Trainers Among Those Who Can Seek Relief Under CARES Act

The passage of the federal CARES Act by Congress last week was critical for the country, but also for equine industries, including horse racing. Trainers, veterinarians, and breeding and boarding farms are just some of the horse racing businesses that can apply for loans offered under the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act). The CARES Act provides $349 billion for small business loans to cover qualified payroll costs, rent, utilities, and interest on mortgage and other debt obligations.

So what kind of benefits can a trainer of a small stable receive? The options include loans—some that can be forgiven—through the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). Both must be applied for at a Small Business Administration-approved bank (obviously, check with the bank where you have an account because not all banks are participants).

The National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA) held a webinar on Wednesday, April 1, with a panel of professionals who have been scrutinizing the CARES Act to determine how it can help horse racing businesses. The panel included Jen Shah, a certified public accountant (CPA) who specializes in equine businesses for Dean Dorton, one of the largest CPA firms based in Kentucky, providing audit, accounting, tax, healthcare consulting, litigation support, business valuation, technology consulting services and many others to clients throughout the region. Also on the panel was the NTRA’s lobbyist, Greg Means, who offered context based on his discussions on Capitol Hill.

There are important differences in the loan programs so businesses and individuals should do the research to determine the best fit for their circumstances.

So what are the key points to consider when checking out your options?

You can only receive one of the above—PPP or EIDL, no double-dipping. If you receive an EIDL, you must certify that the uncertainty of current economic conditions makes the loan necessary to support ongoing operations, and that the loan money will be used to retain workers and maintain payroll, make interest payments on mortgages or pay utilities, to cover payroll, rent, mortgages and other obligations. The loan cannot be used to expand your business.

Racing stables with no payroll could be eligible for an EIDL. A trainer with a payroll may be eligible for either PPP or EIDL (which can be converted into a PPP), employer retention tax credits and employer tax deferrals (but only if they do not participate in the PPP). Again, no double-dipping.

Employer retention credits will be available for employers who are required to fully or partially suspend operations due to the pandemic, as well as those who are down at least 50 percent in gross receipts from the same period in 2019. That credit is permanent and would not require repayment.

Horses farms with payroll may be eligible for the PPP or employer tax credits and employer tax deferrals. As of April 1,
horse farms are not eligible for EIDL, and Dean Dorton's Shah noted that this is because loans to farms and other agricultural businesses have historically fallen under the domain of the Department of Agriculture.

Others who may be eligible for the PPPs are bloodstock agents and consignors (sole proprietors or partnerships without payroll).

When the PPP and EIDL programs were announced in the 800-plus page CARES legislation, tax experts noted that any small business that derives one-third or more of its income from gambling-related revenues is excluded from EIDL loans through the Small Business Administration. Dean Dorton’s Shah issued the following statement in the NTRA webinar: “I don’t think that trainers are subject to those exclusions. Trainers generate commissions from purses and training fees.”

The NTRA’s lobbyist noted that there is belief that the “gambling-related” exclusion in the SBA’s program is “archaic” language based on “old regulations,” and they are working with lawmakers and the Department of the Treasury to change this through updated language.

Shah, with Dean Dorton, cautioned that the government issues new guidance and clarification on these programs daily, and your accountant or banking institution may be able to offer more more clarity.

Outside of the PPL and EIDL programs, the CARES Act also allows for self-employed persons to apply for PPP or EIDL, or for the first time ever, unemployment benefits. Under the CARE Act, self-employed individuals will be eligible for up to 39 weeks of unemployment insurance and will also get the extra $600 a week through July 31. Individuals must sign up locally.

For additional information, please check the USTA homepage, the website of your local horsemen’s association, or an accounting professional.

### Key Points of Payroll Protection Program

- Eligibility includes businesses (corporations, LLCs, sole proprietors, independent contractors, and eligible self-employed individuals);
- Potential loan forgiveness (eight weeks of payroll costs; mortgage interest or rent; utilities; amount forgiven can be reduced in certain circumstances if reduction in employees);
- No personal guarantee or collateral required;
- Loan amount is the lesser of 2.5 times average monthly payroll costs (salaries, wages, commissions, cash tips, sick and other leave, retirement payments, state and local taxes; payroll costs excludes individual employee compensation in excess of $100,000);
- Loan can be used for payroll costs; interest on mortgage indebtedness (preexisting), rent (preexisting), utilities, interest on other indebtedness.

### Is Paycheck Protection Program Right For You?

**STEP ONE:**
Complete the PPL application

**STEP TWO:**
Gather IRS Form 941 for tax year 2019, a current payroll register for year 2020 or equivalent information/documentation detailing the business’ employees, verifying the number of full time equivalent employees, employed during the relevant periods, and the compensation paid them.

**STEP THREE:**
Gather organization documents (if incorporated, LLC), as well as driver’s license and a secondary form of identification.

**STEP FOUR:**
Submit to a Small Business Administration (SBA) participating lender/bank.
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COVID-19 Prompts Creative Solution To Shipping Semen

By Kathy Parker

Late last year the Muscle Hill Syndicate, which is managed by Southwind Farms’ Mike Klau and Laura Young, advised shareholders of new policies and recommendations to breed to the sport’s top trotting stallion in 2020. First of all, the decision was made to limit Muscle Hill’s book to 110 mares in North America, which meant that only shareholder-owned mares would be accepted. Second, Young recommended that mares be located close by Southwind’s farm in Pennington, N.J., so semen was just a short drive away.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, required additional changes be made for some people with mares scheduled to be bred to Muscle Hill.

“Once the airline flights became disrupted, we had a problem with that,” said Klau. “For instance, there were 20 boxes of semen from various stallions on a flight to Lexington; the plane was supposed to be there at 2 p.m., but it didn’t arrive until after midnight.

“With Tactical Landing, a young stallion with great fertility, it didn’t make a difference as his semen was still very good. But with an older stallion such as Muscle Hill, the timeline of when the semen is collected and when the mare is bred can be affected if the semen doesn’t get there on time. His semen doesn’t ship as well.”

Klau said 80 of the 110 mares booked to Muscle Hill this year have been residing and/or boarded within driving distance to Southwind, but the other 30 mares require shipped semen. So Klau and Young brainstormed on how to try to achieve the best chances of conception for these mares, knowing that flight schedules and arrivals are subject to change.

“We came up with the idea of sending a tank of frozen semen to Hagyard Equine in Lexington, a respected veterinary clinic in the heart of the Bluegrass, located just across the road from the Kentucky Horse Park.

Klau said the new plan has already revealed an additional upside.

“So the semen got to Hagyard, and mares were sent there to be bred. And then we learned something else. Some mares were sent there to be bred on Monday. They were checked for ovulation every hour, but they didn’t ovulate on Monday as expected. They ovulated on Tuesday, so they were bred Tuesday,” explained Klau.

Indiana breeder Ola Yoder has a mare in Lexington to be bred to Muscle Hill. Yoder, who operates a cabinet-making business in Nappanee, Ind., owns about 20 mares, among them 2019 Breeders Crown 3-Year-Old Filly Trot champion Winndevie. Yoder reported that Winndevie was bred early to the Ohio-based Enterprise and quickly conceived.

Yoder owns Enterprise 3, 1:52, who stands at Dublin Valley Farms in Ohio. He said while bookings to the son of Chapter Seven have slowed slightly since the COVID-19 crisis, the stallion thus far has more than 80 mares in his book.

While breeding horses has continued under the wide-sweeping stay-at-home orders by states, Yoder said his Indiana Amish community has made adjustments as well.

“Most businesses, the non-essential, are closed. The RV (recreational vehicle) factories are closed, and that’s where a lot of Amish in this area work,” said Yoder. “We’ve canceled church services. People want to do what’s right.”

On the foaling front, offspring from Danae and Darlinonthebeach were announced recently on social media. Danae, the dam of the international star Propulsion and last fall’s $1 million yearling colt Damien, gave birth to a colt by Muscle Hill—and thus a full brother to Damien—at Cane Run Farm in Georgetown, Ky.

Darlinonthebeach p,3, 1:48.1 ($1,068,648) gave birth to her first foal on Monday, March 30, a colt by Always B Miki. In what might be a naming world record, the colt was quickly christened Christchurch and registered as such with the USTA.

Darlinonthebeach foaled in Pennsylvania at Diamond Creek Farms, which last fall purchased her for $450,000 at the Standardbred Horse Sale in Harrisburg. The daughter of Somebeachsomewhere is owned by Diamond Creek, Schmuel Farhi of Canada, and Spreydon Lodge Ltd. of Christchurch, New Zealand.

Spreydon Lodge is the breeding operation of the same ownership as Nevele R Stud of New Zealand.

“We did our original Down Under stallion deals with Nevele R and they always wanted to get in on our horses earlier,” said Diamond Creek’s Adam Bowden, “and they wanted to be in on Darlinonthebeach.”

From the New Arrivals department, this foal by Helpisontheway was born March 13 in Indiana. The colt is out of High Heels Hanover, a three-quarter sister to Horse of the Year Hananelor Hanover.
Horsemen’s Associations Providing Relief To Membership

The COVID-19 pandemic has made collaborating and exchanging information more important than ever before. The North American Harness Horse Alliance (NAHHA), just founded in late February, has provided an additional framework for conference calls among leadership of the sport’s horsemen’s organizations.

The NAHHA has exchanged information via emails, phone calls and conference calls so horsemen’s associations can exchange ideas to best help their membership during the COVID-19 crisis.

Several horsemen’s associations with insurance plans will extend coverage, without payment, to their members presently enrolled. Those include the Meadows Standardbred Owners Association, Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association, Western New York Harness Horsemen’s Association and Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen’s Association.

Horsemen’s organizations have also arranged for other benefits for their membership, from payouts from purse accounts to keeping backstretches open, to giving out vouchers for food, hay, straw and grain.

Alan Schwartz, president of the Monticello Harness Horsemen’s Association, said the organization reached out to the track’s parent company, Resorts World Catskills, and with their financial help, every horse stabled at the track would be provided with feed, hay and straw. Each driver, trainer and groom would get a monetary subsidy for two weeks based on their prior two weeks of income.

“It’s almost overwhelming,” said Schwartz of the situation. “We’re going to try to continue to do this as long as we can. We’re trying to keep people from stockpiling.”

In addition to Monticello, associations that represent horsemen stabled at tracks with backstretches have made agreements to keep their members—and their horses—safe.

The Meadows Standardbred Owners Association agreed in principle to pay approximately $100,000 per month to Penn Gaming to keep The Meadows’ backstretch and track open for horsemen during the COVID-19 shutdown. This will cover all expenses incurred to keep the facility open such as, but not limited to, water, electric, security, maintenance, track costs and manure removal. With approximately 750 horses on the backstretch, that works out to approximately $133 per horse for stall rent.

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The Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association has worked with MGM Northfield to keep that track’s backstretch—and dormitories—open.

At Yonkers Raceway, the dormitories on the backstretch were just condemned by the Department of Health after a person died there, but not of COVID-19. The Standardbred Owners Association of New York made arrangements so the grooms living in the dorms could relocate to a hotel nearby, and that way they can also continue to safely travel to the track to work. There are approximately 50-60 horses on the backstretch at Yonkers.

Some horsemen’s organizations have paid their membership—at least those who recently raced—a small stipend to help carry them through. Late last week, Ontario Racing announced that financial relief, a total of $300 per horse, is being offered to those involved with Standardbreds who were in-to-go at racetracks from March 19 to March 24.

Trainers and grooms who are members of the Western New York Harness Horsemen’s Association also received small payments.

But leadership from all horsemen’s associations are cognizant that they must make prudent decisions and craft fair policies to help members get through the COVID-19 crisis, all the while keeping in mind that they need to preserve funds for future purses.

One horseman’s association said it has an application-based benevolence program. The Delaware Standardbred Owners Association (DSOA) took a unique approach with purse money earmarked for the last two weeks of the Dover Downs meet, which was canceled due to the shutdowns because of COVID-19.

The DSOA has received approval from the Delaware Harness Racing Commission so purse money for the final two weeks of the meet can be disbursed using the following formula:

A six-week “look back” period was employed, Feb. 3 to March 16. Every “owner entity” (owners and partnerships) that raced a minimum of two starts during that period were included; every owner entity’s starts were totaled and then divided by six (six weeks) to get that entity’s weekly “per start average,” that PSA was then multiplied by the “purse payment per start amount,” which is the total purses paid for each week (total purses minus five percent trainers and drivers’ fees) divided by the total number of owner entities. The trainers and drivers’ fees were calculated the same way.

In addition, the DSOA is also in early discussions with the Department of Agriculture regarding a possible “interest free loan program” similar to the one the governor’s administration recently approved for the restaurant and hospitality industry.—By Kathy Parker
The Way Forward: Some Initial Steps

By Russell Williams, USTA President

Pick your catastrophe. We face a world health crisis worse than any we’ve seen for over a century. Meanwhile, the Governor of Pennsylvania is engaging in some state budget buccaneering that would, if the General Assembly permits it, destroy a two-century-old, native horse racing industry that brings $1.6 billion in economic impact and 20,000 jobs to the state. If this succeeds, what will happen in other states? And, finally, a long list of Thoroughbred and Standardbred industry participants face a reckoning that, looking at their conduct as alleged, you would think they never expected. This last situation is in the forefront of the minds of our Board of Directors as we work through our “annual meeting from home” this week and next.

We abhor the allegations in the indictments and criminal complaints, and we roundly condemn all conduct of the kind. At the USTA, however, there is an obligation to forego the luxury of performative outrage and, instead, to concentrate on what concrete steps our mandate requires us to take. Our record in dealing as an association with cheating and horse abuse is excellent. Now I write to call for concrete action that will move us forward in the right direction. In this editorial, I offer some recommendations. Others will join in, I hope, offering additions and corrections. At last, I hope, everyone of good will in harness racing will contribute time and money to the work that must be done. We can resolve to embrace change and to bear its cost, because we know that only then can our racing sport thrive in the modern era.

The Narrative

We love horses. This is our narrative, its beginning and its end, and it consists of countless stories of courage, hope, and love for horses that totally contradict the acts of a criminal few. Perhaps our very survival as a sport requires us now to make sure that the world learns about our true selves. When a horse puts its nose ahead of another horse’s nose, evolution is at work. Taking the lead is part of a horse’s social nature, so (unlike dog racing, for example) horse racing is entirely natural, and horses thrive on it.

Horsepersons can tell inspiring stories of horses that found a way to win against unplanned-for adversity, just as we must overcome adversity now. Caring well for horses, and we do care well for them, involves trying to understand these beautiful creatures that cannot communicate with us in human terms. But those of us who employ their intelligence to understand and communicate in something like horse terms become better people for it. There are wonderful stories of lives that have been transformed, not merely economically, but in a deeper way, by the bond with the horse, an animal that evolved along an entirely different strand of the net of creation from humans. Horses can teach us things about courage and beauty, even love, that we would otherwise never learn.

Some people do not know that our award-winning writers and photographers have been telling the story of harness racing in Hoof Beats since before the USTA was founded. But today the USTA has more powerful resources for telling the story of harness racing than it has ever had: our website is the most visited in harness racing and is closely watched by other breeds, and our social media presence is a serious force on the internet. Our Communications Department is unrivaled among breed associations, and our ability to put these resources to use is limited only by the cooperation of our membership. Finally, the USTA Board of Directors is meeting as I write, by means of a series of teleconferences, and advanced communications is under discussion. As the USTA and the membership find new and more effective ways to tell the true story of harness racing, we can correct the cultural narrative and propel our sport into its rightful place in the future.

“The Feds”

In the United States, the federal level provides the services that a central government should provide, while the states retain authority over every other matter. Federal prosecutions are usually the best way to address criminal activity occurring in multiple states. Although the conduct alleged took place in several states, the indictments and criminal complaints under discussion issue from the Southern District of New York, one of the most sophisticated offices within the United States Justice Department.

We must not fall prey to the ignorant notion that there is any magical connection between the Justice Department and the Horseracing Integrity Act which, if it ever were to see passage, would be governed by the Commerce Department. As Ed Martin, president of the Association of Racing Commissioners International (representing state authority), has pointed out: nobody needed a Horseracing Integrity bill to make these prosecutions happen. The laws that make the allegations in the indictments illegal, and the federal, state, and private agencies that built these cases already exist, and we should build on the existing system to prevent cheating and horse abuse, and to incentivize best practices in our sport.

Continues on page 8  

The serious problems that the Horseracing Integrity Act poses for harness racing have been explained elsewhere. Yes, we have problems of our own to solve, but instead of throwing this poorly-considered federal Hail Mary, instead of ignoring the states’ established knowledge and experience in regulating horse racing, and instead of relying on some unspecified federal magic to solve our problems, our effort must be to support and extend the growing cooperation among state racing commissions. The state racing commissions themselves called for this over a year ago, by proposing a dedicated unit among key federal and state agencies to investigate racing matters and, where appropriate, to refer them for prosecution. This call was ignored by those proposing so-called racing integrity bills at the federal level, but individual state racing commissions are continuing nevertheless to strengthen their ties with state and federal enforcement agencies.

An even more significant development is taking place. “Interstate compacts” provide a contractual structure that enhances cooperation among states regarding regulations and enforcement. This is not a new concept: for years an interstate licensing compact has existed, simplifying licensing for owners, trainers, drivers, jockeys, and other licensees across the country. In a similar but more important way, an interstate medication compact would bring about consistent medication regulation nationwide. (We don’t use the word “uniform,” because Standardbred and Thoroughbred medication rules can’t be uniform. They must differ in a few areas because the two breeds have different performance models.) Interstate medication compacts are working their way through several state legislatures, and we may be approaching passage of a multi-breed medication compact in one of the leading racing states. If this happens, I believe that the other racing states will quickly follow suit.

Reading legislative bills (and enacted statutes) can be extremely tedious for most people. But someone has to do it. And if you read the Horseracing Integrity draft bill, you will discover something very surprising: recognition in the bill’s own language of the primacy and importance of interstate compacts and, by implication, state authority. It’s almost as if the federalization special interests felt compelled to acknowledge that the states have already done all the work and already have all the know-how regarding medication regulation. Section 4(e) of the draft bill says that the whole federal house of cards collapses if, “after the expiration of five years following [the effective date of the Act],” an interstate compact is established. Amazingly, the draft then goes on, in subsection 4(e)(2), to recite important steps that we should take to develop an interstate medication compact.

Let us not wait five years enduring some sort of expensive and pointless federal intermission before we do what should have been done in the first place: to fully establish the breed-specific medication compact that is presently evolving in the states.

The Ethical Climate

We can achieve a radically new regulatory process that will render extinct the criminal activity of a few horsepersons and veterinarians, and we can do it without having to purchase any expensive federal snake oil. The type of criminal activity under discussion was, in the past, often veiled by certain legal concepts and, to some extent, aided by a certain “don’t ask don’t tell” attitude within the industry. We now have the opportunity, maybe our last, to change this permanently.

First, the days of turning a blind eye to suspicious activity are over. They never should have existed. I offer, as a good counterexample to horsepersons who failed, in the past, to report suspicious activity, the American bar. If a lawyer becomes aware of an ethical infraction and fails to report it, he or she becomes guilty in turn of another serious ethical infraction. In other words, the legal community has a self-policing system that can be expected to work much better than the “don’t ask don’t tell” system that we have tolerated in racing. In grade school, if you told on someone, you were a “rat.” Unfortunately, this way of thinking persisted into adulthood among some horsepersons. It was never valid. We must police ourselves, because our obligation is not to be a “stand-up guy.” Our obligation is to ensure the health and welfare of our horses, and to preserve the integrity of our industry.

Second, we must recalibrate our internal affairs. No longer can we be excused for leaving investigation and enforcement up to our chronically underfunded racing commissions. But rather than pouring more of our money into the state commissions, we should develop private investigative capabilities that support the regulators’ powers and we should demand the commissions’ formalized cooperation with the investigations that must be carried out.

We have contracted with investigative firms in past years, but never did we make the sort of commitment that was made to 5Si. Maybe this should be the model going forward: use the power of private investigations wherever necessary to support the work of the racing commissions.

Much of the investigative work that went into the current prosecutions was carried out not by the FBI, but rather by a private firm called “5 Stones intelligence” or “5Si.” We have contracted with investigative firms in past years, but never did we make the sort of commitment that was made to 5Si. Maybe this should be the model going forward: use the power of private investigations wherever necessary to support the work of the racing commissions. Indeed, as Ed Martin pointed out, the current prosecution demonstrates the way to protect racing. No federal Hail Mary is necessary.

Third, all licensees in racing should be required to consent to investigation by any racing authority, in any public or pri-

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According to the testimony of a Thoroughbred witness before the Congressional subcommittee that is presently considering the Horseracing Integrity Act, the cost to the Standardbred industry would be about $13.8 million. Even if we had to put that much into the existing system to make it work effectively, at least we would know where the money was going.

Conclusion and Invitation

Times of peril are also times of opportunity. We’re aware, we’re outraged, we’re worried. But we’re also energized as perhaps never before. Now is our chance to do things that probably could not have been done before. The USTA will act. I invite industry stakeholders to join the USTA in developing a comprehensive template that will protect real integrity, support the health and welfare of our horses, and permit the beautiful narrative of horse racing to continue uninterrupted.

Looking Back

TM’s-Future-Woman Wins Blossom Final

It was 20 years ago Sunday—April 5, 2000—that TM’s-Future-Woman won the $87,200 Blossom Series final at the Meadowlands. Driven by David Miller, TM’s-Future-Woman was sent to the lead, but soon yielded and was shuffled back to fourth. Miller was able to angle TM’s-Future-Woman to clearance in the stretch, and the 3-year-old daughter of Falcon’s Future rushed home a three-length winner in 1:54. Owned by Thomas Gene Weber and trained by Alan Small, TM’s-Future-Woman earlier in the year swept the Petticoat Series at Yonkers and won the Tender Loving Care final at the Meadowlands. (Michael Lisa Photo)
Following is a letter sent to U.S. Trotting Association President Russell Williams and his response to five prominent harness horsemen — George Segal, Marvin Katz, Steve Stewart, Myron Bell and Richard Alan Arnold — who called for action from the industry because it “owes a debt and profound obligation to two essential and dependent constituencies without whom our sport cannot exist: the Wagering Public and our beloved Standardbred Race horses.”

Letter to Russell Williams from Segal, Katz, Stewart, Bell and Arnold

March 19, 2020
Mr. Russell Williams
President
United States Trotting Association
6130 S. Sunbury Road
Westerville, OH 43081-9309

Dear Mr. Williams:

As owners, breeders and caretakers of Standardbred race horses, we owe a debt and profound obligation to two essential and dependent constituencies without whom our sport cannot exist: the Wagering Public and our beloved Standardbred Race horses. Both are totally dependent on the integrity and good faith adherence to the tenants of our sport by the vast majority of our sport’s participants who understand the need for honesty and humanity. In addition, both require exclusion of cheaters who violate them.

Harness Racing has a devoted following to whom we all owe a duty of transparency and integrity. The work of a cheater doping horses in the shadows of the shed row is neither transparent nor honest. And worse, it is an unconscionable abuse of our noble charges. This chemical subterfuge, though apparently practiced by a distinct few undermines our sport and requires those honest participants who are in the vast majority standing up and saying enough.

Although, the wagering public and our racehorses are both essential to our sport, there is one very important difference. The public can vote with their pocketbooks by moving away from the sport if they are displeased. But our beloved race horses cannot choose to leave if they are abused. For those of us who breed, raise, train, race and care for these magnificent animals, know that horses love to interact and develop relationships with humans who treat them well; and these noble beasts excel at performing in the manner they were bred to do. Those loveable characteristics of the racehorse makes it criminal to abuse these wonderful creatures or stand silent when others are doing so.

The recent indictments of 29 members of the Horse Racing Industry by the Department of Justice was both shocking and depressingly disappointing. Common sense tells us these 29 individuals who were indicted are unlikely to be the only participants in our sport who may be responsibly charged with violating laws protecting our wonderful racehorses and the Betting Public.

A crisis is upon us and make no mistake, the general public is watching. Two very different newspapers, the Washington Post and the (Louisville) Courier Journal, each published sobering editorials regarding Horse Racing and the doping indictments:

“Horse Racing Has Outlived Its Time”
Washington Post, March 13, 2020

“Horse Racing Doping Scheme Leaves No Option”
Courier – Journal, March 10, 2020

In response to these clarion calls the time for action is now. It is time to stand up for our great sport and to protect our race horses from potential harm by the unscrupulous who would destroy and abuse both for potential gain.

In this time of crisis the undersigned call for the following concrete steps to be taken immediately:
1. For the U.S.T.A. to actively and publicly condemn the type of activity alleged in the DOJ indictments and proactively work with other industry groups to propose and obtain comprehensive regulation to prevent the mistreatment of our horses through doping and other unethical activity.
2. For the U.S.T.A. to reinstate its Tip Hotline for persons of integrity to report suspected cheating – SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING.

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3. For U.S.T.A. to form an industry committee to investigate the extent of the doping problem in our sport, including, if necessary, hiring private investigators and provide its findings to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

4. For all of us to commit to the betting public, our race horses and each other to speak up – disassociate ourselves from cheaters and to shun those who we know are dirty trainers and vets or owners who associate with them.

In many ways 2019 was one of the greatest years in our sport’s history. But recent developments make it clear either the vast majority of us who love this sport and these magnificent creatures we call race horses, stand up for what is right or, the pride we now feel for being involved in this noble and enjoyable venture may turn to the shame we will bear for being associated with an enterprise that expired through our neglect.

Yours very truly,

George Segal—Marvin Katz—Steve Stewart—Myron Bell—Richard Alan Arnold

cc: U.S.T.A. Board of Directors

Williams’ response to Segal, Katz, Stewart, Bell and Arnold

March 30, 2020

Dear George, Marvin, Steve, Myron, and Richard:

Your timely and eloquent letter is most welcome. I respectfully refer you to an item that was recently posted on the USTA website (http://ustrottingnews.com/the-way-forward-some-initial-steps/). In it, I offer some recommendations and invite all harness racing stakeholders to join the effort to preserve all that is best about our sport. Your letter, representing the views of some of our industry’s leaders, is the first contribution to that effort, and sets the perfect tone for the industry conversation that we must have.

Most of your concerns are answered in detail in the website post.

The Tip Hotline is being restarted as you recommend. As my website post makes clear, a major investment in investigative capability and sweeping changes to the regulatory process will be needed. Given the magnitude of this, I’m glad to report that we already have a committee in place to handle these matters. It is the Executive Committee of the USTA Board of Directors, and it represents all harness racing interests. In my quarter-century on the USTA board, we have never had such a skilled, cooperative, and active board and executive committee as we have today.

I cannot thank you enough for your letter. Please expect to be called upon to assist with and contribute to our work.

Very sincerely,

Russell Williams
President, U.S. Trotting Association
A Trio Of Legends Talk Racing

While much of North America on Wednesday night tuned in to watch Tiger King on Netflix, Survivor on CBS, or The Masked Singer on Fox as a distraction from the COVID-19 pandemic, many in harness racing watched a 90-minute interview on Facebook Live with a trio of Hall of Famers: John Campbell, Bill O’Donnell and Ron Waples.

The three retired horsemen were part of a roundtable discussion hosted by Western Fair’s director of marketing and communications Greg Blanchard in a presentation streamed live on COSA TV on the Central Ontario Standardbred Association (COSA) Facebook page and produced by CUJO Entertainment, which is owned by Curtis MacDonald, the brother of horsemen Anthony, James and Mark MacDonald. Wednesday night’s discussion was part of a series which airs on Sundays and Wednesdays.

“We thought this is another way to provide some content for the harness racing community at a time where they can use it,” said Blanchard. “It was meant to be entertaining. At this point we’re treating it as a way to take people’s minds off things for a while. People are stuck in their houses and need their horse racing fix, so to speak.

“We generally go an hour, but because we had three guys of their stature in Ronnie, John and Bill, we devoted an hour and a half. We knew we had a lot to talk about and they are all good talkers. We did it from 7:30 to 9 p.m., and the timing was that we wanted to be finished before Garth Brooks (special on CBS) started.”

In addition to questions asked by Blanchard, questions were sent in by viewers, and the names of those who were viewing were seen on the page. Blanchard said that as of Thursday morning, the video had been viewed more than 4,000 times.

“That’s the beauty of going live on Facebook, that you can have the interaction with the live audience,” said Blanchard.

While the drivers all discussed the current COVID-19 epidemic, most of the talk centered on racing. Blanchard said prior to the show MacDonald had compiled several videos and photos, which were shown at the appropriate times. One video shown was that of Life Sign winning the 1993 Little Brown Jug at Delaware, Ohio.

“Riyadh was off the gate by quite a bit in his first heat and my thought process was that I could beat him off the gate and cross over before the first turn,” remembered Campbell, who drove Life Sign to the tough, parked-out victory. “However, that failed miserably. It’s hard to drive a horse that bad and have it end up being a memorable Jug. I wasn’t able to make the front and had to take back to fourth. The way the race was making out I didn’t think I was going to win.

“A lot of people bring the replay to my attention, it’s a great race to watch. Obviously it was all the horse because it was a terrible drive,” he concluded with a smile on his face.

Campbell, now the president of The Hambletonian Society, also lamented one race he wasn’t able to add to his resume: The Provincial Cup at Windsor Raceway, where he got his start in racing.

“It would have been a pretty big party,” Campbell answered when asked what a win in Windsor’s signature race would have meant to him.

O’Donnell, the president of COSA, recalled having to make a choice between driving Mack Lobell and Sir Taurus, and opted for the latter.

“I qualified Mack Lobell and Sir Taurus both for the Peter Haughton,” O’Donnell said. “I thought Sir Taurus was a little better at the time.

“It happens,” said O’Donnell, adding that the Haughton was the only major stakes he wasn’t able to win.

Blanchard asked the trio which horse they would have liked to have driven, and it was unanimous: Niatross. O’Donnell and Waples added that a second choice would have been Cam Fella.

The show with Campbell, O’Donnell and Waples can be viewed by clicking here. — By Gordon Waterstone
Hoping For Better, Busier Days—And Nights—For Harness Racing

For those of us who work in harness racing, even though for many of us our days are still filled with work, there is less of it. Those who work hands-on with horses can still have that contact, but the disappearance of racing from our lives has left us poorer in finances, and even in our soul.

The only thing we can do to hasten our return to normalcy—and for us, racing—is abstain from normalcy, and hope that others do the same.

While we are waiting for life to be back to some semblance of its former self, there are some things I hope folks in various positions of leadership are doing.

Since we are in a business that depends very much on being an optimist, I’m going to stick with the projections that are more in the range of optimistic and not the worst-case scenarios. We all know this seems to be changing on a daily basis.

Statistical projections released late Monday night (March 30) on the https://covid19.healthdata.org/projections website showed that in some harness racing states, including Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana, social distancing will create a flat outbreak line by mid to late May.

The jackpot question, of course, is if outbreaks flatten, can social distancing restrictions be relaxed enough that commerce will be permitted to resume? And at that time, will harness racing be prepared with creative solutions for resuming business if restrictions are relaxed, but to some degree are still in place?

While racing took place at Cal Expo with adherence to social distancing. In addition, Northfield Park raced with strict social distancing restrictions just prior to the Ohio shutdown on March 19.

Observing social distancing while racing has meant the number of people in the paddock is limited. When horses do not need hands-on attention, caretakers, trainers and drivers have spent their time in their vehicles or outside the paddock, safely apart. Anyone that’s raced at fairs very much knows that fair racing can be like social distancing when there are no barns with stalls and one races their horse out of their trailer.

Fewer races on a card would mean fewer people in and out of race paddocks, or with a regular number of races, perhaps there would be more shifting of times to report to the paddock.

In an interview with his hometown newspaper, leading trainer Ron Burke said, “We should be able to get back about the quickest of any industry. We don’t need interaction. People can bet from their phone and on computers. I have a little hope for whatever social-distancing requirements there are, we can manage it.”

Joe Faraldo, president of the Standardbred Owners of New York, said he believes, “We need some plan, something written, for how we can operate and race—when that day comes—instead of waiting for regulatory (commissions) to draft a plan.”

It takes state employees to help run pari-mutuel racing, so they also will have to be permitted to work in a safe fashion for racing to be up and running.

If getting back to racing sooner rather than later is possible, and none of us know what that timetable is but we certainly hope it is sooner in some areas, we’ll then have to deal with another reality: less purse money.

With casinos and racinos shut down along with racing, purse accounts are not receiving their usual influx of revenues from those agreements. On the other hand, with no racing they aren’t paying purses. That means the managers of the purse accounts, race secretaries usually in concert with horsemen’s associations, will have to strategize how much racing they can conduct with the purse money available.

I asked Faraldo how Yonkers is positioned in terms of its purse account. Via email, he told me the purse account at Yonkers is underpaid by a few million dollars, so there will be purse money when they reopen, even if the casino doesn’t immediately reopen.

Thankfully, several sires stakes programs earn revenues throughout the 12 months of the year, and since the sires stakes seasons concluded last fall, the purse accounts have had several months to build up a cushion.

So if we’re looking at the best-case scenario, and let’s say there is live harness racing—and some open casinos—in June, what does the rest of 2020 look like?

Maybe we’ll all be walking around with face masks. The best case of the scientific experts says that by fall there could be fewer outbreaks because of more testing and thus isolation of ill individuals, better treatments, and thus less pressure on the health care system, and fewer fatalities. But they also are now saying face masks might be a new tool to fight COVID-19.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is no laughing matter, the thought of all of us walking around with masks makes me think of the Standardbred Horses Sale auction in Harrisburg before improved air filtration. We’ve worn face masks before and carried on with business. Let’s just hope that we can carry on again, even if we have to wear masks.
Billy Johnston Dies At 84

William “Billy” Johnston, former president of Sportsman’s Park, Balmoral Park and Maywood Park and one of the most influential people in the history of Illinois harness racing, died after a four-month battle with brain cancer on Thursday, March 26, at his winter home in Key Largo, Fla. He was 84.

“I started working with Billy in 1965 and for the next 50 years we had a sometimes contentious but very successful relationship,” former U.S. Trotting Association president and Chicago race secretary Phil Langley told Illinois writer Neil Milbert. “In my opinion, the success of harness racing in Illinois was due to Billy’s promotional instincts and time after time coming up with new ideas.”

Mr. Johnson and Langley, who also served as director of racing, were instrumental in pioneering inter-track simulcast betting at Sportsman’s Park in 1984. They later helped persuade the state legislature to approve off-track-betting parlors, making Illinois the first state where it wasn’t government run.

Mr. Johnston’s father, William Sr., was one of the original owners of the Hawthorne Kennel Club when it was changed to a Thoroughbred racetrack and renamed Sportsman’s Park in 1932. Seventeen years later in 1949, harness racing was added at Sportsman’s Park.

It was in the 1950s that Mr. Johnston became involved with racing, a passion he never lost. He served as a member of the U.S. Trotting Association’s board of directors for 45 years.

A resident of the Chicago suburb of Hinsdale, Mr. Johnston graduated from the University of Miami in Florida in 1957. He then joined the Coast Guard. After his discharge in 1961, he became more involved in all aspects of the operation of Sportsman’s Park.

He also began driving harness horses, winning his first race at Maywood Park. He only had a limited driving career, with archived U.S. Trotting Association (USTA) records showing 20 wins in 153 starts and $22,047 in purse earnings. He also owned and operated a Standardbred and Thoroughbred breeding farm in Illinois.

From the mid-1960s through 1997, Mr. Johnston was at the helm of the Chicago Downs Associations and Fox Valley Trotting Club meets at Sportsman’s Park, while Stormy Bidwell and his family ran the Thoroughbred meets. When Sportsman’s Park converted to a dual-purpose venue and added open wheel (CART) auto racing in 1997, Mr. Johnston resigned his position.

In 1977, Mr. Johnston put together the partnership group of Pat Flavin, Dick Roggeveen, Lester McKeever and Sid Anton to secure a longtime lease to race at Maywood Park. In 1987, that group joined with Hawthorne Race Course owners and the family of New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner to purchase Balmoral Park.

Mr. Johnston’s management teams at the Chicago-area racetracks also operated the race meets at the State Fairs at Du Quoin and Springfield.

Johnston was proactive in ensuring the integrity of racing, and in 1996, his ire was raised enough that he placed an ad in a Maywood program asking for bettors who placed a wager on an earlier race that was later determined to be fixed by the state stewards to join in a class-action suit against the owner of the horse involved. Nothing ever came of that suit.

Mr. Johnston is survived by his wife, Jane; sons John and William III (Duke); a daughter, Heather; a sister, Jewell Howell; and seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.
USTA creates COVID-19 resource center
To assist harness horsemen during the current circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Trotting Association has created a resource center of valuable information for industry participants. The USTA COVID-19 Resource Center can be accessed through the banner on the home page of www.ustrotting.com or at this link. more

Microchip deadline extended to 2022
During the U.S. Trotting Association (USTA) Registration Committee teleconference call on Tuesday, March 31, the members voted unanimously to extend the deadline for all horses to be microchipped from 2021 until 2022. The extended deadline will now require all horses to be microchipped before they race in 2022. more

May named executive director of Minn. Racing Commission
Minnesota Governor Tim Walz announced the appointment of Steve May of Georgetown, Ky., as the next executive director of the Minnesota Racing Commission on Friday, March 27. May will assume his new duties in late April, succeeding Tom DiPasquale, who retired in February after serving as director since 2013. more

Kurt Sugg reflects on racing
When Kurt Sugg looks back on his childhood, some of his fondest early memories of harness racing involved climbing into the family’s Ford Ranchero and accompanying his father, Ivan, on trips to the county fairs in Ohio. Sometimes, they would stop on the way to pick up driver Jeff Fout, then continue on their journey to the races. more

Community focus: Dave Yarock
A little more than a decade ago, Dave Yarock decided it was time to give up playing basketball. He had played throughout his life; in high school and college and was still going full court two or three times a week into his mid-50s. more

Maryland spring stakes rescheduled for fall
The Maryland Standardbred Race Fund Advisory Committee would like to notify all owners and trainers that the spring stakes scheduled at Rosecroft in April and May will be rescheduled in the fall when Rosecroft reopens. more

Trio of April qualifiers at Southern Oaks
Southern Oaks Training Center will be hosting qualifiers on three consecutive Fridays — April 10, 17, and 24. Please enter by text or phone at (320) 583-4181 the preceding Wednesday by noon. more

Florida Hall of Famer Warren Harp dies
Warren Harp, 83, died Saturday, March 28. He grew up and remained in the harness racing industry his whole life. At 16 he drove his first pari-mutuel race for his father, George Harp Sr. more

Thirty 4YOs nominated to Prix d’Ete
A total of 30 four-year-old pacers have nominated to the $200,000 Prix d’Ete at the Hippodrome 3R on Sunday, Aug. 23. The Prix d’Ete, once the premier pacing event in all of Canada, will feature the top eight seasonal money winning entrants in the final and for the first time the race will also feature a $50,000 consolation race on the same day for entrants that do not make it in the final. more
**Harness Racing Leaders**

**Compiled by the USTA—through March 31, 2020**

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

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**Leading Money-Winning Drivers**

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**Leading Money-Winning Trainers**

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