Series for 3- and 4-year old male pacers.

It’s no surprise that George Napolitano Jr., who has ruled the roost among the drivers over the past several years, is listed to drive in all 14 races. Also listed in all 14 races are drivers Simon Allard, Matt Kakaley and Jim Morrill Jr. Ron Wrenn Jr., the leading dash-winning driver in North America the past two years, is scheduled to drive for the first time ever at Pocono, picking up 10 drives.

Listed on eight horses is Larry Stalbaum, who is returning to Pocono this year on a full-time catch-driving basis. Stalbaum was a Pocono staple a few years ago but has recently been more active in New York, specifically Yonkers and Monticello. Despite not having made a start at Pocono last year, Stalbaum had 1,799 drives at the Pennsylvania five-eighths mile track since 2010, with 188 wins and $2.45 million in purse earnings.

Stalbaum, along with his wife, Kim Asher, who is the listed trainer for the stable, is closing in on 5,000 career driving victories. The stable had a string of six consecutive years from 2007-12 in which it topped $1 million in earnings, including 2008 when it surpassed the $2-million mark, led by Special Report, who won the $390,000 Levy final at Yonkers that year.

The past two years have been down years for the barn, with combined earnings of less than $600,000. Stalbaum said when there were just three horses in the barn last year, he contemplated leaving the business.

“Last year I made it up in my mind that I was going to quit. But when horse racing is your life, and you’ve done good at it, it’s consuming.”

—Larry Stalbaum

“Last year I made it up in my mind that I was going to quit. But when horse racing is your life, and you’ve done good at it, it’s consuming.”

—Larry Stalbaum

“We talked about it and I had just gotten tired and was going to quit,” said Stalbaum. “But the kids told their mom they waited their whole life and wanted to race horses. They are all home schooled and work in the barn. They get up in the morning and come to the barn and work, and then do their schoolwork in the afternoon and evening.”

Stalbaum and Asher have rebuilt the stable to 22 horses, most kept in training at George Zitone’s Big Z Farm in Montague, N.Y., a stone’s throw from their own 150-acre farm in Matamoras, Pa. They own all of the horses except for the 5-year-old pacer O’Sunland, who is owned by Bobby Williams Jr. Last year O’Sunland set a Monticello Raceway track record for 4-year-old pacers with a 1:53 victory with Stalbaum driving. The other Asher-trained horses include Story Book, who has won six of seven in 2015 at Monticello.

“All year I’ve been driving only my own,” said Stalbaum. “I kind of quit catch-driving for a little while trying to help the kids get started and show them the way. Once I start driving full-time again they can do it all. I’ll drive at Pocono every night and have catch-drives too, and go to Yonkers and Monticello and just drive my own.”

As for his future at Pocono, Stalbaum remains realistic. “This is the toughest place in the country to drive,” he said. “It’s just a speed track. Speed holds and it’s hard to win from off the pace. All the drivers there can make speed. It’s not easy. And you have Georgie (Napolitano Jr.) there pushing them all.” — By Gordon Waterstone
Somwhereovrarainbow Looks To Find Matchmaker Pot Of Gold

Somwhereovrarainbow will be heading to Yonkers on Friday night to try and defend her title in the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series. After a month layoff, the mare from the royal cross of Somebeachsomewhere and Rainbow Blue struggled in her first start back, finishing fifth in the Filly and Mare Open Pace last Friday.

With five $40,000 preliminary legs and a final that could be worth more than $350,000, Somwhereovrarainbow has a chance to increase her career bankroll over the $1.5 million threshold and have her fourth consecutive season of six-figure earnings. She enters the series with $1,342,848 lifetime and earned $440,089 in 2014.

Trainer Joe Holloway is always confident in his prized mare, but was admittedly disappointed in last weekend’s effort, which came one month after her season debut on Jan. 23 at the Meadowlands, where she won easily in 1:50.4. Last time out, after being parked to the opening quarter of :26.4, driver David Miller and Somwhereovrarainbow faded to finish fifth by five lengths.

“She didn’t race good the other night, but she has been battling a quarter crack recently that might have bothered her,” Holloway explained. “The way she got caught I was a little disappointed, but she needed a start after the month-long break.”

Her prep for the 2015 Matchmaker does not resemble her impressive start preceding the series in 2014, where she won an open pace at the Meadowlands in 1:49.1 by six lengths after being parked to the first quarter.

Somwhereovrarainbow was sensational last year at Yonkers. She took the Matchmaker series by storm with three wins, one place, and one show finish, including a 1:52.3 victory in the $371,400 final, edging out Yagonnakissmeornot and Krispy Apple. She was fortunate last year to avoid outside posts: her worst starting position was six, and she drew the rail for the final.

Holloway is hoping for the same luck as last year and knows the dangers of an outside post at Yonkers for any horse.

“It’s awful tough there if you draw outside,” said Holloway. “You have to draw well especially in the final where you have a full field of great mares.”

Seventeen of the 23 Matchmaker eligible will be in action Friday in a trio of opening-leg divisions, slated as races 4, 5 and 6. Somwhereovrarainbow will start from post 3 in the third split with Miller driving.

While Somwhereovrarainbow was impressive at Yonkers last year, Holloway still does not see the half-mile as her strong suit.

“I don’t think she is as good on a half as a mile,” said Holloway. “A five-eighths is definitely where she is at her best, but it’s a great series and she needs some starts.” — By Jay

Blue Chip Matchmaker Final Winners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purse</th>
<th>Winner (driver)</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$229,000</td>
<td>Pancleefandarpels (J. Stratton)</td>
<td>1:54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$237,000</td>
<td>Ginger And Fred (T. Tetrick)</td>
<td>1:52</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$301,000</td>
<td>Tomorrowpan (D. Dube)</td>
<td>1:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$297,000</td>
<td>Rocklamation (Y. Gingras)</td>
<td>1:51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$285,000</td>
<td>Feeling You (T. Butler)</td>
<td>1:52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$371,400</td>
<td>Somwhereovrarainbow (B. Sears)</td>
<td>1:52.3</td>
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Not Afraid Is Taking A Stand At Yonkers

Without peeking at page 12 of the HarnessRacing Weekend Preview, who is the richest horse thus far in 2015? Tough one, huh? The answer: Not Afraid, who despite hailing from the barn of Hall of Fame trainer Jimmy Takter, has been a bit under the radar while amassing season-high earnings of $136,150.

Not Afraid has been nearly unbeatable this year while dominating the top-class ranks at Yonkers Raceway. Not Afraid has six wins and a second in eight starts, and the 6-year-old son of SJ’s Caviar is riding a four-race win streak in Yonkers’ opens heading into Saturday night’s $42,000 contest.

“What’s impressive about Not Afraid’s current form spree is that he is winning from the toughest starting spots over the half-mile oval at Yonkers. In his seven starts this year at Yonkers, Not Afraid has yet to line up inside of post 5. His wins have come from posts 5, 6, 7 and 11 once each, and post 8 twice.

Not Afraid’s victory from post 11 last time out in the super-sized $55,000 Open (a result of the race being contested on Sunday morning, March 15, as part of a race card simulcast to France), made him the first of 14 starters from that trailing starting spot to land in the winner’s circle this year at Yonkers. Parked every step of the 1 ¼-mile distance with driver Daniel Dube, Not Afraid won in 2:28, a tad slower than his wire-to-wire 2:25.3 score in a $46,000 added-distance race on Feb. 22 after starting from post 8.

“He’s the king now,” said Takter. “He loves Yonkers. He handles the turns good. Some horses race at Yonkers and race a couple starts and then be terrible. This guy, it’s like nothing there.”

Owned by Goran Anderberg, John Fielding and Takter’s wife, Christina, Not Afraid was a $17,000 weanling purchase at the 2009 mixed sale at Harrisburg. A half-brother to the 2008 Breeders Crown 3-Year-Old Colt Trot champion In Focus (also trained by Takter), Not Afraid has 24 wins in 82 career starts with $563,444 in earnings.

“He’s always been a good horse,” said Takter. “He won the Dexter Cup as a 3 year old and then he had something because he couldn’t beat me halfway through the season.”

Takter said Not Afraid is not staked to anything this year and that there is no reason to leave Yonkers.

“That $55,000 race (on March 15), that has to be one of the highest purses we’ve had in many years for an overnight,” he said. “And you don’t have to face those stakes horses. I will keep him there as long as I can.” —By Gordon Waterstone
Breeding horses can be just as full of heartbreak as racing them. Last week I received a call from John Schmucker of Black Creek Farm in Indiana, that they had lost their champion Indiana filly Msnaughtybynature, who was carrying a foal by Guccio. Schmucker did have some good news as well. Black Creek recently welcomed a healthy full brother to Natural Herbie, the upset winner of last fall’s Yonkers International Preview.

Also on the good news front, the last foal of the great Moni Maker was born at Hanover Shoe Farms at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 17. Moni Maker, of course, died last spring, but before her passing she produced an embryo by Muscle Hill, which was transferred to a recipient mare. This is Moni Maker’s 11th foal. Interestingly, after having six straight fillies at the beginning of her broodmare career, four of her last five foals have been colts.

While I was at the annual meeting of the U.S. Trotting Association last weekend, quite a few breeders were in attendance as directors or members.

Dr. Ken Walker, who breeds mares in Illinois under the banner of Fox Valley Standardbreds, chairs the USTA’s Registration Committee. There were no huge issues for that committee at this year’s meeting, although it approved of the passage of Rule Change Proposal 9, which was later passed by the full board. The proposal amended Rule 26.02 of the USTA rule book, which requires permanent identification and confirmation of parentage verification before the USTA will issue registration papers for any foal. The late Bob Huff, a longtime director from Michigan, lobbied for years for permanent identification and parentage verification before foals are registered, and those who knew Huff mentioned he would have been pleased to see the association’s rules finally changed.

Dr. Walker and his fellow USTA District 5 Director Jim Reynolds reported to both the Registration Committee and Fairs Committee that the Illinois fair program for 2015 is in jeopardy because the governor’s office took out the appropriation of funds for the fairs from the Department of Agriculture budget. They had hoped funding would be reinstated in the budget, but the Illinois Harness Horsemen’s Association announced on March 18 that the Department of Ag can’t enter into any grant agreements with county fairs scheduled for June. Harness racing leaders in the state are attempting to get funding restored so the rest of the fair season can take place, and of course this is just one more problem to beset Illinois racing.

There was also discussion in the halls at the USTA meeting about the recent action by The Hambletonian Society to drop its stallion restriction, which kept progeny of 4-year-old stallions that bred mares (without a medical exemption) from eligibility. The restriction is dropped beginning with foals of 2017. (On March 18, Jamie Martin, vice president of Standardbred racing for the Woodbine Entertainment Group (WEG), confirmed they had also dropped the restriction from their races.)

In 2011, the stallion restriction had been adopted by The Hambletonian Society and WEG following a request from Jeff Gural, chairman of the New Meadowlands Racetrack. Gural first adopted it for Meadowlands races and asked for industry support because he believed it was important to keep more of the sport’s stars on the track instead of heading to the breeding shed.

I have spoken with a handful of breeders, and most have said they are glad the stallion restriction has been dropped by those two groups, but everyone also added that they are grateful for all of Gural’s work to keep racing alive at the Meadowlands. While Gural may find the praise small consolation, breeding and racing are intrinsically linked, and he has been rightfully sounding the alarm about the continuing decline mares bred and the foal crop. Whether or not the stallion restriction hurt yearling sales and breeding activity is tough to determine.

The stallion restriction rule did bring about a couple of developments that have been positive for the sport in other ways. It prompted the creation of the Hambletonian Maternity for 4-year olds, which The Hambletonian Society plans to continue, and this year we are set to see a top trotter tackle both breeding and racing in the same season. —By Kathy Parker

While they aren’t breeding prospects, breeder Michael Andrew recently posed with two well-known trotters—both geldings—at his farm in Maine. At left is the recently retired $4 million winner Arch Madness, now 11 years old, while on the right is the 12-year-old Likeabatoutahell 7, 1:51.3 ($1,035,643), who was bred and campaigned by Andrew. Both horses were trained by Trond Smedshammer.
N.J. Man Turns $3.60 Into $200,000

The Meadowlands is pleased to announce a racetrack patron won $200,000 on the 13th race on Saturday, March 14. The patron, who wishes to remain anonymous, won the money by having the single winning 20-cent Jackpot Super Hi-5 ticket. Remarkably, the patron utilized the Quick Pick feature available on the racetrack’s self-service betting machines.

The man from Union City, N.J., who is in his mid-40s, had the 1-5-3-7-10 combination in race 13. His good luck earned him a payoff of $188,351.36. Meadowlands chairman Jeff Gural added an additional $11,648.64, making up the difference of a $200,000 guaranteed payout promotion. The amount is the largest payout in Meadowlands history.

“I started coming to the Meadowlands on Fridays and Saturdays with my father and uncle in the early 1990’s,” said the winning horseplayer. “I normally bring a hundred dollars or so with me. It’s entertaining, exciting and fun. The biggest ticket I ever hit before this was a $4,000 superfecta in December.”

The Jackpot Super Hi5 requires horseplayers to correctly select the first five finishers of the race in the exact order. The catch is that the jackpot pays out only if there is one unique winning ticket. Prior to Saturday, the jackpot had not been paid out since December and continued to grow through 34 race days.

“I studied the program for the pentafecta the night before but couldn’t come up with anything,” said the winner.

“Around the 11th race Saturday, I was tired and ready to go home. I had $2700 left on my voucher so I played some tickets with a single horse I liked and used the Quick Pick for the other horses. I bet a total of $3.60 on the race. I didn’t even realize I won until I got home from work Sunday. I had my wife read the numbers off the results on the website while I checked my tickets.”

Longshots finished in three of the top five positions in the thirteenth race on Saturday resulting in the single winning ticket. Missisomebeach Blue won the race at 15-1 with a 40-1 shot finishing second and a 38-1 shot finishing fourth. Favord Mandy’s Mattjesty finished off the board.

“We are setting up a college fund for our 7-year-old daughter, my wife is going back to college herself, we’re buying a car and paying off some bills,” the man said with a smile.

“I’ll still be coming to the track but won’t be betting any more than usual. Just having some fun.”

Yankees’ Assistant Takes To Sulky Friday

For more than 20 seasons, New York Yankees clubhouse assistant Joe Lee has had the best seat in the house for some of baseball’s greatest moments. On Friday night, Lee will take the best seat at the racetrack when he drives the trotter Free Rollin in Race 12 at the Meadowlands in the GSY Amateur Series.

“Baseball is in my blood for sure,” said the Bronx-native Lee, who started working for the Yankees as a 16-year-old batboy. “But it is such a rush to drive a horse. If there was a race in Alaska and an owner gave me the opportunity to drive their horse, I’d be there in a heartbeat.”

Lee, 35, grew up around horses: his parents owned racehorses and regularly took their son to the races at the Meadowlands, Yonkers, Freehold, and Roosevelt.

“When I was a teenager and first started working for the Yankees, I saw John Campbell outside George Steinbrenner’s private box when he was driving for him; it was like meeting Mickey Mantle,” explained Lee, “John Campbell was my idol.”

Lee also rode horses as a child, but always had the itch to sit behind one of the powerful trotters he watched race in the evenings.

“Sandy Goldfarb put me in touch with trainer Buzzy Sholty, who invited me down to his stable and gave me my first chance to jog a horse,” explained Lee. “I started going to help him every Saturday and eventually worked my way to getting my harness driver’s license.

“No matter how much I practice, I could never be the starting shortstop for the Yankees. But now that I have my harness license, I can compete on the same ‘field of play’ as the pros. I won’t ever drive 2,000 horses in a year like Tim Tetrick, but on one day and in one race, I have the chance to beat the best. There’s no other sport like harness racing where a guy like me can compete with the pros.”

Besides Lee, the Yankees and harness racing have other connections. Yankees general manager Brian Cashman’s late father, John, is in harness racing’s Hall of Fame. Steinbrenner was a very active and successful Standardbred horse owner and Whitey Ford was a frequent visitor to Pompano Park in Florida.

Hoping For “Ladies Night” In Matchmaker

For older female pacer For The Ladies N, it’s not how you start, but how you finish.

The 6-year-old New Zealand import is not the quickest mare off the starting gate—only twice in 11 lifetime U.S. races has she been better than fifth after the opening quarter-mile—but she still can find her way to the winner’s circle on a regular basis.

For The Ladies N, trained by 64-year-old Australia native Peter Tritton, has won six times in the States and hit the board a total of nine times since arriving in the U.S. last November. She has earned $76,500 for owner Harry Von Knoblauch during that span.

On Friday night, For The Ladies N will step up in class when she competes in the opening round of the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series at Yonkers Raceway. She was one of 17 pacing mares to enter the first leg of the six-week event, which concludes on April 25.
Tyler Smith Set To Spend Saturdays At Big M

“Home free. Tyler Smith. Big Night. That’s five on the card.”

That was the race call from the 13th race on June 28, 2014. Smith won five races at the Meadowlands. Now he’s back. With his sights set on the Mecca of harness racing, Smith took time to reflect on the biggest night of his career. “Winning one race at the Meadowlands is something special,” said Smith, “but winning five races was unbelievable. It was beyond a dream come true.”

In 2014, Smith made 39 starts at the Meadowlands, winning seven races, or 18 percent, a more than respectable figure. Winning five this Saturday may be a challenge, but Smith did pick up seven drives on the 12-race card. Smith said a text message was the catalyst for his return to the New Jersey oval.

“Sam McKee sent me a text message and asked if I wanted to come out and drive with some of the drivers heading to the Levy at Yonkers. I said absolutely. Any opportunity I can get to drive at the Meadowlands I am going to take. Hopefully, I can get lucky and win some races.”

It will be a busy weekend coming up for Smith. “I’ll be in Ohio on Friday, then heading to the Meadowlands to drive Saturday night before I have to be back in Ohio for a 3 p.m. post time on Sunday.”

Smith will be looking to pick up as many drives as he can in the coming weeks. “I am not coming out to drive for any one trainer; I am just looking to pick up whatever I can. Hopefully in the coming weeks I get lucky and pick up some good horses along the way.”

Smith appears to be aboard several contenders on the Saturday program. Perhaps none more so than Diamond Saying in the 11th race, who looked like an easy winner last week before he went offstride in the stretch.

Smith has won 1,650 races at the age of just 22 and has already amassed nearly $12 million in earnings in his career. He is expected to drive at the Meadowlands on Saturday nights through the end of April if things go well. (Meadowlands)

RCI Expects To Address Cobalt Next Month

In remarks made before the Board of Directors of the United States Trotting Association this past weekend, Association of Racing Commissioners International (RCI) President Ed Martin indicated that he expected regulators would set a uniform approach on cobalt when they meet April 23-25 in Tampa, Fla.

Martin predicted that the regulators would act to set in motion a ban on intentional cobalt administrations out of equine welfare concerns and the possibility of performance enhancement.

Horses found with elevated cobalt levels would be excluded from competition until such levels subsided. Trainers of horses with cobalt levels indicative of an intentional administration would face sanctions and suspension.

“Regulatory veterinary staff in several jurisdictions have received complaints and/or observed instances where a cobalt administration has caused distress and colic in horses, causing cramps and muscle twitching, sweating, and pain,” said Martin.

“We are obviously concerned about the use of cobalt with the belief that it will enhance performance. But while the published science is not fully settled at what point that actually happens, we believe it is wrong to deliberately put a horse in discomfort absent a compelling medical reason to treat a serious ailment or injury. This issue is about the horse and not just about doping,” he said.

The RCI Executive Committee met last week and was unanimous in its desire that a uniform approach be adopted to prohibit cobalt administration in a way that does not impact those who have not deliberately administered it.

RCI’s Drug Testing Standards and Practices Committee will meet on Thursday morning, April 23, to consider options on cobalt regulatory thresholds. Recommendations from RCI
and broadcast platforms. During the three-day meeting, a
into social media, with an increased focus on interactivity
weekend that continues the association’s aggressive move
term as USTA president and presented an agenda over the
That’s what we’re shooting for here. “
best, the USTA brings people together to effect change.
and to involve others from various constituencies. At its
for us to use that energy to keep the conversation going,
dented competition that our sport faces, it would be wise
cussed, “ said Langley. “Given the challenges and unprece-
tween the media and the OSRC, and work to promote the
racing journalist and Standardbred trainer, will
develop and implement policies and procedures for the
Ohio Standardbred Development Fund and the Ohio Sires
harness racing segments to further examine and address
announced Wednesday.
USTA To Create Industry Summits In 2015
Building upon the momentum generated by its recently
concluded annual board of directors meeting, the United
States Trotting Association will create and host at least two
“industry summits” this year, USTA President Phil Langley
announced Wednesday.
Each meeting will concentrate on specific topics of impor-
tance to the sport and will attempt to bring together various
harness racing segments to further examine and address
those issues that impact the game’s growth.
The sessions will be held in Columbus at times and dates
to be announced and will involve key stakeholders from
both within and outside of the USTA.
“Our annual meeting was especially productive in regards
to the issues and ideas that were introduced and dis-
cussed,” said Langley. “Given the challenges and unprece-
dented competition that our sport faces, it would be wise
for us to use that energy to keep the conversation going,
and to involve others from various constituencies. At its
best, the USTA brings people together to effect change.
That’s what we’re shooting for here.”
Langley was re-elected on Sunday to a fourth, four-year
term as USTA president and presented an agenda over the
weekend that continues the association’s aggressive move
into social media, with an increased focus on interactivity
and broadcast platforms. During the three-day meeting, a
repeated theme was the need for industry cohesiveness in
order to promote growth.
The conferences will be organized by Mike Tanner, the
USTA’s executive vice president, and his staff, and will be
held in Columbus, Ohio, the USTA’s home base. Tanner indi-
cated that he hopes to be able to provide event details, an
agenda, and a preliminary participant list by the end of
May. He anticipates that the first summit will take place in
late spring or early summer. (USTA)

$150,000 Approved For Broadcast Funding
The final committee meetings of the 2015 USTA Board of
Directors meeting were conducted Monday morning at the
Hilton-Easton in Columbus. The 2015 budget was approved,
including an additional $100,000 added for a total of
$150,000 for the Broadcast Committee to distribute to assist
in funding to racetracks wishing to have their races tele-
vised on national or regional cable TV. The Board also ap-
proved the remainder of the $250,000 annual budget to
continue working with Converseon on the USTA social
media initiative.
Several tracks have made initial inquiries to the USTA
Broadcast Committee for potential television funding. The
Little Brown Jug, Scioto Downs and representatives from
the Hambletonian have made requests for consideration.
Future possibilities for revenue increases were discussed
with a focus on the potential for sponsorships and remnant
advertising, as well as the potential of a live streaming har-
ness racing channel. The point was emphasized that maxi-
mizing content and capabilities needs to be done quickly
because at its core, the USTA is a member services organi-
ization. (USTA)

Ken McNutt Dies At 81
Gerald Kenneth McNutt died Sunday, March 15, at Wilm-
ington Hospital after a short illness. He was 81.
Mr. McNutt was born to Jannie and Charles McNutt in
Bible Hill in the province of Nova Scotia, Canada, on Oct.
15, 1933. He was the youngest of nine children. He grew up
on a farm, and left home in his teens to pursue his goal of
working in the sport of harness racing.
Over the past seven decades he served in many capacities
within the harness racing industry, most notably as a lead-
ing trainer-driver who achieved more than 1,050 victories at
racetracks including Batavia, Laurel, Harrington, Pompano,
Monticello, Roosevelt, Yonkers, the Meadowlands and
Pocono Downs. Delaware horse racing fans will remember
him from his tenure at Brandywine Raceway, from the time
it opened into the 1980s.
He is survived by his daughter, Margaret McNutt; grand-
daughter, Leah Brooks; and his extended family of friends
and relatives who will miss his loyalty, generosity and
sense of humor. (USTA)
### Harness Racing Leaders

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

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<thead>
<tr>
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#### Leading Money-Winning Drivers

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#### Leading Money-Winning Trainers

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### Leaders Of The Week

#### Drivers

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#### Trainers

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