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Stormtracker Has Burning Point Series On Her Radar

Twenty older pacing mares will line up behind the gate in a pair of \$15,000 divisions of the opening leg of the three-week Burning Point Series on Saturday night at the Meadowlands. Round two will be held on April 14, with the \$50,000 final scheduled for April 21.

Trainer Linda Toscano has a pair of Burning Point entries in action, including Stormtracker and Planet Rock, who have been racing at Dover Downs thus far in 2018.

“Knock on wood, she seems to be much sounder and a little more mature and stronger for it.”

—Linda Toscano
about Stormtracker

Stormtracker, on paper, appears an interesting prospect in the first division (Race 7) with Brett Miller driving from post 7.

A \$52,000 yearling purchase who was unraced at age two, Stormtracker had three wins, one second and one third in five starts last year at three, and then this year has four

wins and two seconds in six starts. Overall, the 4-year-old daughter of Big Jim has never finished worse than third in 11 starts, with earnings of \$64,700 for owners Enviro Stables, Camelot Stable, The Bay's Stable and John Mehlenbacher.

“She cracked a P-1 bone when she jumped over a butterfly training and landed wrong,” Toscano explained of Stormtracker missing her freshman season. “It was after she worked a mile in 2:02 so she was ready to go and we liked her a lot. We had to put a couple of screws in and it cost her her whole 2-year-old year.”

Stormtracker won in her career debut at Dover Downs on March 21, 2017, rallying from fifth at the half to score in 1:55.1. Stormtracker then had a first and second at Yonkers and a third at the Meadowlands before getting a month off. She returned with a 18 ³/₄-length romp in a Harrah's Philadelphia qualifier, but then wasn't seen again until a Dec. 2 qualifier at the Meadowlands where she finished fourth.

“Last year she had lots of stupid little problems,” said Toscano. “She got a little sore in the hind ankles and I don't know if it was P-1 related or growing pains. I was afraid that she might hurt herself again, and it's a good group of people that own her, so we decided to give her time and try her again in the winter.

“It worked out so far. Knock on wood, she seems to be much sounder and a little more mature and stronger for it.”

Stormtracker won a second Big M qualifier the following week, which was followed up by a season-ending 1:53.2 victory at Harrah's Philadelphia. She hasn't missed a beat with the calendar turning to 2018 as she won two straight at Dover Downs. She then alternated seconds and firsts over

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her next four starts, including a career-best 1:52.1 effort last time out on March 28.

The bettors have flocked to the window in support of Stormtracker, making her the odds-on favorite in nine of her 11 starts, including her last seven races.

As for Planet Rock, the 4-year-old daughter of Rock N Roll Heaven heads to the Meadowlands after a pair of eight holes that led to off-the-board finishes her last two times out at Dover. Planet Rock didn't fare much better for the Burning Point opener as she landed post 9 in the second division (Race 10). The 11-time career winner will be driven by Victor Kirby.

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Toscano admitted she isn't as optimistic about Planet Rock, who has 11 career wins and \$296,073 in career earnings.

"Planet Rock has been a bit of a disappointment," said Toscano. "She's a very fast horse that I think one day might put it all together, she just has to work things her own way. She doesn't seem to be able to go both ends of the mile." — *By Gordon Waterstone*

Will Takter Drive Off Into Retirement In Style?

With the 2018 stakes season looming, Hall of Fame trainer Jimmy Takter is approaching the year a bit differently. Takter announced last year that he would take a break from training in 2019 as he contemplated full retirement.

Although Takter's stable once again appears loaded with talent, he says he is content with his decision.

"Right now I am definitely going to take next year off and then I don't know what I'm going to do," said Takter. "If I go back and train horses I will just do it for a few friends and maybe have a little partnership and a handful of horses. But who knows? Maybe I won't want to go back. "I don't think about it now.

I just go out in the morning and do my best every single day. That's how I am."

Takter said a harsh winter in New Jersey has delayed things slightly, especially his 2 year olds.

"We had the worst winter ever," said Takter. "Yes, I'm a little bit behind, and my 2 year olds are definitely behind. I have a great group of 2 year olds this year, with the Father Patricks so nice.

"I have a lot of training into them but I'm a little bit behind on time. But I'm not going to be so worried about that. They're going to come out when they're ready. If I'm a little later, then I'm a little later. It's a long year."

Takter added the training responsibilities late last year on eventual 2-Year-Old Colt Pacer of the Year Lost In Time. Over the winter, the colt added a new owner in retired professional wrestler Ric "The Nature Boy" Flair, who was given an interest by co-owner Scott Robinson as a surprise birthday present announced at the Dan Patch Awards dinner in Orlando in late February.

Takter said he has extra incentive this year with Lost In Time as Robinson promised him that if the colt wins three major races, he will buy him a new car. And not just any new car.

"If Lost In Time wins the North America Cup, Meadowlands Pace and Little Brown Jug—which isn't easy to do—Scott is going to buy me a new, two-door Rolls Royce convertible. I just have to pick the color," said Takter. "I'm going to be able to drive off into retirement in my two-door convertible Rolls." — *By Gordon Waterstone*



THIS WEEKEND'S FEATURED RACES

All times listed are local.

Friday, April 6

7:40p	M2	Shiaway St. Pat Trot div.	Trackmaster PPs
8:10p	YR5	Matchmaker OMP div.	Trackmaster PPs
8:20p	M4	Shiaway St. Pat Trot div.	Trackmaster PPs
8:30p	YR6	Matchmaker OMP div.	Trackmaster PPs
8:45p	MVR9	Mossbarger FMP final	Trackmaster PPs
8:50p	YR7	Matchmaker OMP div.	Trackmaster PPs

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Saturday, April 7

8:30p	YR6	Levy Mem. OHP div.	Trackmaster PPs
9:10p	YR8	Levy Mem. OHP div.	Trackmaster PPs
9:25p	M7	Burning Point FMP div.	Trackmaster PPs
9:30p	YR9	Levy Mem. OHP div.	Trackmaster PPs
9:45p	M8	Whata Baron Pace div.	Trackmaster PPs
10:30p	M10	Burning Point FMP div.	Trackmaster PPs

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Stage Set For Shuffling Of Levy, Matchmaker Standings

The winners reap the rewards. That's the case this weekend at Yonkers Raceway as a pair of Levy Memorial division winners and a trio of Blue Chip Matchmaker split winners are able to take the week off and skip the fourth leg of the two series for older horses.

Both the Matchmaker and Levy series are down to three divisions each this weekend, and with top earners sitting out, there could be a shuffling of the standings.

On the Matchmaker side, the older mares ranking one-two-three in the standings are all on the sidelines on Friday night, including top point-earner Shartin N, who has swept her three preliminaries. Also getting the weekend off are two-time winners Twinkle and Mackenzie A, respectively second and third in the standings.

Lakeisha Hall and Motu Moonbeam M, tied for fourth in the standings, are both in fourth-round action on Friday and both drew into the same \$40,000 division (Race 7). If either wins, the 50 points for the victory and 25 points for the start would be just enough to catapult them to the top of the series leaderboard.

Coming off a 1:54.2 win in leg three, Lakeisha Hall will start from post 2 with George Brennan driving for trainer Ron Burke. After finishing second, first and sixth in her first three Matchmaker starts after starting from outside posts 6, 7 and 8, Moto Moonbeam N will start from post 1 on Friday night. Brent Holland drives for trainer Paul Blumenfeld.

Early prelim winners Lady Shadow and Wishy Washy Girl—both driven by Jason Bartlett and trained by Richard Banca—are also on the track Friday. Lady Shadow, who has a pair of fourths to go with her win in leg one, will start from post 4 in the first division (Race 5). Wishy Washy Girl, who missed the first leg of the series but captured her round-two division and then was sixth, will start from the outside post 6 in the second split (Race 6).

As for Saturday's three \$50,000 Levy divisions, Rockin Ron is poised to move to the top of the standings as he currently

Continues on page 5 >>>

Levy Memorial Series Point Standings

Name	1st Leg	2nd Leg	3rd Leg	25 pts/start	Total
1. Dr J Hanover	50	50	50	75	225
2. Rockin Ron	50	50	25	75	200
3. Western Fame	8	50	50	75	183
4. Somewhere In L A	25	25	50	75	175
5. Bit Of A Legend N	50	12	25	75	162
Missile J	25	12	50	75	162
7. Evenin Of Pleasure	25	50	0	75	150
8. Bettor Memories	12	25	25	75	137
Mach It So	50	12	0	75	137
10. Always At My Place	50	5	5	75	135
11. Luciano N	8	25	12	75	120
12. Chumlee A	25	8	8	75	116
13. Long Live Rock	12	0	25	75	112
14. Keystone Velocity	8	25	0	75	108
Mister Daytona N	25	0	8	75	108
16. Another Daily Copy	0	12	12	75	99
17. Caviart Luca	5	5	12	75	97
18. Franco Rayner N	8	8	0	75	91
19. Change Stride N	8	0	5	75	88
20. All Bets Off	12	0	0	75	87
Christen Me N	12	0	0	75	87
22. Bungalow Bill N	5	5	0	75	85
23. Theartofconfusion A	0	8	0	75	83
24. Simply Susational N	0	0	5	75	80
Thisjetsabookin	0	5	0	75	80
26. Waikiki Beach A	0	0	0	75	75
27. Great Vintage	5	—	8	50	63
Orillia Joe	—	8	5	50	63
29. Killer Martini	0	—	12	50	62
Western Dynasty	12	0	—	50	62
31. Bakersfield	5	0	—	50	55
32. Artmagic	0	0	—	50	50
Blood Brother	0	—	0	50	50
34. Rodeo Rock	—	—	8	25	33
35. Awesomeness	5	—	—	25	30
36. Hug The Wind N	0	—	—	25	25
Sports Column	—	—	0	25	25
38. Gokudo Hanover	—	—	—	0	0

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is just 25 points behind the leader Dr. J Hanover, who is sitting this week out after sweeping his three preliminaries.

Rockin Ron, who has two wins and a second in the opening three rounds, will start from post 3 in the middle division (Race 8) with Yannick Gingras driving for trainer Burke. Rockin Ron won't have an easy time of it as he drew in against Somewhere In LA, who has a win and two seconds in the prelims, and starts from post 1 for the Bartlett/Banca team. Also in the field are prelim winners Missile J (post 6) and Evenin Of Pleasure (post 8).

The only Levy winner starting in the first division (Race 6) is Bit Of A Legend N, who captured the 2016 Levy final. Bit Of A Legend N won his first-round split and then finished 4p3 and second. Stratton drives from post 2 for trainer Peter Tritton.

The third Levy division (Race 9) has first-leg winner Mach It So starting from post 1 for driver David Miller and trainer Jeff Bamond Jr. The field includes reigning Levy champ Keystone Velocity—and 2017 Older Male Pacer of the Year—who has a fourth, 3p2 and sixth so far this year. Keystone Velocity will start from post 5 for driver Daniel Dube and trainer Rene Allard.— *By Gordon Waterstone*

Blue Chip Matchmaker Series Point Standings

Name	1st Leg	2nd Leg	3rd Leg	25 pts/start	Total
1. Shartin N	50	50	50	75	225
2. Twinkle	50	25	50	75	200
3. Mackenzie A	0	50	50	75	175
4. Lakeisha Hall	5	25	50	75	155
Motu Moonbeam N	25	50	5	75	155
6. Lady Shadow	50	8	8	75	141
Sell A Bit N	50	8	8	75	141
8. L A Delight	—	50	25	50	125
Safe From Terror	0	25	25	75	125
10. Medusa	25	5	12	75	117
Shesjustadelight N	12	5	25	75	117
12. Mach It A Par	8	25	5	75	113
13. Scandalicious	25	12	0	75	112
14. Dewar N Soda	25	5	5	75	110
15. Clear Idea	0	25	8	75	108
16. Newborn Sassy	0	5	25	75	105
17. Dudesalady	12	12	5	75	104
18. Wishy Washy Girl	—	50	0	50	100
19. Eclipse Me N	12	0	12	75	99
20. Call Me Queen Be	8	0	12	75	95
Miss Irish Rose A	0	8	12	75	95
Vintage Babe	8	12	0	75	95
23. Annabeth	8	0	8	75	91
24. Gina Grace N	0	12	0	75	87
Lispatty	12	0	0	75	87
26. Hp Sissy	0	8	0	75	83
27. All About Madi	5	0	0	75	80
Change The Rulz N	0	5	0	75	80
Jag Out	5	0	0	75	80
Regil Elektra	5	0	0	75	80
31. Au D Lox Bluegrass	0	8	—	50	58
32. Franney Love Dat	0	—	0	50	50
33. Wrangler Magic	—	12	—	25	37
34. Elliesjet N	0	—	—	25	25



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Full Sister To JL Cruze Making First Meadowlands Start

Brenda Teague was at the 2015 Standardbred Horse Sale in Harrisburg and clearly remembers when a full sister to the stakes-winning trotter JL Cruze, who had won in 1:49.4 and was in the midst of a stellar season that included 14 wins at the Meadowlands, walked into the auction ring. Teague's brother, George, was next to her and effectively said, "Don't even bother to look. This filly is out of your price range."

But because JL Cruze was Delaware-based, like the Teagues, Brenda took a closer look at the filly by Crazyed. She saw one flaw that might deter some buyers, but nothing that she thought should be causing the bidding to stall at \$9,000. When the auctioneer's hammer came down and he declared the filly "sold" at \$9,000, Brenda watched the sales associate locate the buyer.

"I saw them talking instead of just signing the slip, so I walked over and they (buyer) said they didn't want to have the last bid, so I told them I would take her," shared Brenda. "She stood a little funny in her left hind, but otherwise I didn't see anything wrong with her."

Brenda's \$9,000 purchase is Sheez On A Cruze, now 4 years old and a winner of four of six starts this year and \$45,451 in 15 career starts. Sheez On A Cruze will start from post 1 in Race 7 at the Meadowlands on Friday night, a conditioned event.

Sheez On A Cruze comes into the race following a bout with sickness which forced her to be scratched from a March 27 race at Dover. She had won four races in a row this winter at Dover, taking a lifetime mark of 1:55.1, before her streak was broken. She finished seventh in a March 20 race at Dover, taking herself out of the race when she broke stride before the start.

"She was a little sick, a 5-6, when we scratched her, and in the race where she broke, Montrell (Teague, Brenda's nephew and regular driver of the mare) was taking her to the gate and she kind of bounced a little and when she did she broke the tail tie, and then she ran," explained Brenda. "She spotted the field 30 some lengths and trotted good after she caught back, so that's just one of those things."

Brenda said Sheez On A Cruze tried her patience as a 2 year old and is still learning how to race, but has shown both speed and versatility on the track.

"She's getting more educated and she's a big, strong mare," said Brenda. "She looks just like JL Cruze."

Sheez On A Cruze is one of 13 horses Brenda is training, who noted that is "too many" and she might sell a couple. Another horse in her stable, Delaware Chrome, is in-to-go in Race 2 at the Meadowlands Saturday night.

"He jumped everything at two," said Brenda of Delaware Chrome, a homebred colt by Mr. Apples out of Sheisaknock-out, two horses raced by the Teague family. "He can go to Ohio (for Sires Stakes) but I don't know if I'll try him on a half this year. I'll try Scioto, but I probably won't go to Northfield."



Sheez On A Cruze (2)

Delaware Chrome has two wins and two seconds in five starts this year, all at Dover. He drew post 10 for his race at the Meadowlands. "Not the best but we'll give it our best," quipped Brenda.

With Dover Downs closing its meet on March 29, and Delaware's Harrington Raceway not opening until Monday, Brenda and her brother George helped the entry box at the Meadowlands. George has five horses scheduled to compete.

In other Teague horse news, George's broodmare Mozzi Hanover, the dam of Wiggle It Jiggleit, gave birth to a full brother to the 2015 Horse of the Year on Thursday morning at 1 a.m. By the way, Teague is hoping to have Wiggle It Jiggleit back racing by late summer this year. The horse has been recovering from injury and missed the entire 2017 season. — By Kathy Parker

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Sutton Making First Start Since 2016 At Meadowlands Friday

After spending more than a year away from the races in an effort to resolve chronic foot issues, multiple-stakes-winner Sutton returns to action in Friday's first round of the Shiaway St Pat Series for trotters at the Meadowlands Racetrack.

Sutton, who finished third as part of a photo finish with Marion Marauder and Southwind Frank in the 2016 Hambletonian, is the 2-1 morning-line favorite in the second of two \$15,000 Shiaway St Pat divisions. The 5-year-old stallion, trained by Julie Miller and driven by Andy Miller, has won seven of 26 career races and earned \$440,263. He is owned by the Andy Miller Stable Inc., Jason Allen and Doug Allen.

"We thought the 4-year-old season is tough anyway for a trotter, so we wanted to give him all the time he needed," Julie Miller said. "We thought turning him out for the year and bringing him back (at 5) would be the best solution.

"We try to keep our expectations low so we're not disappointed, but he came back really nice. The issues had resolved themselves, and hopefully they stay that way. We're really happy with him. His attitude is super and he's most definitely matured; he's big and strong. We thought, let's go for this series and see what evolves."

Sutton is a son of Donato Hanover out of the stakes-winning mare I Wanted Wings. He was purchased for \$40,000 at the 2014 Standardbred Horse Sale. His victories include divisions of the Bluegrass and Tompkins-Geers stakes as well as an elimination of the Breeders Crown at age 3. He has a lifetime mark of 1:51.2, which came in a qualifier at the Meadowlands in 2016.

His connections hope Sutton can return to a stakes schedule later this season.

"We staked him pretty heavily, but you just can't go off the high dive with the best horses in the older trot division," Julie Miller said. "This series the Meadowlands has provided is very beneficial. We pointed him toward this series to get him back on the track. Hopefully he can have some success this year."

Team Miller also sends out 7-year-old gelding Opulent Yankee in the first division of the Shiaway St Pat Series. Opulent Yankee, who has won four of five races this year, is the even-money favorite on the morning line.

Opulent Yankee is owned by Little E LLC, Arthur Geiger and David Stolz. He has won 22 of 86 career races and earned \$418,795.

"I just call him the veteran warhorse," Miller said. "He's been a picture of consistency. I don't think he's one of the top ones, but it looks like he should be able to compete in this series pretty well."

The Shiaway St Pat Series features two preliminary rounds followed by a final on April 20. — *By Ken Weingartner/USTA*

"Lady" Looks To Stay Hot For Mossbarger Final

Rockin Hot Lady was slowed by issues at ages 2 and 3, but with three wins in her past four starts, the 4-year-old mare pacer is starting to reward trainer Ernie Gaskin's confidence in her. On Friday, the mare will attempt to extend her hot streak in the \$25,000 Dr. Don Mossbarger Memorial Series championship at Miami Valley Raceway

"She's one of those that fools you a little bit. You look down at your watch and you're surprised how fast you've gone."

—*Ernie Gaskin*

before possibly being sent to compete on the East Coast.

Purchased as a yearling for \$23,000 at the 2015 Hoosier Classic Sale, Rockin Hot Lady is owned by Gaskin's wife, Darla, and daughter Emily, the

race marketing manager and a race commentator at Hoosier Park Racing & Casino. Also a member of the ownership group is Shelby Ratcliff, the daughter of Centaur Gaming chairman and CEO Rod Ratcliff.

Rockin Hot Lady, by Rockin Image out of Deferred Comp, is a full sister to Rockin Rum Springa, a multiple winner on the Indiana-bred stakes circuit, and half-sister to successful invite-level gelding Nitro.

"She came from a proven family and was a nice big filly, so we stepped out for her," Gaskin said. "She trained down great as a 2 year old, but she later had the start of a (fracture) so we shut her down. She came back at 3 and things went OK, but then she kind of fell off the edge of the earth.

"It took us a little while to get it figured out. She wasn't physically lame, so we were looking for bleeding and ulcers and stuff like that and it turned out to be EPM (equine protozoal myeloencephalitis). Once we got it figured out, it's been a lot better."

Rockin Hot Lady has won seven of 37 career races, with six of those victories coming in her past 12 starts, and earned \$54,900. She enters Friday's Mossbarger Memorial final off a 1:54.3 win by a nose over Turnitdownforwatt in a second-round division of the series. It was her first start of the season.

"She's coming around," Gaskin said. "We like her. We got a little messed up with the weather (coming back this year); I'd love to have one more race in her. We'll see.

"She is beautifully gaited. She's one of those that fools you a little bit. You look down at your watch and you're surprised how fast you've gone. She's a fluid mover that way."

Rockin Hot Lady will start from post 1 on Friday with 22-year-old driver Trevor Smith.

"Trevor is just another good, young, athletic horse kid coming up," Gaskin said. "I'm happy to have him." — *By Ken Weingartner/USTA*

Brother Of Walner Blossoming In Ohio For New Owner

Miami Valley race secretary Gregg Keidel has loaded up the track's schedule with series action and among the winners of the finals held thus far is a horse who has made an unexpected comeback: Elmo Blatch.

Last Tuesday (April 2) at Miami Valley, Elmo Blatch captured the \$22,500 Dr. Daniel Farwick Memorial Trot by open lengths in 1:56.3 over a sloppy track. It was his seventh victory in 11 starts this season.

Elmo Blatch is named for a villain in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*. The horse is a 5-year-old gelding by Andover Hall and the mare Random Destiny, which means he is a half brother to world champion Walner.

Elmo Blatch was sold as a yearling for \$50,000 to horseman Steffan Lind in 2014. He didn't start as a 2 year old and made just four starts at age three, although he won two of them, taking a mark of 1:58.3f at The Meadows. Racing at age four in 2017, "Elmo" made 10 starts and picked up about \$11,000 in purse money before he was offered for sale.

Ohio horseman Dave Lough purchased Elmo Blatch in early December and since then the horse has earned approximately \$62,000 for Lough and lowered his lifetime mark to 1:55.2 with a win at Miami Valley.

"I don't know exactly where he was or if he was pulling a buggy, but I was told he was with the Amish and was for sale," said Lough of his acquisition.

When asked the price he paid for Elmo Blatch, Lough said, "He's 16.2 hands, big and dark. I can tell you that horses like this will bring \$8,000 to \$10,000 in the Amish community for a buggy horse, just based on their looks."

Lough said he didn't notice any soundness issues with Elmo Blatch.

"When we got him, he didn't really have any problems that we could see. If he had a problem, he swam himself out of it," said Lough.

Lough said he's a big believer in swimming horses and turning them out instead of training on a track.



Elmo Blatch

Conrad Photo

MGM Has Agreement To Purchase Northfield Park

MGM Growth Properties announced on Thursday that it has entered into an agreement with Milstein Entertainment LLC to acquire Hard Rock Rocksino Northfield Park. The membership interest purchase agreement will be for 100 percent of the issued and outstanding limited liability company interests in Northfield Park Associates LLC, which owns and operates the Rocksino.

"Since opening our doors in December 2013, the Hard Rock Rocksino has established itself as the premier gaming and entertainment destination in the market, thanks to our dedicated employees, partners and loyal guests," said Brock Milstein, chairman of the board at Hard Rock Rocksino Northfield Park. "MGM Growth Properties has many options and opportunities to invest all over the country, so we are especially proud and grateful that they have chosen to make such a meaningful investment in Ohio."

MGP plans to fund the purchase price with a combination of cash on hand and debt. MGP expects to ultimately sell the entities holding the licenses and operating assets to a third-party operator. MGP intends to retain ownership of the real estate, anticipating \$50 to \$60 million of annual rent, which is expected to represent approximately 1.8x rent coverage.

The transaction is expected to close in the second half of 2018 and is subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals. *(MGM Growth)*

"I just swim horses and turn them out, and this seems to work for most of my horses," said Lough. "I think this horse (Elmo Blatch) just wanted to be a horse and likes this program.

"He's a phenomenal swimmer," added Lough, noting that his pool is located in a barn and is a straight chute that is heated to 75-degrees in the winter.

Lough has never trained or jogged Elmo Blatch on the track. The only time the horse is on a track is on race day, when he warms up and races. He credits his son, Tylor, with giving the horse the right trips for success.

"When he beat a horse by a nose in 55 and a piece, he started from the nine hole and Tylor ducked him and then pulled later. When he got off the bike he told, 'Dad, I think this is going to be a really nice trotter,'" said Lough.

"It's a treat to have a horse like this fall in your lap," added Lough. "We're hoping to give him a little more opportunity. We're looking around for races he might fit in." — *By Kathy Parker*

Hazel Park Raceway Closes After 70 Years

Hazel Park Raceway, where I got my start in 1979 as assistant publicity director, announced Thursday morning (April 5) that it was shutting its doors immediately.

While there have been hints of the possibility, it seemed that the track would remain open this year, especially since it had been heavily promoting on social media the opening of its Thoroughbred meet on May 4, and special Kentucky Derby day festivities the following afternoon.

I've learned that the track has been sold and will be bulldozed. That includes the new grandstand that was built when the massive, six-story structure was torn down several years ago, and the adjacent building that was supposed to house slot machines but has remained empty when the slots bill was tossed aside by the legislature after looking like it was being approved.

There hasn't been harness racing at Hazel Park in a few years, with the track hosting only Thoroughbreds since it couldn't reach a contract agreement with the Michigan Harness Horsemen's Association. Harness racing has been held only at Northville Downs, a far cry from back in the day when there were several Standardbred facilities in Michigan.

What made the news even more sad to hear is that there was no advance notice given to employees. I was the one to share the news with Linda Pellegrini-Koshorek, who I hired as my assistant back in 1981 when I was promoted to publicity director. Linda was one of less than a handful of employees still around from what I call the good old days.

For those who don't know, or don't remember, Hazel Park first opened for Thoroughbred racing in 1949, adding harness racing four years later in 1953. It was the country's first five-eighths mile track, hence the slogan noted nightly by late announcer Jack Riggs: "America's pioneer five-eighths mile oval."

I went from fan to PR assistant literally overnight in 1979, leaving my job filling paint to now getting paid to be somewhere that I would likely be anyways. At that time Hazel Park was owned by Donald MacFarlane, with Harold Duris the general manager and Greg Magreta the publicity director. When Greg moved into the race office in 1981, I was given the promotion and I quickly stole Linda from her job working the switchboard for the Thoroughbred meet. I also hired a second assistant, Susie James, the now former wife of Michigan Hall of Fame driver Jeff James.



Hazel Park's second year of harness racing opened on Thursday, April 29, 1954, and a crowd of 10,253 turned out to welcome the trotters and pacers.

The days back then were truly great. In pre-simulcasting days, we had an average nightly handle of nearly a million dollars. Yes, you read that right. Nearly a million dollars—and on 10 races nightly. All on track. Through the 1980s we handled more than \$1 million on Friday and Saturday nights, and were close to \$1 million on Mondays.

In 1985, after years of alternating early and late harness meets with Detroit Race Course, Bernard Hartman and Herb Tyner, who operated as Hartman & Tyner, took over operation of Hazel Park, which turned into a harness-only venue. I still have some of my old files and in that first extended 168-night meet, the average handle was \$847,701.

Back then the grandstand and clubhouse were always filled to capacity, and it took a hefty tip to secure a clubhouse table. I used to tease the three hostesses that if I could work just one Saturday night and collect the cash they were getting, I could retire.

I could go on and on and on naming great horses that raced at Hazel Park. Albatross. Bret Hanover. Strike Out. Super Bowl. Laverne Hanover. True Duane. Rambling Willie. Moshannon Express. Romulus Hanover. Race Time. Meadow Skipper. I'm leaving out hundreds more, obviously.

And it wasn't just the horses but also the horsemen. Hazel Park was home to some of the all-time great drivers including John Campbell, who left the Michigan/Windsor scene when the Meadowlands opened.

Also there on a regular basis during the glory years were Bill Gale, Chris Boring, Wayne "Curly" Smart, George Sholty, Joe Marsh Jr., Tom Wilburn, Doug Ackerman, Del Cameron, Tom Merriman, Greg Wright, Merritt Dokey, Shelly

Continues on page 10 >>>

Goudreau. I'm leaving out plenty more, such as local favorites like Jeff James, Wally McIlmurray, Bea Farber, Carl Putnam Jr., Ron Wrenn, Keith Crawford, Terry Tomlin, Dan Johnson, Lee Sattelberg and Mark Jordan.

Two of my most favorite memories came in 1987 and '88 when we had a Breeders Crown event. Despite both nights coming in early October when the weather was turning brisk and crowds usually dwindled, the place was packed. In addition to the big race we had a big promotion, giving away sweatshirts the first year and jackets the second. We had more than 13,000 each of the two nights, if I remember.

In 1987, the 2-Year-Old Filly Trot was won by Nan's Catch, who went on to produce the great Moni Maker. I remember that night vividly as I was standing in the winner's circle with Breeders Crown executive Tom Charters when I was called over to the paddock phone to speak to Ken Marshall, who was in the mutuel office. Ken hinted to me that Herb Tyner, who was with him, wanted to delay post time because of long lines at the windows, but I told him that couldn't happen because the race was on ESPN. Despite that, Herb made a call to have the horses take an extra turn, and I remember Tom yanking his headset off and yelling at me that it couldn't happen.

Somehow things went off at the right time. Actually, somehow the whole night came off without a hitch. Breeders Crown publicity director Moira Fanning still tells me to this day that the night was the only one where the prior night actually melded directly into Crown night.

The second Crown in 1988 was a special one as the 3-Year-Old Filly Pace was won by Sweet Reflection, who was trained by Detroit native Steve Elliott. The winner's circle was packed following the victory.

Back then the backstretch was filled to capacity, and with many grooms living on the grounds there were always things happening. I remember many, many late night parties in the small rooms that housed the grooms. Sadly, one of the things I remember most about the backstretch was that June night in 1987 when somebody ran into my office located in the middle of the clubhouse yelling that barns were on fire. I looked out the window and saw the flames—which appeared virtually on top of me—before I ran out to try and help. People were moving horses out of nearby barns just in case and I remember somebody throwing a halter on one and giving me the lead shank so I could take the horse to safety.

I believe there were 15 horses who were killed in that fire. And only one human injury, that coming when general manager Michael Collins, who has since

passed away, broke an arm after being knocked over by a fire hose.

As for today, George Kutlenios, the president of the Michigan Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, the parent group of the Thoroughbred horsemen, told me that it wasn't until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday when he received a phone call notifying him of the closing. George told me simultaneously he learned that trucks loaded with horses were being denied entrance at the stable gate.

"Our concern about the horse's and their safety was primary so they did allow about 42 horses to get off the trailers and into stalls," said Kutlenios. "We then contacted all the other people who were shipping in to stop until we learned more details. We don't know where it goes from here. Our job right now is to number one, try and help the horsemen get some stalls in surrounding states where they can race, and number two, kind of mop up what we can possibly do to salvage racing in Michigan."

There are so many more stories I could tell. I've said many times over the years that I wish I had taken the time and written a book. Not that anybody would buy or read it, but just to have it all down on paper somewhere. Maybe now is the time?

Farewell Hazel Park. I will forever be indebted to you.—By Gordon Waterstone



Above: Bill O'Donnell drives Sweet Reflection to victory in the 1988 Breeder Crown 3-Year-Old Filly Pace.

At left: Hazel Park hosted a 30th Anniversary Driving Championship on Aug. 23, 1982, with the participants including: front row (left to right) Joe Marsh Jr., Ray Remmen, Merritt Dokey and John Campbell; back row (left to right) Tom Merriman, Hazel Park's executive vice president Harold Duris, Bea Farber, Tom Harmer, Chris Boring and Robert Williams.



Meadowlands addresses testing

In response to horsemen's concerns over the accuracy of blood-gas testing being done at the Meadowlands, equipment was brought in from Tioga Downs and Meadowlands management, with the assistance of the New Jersey Racing Commission (NJRC), conducted on-site TC02 testing over the weekend of March 16 and 17. The concern was over the procedure in place for TC02 testing which required the samples be shipped to a lab in California, citing the possibility that there may be deterioration of those samples during the time spent in transportation. [more](#)

Blumenfeld looking for Matchmaker points

Trainer Paul Blumenfeld will start two horses in the fourth leg of the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series Friday night. Vintage Babe and Motu Moonbeam, who both started from post eight last week, each drew the rail in their respective divisions this week. Blumenfeld sees the draw as an opportunity to win key points toward in the final when series leaders Shartin N, Twinkle, and Mackenzie took the week off. [more](#)

Bone density drugs discussed at RCI

Bisphosphonates, a class of drugs that prevent the bone-density loss, might have some therapeutic value for older racehorses but speakers at the Conference on Equine Welfare and Racing Integrity warned of the potential harm caused by such treatments for young horses such yearlings and 2-year-olds. That was among the take-aways from Wednesday's Animal Welfare Forum of the Association of Racing Commissioners International's 84th annual conference. [more](#)

Campbell appointed to board

The Racing Officials Accreditation Program's (ROAP) board of directors elected its 2018-2020 officers during its March 27 board meeting and appointed two new board members. In addition to officer elections, two board members were appointed: John Campbell as an at-large director and Dr. Camie Heleski representing the University of Kentucky's Ag Equine department. [more](#)

Harrington opens 72nd meet on Monday

Harrington Raceway's 72nd year of live harness racing will kickoff Monday, April 9, with a 13-race program starting at 5 p.m. Reigning leading driver Victor Kirby and last season's top trainer Brian Malone will both be back in action on the opening day program. [more](#)

NY horseman Robert Gruber III dies

Longtime Western New York Standardbred owner and trainer Robert Gruber III, 52, of Lakeview, N.Y., died March 31, after suffering a medical emergency during an on-track training session. [more](#)

Wrenn at home at The Meadows

Ordinarily, when drivers first locate at a harness track, they may experience some lean months as they build relationships and eke out assignments. With Ronnie Wrenn Jr. and The Meadows, however, it was pretty much love at first sight. Wrenn, 31, has been driving at The Meadows relatively briefly, splitting time with tracks in Ohio where he lives. [more](#)

Pinehurst Matinee set for Sunday

The Pinehurst Driving and Training Club Spring Matinee, presented by Preferred Equine Marketing, is set for Sunday, April 8, in Pinehurst, NC. The annual celebration of Standardbreds in the Sandhills expects good weather and another large crowd with last year's event hosting over 4,000 patrons. [more](#)

Two spots up for grabs for handicapping tourney

Two more spots are up for grabs this Saturday in Meadowlands Racing & Entertainment's Last Chance Qualifier. The qualifier has a \$100 total fee (\$50 entry plus a \$50 real-money bankroll). The format requires players to place a minimum of 5 \$10 Win wagers on Meadowlands races. Players can register on-site Saturday up until 7:15 pm. There are 60 players already qualified for the WHHC Final. [more](#)

Entertainment announced for NA Cup program

The \$1 million Pepsi North America Cup returns bigger than ever this year to the newly renovated Woodbine Mohawk Park. The signature race of the 2018 Standardbred season will take place Saturday, June 16, with K. Trevor Wilson and Dylan Playfair from Letterkenny and live music from country duo Buck Twenty. Advance tickets are now available at bit.ly/NACup2018. [more](#)

Dan Patch dinner returning to Orlando in 2019

If you have everything prepared for a winning effort, and that effort results in success, and you have the same people in place for the next time — why make any changes from a winning formula? So thought the United States Harness Writers Association, the sport's leading group of journalists, who is announcing that its 2019 meetings and Dan Patch Awards banquet will return to the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Fla. [more](#)

Mike Sweeney gets 1,000th training win

As the night of Wednesday (April 4) deepened over Pompano Park with the final race concluding, a 5-year-old trotting gelding left the winner's circle after completing a victory of 1:55.2 for driver Wally Hennessey. Not only was it a new lifetime mark for PC's Alleyway, it marked the 1,000th career training win for Patrick Sweeney, better known as Mike throughout the world of harness racing. [more](#)

RACE LINES

Harness Racing Leaders

Compiled by the USTA—through April 3, 2018 (week difference March 28-April 3).

Leading North American-Based Money-Winning Horses

	Sts.	W	P	S	Earnings
NF Happenstance (8tm)	11	6	3	0	\$121,700
Shartin N (5pm)	8	7	1	0	106,375
Sell A Bit N (8pm)	9	4	1	1	103,200
Caviart Cherie (4pm)	11	7	3	0	94,750
Missile J (5pg)	9	4	1	1	92,200
Theresademoninme (7tg)	10	5	3	1	85,875
Super Imposed N (6pg)	11	4	1	1	82,640
Dr J Hanover (5pg)	4	3	1	0	80,000
Nirvana Seelster (7pg)	10	4	3	2	79,208
Motu Moonbeam N (6pm)	11	3	2	2	78,600
Chumlee A (7pg)	11	4	2	0	77,922
Major Uptrend (7pg)	10	4	2	2	76,250
Mostinterestingman (5tg)	12	4	1	2	74,920
Jet Airway (7ph)	12	6	2	0	74,660
Rubber Duck (6tr)	8	3	0	0	72,200
Go Sandy Go (3pf)	4	3	1	0	72,200

Leading Money-Winning Drivers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UDR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Jason Bartlett	643	114-106-104	.323	\$1,937,813 (\$186,865)
Jordan Stratton	611	117-95-76	.319	1,911,963 (141,715)
Aaron Merriman	999	232-180-143	.380	1,623,839 (144,024)
Tim Tetrick	543	110-94-68	.340	1,398,897 (219,252)
Trace Tetrick	665	143-104-82	.343	1,364,703 (91,385)
George Brennan	534	74-74-51	.247	1,278,457 (114,410)
Ronnie Wrenn Jr.	752	182-115-110	.376	1,113,931 (83,652)
Corey Callahan	599	96-99-78	.295	1,110,025 (57,601)
Louis Roy	531	144-91-81	.417	1,095,973 (107,103)
Jim Marohn Jr.	651	110-88-85	.288	1,088,689 (133,739)
Matt Kakaley	431	62-70-51	.274	1,079,180 (0)
Dan Noble	574	109-86-85	.322	1,052,688 (102,330)
Daniel Dube	466	49-47-72	.213	964,668 (68,095)
Chris Page	590	90-65-65	.250	963,934 (71,166)
Tony Morgan	448	90-65-58	.325	869,465 (53,230)

Leading Money-Winning Trainers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UTR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Ron Burke	623	130-97-69	.332	\$1,549,059 (\$185,162)
Scott Di Domenico	355	66-60-31	.309	959,572 (101,337)
Richard Moreau	388	101-64-46	.391	949,979 (72,937)
Rene Allard	303	59-44-39	.318	865,938 (124,670)
Richard Banca	223	36-35-33	.298	600,025 (79,100)
Nick Surick	447	87-72-50	.321	595,617 (37,517)
Jennifer Bongiorno	131	38-17-17	.405	471,701 (34,110)
Carmen Auciello	369	29-36-48	.176	469,258 (26,208)
Dan Ater	179	33-31-19	.316	439,625 (22,565)
Dylan Davis	145	35-22-22	.376	438,877 (61,000)
Gilbert Garcia-Herrera	210	27-24-30	.240	438,476 (79,120)
Rob Harmon	154	25-23-25	.299	411,300 (30,195)
Kimberly Asher	157	43-35-27	.455	393,743 (31,600)
Jeff Brewer	228	27-32-32	.243	381,281 (30,855)
Paul Blumenfeld	196	19-26-26	.215	370,405 (16,820)

Leading Breeders

Breeder	Starters	Winners	Wins	Earnings
Hanover Shoe Farms Inc.	519	217	358	\$3,499,962
Winbak Farm	510	211	357	3,108,940
Brittany Farms LLC	120	61	103	1,231,450
Blue Chip Bloodstock Inc.	105	49	88	804,572
Seelster Farms Inc.	111	54	100	785,175
Perretti Farms	98	49	78	756,339
Robert McIntosh Stables Inc.	95	39	70	650,752
White Birch Farm	87	37	71	629,018
Bulletproof Enterprises	84	35	68	598,771
Spring Haven Farm	68	32	50	524,922
Steve H Stewart	86	36	59	514,293
Kentuckiana Farms Gen Par	71	33	65	511,228
Diamond Creek Farm LLC	75	34	53	498,982
CSX Stables	49	22	44	428,699
Midland Acres Inc.	82	27	41	400,584

Leaders Of The Week

Ranked by wins for March 28-April 3 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.

Drivers

Driver	Starts	W-P-S
Aaron Merriman	85	18-16-10
Louis Roy	51	17-7-5
Ronnie Wrenn Jr	65	14-7-11
Jim DeVaux	56	12-10-9
Jim Marohn Jr.	58	12-8-8
Dan Noble	52	11-8-8
Trace Tetrick	47	11-7-7
Dave Palone	39	10-8-2
Jason Bartlett	57	10-6-12
Michael Merton	31	9-4-3
Wally Hennessey	32	9-7-2
Alfred Carroll	30	8-2-4
Brett Miller	35	8-7-2
Frank Coppola Jr.	31	8-4-1
Greg Grismore	52	8-8-4
Jim Morrill Jr.	31	8-3-5
Simon Allard	34	8-4-4
Tim Tetrick	40	8-5-3

Trainers

Trainer	Wins
Ron Burke	13
Richard Moreau	10
Rene Allard	9
Craig Mosher	6
Gilbert Garcia-Herrera	6
Kathleen Plested	6
Nick Surick	6
Scott Di Domenico	6
Dirk Simpson	5
Melissa Beckwith	5
Philip Sowers	5
Victor Puddy	5
Benoit Baillargeon	4
Christopher Petrelli	4
Donald Billings	4
Jeff Cullipher	4
Jenny Melander	4
Patrick Shepherd	4
Rich Gillock	4
Richard Banca	4
Sam Schillaci	4

2018 APRIL



sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
1 Easter April Fool's Day Weiss 3&4F&M Pace (PcD) Weiss 3&4H&G Trot (PcD)	2 Cook Mem. 3FP (Mea) Owens Mem. Pace final (MVR)	3 Farwick Mem. Trot final (MVR) Hiteman Mem. Pace final (MVR) SOA Bonus Open Trot (YR) Weiss 3&4F&M Trot (PcD) Wood Mem. 3CT (Mea)	4 Provost Mem. 3FT (Mea)	5	6 Blue Chip Matchmaker OMP (YR) Mossbarger Mem. Pace final (MVR) Shiaway St. Pat OT (M)	7 Burning Point OMP (M) Kirwan Mem. 3CP (Mea) Levy Mem. OHP (YR) Tharps Mem. Pace final (MVR) Weiss 3&4H&G Pace (PcD) Whata Baron OHP (M)
8 Weiss 3&4H&G Trot (PcD)	9 Cook Mem. 3FP (Mea) Hackett 3FT elims (MVR) Weiss 3&4F&M Pace (PcD) Harrington Raceway opens	10 Hackett 3CT elims (MVR) SOA Bonus Open Trot (YR) Weiss 3&4F&M Trot (PcD) Wood Mem. 3CT (Mea)	11 Provost Mem. 3FT (Mea)	12 Mohawk Park opens	13 Blue Chip Matchmaker OMP (YR) Hackett 3FP elims (MVR) Shiaway St. Pat OT (M) Harrah's Philadelphia opens	14 Burning Point OMP (M) Hackett 3CP elims (MVR) Kirwan Mem. 3CP (Mea) Levy Mem. OHP (YR) Weiss 3&4H&G Pace (PcD) Whata Baron OHP (M)
15 Weiss 3&4H&G Trot (PcD)	16 Hackett 3FT final (MVR) Weiss 3&4F&M Pace (PcD) Plainridge Park opens	17 Hackett 3CT final (MVR) SOA Bonus Open Trot (YR) Weiss 3&4F&M Trot (PcD)	18 Horseman	19	20 Hackett 3FP final (MVR) Shiaway St. Pat OT final (M) Vernon Downs opens	21 Hackett 3CP final (MVR) Blue Chip Matchmaker final (YR) Burning Point OMP final (M) Kirwan Mem. 3CP final (Mea) Levy Mem. OHP final (YR) Provost Mem. 3FT final (Mea) Whata Baron OHP final (M) Weiss 3&4H&G Pace (PcD) Wood Mem. 3CT final (Mea)
22 Earth Day Weiss 3&4H&G Trot (PcD)	23 Weiss 3&4F&M Pace (PcD)	24 SOA Bonus Open Trot final (YR) Weiss 3&4F&M Trot (PcD)	25	26	27 Scarlet & Gray 3FP Inv. (MVR) Scarlet & Gray 3FT Inv. (MVR)	28 Dexter Cup 3CT elims (Fhld) Scarlet & Gray 3CP Inv. (MVR) Scarlet & Gray 3CT Inv. (MVR) Weiss 3&4H&G Pace (PcD)
29 Meadowlands Mixed Sale at East Rutherford, N.J.	30	1 Msnaughtybynature Trot (HoP)	2 Expression H&G Trot (HoP)	3 Go On BB F&M Pace (HoP)	4 Hal Dale H&G Pace (HoP) OHSS 3FP/3FT (MVR) Hawthorne Racecourse opens	5 Cinco de Mayo Buckeye Stallion 3CP/3CT (MVR) Cutler Mem./Graduate Pace (M) Dexter Cup/Lady Suffolk (Fhld) PASS/PA Stallion 3CP (Mea) Van Rose Mem. Inv. Pace (PcD) Weiss 3&4YO finals (PcD) Bangor Raceway opens Tioga Downs open



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