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Harness Racing

WEEKEND PREVIEW

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015

Inside
Weekly
harnessracing.com
News Digest

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Out-Of-Town Horses Flood Entry Box At Big M

With the 2015 race meets at Yonkers Raceway and Harrah's Philadelphia finishing up last weekend, it left the Meadowlands as the only game in town in the area the next few weeks. While an influx of out-of-town horses was expected at the Meadowlands for this weekend's race cards, the entry box was overflowing with new names.

From 289 horses scheduled to compete on Friday and Saturday at the Meadowlands (also-eligibles not counted), 103 made their last start at the Big M—35.6 percent. Sixty-four horses (22.1 percent) made their last start at Yonkers, while 69 horses (23.8 percent) raced last at Harrah's Philadelphia. Saratoga also has a presence in 19 starters (6.5 percent) at the Big M this weekend.

“Going forward, we will take entries from horses who raced at least twice at the Meadowlands from the beginning of the meet on Nov. 13 first.”

—Darin Zoccali

appearance at Harrah's Philadelphia, four at Yonkers, and one at Saratoga). In fact, only two of the 10 starters even raced at the Big M in 2015, those being OK Galahad (three starts) and Knocking Around (two starts).

Mark Ford, the newly-elected president of the Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of New Jersey, told Weekend Preview he believes the situation will rectify itself.

“Everybody wants to go somewhere else and how do you determine who a Meadowlands guy is?” said Ford. “It's one of those thankless jobs where everybody will have an attitude if they don't get to race.”

New Jersey-based trainer Tom Fanning said he hopes things can move forward on a positive note following this weekend.

“It's water under the bridge,” said Fanning, who saw one of his two entries this weekend not get drawn in. “The races have already been drawn. Hopefully, when something like this comes around they'll think it important enough to be proactive about it and do what's best for the racetrack and the local horsemen. We have to look down the road when situations like this arise, and have the foresight to put something in place. We have to have a happy medium and both sides have to work together.”

The party crashing this weekend at the Meadowlands is especially evident in Race 14 on Saturday night. From the 10 horses scheduled to start, not one shows a single race line at the Meadowlands (five starters made their last ap-

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Fanning got his wish following a meeting between Meadowlands and Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of New Jersey officials on Tuesday afternoon, Dec. 15.

“Going forward, we will take entries from horses who raced at least twice at the Meadowlands from the beginning of the meet on Nov. 13 first,” Meadowlands' director of racing operations Darin Zoccali told Weekend Preview in an email. “After that, we will use horses to fill

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the races as needed. This will be noted on our condition sheet going forward."

Also, because of Christmas and New Year's, live racing at the Meadowlands will be down to just a single weekly card on the next two Saturdays (Dec. 26 and Jan. 2), with post time moved up to 6:35 p.m. The Dec. 26 card will be comprised of races that are usually programmed on Fridays, while the Jan. 2 card will be the usually Saturday fare.

Both Saturday programs will be expanded to 15 races with 11-horse fields in several races, with the sixth-place finisher in those contests receiving three percent of the purse.

"This will help some as there will be 40 more horses getting raced even though we're losing a day," said Ford. "At least the Meadowlands is trying to work with us." — *By Gordon Waterstone*

Takter Wants Regular Open; Looking Forward To '16 Season With Always B Miki

It's the proverbial catch-22. With fewer nominations each year, it was easy for the Presidential Series, for years the top winter event for free-for-all pacers, to be cancelled. But with the Presidential Series off the Meadowlands calendar, today there are fewer free-for-all pacers in action in January and February.

"You know you're in the presence of a great horse. If he stays sound next year, he'll make history!"

—*Jimmy Takter*
about Always B Miki

Woodbine and the Meadowlands each have Open/Preferred Paces scheduled for Saturday night. With Yonkers Raceway closed for a holiday hiatus, the Meadowlands has a field of eight for a \$25,000 Open, with three of the contenders making a Big M

appearance after competing at Yonkers in their previous start. Woodbine has a field of just six for its \$34,000 Preferred with Apprentice Hanover coming into the race off of a win in his first start back after a four-month layoff.

The horse many believe to be the top free-for-all pacer is still in training, but he is not in to go in this weekend's Open at the Meadowlands. Instead of racing, 2015 Breeders Crown Open Pace winner Always B Miki, who made only four starts this year because of an injury, has been training but also lollygagging a bit at trainer Jimmy Takter's farm in New Jersey.

"He trains twice a week, very light," said Takter on Wednesday. "If the Meadowlands would announce they will have an Open every two weeks for \$40,000, I guarantee they would have a full field, and he would be in it. We need to have an open. People want to see this kind of horse racing. But you need to know that there will be races."

Even without immediate racing opportunities to prepare for, Takter personally sits behind Always B Miki every day.

"I am so happy to be working with a horse like this. I make sure to sit behind him every day," said the Hall of Famer,

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THIS WEEK'S FEATURED RACES

Friday, December 18

All times listed are local.

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

8:50p Wdb5 **Niagara 3FP** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

9:29p M8 **Open Trot** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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Saturday, December 19

7:50p Wdb2 **Preferred Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

10:10p Wdb9 **Valedictory 3CP** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

10:52p M12 **Open Pace** [Trackmaster PPs](#)

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who recently welcomed his sixth grandchild. "I've jogged him with six or seven babies, with nothing in his ears. He's just so easy going, and he's one of those horses that has charisma. You know you're in the presence of a great horse. It's exciting. If he stays sound next year, he'll make history."

Takter said he has no plans to slow down Always B Miki's training regime.

"He will not be shut down," said Takter, who is training 35 babies at his farm in New Jersey. "A big, heavy horse like him, you can't shut him down. I don't know yet when he'll start racing next year. I've got to see the stakes schedule and then I will make a plan." — *By Kathy Parker*

Johansson: “The Horse Will Race From Off The Pace”

Trainer Nancy Johansson admits she doesn't know what to expect from her 2-year-old first-time starter Rollaroundtheworld in Race 3 Saturday night at the Meadowlands, but she knows what her trainer comments would be if asked: “The horse will race from off the pace. It is up to the bettors to decide if he will make it there in time.”

Rollaroundtheworld will start from post 3 in the \$10,000 non-winners of two or \$20,000 lifetime race for 2 and 3 year olds with driver David Miller. The son of Roll With Joe won his first qualifier on Nov. 28 at the Meadowlands in 1:55, kicking home in :26.4 to close from third to win by a neck. In his second qualifier on Dec. 5, Rollaroundtheworld again rallied from third with a last quarter of :26.2, but fell two lengths short of the 2014 Breeders Crown 3-Year-Old Filly Pace runner-up Major Dancer, race-timed in 1:54.1.

“You don't know what you have until you qualify a horse, and he is one of the few times that a horse has surprised me so much, and in a good way.”

—Nancy Johansson

might have something here.’ He qualified back the following week and got beat by Major Dancer, a very good horse.”

Johansson said Rollaroundtheworld was helped greatly with the Meadowlands moving qualifiers to night prior to the pari-mutuel card.

“They moved the qualifiers to night and that was good because he got to go under the lights,” she said. “Horses that start racing this late, it's like they skip kindergarten and have to be in first grade. But he's handled everything. I knew he was a nice horse and had some ability, but to go :26.2 quarters like nothing, that surprised me.

“I'm still in a little bit of disbelief. You don't know what you have until you qualify a horse, and he is one of the few times that a horse has surprised me so much, and in a good way. Sometimes it's the other way around.”

“I put him in the first qualifier and I told David (Miller) to just get around there, to keep him on somebody's helmet and he'll follow,” said Johansson. “Coming down the stretch David pulled him and I said, ‘What is David doing now?’ But he went right on by in a :26.4 last quarter and I said ‘Holy crap.’ David came back and said, ‘Nancy, you

Rollaroundtheworld is out of the Artsplace mare Inanotherworld, a full sister to the two-time divisional champion Worldly Beauty, a winner of \$1.9 million. Originally purchased as a yearling for \$130,000 by West Wins Stable and Adriano Sorella, Rollaroundtheworld was bought solely by Sorella at last August's Tattersalls Mixed Sale at the Meadowlands for \$30,000.

Rollaroundtheworld had been trained initially by Casie Coleman at her winter base in Florida, and was sent to the New Jersey-based Johansson following the August sale.

“When they brought him north he started making breaks for some reason and running off the track,” said Johansson. “They gelded him and turned him out. I guess I'm the fortunate one who gets to deal with him as a gelding and not a colt.

“He's grown an enormous amount since he came to our barn. He was an average-sized 2 year old but he's really grown into a nice, strong horse. It's hard to say, but he could pretty much be anything.”

Johansson said she started completely over with Rollaroundtheworld when he arrived at her barn at White Birch Farm.

“I kept him off the track as much as I could because everybody kept telling me he was running off the track,” she revealed. “So I primarily trained him on the straight track where they really don't have anywhere they can run off. It helps in brainwashing a little bit.”

As for Johansson's comments about Rollaroundtheworld racing off the pace in his debut Saturday, she said it's a no-brainer.

“We have to stick to our game plan,” she said. “Obviously, it would be nice to win Saturday night, but the most important thing is that he needs to be educated. You can't forget he's still a baby and this is his first lifetime start. He needs to learn how to race. Our goal isn't to win non-winners of two races at the Meadowlands. Of course you will win whatever races you can win, but he has shown some potential where he could be a stakes-type of horse next year.”

With the Meadowlands dropping all of its late-closers that have been raced in the early months of the year, Johansson is unsure of Rollaroundtheworld's immediate future.

“It kind of stinks because he could have used them,” Johansson said about the cancellation of series at the Big M. “Obviously, we are going to race him on Saturday and think then what we will do with him. Either keep racing him or give him a little time off.” —By Gordon Waterstone



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Wiggle It Jiggleit Named 2015 Horse Of Year

Not surprisingly, Wiggle It Jiggleit on Thursday afternoon was announced the overwhelming choice for 2015 Horse of the Year in voting by members of the U.S. Harness Writers Association. After receiving 132 of 136 votes cast to be named Pacer of the Year, Wiggle It Jiggleit received 130 votes for Horse of the Year.

Pinkman, who was voted the Trotter of the Year, received three votes for Horse of the Year. Foiled Again, Freaky Feet Pete and Mission Brief each received one vote.

Pinkman received 85 votes for Trotter of the Year, with runner-up Mission Brief receiving 18, followed by Southwind Frank (14) and Bee A Magician (13).

Wiggle It Jiggleit, owned by George Teague Jr. Inc., trained by Clyde Francis and driven by Montrell Teague, won 22 of 26 starts, including the Meadowlands Pace, Little Brown Jug, Battle of the Brandywine and Max Hempt Memorial. With earnings of \$2,181,995, Wiggle It Jiggleit was the richest Standardbred of 2015.

Pinkman, who received 132 votes in being named 3-Year-Old Colt Trotter of the Year, is owned by Christina Takter,

John Fielding, Jim Fielding, Joyce McClelland and Herb Liverman, trained by Jimmy Takter and driven primarily by Yannick Gingras. Pinkman won 11 of 17 starts, including the Hambletonian, Canadian Trotting Classic, Kentucky Futurity and Earl Beal Memorial. His earnings of \$1,892,865 was the most for any trotter in 2015 and second behind only Wiggle It Jiggleit for all Standardbreds.

Although all six pacers voted Dan Patch Award divisional honors were being honored for the first time, three trotters added to their respective totals. The filly Mission Brief and the gelding Pinkman were Dan Patch Award winners last year at two and repeated as honorees in 2015. The 5-year-old mare Bee A Magician was previously recognized in 2013, not only as the 3-Year-Old Filly Trotter of the Year and Trotter of the Year, but also the Horse of the Year.

Pure Country received 124 votes to be named 2-Year-Old Filly Pacer of the Year. Pure Country was a perfect 10-for-10 this year, joining JK She'salady (2014), See You At Peelers (2010) and My Little Dragon (2005) as the only 2-year-old filly pacers to win a Dan Patch Award with an undefeated season. A winner of \$689,968, Pure Country is owned by Diamond Creek Farm, trained by Takter and driven by Brett Miller.

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DAN PATCH AWARD VOTE TOTALS (136 ballots)

HORSE OF YEAR		3YO FILLY TROTTER		3YO COLT PACER	
Wiggle It Jiggleit	130	Mission Brief	118	Wiggle It Jiggleit	132
Pinkman	3	Wild Honey	17	Freaky Feet Pete	4
Foiled Again	1	Barn Doll	1		
Freaky Feet Pete	1			3YO FILLY PACER	
Mission Brief	1			Divine Caroline	113
		OLDER MALE TROTTER		Sassa Hanover	18
PACER OF YEAR		JL Cruze	118	Bettor Be Steppin	2
Wiggle It Jiggleit	132	Resolve	11	Safe From Terror	2
Freaky Feet Pete	3	Creatine	1	Mosquito Blue Chip	1
Foiled Again	1	Il Sogno Dream	1		
		Obrigado	1	OLDER MALE PACER	
TROTTER OF YEAR		Papagayo E	1	State Treasurer	108
Pinkman	85			Always B Miki	18
Mission Brief	18	OLDER MARE TROTTER		Foiled Again	4
Southwind Frank	14	Bee A Magician	119	JK Endofanera	3
Bee A Magician	13	D'One	14	Doo Wop Hanover	1
JL Cruze	5	Daylon Miracle	2	Mach It So	1
Barn Doll	1	Shake It Cerry 1		Take It Back Terry	1
2YO COLT TROTTER		2YO COLT PACER		OLDER MARE PACER	
Southwind Frank	135	Boston Red Rocks	82	Venus Delight	105
		Control The Moment	48	Color's A Virgin	12
2YO FILLY TROTTER		Big Top Hanover	2	Krispy Apple	9
Broadway Donna	112	Betting Line	1	Anndrovette	5
All The Time	18	Ideal Jimmy	1	Lady Shadow	2
Caprice Hill	4	Travel Playlist	1	Radar Contact	1
Womans Will	1			Yagonnakissmeornot	1
		2YO FILLY PACER			
3YO COLT TROTTER		Pure Country	124		
Pinkman	132	LA Delight	11		
Crazy Wow	4				

Send A Card To A Dying Fan In Delaware, Ohio

At various times over the past 40 years, Ted Barcus has taken care of horses at the Delaware, Ohio, County Fairgrounds. In the late 1970s and early '80s he groomed for Bob Davenport and Harold McNamara at the fairgrounds, and when a blizzard hit Delaware in December 1977 and roads impassable, Teddy, who lived nearby, walked to the fairgrounds and made sure the horses were fed and watered.

Now Barcus needs a little attention. He has been diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Indiana horsewoman Stacey Ruddick, who met Barcus at the fair, learned of his illness in their annual Christmas card exchange and she has written the following plea asking for Christmas greetings for Barcus. Ruddick writes:

My lifetime in the Standardbred industry has allowed me to meet and become friends with lots of wonderful people. Perhaps none is more interesting than a gentleman named Ted Barcus, who I met at the Delaware County Fair several years ago.

I'm not sure if he is considered autistic or not, but Ted reminds me a little of Dustin Hoffman's character in the movie Rain Man. He is unique in many ways. Ted is not an owner, trainer, or driver. He is simply a fan of our sport, who happens to live in the best place possible to be a fan of harness racing, the home of the Little Brown Jug.

When talking to some of the old timers stabled at the Delaware fairgrounds, I learned some interesting things about Ted. He had grown up just outside the gates of the facility and lived in Delaware his entire life. Always a fan, he was in attendance during the race meet each year. I can't remember the exact year I met Ted. I remember he came walking through the barn area early one morning and just started talking to me. Ted would tell me things like the amount of the upcoming lottery jackpot. He would also tell me what he had eaten at the fair the day prior, usually the Swiss steak at one of the church stands.

I would be polite to Ted and engage in idle chit chat about this or that. He would ask me if I knew this person, or that person. With his mind always running, he would tell me names he would use if he ever had a racehorse. He would always ask me what days my horses were racing, and he remembered when he returned the next day.

The year his mother passed away, Ted carried a copy of her obituary in the plastic pocket protector where he always had his most prized possessions. Every morning that year, he would get out the tattered newspaper clipping of the obituary and ask me to read it to him. Each day, I would read it aloud, trying to make it sound as exciting as an obituary could be read. The look on his face let me know how much he loved and missed his mother.

Year after year, Ted would visit me while I was stabled at Delaware for the fair. His memory was good, as he always knew if I was located in a different spot. He also remembered I was friends with Chip Noble, because he talked



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about Chip's passing as being such a loss to the sport. Knowing Chip, I imagine he was another horseman who took the time to talk with Ted at the fair each year.

Probably the first year I met him, Ted asked me if I would send him a Christmas card if he sent one to me. I said, "Sure!" So, I gave him my address and didn't put a lot more thought into it. That year, I received a card from Ted. I returned the gesture and we have exchanged cards every year since then.

Ted's cards are always written by someone else, which I assume is a family member or other caregiver. The greeting is written far too neatly to be Ted's writing, as his own signature reminds me of that of a first grade student. However, he always writes his own name in the card. The personal message written by his helper is usually simple. It is typically something like, "See you at the fair!" or, "Nice to see you and the horses!"

This year, Ted's card is a little different. Below is the message it contained:

"Hi Stacey, hope you are doing well. This has been a bad year for me. The first part of the year, they found a cancer on my lung. We did chemo & radiation. It was the size of a softball & it shrank about half, with a 75-80% chance of coming back. A couple of months ago, we did an MRI and they found another cancer in my pancreas (Stage 4), so I just have a few months. I will probably not be here next Christmas. It has been nice having friends like you.

Merry Christmas!

Ted Barcus"

I will be sending my card back to Ted in the morning, as I know it is a highlight to his day to receive the cards each year. I am certain I am not the only person Ted talked to at the Delaware County Fair. If you had the pleasure of meeting Ted, I am sure you would never forget him.

In the spirit of the holidays, I would like to ask anyone who knows Ted, or raced at Delaware, because I'm sure he would know your name or your horses' names, to please send him a card or note.

Ted Barcus
104 Chamberlain St.
Delaware, Ohio 43015

Florida's Compact With Seminole Tribe Could Kill Horse Racing

The horse trading between the state of Florida and the Seminole Tribe has resulted in a deal, or compact, that could result in the "decoupling" of horse racing and expanded gaming at pari-mutuel operations. Under current law, live racing is required for expanded gaming at tracks, such as the slot machines and card room at Pompano Park.

Decoupling is one of several key items lawmakers and industry leaders are trying to work out as they cobble together gambling legislation for the session that begins next month. Allowing operators to eliminate horse racing, or dog racing, would be allowed per the \$3 billion, seven-year compact signed by Gov. Rick Scott and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

The legislature must approve the deal, and since it has many details, passage is likely to involve more horse trading.

The Florida horse industry is rallying the troops to try to prevent decoupling.

"This is just a money grab by the casinos. That's all it is," Joe Pennacchio, executive director and president of the Florida Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association, told The News Service of Florida. "Maybe if they traded horses for blackjack tables, they may make more money. But that's not how they got their permit. They got their permit because they agreed to race horses. My point is if you don't want to race horses, that's fine. Just give the permit back."

Lonny Powell, CEO and executive vice president of Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association, said his organization is firmly opposed to decoupling. Powell, who has many years of experience in racing, including a tenure as CEO of Racing Commissioners International, called decoupling "one of the worst things we could face in our business."

New Casino Legislation Proposed In New Jersey

Legislation was introduced Friday, Dec. 11, in the New Jersey Senate that would allow two new casinos to be built in northern New Jersey. The bill was introduced by Senate president Stephen Sweeney, a Democrat, and if approved by the state legislature, the referendum would then go on a statewide ballot in November 2016 for voter approval.

While the locations for the two new gaming sites are not specified, one of the casinos could be at the Meadowlands, which in June announced a partnership with Hard Rock International to build a \$1 billion casino on the grounds of the sports complex, next to MetLife Stadium.

There are currently eight casinos operating in Atlantic City, which was approved for casino gaming in 1978. The proposed legislation provides that the two new casinos pay a much higher tax rate than the eight percent the current Atlantic City casinos pay. In its proposal, Hard Rock/Meadowlands offered to pay a 55-percent tax.

All tax revenue from the new casinos would go into a New Jersey Investment Fund. For the first 15 years, 49 percent of that money would go to Atlantic City to compensate for expected losses. Forty-nine percent would go to counties and municipalities for tax relief for seniors and the disabled, while two percent would go to the horse racing industry.

After the first 15 years, the amount sent to Atlantic City would decrease by three percent a year for the 10 years that follow, while the amount sent to counties and municipalities would increase by three percent a year. After 25 years, Atlantic City would get 19 percent of the tax revenue and the counties and municipalities would get 79 percent.

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Tom Tanner Photo

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STRETCH CALL

BY DAVE BRIGGS

SI's American Pharoah Debate Proves Horses, Humans Not Athletic Equals

The kerfuffle over Sports Illustrated selecting Serena Williams over American Pharoah for the magazine's Sportsperson of the Year award rekindles an old debate about whether horses deserve to be in the discussion against people for such honors.

It depends on the award and its rules, of course, but to those that say Williams clearly deserved the SI honor because American Pharoah—also known as "AP"—is not a "person," I say, then why did SI include AP in its readers' poll at all?

In reader voting—which SI said had no bearing on its final decision—American Pharoah unleashed a Secretariat-style Belmont beat down on Williams, crushing her by more than 267,000 votes (272,824 to 5,520). AP garnered a whopping 47 percent of the vote and was the leading vote-getter in 46 of the 50 states.

The skeptic in me says it was a bit of a ruse, a way for SI to get some attention for an award and a magazine that have both lost some luster in the digital world.

I'm not questioning the final decision. Williams is an outstanding athlete and a deserving choice, but where, exactly, do horses fit in when pitted against human athletes?

Horses beating out humans for significant spoils is rare, but not unprecedented.

Probably the most famous harness racing example in the modern era is when Niatross was named the New York Post's 1980 Athlete of the Year the same year the New York Islanders won the Stanley Cup and the U.S. Olympic Hockey Team won Gold in the state at Lake Placid.

In Canada, horses going up against human athletes has an interesting history.

In 2008, Standardbred Canada and others campaigned for Ontario-sired and Canadian owned, trained and driven superstar Somebeachsomewhere to be named the winner of the Lou Marsh Award that annually goes to Canada's top athlete—professional or amateur. No horse—not even the incomparable thoroughbred Northern Dancer—had won the Lou Marsh. Driver Herve Filion did win the award in 1971 and jockey Sandy Hawley has won it twice (1973 and '76).

The Lou Marsh committee did consider The Beach's bid for top athlete, at least briefly, before it quickly implemented a rule barring horses from consideration for that award from that year forward.

Canada's Sports Hall of Fame is a more interesting case. A few years ago, I submitted Somebeachsomewhere's name

for consideration, arguing not only his greatness, but also his ability to draw the interest of the national media.

Harness racing is fairly well represented in that Hall, which has enshrined Filion, John Campbell, Bill O'Donnell, Keith Waples and Joe O'Brien. Nominating a horse was far from unprecedented. In fact, both Northern Dancer and the great Olympic show-jumping horse Big Ben (and his rider Ian Millar) are already enshrined in Canada's Sports Hall of Fame.

If you can believe it, so, too, is the great Maritime sailing ship The Bluenose. That's right, a boat—albeit a successful boat rich in Maritime lore—is actually enshrined in Canada's Sports Hall of Fame.

Serena Williams is an outstanding athlete and a deserving choice, but where, exactly, do horses fit in when pitted against human athletes?

Somebeachsomewhere did not make the cut the first year he was nominated, but the process called for unsuccessful nominees to automatically be considered again the next year. That

same year, Standardbred Canada nominated the great Canadian-owned, trained and driven pacer Cam Fella, which means the selection committee likely had to consider two Standardbreds at the same time.

That's when I believe the induction committee got fed up.

Not long after that, I received something of a cease and desist letter from the Hall saying my nomination for Somebeachsomewhere for inclusion in Canada's Sports Hall of Fame had been denied and the committee that considered such nominations had changed the rules to effectively bar horses, other animals and, I guess, boats, from future induction.

The rule now reads, "An animal or inanimate object will only be considered for induction into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame when requested by a successful nominee that has been ratified by the Board of Governors of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame for induction. The animal or inanimate object must have been integral to his/her achievements over an extended period of time."

Fine, except unlike the Lou Marsh and SI's Sportsperson of the Year award, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame had already set a precedent of inducting horses—worthy ones, too. Why change now?

Clearly, these awards committees are too narrow minded to consider that an athlete worthy of recognition could have four legs, not two.

When one like American Pharoah comes along and wins a Triple Crown—thus pulling off one of the most difficult achievements in all of sports—awards committees are generally caught with their pants down arguing in favor of a silly biped bias.



Dave Briggs was the editor of The Canadian Sportsman for 18 years and is an award-winning journalist. His column appears in HarnessRacing Weekend Preview in part through the advertising support of Hanover Shoe Farms and Woodbine Entertainment Group. Any opinions expressed in this column are his own and not necessarily those of the Horseman Publishing Company and its publications or its advertisers.



December Strong At Meadowlands

The Meadowlands continued its strong December, with another weekend which yielded gains over 2014. The 13-race Friday (Dec. 11) program generated \$2,720,893, an increase of over \$400,000 compared to the same Friday the previous year. The 13-race Saturday (Dec. 12) card posted a handle of \$2,671,529, more than \$50,000 better than the previous year on that same day. The weekend resulted in a 10-percent increase overall compared to the prior year. Live handle also showed mild gains.

Overall thus far for the month of December, there has been an additional \$1,366,169 wagered on the Meadowlands' racing. The on-track handle has increased six percent, while export handle has grown 15 percent.

"It was certainly encouraging to see the increases from the first weekend carry over into this past weekend," said Meadowlands chairman Jeff Gural. "We'll continue implementing our game plan which has produced these results. The entry box has been filled and the bettors are responding."

Through this past weekend over \$211 million has been wagered on the Meadowlands' Standardbred product in 2015.

Trainer Julie Miller's stable accounts for the morning-line favorites of both Open Trots on the Friday, Dec. 18, 14-race card at the Meadowlands, and over \$150,000 in guaranteed pools and carryovers await punters on a card that boasts 10- and 11-horse fields all around.

The featured \$25,000 Open 1 Handicap Trot is carded as the evening's eighth race, coinciding with the start of a \$50,000 guaranteed Late Pick 4. Miller sends out 5-2 morning line favorite Opulent Yankee from post 7 for the partnership of Little E, Geiger, Settlement, and Stolz. The 4-year-old Muscles Yankee gelding is rounding into form, most recently chasing Handover Belle in last week's Open after emerging out of traffic a quarter mile from the winning post. Andy Miller will once again drive the eight-time winner.

Among Opulent Yankee's toughest competition are Waiting On A Woman (post 5, Corey Callahan), a winner of two straight upper-level events for trainer Kyle Spagnola before a game defeat at this level last week; top-level Philadelphia shipper and Ron Burke trainee Appomattox (post 6, Yannick Gingras); and Crosbys Clam Bake (post 9, Scott Zeron), who sprung a 29-1 upset over Open foes for the Andy Federico stable a fortnight ago.

Ohio Drivers Win Contest; Kids Get Gifts

In a thrilling six-race "Buckeyes vs. Hoosiers Drivers Challenge," which included four lead changes and came down to the last race, the top drivers from Hollywood Dayton Raceway in Ohio edged the top drivers from Hoosier Park in Indiana by a score of 169-162 on Tuesday night, Dec. 15.

The biggest winners, however, were the Dayton Fire Department Local 136 and underprivileged children in the Dayton area. The members of both five-driver squads announced immediately following the Tuesday night (December 15) contest that all of the \$2,500 in prize money they were competing for will be donated to the local firemen for their annual drive to help make sure that every child has a new toy under their tree on Christmas.

The "Hoosiers" raced to an early lead when Trace Tetrick won the first of the six races with Lex Lugar and teammate Tyler Smith followed him across the wire second with Lifetime Mattjic. The best the "Buckeyes" could do was a third-place finish by Jeremy Smith behind I Got My Wish and a dead-heat for fourth between Chris Page with Bluetime Avalanche and Dan Noble with Straight Dancer. The tally was 30-24 after Round One.

Going into the final leg, the Buckeyes were on top by an almost unsurmountable 150-124 tally. The Hoosiers stormed back to make the final score very close, though, with their own 1-3-4 finish in the contest nightcap. Andy Shetler notched the upset win with Easton Bound, and teammates Ross Leonard (Fox Valley Action) and Tyler Smith (Little Mans Magic) were third and fourth. Saving face for the Buckeyes were Kayne Kauffman, who finished second with Pipecreek Yankee, and Josh Sutton, who was fifth with Best Dream Seeker. (*Hollywood Dayton*)

Purchase Of The Meadows Moves Forward

After more than a year of wrangling, The Meadows Race-track & Casino is being sold for \$440 million after an extended legal dispute over the purchase price. Gaming & Leisure Properties Inc., a spinoff company of Penn National Gaming, is paying Cannery Casino Resorts LLC of Las Vegas \$15 million less than it had offered in May 2014 for the North Strabane casino.

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board and Harness Racing Commission must approve the sale. If approved, the transaction is expected to close by November 2016, Gaming & Leisure officials said.

In a federal lawsuit, Gaming & Leisure Properties alleged fraud in the casino's reported finances and breach of contract. Cannery also had sued Gaming & Leisure in state court to force it to honor the earlier agreement.

Click [here](#) to read about the sale in the Pittsburgh Tribune.

Merriman Poised To Take Dash Title

Aaron Merriman won three races on Wednesday, giving him a total of 836 victories for 2015 to increase his leading in this year's North American dash championship to

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four over George Napolitano Jr., who has finished driving for the year.

There was a brief buzz early on Wednesday when Napolitano's name was down on two Chris Oakes-trained horses at Pompano on Sunday, but harnessracing.com immediately contacted Napolitano, and he restated that he would not be back in the sulky into 2016. "Chris Oakes wanted me to fly down on Sunday, but our son (Kristopher) is in school until Friday, and we have things to do around here (Pennsylvania)," Napolitano told harnessracing.com.

Balmoral/Maywood Auction Extended To Dec. 28

The Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association has posted on its website an update regarding the auction that was conducted on Monday on Maywood Park and Balmoral Park and all of their assets. The update reads:

Bids for Maywood and Balmoral Park and all of their assets were due in their attorney's office by last Friday. Three bids were submitted, only one met the qualifying criteria. That bid was on the Balmoral property alone.

Because of that tepid response, today (Dec. 16), in bankruptcy court, attorneys for the racetracks and the riverboats motioned the court to allow them another two weeks to negotiate with the lone qualified bidder and to find more interested buyers to stimulate the bidding process. That motion was granted and the new auction date has been extended until Monday, Dec. 28.

In a separate but related incident Maywood and Balmoral Park were granted licenses by the Illinois Racing Board to operate their OTB's and their intertrack facility in 2016. (IHHA)

Miami Valley To Increase Purses 30 Percent

As a new race season rapidly approaches, Miami Valley Gaming & Racing and the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association (OHHA) jointly announce a 30 percent purse increase from prior year which will surely attract an abundance of quality racing interests to the upcoming meet beginning Jan. 9.

"It is a pleasure to see the loyalties of our Ohio-based horsemen rewarded." OHHA representative Brett Merkle said. "It is refreshing to know our purses double as soon as Miami Valley's meet opens; it really gives the horsemen a serious race program to train towards."

A total of 30 late-closing events for a wide variety of horses are scheduled throughout the season which will contribute to the competitive overnight racing that Miami Valley fans are already accustomed to over the lightning fast five-eighths mile oval.

A dress rehearsal session including non-betting qualifying races will prime the action on Wednesday, Jan. 6, with a 2:05 p.m. post time. The track will be open for training hours from Jan. 4 to Jan. 8 from 7:30-11:30 a.m. (Miami Valley)

Meadowlands Trainer Report Requests Now Online

In an effort to better accommodate the often busy morning schedules of trainers racing at the Meadowlands, a list of horses for which trainer reports are requested for a given week is now posted at

<http://meadowlandsracetrack.com/uploadedFiles/trainerreport1218.pdf>. This list will be posted every Tuesday afternoon going forward for that weekend's races.

Trainers are encouraged to check this list and email their reports to trainers@playmeadowlands.com by 1 p.m. on Wednesday for Friday entrants, and 1 p.m. on Thursday for Saturday entrants. Alternately, they can phone reports to Darin Zoccali at (201) 460-4041 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, or trainers to whom the personal mobile phone numbers of Zoccali or James Witherite have been made available can submit them by text message or phone call.

It is anticipated the additional lead time availed our horsemen will make this process easier and more efficient while still yielding the same information to our betting public. (Meadowlands)

New Jersey Owner Wins SRF Raffle For Paris Trip

The Standardbred Retirement Foundation's (SRF) very popular raffle of a trip to the Prix d'Amerique was won by Joseph Walsh of Secaucus, N.J. "Are you kidding?" was his response. The news took a few minutes to become real for the New Jersey racehorse owner.

The trip includes five days and four nights in Paris, a fabulous event through Equitours that starts on Jan. 28, 2016, and includes a tour of a training center, races at Vincennes, cocktail parties, a Parisian tour and much more.

Walsh is a longtime supporter of SRF and said he never expected to win. Part of a group of owners at Fly by Night Stable, their trainer is Tom Fanning, who stables at Gaitway Farm in Manalapan, N.J.

The raffle is a very important fundraiser for SRF. It helps to board, feed, and care for the 208 Standardbreds presently in SRF's care, of which 131 are assumed retired for life due to age or injury. SRF is the only Standardbred charity managing this large number of horses, is dedicated solely to the breed, and helps trotters and pacers regardless of age or likelihood of adoption. Already in its sixth year, support of the Prix race raffle is greatly appreciated by the 26-year-old organization. (SRF)

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ARCI To Focus Efforts On Racing Unification

The Board of Directors of the Association of Racing Commissioners International (ARCI) has voted to focus its efforts in 2016 on unifying the racing industry behind efforts to strengthen integrity efforts and possibly a central rule making process in the U.S. to achieve uniform medication policies and consistent implementation.

"The political divide that currently exists in the racing industry is destructive to the sport," said current ARCI chairman Mark Lamberth, who indicated "significant progress has been made and continues to be made on a variety of fronts to implement agreed upon reforms." He noted that the ARCI Compliance Committee that he formed earlier this year has identified the issues in specific jurisdictions that have been an obstacle to achieving uniformity.

"We believe it is time to take a holistic approach to these issues and develop a consensus on how to achieve this," said ARCI president Ed Martin, who noted that current legislative proposals being put forth were formulated without a regulator or industry consensus.

To that end, the ARCI will hold "Town Meeting" forums across the U.S. with racing industry stakeholders, participants and fans in an attempt to find common ground and a workable solution to the problems the industry faces.

The ARCI Board did not rule in or out possible federal legislation yet to be drafted. Board members indicated that legislation may not be necessary and the powers and ability to achieve agreed upon goals may already exist under current federal and state laws. (ARCI)

Hawthorne Announces Condition Sheet, Late Closers

Racing secretary Peter Hanley has released the condition sheet for the upcoming 2016 winter harness meet at Hawthorne Race Course. Racing will kick off on Friday, Jan. 8, and will be conducted on a five-night a week schedule with post time Wednesday through Sunday at 7:20 p.m. (CST).

A host of winter series have also been announced for both pacers and trotters. Entry fee for all series will be \$200 and are due by Jan. 1, 2016. All nominations for these late-closing winter series are due by Jan. 1, 2016. All payments should be made payable to Hawthorne Race Course and sent to: Jim Miller, Hawthorne Race Course, 3501 S. Laramie Ave., Cicero, Ill. 60804.

The condition sheet and late closers can be viewed by clicking on this [link](#). (Suburban Downs/Hawthorne)

Former USTA Director Jim Coulter Dies

James "Jim" Coulter, of New Sharon, Iowa, died Monday, Dec. 14, at the Crystal Heights Care Center in Oskaloosa. He was 85.

Mr. Coulter was born Sept. 13, 1930, in What Cheer, Iowa, the son of Warren and Marie Grudgings Coulter. He was a 1948 graduate of What Cheer High School. While a senior in high school he enlisted in the Iowa National Guard so he could continue to help his parents on their farm.

On Sept. 29, 1951, he was united in marriage to Lenora McCulley at the Little Brown Church in Nashua. Soon after the couple started a family and began buying farmland.

In 1959 Mr. Coulter purchased two broodmares from his father and began his lifelong passion as an owner, breeder, trainer and driver of Standardbreds. Over time both Mr. Coulter and his father earned a spot in the Iowa Harness Horse Hall of Fame.

In 1983 Mr. Coulter was instrumental in lobbying Iowa legislators to bring pari-mutuel racing to Iowa. It was important to him that people knew harness racing was an honest, family oriented business that most any family could enjoy together. Over the years he served as a director of the United States Trotting Association District 4, Iowa Harness Horsemen's Association, Hawkeye Colt Association, Southern Iowa Fair and the Keokuk County Fair.

He was past president of the Midwest Racing Circuit and North Mahaska School District School Board. He also served as Adams Township Trustee and was a member of the Lacey United Methodist Church.

He is survived by his wife, Lenora; daughters, Diana (Randy) Fuqua and Janna (Jim) Hawkins; son, Rodney (Victoria); sisters, Jeannine Duncan and Dottie Behrens; brother, Dan; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; infant sister, Barbara; sister-in-law, Annette; and brothers-in-law, Glenn McKain and Elmer Behrens.

Funeral services will begin at 11 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 18, at the Holland-Coble Funeral Home in What Cheer. Burial will be in the Sixteen Cemetery near Thornburg. Visitation will begin at 12 noon on Thursday, Dec. 17, with family present from 5-7 p.m.

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RACE LINES

Final Standardbred Poll

Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown Poll compiled by
 Harness Racing Communications for the week of November 24, 2015

	AGS	St-1-2-3	Earnings	Pts	Pvs
1. Wiggle It Jiggleit (30)	3pg	25-21-3-0	\$2,031,995	338	1
2. Freaky Feet Pete (3)	3pc	17-15-2-0	853,774	269	2
3. Southwind Frank (1)	2tc	12-11-0-0	786,419	267	3
4. Mission Brief	3tf	14-10-3-0	1,008,517	207	5
5. Pinkman	3tg	17-11-3-1	1,892,865	202	4
6. Pure Country	2pf	10-10-0-0	689,968	142	7
7. Always B Miki	4ph	4-4-0-0	301,210	136	6
8. Bee A Magician	5tm	18-10-5-0	980,845	81	8
9. Wild Honey	3tf	16-7-7-0	1,149,532	65	9
10. D'One	5tm	5-4-0-0	329,150	39	—

Others receiving votes: L A Delight, State Treasurer 37, Resolve 20, Wakizashi Hanover 17, JL Cruze 11, Artspeak, Divine Caroline 9, Bettor's Edge 6, Boston Red Rocks, Shake It Cerry 5, Broadway Donna, Crazy Wow, Venus Delight 4, Double Exposure 3, All The Time, Yankee Moonshine 2, Anndrovette, Betting Line, Control The Moment, Dot Dot Dot Dash 1.

Note: L A Delight received one first-place vote.

Harness Racing Leaders

Compiled by the USTA—through December 15, 2015 (week difference Dec. 9-15).

Leading North American-Based Money-Winning Horses

	Sts.	W	P	S	Earnings
Wiggle It Jiggleit (3pg)	26	22	3	0	\$2,181,995
Pinkman (3tg)	17	11	3	1	1,892,865
Wakizashi Hanover (3pg)	20	11	4	2	1,153,700
Wild Honey (3tf)	16	7	7	0	1,149,532
Crazy Wow (3tc)	17	9	3	1	1,027,612
Mission Brief (3tf)	14	10	3	0	1,008,517
The Bank (3tc)	18	5	8	0	998,652
Bee A Magician (5tm)	18	10	5	0	980,845
Artspeak (3pc)	17	6	5	1	883,684
State Treasurer (6ph)	19	9	1	5	865,807

Leading Money-Winning Drivers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UDR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Yannick Gingras	2,075	431-350-281	.347	\$13,518,013 (\$200,079)
David Miller	2,542	379-363-364	.276	12,318,656 (129,283)
Tim Tetrick	2,525	465-362-331	.308	11,997,334 (1,690)
Jason Bartlett	2,653	514-468-364	.337	9,837,631 (52,903)
Corey Callahan	3,341	619-489-482	.315	9,662,473 (101,540)
Brian Sears	1,975	376-314-281	.326	9,359,345 (58,290)
George Napolitano Jr.	3,145	832-559-382	.404	8,567,733 (132,585)
George Brennan	2,467	399-325-309	.277	7,634,454 (52,440)
Daniel Dube	2,396	355-313-277	.259	7,394,260 (59,789)
Brett Miller	2,285	270-318-301	.239	7,357,394 (100,941)

Leading Money-Winning Trainers

	Sts.	W-P-S	UTR	Earnings (wk. diff)
Ron Burke	4,749	972-763-679	.342	\$24,802,832 (\$242,490)
Jimmy Takter	781	183-147-103	.383	12,942,377 (14,460)
Rene Allard	1,676	433-275-219	.393	6,177,017 (72,885)
Tony Alagna	669	141-100-86	.337	4,653,620 (8,880)
Jeffrey Bamond Jr.	847	137-134-137	.304	4,641,221 (35,617)
Gilbert Garcia-Herrera	1,788	334-290-218	.318	4,378,254 (97,855)
Julie Miller	738	121-130-104	.309	3,696,841 (21,570)
Ake Svanstedt	517	101-72-53	.307	3,495,985 (9,000)
Brian Brown	591	142-92-84	.374	3,427,741 (0)
Virgil Morgan Jr.	1,344	305-182-169	.344	3,251,835 (14,820)

Leading Breeders

Breeder	Starters	Winners	Wins	Earnings
Hanover Shoe Farms Inc.	1,065	741	2,419	\$29,814,776
Winbak Farm	1,010	673	2,248	18,689,497
Brittany Farms	288	206	781	11,959,187
Perretti Farms	299	207	746	7,671,957
White Birch Farm	154	115	369	5,909,200
Diamond Creek Farm LLC	137	90	271	5,830,799
Kentuckiana Farms Gen Par	245	164	542	5,287,479
Blue Chip Bloodstock Inc.	199	140	453	5,173,969
Steve Stewart	141	98	288	4,454,597
Frederick Hertrich III	156	119	351	4,316,712

Leaders Of The Week

Ranked by wins for Dec. 9-15 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.

Drivers

Starts

W-P-S

Aaron Merriman	100	17-19-16
Yannick Gingras	80	14-22-9
David Miller	60	13-8-10
George Napolitano Jr.	52	13-9-5
Jason Merriman	64	13-4-6
Jim Pantaleano	50	13-9-7
Tyler Smith	55	12-6-6
Andy Miller	43	10-4-1
Bob McClure	38	10-2-7
Bruce Aldrich Jr.	57	10-11-9
Chris Page	61	10-6-6
George Dennis	48	10-6-0
Josh Sutton	51	10-6-10
Allan Davis	66	9-7-12
Dave Palone	47	9-6-7
Jeremy Smith	59	9-9-7
Jonathan Roberts	46	9-4-6
Tony Morgan	58	9-6-7
Trace Tetrick	55	9-11-5
Alfred Carroll	52	8-14-8
Dan Noble	63	8-11-6
Jim Taggart Jr.	32	8-6-5
Ronnie Wrenn Jr.	61	8-14-5

Trainers

Wins

Ron Burke	22
Gilbert Garcia-Herrera	11
Rene Allard	8
Robert Lounsbury	7
Steve Wiseman	7
Vincent Fusco Jr.	7
Michael Dowdall	5
Billy Farmer	4
Calvin Hollar	4
Colin Johnson	4
Dale Gilmour	4
Gerald Lee Jr.	4
Karen Garland	4
Kimberly Asher	4
Richard Moreau	4