Former USTA President, Racing
Exec Phil Langley Dies At 83

F. Phillip “Phil” Langley, 83, president of the U.S. Trotting Association for 13 years, died Saturday, April 11. He was elected as a USTA director in 1983 and became president in 2003 before resigning at the close of 2016.

Mr. Langley was admitted to a Chicago-area hospital and underwent triple bypass surgery on March 30. He was in the intensive care unit (ICU) for about a week and improved and was moved into a cardiac care area. But his condition worsened and he was moved back to ICU and testing revealed he had covid-19.

Mr. Langley’s leadership at the USTA was characterized by great advances in technology, such as online entry for races at all levels and a social media presence that made it possible for people across the globe to follow racing’s people and horses at any time, on any electronic device.

Mr. Langley, a native of Wisconsin, learned about racing from his father, who was a mailman, restaurant owner and in the 1930s, took over administration of the Elkhorn Fair and later the Wisconsin State Fair.

“I learned to read by helping my dad figure out which horses qualified for a race,” Mr. Langley said.

As a boy, he saw the 1943 Hambletonian winner Volo Song race at Elkhorn, Wisc., where his father was race secretary. The trotter suffered a fatal broken bone and had to be euthanized, a memory that stayed with Mr. Langley throughout his life.

“My dad stayed with him at the vets until they gave up. Sad day in Elkhorn,” he said decades later.

Mr. Langley graduated from Dartmouth University in 1959 with a history degree, a passion he continued as a racing official, with a Standardbred library whose titles stretched back to the Civil War.

Mr. Langley’s career as a race secretary and executive centered on the Chicago tracks, and he held management positions at Sportsman’s Park and was director of racing at Balmoral and Maywood Park. He was part of the ownership group of both those tracks.

He was inducted into the Illinois Harness Horsemen’s Hall of Fame in 1994 and into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in Goshen, N.Y., where he was also a trustee, in 2007.

Mr. Langley served as a member of the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture Advisory Committee and the Racing Industry Charitable Committee, which served the needs of backstretch employees.

Mr. Langley worked with both the Illinois and Du Quoin State Fairs on their harness racing meets for many years in an advisory capacity.

As a horse owner, his top performer was Thisbigdogwillfight p,5,1:49.1, a winner of $978,789 lifetime.

Mr. Langley is survived by his wife, Margo; son, Dr. Pete; daughters, Kate and Meg; and five grandchildren. (USTA)
USTA’s Mike Tanner Remembers Phil Langley

Phil Langley loved obituaries. No one alerted us to more deaths than he did, a practice that didn’t abate even after he stepped down as the USTA president at the end of 2016. And it wasn’t just that he would let us know that someone had passed away. Almost always, the notification came attached to a personal quote, anecdote, or story from Phil, along with a brief message asking that his words be included as part of the tribute to the recently departed.

It struck me as odd, at least at first. Over time, though, I grew to understand that harness racing, and especially its people, were fundamentally central to the core of who Phil was, and, beyond that, part of the sport’s shared, collective past. History must be preserved. Attention must be paid. The irony is that Phil, the longtime USTA president and Hall of Famer who passed away on Saturday (April 11) at the age of 83, would never have expected anyone to insert themselves into his obituary. He would have told me not to do it. That he’s not here to issue that directive is profoundly sad.

Here’s what you should know about Phil. He was smart, a Dartmouth graduate who never played up his Ivy League pedigree. He saw things largely in black and white, but had great appreciation and patience for viewpoints that weren’t his own. I can’t remember winning many arguments with him, but that’s because he usually was right, and he never failed to hear me, or anyone else, out. He was seen as an old school guy, but under his leadership, the USTA embraced and launched an extensive social media initiative and beat every other breed registry to the punch in pioneering online entry. He was gentle and he was kind. He loved his wife and kids, of whom he was incredibly proud, and doted on his grandchildren. He loved the USTA president, and was proud of the organization and the staff. He looked out for people. He had a brilliantly dry sense of humor, loved to laugh, and was a skilled storyteller. He was stoic about problems and challenges, and I never heard him make an excuse or utter a word in self-pity. He loved horses and the men and women who cared for them. He was honest and direct. If he told you that he would do something, you knew that he would. He was my friend.

Phil had a habit of not saying goodbye at the end of phone calls, which would often conclude abruptly and without warning. I never quite understood it, and until you got used to it, those endings could be rather jarring. But when I would think back on the conversation that we had just had, there was nothing left unsaid, nothing that required further clarification. As he did in every other facet of his life, Phil had covered all the bases.

The United States Trotting Association extends its sympathy and condolences to the family of F. Phillip Langley, our leader and our friend. Thank you for sharing him with us.
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Hanover pledges $250,000 Matching Grant To Support Integrity Initiatives

On Thursday morning, the following letter was distributed on behalf of Hanover Shoe Farms’ executive vice president Bridgette Jablonsky, V.M.D., to announce the establishment of a $250,000 matching fund grant to support the work of restoring full integrity to the harness racing industry. Hanover’s initiative comes following the indictments and arrests of top harness racing trainers by the federal government last month.

Below is Dr. Jablonsky’s letter:

To All Industry Participants:

I hope this letter finds you well and withstanding the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that you all join me in eagerly waiting for racing to resume and life to return to some semblance of normal. I have used some of the time normally spent watching races and following entries and results to reflect on the criminal proceedings revealed to us on March 9, 2020. My initial reaction was, “What a terrible day for this business.” Upon further reflection, however, I find that my initial reaction was completely off base. This was a good day for our business. We will not survive unless the cheaters and wrongdoers are identified and exiled.

I will footnote this by saying that the defendants in these proceedings are presumed innocent until they either admit their guilt or are found guilty in a court of law. If any are innocent, I hope their names are cleared with no lasting ill effects, but all of those who are found guilty of the heinous acts depicted in the indictments should be punished and never allowed to touch a horse again. This brings me to the point of this letter, which is meant to be a hopeful and positive one in these times of darkness.

One useful thing we have learned from the criminal indictments is that high-powered investigative services appear to be necessary to aid the racing commissions in investigating wrongdoing by (1) gathering evidence in a timely and efficient manner, and (2) presenting that evidence in a form that will fully support the authorities that have the power to exile the cheaters. Other new approaches may be needed to make our industry more responsive to and supportive of the racing commissions. I have discussed this with Russell (Williams), and Hanover Shoe Farms pledges $250,000 as a matching grant to support the work of restoring full integrity to our sport. The term of this pledge is 12 months, beginning on the day Standardbred racing resumes in 2020.

Hanover Shoe Farms is a nursery. We raise our babies with love and dedication to their well-being. When we sell them, it’s as if we are sending them off to college, releasing them out into the world to hopefully make us and their new owners proud. Above all, however, I hope that they enjoy doing what they were born to do and are being treated well. Reading the indictments grieved me deeply, because it was so plainly obvious that some horses are not treated well, nor even humanely. We hope that major financial support will stimulate better practices within the industry and go a long way toward procuring a brighter and safer future for our horses.

Our approach will only work if it earns broad industry participation, and if we come up with effective new approaches to ensuring integrity. Please join us in this fight against cheating and abuse. It will save our industry, it will save lives and eliminate suffering, and it will stop the ill-gotten gains of a select few who think the rules don’t apply to them.

For further information, contact Russell Williams at rwilliams@hanoverpa.com.

I hope everybody stays safe and healthy, and I can’t wait to see you at the tracks and the sales this fall.

Best regards,

Dr. J
World Champion and the fastest 4-year-old ever LATHER UP brings the great BETTOR’S DELIGHT SIRE LINE to Ohio!

In all, Lather Up set seven track records and his 1:46 in the Graduate Final is the fastest mile ever recorded at night, equaling the world record of Always B Miki at Lexington.

His sire, I’m Gorgeous by Bettor’s Delight, was among the top colts of his year winning a heat of the Little Brown Jug in 1:50.4h and finished a close second to “Horse Of The Year” Rock N Roll Heaven in the $410,000 final. He also won an elimination to the Cane Pace at Freehold in 1:50.4h.

His dam, Pocket Comb is responsible for the winners of nearly $3.7 million including Lather Up. In all, nine of her 10 foals have been significant winners.

With essentially outcrossed pedigree, LATHER UP becomes the outcross outlet for the numerous Western Hanover-Western Ideal line mares by such sires as Pet Rock, Well Said, The Panderosa, Western Terror and We Will See, in addition to those by Dragon Again and his great son Fear The Dragon resident to Ohio.

A limited number of breeding opportunities remain available to Lather Up at $6,000, live foal.
USTA Convenes By Teleconference:
New Rules Include Track Maintenance

The 2020 U.S. Trotting Association (USTA) Board of Directors Annual Meeting, which was conducted through a series of teleconferences, concluded Thursday, April 9, with the closing session of the full board. Among the highlights of the annual meeting were the election of some new officers, approval of the 2020 budget and new rules that will take effect on May 1, plus the announcement of a new location for the 2021 annual meeting.

Teleconferences were required for all committee and board meetings after the covid-19 outbreak forced the cancellation of the meetings that were scheduled for March 13-16 in Columbus, Ohio. Following is the schedule of the meetings that were held during the past two weeks: Racing and Registration Committees on Tuesday, March 31; Rules Committee on Thursday, April 2; Finance Committee on Friday, April 3; Executive Committee on Tuesday, April 7 with the annual meeting concluding with the full Board of Directors general session on Thursday.

Among the newly adopted rules were:
- Rule 4.70 Gene Doping – prohibiting the non-therapeutic use of gene therapy to improve performance;
- Rule 17.07 Contents of Application for Trainer’s License. Effective Jan. 1, 2021, USTA will require new trainer applicants to be a USTA member and to show evidence of at least three consecutive years of experience as a groom or trainer licensed by a state racing commission or be issued a Limited license;
- Rule 5.19 Racetrack Maintenance, sets specific standards for staffing, grading, material for surface cushion and conditioning of the track at all extended pari-mutuel tracks with the requirement that racetrack operators must ensure that those standards are maintained.

To see the complete list of rule changes, click here.

The new Rule 5.19 was sponsored by Kim Crawford, who oversees the racetrack department at Yonkers Raceway. Crawford is also a District 8 Track Director, representing Yonkers.

“The regulations (regarding track maintenance) that were approved, there will no problems maintaining compliance in the majority of the jurisdictions and the racetracks,” said USTA chief operating officer T.C. Lane. “For the most part, we don’t feel there is an extreme problem throughout the country, but this provides a guideline for racetracks to follow to at least be at a minimum.

“Racetracks are responsible for it and have to maintain that, but there is no compliance timeline in terms of reporting established.”

New June Midwest Mixed Sale Planned;
Online Bidding Will Be Available

The Midwest Auction Company has announced the addition of a new Standardbred mixed sale date. In addition to the company’s November sale, the June Midwest Mixed Sale will be held on Monday, June 22. The sale will be held at the auction company’s normal venue, the Michiana Event Center in Shipshewana, Ind.

Citing demand for the mixed sale created by other sales scheduled for April and May being cancelled, the sale company was able to secure a late June date to meet that need.

“We certainly understand how fragile of a time we are in right now, not just for our industry but for the world,” stated sale manager Jeff Fought. “Our goal was to find a date that we felt would be late enough that we could make it work, while still early enough to fit the needs of both buyers and sellers of all classes of racehorses. We will take every precaution possible to have this be a safe environment, and we are optimistic about getting back to racing and back to business.”

In addition to all the amenities normally provided at the fall Midwest Mixed Sale, including 50 percent payment of proceeds paid the day of the sale, the June 22 sale will offer live stream online bidding.

Entries are now being accepted and will close on May 11 or earlier if full. Entries will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. For information please go to MidwestAuctionCo.com, email jeff.fought@midwestauctionco.com or call 260-463-1649.

These approved regulations will now be circulated to the various racing commissions and to the Association of Racing Commissioners International for adoption into their model rules.

“The anticipation is that the various racing jurisdictions will adopt similar language so that it becomes a state requirement and not just an association requirement,” said Lane.

Following are the results of the officers’ elections: In the election of the new chairman of the board, District 8A chairman Joe Faraldo defeated District 9 chairman Don Marean, who abdicated his USTA vice-chairman position to run. Faraldo replaces District 3 chairman Ivan Axelrod, who didn’t seek reelection. District 7 director Mark Loewe defeated District 4 chairman Gabe Wand for vice chairman and District 5 director Jim Miller defeated District 1 director Donald “Skip” Hoovler for treasurer.

Sally Stauffer was unopposed as secretary while president Russell Williams, whose term expires in 2023, remains in that position. (with files from USTA)
Hambletonian Elimination winner

Enterprise
2,1:58.1f; 3,1:52 ($423,121)

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By the red hot sire Chapter Seven, Enterprise was a multiple stakes winner at 3. He is from the top producing dam SHES GONE AGAIN whose first three foals all trotted in 1:52.4 or faster, (including LIVE LAUGH LOVE, BT1:50.2).

His dam is also a half-sister to Breeders Crown champion Poof She's Gone 3,1:53.1 ($1,312,093).

Enterprise won half of his 12 starts in 2017, including an elimination of the Hambletonian, and finished fourth, placed third in the $1,000,000 final at the Meadowlands.

Enterprise has won on all sized tracks, including a 1:55.4h victory against older horses at Yonkers.

Standing his second season, ENTERPRISE was well received in the Buckeye State and is highly fertile.

The handsome son of Chapter Seven bred well over 100 mares in 2019 with better than a 90% conception rate. Despite the nationwide interruption, he has been bred to, or is booked to, 100+ mares this season as well.

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Letter to the Industry:

And so it was that our industry, led by the president and the Board of Directors of USTA, did it again. During its last meeting, just concluded, they stuck their collective heads in the sand and ignored taking a significant and strong stand, regarding acknowledging and severely punishing our cheaters. No proposals, no serious discussions, nothing, to lead our industry in the direction of severe punishment/banishment of these cheaters, and their complicit owners who supply them with the horses which are then abused with illicit drugging.

There would be no crooked trainers if owners who seek the easy and ill-gotten purse money would be suspended and/or banned from the sport. There is no owner in this tough business today who can claim ignorance of what their trainers are doing. There is no one in this industry that is unaware of the reputation of crooked trainers. Does anyone really think that the likes of Banca, Oakes and Allard were just the greatest trainers on this earth? Absolutely not, yet they keep getting fed with horses by whom? The owners!

But when these cheaters get their just reward—Andrew Adams, Asst. U.S. Attorney stated there is “voluminous” evidence from one (1) years’ worth of wiretaps—the only people who will walk away from all this unscathed will be the owners who gave them horses to race.

The USTA president writes a nice speech, example: “The USTA Board of Directors—have conducted themselves with courage, with wisdom” etc., etc. Excuse me but I see no courage and no wisdom in side stepping the biggest problem our industry has faced for many years and that is our complete lack of integrity which has driven away our core supporters to the detriment of all those who participate in racing with honesty and hard work.

And what about Yonkers Raceway? Its top two trainers have been cheating their way to huge purse checks for themselves and their owners. Where is management in this debacle? Where is the vaunted and renowned horsemen’s association in all this? Oh, and by the way, the long-standing president of this auspicious horsemen’s association is one of these owners who was choosing to have horses owned by him to be trained by the leading trainer at Yonkers, none other than Richard Banca.

And to compound this disgrace, that same owner was just elected chairman of the Board of USTA! And some of the owners that fed Chris Oakes with horses are the so-called bright lights of our industry, high profile participants who cared less about his reputation as a cheater than they did about the purse money they pocketed.

I’ve owned racehorses for over 50 years and none of the trainers I have used in all those years ever had a pimple on their record. I take no particular credit for that because it is simply as it should be for all of us. Furthermore, I spent 30 years as a USTA director and served seven years as its chairman. Throughout all my years of service, I struggled to put integrity at the forefront of every meeting in every year. I was proud of attempting to champion that cause. Now, I’m ashamed of our leaders, who when faced with an opportunity to make a strong statement, to be brave and resolute showed us nothing but cowardice and disgrace.

Turns out that Richard Banca and Rene Allard have hired counsel to represent them in their criminal issues. Are they entitled to legal representation? Absolutely. The bigger question is should the newly minted chairman of the Board of Directors of USTA or his law firm be the one representing them?

What we have here is the clear perception that this industry is now being led by a horse owner who gave horses to Banca to train and who (or his firm) may now be representing the accused Banca. What kind of message does this send to USTA members and participants who wish for nothing more than a fair shot and a level playing field? Were the directors aware of this when they voted?

I call upon the USTA president to act immediately to recall the new chairman and call for a new election during which all directors will be made fully aware of the facts so that clear transparency will rule and the industry will then be assured that there is no conflict of interest between the chairman of the board, his responsibility to USTA members, and our industry. Otherwise, the message will be clear: SORDID PERCEPTION AND INTEGRITY BE DAMNED.

Paul A. Fontaine
Rhode Island

Let’s Set The Record Straight, Counselor

Mr. Fontaine:

First, let’s close down the nonsense about me and any invented conflict of interest involved in my recent election as USTA chairman that would affect my “responsibility to USTA members and our industry.”

What’s a “disgrace” is your implication and attempt to smear my reputation by suggesting that my “law firm” is representing one of the trainers recently “indicted.” Let’s be clear; my “firm” consists of me and only me as the sole practitioner. Further, my practice is exclusively limited to civil matters.

I’m not representing any of the accused, which as an attorney you could have easily ascertained with a little due diligence rather than making your reprehensible accusation against me.

And while we’re setting the record straight, the “voluminous” evidence stated by the Assistant U.S. Attorney refers to those indicted. The trainer associated with me that you cited (Richard Banca) was not included in the indictment. (Editor’s Note: Banca was arrested separately by authorities and charged with “misbranding drugs,” and charges stated that the FBI searched Banca’s stable in Middletown, N.Y., and found a number of illegal substances and handwritten notes with instructions on how to administer drugs.)

Clearly, any owner who is an accomplice in any wrongdoing in this sport by his trainer or anyone else should be penalized.

Continues on page 9

April 17, 2020
But let us not forget the solution you advocated during your “30 years as a USTA director and seven years as its chairman,” when you proposed an owners’ responsibility rule that would have placed responsibility and penalties upon an owner whose trainer cheated regardless of any knowledge of or complicity on the owner’s part. That was wisely rejected.

Imagine a horse owner with a professional license as an attorney or a certified public accountant who would be penalized due to the actions of a trainer without any wrongdoing on his/her part. When reported to the administrative agency that administers his/her professional license, it could result in further disciplinary action significantly impacting that person’s ability to make a living in their profession. That risk would have driven owners out of our sport.

Additionally, your assertion that, “there would be no crooked trainers if owners who seek the easy and ill-gotten purse money would be suspended and or banned from the sport,” could easily lead to unfounded suspicions of cheating about any rule-abiding trainer who consistently performs better than his competitors. Without any evidence or validity, the risk of the owners’ responsibility rule penalties would cause them concern over their trainer’s success because of the underlying assumption that they might be doing something wrong.

And I’d like to refresh your memory of some serious trouble that one of your former trainers had in the past, yet I don’t recall you calling for any penalties under the provisions of an owners’ responsibility rule at the time.

I have horses with a variety of trainers ranked in the top 10 in the country. One of my trainers that you referenced was training two horses for me when the complaint against him was filed. And similar to the action you took with your trainer that got into trouble years ago, I’ve reconsidered the relationship with my trainer as a result of action taken against him. In both cases, our trainers were in good stead with all the various regulatory bodies. With my trainer, there was one suspension of seven days within the last nine years that involved a therapeutic medication.

Although the Assistant U.S. Attorney has stated that there is “voluminous” evidence in the indictments, as an attorney, you should recognize that all accused are entitled to a defense with the presumption of innocence and that total condemnation of the owners of all of the horses involved with the trainers indicted is a cheap shot at those owners.

For your information, the USTA was closely involved with the investigations leading to the indictments by providing requested documentation as well as significant background, operational and logistical information that assisted investigators.

As a former director, you should know that USTA has no regulatory, legal or enforcement authority in these matters so that your attack against the organization is as much nonsense as your accusations about me and your call for a new election.

Joe Faraldo
USTA Chairman,
President, Standardbred Owners Association of NY
In Memoriam

F. PHILLIP LANGLEY
1937 - 2020

A great leader, horseman and friend. You will be greatly missed.

HAMBLETONIAN SOCIETY BREEDERS CROWN
Vernon-Based Trainers Remain At Winter Bases

Vernon Downs was scheduled to open its 2020 race meet on Friday, with sister track Tioga Downs targeted for a May 2 opening. But with both New York racetracks shuttered due to the Covid-19 pandemic, horsemen who normally would have been on the grounds have had to remain elsewhere.

The barn areas at both tracks were scheduled to open May 1, but owner Jeff Gural announced both facilities will remain closed until the casinos can re-open. So trainers George Ducharme and Howard Okusko Jr., both usually based at Vernon Downs, are staying at their winter base of Spring Garden Ranch at Florida. In addition, Homer Hochstetler, who also spends his summers based at Vernon, is remaining at Pinehurst Harness Track in North Carolina.

“Jeff Gural said he wasn’t opening the barn areas until the casinos open, so when that is or where else we can go, it’s up in the air so I have no answers right now.”

—George Ducharme

Hochstetler said he wasn’t opening for word from Gural as to when Vernon will re-open its barn area, which has several hundred stalls.

“Jeff Gural said he wasn’t opening the barn areas until the casinos open, so when that is or where else we can go, it’s up in the air so I have no answers right now,” said Ducharme, who is training a stable of 40.

Okusko and his wife, Jessica, reduced their stable by seven on Wednesday, so now they are left with 21 at Spring Garden Ranch.

“We just sent seven out (Wednesday) and they will go to the owners’ farms,” said Okusko. “I don’t have much of a ‘Plan B.’ Now you don’t know whether to keep going and keep training, so we’re all backed up. Usually we’d have been qualifying by now. I wish we could just get up there where we can train until they decide what to do.”

The Meadowlands is also owned by Gural, and he recently stated he was hoping to get that New Jersey racetrack back open. That scenario would include racing without fans in attendance.

“Let’s say Gural started racing at the Meadowlands but he didn’t open Vernon, I’d have to get my 3 year olds up there somewhere,” said Ducharme. “I’d have to find a spot. But it’s not easy trying to place 40 horses. I think we all have the same plan, it’s just a matter of when we can race.

“We’re all in limbo and just waiting. But I guess right now with the springtime weather, I’d rather be here than up there in the cold and rain.”

Hochstetler, who is training a stable of 26 in tandem with his son, Jay, said 10 of those horses would have already been sent to Harrah’s Hoosier Park, which had been scheduled to open its race meet on March 27.

“My plan was to have Jay go to Hoosier Park with 10 last week, and then I was going to go May 1 to Vernon. Now I don’t know when I’ll go,” said Hochstetler.

Hochstetler said there are still about 100 horses on the grounds at Pinehust with various trainers. He said while normally all would have been gone by May 1, with future horse shows at the venue now canceled, the barns will remain open for the harness trainers.

“We don’t really have an option. I told them I wasn’t going anywhere,” said Hochstetler. “They have the horse shows, but they’ve all been canceled. I was told they will be having a powwow next week but they’re not going to chase us out of here.

“Right now we’re going to qualify on April 24,” he said. “We were scheduled earlier but there was no chance of that.” — By Gordon Waterstone

Sweden’s Elitlopp To Be Held Without Spectators

Solvalla race track officials have announced that the Elitloppet will be held this year as scheduled on Sunday, May 31, but without an audience. At the same time, the Sweden Cup is canceled, and the winner of the Meadow Road race will qualify for the Elitloppet.

“The Elitloppet is an annual sporting highlight for many Swedes and we currently feel confident that we can conduct the competitions safely and responsibly,” says Solvalla CEO Jörgen Forsberg.

All Swedish trotting tracks have closed down their public facilities since March 12, and even the Elitloppet will be run without any spectators, but there are still some question marks to be addressed.

“Our decision is made with reservations, that the situation in our society does not worsen and that the conditions therefore change. At present, most things point to the fact that we can arrange the Elitloppet weekend without a public. Of course, I hope that our fantastic audience can be there, but if the prevailing conditions prevents it, the Elitloppet weekend will still be implemented,” Forsberg continued.

The purse in the Elitloppet will not be changed; the winner in the final earns 3 million Swedish krona (approximately $275,000).

“The biggest change during the Elitloppet weekend is that the Sweden Cup is discontinued. We cannot count on the addition of foreign elite horses, and therefore the horse base will not be enough to run both Sweden Cup and the Elitloppet this year,” said Anders Malmrot, sport director (race secretary) at Solvalla.

New for this year, the winner of the Meadow Road Race on May 13 will be invited to the Elitloppet.

As has been the case in prior years, the Paralympic Race (before the Olympiatravet) at the Åby track on April 25, and the Prince Daniel’s Race at Gävle on May 23 are also included in the direct qualifying races. (SulkySport.se)
North America Cup Postponed; WEG Looking Into Historical Racing

In a “Stronger Together” live video session Wednesday afternoon that included a lengthy question-and-answer period with viewers regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the shutdown of harness racing across North America, Woodbine Entertainment CEO Jim Lawson announced that the Pepsi North America Cup for 3-year-old colt pacers at Woodbine Mohawk Park, which had eliminations scheduled for June 13 and the $1 million(C) final on June 20, will be postponed.

“Yes, we’ll be postponing the Pepsi North America Cup,” Lawson told session host Jason Portuondo. “Hard for me to say without understanding in particular what other racetracks are doing, but Bill McLinchey, Scott McKelvie and Jessica Buckley are already looking at that and starting to figure that out.”

Lawson said he is hopeful restrictions imposed by the Canadian Premier and Prime Minister will be eased in early May will lead to a resumption of racing in June or July. Lawson expects racing to resume without a live audience.

“We’re hoping some of this is behind us in early May...we’re not waiting for that date to start planning; in fact, we’re working right now with new procedures and guidelines in what works for live racing.” He said. “If I have to project any specific dates, we’ll look at early May and hopefully there is good news. And then we can look at resuming racing in June or July. I hope I’m not too optimistic in saying that. As I say that, I know our audience is understanding and appreciates that none of us know for sure. But let’s all hope and pray that in may we can get some of this behind us and we can do the right thing and get on with racing.”

Lawson said rearranging a stakes schedule won’t be easy as other racetracks across the continent will also be doing the same.

“The stakes schedule will delayed and we’re going to have to go through the exercise of looking at a stakes schedule that works for everyone,” he said. “At Mohawk, it might be a little bit more difficult in terms of fitting it in with the programs of other racetracks that will be up and running in the United States. It’s a different horse population to some extent, but we’ll work through that.

“We’ve lost some stakes and payments on the Standardbred side will be refunded for those that are canceled. Other races will be postponed and deferred. Everyone wants to get back to racing. Right now, practically speaking, the NA Cup will be postponed and we’re doing our best to work with everyone in trying to be fair about waiving stakes payments or deferring stakes payments.”

Lawson also said there currently are no plans to move the date of the Mohawk Million for 2-year-old trotters from Sept. 26, where owners paid $110,000 for a slot in the race.

“As far as I know, it’s going ahead as scheduled,” said Lawson. “Of course, we had a good series of summer races leading up to the Mohawk Million, so it will largely be a function of when we can get started. But currently there are no plans to change the date of the Mohawk Million; the only thing that can change that is if we don’t get some of those trotting series we have leading up to it in place.”

Lawson also announced track officials are hoping for government approval to offer the slot-like Historical Racing machines that allow bets on races run in the past on its HPibet wagering platform.—By Gordon Waterstone
International Champion

Volstead
1:51.3f ($773,903)
Cantab Hall - Madame Volo - Yankee Glide

Standing at Dublin Valley Farms

An outstanding and imposing (16.2 hands) individual, VOLSTEAD was bred in the USA, became an International Champion, and is standing his first season for an introductory fee of $4,500.

2020 STUD FEE $4,500

- CANTAB HALL is a proven sire of sires including, Father Patrick, Uncle Peter, and Explosive Matter.
- VOLSTEAD is a European Group 1 winning stallion.
- A serious racehorse that won in 1:51.3 on the 5/8 mile track at Solvalla, a season’s leading record in 2017.
- Winner of 23 races, including the prestigious Sweden Cup, defeating top horses such as Elitloppet winners Ringostarr Treb and Magic Tonight on multiple occasions. (73 starts: 23-10-2)
- From an outstanding family of multiple stakes winners:
  Dam: MADAME VOLO 2,1:56.4 ($32,504, also the dam of HIGH BRIDGE 1:54.3f ($327,544, etc.)
  2nd Dam: MISSYS GOAL 3,1:56 ($28,252), Dam of MISSY’S GOALFIRE 3,1:57.1h ($329,939),
  HAVE YOU EVER 3,1:55.2 ($204,280), PRIVATE PENNANT 1:55.2f ($177,887), etc.

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Waterstone Named To HOF Screening Committee

Gordon Waterstone, a 42-year veteran of harness racing journalism who has worked at The Horseman and Fair World for over two decades and is a member of harness racing’s Communicators Hall of Fame, has been appointed to the Hall Of Fame Screening Committee of the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA) by Kim Rinker, president of the sport’s leading media organization.

The HOF Screening Committee considers the nominees submitted by the various chapters of USHWA, talks with a select group of present members of the Hall Of Fame, and then announces the candidates for the summer HOF ballot, on which a nominee requires 75 percent of the yes-no vote to receive the sport’s highest honor, election to the Hall Of Fame.

Waterstone started his career working in publicity at Detroit’s Hazel Park, and also worked at other tracks at other points of the season, including helping with Breeders Crown publicity in that series’ early days. In 1998 he joined The Horseman and Fair World as associate editor, and during his time with the Kentucky-based company he has received two John Hervey Writing Awards, one in the feature category and one in the news/commentary division, making him one of the few people to have been honored in both sections.

His popular “Backstretch With Gordon” column during the prime of The Red Mile’s racing season keeps him in close contact with many of the sport’s leading horsepeople.

A former national president of USHWA and a Life member of the organization, Waterstone is currently the president and secretary of the organization’s Kentucky Chapter. He received the USHWA President’s award in 2001.

Waterstone has also been honored by the North American Harness Publicists Association, Harness Horsemen International, and the Michigan Harness Horsemen’s Association. The ultimate honor for a harness journalist, entrance into the Communicators Hall of Fame, came with his induction ceremony in 2017 at the Harness Racing Museum in Goshen N.Y.

The first Sunday in July at Goshen will find Waterstone discussing the merits of this year’s candidates with his fellow committee members: committee chair Judy Davis-Bojarski, Bob Heyden, Jason Settlemoir, and Steve Wolf; president Rinker also serves on this committee as an ex officio voting member. (USHWA)

Looking Back

After dominating the New York Sires Stakes and capturing the Breeders Crown 2-Year-Old Colt Trot in 1999, Master Lavec was tabbed the winterbook favorite for the 2000 Hambletonian. Voted Dan Patch Award divisional honors for his 10-win season in 12 starts, Master Lavec returned to the racetrack at Pompano Park on Friday, April 14, 2000, where he cruised to a seven-length, 1:59.1 qualifying win over a “sloppy” surface. Trained and driven by Dan Daley, Master Lavec never got untracked his sophomore campaign where he won just once in nine starts, adding $50,550 to his first-year bankroll of $533,781 for owners Ann Mari Daley and Robert Pergament. (Lap Time Photo)
Stars Desperately Seeking Racing—Part 2

In last week's HarnessRacing Special Preview, Gordon Waterstone spoke to a few trainers to find out where they stood with their respective stable stars with the uncertainty of racing's return. Gordon caught up with a few more trainers this week to ask how their stars are doing.

ATLANTA—RON BURKE

Trainer Ron Burke said that while the famed Elitlopp is still on the calendar to be raced in Sweden on May 31, albeit without fans in the stands, the 5-year-old trotting mare Atlanta will obviously not be heading across the Atlantic Ocean.

"We would have gone to the Meadowlands first and gone a couple starts, and then we were going to the Elitlopp, which is now out of the question," said Burke. "If she came back good, we were going. Everything we did last year was with that in mind, that we'd go and take our chance."

Atlanta, who was voted the 2018 Trotter of the Year and then last year captured divisional honors in both the U.S. and Canada after an eight-win season that included a career-best 1:49.1 win in the $250,000 Graduate final at the Meadowlands, is ready to return to the track, according to Burke.

"She's ready to qualify," said Burke. "She's all dressed up with no place to go. She's been super and everything has been positive for her since she came back."

Atlanta put together a 15-8-4-1 ledger in 2019, with her $769,950 in earnings bringing her to within $90,000 of the $2-million mark for her career. In addition to her Graduate victory, she raced several times against male competition last year, including finishing second in the Maple Leaf Trot, third in the Breeders Crown, and seventh in the Yonkers International.

"She's come back a little bit stronger and a little bit heavier," said Burke. "She might be very much like Buck I St. Pat that way. By the time she's six, she's going to be a big, strong mare, and you're not going to recognize her from when she was three. She is going to fill out and it's going to make her a way better horse, and that's scary to think about because of how good she has been up until this point."

Burke believes any prolonged absence will not deter Atlanta.

"She is more Thoroughbred like," he said. "She's just as good off a month off as she is racing two weeks in a row, if not better. With her, I just have to be careful not to overwork her."

LYONS SENTINEL—JIM KING JR.

Although she made 14 starts last year, it was worth it for the connections of Lyons Sentinel as she amassed $810,809 in earnings, the most by any 2 year old regardless of sex or gait.

After a campaign that began with a pair of June baby races and concluded with the Nov. 23 Three Diamonds, trainer Jim King Jr. decided a little extra time off was in the cards for Lyons Sentinel, who was easily voted Dan Patch Award honors as 2-Year-Old Filly Pacer of the Year.

"She started back a little bit late because we had raced so late in the year," said King. "A 2 year old with 14 starts, that was a big enough year for what we wanted her to have. But we're getting close with her."

Lyons Sentinel won nine of her 14 starts, including the $405,000 She's A Great Lady final at Woodbine Mohawk Park in a career-best 1:49.3, and the $225,000 Pennsylvania Sires Stakes final at Harrah's Philadelphia. She also posted four second-place finishes, coming up short by a combined half-length.

Lyons Sentinel's lone third-place finish came in her final start of the year in the $411,000 Three Diamonds at the Meadowlands. In that race, driver Tim Tetrick moved the daughter of Captaintreacherous to the lead past the opening quarter before being unable to fend off the late charges of one-two finishers JK First Lady and Rocknificent.

"I thought she went a really good trip, but those two fillies that beat her really, really went good trips," said King. "She went a good trip and there was nothing to be ashamed of. And she raced. It wasn't like she just followed them around there and came up flat. She raced."

King said Lyons Sentinel wasn't nominated to the Fan Hanover at Woodbine Mohawk Park that had been scheduled for mid-June, and he instead was pointing toward the Pennsylvania Sires Stakes circuit.

"I've been in 2:10 with her in a jog cart," said King. "That's getting close. We're still a month away until we would have wanted to qualify her. We started back a little bit but she's just about ready. So when the first things come along, we will be ready.

"She's grown well. She's not a real fancy trainer anyways; she's nothing to get excited about," he concluded.
SOUTHWIND OZZI—BILL MACKENZIE

After starting out his sophomore year in 2019 with strong performances on the Pennsylvania Sires Stakes circuit, Southwind Ozzi proved he was a Grand Circuit-caliber pacer when he won the $400,000 Adios final on July 27 at The Meadows by a resounding seven lengths in 1:48.

It was the second-fastest mile in the 53-year history of the Adios, missing Bolt The Duer’s 1:47.4 record (2012) by a tick.

Southwind Ozzi again showed his mettle when he won the same-day elim and final of the Little Brown Jug at Delaware, Ohio. He completed his year with nine wins in 15 starts and $837,685 in earnings, the third most by any 3-year-old male pacer.

“I’m just getting him ready, but with all that’s going on we just backed off a little bit,” said MacKenzie, who trains on his own farm in Cranbury, N.J., just down the road from the offices of The Hambletonian Society. “We’re just waiting to hear something, but for now we’ll stay working light. When we hear something we’ll know what we’re going to do, but up until then we’ll keep him working and his schedule will go by what information we get.”

MacKenzie said Southwind Ozzi’s scheduled debut was the opening leg of the Graduate Series for 4-year-old pacers on May 2 at the Meadowlands.

“We’re really (in a holding pattern) and that’s where everybody else is,” said MacKenzie. “The weather up here is getting good now so he’ll get some extra time out. Maybe we’ll give him a day off after he trains.”

MacKenzie said he’s spent some of his quarantine time watching replays of Southwind Ozzi’s biggest wins.

“I just heard about and watched YouTube; I’m really out of date,” he said with a laugh. “My wife Anne Mari and daughter Charlotte were showing me how I can put on YouTube and I can see a couple of his races. So I got to watch them and it was pretty cool. I hadn’t seen those races on a 65-inch TV ever.

“Then I started watching some of the older races, like Mack Lobell and Matt’s Scooter. I felt like a kid again!”

TALL DARK STRANGER—NANCY TAKTER

Tall Dark Stranger won divisional honors as the 2019 Two-Year-Old Colt Pacer of the Year in both the U.S. and Canada, and trainer Nancy Takter said the sophomore is ready to get his year started and defend his crown.

“He grew a ton. He really grew up and filled out,” said Takter, who trains at Millennium Farms, which is owned by her parents, Jimmy and Christina. “He just needs to race. You can only train them so much.

“We trained six in a set the other day and I was sitting second-over with him and I had to pull coming out of the turn. Yannick (Gingras) was driving one in front or I would have run him over at that point.”

Takter said she is now in a holding pattern with Tall Dark Stranger as she awaits word on when and where she can start the son of Bettor’s Delight who won eight of nine starts last year—including a career-best 1:49.1 in the $562,500 Metro final at Woodbine Mohawk Park—and $717,514 in earnings.

“He raced nine times last year so he’s none the worse for wear,” said Takter. “I think there is still a lot of development in him. He needs to race at this point.

“Right now it’s like we all have a glass and we’re filling it with water, but you don’t want to overfill it. But you don’t want the glass to be too empty when it’s time to go, either. So we’re slowly filling the glass and hopefully I can be right at the top of the glass when it’s time to go.”
Remembering Arbitration, A Cinderella Filly

By Kathy Parker

The stakes-winning filly Arbitration p,4, 1:52; BT1:50.1 ($727,129), who memorably engaged in a stirring stretch battle with Kikikatie in the 2003 She’s A Great Lady final at Woodbine and was beaten just a nose by her rival, died on Tuesday following a brief illness.

While my family races horses, we aren’t breeders, but Arbitration was like one of our own because she was trained and once owned by my brother Norm, and he has trained her babies. Arbitration was 19 and had lived a great life thanks to Norm and Tom Klosky Jr., who campaigned Arbitration with Norm and retained her and gave her the opportunity to be a broodmare.

Arbitration was purchased as a yearling by my father, Dwane. My Dad didn’t exactly search her out and select her out of the Perretti Farms consignment at Tattersalls in 2002. He was standing where they lead in the horses from the barn to the auction ring and she was the first horse in the session. He noticed she didn’t stand perfectly and thus might be in his price range, and he figured her flaw was one he could work around.

No one else in the light crowd bid and Arbitration wasn’t protected, so to speak, by Perretti, so my Dad bought her for $5,500.

Arbitration had a pretty good pedigree for a cheap yearling. She was by the top performer Artiscape and was just the second foal of Serious Smile, a daughter of the very good stakes-winning filly So Cozy, a winner of $880,492.

Bob Marks, who handled most of the broodmare acquisitions and matings at Perretti, remembers Arbitration, even from her early days on the farm.

“I would always buy daughters of top fillies, if I could get them. My philosophy has been that the top fillies don’t always go on and produce. But their daughters do, so that’s why we bought Serious Smile,” he said of Arbitration’s dam. “If you do your homework, you’ll see it.”

Arbitration made up for her conformation with a huge heart and desire, and speed. In her second stakes as a 2 year old, an Arden Downs on her home track of The Meadows, she got locked in. Just yards before the finish line she was backed out and restarted, and she shifted into the kind of overdrive that catches your eye. John Cashman Jr., who managed Castleton Farm until just a couple of years earlier when the farm was sold, had an astute eye for a horse and he called me to praise my brother’s filly.

The Arden Downs gave Norm and Tom the kind of confidence to think about trying the best in the She’s A Great Lady. She lived up to their hopes and dreams, and she fought hard to wear down Kikikatie and fell just a nose short. It was one of those stretch drives where if your horse is engaged in the battle, you pound on a table, hit your leg with your rolled-up program, and simply can’t sit still, instinctively trying to help your horse get the edge. And it took a photo to determine the winner.

“She took us places we had never been before,” said Klosky, who traveled with his parents to almost every single one of Arbitration’s races on the road.

“They sometimes say a horse has a heart as big as a tack trunk, and she was one of those,” said Norm, “especially in the She’s A Great Lady final, when she would-
n’t give up, and the Lynch final at Pocono as a 3 year old, when she was used hard in a :26 first quarter and then pulled away to win.”

Although illness interrupted the middle part of her sophomore campaign, Artbitration continued racing at age four and in addition to competing against Kikikatie, she faced a deep class of fillies and mares throughout her career. The group also included Rainbow Blue, Glowing Report, Loyal Opposition, Stonebridge Kisses, Carolina Sunshine, Invitro and Burning Point. She finished third in the Cape & Cutter final at the Meadowlands, beaten a neck despite starting from post 9; second to Loyal Opposition in the $100,000 Strada Memorial at the Meadowlands; and third behind Invitro and Burning Point in the Roses Are Red final.

And I have to point out that like baseball, harness racing had a steroid era and that included Artbitration’s racing years. My father and brother have always operated their stables with hay, oats and water and as little vet work as possible, but it was common knowledge then that some of our horses—even fillies and mares, and at least a couple of Artbitration’s foes—raced on steroids. Steroids weren’t banned until beginning in late 2008 and early 2009.

Artbitration has produced a couple of good racehorses, but unfortunately, she wasn’t exactly just a nose behind Kikikatie in the production department. (Kikikatie, of course, is the dam of Rockin Image, Tellitlikeitis, TimeTo Roll and Rockin Amadeus.)

While boarded her at the farm of veterinarian Dr. Nick Loutsion in western Pennsylvania, Artbitration raised seven babies and enjoyed visits and treats from those whose lives she had touched, including Parker Stable assistant Terry Brewer, her caretaker and traveling partner.

Her first foal, Dew N Doughnuts p, 1:51.1f; BT1:49, a son of Real Desire who showed his mom’s heart, recently was retired with 34 lifetime wins and $453,124 in earnings. Artbitration is also the dam of Dew A Little Dance p,4, 1:50f ($103,605) and a 2-year-old filly and a 3-year-old filly who are in training.

Maybe Artbitration’s only two daughters will show enough racing that one day they will have a chance to be broodmares and pass on the genetic material that gave their mom her heart and speed.

Meanwhile, Artbitration has a couple of sisters who are already carrying on the maternal line. Ohio breeder Bruce Trogdon (Emerald Highlands Farm) raced two of Artbitration’s younger half sisters with great success, Blissful Smile p,3, 1:53; BT1:49.3 ($778,734) and Seriously p,3, 1:50.1; BT1:49.3 ($278,545). He still has Blissful Smile and two of Seriously’s daughters in his broodmare band. Blissful Smile is in foal to Fear The Dragon and due in May, and Trogdon has a 2-year-old colt by Always B Miki out of Seriously’s daughter Serious Filly.
Update on Yonkers stakes races
With the disruption in racing at Yonkers Raceway, some adjustments have been made to upcoming Stakes payments and scheduling. more

Freehold cancels Dexter Cup, Lady Suffolk For 2020
Freehold Raceway announced today the cancellation of the 2020 Dexter Cup Trot and the Lady Suffolk Trot due to the continued closure of live racing and shelter in place orders from Governor Phil Murphy due to COVID-19. The finals for both races were scheduled for Saturday, May 2. more

Prix d’Ete canceled; nominations to be refunded
The following press release was issued by the Quebec Jockey Club on Tuesday: Since the arrival of COVID-19, we, the Board of Directors of the Quebec Jockey Club, have made every effort to ensure the health of everyone by complying with the confinement and gathering prohibition issued by the government. more

Currier & Ives Filly Trot at The Meadows postponed
The Meadows announced today that the Currier & Ives Trot 46 for 3-year-old filly trotters will be postponed from its current May 22 date. A rescheduled date for the event will be announced in the near future. more

Ohio racing canceled through May 15
By Order of the Ohio State Racing Commission, all racing in the state has been canceled through May 15. more

SOANY sends 400 checks to 155 grooms at Yonkers
The Standardbred Owners Association of New York (SOA of NY) completed mailing out 155 checks in the amount of $400 each to those grooms who participated at Yonkers Raceway over an extended period of time and on a regular basis. The total cost of today’s aid for our most dedicated caretakers amounted to $62,000. more

Loan information for Delaware racing community
As the Delaware Standardbred Owners Association (DSOA) continues to proudly represent our harness racing community during the suspension of racing during this Covid-19 pandemic, the organization has more information that may help many local horsemen and women. more

Racing reflections with Matt Kakaley
Matt Kakaley was 16 when Rickards Ed arrived in the stable run by his parents, Linda and John, at Pompano Park. Matt was just starting to work in the barn more frequently and quickly formed a bond with the then 7-year-old pacer. more

Flashback: Somebeachsomewhere’s 2007 Metro victory
On Sept. 1, 2007, Somebeachsomewhere paced the fastest mile in history by a 2-year-old to win the Metro Pace by two lengths over Moon Beam at Mohawk Raceway in Ontario. It was the day, for all intents and purposes, when Somebeachsomewhere became The Beach. more

USTA supports federal SAFE act banning slaughter
The United States Trotting Association announced Friday (April 10) that it has endorsed the passage of the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act of 2019 (H. R. 961), which states that “the knowing sale or transport of equines or equine parts in interstate or foreign commerce for purposes of human consumption is hereby prohibited.” more

CHHA scholarship application date extended to July 15
Scholarship application is now available for the Christian Harness Horsemen’s Association Scholarships. The application can be found at www.chha.net. Completed applications, including all attachments, must be postmarked by July 15, 2020. more

Ohio horseman Darwin “Bub” Steinke Dies
Darwin “Bub” E. Steinke, 81, of Pioneer, Ohio, died March 31, at Evergreen Manor Nursing Home in Montpelier. more