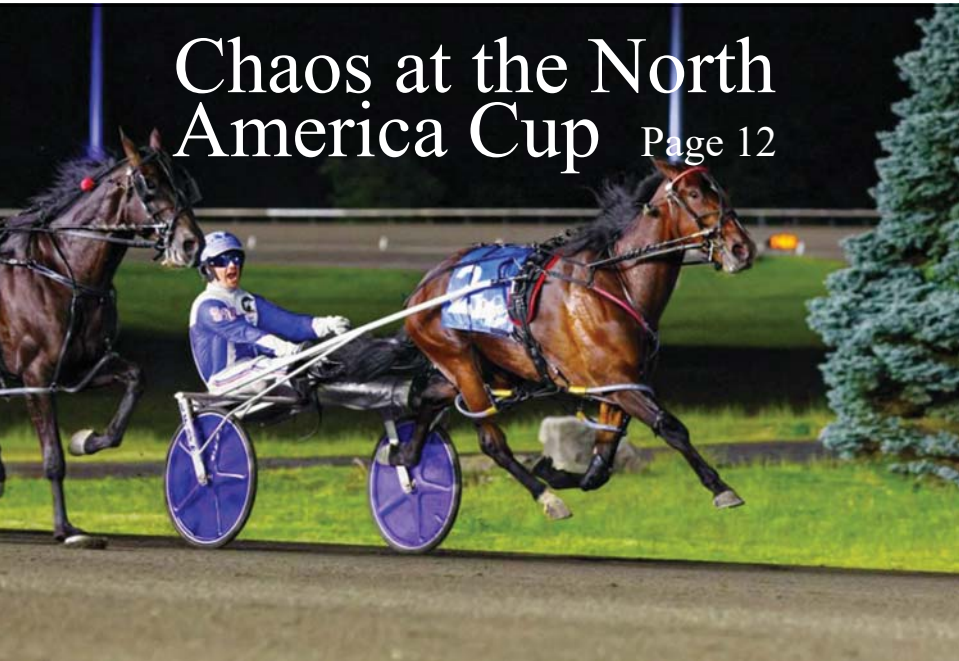


# DOWN THE STRETCH

CANADA'S MOST INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING HORSE RACING NEWSPAPER



Chaos at the North America Cup Page 12

Women rule - men drool Page 4

Patrick Husbands and his amazing body Page 14

Matt Kakaley's 9-win night Page 21

Tom Durkin Page 10

96-Year-old Trainer Page 15

Preakness Stakes Page 17





How Fox ruined Tom Durkin's Belmont Call Page 11

**ALSO INSIDE**

Cartoon Page 9  
Michael Copeland Page 13  
Stacey Van Camp Page 18

Jeff Gillis Page 19  
Brad Clark Page 20  
Apprentices Page 21

Irwin Driedger Page 21  
Oddities & Entities Page 22  
Podcast Descriptions Page 23

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**DOWN THE STRETCH**  
 VOLUME: 1 ISSUE: 2  
 APRIL 19 - MAY 2, 2008  
 COVERING BIG LEAGUE HORSE RACING



The picture above is the cover of our first issue back in 2008. It featured Patrick Husbands and Emma-Jayne Wilson who figured to battle it out for jockey supremacy that year at Woodbine.

Hang on to that thought.

This is our 137<sup>th</sup> issue in our 16<sup>th</sup> year. We have maintained our thrust, our major thesis, our raison d'être. Which is – this sport of horse racing has people and events that simply don't happen in any other sport.

This issue is full of stories that dance in rhythm to that argument. For example – harness driver Doug McNair. On June 17, the night of the North America Cup, McNair gave Refined a perfect steer to upset the heavy favourite in the \$210,000 Armbro Flight Final. Four races later, he was a mere passenger when Grace Hill clobbered 9 other fillies and mares in the \$305,000 Roses Are Red Final. But in between those races, McNair was ejected from his sulky at the head of the stretch in the Mohawk Cup. He bruised some ribs but elected to go back to work in the next race. How often does something like that happen in hockey or football or basketball?

One thing that never happens in other major sports

is women beating men on a level playing field. We have a story of several events that happened on June 10 that demonstrate the importance of females in horse racing. Trainer Jena Antonucci sent out Arcangelo to win the Belmont Stakes, becoming the first woman to win a Triple Crown Race. Earlier that same day, jockeys Emma-Jayne Wilson, Skye Chernetz and Sofia Vives won races at Woodbine. Later that night, harness trainers Linda Toscano and Nancy Takter combined to win 3 of the 4 elimination heats for the North America Cup. And, almost at the same time that happened, Lauren Tritton drove longshot, Lochinvar Art (\$38.60) to a surprise win in the \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie at Northfield Park in Ohio. You'll find that story in these pages.

You will also find documentation of the races from June 3 at Woodbine, when 4 apprentice jockeys won races. You could bury yourself in years of charts from major racetracks and never see this again. Sofia Vives won 2 races and Amanda Vandermeersch won one, reinforcing our theme of ladies in the winner's circle. Oh – Desean Bynoe also won a race, which proves that male jockeys can compete with the women.

If you want an example of a male jockey exceeding expectations, we present Patrick Husbands to you. Wracked by injuries toward the end of 2021, Husband announced his retirement. He un-renounced in 2022 and has started 2023 with remarkable results. We say remarkable because he turned 50 in May and because the list of boo-boos his body has absorbed would make lesser men and women spend the rest of their lives in a La-Z-Boy with a bowl of chips and a beer nearby.

Amazing things in the sport of horse racing? How about a guy named Matt Kakaley? He's one of the best harness drivers in North America, but what he recently did one night at Yonkers Raceway is off the charts. Kakaley drove in all 10 races, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> and won all other 9 races.

Then there's Robert "Red" McKenzie. He sent out a mare named Entitled Star to win a race at Century Mile on June 26. Entitled Star is 10 years old. McKenzie is 96.

We got our editorial undies in a knot on Belmont Stakes day. We were *so* looking forward to hearing the great Tom Durkin calling the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of the Triple Crown. But Fox TV executed an epic blunder by leaving the crowd sound so loud, Tom Durkin could not be heard.

All those stories above can be found in the pages of this issue. We also have our regular features, like the 3 Owners of the Month. Stacey Van Camp married the trainer of her thoroughbreds, but trust us, she calls the shots. Jeff Gillis, our Standardbred Owner, is a guy who has experienced great triumphs and the bitter tragedy of the game. And Quarter Horse Owner, Brad Clark recently had the thrill of seeing his first horse win for the first time.

We have coverage of all the Stakes races at Woodbine, as horses prepare for the August 25 King's Plate and to emphasize that, our layout artist, Gord Steventon created our first King's Plate cartoon. And for the 137<sup>th</sup> time, we have a full page of Oddities and Entities, including a hungry horse getting a snack in mid-race, a rodent who found the best place to watch the races, a jockey winning a race after his reins snapped and – so appropriate for the back end of this paper – a horse whose name somehow slipped the censors, made all the more obvious when you see the last name of its owner and trainer.

Oh, and I told you to pay special attention to the picture at the top of this page. I ask you – name a professional sports team that still has the same two stars it did 15 years ago. We put Patrick Husbands and Emma-Jayne Wilson on our cover in 2008 and we're still writing about their amazing conquests today.

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# It Was a Great Day for Women

International Women's Day was officially March 8, but we could easily assign Saturday June 10 as a day when women made remarkable international history in horse racing. Let's break it down chronologically.



Skye Chernetz

The 3<sup>rd</sup> race at Woodbine that Saturday went off at 2:09. It was a 5-furlong dash with a field of 7 fillies and mares, all of whom could be claimed for \$7,500. Skye Chernetz was riding Olympic Fencer, a 4-year-old filly trained by Abraham Katryan, and Chernetz gave her



Sofia Vives

The 8<sup>th</sup> race that day, off at 4:40 was an optional claimer with a purse of \$61,800 and eight 3-year-old fillies went 6 furlongs on the turf. The result was surprising to most as apprentice jockey, Sofia Vives tore away in the stretch to win by 6 1/2 lengths aboard Cahira's Blessing for trainer Mark Casse. The filly won for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 6 tries and paid \$37.10. Vives is making a favourable impression at Woodbine. That was her 9<sup>th</sup> win out of 73 assignments.



Emma-Jayne Wilson

The 10<sup>th</sup> and final race on that card was at 7 furlongs on the dirt, and it attracted a field of 11 fillies and mares hoping for a major chunk of \$111,000. This race went off at 5:52. Emma-Jayne Wilson parlayed a 5-wide turn into the stretch with Devils' Bit into victory by 3/4 of a length for trainer Roger Attfield. Devil's Bit is a 4-year-old filly winning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 9 races and she paid \$18.80.

So, there were 3 female jockeys winning with 3 fillies on a pleasant afternoon at Woodbine. About 74 minutes later, the gates for the 155<sup>th</sup> Belmont Stakes sprung open and 2:29.23 after that, Arcangelo had crossed the wire, a winner by 1 1/2 lengths thanks to a rail-skimming move by Javier Castellano. The winning trainer is Jena Antonucci who is the first woman to train a victorious Triple Crown horse. Arcangelo is owned by Blue Rose Farm which put up a \$50,000 supplemental fee to enter the race. The win ticket was \$17.80 and there were many more female triumphs to go on that Saturday night.

Mohawk Raceway featured 4 eliminations for the \$1 million North America Cup. The first heat, off at 7:45 was won by Christchurch, who was given a perfect drive



Nancy Takter

from Dexter Dunn. Christchurch won for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in 9 races and paid \$9.50. The winning trainer was Nancy Takter who pushed her win total to 693.

Race 5 sprang out of the gates at 8:30 and the winner



Linda Toscano

of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NA Cup elimination was Fulton, also driven by Dexter Dunn. Fulton is trained by Linda Toscano,

and this was the 2,489<sup>th</sup> harness racing win for Toscano. Fulton notched a 9<sup>th</sup> win in his 13<sup>th</sup> heat and paid \$5.30.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> NA CUP elimination started at 9:20 and It's My Show, driven forwardly by Scott Zeron gave Toscano her 2<sup>nd</sup> win of the night and the 2,490<sup>th</sup> of her career. It's My Show led all the way for his 5<sup>th</sup> win in 13, producing a \$4.70 win ticket. So, 3 of the 4 North American Cup eliminations had the DNA of lady trainers on them, but the most impressive win by a woman on this historic Saturday was yet to come.

Northfield park in Ohio had a monster card of harness racing and the feature race, the 11<sup>th</sup> on a 15-race night was the \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie which went off at 10:35. When Ruthless Hanover, the 1-2 favourite broke stride into the first turn, the race set up for an upset. Lauren Tritton was driving the 4-horse, Lochinvar Art, who despite winning 33 of his first 67 races, went off at 18-1. This was strong company and he had come in off 6 straight losses. But Tritton set Lochinvar up perfectly, getting a second over spot down the backstretch and moving 3-wide into the stretch. Lochinvar Art was powerful through the lane and won by more than a length in a career-best 1.50. That \$2 win ticket was worth \$38.60, and Lauren Tritton became the first female driver to win the Battle of Lake Erie in the 37<sup>th</sup> version of the race. She is certainly a driver to watch in a sport that



Lauren Tritton

doesn't offer many good opportunities for women who want to steer pacers and trotters. This was the 50<sup>th</sup> win in Tritton's 174<sup>th</sup> race, which means she's winning at an excellent rate of over 31%. Her U.D.R.S, a complicated rating that weighs firsts, seconds, and thirds, is .400. That is a phenomenal number. Dexter Dunn, considered the best driver in the U.S. has a U.D.R.S. of .302, Tim Tetrick is at .337 and James MacDonald, the best driver in Canada gets a .341.



Jena Antonucci Winner at Belmont



# Woodbine Stakes

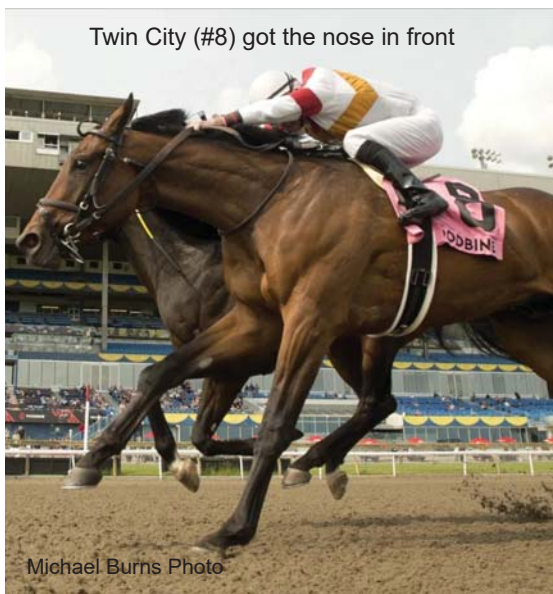
## May 20, \$120,000 Ruling Angel Stakes:



It was compact field of 6 for the 7-furlong trip, but at the end it was clear that Ryder Ryder Ryder was much the best. With Patrick Husbands riding for trainer Mark Casse, Ryder Ryder Ryder assessed the situation early from 5<sup>th</sup>, as Collecting Flatter (Kazushi Kimura) led the field through a hasty half in :43.76. When Husbands pressed the “go” button, the response was impressive, as Ryder Ryder Ryder galloped past rivals with impunity, had the lead when the field straightened for home, and expanded his advantage with each stride, hitting the wire 7 lengths the best in 1:21.79.

Ryder Ryder Ryder is owned by Live Oak Plantation and with his 2<sup>nd</sup> win in 3 tries, he paid \$6.50.

## May 21, \$100,000 King Corrie Stakes:



The 3-year-old Twin City, who lost his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> career races by a head, had the photo finish go his way in a thrilling edition of the 7-furlong King Corrie Stakes. Under Gary Boulanger, Twin City was 2<sup>nd</sup> most of the way, tracking the early pace of Keen Flatter (Sahin Civaci). As the field turned for home, Twin City and the 3-5 favourite, Wico (Kazushi Kimura) moved to the front and down the stretch, neither had any quit. At the wire, heads were bobbing and the judges, after looking at the photo, gave the win to Twin City by the narrowest of noses. The winner is

trained by Stuart Simon and owned by Simon in conjunction with Brent, Russell, and Roy McLellan. Twin City improved to 2 wins and 4 seconds in 6 races and paid \$23.10.

## June 3, \$211,000 Royal North Stakes:

Ten older fillies and mares went 6 ½ furlongs on the turf and Our Flash Drive proved she deserved to be the even-money favourite. With Patrick Husbands aboard, Our Flash Drive stalked longshot Forest Drift (Daisuke Fukumoto) from 2<sup>nd</sup> most of the way, accelerated 4-wide into the stretch and galloped to the wire a winner by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:13.88, less than a second off the course record. Our Flash Drive is trained by Mark Casse for Live Oak Plantation and with her 7<sup>th</sup> win in 16 races, she paid \$4.30.

## June 3, \$180,00 Belle Mahone Stakes:

Patrick Husbands continues to show he’s still an elite rider. Moira, the 2023 Canadian Horse of the Year took most of the action, going off at .30 in this mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> test, but Husbands, having perused the form, realized there was very little speed in the field, so he was determined to “walk” his filly, Souper Hoity Toity, and the plan was executed perfectly. Souper Hoity Toity led throughout, cutting very easy fractions of :25.26, :50.75 and 1:14.87. That meant that when Moira (Kazushi Kimura) came calling, Souper Hoity Toity had enough left to win by a neck in 1:44.49. The 4-year-old filly won for the 6<sup>th</sup> time in 10 races and that’s a gift to get a \$13.70 win ticket on a horse ridden by Husbands in a Stakes race for Mark Casse and Live Oak Plantation.

## June 4, \$101,500 Pink Lloyd Stakes:



A field of 11 went 6 furlongs trying to emulate the great sprinter Pink Lloyd and it was Keven Nicholls who orchestrated a front-running victory with the 6-year-old Rockcrest. Nicholls took the speedy gelding straight to the top and by carving out sensible splits of :23.46 and :45.53, the pair was full of energy for the final furlong, prevailing by 2 lengths over the 6-5 betting choice, Candy Overload. The winning owner/trainer is Nigel Burke, and this was Nicholls’ first win at Woodbine this year after a 0 for 28 start. Rockcrest won for the 7<sup>th</sup> time in 26 races and paid \$14.80.

## June 4, \$175,000 Eclipse Stakes:

Older horses went a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> and the 5-year-old gelding, Treason was rated perfectly by Kazushi Kimura. Treason stalked from 3<sup>rd</sup>, moved to the lead after a 4-wide move on the turn and powered away from rivals in the



final 16<sup>th</sup> to win by 1 ½ lengths. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> win on the card for the track’s leading rider. Josie Carroll is the trainer for LNJ Foxwoods and MSK Racing Ventures. Treason has raced just 7 times, and this was his 3<sup>rd</sup> win. He paid \$14.60.

## June 10, \$125,000 Fury Stakes:



A field of nine 3-year-old fillies erupted from the gate for this 7 furlong race and Patrick Husbands rode Ticker Tape Home in an aggressive come get me fashion. Husbands had the lead at the first call with the filly and carved out professional fractions of :45.83 and 1:09.41. That was fast enough to stay in front, but not so swift as to debilitate his filly. Ticker Tape Home was alone by 4 lengths at the wire in the excellent time of 1:22.15. This was the 4<sup>th</sup> Stakes win this year at Woodbine for Husbands (no other rider has more than 1) and all his Stakes wins have been for trainer Mark Casse and the owners Live Oak Plantation. Ticker Tape Home won for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 8 races and paid \$5.30.

## June 11, \$127,000 Queenston Stakes:

There were a dozen 3-year-olds in this race, considered a prelude to the King’s Plate. The distance was 7 furlongs and Paramount Prince under Patrick Husbands tried to lead all the way, but Kaukokaipuu, ridden by Rico Walcott came from 5<sup>th</sup> at the head of the stretch and, after extricating himself from traffic, found a clear path in the middle of the track and romped by late to post victory





**June 10, \$125,000 Fury Stakes:**

A field of nine 3-year-old fillies erupted from the gate for this 7 furlong race and Patrick Husbands rode Ticker Tape Home in an aggressive come get me fashion. Husbands had the lead at the first call with the filly and carved out

**June 24, \$100,000 Ballade Stakes:**

A field of 10 older fillies and mares contested this one at 6 furlongs. The 7-5 betting choice was Miss Speedy, and she got an appropriate winning ride from Sahin Civaci. Miss Speedy stalked the early pace of Ol' Blondie (Emma-Jayne Wilson) who got the first half mile in :45.07. By the time the field turned for home, Civaci had Miss Speedy on the lead, and she would kick clear down the lane to win by almost 3 lengths in 1:09.07. Miss Speedy is trained by Mark Casse for owner Gary Barber and this was her 5<sup>th</sup> win in 12 races. She paid \$4.90.

**June 25, \$100,000 Alywow Stakes:**



The favourite among seven 3-year-old fillies in this 6 1/2 furlong dash was Ryder Ryder Ryder, who went off at 8-5, but didn't hit the board. It was Mohawk Trail, running on synthetic for the first time who got a patient ride from imported Adam Beschizza, to win in come-from-behind fashion. Mohawk Trail was 4<sup>th</sup> and among horses after the half was passed in a leisurely :47.2 by longshot, Collecting Flatter (Luis Contreras). Beschizza had to wait until about mid-stretch to get out of a pocket and when he did, Mohawk Trail was full of run, passing rivals and winning by 3/4 of a length in 1:15.65. Beschizza was brought north by trainer Kelsey Danner for NBS Stable. This was Mohawk Trail's 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 8 starts and she paid \$23.10.

# Canada Day Festival:

Woodbine celebrated Canada's 156<sup>th</sup> birthday with a massive card that included 5 Stakes races. First



up was the \$180,000 **Marine Stakes** for 3-year-olds at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>. This King's Plate lead-up attracted a field of 8. Kazushi Kimura was aboard the even money favourite, Turf King, who lived up to his name under a perfectly timed steer. Kazushi had Turf King 5<sup>th</sup> after half a mile but galloping comfortably. With an inside move as the field entered the stretch, Turf King saved valuable ground and despite being slightly bumped by a late-running Kaukokaipuu (Rico Walcott), Turf King was best at the wire by 1/2 a length. Chad Brown is the trainer, and the 3-year-old colt is owned by Wise Racing. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 4 races for Turf King who paid just \$4.10.

Next up was the \$180,000 **Selene Stakes** for fillies, also at a mile and a quarter. This race often serves as an indicator for the Woodbine Oaks, and there were nine 3-year-olds in this one. Wonder Wheel, under Patrick Husbands was the 3-5 choice, but that one had a miserable trip and finished 8<sup>th</sup>. It was Solo Album and Sahin Civaci



who surprised at over 9-1. Solo Album moved past rivals as the field headed for home and pulled away to win by a convincing 6 1/4 lengths in 1:42.65. The winning trainer is Mark Casse for Eclipse Thoroughbred partners, Gary Barber and Steven Rocco. Solo Album improved to 2 for 7 and paid a very un-Casse-esque \$21.10.

Nine older horses contested the **Highlander Stakes**, worth \$240,000 at 6 furlongs on the turf, and Civaci



Michael Burns Photo

doubled up with an even more unlikely surprise. The 5-year-old gelding, Lucky Score erupted from last down the backstretch to win by a half length in 1:07.86, less than a second off the course record. Lucky Score is also trained by Mark Casse and owned by Pantofel Stable. Despite the fact this was his 6<sup>th</sup> win in 15 races, Lucky Score paid \$30.60.

The appropriately named **Dominion Day Stakes** offered \$180,000 to older horses who believed they could prosper at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>. Rafael Hernandez was able to slingshot Tyson from 7<sup>th</sup> halfway through to a nice battle



Michael Burns Photo

in the stretch with the 3-2 favourite, Treason (Kazushi Kimura). As that pair neared the finish line, Tyson inched away for the 1 1/2 length win. Trained by Josie Carroll and owned by Hill 'n' Dale Equine and Stretch Run ventures, Tyson paid \$10.30 to win.



Michael Burns Photo

And the final Stakes of the day was the \$320,000 **Nassau Stakes** for older fillies and mares going one mile on the grass. The reigning Horse of the Year, Moira was bet down to .90, but it was Fev Rover under Patrick Husbands who prevailed. The 5-year-old Fev Rover made an eye-catching move from last down the backstretch, saved ground by hugging the rail into the lane, and when clear was much the best finding the wire 4 1/2 lengths ahead of a late-moving Moira in the unusually slow time of 1:40.03, more than 8 seconds off the record for a mile on the grass. Feb Rover gave Casse his 3<sup>rd</sup> Stakes win of the afternoon. Tracy Farmer is the owner and Fev Rover, winning for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in 15 races paid \$9.10.



# Ajax Downs Wrap for June 28 by Jennifer Morrison



Two-year-old General Skywalker, making just his second career start, proved best in the first running of the \$36,360 Stallion Auction Futurity Stakes at Ajax Downs on a warm and windy June 28 afternoon. The eighth day of the Quarter Horse meeting at Ajax Downs also featured the final of the new “Never Better Than 79” Unclassified Maturity, which was won in a mild upset by

James Bogar’s Cheeko Malo, an Ontario-bred who was winning for the first time in the \$31,320 dash.

General Skywalker, a son of Ontario stallion Look At Magics Form, came into the Stallion Auction Futurity off a second-place finish in his career debut for owner and breeder Marie Broadstock and trainer Bob Broadstock. The big gelding, ridden by Ramiro Castillo, maintained his composure during a delay at the gate when race favourite Senator Rose was a late scratch, and ran down first-time starter Wicked Wild Willie to win the 250-yard dash by half a length in a time of 14.093 into a strong headwind.

“He’s a really cool horse. He takes everything in stride,” said Broadstock, who credited his team including Brian Samis, Don Reid, and jockeys Rachael Isaacs and Castillo for the victory. “The stallion auction will continue in 2024. It’s a great way to get into Ontario racing.”

Look At Magics Form, owned by Chantelle Bourgeois,

has 11 winners from 12 starters in an auspicious beginning to his stallion career.

The co-featured Unclassified/Never Better than 79 Maturity Stakes, was won by Cheeko Malo, who broke his maiden against a good field going 330 yards. The big bay 3-year-old, ridden by Diego Benitez, rallied from post position nine and won by three-quarters of a length at 5 to 1 over Krash On Okey.

Bred by James Bogar, who owns Cameron Steel in Lindsay, ON, Cheeko Malo had finished second by a neck in one of two Trials for the Unclassified Maturity.

“I thought his Trial race was strong and I expected him to have a good chance of winning,” said Bogar, who runs his own horse, began training his stable this year, and won four races on the June 18 card at Ajax Downs.

“I like to have control of my horses but hats off to my assistant Nicole Clark. She really does all the work.”

## Jim Lawson and the Casino Expansion

The huge new casino at Woodbine officially opened on June 20. A bigger place to gamble may be tempting news to many, but for the last couple of decades, the acreage around Woodbine was the largest undeveloped piece of property in the GTA. As far back as 2008, plans for Woodbine Live were revealed, but that project fell through, thanks to a toxic mix of bad partners and greedy politics. Woodbine CEO Jim Lawson will be stepping down in the fall, but he’s obviously proud that this expansion occurred under his watch. **Down The Stretch** got Lawson talking about the new casino and the other projects built on the Woodbine site.

### **Lawson:**

It’s the largest casino in Canada. It’s one of the largest in North America with 328,000 square feet of gaming space and 4,500 slot machines and sports betting. The new music center is coming probably this fall, and we will have a 400 room hotel that overlooks the stretch at Woodbine. All of this is expected to bring 12 million visitors annually to the Woodbine property. We’ve always said that horse racing will be at the core of the Woodbine property, and the challenge to our marketing team and our guest experience team is to grab many of those 12 million people and bring them over to watch and wager on horse racing.

### **Down The Stretch:**

Are you able to reveal the financial arrangement between Woodbine and Great Canadian in terms of how much of the gambling revenue is poured back into horse racing?

### **Lawson:**

There is a participation rent based on revenues going back many years. As the revenues increase, it certainly will sustain horse racing and help Woodbine with its huge overhead. It’s a good arrangement for us in the sense that there’s a land lease there that assures we will now be sustainable for the next 40 years.

### **Down The Stretch:**

In a press release generated by Woodbine, there’s a reference to the fact that this new casino will enable Woodbine to survive without government supplemental funds.

### **Lawson:**

That’s our goal. As to when that will happen, we can’t

predict. A lot of it is tied to the pace with which their gross gaming revenue increases. The money we receive from the government gets reduced dollar for dollar. But when our revenues get high enough that we don’t need any sort of government subsidy – and we’re hoping that’s in the next 3 to 5 years, then we would be in a position to no longer be tied to the government and its restrictions. In fairness to the government, I think they would be happy to see us go off on our own and be able to operate without any sort of government support.

### **Down The Stretch:**

This casino comes with a hotel with 400 rooms, many of which overlook the racetrack. Is that unique? Does this happen anywhere else in the world?

### **Lawson:**

The racetrack in Dubai, which I’ve been to, has a hotel overlooking the racetrack. That’s the only one that comes to mind for me.

### **Down The Stretch:**

Can we assume that having a hotel right on the racetrack premises will be very appealing to people who bring their horses in for some of your signature races?

### **Lawson:**

I hope so. Interestingly enough, according to the developers of the hotel, you’re not going to envision big presidential suites. The rooms are all pretty standard. There aren’t any VIP rooms for the big gamblers, unlike what you’ll find with most casino resort hotels around the world.

### **Down The Stretch:**

How difficult was the battle for political favour for this casino project?

### **Lawson:**

When the slots at the racetrack program was pulled in 2013, the entire horse racing industry and Woodbine Entertainment was in a very difficult position. We went out independently of the OLG and fought for casino zoning and table games at Woodbine. There were competing sites, one being Ontario place, one being downtown Toronto. And we had to go out and get the zoning on our own and work with the city council members that were in favour of gambling. I can assure you,

with city council, there were a lot of anti-gambling people. I think we won by one vote.

### **Down The Stretch:**

Can you tell us about the 5,000 seat theater and what kind of acts will be there?

### **Lawson:**

I don’t want to date myself, but there are a lot of really good acts from the ‘70s, maybe even the ‘60s that will attract crowds in the 5,000-seat range. The casino operator is going to bring in big acts. I understand that they’re planning on bringing in a big name act for opening night which is expected to be in early fall. Woodbine has access to it as part of our lease for many nights of the year. So, we’re going to figure out how we can use it to benefit racing and have our own events there. So, we can use that space for events surrounding the King’s Plate, the Woodbine Mile weekend, Kentucky Derby, and other potential events that we could hold in this music facility.

### **Down The Stretch:**

Name your favourite rock band.

### **Lawson:**

I’d have to say Bruce Springsteen and his E Street Band. That would be my favourite.

### **Down The Stretch:**

Considering that you’re retiring as CEO in the fall, is this going to be at the top of your resumé as something you did that you’re really proud of?

### **Lawson:**

Absolutely. I’m not doing it to create a legacy, and it hasn’t been just me. It’s been the work of a lot of hard working people and a big team. I think 25 years from now when the 683 acres which composes the Woodbine property is a major city within a city, that growth will help to support horse racing. I joined the board of Woodbine, and I formed a real estate committee, and we negotiated our way out of the deal with the Cordish Group of Woodbine Live. And I’ve been working 15 years on this. There was a vision there to serve Rexdale and Etobicoke and the province of Ontario, but particularly the sport of horse racing and now it’s going to benefit it for generations and I’m very proud of that.



ON AIR

# DOWN THE STRETCH



A Podcast with Peter Gross



# RACETRACK HUMOUR



Perry & Mooch

*The King's Plate, Woodbine Racetrack,  
August 20, 2023*

Camilla!  
There are Horses  
on my Plate!



WIN  
MAR  
23



# Tom Durkin called the 2023 Belmont Stakes



The legendary Tom Durkin was lured out of a 9-year retirement to call the Belmont and other races on the June 10 card. For knowledgeable racing fans, Durkin didn't just raise the bar – he *was* the bar. His calls were dynamic, authoritative, and always entertaining. He told you where every horse was, alerted you when the favourite was in deep water and expressed a fan's emotion when a horse came flying late out of nowhere.

Now 72, Durkin's career took him from county fairs in Wisconsin to Thistletown, Florida Downs, Balmoral, Hialeah, the Meadowlands, Gulfstream Park and finally, in 1990, to the three dominant racetracks in New York State – Aqueduct, Belmont and Saratoga. After calling the Spinaway Stakes on August 31, 2014, Durkin retired. *Down The Stretch* got him on the phone to talk about his engagement with Fox TV for the 2023 Belmont Stakes.

**Down The Stretch:**

Tom Durkin, there are people in the world who would just be thrilled to have a conversation with Paul McCartney and probably other individuals who, if they were able to talk to Elon Musk would consider that a memorable event. As a lifelong horse player, being able to talk to you is very exciting.

**Durkin:**

Well, I'm, I'm quite flattered. I'm no Elon Musk and I certainly don't have his bank account or his brains.

**Down The Stretch:**

How did the Belmont call this year come about?

**Durkin:**

Actually, about a year ago, I was at the Belmont and one of the guys from Fox said, "What do you think? We've got the Belmont next year for the first time." I didn't really think about it much at the time, but then the idea grew on

me and here we were.

**Down The Stretch:**

I had the great pleasure of being at Saratoga for your last race call on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014. It doesn't seem that long ago. So, the question is, what have you been doing for nine years?

**Durkin:**

I went back to school and got my college degree. I taught a course in public speaking, and I played a lot of golf. I'm also on several boards here at the track. That keeps me busy. And I do a little voiceover work now and then. So, I was pretty busy, but not completely fulfilled. I needed a challenge, especially after Covid. Covid put a damper on everything. So frankly, I got a little bored and I was just delighted that this came along because I found out that it is a challenge. I was practicing race calling here at Belmont for most of the week before the Belmont and I can tell you it's not like riding a bike.

**Down The Stretch:**

As someone who projects great confidence and authority during a race call, it's notable that you decided to stop calling the Kentucky Derby after 2011, citing anxiety. Can you elaborate on that?

**Durkin:**

It was just a tension convention. I was dealing with stress. I did everything I could do to get away from it – self hypnosis, beta blocker drugs that stop too much adrenaline getting in your system, and I just was not enjoying the exercise. It kept me awake at night, so I just decided to walk away from it and I'm glad I did.

**Down The Stretch:**

According to your bio, you were born in November 1950. Is that correct?

**Durkin:**

November 30th.

**Down The Stretch:**

I was born July 1950. I'm actually older than you. So, I've listened to many, many race callers. There's overwhelming consensus that I certainly agree with that you are the greatest race caller of all time. The GLOAT. How do you react when people tell you that?

**Durkin:**

There's an old Latin phrase, "de gustibus non est disputandum," which means, "concerning taste, there's no dispute." It's just a matter of taste. Nobody told me I was a great racetrack announcer when I was calling \$2,500 claimers 10 times a night at Cahokia Downs, you know, so what you have to work with really makes a big, big difference.

**Down The Stretch:**

When you called races, you came across as someone who is the ultimate professional, but there is a mischievous, silly side to Tom Durkin. For example, there was a race at Aqueduct where a thick fog completely descended on the track. As the horses went down the backstretch, you got a little sarcastic, saying, "Oh look at the sight of that. That is absolutely beautiful, horses in flight." Do you remember that call?

**Durkin:**

Oh, yeah, that, that happened a few times at because it's right on Jamaica Bay there and they get fogged in every now and then.

**Down The Stretch:**

And that was probably before any of the horses had those electronic chicklets in their saddlebags.

**Durkin:**

Oh, long before that. Yes.

Then there was a race at Saratoga and the race was won by a horse named Arrrrr and as the horse hit the wire, you bellowed out his name like a pirate who had just discovered a huge chest of gold.

**Durkin:**

Yeah, that was a little over the top. But you got to go with it. Are you going to play that straight? The horse's name is Arrrrr, but one thing I will say when you're dealing with humour, you have to be very careful. You have to use it judiciously because people are betting, but it's still in its essence entertainment.

**Down The Stretch:**

And back in 1989, very early in your career, at a race at Hialeah, there was a horse called Yakahickamickadola. And you obviously made the decision not to nail that horse's name.

**Durkin:**

Oh yeah, quite on purpose, I screwed it up 10 ways to Sunday. How are you going to play that? If you played it straight, I think you'd sound pretty foolish. I went with "Hickadackamackarockadol," then I tried "Dickamickahackarockadola" and the third time it came out "Dollerrollerrolarockadolamolahola." *During his 43 year career, Tom Durkin called over 80,000 races.*



# History and Emotion in the 155<sup>th</sup> Belmont Stakes



With the thought of a Triple Crown sweep vanquished weeks before, the Belmont Stakes turned out to be everything the New York Racing Association could have hoped for. Best of all, it was a good race, won by an underdog who got a great ride from a veteran jockey.

The betting for the 9-horse field was nicely spread out. Forte, the Todd Pletcher trainee who had to be withdrawn from the Kentucky Derby, was installed as the lukewarm 2-1 choice, with the bettors also considering Angel of Empire (3.45-1), Tapit Trice (5.30-1), and Preakness champion, National Treasure (5.70-1). None of those horses got it done, because Arcangelo under Javier Castellano, proved again that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

John Velazquez had National Treasure leading for at least a mile and a quarter of this 12-furlong test, with Hit Show (Manny Franco) and Tapit Shoes (José Ortiz) close early on. Forte under Irad Ortiz never seemed to be a serious threat. With about ¾ of a mile to go, Castellano squeezed Arcangelo up the inside of National Treasure, and in increments pushed past to take the lead with a quarter mile left. Forte had a little energy late to pass the tiring horse and get 2<sup>nd</sup> by a nose, but Arcangelo was alone by 1 ½ lengths at the wire in 2:29.23, more than 5 seconds off the track record set in 1973 by Secretariat in this race.

The history here has to do with the trainer, Jena Antonucci who became the first female to train the winner of a Triple Crown race. This was also Castellano's first Belmont win in his 15<sup>th</sup> try.

The owners of the horse, Blue Rose Farm deserve props as well. Arcangelo, who had raced just 4 times previously had to be supplemented to the Belmont at a cost of \$50,000. That turned out to be a brilliant gamble – the

winner's share was \$900,000.

There's a wonderful viral video of Antonucci as she was watching the race. She's looking at a large screen and as Castellano guided Arcangelo to the winning path, Antonucci is screaming,

"Go Javy! Go Javy!" When her horse has grabbed a clear lead late in the stretch, Antonucci turns towards the track, exploding in ecstasy. That moment expresses everything that is great in horse racing.

"They say there's no crying in baseball, but they never said it about horse racing," Antonucci said when surrounded by reporters after the race, her eyes wet with emotion.

Arcangelo went off at almost 8-1 and his brief racing form results would seem to justify the fans lack of interest. He ran 3 Maiden Special Weights before breaking through, and his only other win came in his 4<sup>th</sup> race, a nice-looking come-from-behind victory by a head in the \$200,000 Peter Pan Stakes at Belmont on May 13. Although Blue Rose Farm owner, Jon Ebbert could have had his pick of the top trainers in the sport, he stuck with Antonucci.

Ebbert acquired Arcangelo for the bargain basement price of \$35,000 at the 2021 Keeneland September Yearling Sale and on multiple occasions was offered much more to sell the horse. Ebbert referred all bidders to Antonucci.

"Her phone rang non-stop," said Ebbert. "I kind of used her as a buffer. They called her and she said, 'Stop right there, the horse isn't for sale.'"

Antonucci rode horses as a younger woman and before getting her trainer's licence, worked as a veterinary assistant. She discovered early that being a lady trainer comes with few perks.

"It's been overcoming adversities," said Antonucci. "You go through growing, and your career and you take it

on the chin, and you fight for that spot. You feel you have to prove your worth, but horses don't care. They don't care who you are. They know who you are and to have a horse believe in you and your team."

Arcangelo's Belmont win was his 3<sup>rd</sup> in 5 races, and he paid \$17.80.

## Cody's Wish

The best story in horse racing wrote another thrilling chapter two races before the Belmont. It was the \$1,000,000 Met Mile for 3-Year-Olds and up, and the heavy favourite, pari-mutually and emotionally was Cody's Wish. The 5-year-old son of Curlin is named for teenager Cody Dorman. Dorman was born with Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome, a rare genetic disorder affecting many body parts. He uses a wheelchair and cannot speak, but communicates brilliantly through his computer. Four years ago, Gainsborough Farm in Versailles, Kentucky invited the Dorman family to their premises and Cody struck up a remarkable friendship with an unnamed foal. The baby horse's keepers were so impressed they named it Cody's Wish. In his first 3 races, Cody's Wish finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, so Cody Dorman, through his computerized speaking device insisted that his parents take him to Churchill Downs for the horse's next race. "He won't win until I'm there in person," said Cody. And Cody's Wish won that day and 7 of his next 8 races, including the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile at which Cody and his family were special winner's circle guests. The Dorman family live in Kentucky, so transporting Cody to New York for the Belmont was not practical, but dad, Kelly attended on his son's behalf. In the Met Mile, jockey Junior Alvarado had Cody's Wish 8<sup>th</sup> in the 9-horse field down the backstretch, but the rider knew the pace up front was hot and around the far turn, he started to gather up momentum 3-wide. As the field straightened for home, Cody's Wish was on the outside and gobbling up his rivals. Well before the wire, he was the clear winner and he hit the finish line 3 ¼ lengths the best in 1:34.36. That win improved his record to 9 wins in 13 races with over 2.3 million earned.

## How Fox Wrecked Its Own Broadcast

It was great news when Fox TV told us that legendary race caller, Tom Durkin (retired since 2014) would be describing the Belmont and other races on the card. But everyone involved needs to hang their collective heads in shame over the way Durkin's calls were presented. It's not as if Fox has never covered a sports event before. Job one is to mitigate the sound of the crowd so that listeners at home can hear the broadcast clearly. Instead, Durkin's vocal observations were drowned out by the roar of the crowd, and because the Belmont inspired the greatest audible outpouring from the fans, it was impossible to figure out what Durkin was saying. Fortunately, this problem distressed only those watching Fox. For those at the track, and those watching on Woodbine's HPI for example, the excellent call of John Imbriale came through loud and clear.



# North America Cup # 40

On a perfect June 17 late spring night at Mohawk Park, the racing card featuring the 40<sup>th</sup> North America Cup had both thrills and spills.



Its My Show

New Image Media Photos

The \$1 million feature was the 11<sup>th</sup> race on a monster 13-race card, and it featured a great drive by Scott Zeron. Zeron was paired with the second choice, Its My Show and Zeron let the 3-year-old colt sit temporarily in 2<sup>nd</sup> through a sharp first quarter of :25.4 etched by Save America and Yannick Gingras. As the field straightened down the backstretch, Zeron right lined Its My Show, who paced effortlessly to the lead, reaching the half mile in :54.

“My horse can leave faster than anything I ever drove, and then at the same time I can calm him down if I ask him to,” said Zeron. “I was confident that I could start him up as hard as I did and was able to seat a bunch of horses. To be able to remove and control from there was great for me.”

Control was the operative word. After passing  $\frac{3}{4}$  in 1:20.4, Its My Show was being mildly hounded by Fulton (Dexter Dunn) on the outside. But just a few strides into the lane, Its My Show had shrugged off Fulton only to have the 7-5 favourite, Confederate (Tim Tetrick) come roaring from way back, chewing up ground at an impressive rate. Fortunately for Its My Show, the wire came just in time – he held on by a quickly diminishing head in 1:47.4.

“Fulton was giving me a hell of a run in the last turn,” said Zeron. “And I figured Timmy [Tetrick, driving Confederate] had to be right behind him with how great Confederate is. I knew it was going to come right down to the finish.”

Linda Toscano is the winning trainer, and this was her first North America Cup.

“He’s an amazing horse,” said Toscano. “He disappointed me so much last year, but he’s come back, and he’s been nothing less than perfect.”

Toscano is the 6<sup>th</sup> female trainer out of the last 9 years to train the winner of this race. She joins Kathy Chechin,



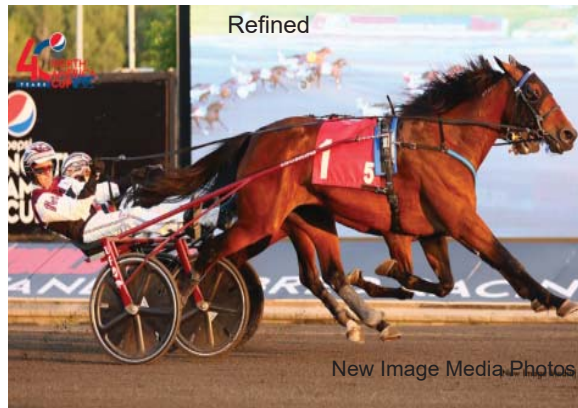
Southwind Coors

New Image Media Photos

Nancy Taketer, Nancy Johannson, Casie Coleman, and Joann Looney-King.

Zeron won the N.A. Cup for Johannson in 2019 with Captain Crunch. Its My Show ran his 2023 record to 6-0 after failing to win at all as a 2-year-old. He paid \$8.50 to win.

This was one of 3 races Scott Zeron won that night. He also prevailed by the slimmest of margins in the \$250,000 Goodtimes Final for 3-year-old trotting colts and geldings. Zeron and Southwind Coors hooked up in the lane with the 3-5 favourite Gaines Hanover (Louis-Philippe Roy) and neither of the two horses would



Refined

New Image Media Photos

concede. At the wire, there were visually inseparable, but the photo gave it to Southwind Coors by a barely perceptible nose in 1:52. It was just his 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 16 tries and Southwind Coors paid \$12.10. Zeron capped his excellent night at Mohawk by taking down the 13<sup>th</sup> race of the night with Jaberwocky, a 4-year-old gelding, appropriately owned in part by his father, Scott.

Another driver, Doug McNair also featured prominently on Cup night. McNair contributed a brilliant drive to win the \$210,000 Armbró Flight Final



Abuckabett Hanover

New Image Media Photos

for Trotting Fillies and Mares. In that race, the 1-4 favourite, Bella Bellini looked ready to win by opening up 2 lengths in mid-stretch. But McNair had Refined rolling late, passing rivals, and nailing Bella Bellini right at wire to win by a head in 1:52. Refined is a 7-year-old mare with 34 wins in 95 starts. She is trained by Virgil Morgan and owned by Joyce McClelland and Larry Wills. She paid \$16.30.

So that was good for McNair. The 8<sup>th</sup> race was the \$100,000 Mohawk Gold Cup. McNair was teamed with Wheels On Fire. As the field came into the stretch, Billy Clyde (Mark MacDonald) broke stride. That started a chain collision in which Waytothebeach (Travis Cullen) and Wheels On Fire fell, tossing their drivers to the track. Neither of the two horses was seriously hurt and there appeared to be no permanent damage to either Cullen or McNair, though the latter did book off the rest of his drives. The winner was Abuckabett Hanover



Grace Hill

New Image Media Photos

driven by Andrew McCarthy for trainer Andrew Harris. Abuckabett Hanover paid \$9.60.

McNair, however decided he would fulfill his commitment with Grace Will, the even-money choice in the \$305,000 Roses Are Red Final for fillies and mares. If McNair was suffering from his fall, it wasn't evident as he moved the 5-year-old mare to the lead down the backstretch, hit the half in :53.4, the  $\frac{3}{4}$  in 1:21.1, and by tossing a :26.3 final quarter at the rest of the field, Grace Hill was more than 2 lengths the best in 1:47.4, which is a Stakes, track, and Canadian record for older mares. Just before the wire, McNair laid flat out in the bike and made a victorious gesture with his right hand. In the winner's circle, he explained his unusual behaviour.

“Fifteen, twenty minutes ago, I’m laying on the track not knowing what’s going on,” he said. “Next thing you know, I’m standing in the winner’s circle for the Roses Are Red on one of the greatest mares to ever see through a bridle.”

Grace Hill deserves McNair's praise. She's won 6 in a row, 24 of her 51 starts, and she pushed her earnings to \$1,465,130. The bettors didn't get quite that much. Grace Hill paid \$4.10 to win.



Sylvia Hanover

New Image Media Photos

The race preceding the North America Cup was the \$420,000 Fan Hanover pace for 3-year-old fillies and this one went fast as well. Sylvia Hanover, driven forwardly by Bob McLure had the lead just past the quarter, took the field to the half in 1:21.3 and with a final quarter of :26.4, easily discouraged her 9 rivals, winning by 3 lengths in 1:48.2, which tied the Canadian, Stakes and track record for 3-year-old fillies. Sylvia Hanover remained perfect in 2023 with her 5<sup>th</sup> win in 5 starts as she improved to 11 for 12 in her amazing career. She is trained by Shawn Stacey for Hudson Standardbreds, and her \$2.90 win price was the lowest of the evening.

Not so low was the handle of \$5,259,044 generated by harness racing fans for the entire card.



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# Copeland is Woodbine's Next CEO

## Lawson Appointed Executive Chair of the Board of Directors



On June 6, Woodbine Entertainment's Board of Directors announced the appointment of sports and business leader Michael Copeland as Chief Executive Officer, effective October 1, 2023.

Copeland, who is currently President, Commercial, joined Woodbine Entertainment in 2021 after holding various leadership roles in sports and entertainment, including President and CEO of the Canadian Football League's (CFL) Toronto Argonauts from 2015 to 2018, and President of the CFL's head office from 2006 to 2015. He has a law degree from the University of Western Ontario and an MBA from Western's Ivey School of Business. He is a recipient of the prestigious Caldwell Partners/Globe & Mail "Canada's Top 40 Under 40" Award, and the Western Law W. Iain Scott Business Leadership Award.

Copeland will take the reins from current CEO Jim Lawson who announced earlier this year that he would be stepping down from his post this fall. Lawson steered Woodbine through a variety of events since taking over in 2015.

"We are thrilled to have a business leader of Michael's calibre to take on this role and lead our organization during a transformative time that is full of opportunity for Woodbine and the horse racing industry," said Hugh Mitchell, Chair of Woodbine Entertainment's Board of Directors.

Woodbine Entertainment is one of North America's leading Thoroughbred and Standardbred racetrack operators. In 2022, it generated over \$1 billion in

gross wagering revenues from both physical and online channels. It operates best-in-class racing facilities at Woodbine Racetrack in Toronto, Ontario, and Woodbine Mohawk Park in Campbellville, Ontario and is an established broadcast and technology leader. Woodbine directly employs more than 1,500 individuals in Ontario and leads the sustainability and growth of the entire Ontario racing industry and the roughly 25,000 jobs within it. Woodbine is currently building a major urban community for all of Toronto on the 684-acre site that includes Woodbine Racetrack. This will be reimagined as vibrant, new spaces with housing, parks, employment districts and retail, along with upgraded horse racing facilities.

"We are one of the best multi-faceted sports and entertainment companies in North America, and we have tremendous potential to further develop and grow with horse racing at the centre of it all," said Copeland. "With this role comes great responsibility as it supports a way of life for tens of thousands of families in Ontario, as it did for my wife's family for decades. I am excited about the opportunity we have to lead Woodbine and racing in Ontario to ambitious, new heights."

Woodbine Entertainment's Board of Directors also announced the appointment of Jim Lawson to Executive Chair, creating continuity as the organization prepares for transformative growth in the coming years.

"We are equally as excited to continue to have Jim's leadership, experience and valued relationships as Executive Chair," said Mitchell. "The continuity this

provides will bode well for us as we embark on this next chapter of our storied history."

"I have worked with Michael for many years, and I am truly excited for the strategic thinking and bold vision he will bring as CEO," said Lawson. "I am also looking forward to contributing to Woodbine and the racing industry and supporting Michael in my new role as Executive Chair. Woodbine has accomplished many great things over the past decade, but the best is yet to come."

As part of the transition and to support Copeland in his new role, it was also announced that long-time horse racing industry executive Bill Ford will assume the role of Chief Racing Officer and General Counsel. Ford has been an executive at Woodbine Entertainment since 2011 and prior to then he was General Counsel and Secretary for Magna Entertainment (a predecessor of The Stronach Group) from 2003 to 2010. During his 20 years in racing, Ford has been on various boards and committees, including the Board of Directors for Racetracks Canada, the industry association representing all horse racing tracks in the country, from 2013 to 2022, including as Chair for the last five years.

"Bill brings deep knowledge and a lifelong passion for the sport of racing. With his experienced, steady hand overseeing our racing operations, we are very well-positioned to further strengthen our racing product and the Ontario racing industry," added Copeland.



# Patrick Husbands is Still in His Prime

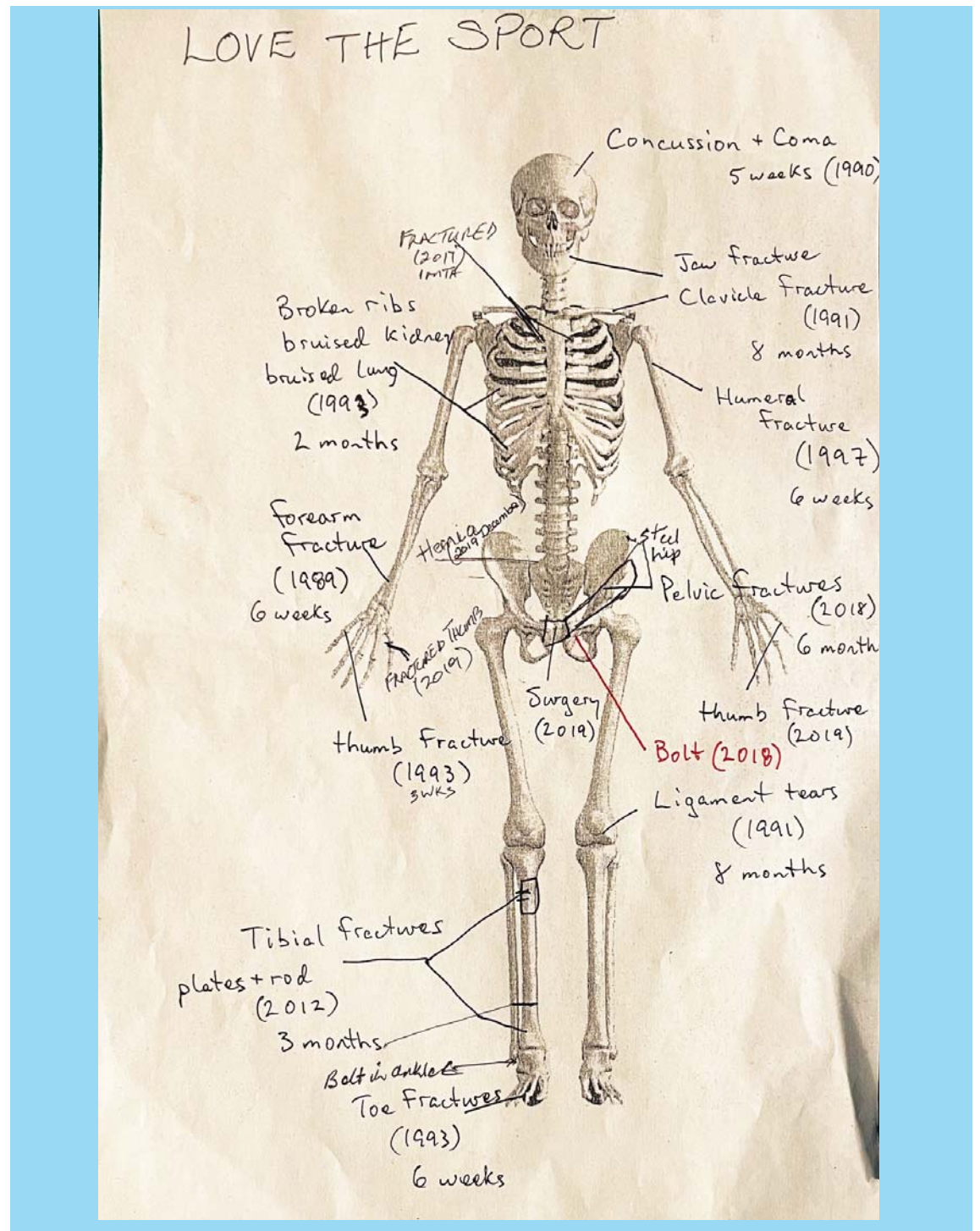


There are only two amazing things about Patrick Husbands and the fact that he's still riding at an elite level. One – he turned 50 in May. Two – take a look at the picture of the skeleton here. It represents Husbands' body. There are at least 18 notes regarding injuries. Concussion, fractured jaw, clavicle fracture, fractured arm, fractured pelvis, ligament tear, tibial fracture, broken forearm, broken thumb, bruised kidney, bruised lung – that's Husbands' own message at the top – “LOVE THE SPORT.”

So, we were amazed that this man can still ride horses better than most. Through the first 10 weeks of racing at Woodbine, Husbands had recorded 21 wins in 70 races. That's a strike rate of 30%, much the best of all riders at the track. At the time, Husbands trailed leader Kazushi Kimura by 20 wins, but Kimura had hit that figure with 175 mounts. For the past several years, Husbands has been unable to ride in every race, preserving his body and being selective about which horses he works with. That may be changing, though. Despite the incredible harm he has inflicted on his body, Husbands claims he's more fit now to ride than he has been for a long while.

“In November 2018 I got hurt,” he says. “A horse fell over and crushed me. I had that surgery in November and then I had surgeries in each of the next 2 years. The last two years, my two shoulders were busted, but now my body is back, and I can do the things that I want to do. The last 5 years, I would tell my agent, Leroy Trotman, just put me on 2 or 3 to let my body heal. Now its time to put my foot down.”

The most convincing evidence that Husbands is as good as he ever was came early in the Woodbine meet. He won 4 of the first 9 Stakes races at Woodbine. He won the \$150,000 Whimsical Stakes with Our Flash Drive, the \$100,000 Ruling Angle with Ryder Ryder Ryder, the \$150,000 Bell Mahone with Souper Hoity Toity, and the \$175,000 Royal North with Our Flash Drive. All those wins came for trainer Mark Casse and Live Oak Plantation. Husbands had 4 Stakes wins before any other



jockey had 2. Even if Husbands himself had doubts about his physicality, Casse was always confident employing the best possible jockey in the important races.

“Since I was being hurt in the last five years, Mark was still putting me on his best horses,” says Husbands. “I got to take my hat off to Mark. I told Mark last year in December, I said ‘I wasn’t giving you 110% because I had my injuries. But next year, I guarantee you, I will have a fantastic year,’ and so far, it’s showing.”

In his long tenure at Woodbine, Husbands has amassed impressive stats. He has won 8 Sovereign Awards as Canada's Outstanding Jockey. Nineteen times he has won over 100 races in a single season. Equibase shows he has ridden over 19,000 horses with almost 3,600 wins and more than \$175,000,000 in purse earnings. Thanks to his multiple injuries, it's been several years since he claimed a riding title, but he feels that's a possibility this year. The main thing to do is get his customers back. When he was

being selective, trainers formed bonds with other riders and Husbands became identified as the jockey for the Casse horses.

“I want to get back to the top,” he says. “I lost a lot of business in the last 5-6 years. So, it's going to take some time. I told Leroy, ‘Don't get frustrated. You're going to get us back there and that's what I'm focusing on right now. I just got to work my way back up.’”

Making up the difference between himself and Kimura will be a big challenge to Husbands, but he's healthy and still determined. Winning another riding title would be huge to him.

“It would help me a lot,” he says. “My goal is to have a championship. I don't want people telling my kids ‘Your daddy was a champion.’”

I want my kids to see in real time that I am a champion. I want to be a champion again, and I'm working on it right now.”



# 96-Year-Old Trainer Wins Another



All the evidence indicates this was a Canadian record. Robert "Red" McKenzie, 96 years old is the owner and trainer of Entitled Star who won the 2<sup>nd</sup> race at Century Mile Racetrack on June 23.

Entitled Star was ridden by apprentice, Meagan Fraser, and the 10-year-old mare paid \$52.70, a very generous return considering this was her 13<sup>th</sup> win in her 80<sup>th</sup> race and it was a rock bottom \$4,000 claim event.

For McKenzie, this was his 523<sup>rd</sup> official win from 5,700 starters, although Equibase only shows his results as far back as 1976 when he would have been 49. One suspects there were many more wins before that.

Before becoming a trainer, McKenzie was galloping horses as far back as 1937 and was a leading rider at some "B" tracks in Alberta, before competing at some of the larger racetracks in the province.

McKenzie is considered the oldest person in Canada to train the winner of a thoroughbred pari-mutuel race. Some guy named Jerry Bozo was 97 when he saddled a winner at Gulfstream in 2018.



We didn't know exactly what to say about this picture except that jockey Ailsa Morrison looks great on a horse!



# AJAX DOWNS RACETRACK



Special events

## WEDNESDAY RACE DATES 2023

Wednesday May 10, 17, 24, & 31  
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday June 7, 14, & 28  
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday July 5, 12, & 26  
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday August 2, 9, 16, & 23  
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday September 13, 20, 27  
12:55pm First Race

Wednesday October 4, 18, 25  
12:55pm First Race

## SPECIAL RACE DATES 2023

Sunday June 18  
**Father's Day**  
12:55pm First Race

Sunday July 16  
**Craft Brewery Day**  
12:55pm First Race

Sunday August 27  
**Family Fun Day**  
12:55pm First Race

Sunday September 3  
**Fan Appreciation Day**  
12:55pm First Race

Monday October 9  
**United Way - Pumpkin Day**  
12:55pm First Race

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# PREAKNESS/148

## Preakness Stakes 2023: Baffert's Agony, Baffert's Ecstasy



There's no evidence that Bob Baffert has ever met Judy Collins, but on May 20, Preakness Day at Pimlico, he looked at life from both sides.

The Baffert-trained National Treasure parlayed a front-running strategy into victory in the 148<sup>th</sup> Preakness Stakes, giving jockey John Velazquez his first Preakness victory on his 13<sup>th</sup> attempt. But earlier on the card, during the running of the \$200,000 Chick Lang Stakes at 6 furlongs, the sadly ironically named Havnameltdown, a Baffert 3-year-old, took a bad step, ejected jockey Luis Saez and was subsequently euthanized on the track.

"This business is twists and turns, ups and downs," said an emotional Baffert after the Preakness. "When he got hurt, it's just the most sickening feeling a trainer can have. It put a damper on the afternoon."

Despite having won just once in 5 previous races – and that win came in maiden company – National Treasure left the gate as the second favourite, behind Kentucky Derby winner, Mage, who went off at 7-5. National Treasure did not run in the Derby. His previous outing was a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Santa Anita Derby which was won by Practical Move.

Baffert was not allowed to enter a horse in the Kentucky Derby. After the finding of a prohibited substance in Medina Spirit, who was DQ'd from his 2021 Derby win, Baffert has been banned from Churchill Downs for the last two years.

Strangely, Mage was the only horse in the second leg of the Triple Crown who had run in the first one. All 6 of his opponents were running in their first Triple Crown race.

Leaving from post 1, Velazquez gunned National

Treasure right to the lead and was able to orchestrate comfortable fractions for the first mile. When the half was posted in 48.92, race caller Larry Collmus advised:

"The half mile – a pedestrian one – advantage National Treasure," who then dawdled to the  $\frac{3}{4}$  station in 1:13.49. That left sufficient gas in the tank when Blazing Sevens and Irad Ortiz came calling at the head of the stretch. It did appear that Blazing Sevens very temporarily got his nose in front with maybe a 16<sup>th</sup> to go, but National Treasure fought back on the inside to record the win by a long head. The time of 1:55.12 was almost 3 seconds off the course record but was about .80 of a second faster than Justify, who took down the Preakness en route to his Triple Crown sweep for Baffert in 2016.

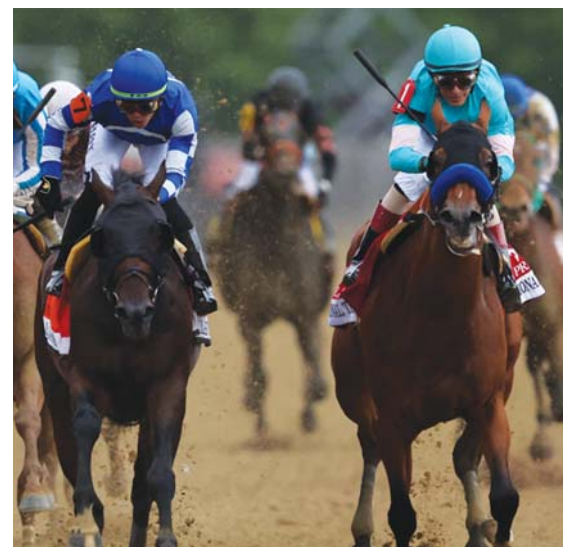
"He fought the whole way," said Velazquez. "he put up a really good fight. That's what champions do."

Mage ran a decent if not brilliant race, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> and emphasizing just how difficult it is for a 3-year-old thoroughbred to run at an elite level twice within 15 days.

National Treasure paid \$7.80 to win on a day when the players flashed their "A" games. More than \$20 million was bet to win, of which \$7,015,796 went down the drain on Mage. Including exactors, triactors, superfectas and doubles, more than \$50 million was bet on the Preakness alone.

The on-track death of Havnameltdown served only to elevate concern over safety in horse racing. During a 10-day span leading up to the Kentucky Derby, 7 horses perished on the track.

National Treasure is owned by SF Racing, Starlight Racing, Madaket Stables, Robert Stonestreet Stables, Jay Schoenfarber, Waynes Edge Capital, and Catherine Donovan.







Our first question to Stacy Van Camp, our Thoroughbred Owner of the Month, was a tad impudent.

What did she acquire first – a husband or a racehorse? Her answer:

“One doesn’t come without the other,” she laughs. “Actually, I’m married to the trainer.”

The trainer is Michael Mattine, so we’re giving him the win by, say, a head. Van Camp and Mattine were married in 2008 and her first horse raced the next year. Interestingly enough, the horse had an appropriate name – Startsomethingnew.

“We hit the board a couple of times with her, but I don’t think we ever had a win,” says Van Camp.

Equibase agrees with that assessment. Startsomethingnew raced 26 times without a victory, 3 seconds and 3 thirds and \$34,552 in the bank.

It took Van Camp about 2 years to experience the thrill of winning a race. On June 16, 2010, Vindys Luckystrike was the 25<sup>th</sup> starter for her, and her first winner. With Krista Carignan aboard, the 3-year-old filly broke her maiden with a half length win over a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>, leaving a dozen rivals behind here. Vindys Luckystrike paid \$20.10.

“It was something, because it took me a couple of years to get rolling,” Van Camp says. “But the excitement of it, I don’t know how to explain it. It is quite the feeling.”

Van Camp is quick to identify another horse that performed well for her.

“Uncatchable Fire,” she says. “I raced him till he was 10 and retired him, and he did well for me. He’s actually one of Michael’s top earning horses. I remember winning two races with him in two weeks. It was the first time we put him on the turf, and he won and came back two weeks later and won again.”

That first turf win came on June 30, 2012, With Richard Dos Ramos riding, Uncatchable Fire beat 11 other maidens at 7 furlongs, returning \$21.60. Fifteen days later, in a \$54,000 allowance race, he scored again, this time at 6 ½ on the grass, with Dos Ramos doubling up to generate a \$9.90 win ticket. Uncatchable Fire raced 70 times, won 5 and earned \$237,504.

“When I retired him, he worked as a pony at the track,” adds Van Camp.

Van Camp is the kind of owner who ensures all her horses have a great life when the racing days are done.

“I hate dropping my horses in and having the thought of somebody claiming them,” she says. “So, I try and retire my horses and find them homes and they have a whole other life. I got a home for Vindys Luckystrike. She jumps and she’s won ribbons. I had Stormfuhr, who was one of Michael’s biggest earners as well. I’ve retired him and he’s gone on to a jumping career. Super Hot, I retired him. He was a Stakes winner. He’s actually moved out to Nova Scotia. I found a good home out there for him.”

It’s interesting to explore the working relationship



Stacey Van Camp with Take Charge Sousi

between an owner and a trainer who happen to be married to each other. What Van Camp emphasizes is that she calls the shots with the animals.

“I buy my own horses,” she says. “I work as a nurse during the week, and I drive down to the city Friday night and I am at the track every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday.”

Let’s not diminish Mattine’s contribution here. His Equibase stats go back to 1986. He’s sent out more than 3,700 runners with 412 wins and earnings in excess of \$13 million.

“He’s got more knowledge than I do, of course,” she says. “And in the long of it all he usually knows more than I do.”

However, a recent series of wins by Van Camp’s horses illustrates that she has good instincts. On May 5, Souper Rush (\$7.40) prevailed by ¾ of a length in a \$25,000 claim race at 5 ½ furlongs. On June 3, it was the 4-year-old gelding Take Charge Sousi repelling 5 rivals and winning by over 6 lengths in a Maiden Special Weight for a purse of \$111,600 at 6 ½ furlongs. Fifteen days later, One More Brew, a 3-year-old gelding was almost 5 lengths the best in a 6-furlong sprint for \$25,000 claimers. The common element in all 3 of those wins was that apprentice jockey, Sofia Vives was aboard each time. Apparently, that would not have been Mattine’s choice.

“Mike always likes to put top jocks on,” says Van Camp. “I always like to use the lower jocks because I like the same jockey that comes and works the horse so that, when they’re in the race, they actually know what the horse can do. Mike has been training for 30 some years so, of course, he knows all of them. He does like to have the top end jocks, but I put her on to take the weight off.”

“My biggest achievement was a horse named El Bayern,” she continues. “We won the \$250,000 Muskoka Stakes with her first time. And again, I had a small-time rider – Sheena Ryan.”

This year, Van Camp has 8 horses racing. She draws our attention to Secret Reserve, now a 5-year-old gelded son of

Giant Gizmo.

“He’s won two Stakes,” she says. “Last year he won one, and the year before that he won 2 Stakes.”

In 2021, Secret Reserve won 4 of his first 5 races. In his 4<sup>th</sup> start he carried Rafael Hernandez to an emphatic win by almost 4 lengths in the \$100,000 Elgin Stakes, fooling few bettors with the \$3.20 payoff. Two months later, with Hernandez aboard again, Secret Reserve found the wire 2 lengths the best in the \$80,800 Lake Superior Stakes. The successful bettors cashed \$4.60.

Van Camp has a horse that she calls her favourite. It is Take Charge Sousi, the 4-year-old Ontario -bred gelding that won under Vives on June 3.

“I bought that horse at the sale and when I brought him in, he walked horribly,” she says. “He was just so out of whack, and nobody liked this horse. I didn’t give up on him is because when I jogged him the wrong way on the track, he jogged as sound as could be. He never missed a beat. I didn’t race him his first year. So, when I brought him in as a three-year-old, Michael was ready to give up on him. I said, ‘Just give me four weeks with this horse and see what I can do.’ Mike wanted me to start him for \$7,500. I think I actually talked him into 15, and I went from 15 to 25 to 40. And then a whole bunch of horses got claimed out of that race. And I didn’t want to lose him, so then I started going into Maiden Special Weight, and I knew he had the ability, he just took a little while to get there, and I love him right now. He’s one of the better horses I have in the barn.”

It won’t surprise you that a woman who works professionally as a nurse takes a maternal approach to her horses.

“They’re like my kids now that my kids have all grown up and left home,” says Van Camp. “When I walk into my barn, my horses are calling me. It’s the love and the attention I give them and the love and attention they give me back. The easiest thing to do is to buy them. It’s harder to manage them. It’s not a cheap sport. And like I said, we’ve had good years, and you take the good with the bad. But it’s not easy.





We were checking out the Mohawk Park results for Tuesday, June 13 and saw that 45-year-old Jeff Gillis was the owner of 2 victorious trotters. Warrawee Xalt got a front-of-the-bus drive from Scott Young to take down the 3<sup>rd</sup> and pay \$3.20, and it was Midnight Miracle, a 5-year-old mare, who got a miraculous steer from Young to win the 8<sup>th</sup> race. Both heats offered purses of \$21,000 and Midnight Miracle returned \$14.80.

**Down The Stretch** was familiar with Gillis and his excellent training work – Midnight Miracle was his 1,412<sup>th</sup> career win, with his harness horses earning over \$32 million. What we weren't all that up to speed with was Jeff Gillis as a horse owner.

"My dad, Ray was a hobby horseman," says Gillis. "He always had a horse on the side that he would jog after work. He'd take me to the races on Friday and Saturday nights and I probably don't have to tell you once it gets in your blood, you're in it for life usually."

Gillis recalls that he first owned a horse when he was 19.

"I claimed it for \$3,000 and we kind of learned on the go," he says. "I did work one winter back in '97 for Ben Wallace."

This story will document some great racing events for horses owned by Gillis, but there is one dreadful period from 2007 that is not necessarily easier to talk about as the years go on.

Gillis was one of 11 trainers at Woodbine who were punished in the "Aminorex scandal." Horses were found with traces of Aminorex, a banned substance. After some investigation, it was determined that animals who were given a permissible drug called Tramisol produced a substance that imitated (but wasn't) the illegal medication. It was an ordeal with an uncertain ending, so Gillis decided to downgrade his stock.

"The plan was to start over and race up in Sudbury," says Gillis. "My dad, Ray joined me when the meet opened in early April and my brother was going to come after he finished school. My dad drove back to Cape Breton for my brother's graduation. On the way back, at around four o'clock in the morning, just outside of Ottawa, they were hit head on by a transport truck. My dad was killed instantly. Miraculously, my



Jeff Gillis with He's a Demon

brother suffered a punctured lung and some cuts and scrapes, but he was largely uninjured."

This incident became even more emotionally gripping. That same night, Gillis had sent out a promising pacer named Santanna Blue Chip at Western Fair.

"It was his first lifetime start," says Gillis, "He won that maiden and, as they were driving, my dad called to see how he did, and that was the last time I spoke with him."

Just over 5 months later, Santana Blue Chip would carve out a very poignant moment for Gillis. With Jody Jamieson driving, the 2-year-old raced in the Breeders Crown Final at the Meadowlands.

"Jody got out of a hole in the nick of time to get up by a nose after falling down in training," he says. "That was our first Crown, and it felt like my dad was looking down on us that night. Halfway down the lane, it looked like we didn't have a prayer to get out and somehow, we got out and won the race."

That win came exactly 4 weeks after Santanna Blue Chip won the final of the Governor's Cup at Woodbine. Those two conquests earned \$690,859, but Santanna Blue Chip suffered the misfortune of doing his best work in the same time period as a horse called Somebeachsomewhere.

"There were 8 times when he was 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> to Somebeachsomewhere," says Gillis. "That was also the year of Shadow Play. It was a tough group of horses."

Standardbred Canada's records reflect Santanna Blue Chip's frustration – he was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the North America Cup won in 1:49 by Somebeachsomewhere, then 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Confederation Cup when Somebeach sizzled home in 1:49.2, then 3<sup>rd</sup> to Somebeach in the Messenger Stakes at Yonkers.

But when asked to name the one horse that has thrilled him the most, Gillis identifies a hard-charging trotter of more recent vintage.

"Mister Herbie will always be my favourite. He still is a co-record holder at Mohawk and almost a double millionaire and very dear to my heart."

Mister Herbie competed 78 times from a 2-year-old in 2020 until his final race as a 10-year-old in 2018. In

2012, he won the Maple Leaf Trot in the record time of 1:50.4, the fastest mile ever trotted in Canada. Mister Herbie won 22 of 78 and earned \$1,916,092.

"Herbie was the toughest, most courageous horse I have ever been around," says Gillis.

Gillis also gives props to a horse he shared ownership with named Federal Flex.

"He was in the same year as Muscle Hill," notes Gillis, "So we hooked a couple of historic monsters." Federal Flex, a trotter, won 8 of 16, including the final of the Valley Victory for 2-year-olds at Woodbine in 2008, the Good Times Final at Mohawk in 2009, and a split of the Stanley Dancer in 2009. But, like Santanna Blue Chip, he encountered a superior rival, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> to Muscle Hill in the 2008 Breeders Crown Final and breaking stride in the 2009 Hambletonian won by Muscle Hill.

In 2023, Gillis owns a share of the trotting mare, Hey Livvy, one of those remarkable athletes who seems capable of performing just about every week. As of June 16, the 9-year-old had raced 120 times with 38 wins and 60 in-the-money appearances. Hey Livvy's first 17 races of the year were all at Yonkers with Jordan Stratton driving. She won 4 of those with 5 second place finishes. Hey Livvy is still adding to her earnings of more than \$857,000.

One of Gillis' partners in Hey Livvy is Ellen Ott. Ott was also a partner in Warrawee Xalt, though that one was claimed after winning on June 13.

"Ellen and her husband, Gerald Stay, have been partners dating back to probably 2006," says Gillis. "They're from Buffalo – salt of the earth, great people. I'm very fortunate. I also share horses with Mac Nichol. You could not ask for better partners."

In every owner of the month story that we thrash out, we ask the subject to tell us what keeps them in the sport. Gillis' answer qualifies as the best.

"I don't have any other skills," he laughs before elaborating. "It's the big one. We've participated, but not won the Hambletonian, and the North America Cup gets your heart racing. Winning any race is exciting, but you always hope to find that special horse that can win that type of race."



## Quarter Horse Owner of the Month: Brad Clark



Since we first published in 2008, *Down The Stretch* has written approximately 250 Owner of the Month features – thoroughbred, standardbred and quarter horse – but 45-year-old Brad Clark is a first for us. Clark is the first blacksmith to be an Owner of the Month. It turns out he worked on hooves so often he wanted the whole horse.

On Wednesday, May 31, Clark's first (and only) horse, Jtc Lil Moonbar, a 4-year-old filly, won the 5<sup>th</sup> race at Ajax Downs. It was an allowance sprint of 300 yards and veteran jockey, Brian Bell got the filly out of the gate swiftly, had the lead almost immediately and Jtc Lil Moonbar was able to repel the 4-5 favourite, Silver Lining by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a length in the brisk time of 15.657.

"My wife, Nicole, is the assistant trainer for James Bogar," says Clark. "And we just decided to buy a racehorse and give it a go. We bought her at the end of September 2022. We looked at another horse, but that deal fell through. We bought her from Don Reid for \$10,000."

That's not a cheap price for a quarter horse in this market.

"No that wasn't cheap," says Clark. "But she'd already been running. We figured if we paid \$10,000 for a yearling, we'd have to wait at least 6 months. We got 2 starts out of her right away."

Jtc Lil Moonbar first ran for Brad Clark on October 10, 2022. She finished 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 in a \$17,500 allowance race at 300 yards. Clark got a cheque for \$1,500. Nine days later, in a speed index race, the filly was 4<sup>th</sup>, which rendered a payment of \$840. Jtc Lil Moonbar began her 2023 season on May 17 at 300 yards and ran a nondescript 5<sup>th</sup>. The chart line says, "no late kick."

Now an official quarter horse winning owner, Clark can say he's looked at horse racing from multiple points of view. Many years ago, he owned thoroughbreds.

"I think I ran my last thoroughbred in 2010," he says. Then I just never bothered getting back into it. Then we moved out to the Kawartha Lakes and Nicole started working with the quarter horses and it looked interesting."

Did Clark have any success with the thoroughbreds?

"Foolishfox was probably the only one that was half decent. He won one race by  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lengths. The rest were all duds," he laughs.

We looked it up. Foolishfox raced 14 times with a win, a second and 2 thirds, earning \$13,784. His only



Brad Clark, wife Nicole and the victorious JTC Lil Moonbar

win came in a maiden race at Fort Erie September 26, 2006. Jockey Dean Deverell cruised home in 1:11.81 for 6 furlongs. The purse was \$14,500.

Clark doesn't want to categorically claim that quarter horses are better than thoroughbreds, but –

"Here, you're closer to the starting gate and can focus on them coming out of the gate and that's more exciting," he says. "Sometimes the thoroughbreds and even the standardbreds get an insurmountable lead, but with quarter horses, it seems any horse in the race has a chance. When Moonbar won, the number 6 horse I believe was starting to catch up."

"There are also the different personalities of thoroughbreds that require certain attention. With thoroughbreds, perhaps this horse likes to sit back, this horse likes to lead, this horse doesn't like the crowd. With quarter horses, it's just get out and run fast."

Clark also appreciates the social side of the quarter horse genre.

"I find it's more of a family-oriented thing," he says. "Everybody seems to know each other. When Moonbar won that race, I had two trainers sitting right beside me and they were as excited even though we had beat their horses. They had smiles on their faces for me. They were giving me handshakes and fist bumps."

The training of a quarter horse is different from other species as well.

"It's easier to get them ready," he points out. "You only have to ride them a couple days a week. With thoroughbreds it's constant work. With the quarter horse, you can have another job, you can work for a living, get your horse ready and still be home."

Although it's just Brad's name that appears as owned in the program, Nicole is a critical part of the winning equation.

"Nicole is a huge part because I work full time," he says. "So, she's the one that takes her out, gets her ready for galloping and brushes her. If something's not right, she asks me, and we talk about it. Then she comes up with a strategy. She does everything with the horse and I'm just here for the nice ride."

We think Clark is being a little too humble. There's a saying in horse racing – "no feet, no horse." As a

blacksmith, his work matters.

"Yes, my job is to look after her feet," he concedes. "If we find that she needs a little more traction, we'll put different shoes on her. We keep track of things to make sure she's leaving pressure off her ankles and knees."

As you might imagine, crouching close to a highly wired quarter horse can have its unfortunate consequences.

"I get bit in the back a lot," says Clark. "You get kicked in the legs and more than anything, you get stepped on and I cut myself a lot too. I'm a bit clumsy that way, you know, I'm always cutting myself with a rasp or something like that."

Jtc Lil Moonbar earned Clark \$5,500 with that win at the end of May, which means she needs some more victories to paint a profitable picture.

"It's going to take a while to get her paid off," says Clark. "But we're not in it for the money. It's more of a thrill, so if we break even at the end of the year, we'd be very excited just to be there watching her run."

Any thoughts to expanding the stable?

"We're going to see how this ride goes for a little bit," he says. "We might end up purchasing another one. We're not going to get too big right away. When Moonbar retires, maybe have one again."

For now, just standing by the Ajax Downs rail, watching the races is more than satisfying for Clark.

"With the thoroughbreds, the starting gates are often far away. If it's a 7 furlong race, you can't even see them. Here, if it's one of those 110 yard races, you're right up there seeing everything, and you can get quite a bit of the action right in front of you."

Clark trusts his filly with trainer James Bogar and that probably comes with a recommendation from Nicole.

"He's a nice guy, friendly guy and he's a good trainer," he says. "He treats his horses really well. I know the horses are looked after."

Clark has had the experience of being on the back of a racehorse.

"I used to barrel race when I was younger," he says. "They were all quarter horses. I galloped at Woodbine for years and I galloped Moonbar when we couldn't find a gallop person for awhile."



# That Really Was Special, K!



The only question that needs to be asked to driver Matt Kakaley after an insane night at Yonkers Raceway on June 24 is, “How did you screw up race 5?” It was a 10-race card and Kakaley won 9 of them, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> race. Kakaley knocked down the first 4 heats with Deep Infatuation (\$2.50), ImmaBee (\$2.50), HP Xanadu (\$6.60) and Abruzzo (\$3.00). In the 5<sup>th</sup> he staggered home second with Islandspecialmajor, but atoned by sweeping the rest of the card with Feelin Red Hot (\$2.20), Toccoa Falls (\$2.50), Miss Chantilly (\$4.60), Stellar Yankee (\$4.60) and Magical Journey (\$6.70). Kakaley is the 4<sup>th</sup> driver to have a 9-win night, joining Luc Oullette, Walter Case, and Stephane Bouchard. Earlier in the day, Kakaley won 3 times at Pocono. So, he had 12 wins on the day, bringing his career total to 6,099.

## Day of the Apprentice



We're not sure this has ever happened before. There were 9 races at Woodbine on Friday, June 3 and apprentice jockeys won 4 of them, rendering good payoffs each time. The first race that day was for maidens going 6 ½ furlongs and the purse was an attractive \$112,100. Sofia Vives had her ride, Take Charge Sousi comfortable in 2<sup>nd</sup> most of the way, challenging for the lead just as the field turned for home and romped to the wire much the best by 6 ½ lengths in 1:14.11. Take Charge Sousi is a 4-year-old gelding trained by Michael Mattine for owner Stacey Van Camp and with his first win in 10 races, he paid \$10.30. Buoyed with the confidence from that win, Vives produced the winner of the second race as the 3-year-old filly, Domer Allure crushed 6 others with a 6 ½ length win in 1:32.43 over 7 ½ furlongs on the grass. It was an optional claim race with a purse of \$66,900 and Domer Allure, trained by Mark Casse and owned by Greg Ramsby, paid \$6.80 to win. Those who predicted that Sofia Vives would sweep the early double were rewarded with a \$17.06 payoff for every dollar bet on the daily double. Vives won for the 8<sup>th</sup> time in 70 races.

Race 4 that day offered \$37,800 and had a field of 8 maidens trying 6 furlongs. Apprentice Amanda

Vandermeersch was in charge of Mia and Me and she had the 4-year-old gelding close for the first half, moved 4-wide on the far turn and by mid-stretch had completely discouraged all rivals, winning by a widening 6 lengths in 1:18.41. Mia and Me is trained and owned by Edwin Knight and owned by P413 Racing. He broke his maiden on the 13<sup>th</sup> try and paid \$15.40. Vandermeersch caught our attention when she won the first race on Opening Day, and this was her 6<sup>th</sup> win from 42 assignments.

Jockey Desean Bynoe continued the parade of “bug” persons to the winner’s circle when he captured the 5<sup>th</sup> race aboard Crafty Oaks, a 2-year-old filly making her racing debut. This was an eye-catching performance as Crafty Oaks rallied from 7 lengths out at the top of the stretch to overhaul the 3-2 favourite, Pipit, and gallop to the wire the best by 1 ½ lengths in :58.55 for the 5 furlongs. Crafty Oaks is trained by his owner Keith Edwards, and he lit up the tote board with a \$60 win ticket. Bynoe had a couple of wins at Fort Erie at the time, but this was his first score at Woodbine.

It’s doubtful that anyone was smart enough to parlay a \$2 win bet on all 4 apprentice jockeys that day, but had you done that, your deuce would have turned into almost \$7,000.

## Irwin Driedger (1956-2023)



The Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame extends condolences to the family and many friends of Irwin Driedger, who passed away May 20, 2023. This sad news comes only a few weeks after Irwin learned he had been named to the CHRHF in the jockey category, as part of the Class of 2023.

### Irwin Driedger – Jockey

A native of Russell, MB, Irwin Driedger launched his riding career in 1967, at age 11, as an exercise rider. He then honed his skills at fairs in Western Canada, before moving to bush tracks and eventually conquered tracks such as Assiniboia Downs in 1973, where he plied his trade until 1982. In 1979, Irwin set an Assiniboia record of 161 wins before surpassing his own accomplishment in 1980 with 180 victories. In 1981, Driedger made 214 trips to the winner’s circle, a record that stood for many years. Over the next 17 years, Driedger rode at major tracks across Canada winning 1,633 races for purse earnings of \$14.6 million. The 1998 recipient of the Avelino Gomez Memorial Award, Driedger rode Sovereign Award Winners Liz’s Pride, Phoenix Factor, Classy ‘n Smart, In My Cap, Grey Classic and Imperial Choice. When CHRHF honouree Classy ‘n Smart’s daughter Dance Smartly, was ready to start her race career, Driedger was provided the opportunity to ride the future CHRHF Honoured Member for her first start, a five-furlong maiden race, which the pair won by a comfortable three and a half length margin.



# ODDITIES & ENTITIES

Nothing like a mid-race snack!



It was the Al Shaqab Lockinge Stakes, a Group 1 race at a mile on the grass at the Newbury racecourse on May 30. The 3-1 favourite, Modern Games made a stunning rally from deep in the field to sweep past rivals for a convincing victory, but as he passed Chintin, that one leaned in and savaged Modern Games, biting him on the side of the head. It didn't affect the outcome or the momentum of Modern Games, who strolled to an easy win. Modern Games has won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, the Breeders' Cup Mile and the Woodbine Mile and has earned over \$3.5 million with 8 wins in 15 starts. So when others challenge him to a race, he simply says, "Bite me!"

Real fans know the best place to watch a race!



Despite breaking his reins coming out of the gate, jockey Sheldon Russell wins the first race at Arlington Park on May 31 with Forest King



Ed DeRosa  
@EJXD2

It's even better in all caps

**1** **ANA L**  
B F, Bred in KY, Born May, 2020  
Trainer: CHEEKS KATY  
Jockey: ROJAS MARTINA  
Owner: KATY CHEEKS

2:21 PM · 6/12/23 from Earth · 16.8K Views

9 Retweets 3 Quotes 57 Likes 1 Bookmark



Ed DeRosa @EJXD2 · 1d  
First foal out of Ana L will be Far T.

6 1 29 2,745



Ed DeRosa @EJXD2 · 1d  
Damn. I should have said in all craps.



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## Episode 173, May 15:

We have the Whimsical Stakes and the Jacques Cartier from Woodbine. Apprentice jockey **Amanda Vandermeersch** brought in a huge longshot. South African rider, **Ryan Munger** is off to great start. Veteran **Emma-Jayne Wilson** had a great 5-win weekend at Woodbine. We chat with **Ariane Milligi Fuller** who tells us the best thing to do if you're going to Saratoga and need a place to stay. We run 3 legs from Mohawk of the eliminations for the SBOA Stakes and go to Ajax Downs for Opening Day which included a race call from the **Down The Stretch** host, **Peter Gross**.

## Episode 174, May 22:

This is another very busy horse racing podcast. We've got a couple of Stakes races from Woodbine and 4 SBOA Finals from Mohawk. **Irwin Driedger** passed away on the weekend and we remember him. There was a slight upset in the Preakness at Pimlico, so once again, there will not be a Triple Crown winner. **Mighty Heart**, who won the 2020 Queen's Plate, has been retired and author **Jennifer Morrison** tells us how life-changing this one-eyed wonder was to her and all the people involved in his racing career. We have 2 Morrises in this podcast – Moncton's **Ailsa Morrison** won again at Gulfstream. The terrific **Modern Games** won a Group 1 race in England, but not before a rival tried to rip his face off. Ever seen a husband-wife team take down the daily double? It happened at Louisiana Downs. And sit back and laugh at horse racing jokes from the King of the One-Liners, **Henny Youngman**.

## Episode 175, May 29:

This podcast cover lots of ground - some of it on the turf because Woodbine ran its first grass races last Saturday. It was a big day for South African jockey Ryan Munger. It was Opening Day at Fort Erie and when a lady named **Rachel Slevinsky** won a race, it piqued our curiosity. Race caller **Sugar Doyle** had his 'A' game at Western Fair for the Forest City Pace and the Camluck Classic. **Garnet Barnsdale** hooked up with **Chris Christoforou** at the President's reception for the new inductees into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame. Host **Peter Gross** got his idol, the legendary race caller **Tom Durkin** on the phone to chat about him coming out of retirement to call the Belmont Stakes. And for families that like to have all the cheques coming to the same address, we have races at Mohawk won by father **Dustin and son Tyler Jones**, and a heat from Australia in which the Parnham brothers ran 1-2-3.

## Episode 176, June 5:

We tackle horse racing on a chronological basis and by doing so, get thrills from \$100,000 races at Mohawk, 70 year-old amateur driver **Robert Ciavardini** and jockey **Pierre Mailhot** still winning at Fort Erie in his 40th year of riding. We visit the early returns from Woodbine's new and intriguing bet. Then it's on to quarter horse results from Ajax Downs and a good start for **JB Botello**. Is **Justin Stein** ready to break out? Will Churchill Downs solve its disturbing problem? Can anyone stop driver **James MacDonald**, and just how good was Saturday for apprentice riders, **Sofia Vives**, **Amanda Vandermeersch** and **Desean Bynoe**?. That same day, **Patrick Husbands** put on a Stakes clinic, and that night at Mohawk was jammed with big money Stakes legs and splits. Then, on Sunday, a breakthrough win for **Keveh Nichols** as he snapped a long losing streak.

## Episode 177, June 12:

This week, we are amazed by the women in horse racing – When **Arcangelo** won the Belmont Stakes, **Jena Antonucci** became the first female trainer to win a U.S. Triple Crown race. Too bad FOX tv blundered historically with its presentation. Three women - **Sofia Vives**, **Skye Chernetz** and **Emma-Jayne Wilson** brought in pricey horses at Woodbine. Women trainers won 3 of 4 eliminations at Mohawk for the North America Cup and we have a \$200,000 race at Northfield, Ohio won by **Lauren Tritton**. **Melanie Pinto** is featured for her 2 wins last Tuesday at Fort Erie. But there is room for men to succeed in horse racing - **Jason Pascoe** is crushing it at Ajax Downs and we grill **Michael Copeland**, the man who will replace **Jim Lawson** as CEO of Woodbine. And how would you have called a race in which one of the horses was named **Sumomomomomomomomo**?

## Episode 178, June 19:

The 40th North America Cup provided a full night of thrills and, unfortunately, spills at Mohawk Park – wait until you hear about Doug McNair's night. Wonderful things from great jockeys – **Emma-Jayne Wilson** won 4 races on Saturday afternoon at Woodbine. **Brian Bell** won 5 at Ajax Downs on Sunday. **Patrick Husbands** has a strike rate of over 25%. We find out from the 50 year-old Husbands why he's still so good. Jockeys' agent **Brandon Fairlie** - known also as **Agent Orange** - tells **Down The Stretch** about his perfect afternoon at Woodbine with his jockeys **Rachel Slevinsky** and **Omar Moreno**. WEG executive **Klaus Ebner** explains how the new bet, the Swinger Omni, came to fruition, and **Garnet Barnsdale** tipped us on a dead heat between brothers, a 69-year-old jockey still winning, **Frank Mirahmadi** calling a race that included a horse named after him, and **Ken Middleton** calling a race where it seemed every horse had the word Bettor in it.

## Episode 179, June 26:

It's another fully entertaining **Down The Stretch Podcast** with the Ballade and Alywow Stakes from Woodbine. Jockey **Jose Campos** had his biggest day ever and driver **Doug McNair** talks about his extraordinary night at Mohawk -how he won two big Stakes sandwiched around a frightening crash. More McNair in **Unfiltered**, the OLG's ground-breaking horse racing documentary which we sample. Woodbine CEO, **Jim Lawson** tells us how the new gigantic casino will benefit horse racing. We have **Matt Kakaley** winning 9 of 10 races at Yonkers and 96-year-old **Red McKenzie** still training winners at Century Downs. How did **Jimi Hendrix** and **Sonny Liston** get in the same horse race? And how did the Buff alo Bills direct **Garnet Barnsdale** to winning ticket?

## Episode 180, July 3:

There was a huge Canada Day celebration with 5 Stakes races at Woodbine. We go to Yonkers for the Messenger Stakes and the Yonkers Trot, and to Ajax Downs for a couple of races from last Wednesday. Why did it take jockey **Rico Walcott** 16 years to decide to ride at Woodbine? We find out from the Queenston Stakes winning jockey. There is an amazing group of apprentice jockeys winning at an unprecedented rate at Woodbine; hear how **Sofia Vives**, **Desean Bynoe**, **Amanda Vandermeersch** and **Rachel Slevinsky** dominated a full afternoon last week. **Bulldog Hanover's** owner/trainer **Jack Darling** invites racing fans to suggest a name for Bulldog's new filly. And you will have to listen to decide why **Peter Gross's** interview with jockey **Chantal Sutherland** went off the rails.