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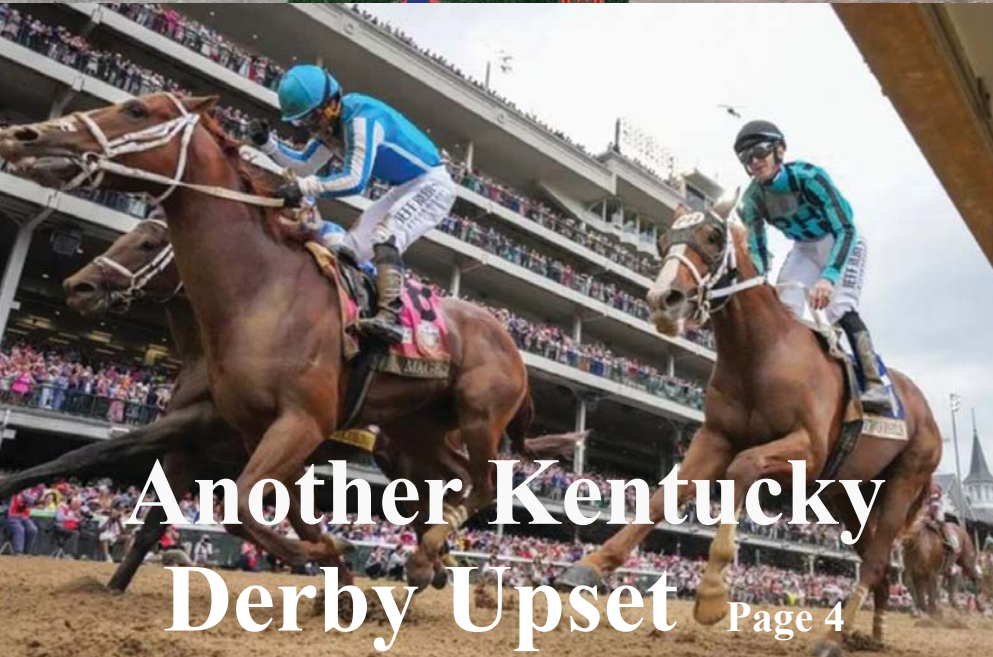


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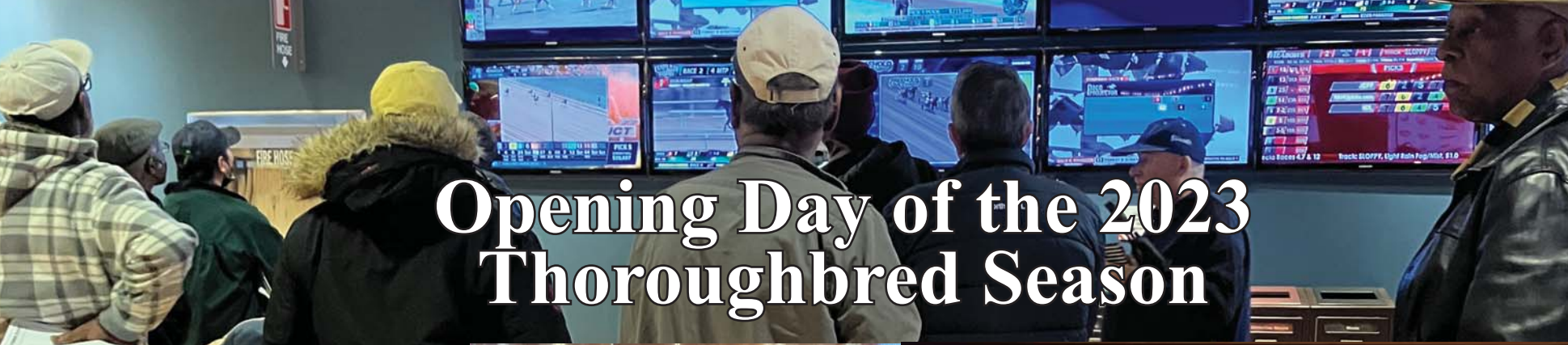
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Opening Day of the 2023 Thoroughbred Season



Race caller Robert Geller



Nifty fanny packs

The day started dreary and rainy, but by the first race time at Woodbine on April 22nd, things were clearing up. Early arrivals found their way to the customer service booth on the second floor and scored free Woodbine fanny packs. These would come in handy for stuffing cash, especially for those who picked the winner of the first race. On a day filled with sprints, this one was at 4 ½ furlongs and offered \$29,000 for fillies and mares eligible to be claimed for \$7,500. Most of the bettors ignored Silver Tunes, ridden by apprentice, Amanda Vandermeersch, and that was easy to do – Silver Tunes is a 6-year-old mare who came into Opening Day with just 2 wins from 37 races and she had faded badly in each of her past 10 races.

It was a good thing neither the horse nor jockey paid any attention to the form. Vandermeersch had Silver Tunes on top just strides out of the gate and the pair opened up 2 lengths coming into the stretch. It did get a little dicey late, but Silver Tunes hung on by a head over a closing Miss Bobbit (David Moran). Silver Tunes is trained by Siddo Barrington for Radcliffe Racing Stable, and she paid \$18.30 to win.

“I was confident in her,” commented Vandermeersch as she walked the tunnel back to the jocks room. “I was told lots of good things about her and that she was ready. I knew that she

would come out fast. She felt awesome.”

Vandermeersch notched her 16th career win in her 135th ride and she was the first of two apprentice ladies to record wins on day one. Sofia Vives gave Basalt Street a well-timed ride in the 6th, rocketing from 6th at the head of the stretch to pass 5 rivals and find the wire a half length the best. Basalt Street is trained by Kevin Attard for Al and Bill Ulwelling, and the 4-year-old filly paid \$8.80 to win.

There are at least a couple of interesting things to note about Vives. She won 4 of 16 starts last fall at Woodbine and, as apprentices typically do, she powered down for the rest of the meet to preserve her “bug” for this season. She resumed riding on April 17 at Parx, near Philadelphia and with her first assignment, delivered Delightful Dreamer to a 10-1 upset. Despite her inexperienced resume, Vives was booked for 6 mounts on Opening Day. Only Emma-Jayne Wilson with 7 had more. Vives’ agent is Jordan Miller who also books for Kazushi Kimura and obviously he was able to persuade some trainers that Vives can ride. She told *Down The Stretch* that all the metrics pointed her to Woodbine as the best place for her to compete.

“I knew that they ride the bug a lot and they use girls here,”

she explained. “It’s just a good place to get your foot in the door.”

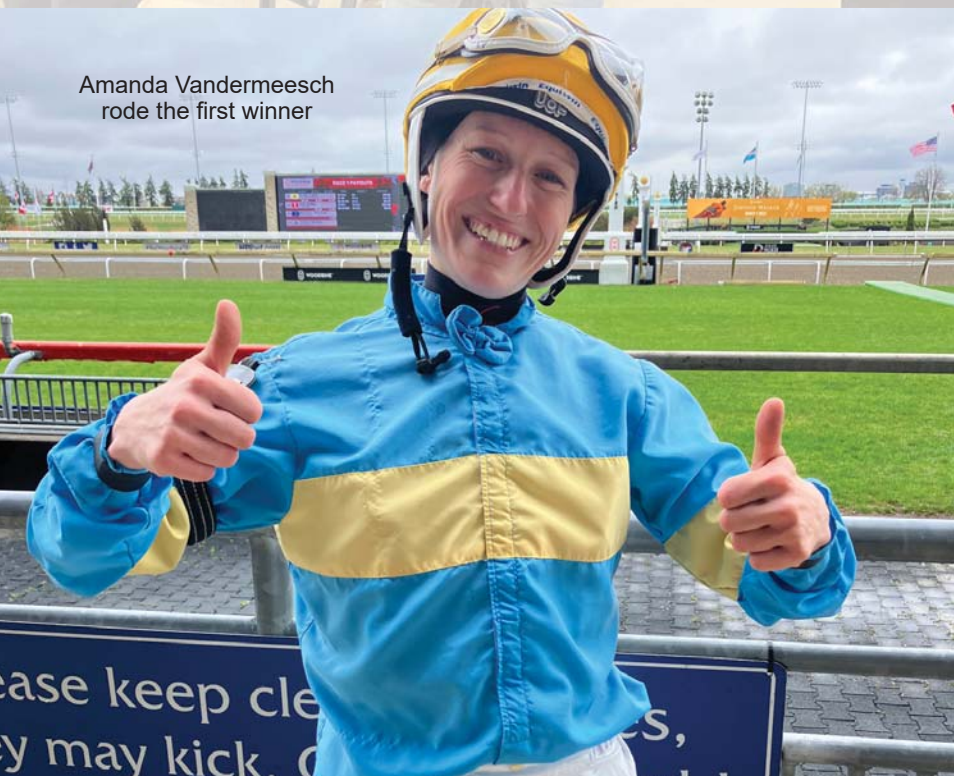
Just 20 years old, Vives is going to maximize her opportunities in the short term. She will fly to Parx for racing on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, then return to Woodbine for the rest of the week.

“I’ll only have the bug for a year, so I might as well hustle as much as I can,” she said.

And it was a good day at the track for agent Jordan Miller. His apprentice won a race and his main guy, Kimura, won a pair. Other winning jockeys on day one were Jason Hoyte, Declan Carroll, Christopher Husbands, Jodeien Anderson and Emma-Jayne Wilson.

The trainers split the purses nicely, with 8 different conditioners getting first place cheques. Bill Tharenos was the only one with two winners. The others were Siddo Barrington, Kevin Attard, John Coryat, Marty Drexler, Don Pleterski, Ravendra Raghunath and Katerina Vassilieva.

The suits were probably pleased with the overall betting. With cash well protected in their fanny packs, the bettors poured \$3,242,809 through the machines, a slight increase over the \$3,207,411 wagered the first day of racing a year ago.



Amanda Vandermeersch rode the first winner



Sofia Vives had a win as well



Rule #1: At important functions, one must behave in a controlled and responsible manner, and appear at all times to be competent and aware.

So, there I was at the annual Sovereign Awards, caressing a coke in the lobby, looking sharp in a suit jacket, a crisp, laundered shirt and dark dress pants while engaging with **Mark Romeo**. Romeo's family owns Terra Racing, responsible for many fine thoroughbreds, and they also have the Pineview Auto Group, which sponsors both this publication and the *Down The Stretch Podcast*. You can imagine how important it was for me to come across as a mature, cultured individual.

As if to reinforce my elevated status, an attractive

young woman named Destiney, one of the servers of hors d'oeuvres before the meal, floated very close to me and pressed her face close to my ear. She said something to me that no beautiful woman previously had ever said.

"Your fly is down."

I'm not sure how to segue out of that. If I'd had a segway at the time, I would simply have pivoted away, leaving Mark and Destiney to laugh at my embarrassment. As it was, I ducked into the men's room and adjusted the situation.

That unfortunate incident notwithstanding, it has been a busy and exciting time in horse racing since our last publication, and we document many events in these pages.

Our coverage of the Sovereign Awards, bereft of any other wardrobe malfunctions, can be found on pages 12-13.

Opening Day at Woodbine is presented to you on page 2, and Woodbine's CEO **Jim Lawson** tells us on page 15 why he's stepping down after running the track for 8 years.

Kentucky Derby day was marred by the deaths of 2 horses on the track in races preceding the big one. In the Derby itself there was a 15-1 upset by **Mage**, who really should not have paid that much. Our Derby coverage eats up page 4.

We have three Owner of the Month features this time around. **Raj Maharajh** not only won a Sovereign Award for his Outstanding 2-Year-Old, Philip My Dear, but he has also earned the glory as our Thoroughbred Owner of the Month (page 18). **Mark Etsell**, owner and trainer of the superb trotting mare, Adare Castle talks about his racing career as our Standardbred Owner of the Month (Page 19). And **Chantelle Bourgeois** is the first Quarter Horse Owner of the Month this year (page 20). That's because the quarter horse racing season kicked off on May 10 and we have page 10 to illustrate that.

And there's more on Adare Castle. She won her first 4 races this year, including the \$83,500 final of the Graduate Series (page 14).

There was an extraordinary moment on the day of **King Charles III's** Coronation. It turns out a horse owned by the King was running in a Stakes race at Newmarket. On page 9, our twisted artist/layout guy wonders if Charles was peeking at his phone when the race went off.

As we do every issue during winter and spring, we record the victories of Canadians in the U.S. You can read about **Chantal Sutherland, Kevin Attard, Steven Chircop, Nick Gonzalez, Mike DePaulo, Marty Drexler, and Bruno Schickedanz** on page 16.

Eight more worthy candidates have been invited to the **Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame**. Go to page 8 to see if you agree with their selections.

Dan Vella had a great career as a trainer, but he has seamlessly morphed into the position as Woodbine's Horse Racing Liaison. On page 17, he explains what that means.

I received no kickback from the publishers of **Curtis Stock's** book, *The Turcottes: The Remarkable Story of a Horse Racing Dynasty*, but I can attest it's a terrific page-turning read. Stock has pulled off the magic of making a documentary into a must-read dramatic saga. Before you read the book, read our interview with Stock on page 21.

This is an exciting time of year for racing in Ontario with all 3 breeds – thoroughbred, standardbred and quarter horses providing endless thrills. Now it's time for me to zip up this editorial.

I wouldn't want to embarrass myself.

STAFF
PUBLISHERS: Anthony and Milagros Kalloo

EDITOR: Peter Gross

ART DIRECTOR: Gord Steventon

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Susan Nash

CONTRIBUTING WRITER: Mark McKelvie

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Mail:

Down The Stretch
#11-1211 Parkwest Place,
Mississauga, On L5E 3J3

Phone: (905) 990 1171 pgross@rogers.com

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The Derby Was Troubled, But Mage Wasn't



Mage at 15-1

Amidst multiple distressing story lines, Mage, under Javier Castellano, erupted from far back to win the 149th Kentucky Derby. It was a magnificent performance by a horse in just his 4th career race, and it was Castellano's first Derby win after failing in 15 previous tries.

Before the 149th Run for the Roses burst from the gate, 5 horses were scratched from the race and during the week, 7 horses died on the track, 2 expiring in races leading up to the Derby. The most impactful scratch was that of Forte, who would have been the favourite. He was diagnosed with a bruised foot.

Mage, who was a strong second to Forte in the Florida Derby, was 14th of 18 down the backstretch but was about to benefit from strong early fractions. Verifying, under Tyler Gaffalione was on top after a first half in a gasping :45.73 and at $\frac{3}{4}$ in 1:10.11. That was much too fast and Verifying stopped badly to finish 16th. As the field entered the stretch, Two Phil's carrying Jareth Loveberry surged to the top, but Mage was in the midst of an eye-catching burst, passing rivals easily and in mid-stretch, he collared Two Phil's and got to the finish line a clear length the best in 2:01.57.

The winning owners are OGMA Investments, Restrepo, Ramiro Sterling Racing and CMNWLTH. We don't know these people personally, but many of those principals are from Venezuela, including the winning trainer, Gustavo Delgado.

"I haven't words," Delgado said, wearing a stylish white jacket that flattered his gray hair as he apologized for his English.

"Sometimes you feel embarrassed a little bit," Castellano said, "When you try so many times and you don't see the result, and sometimes you go down a

little bit. But I didn't give up."

In fact, the television coverage of the race may have given Castellano sufficient motivation to deliver the winner.

"When I was in the jockey room and NBC put '0 for 15 Javier Castellano,' at that moment it gives me so much inspiration myself, and this is going to be the year," said Castellano.

For many years, racing analysts told us that horses who didn't run as 2-year-olds were bad bets in the Derby. In 2018, Justify prevailed, even though he began his career as a 3-year-old. Mage is just the 2nd horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Kentucky Derby without competing as a 2-year-old.

The race favourite, after Forte was scratched, was Angel of Empire (Flavien Prat) at 4.06-1. Tapit Trice at 4.53-1 could not duplicate his impressive Santa Anita Derby win. Tapit Trice came out sluggishly, was last down the backstretch and with an ineffectual late move, finished 8th, defeated by about 11 lengths.

Woodbine riding champion, Kazushi Kimura was riding Mandarin Hero who moved in off the also eligible list as other candidates were scratched. We're sure that Kazushi enjoyed the experience, but Mandarin Hero was bumped badly into the first turn and finished a well-beaten 12th.

One statistic remained intact. The Japanese horse, Derma Sotogake (Christopher Lemaire) who won the UAE Derby, was 6th. The record of horses coming to the Derby after racing in the UAE Derby is remarkable – they are now 0-19 hitting the board.

The victory by Mage produced some dazzling payoffs. The win ticket was \$32.42. The exactor with Two Phil's paid \$330.44 and a winning pick-6 ticket was worth \$1,094,232.

Cody's Wish



The most uplifting moment of the huge card at Churchill Downs on the first Saturday in May came in the 10th race, the \$750,000 Churchill Downs Stakes at 7 furlongs. The 3-5 favourite was Cody's Wish, who came in on a 4-race winning streak that included last fall's Breeders' Cup Mile. Cody's Wish is named after 17-year-old Cody Dorman, a brilliant young man who has a rare genetic disorder that confines him to a wheelchair. Cody cannot speak but communicates passionately through a computerized device. When he first met the horse, who was a yearling at the time, the instant bond between child and animal at Gainsborough Farm was so evident, the baby horse was named after Cody. Cody's Wish ran well in his first 3 races but could produce only 3 third place finishes. Cody told his parents the horse would win only if he was present. So, his dad, Kelly and his mom, Leslie took him to Churchill Downs in October of 2021. It was a nice \$120,000 maiden special race and with Cody watching from the winner's circle, his namesake romped home in 1:33.88 just a half second off the course record for a mile. After that, Cody's Wish was sensational, winning 6 of his next 7 races.

So, when the 5-year-old horse was entered in the Churchill Downs Stakes, Cody and his family were once again guests of the track and once again, Cody's Wish came through. Track announcer Larry Collmus provided the spine-tingling call in the stretch as Cody's Wish rallied from off the pace:

"As they come into the final furlong, Cody's Wish roars by. Cody's wish is pouring it on. He opens up three. He opens up 4 lengths. He did it, Cody! He did it again!"

The most inspirational story in horse racing added another chapter. It's a great horse that has elevated the life of a profoundly disabled young man. It's a brave Cody Dorman who sends his love and helps the horse win.

Cody's Wish paid just \$3.44.

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Woodbine Stakes

Saturday, April 28:



Michael Burns Photos
Jill Jitterbug was moved up

Tyler Conner's rare visit to Woodbine was quite the mixed bag. Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. flew Conner in to ride Blind Spot in the \$150,000 Star Shoot Stakes. The distance was 6 furlongs, and eight 3-year-old fillies left the gate. Conner had Blind Spot on top after half a mile and came into the stretch a half length better than the even-money favourite, Jill Jitterbug, ridden by Sahin Civaci. In the final 16th, Blind Spot veered outward about two paths, forcing Jill Jitterbug to jitter out of the way. At the wire, Blind Spot was first by a neck, but the inquiry sign lit up immediately. The head-on video persuaded the judges that Jill Jitterbug's momentum had been compromised late in the lane, so they disqualified Blind Spot and elevated Jill Jitterbug to first. Owned by Anne Walsh and trained by Ryan Walsh, the 3-year-old filly earned her 3rd win in 7 tries and paid \$4.20.



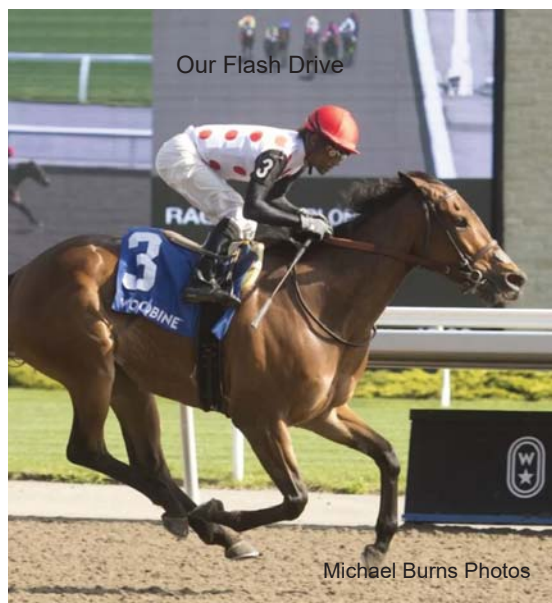
New York Thunder

Sunday, April 29:

It was almost unfair that 5 local 3-year-olds had to run against New York Thunder in the \$125,000 Woodstock Stakes at 6 furlongs. New York Thunder, shipped in by Jorge Delgado had won his first two races impressively, debuting with a 6 ½ length romp in a 5 furlong maiden special weight at Gulfstream last November, and doubling down at the same distance 5 weeks later. New York Thunder, under Ricardo Santana offered no sympathy to his opponents. The colt led by 2 at the quarter and seemed to improve his advantage with every stride, getting to the wire much the best by 7 ½ lengths in the sensational time of 1:08.45, just .82 off the course record held by Nobals. New York Thunder is owned by AMO Racing USA, and all the bettors got on the win ticket was \$2.70.

May 13, \$180,000 Whimsical Stakes:

Tell us if you've heard this one before – jockey Patrick Husbands wins a Stakes race for trainer Mark Casse. Husbands, riding in his 30th season had the assignment



Our Flash Drive

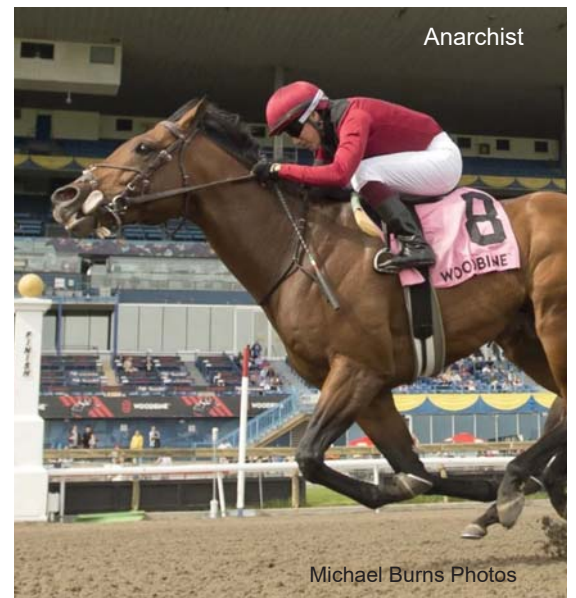
Michael Burns Photos



on the 3-5 choice, Our Flash Drive, a 5-year-old mare, who benefited from a patient ride. Husbands had her 3rd at the half, but motoring when it mattered in the stretch, passing a couple of rivals with a 16th to go and winning easily by almost 2 lengths in 1:10.12 for the 6 panels. Casse trains for Live Oak Plantation. Our Flash Drive won for the 5th time in 15 tries and paid \$3.40.

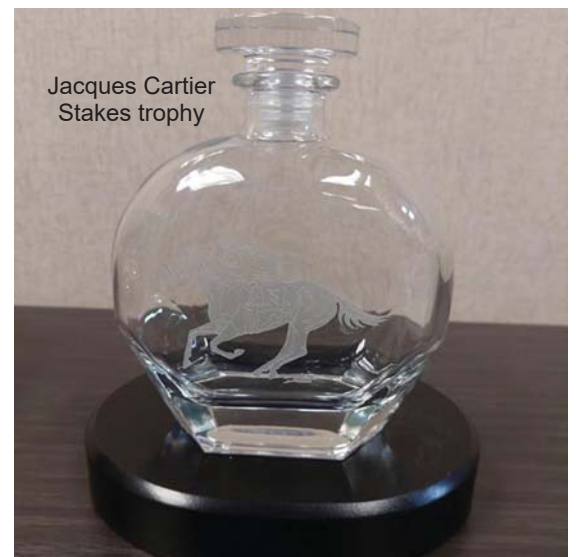
May 14, \$180,000 Jacques Cartier Stakes:

This 6-furlong event attracted 8 older horses and the bettors could not decide on a definitive favourite, installing the 4-year-old colt, Anarchist as the 5-2 choice, even though in his 8 previous races, he had



Anarchist

Michael Burns Photos



never run on a synthetic surface. Luis Contreras was not concerned. He had Anarchist close to the pace for the first half of the dash, put him on the lead coming into the stretch and Anarchist did the rest, hitting the wire ¾ of a length ahead of Ice Chocolat (Daisuke Fukumoto) in the terrific time of 1:08.96. The winning trainer is Josie Carroll for Ilium Stables and with his 2nd career win, Anarchist paid \$7.70.

Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame

Class of '23

Four humans and four horses will be inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in August. The Standardbred honourees are Dr. Lloyd S. McKibbin, DVM – Builder, Chris Christoforou – Driver, Bulldog Hanover – Male Horse, and Pure Ivory – Female Horse. On the Thoroughbred side, the new inductees are R. Glenn Sikura – Builder, Irwin Driedger – Jockey, Pink Lloyd – Male Horse, and Formal Gold – Veteran.

Dr. Lloyd S. McKibbin, DVM – Standardbred Builder

The late Dr. Lloyd Salem McKibbin, DVM (“Doc”) is considered a pioneer in the advancement of equine veterinary medicine. He was an innovator, teacher, and author as well as a very hands-on veterinarian. He was also among the very first people to advocate swimming horses for therapeutic purposes. Among the numerous horses aided by Dr. McKibbin was CHRHF 2020 Inductee Rambling Willie, who spent time under Doc’s care.

Doc also spent considerable amounts of time mentoring other veterinarians to follow in his path, many of whom went on to open their own successful practices. His books *Horse Owners Handbook* and *Cryoanalgesia for Horses* continue to be used as reference manuals.

Chris Christoforou – Driver

Chris Christoforou has been driving Standardbred horses for 33 consecutive years, beginning in 1990 and continuing until the present time. In 1993 at the age of 21, Christoforou became the second youngest driver to win a prestigious Breeders Crown race when he and Earl captured the Open Trot division at Mohawk.

Among the many other horses Christoforou achieved major stakes success with are Grinfromeartoear (1999 Breeders Crown), CHRHF Member Astreos (2000 Little Brown Jug), and CHRHF Member Peaceful Way (2003 Goldsmith Maid and 2003 Oakville Stakes). He has also visited the OSS Super Final winner’s circle 10 times.

Over his career, Christoforou’s driving stats have reached 6,758 career wins, nearly \$119 million in purse earnings, and a .260 UDRS lifetime rating. He has been presented with the O’Brien Award as Canada’s Driver of the Year on four occasions.

Bulldog Hanover – Standardbred Male Horse

Sired by 2022 CHRHF Inductee Shadow Play and out of Artsplace mare BJs Squall, Bulldog Hanover was purchased by CHRHF 2022 Trainer Inductee, Jack Darling, for \$28,000 at the 2019 Harrisburg Black Book Sale. He began his race career at age two, winning four of six starts, including the Ontario Sires Stakes Gold Super Final, with Jody Jamieson as his primary driver. Before the beginning of his three-year-old season, Brad Grant was added to his ownership as a partner.

At three, Bulldog Hanover continued to impress with three Ontario Sires Stakes Gold leg wins. He stepped into Grand Circuit competition with wins in the Somebeachsomewhere Stakes and a North America

Cup elimination, again with Jody Jamieson at the lines, before rounding out his sophomore year with four consecutive wins at Hoosier Park in the Monument Circle, the Star Destroyer Pace, the Circle City Pace and the Thanksgiving Classic – just a glimpse of what was to come.

During his 2022 campaign, Bulldog Hanover won four straight races in a 21-day period – at The Meadowlands, winning a Graduate leg in 1:47, the Roll With Joe in 1:46, the Graduate final in 1:46.1 and the William R. Haughton Memorial in a world record time of 1:45.4, all with Dexter Dunn in the bike. That translated into Horse of the Year honours in Canada and unanimous Horse of the Year acclamation in the U.S.

When he retired from racing at the end of 2022, Bulldog Hanover’s lifetime stats included a record of 28-4-1 in 37 starts, and earnings of \$2,789,271.

Pure Ivory – Standardbred Female Horse

Trotting mare Pure Ivory, by Striking Sahbra, has been successful both on the racetrack and as a broodmare. Bred by Diane Ingham and the late Harry Rutherford of Mount Pleasant, ON, and owned throughout her racing career by Jerry Van Boekel, Christina Maxwell, Steve Condren and Rutherford, Pure Ivory’s racing stats include earnings of \$1.44 million and a lifetime mark of 1:53.1. Trained by Brad Maxwell, the mare won 22 stakes races during her career, including Ontario Sires Stakes Super Finals at age two and three, the Canadian Breeders Championship, and divisions of the Simcoe and Champlain Stakes.

R. Glenn Sikura – Builder

The owner/operator of Hill ‘N’ Dale Canada, located in King, ON, R. Glenn Sikura, has contributed to Canadian Thoroughbred racing as a breeder, owner, and sales agent while also holding key positions with organizations representing various aspects of the Canadian Thoroughbred industry.

Glenn has served as Chief Steward of the Jockey Club of Canada since 2018, and is the Past President of the National and Ontario Divisions of the CTHS, Past President of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame, a founding member and Past President of OHRIA, former Director of both the Breeders Cup and TOBA.

In Kentucky, horses Glenn has sold include Arlington Million G1 winner, Jambalaya, and Breeders Cup Filly and Mare Sprint Champion, Maryfield. Other successful sales graduates include Horse of the Year A Bit o’ Gold, Dynamic Sky, Inglorious, and One for Rose. As an owner/breeder, Glenn campaigned champion Serenading, Handpainted, Painting and many others.

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, where he rode from 1973-

1982. 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.

In 1990, Driedger retired from competition and became the Secretary-Manager of the Jockeys’ Benefit Association of Canada, serving his first term until 2006. Under his direction, Canadian Jockeys became the first in North America to wear safety vests. Driedger was also instrumental in helping to install safety rails at Woodbine. From 2006 until 2018, Driedger held the position of Director of Thoroughbred Racing Surfaces at Woodbine. In 2019, he returned to the Jockeys’ Benefit Association of Canada to again assume the role of Secretary-Manager, a position he held until his retirement in 2021.

Pink Lloyd – Male Horse

An Ontario-bred foal of 2012, Pink Lloyd became one of the country’s most famous and popular racehorses during his career. Even though he didn’t start racing until he was 4, he certainly made up for it over his six years on the track, winning 29 of 38 starts and earning \$2.4 million under Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Trainer, Robert Tiller. Bred by John Carey and owned by Entourage Stable, including principal owner, Frank Di Giulio Jr., the gelding’s first major win came early in 2017 when he captured the Jacques Cartier Stakes, a race that remarkably, he would win three more times. This win would be the start of a of an incredible career record of 26-career stakes wins, all accomplished at Woodbine at sprint distances. His perfect season of eight stakes wins earned him Sovereign Awards as Champion Older Horse, Outstanding Sprinter, and Horse of the Year.

In the final race of his career, the venerable nine-year-old gelding saved his best for the final furlong and rushed late on the outside to snatch his 29th career score before an adoring audience. He is now enjoying the good life at LongRun’s Thoroughbred Retirement Farm.

Formal Gold – Veteran

Twenty-five years after the conclusion of his race career, Ontario-bred Formal Gold continues to rank among the top Thoroughbreds in North America, in terms of Beyer Speed Figures.

Bred by Mr. and Mrs. Rodes Kelly, trained by William W. Perry, and owned by John D. Murphy, Sr., during his race career, the son of Black Tie Affair consistently received Beyer speed ratings in the mid 120s. As a 4-year-old, he scored a 125 rating when he won the Woodward Stakes. Formal Gold was ranked among the top handicap horses of 1997 with gate-to-wire wins in two Grade 1s – the Donn Handicap at Gulfstream and the Woodward Stakes, defeating Horse of the Year and US Hall of Fame member, Skip Away in both races.

At stud, Formal Gold ranked among the top 1% as sire of 2-year-old winners from starters at 45% and sired progeny with global earnings of nearly \$16 million (US), including 19 stakes winners.



RACETRACK HUMOUR

Perry & Mooch



On Saturday, May 6, England celebrated the official Coronation of King Charles III. It was a pretty good day for Elizabeth's oldest son, but it could have been a little better. While Charles and Queen Consort Camilla were cruising down the main stretch in their Gold Stagecoach, a horse owned by the new king was racing at Newmarket. The 4th race that afternoon was the £51,000 Howden Suffolk Stakes. A field of 17 contested the mile and an 8th grass race and, as the field approached the final furlong, the favourite, King of Conquest was leading the charge. But Saga, the horse owned by King Charles III, was exploding from deep in the pack under veteran jockey, Frankie Dettori. It got very close at the wire, but King of Conquest held on by a diminishing neck.

"Oh, he's spoiled the day, hasn't he?" exclaimed one British announcer, suggesting a more appropriate finish on Coronation Saturday would have produced a winner for the King.

Still, it was quite ironic, that on the day Charles officially became the king, a horse named King of Conquest defeated a horse owned by the king.

Opening Day at Ajax Downs



In recent years, no sport has been beat up more than the quarter horses at Ajax Downs – the badly executed end of the Slots at Racetracks program, the Liberals’ attempt to shut down the casino there in favour of a bigger complex in Pickering, the pandemic, and a history of miserable weather on opening days. That’s why a smiling track General Manager Emilio Trotta saw the warmth and sun of May 10 as a positive omen for his track this year.

“This is an awesome sign,” he said. “We were trying to think back to the last pleasant day we had for an opening. This is wonderful. We’re finally seeing some sustainability in the horse industry. Quarter horses are becoming more and more popular every year. Last year we set a record in our handle, and we are going to beat it this year.”

The first race of 2023 was typical of the heart pounding action that draws fans to Ajax Downs. It was a maiden sprint at 220 yards and the favourite, Power Oak needed



Ajax Downs General manager Emilio Trotta

all his endurance to repel Francesca by half a length in 12.145, good for an 89-speed index.

The winning jockey, JB Botello started riding in his native Mexico.

“I went to Alberta in 2011 and I was invited to come

here for the races, and I thought, ‘Let’s go there and have some fun in Ontario.’”



JB Botello won the first race

It was pointed out to Botello that he was, temporarily, the leading jockey at Ajax Downs.

“Yeah, this is exciting, yes?” he replied.

It wasn’t much of a surprise to the bettors that Power Oak won. The 3-year-old filly paid just \$4.30. The winning trainer, Jason Pascoe had ruled the trainers’ race for the last two years and owner, Milena Kwiecien was last year’s leading owner.

“We had a really nice track surface for training,” she said. “We’re really happy to be back.”

Kwiecien told *Down The Stretch* that she has about 20 horses ready to take down purses this year.

As for her quest to repeat as the winningest owner:

“I love this sport and I love the horses,” she said. “It’s amazing to have these accomplishments. I am very proud



Milena Kwiecien, last year’s leading owner

of my team and everybody who supports this sport, and I am glad for every single win.”

There was another usual suspect in the winner’s circle after race 2, a \$13,000 allowance contest at 250 yards. Tony Philips, now in his 20th year at this track, managed to urge the 3-year-old Quick Asa Hiccup to the wire by a



Sniffing out a winner

neck in 13.414, which earned a 90-speed index.

“Time flies for TP,” he cracked. “The horses fly too.”

Philips was the leading rider at Ajax Downs in 2022, but he wasn’t making any outrageous predictions.

“We’ll see how things turn out,” he downplayed. “But I will be gunning for it.”

We wondered how Philips survives the tremendous



They’re off!

stress on the body that being a jockey entails.

It’s a matter of loving the game, loving the horses, and loving the job,” he said. “When you’re a jockey and you love it, there’s no other job like it.”

Philips is not only famous as a winning jockey but he’s the Ajax Downs resident rapper and he had an opening day verse for *Down The Stretch*:

“Clippity-Click, Clippity Clop

The sound of the horses’ hoofs when they all leave the block That’s how we do it at Ajax Go on the attack and that’s a rap.”

The 5th race on May 10 was the Gridiron Gallop, so named because it was just 110 yards. And though it took just over 7 seconds from gate to wire, this one was pure entertainment. The 9-year-old gelding Zoxtobeyou under Lloyd Desouza had to come from behind to post a narrow win over Carnaros. The margin was a neck with Carnaros just a head faster than Fly Bell Cartel who shaded the 4th place horse, Bodhi by a head.

Off the top of this story, we had the General Manager, Emilio Trotta predicting a record handle for 2023. Well, Trott is off to a good start. With only 7 races on the card, the opening day bets came to \$127,653. That’s a very satisfying number considering that opening day last year attracted just \$60,255.

ON AIR

DOWN THE STRETCH



A Podcast with Peter Gross

Sovereign Awards, 2023

There were the expected usual suspects taking down bling at the 48th Annual Sovereign Awards banquet at the Universal Events Space in Mississauga on April 14th, but the trophies were spread nicely around.

Co-hosts Dawn Lupul and Jeff Bratt moved the show along with charm and efficiency and most speeches were kept to a minimum.

On a personal note, it was not disappointing that the *Down The Stretch Podcast* did not prevail as a finalist in the Audio-Visual Broadcast category. It's hard for an audio-only product to compete with moving images. Woodbine Entertainment was celebrated for its Queen's Plate coverage.

Once again, it was a great night for Mark Casse. Sir For Sure, whom he trains was voted the Champion Three-Year-Old Male, Who's The Star earned as Champion Older Main Track Male, and Filo Di Arianna took down the award as both Champion Male Sprinter and Champion Turf Male. Casse was also named the Outstanding Trainer for 2022.

That is his 15th Sovereign in this category and the 12th straight for Casse. It should be pointed out that the trainers' voting was agonizingly close – Casse earned 105 votes and, in his 6th straight year of being a finalist, Kevin Attard was named 102 times. Despite the photo finish, Attard was fine with the result.

"That was a solid bet," joked Attard about the trainers' results. "Casse had another fantastic year. He's a tough guy to get by. Sooner or later, someone is going to knock him off that pedestal."

Attard had reason to be smiling. He trains Philip My Dear, who was named the Champion Two-Year-Old Male, and, of course, Attard was responsible for the Oaks and Queen's Plate wins by the wonderful Moira. Moria was the very unsurprising winner as Champion Three-Year-Old Female, and to end the night, she was named Horse of the Year.

"I'm just happy to be a part of her and I'm looking forward to a big season with her this year," said Attard,

Roger Attard had a good night as well. His Lady Speightspeare is the Champion Turf Female and the Champion Older Main Track Lady.

We had the pleasure of sitting at the same table with the colourful Bruno Schickedanz, so it was exciting when he was named Outstanding Owner.

"I'm deeply honoured that people voted for me," said Schickedanz. "Some people don't like me. I have claimed a lot of horses. A lot of people don't like it when you improve on their horse, but by the same token, there are horses you don't do good with. They ought to be happy that I got those horses."

There was no upset in the jockey voting. The 152 wins, 15 of which were Stakes, obviously persuaded the voters to check off Kazushi Kimura's name. This is his 4th acquisition of the St. Simon replica trophy – he has two as Apprentice Jockey and two as a weight bearing rider. His most unusual accomplishment of recent weeks is that he drove alone in his



Dawn Lupul and Jeff Bratt were the hosts

48th Annual SOVEREIGN AWARDS

50

Celebrating Outstanding Achievements in Canadian Thoroughbred Racing

Down The Stretch was nosed out for the Sovereign

PETER GROSS
DOWN THE STRETCH
A Podcast with Peter Gross

HORSE RACING ALBERTA

WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

QP
163
QUEEN'S PLATE '22

The lady in red was Emma-Jayne Wilson

Rafael Hernandez

Slade Jones

Kazushi Kimura

Bruno Schickedanz

car from Woodbine to Santa Anita last December, then drove back just days before the Awards ceremony. Kazushi told *Down The Stretch* that he rode to Santa Anita on Sunday, April 9, then left early Monday, driving straight until he arrived late Tuesday evening.

“It’s 4,000 kilometers or about 2,500 miles,” said Kazushi. “When I was driving through Utah and Arizona, it was quite a beautiful place. I enjoyed it. I was playing my music and trying not to fall asleep. When I felt exhausted, I would stop at a gas station and take a little nap. I’m still 23, so it wasn’t that bad.”

Slade Jones had a remarkable debut at Woodbine, winning 60 races. He’s the son of Jono Jones, who piled up 648 wins during his Woodbine tenure. Slade, still just 16, was honoured as Outstanding Apprentice, but it seems there may be issues with his size. He admits to being 5’11” and keeping the weight down may be a huge problem for him. The day after the Sovereign Awards, his agent Tom Patton issued a message that Jones “will be stepping away from riding for the time being.”

The Sovereign Award results are as follows:

Outstanding Writing:

GEORGE WILLIAMS

Derby Winner Has a Manitoba Mother

Published May 8, 2022, on WinnipegFreePress.com

Outstanding Photograph (tie):

ALLAN DE LA PLANTE

JULIE WRIGHT

Outstanding Audio-Visual/Digital Broadcast:

WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT

The Queen’s Plate

Aired on CTV/TSN on August 21, 2022

Outstanding Grooms:

AMBER HUTCHINSON

RICARDO NICHALSON

Champion Two-Year-Old Female:

CAIRO CONSORT

Trainer: Nathan Squires

Owner: Maple Lane Farm LLC

Cairo Consort (118), Last Call (72), Renegade Rebel (22)

Champion Two-Year-Old Male:

PHILIP MY DEAR

Trainer: Kevin Attard

Owner: Raroma Stable

Philip My Dear (112), Poulin in O T (60), Velocitor (43)

Champion Three-Year-Old Female:

MOIRA

Trainer: Kevin Attard

Owner: X-Men Racing, Madaket Stables LLC and SF Racing LLC

Moira (134), Souper Hoity Toity (53), Sister Seagull (25)

Champion Three-Year-Old Male:

SIR FOR SURE

Trainer: Mark E. Casse

Owner: Heste Sport Inc.

Sire for Sure (109), Ironstone (48), Hall of Dreams (26)

Outstanding Owner:

BRUNO SCHICKEDANZ

Bruno Schickedanz (59), X-Men Racing, Madaket Stables LLC and SF Racing LLC (52), Al & Bill Ullwelling (39)

Champion Female Sprinter:

HAZELBROOK

Trainer: Lorne Richards

Owner: True North Stable

Hazelbrook (110), Our Flash Drive (43), Lady Speightspeare (27)

Champion Male Sprinter:

FILO DI ARIANNA (BRZ)

Trainer: Mark E. Casse

Owner: Barber, Gary, Wachtel Stable and Deutsch, Peter

Filo di Arianna (BRZ) (98), Arzak (49), Lucky Score (43)

Outstanding Apprentice Jockey:

SLADE JONES

Slade Jones (140), N’Rico Prescod (56), Kimal Santo (34)

Outstanding Jockey:

KAZUSHI KIMURA

Kazushi Kimura (123), Rafael Hernandez (83), Patrick Husbands (11), Emma-Jayne Wilson (11)

Champion Female Turf Horse:

LADY SPEIGHTSPEARE

Trainer: Roger L. Attfield

Owner: Charles E. Fipke

Lady Speightspeare (120), Fev Rover (IRE) (36), Moira (29)

Champion Male Turf Horse:

FILO DI ARIANNA (BRZ)

Trainer: Mark E. Casse

Owner: Barber, Gary, Wachtel Stable and Deutsch, Peter

Outstanding Trainer:

MARK E. CASSE

Mark E. Casse (105), Kevin Attard (102), Josie Carroll (16)

Champion Older Main Track Female:

LADY SPEIGHTSPEARE

Trainer: Roger L. Attfield

Owner: Charles E. Fipke

Lady Speightspeare (117), Infinite Patience (51), Our Flash Drive (44)

Champion Older Main Track Male:

WHO’S THE STAR

Trainer: Mark E. Casse

Owner: M Racing Group, LLC

Who’s the Star (136), War Bomber (IRE) (30), Soy Tapatio (24)

Outstanding Broodmare:

COUNT TO THREE

Count to Three (74), Include Katherine (48), Cosa Rara (32)

Outstanding Breeder:

ADENA SPRINGS

Adena Springs (94), Sam-Son Farm (93), Tall Oaks Farm (21)

Horse of the Year:

MOIRA

Trainer: Kevin Attard

Owner: X-Men Racing, Madaket Stables LLC and SF Racing LLC

Breeder: Adena Springs

2022: 5 Starts, 3 wins, 0 seconds, 0 thirds, \$819,267

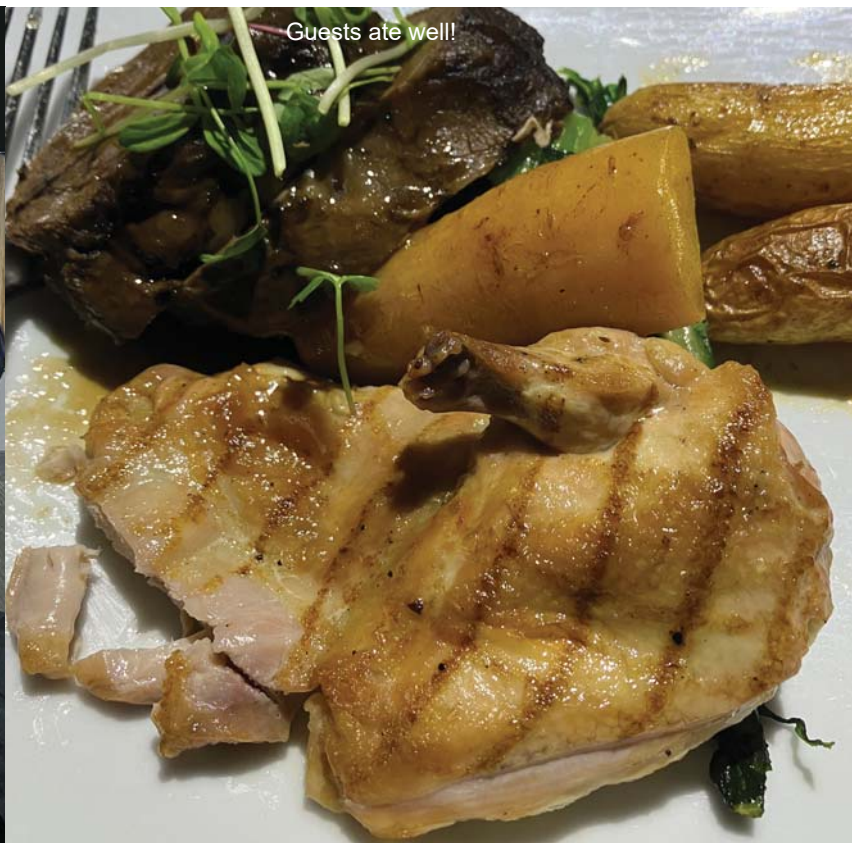
Winner: Queen’s Plate S., Stella Artois Fury S., Woodbine Oaks presented by Budweiser

Moira (103), Lady Speightspeare (75), Filo di Arianna (BRZ) (24)

Kevin Attard with the huge Sovereign for Horse of the Year Moira



Guests ate well!



Grooms of the Year – Ricardo Nichalson and Amber Hutchinson



Graduate Series at Mohawk



Adare Castle

New Image Media Photo

On Saturday night, May 6, Mohawk Raceway conducted 3 finals of the Ontario Sired Graduate Series. There were 3 preliminary heats worth \$25,000 each, and the finals offered more than \$80,000 for all 3 classes.

There was a final for 4-year-old pacing colts and geldings and a final for 4-year-old pacing mares, but thanks to a low number of eligible trotting mares, the final for that gait was co-ed – the boys had to try to keep up with the girls.

In fact, the ladies dominated the \$83,500 final. Adare Castle, who started her 2023 season by sweeping the first 3 legs of this series, was installed as the prohibitive 1-5



Raptors Won

New Image Media Photo

betting choice and that turned out to be fully justified. Driver James MacDonald zipped her to the lead before the half, which was timed in :56.4, and 5 others had no chance after that. Adare Castle threw a :27 final quarter at her rivals and was 1 3/4 lengths the best at the wire in a career best 1:52.1. Coming late for second was the other mare in the field, Mischevious Rose, driven by Louis-Philippe Roy.

Mark Etsell trains Adare Castle and shares ownership with Robert Newton, Graham Hopkins, and Peter Porter.

“The great part about Adare Castle is she’s always got a little bit more left if you need it and she just kept digging through the wire,” said MacDonald, who was also asked to compare Adare Castle and star pacing mare So Much More.

“I’m just a lucky guy to get to sit behind both of them. They have some similarities. Neither one has blazing gate speed, but both of them are tough as whalebone. They keep going and keep coming, so if Adare Castle can do what So Much More has done as an aged horse, Mark and the ownership group will be very happy.”

This was Adare Castle’s 18th win in her 27th race and she pushed her bankroll over \$1.2 million. That’s a tad more than the bettors got – the win ticket was \$2.50.

The Raptors may be long gone from the post season, but the horse, Raptors Won scored as buzzer beater over the 2-5 favourite, Silver Label in the \$84,500 final for 4-year-old mares. Sylvain Filion’s strategy was to try and win it on the front end and that worked out, even if the margin at the wire was a skimpy nose. The time for the mile was 1:49.2, and that is a career best for Raptors Won.

“If Silver Label had come past the quarter, I probably would’ve let her go, but then Dewitt For Josie tried to remove on me, so I had to go on,” said Filion post-race of the front-end mission with Raptors Won. “She felt very good, and I just felt I didn’t want to let Silver Label get close to me, so I let her rock.”

The 7-1 price on Raptors Won was understandable, as she had been winless in her first 6 races this year. She had finished 4th, 3rd, and 6th in the first 3 legs of the series. Raptors Won is owned by Bruno Lepage and trained by Richard Moreau. That was the mare’s 10th career win, and she now has earnings of over \$200,000.

Raptors Won paid \$16.70 to win.

The 3rd final of the night was the \$81,500 Ontario Graduate Open Pace, and though the 3-5 choice, Cold Creek Queso produced a huge effort to repel a determined Camara Moment, the result of this race favoured the mares. Cold Creek Queso, driven by Filion lasted by a neck in 1:50.3, about 6 lengths slower than the mark recorded by Raptors Won.

“I had to get a little breather. We left out of there pretty hard,” said Filion post-race. “Down the lane, Camara Moment was coming at us pretty hard and got me a little anxious.”

Cold Creek Queso won the first two legs of this series but did not contest the 3rd leg. Trained by Murray Brethour, the 4-year-old gelding improved to 3 for 3 in 2023. He is owned by Cold Creek Standardbred and has now earned over \$350,000.

Cold Creek Queso paid just \$3.20.



Cold Creek Queso

New Image Media Photo

This is how the 7th race finished on Sunday, May 7 at Hippodrome 3R in Quebec as 6 pacers hit the line almost simultaneously. If you look closely, you might see that the winner was #3, Mach Play who was 11-1 for driver Joel Gagnon. You might also be able to tell that #2, Southwind Leo came 6th, but was beaten only 1/4 of a length,



1er

Jim Lawson became the CEO of Woodbine Entertainment in April of 2015. IN early April, somewhat surprisingly, he announced that he is leaving the post of running Canada's most important racing organization. What follows is the letter he sent to everyone on his list:



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

I have been highly fortunate to have been involved in horse racing for most of my life and while I don't anticipate that will change, I want to share with you that I will be stepping down as CEO of Woodbine Entertainment this fall.

Professionally, I have been CEO or Chair of the Board of Directors for more than a decade and it's time to hand over the reins to someone else. On a personal level, I am at a point in my life where I want to spend a lot more time with my growing family. On Thursday, April 6, our daughter Brodie welcomed a healthy baby boy named Hugh Lawson Moore, our second grandchild. My wife Sue and I very much look forward to spending more time with each other, our kids and our grandchildren.

As someone who grew up in racing and always had a great affinity for horses and horse people, my love for this tremendous sport and respect for the hard-working women and men connected to it has never wavered and has only grown stronger. Although I am relinquishing my position as CEO, I anticipate maintaining a senior role within the organization while continuing to have a strong association with Woodbine's world-class horse racing. I will also continue to be involved as a part-owner and Executive Member of the CFL's Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

When I took the reins of CEO over eight years ago, it was a position that came with great responsibility to ensure that horse racing in Ontario didn't simply survive but would thrive for decades to come. I have cherished working with our Board, our people and the horse community and together, we have accomplished much more than I ever thought possible.

There have been a multitude of changes and advancements, both to the racing industry and to the Woodbine property itself. We moved our Standardbred racing to Woodbine Mohawk Park on a year-round basis and established it as the Number 1 Standardbred Racetrack in North America and we installed both the Tapeta main track and Inner Turf course at Woodbine. We have become the leading technology racetrack operator in North America through our multi-faceted, top of class platforms, including our simulcasts, HPIbet and DarkHorse Bets. We have also continued our industry leading commitment to equine and horse people safety. Proudly, we have advanced our reputation and stature as the model for other racetracks to pattern themselves after.

Despite the enormous constraints and challenges associated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Woodbine worked diligently and thoughtfully to protect our employees and horse people while working with various levels of government to safely run live racing. We took immediate action at the outset of the pandemic, establishing committees and a thorough set of protocols to ensure the well-being of everyone associated with our racing programs. Although we were unable to have fans at Woodbine and Mohawk Park, we were still able to put on a fantastic Queen's Plate event in 2020, a testament to the hard work and team effort displayed by people throughout the industry during very difficult times.

In 2018-19, we led the negotiation and consummated an historic funding agreement with the Ontario Government, which allots up to \$105 million annually to horse racing industry stakeholders over a

19-year period. The funding is utilized to sustain horse breeding and racing, including purse management, operational expenses and capital improvements.

Certainly, a proud personal highlight has been the establishment of a strong workplace culture at Woodbine Entertainment. Every day, we operate in alignment with a set of values and beliefs which collectively guide us. These core values allow us to achieve our strategic goals and initiatives, while challenging us to raise the bar of excellence for Canada's horse racing industry. Leadership and Professional Development Days help to inspire and grow our leaders with events that feature a wide range of notable business and thought leaders who share their heartening stories. To witness the evolution of a vibrant and caring workplace has been tremendously rewarding.

Through my father, Mel, I grew up at Woodbine, accompanying him to the races as a young child. I never dreamt I would end up working in this industry. As all of us experience, there are crossroads in life that result in decisions being made that ultimately take one down a new and different path. For me, this path has been an incredibly satisfying journey; I feel blessed to have come to know the hard-working and passionate people who are united by their love of horses and horse racing.

During my 15 years of holding formal positions with Woodbine, our community has been resilient in overcoming multiple challenges and we are extremely well-positioned for the future. I leave knowing our industry is healthy and headed in the right direction. The time is right for me to step down as CEO and allow the independent Succession Committee of the Board of Directors to find the person to lead Woodbine forward.

It has been an honour to work with all of you. I am grateful for your support, your dedication, and your unwavering commitment to our great sport. I have had the great privilege to meet and work alongside many talented people, enjoyed innumerable experiences and made lifelong friends.

Although this announcement marks a shift in my career journey, my passion and love for my Woodbine Family and Community will not change.

It's been an amazing ride. Thank you all.

Sincerely, Jim

James J. Lawson
Woodbine Entertainment,
Chief Executive Officer

2023 EVENTS

CLINTON Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sun, Jul 9	3CP	GRASSROOTS	2
Sun, Aug 6	2CT	PROSPECT	2B
Sun, Aug 6	2FT	PROSPECT	3A
Sun, Aug 20	2CP	PROSPECT	4A
Sun, Aug 27	3CT	PROSPECT	4B
Sun, Sep 3	3CT	GRASSROOTS	4

DRESDEN Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sun, June 11	3FT	PROSPECT	2A
Sun, Jul 9	3CP	PROSPECT	2B
Sun, Jul 30	3FP	PROSPECT	3
Mon, Aug 7	2FP	GRASSROOTS	3

FLAMBORO Downs

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sat, May 20	3CP	PROSPECT	1A
Sat, May 20	3CT	PROSPECT	1A
Sat, May 20	3FP	PROSPECT	1A
Sat, May 20	3FT	PROSPECT	1A
Sun, May 21	3CT	GRASSROOTS	1
Tue, Sep 5	2FT	PROSPECT	5A
Tue, Sep 5	2CT	PROSPECT	4B
Tue, Sep 12	2CT	PROSPECT	5
Tue, Sep 12	2FT	PROSPECT	5B
Thu, Sep 14	2FP	PROSPECT	5B
Sun, Sep 17	3FT	PROSPECT	5
Sun, Oct 1	2CP	GOLD	5
Sun, Oct 1	2FP	GOLD	5

GEORGIAN Downs

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sun, June 25	3CP	PROSPECT	2A
Tue, Jul 25	2CT	PROSPECT	2A
Tue, Jul 25	2FT	PROSPECT	2
Sun, Jul 30	2CT	GRASSROOTS	2
Sun, Aug 6	2CP	PROSPECT	3A
Sun, Aug 6	2FP	PROSPECT	3A
Tue, Aug 8	2CT	GOLD	3
Tue, Aug 8	2FT	GOLD	3
Sun, Aug 13	2CT	PROSPECT	3A
Sun, Aug 13	2FT	PROSPECT	3B
Sun, Aug 20	3FT	PROSPECT	4B
Tue, Aug 22	2FP	PROSPECT	4A
Sun, Aug 27	2CP	PROSPECT	4B
Tue, Aug 29	2CT	PROSPECT	4A

GRAND RIVER Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Fri, June 2	3FP	PROSPECT	1B
Fri, June 2	3FT	PROSPECT	1B
Mon, June 26	3FT	PROSPECT	2B
Wed, Jul 26	2CP	PROSPECT	2
Wed, Jul 26	2FP	PROSPECT	2
Wed, Aug 2	3CP	PROSPECT	3
Fri, Aug 4	3CT	PROSPECT	3
Mon, Aug 7	3FP	GOLD	3
Mon, Aug 14	3CT	GOLD	3
Wed, Aug 16	3FP	PROSPECT	4A
Fri, Aug 18	2CP	GRASSROOTS	3
Mon, Aug 21	2CT	PROSPECT	3B
Mon, Aug 21	2FT	PROSPECT	4A
Mon, Aug 28	2FT	PROSPECT	4B
Wed, Aug 30	2FP	PROSPECT	4B
Fri, Sep 1	2CT	GRASSROOTS	4
Wed, Sep 6	2CP	PROSPECT	5A
Wed, Sep 6	2FP	PROSPECT	5A
Mon, Sep 11	2FT	GRASSROOTS	5
Wed, Sep 13	2CP	PROSPECT	5B
Fri, Sep 15	3FP	PROSPECT	5
Wed, Sep 27	ALL	PROSPECT FINALS	

HANOVER Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sat, June 17	3FP	PROSPECT	2A
Sat, Jul 8	3CT	PROSPECT	2B
Sat, Jul 15	2CP	PROSPECT	1
Sat, Jul 15	2FP	PROSPECT	1
Sat, Aug 26	3FP	GRASSROOTS	4
Sat, Sep 9	3FT	GRASSROOTS	5

HIAWATHA Horse Park

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sat, June 17	3CT	PROSPECT	2A
Sat, Jul 1	3FP	PROSPECT	2B
Sat, Jul 22	2FP	GRASSROOTS	2
Sat, Aug 12	3FT	PROSPECT	4A
Sat, Sep 2	2FT	GRASSROOTS	4
Sat, Sep 16	3CP	PROSPECT	5

KAWARTHA Downs

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sat, Jul 15	2CT	PROSPECT	1
Sat, Jul 15	2FT	PROSPECT	1
Fri, Jul 21	3FT	PROSPECT	3
Sat, Jul 29	2CP	GRASSROOTS	2
Fri, Sep 1	3CP	PROSPECT	4B
Fri, Sep 1	3FP	PROSPECT	4B
Sat, Sep 16	3CT	PROSPECT	5

LEAMINGTON Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sun, Aug 13	2CP	PROSPECT	3B
Sun, Aug 13	2FP	PROSPECT	3B
Sun, Aug 20	3CP	PROSPECT	4A
Sun, Aug 20	3CT	PROSPECT	4A

Woodbine MOHAWK PARK

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Mon, May 29	3CT	GOLD	1
Thu, June 1	3FT	GRASSROOTS	1
Fri, June 2	3FP	GOLD	1
Tue, June 6	3CP	GRASSROOTS	1
Thu, June 8	3FT	GOLD	1
Fri, June 16	3FP	GRASSROOTS	2
Fri, June 23	3CT	GRASSROOTS	2
Fri, June 30	3FT	GOLD	2
Sat, Jul 1	3CP	GOLD	1
Mon, Jul 3	3FT	GRASSROOTS	2
Sat, Jul 8	3CT	GOLD	2
Mon, Jul 10	2CP	GOLD	1
Tue, Jul 11	2FP	GOLD	1
Thu, Jul 13	2FP	GRASSROOTS	1
Thu, Jul 13	2FT	GOLD	1
Fri, Jul 14	2CP	GRASSROOTS	1
Fri, Jul 14	2CT	GOLD	1
Sat, Jul 15	2CT	GRASSROOTS	1
Mon, Jul 17	2FT	GRASSROOT	1
Tue, Jul 18	3FP	GOLD	2
Fri, Jul 21	2CP	GOLD	2
Fri, Jul 21	2FP	GOLD	2
Sat, Jul 22	3CP	GOLD	2
Tue, Jul 25	3FP	GRASSROOTS	3
Thu, Jul 27	2CT	GOLD	2
Thu, Jul 27	2FT	GOLD	2
Mon, Jul 31	2FT	GRASSROOTS	2
Mon, Aug 7	2FT	GRASSROOTS	3

Woodbine Mohawk Park cont.

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Thu, Aug 10	2CT	GRASSROOTS	3
Sat, Aug 12	3CT	GRASSROOTS	3
Tue, Aug 15	3FT	GOLD	4
Tue, Aug 15	2FP	GOLD	3
Sat, Aug 19	2CP	GOLD	3
Mon, Aug 21	3FT	GRASSROOTS	4
Fri, Aug 25	3CT	GOLD	4
Mon, Aug 28	2CP	GRASSROOTS	4
Mon, Aug 28	2FP	GRASSROOTS	4
Thu, Aug 31	3CP	GRASSROOTS	4
Fri, Sep 1	3FP	GOLD	4
Fri, Sep 1	3CP	GOLD	4
Sat, Sep 2	2CP	GOLD	4
Sat, Sep 2	2FP	GOLD	4
Mon, Sep 4	2FT	GOLD	4
Tue, Sep 5	2CT	GOLD	4
Thu, Sep 7	2CP	GRASSROOTS	5
Fri, Sep 8	3FP	GRASSROOTS	5
Sat, Sep 9	3CP	GRASSROOTS	5
Mon, Sep 11	2FP	GRASSROOTS	5
Mon, Sep 11	3CT	GRASSROOTS	5
Tue, Sep 12	2CT	GRASSROOTS	5
Thu, Sep 21	ALL	GRASSROOT SEMI-FINALS	
Thu, Sep 28	3FP	GOLD	5
Fri, Sep 29	2CT	GOLD	5
Fri, Sep 29	2FT	GOLD	5
Sat, Sep 30	ALL	GRASSROOT CHAMPIONSHIP	
Mon, Oct 2	3CT	GOLD	
Mon, Oct 2	3FT	GOLD	5
Thu, Oct 5	3CP	GOLD	5
Fri, Oct 13	2YO	GOLD SUPER FINALS	
Sat, Oct 14	3YO	GOLD SUPER FINALS	

RIDEAU CARLETON Raceway

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Sun, Jul 16	3FT	GOLD	3
Sun, Jul 16	3FT	GRASSROOTS	3
Sun, Aug 13	3CP	GOLD	3
Sun, Aug 13	3CP	GRASSROOTS	3

The Raceway at WESTERN FAIR

Date	ASG	SERIES	Leg
Fri, May 26	3FP	GRASSROOTS	1
Mon, May 29	3CP	PROSPECT	1B
Mon, May 29	3CT	PROSPECT	1B

PROSPECT SERIES FINALS

Friday, September 27, 2023

Grand River Raceway
Post Time 6:30 pm

GRASSROOTS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Saturday, September 30, 2023

Woodbine Mohawk Park
Post Time 7:00 pm

GOLD SUPER FINALS

2YO's Friday, October 13, 2023

3YO's Saturday, October 14, 2023

Woodbine Mohawk Park
Post Time 7:00 pm



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Schedule accurate as at February 8, 2023. Please note that all dates are subject to change and it is recommended to confirm dates and

post times with the track. For complete OSS information including schedules, stats, leader boards and more, please visit oss.ontarioracing.com.

Complete track information may be found at ontarioracing.com

Canadians out of Town

March 22, Gulfstream Park:



Chantal Sutherland and Mundo Mix
Adam Coglianese Photo

The 4th race was a mile on the dirt, and Chantal Sutherland executed a daring trip on the 8-5 favourite, Mundo Mix. Sutherland rocketed the 4-year-old gelding to a huge lead, but as the field went around the far turn, it appeared that Mundo Mix was about to be inhaled. Instead, he showed he had plenty left, re-established a comfortable lead and won by 4 comfortable lengths in 1:37.88. Mundo Mix is trained by Jorge Delgado for the Strike Stable and with his 2nd win in 13 starts, he paid \$5.40.

March 24, Gulfstream Park:



Mandy Green
Adam Coglianese Photo

Give jockey Paco Lopez credit for a well-timed ride on Mandy Green, trained by Kevin Attard. The 8th race was for \$35,000 claimers going a mile on the turf. Lopez held Mandy Green in mid-pack for the first half, then turned the 5-year-old filly loose 5-wide into the stretch, blowing her rivals away to win by almost 3 lengths in 1:35.67. Mandy Green was owned by Jim Bruce but was claimed from this race after paying \$13.20.

March 25, Aqueduct:

Steven Chircop has been crushing it at Penn National, but he entered the Ontario-bred, Romantic Gamble in the 7th race, a starter's allowance which had a purse of \$50,000. Halfway through this 6-furlong test, Romantic Gamble appeared hopelessly beaten, 5th at least 6 lengths



Romantic Gamble for Steven Chircop
Adam Coglianese Photo

from the front. But they'd gone too fast, and jockey Trevor McCarthy and Romantic Gamble came barreling down the long Aqueduct stretch. The pair found the finish line first by a length in 1:11.93. Romantic Gamble, which Chircop owns with partner Eric Ross, had won 10 days earlier at Penn. That didn't impress the bettors, as Romantic Gamble paid \$19.20 to win.

March 30, Gulfstream:



Extraction Will for DePaulo
Adam Coglianese Photo

About an hour before Aaron Judge hit a home run in his first at bat with the Yankees, Chantal Sutherland went deep in her first ride of the day in Hallandale. The 1st race of the day was for \$20,000 claimers at a mile and 70 and Sutherland's horse, Total Bliss went off at 14-1. The bettors sure got it wrong – Sutherland blasted Total Bliss from 3rd to 1st on the last turn and withstood a late challenge from a rival to hold on by a neck. Total Bliss is owned and trained by Kelly Blake. The 4-year-old filly broke her maiden on the 2nd try and paid \$30.80.

March 31, Gulfstream:



Sutherland and Disco Queen
Adam Coglianese Photo

The 3rd race had a field of 8 maiden fillies and mares going 5 ½ on the all-weather. The 4-5 choice was Gayelette, and with Ira Ortiz aboard, she made the bettors' prediction an accurate one, getting up late by a neck in 1:03.75. Gayelette was winless in her first 11 races at Woodbine but broke through in her first try at Gulfstream. She is trained by Nick Gonzalez for owner Eric Reller, and she paid \$3.80.

April 6, Gulfstream:

The 5th race was 6 furlongs on the dirt for maiden claimers with a tag of \$12,500. Mike DePaulo sent out Extraction Will with jockey Heriberto Figueroa. The bettors ignored this one, letting it off at almost 14-1 and that was a mistake – Extraction Will had the lead at the half and was fierce to the wire, winning by a length in 1:12.97. DePaulo trains this one for MLSJ Management, and the \$29.80 win price reflects that Extraction Will needed 19 tries to break his maiden.

April 7, Gulfstream:

It was, unofficially, Canada Day as Maple Leaf prevailed in 4 races. Chantal Sutherland kicked off the raid by

winning the 2nd race, a \$6,250 claimer, with Disco Queen. The 4-year-old filly danced to the finish line half a length the best in 1:39.35 for the conventional dirt mile. Daniel Pita is the winning owner and trainer and Disco Queen paid \$12.80.

The next race had a field of 6, all of whom could be taken for \$16,000. The distance was 5 ½ furlongs and



Reservenotattained
Adam Coglianese Photo

the winning favourite, Reservenotattained was grateful it wasn't longer. Under Edgard Zayas, Reservenotattained lasted by a neck in 1:03.35. Marty Drexler trains this one for Bruno Schickedanz and the 7-year-old gelding has now won at least once in 5 straight years to make the record 9 for 22. The bettors cashed \$4.

That same day, race 6 was a starter's optional claiming at a mile on the grass. Alley Oop Johnny was the 3-5 choice in the field of 7 and with Zayas aboard, the



Alley Oop Johnny gave Drexler and Schickedanz a double
Adam Coglianese Photo

favourite got there by a neck in 1:35.00. That made it 2 wins on the card for the Drexler/Schickedanz combination. Ally Oop Johnny won for the 5th time in 29 tries and paid \$3.20.

The terrific day for Canada concluded in race 8, a \$35,000 claim event in which 8 older horses went 5 furlongs on



Xy Speed was Sutherland's 2nd win on the card
Adam Coglianese Photo

the turf. Chantal Sutherland gave Xy Speed a perfect ride, rallying from 5th early to surge up between rivals at the right time, getting to the wire a length the best in :56.18. Xy Speed is trained by Michael Lerman for Clear Stars Stable. Xy Speed has won a race in 6 straight years improving to 10 for 28 and paying \$9.20 to win.

Retired trainer Dan Vella Joins Woodbine

by Mark McKelvie



In early March, Woodbine Entertainment announced the addition of Sovereign Award and Queen's Plate winning trainer Dan Vella as Horse People Liaison.

Vella joins Woodbine in this new position following a training career that spanned several decades, compiling over 800 wins and \$39 million in earnings.

"Dan is a highly regarded figure on our backstretch that has his finger on the pulse of our racing community," said Jim Lawson, CEO, Woodbine Entertainment. "Having the ability to add someone like Dan, who has spent over 50 years on our backstretch and enjoyed success at our highest levels, is a big boost for our stakeholder relationships."

Leveraging his decades of racing experience, Vella will be a point of contact for owners and trainers for opportunities and feedback regarding race conditions,

track surface matters, backstretch maintenance, equine safety, and race day logistics. Vella will report to the Director of Racing.

"A fair amount of racetracks have that type of thing," says Vella about his new gig. "I think Woodbine wants to keep an open dialogue between the front side and the back side, and that way they can stay informed, and the horseman can stay informed and that'll be my job. I am excited to have this opportunity to work for Woodbine and continue to be involved in the industry and sport that has given me so much. I am really looking forward to working with the hardworking and dedicated management team at Woodbine, while also having the opportunity to work with horse people throughout the backstretch that I respect and admire."

The original introduction to Woodbine for Vella began as a teenager in 1972. Becoming a groom shortly after, Vella groomed Fabe Count in the 1973 Canadian International, famously known as Secretariat's final race.

Cutting his teeth on the Woodbine backstretch, Vella eventually launched a successful training career, working for top owners such as Steve Stavro and Frank Stronach. His first stakes victory came in 1985 with Bert James in the Sir Barton Stakes.

Vella spent 1993 to 1998 training for Stronach, primarily racing in the United States. It was during this time that Vella reached the pinnacle of Canadian racing, winning the 1994 Queen's Plate with Basqueian.

Finding continued success at Woodbine during that period, Vella won the Sovereign Award as Canada's outstanding trainer in 1994 and 1995.

After parting ways with Stronach Stables, Vella

remained in the United States before returning to Woodbine in 2003.

In 2012, Vella captured his second Queen's Plate title with Strait of Dover.

In recent years, Vella has continued to collect stakes victories at Woodbine. The Minkster scored a Stakes double for the veteran conditioner in 2021, winning the Coronation Futurity and Queenston Stakes, before running in last year's Queen's Plate. Rookie filly Jumpin Junie delivered his final stakes victory in October's Princess Elizabeth.

Vella was elected to the HBPA Board of Directors in 2021 for a three-year term. However, Vella recently resigned from the Board.

Vella announced his retirement from training at the end of 2022. It makes us wonder if he decided to stop training because a nice transition was offered, or did Woodbine jump at the opportunity to work with a seasoned pro who knows all the drama and intrigue of the backstretch?

"There was a meeting last year called Stronger Together," says Vella. "And they talked about having a job like this and it's been kind of an ongoing conversation since then. My decision to retire from training has been a year-to-year thing for the last few years. I'm 67 and the average person retires at 65, although some horse trainers don't. So, my intention was to retire this year no matter what. And then with these conversations with Woodbine, if I can do anything to move the industry forward, that would be wonderful."

Vella began working as the Horse People Liaison on April 1.



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presented by WEG

There were 23 happy recipients of the St. Simon replica trophy at the Sovereign Awards on April 13, but the most interesting winner had to be Raj Maharajh, owner of Philip My Dear, who was acclaimed the Outstanding Two-Year-Old Colt for 2022. By expressing his delight at winning a Sovereign for the second straight year, Maharajh cued up a clip from the Trinidadian singer Mighty Sparrow. Appropriately, the song is called *Philip My Dear*.

“When I bought Philip, he was a beautiful horse,” says Maharajh. “And you always have a big dream of running in the Queen’s Plate one day. So, I said, ‘Wouldn’t it be interesting to have a horse by the name of Philip My Dear?’ Philip, the queen’s husband had died the year before. Trinidad is the land of calypso and the Mighty Sparrow. One of our great calypsos wrote this beautiful song called *Philip My Dear*, and I thought it had a lovely ring, and wouldn’t it be fitting if he could win the King’s Plate?”

The trophy for Philip My Dear occurred one year after Maharajh’s Raroma Stable won for Munnyfor Ro, the Outstanding Three-Year-Old Filly.

“That was amazing,” says Maharajh. “She started her career at Woodbine and didn’t show anything great in two starts. We took her down to Florida and tried her in a \$35,000 claim. The next race, she was a close 3rd on the grass, and she ran second and then she won a maiden special weight at a mile and a 16th on the grass at Keeneland. That’s when we saw some potential. She ran in the Selene Stakes at Woodbine and ran a good second. She really needed that race because that set her up perfectly for the Oaks and she just blossomed in that race. She ran her best race ever and won. It was an amazing day for us because it was also my mom’s 80th birthday, August 1. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful moment to celebrate, and a great day for the whole family.”

Munnyfor Ro was a solid 4th in the Queen’s Plate in 2022, then captured the \$250,000 Wonder Where Stakes and the \$150,000 Damsel Stakes in October. She finished her sophomore year with a record of 4 wins in 12 races and her accomplishments were rewarded by the Sovereign voters.

“It was really an inspirational moment for Raroma Stable to win a Sovereign award,” says Maharajh, “coming from Trinidad and being a small owner in such a big racing industry.”

Although the name Philip My Dear was inspired by English royalty and Maharajh’s love of calypso, there is a running theme that resonates through many of his horses. On February 12, a three-year-old filly named Ro Town carried jockey José Ortiz to a 6 ½ length victory in an \$84,000 Maiden Special Weight at Gulfstream. The winning trainer is Brian Lynch, and Ro Town paid \$24.80



to win, breaking her maiden on the 2nd try. Munnyfor Ro, Ro Town, Raroma Stable –

What’s the connective tissue here?

“It’s quite interesting,” smiles Maharajh. “When I got into the game, my first horse was an Afleet Alex filly that I bought in 2009 in the Ocala sales. Pam Edel was the girl that was buying the horses for me, and she said, ‘Raj, I looked at three of them and this is the short list.’ So, I said, ‘Ok, send me the name and I want to know the date of birth. The first one I looked at was born April 27th and that was the day my son, Rowan was born, so the first horse that I ever ran was Runfor Ro.”

Runfor Ro was a pretty decent filly. She scored just 2 wins in 18 races but came 2nd 5 times and 3rd 4 times more. Runfor Ro earned \$211,042.

(At this point, you should be able to figure out that Raroma Stable includes the Ra from Raj, the Ro from Rowan, and the Ma from Maharajh).

Runfor Ro is now a broodmare owned by Raroma stable. She is the dam of Ro Town.

“Ro Town has turned out to be a lovely little horse,” says Maharajh. “She ran a beautiful race at Gulfstream, and then we ran her at Keeneland and unfortunately, she bled a little bit in that race and that impacted the way she ran. So, we had to give her some time off. Right now, she’s on a farm trying to recuperate, and they probably give her 60 days off and then start her up again.”

Winning the Sovereign for Philip My Dear certainly justified a costly gamble by Maharajh.

“We bought Philip My Dear in the September sales,” says Maharajh. “I’ve got to give mention to my buddy, Art Fisher, who has been very instrumental with me buying horses. He picked out Munnyfor Ro and he also picked out Philip My Dear. It was a tough sale. A lot of the horses were very expensive. We tried to buy a few, and we couldn’t.

And then coming down to the end of the sale, we saw this beautiful black beauty and we had to go a little bit beyond what we wanted, but we did buy him for \$100,000.”

Philip My Dear went 3 for 5 in his rookie year and earned \$305,762.

Maharajh had had a successful career in the pharmaceutical industry.

“I studied in Canada and got my degree at York University,” he says. “Then I went back to Trinidad and started a pharmaceutical distribution business. I’ve been doing that for the last 30 years. We are a regional distributor for two big Canadian companies, and we service Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados and all the small islands.”

As for his nice run of good fortune at Woodbine the last couple of years, Maharajh understands how much serendipity can play in this game.

“We ended up getting a little bit lucky,” he says. “Munnyfor Ro was a big chunk of that. Sometimes it takes a lifetime when you’re in this game to find one. It’s just the nature of the beast. We were very fortunate to have Munnyfor Ro and then to have Philip My Dear. It has been really a beautiful and wonderful moment for the stable to have back-to-back Sovereign Awards. Some people go through their whole racing life and never win a Sovereign. So, we will enjoy the luck when it’s there, keep our fingers crossed that we have a good year this year. We’re looking forward to it.”

More than anything else, Maharajh is looking forward to the possibility of Philip My Dear running in the King’s Plate.

“That would be a dream come true,” he says. “Winning the greatest race in Canada would be an amazing thing to happen. That would be the pinnacle of my racing career. It would put all the icing on the cake for us.”

And then the Mighty Sparrow would have to write a song about it!



We started our interview with 67-year-old Mark Etsell by tossing him a softball question. Etsell is the trainer of the wonderful trotting mare, Adare Castle, whom he owns in partnership with Robert Newton, Graham Hopkins, and Peter Porter. The 4-year-old Adare Castle just completed an impressive sweep of the Ontario Sires Graduate series, winning the first three legs, then prevailing in the \$75,000 final on May 6. That was her 18th win in her 26th race and it jacked her earnings to over \$1.2 million. Our question was – is she the best horse Etsell has ever owned?

“Oh, for sure,” responds Etsell without skipping a beat. “You’d be a fool not to say that. She has made over a million dollars, won most of her career starts, and put a lot of smiles on a lot of faces. I’ve had some other really nice horses, but, yeah, she’s the best one for sure.”

Adare Castle’s excellent record speaks volumes, but Etsell puts the mare in a class by herself.

“It’s just fantastic to have one that shows up for every race and gives you what she has and doesn’t argue about it,” he says. “She’s just a treat to have around. She’s good in the barn. She’s great on the track. You can leave with her, you can sit her in a hole, you can do anything you want. She’s just a fantastic animal.”

That purse total of more than \$1.2 million is even more impressive when you discover how little was paid for the trotter. Etsell and his partners wrote a cheque for \$10,000.

“That’s pretty good value, wouldn’t you say?” cracks Etsell. “We were prepared to go a lot more. I think I put the range in from 35 to 40 to be the maximum we would go. When I got her for 10, I was a little suspicious that I missed something. One explanation could have been that people didn’t realize that Ed Lohmeyer was just quitting training horses. He was the consignor and the breeder, and I think people thought that she was a cull. That’s speculation on my part but it all worked out in our favour.”

There was an interesting aspect to the Graduate Series at Mohawk. There were 3 legs and a final for both pacing mares and pacing colts. But for older trotters, it was determined there would be just one category and that’s how Adare Castle ended up competing against – and crushing – her male counterparts.

“Trotting mares are always at a disadvantage in this country because they only have segregated events for two and three-year-olds,” says Etsell. “Once you become four, you always have to race against the boys. I talked to the race office when they were coming up with these series



and they said they didn’t think they would have enough mares to fill, so they just wrote it open. I was ok with that. It’s always tougher when the fillies have to race against the boys, especially at an older age. But she’s shown she can compete.”

We wondered if Etsell was thinking broodmare at the sale, or was his intention to get a competitive animal?

“I just felt that we had a chance to get a racehorse and when I go to sales, that’s my main goal,” he says. “What kind of number can we spend? Because stake horses and great horses are just dreams, right? I was thinking if we get a grass roots horse, I’ll be tickled pink, but to get what we got was exceptional.”

Asked to recall the first horse he ever owned, Etsell laughs.

“Oh, God, it wasn’t a very good one,” he says. “The very first horse I bought on a whim was a mare called Have a Gud Day. She was racing at Owen Sound, so that’s how far that goes back. Those were the days before there was internet so you couldn’t just go online and look at the horse’s races. She had finished second in a recent event there, but she’d paced only 2:16 and 3 or something like that. Anyway, we bought her cheap and, learned a lot. My second horse was Carolwood Val and that’s the horse I won my very first driving win with.”

Standardbred Canada shows that Carolwood Val raced 64 times with 8 wins and 20 other in-the-money finishes, earning just \$6,614 with a lifetime best mile of 2:07 at Hanover.

Now well into his 7th decade, Etsell has cut back significantly on his driving assignments, though his lifetime stats indicated over 10,000 pari-mutuel steers with 1,252 wins and a U.D.R.S. of .243. Don’t worry about how U.D.R.S. is calculated (so much weight for

each win, place, and show, etc.), just consider that only 4 drivers at Mohawk have better marks – James Macdonald (.342), Doug McNair (.313), Louis-Philippe Roy (.277) and Bob McClure (.261). Etsell concedes that at his age, the training takes precedence over the driving.

“As time goes on, the body doesn’t allow you to do that driving,” he says. “In the 90s, I had to make the decision whether I was going to train or drive. You can’t do both well. I love driving, but I also enjoy training. I really like seeing those young horses develop and I am comfortable doing that. So, if you’re asking, ‘Do I like driving or training more at this stage of my life?’ I definitely like training.”

Etsell doesn’t have to worry about the skill level of the men who get behind his horses. It has been James MacDonald paired with Adare Castle throughout her spring rampage.

“I’m very fortunate,” he says. “Bob McClure is a good friend of mine. That was his drive. He won the first 3 starts with this filly, but because he was under contract to Determination, he had to drive Mischevious Rose. That’s when James took over. Bobby would have done a great job too.”

When asked what keeps him so plugged into the sport of harness racing, Etsell’s response has to do with the work he does in the mornings.

“The biggest thing that gives me pleasure is to watch the young ones develop,” he says. “I like working with the young ones. You buy the yearling and train them and watch them develop. You go through their bad times and their good times. We’ve had a lot of horses that didn’t start out that good, that ended up ok and vice versa. Just seeing them go on and win races and be competitive at a high level – that’s a big feather in your cap.”

Quarter Horse
Owner of the
Month:
Chantelle
Bourgeois



The first horse our Owner of the Month, Chantelle Bourgeois sent out this year produced an adequate, if not winning result. Summers Grace, a 5-year-old mare was entered in Ajax Downs' 2nd race on opening day, an allowance sprint of 250 yards with a purse of \$13,000. Moments before the gates opened, the feisty mare reared up, almost catapulting jockey Cassandra Jeschke out of the saddle. When the race went off, Summer Grace ran well, just getting nosed out of second place. The 3rd place cheque was \$1,250.

Bourgeois trains her own horses and has been in love with the animals pretty well all her life.

"I got a horse for my 16th birthday," she recalls. "And I needed to pay for its board, so I got a job on Joe Tavares' farm."

That was a good place to start. Tavares has been training quarter horses for over 30 years.

Bourgeois wasn't necessarily destined to be a quarter horse owner. It could have gone another way.

"I actually worked for Mac Benson at Woodbine," she says. "I also worked at Windfields. I love thoroughbreds and I love quarter horses."

She categorizes her initiation into this sport as an "accident."

"The first quarter horse I owned was Junos Lady Bug," she says. "I had worked with her mother, Bugs Jetlark at Joe's barn. She had lost her foal that year and Joe said, 'If you're still interested in buying this horse, I will sell her to you. So even though I was living in downtown TO in a condo and working in IT, I bought her as a pleasure riding horse. I boarded her out in Stouffville which meant I got in traffic every night and drove up the DVP to see my horse."

If Bourgeois thought she had bought just one horse, there was a small surprise attached to the deal.

"Joe didn't mention that he had bred her," she laughs. "I didn't know at the time. He called a couple weeks after I got her and said, 'Did I mention that we actually covered her once. You might want to check that.' The foal was Junos Lady Bug – my first racehorse."

Junos Lady Bug, to be kind, did not put up sensational numbers, racing just 4 times in 2001.

"I think she had a win, a 2nd and a 3rd," says Bourgeois. "She had had an injury and was retired."

Despite the meagre winnings (\$1,325) of her first racehorse, Bourgeois wanted more of the action.

"I had already fallen in love with foals and breeding," she says. "So, I re-bred this mare to Bugs Jetlark and that



was my second racehorse, Junos Copper Bug, and that's when I was really hooked."

Junos Copper Bug gave Bourgeois thrills over several years. In 2003, as a 2-year-old, he raced 7 times at old Picov Downs, producing no wins, but 2 seconds, 3 thirds and a fourth.

The next year, in a maiden race with a purse of \$1,710, Junos Copper Bug carried rider Keith Dimach to victory in a 330-yard race. In 2005, he won a \$2,500 allowance race and the next year, with Mike Mehak aboard, he blazed home in 16.470 to win a \$15,000 Stakes race. That time was a record for the distance.

"He was my first winner as a trainer, my first winner as an owner, and he was my first Stakes winner while setting a track record," declares Bourgeois proudly.

Junos Copper Bug finished his career after racing for 7 seasons, winning 7 times with 9 seconds, 13 thirds and over \$40,000 earned from 52 starts. Now 22, he's living the good life in retirement.

"He's at home in my paddock right now," confirms Bourgeois.

As Bourgeois was rising up the food chain as both trainer and owner, it's appropriate that she found great success with a horse called Rising Up the Charts.

"I trained Rising Up the Charts for the Hunderups," she says. "And he went on to win Stakes for them. I purchased him off them when he was a 6-year-old gelding and people told me I was crazy. He went on to win a Stakes and placed in multiple other Stakes and ran all the way up to age 11."

Rising Up the Charts raced 49 times for Bourgeois, recording 9 wins, 12 seconds and 10 thirds. Bourgeois figured she had a good thing going with that one, so....

"Then I purchased his sister, Shake Pretty Baby," she says. "She has been my best broodmare. I bred her to my own stallion, Look At Magics Form and the result was Shake It Twice. I purchased Look At Magics Form as a yearling from the Hunderups' Heste Sport and then owned and trained him throughout his career. He was Stakes placed and AQHA Canadian Champion in 2010. He has

become the foundation of my breeding program over the past 10 years and is also Summers Grace's sire."

Shake it Twice was a veritable ATM for Bourgeois. As a 2-year-old she raced 3 times. She debuted with a 2nd place finish in a \$10,000 Futurity Trial, came back 3 weeks later with a 3rd place result in the \$65,800 Futurity Final. She completed her rookie year by breaking her maiden for rider Cassandra Jeschke at 300 yards for a purse of \$12,500.

As a 3-year-old, Shake it Twice won 2 consecutive allowance races and stretched her win streak to 3 with a narrow victory in the \$56,300 Ontario Sires Stakes Derby. Cory Spataro was the rider. In 2020, with Jeschke back aboard, Shake it Twice prevailed by a nose at odds of 4-1 in the \$43,700 Ontario Sired Stakes Maturity. Shake it Twice won 6 of 15 in her racing career and banked \$69,936.

As the 2023 season got underway at Ajax Downs, Bourgeois told *Down The Stretch* that she has 8 horses in training, 3 yearlings, a stallion, 4 broodmares and "a pile of retired standing there eating hay."

She admits being involved in quarter horse racing with just 25 dates at Ajax Downs is not something anyone does to be rich.

"I am a software architect, and this is my full-time hobby," she explains.

Anyone venturing out to Ajax Downs will understand how fulfilling it is for Bourgeois to be involved in this sport.

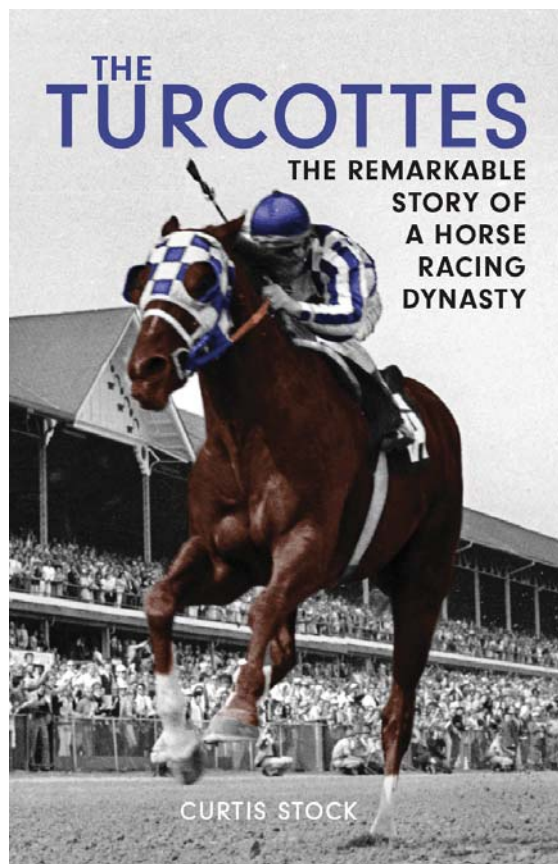
"Ajax downs is a great place to race," she says emphatically, "If you look around after the race, you will see owners and trainers hugging each other. It's a family."

We like to conclude all our Owner of the Month interviews by asking the subject what keeps them in the sport.

"It's a game of luck and chance, but also talent." Says Bourgeois. "It's tough. You have to have luck on your side, and you have to have a good horse. It's adrenalin like nothing else."

cmbracing@hotmail.com

Curtis Stock's riveting epic of the 5 racing Turcottes:



The Remarkable Story of a Horse Racing Dynasty by Curtis Stock

It's no surprise that multiple award-winning writer, Curtis Stock elected to write about the 5 Turcotte brothers, all jockeys who escaped poverty from their humble beginnings in New Brunswick. The question might be, why didn't someone do this before?

The book is called *The Turcottes: The Remarkable Story of a Horse Racing Dynasty*, and Stock discovered that the more he researched, the more he recognized a gripping saga.

"I was attracted by the whole spectre of the 5 Turcotte brothers from a small, impoverished town in Drummond,

how they all became great riders, and, unfortunately, tragic things happen to all of them."

The book chronicles the catastrophic events that visited each of the Turcottes.

"Ron was the most famous, of course as the rider of Secretariat and Riva Ridge," says Stock. "He got hurt in 1978 in New York, broke his back and he's paralyzed from the waist down. Noel was a very good rider in Canada. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic and he committed suicide. Rudy may have been the best rider of all of them. He won everywhere down the east seaboard, but Rudy, too was an alcoholic and he died of alcoholism. Roger came next. He was once the leading apprentice rider in North America and a great rider in Alberta. Unfortunately, he too was an alcoholic, and he committed suicide. And then there was Yves. He was a very good rider in Alberta. He won most of the big races out here, including the Canadian Derby but he got hurt in an accident and couldn't ride again."

Stock's book is rich with both the sad side of the Turcottes' lives as well as the fascinating accomplishments of both the humans and their horses.

"I didn't realize just how great Secretariat really was," says Stock. "He won 16 of 21 races, but he could have been undefeated. Ron couldn't ride him in his first start, and an apprentice, Paul Feliciano rode and he got him boxed in. Then Secretariat lost the Wood Memorial, the prep before the Kentucky Derby and it was discovered that he had an abscess the size of a quarter in his mouth. Ron didn't know anything about that, and every time he tried to pick up the bit, the horse would toss his head. He wasn't supposed to run in the Woodward. It was supposed to be Riva Ridge, but the track came up sloppy and Riva Ridge couldn't stand the slop. They put Secretariat in after only two very minor breezes on grass and he just wasn't ready. And he lost the Whitney when he had a fever of 104. Ron cried afterwards. He couldn't believe that the horse could run as well as he did. Ron told me that we

never saw the real Secretariat. He was just beginning to get good. He won his last two races on the grass, including the Canadian International at Woodbine, and Ron said he was a better horse on grass than he was on dirt. There was no telling how good the horse would have been if he would have been able to run as a four or even a five-year-old. He retired when he was three. I was also surprised when they did an autopsy on Secretariat and found that his heart was twice the size of a normal horse's heart. That explains why he got so much oxygen and could run so fast."

Racing fans will turn the pages as they read about the great races, but Stock insists this is so much more than just a horse racing book.

"I think the whole story of the ups and downs, the triumph and the tragedy of the family is a great piece of Canadiana that isn't known to most people," says Stock.

Anyone considering authoring a book with a racing theme is faced with the reality that horse racing stories appeal to a limited market and very rarely jump out of the narrow constituency to be appreciated by a wider audience. *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hillebrand was a huge best seller and was the basis of a terrific Hollywood movie. That might be a massive ask for Stock's book on the Turcottes, but so far, it's getting lots of attention. *Down The Stretch* interviewed Stock in late March and it turned out we weren't the only ones seeking his comments.

"I have 21 other interviews booked," he said with a chuckle. "All of them, except for one on CBC are in the US."

In mid-April, the books became available in stores, but until then, one had to get them through Amazon, and Stock was getting great feedback.

"They keep selling out. So, they keep having to print more. So, it's been surprising how much attention this book has raised."

Curtis Stock holds the record for most Sovereign Awards in the Media Writing category. He's copped 11 of them.

Father and Son



This photograph by Jessica Hallett is more than just two horses in near-perfect synch approaching the wire in a race at Saratoga Harness track. It's also a father and son image as Brett Beckwith is the driver of the outside horse, #3 Duckdodgendrive who won the race over #1 Justathriller, driven by Brett's father, Mark.

Not Calling the Shot

It was the 7th race at Mohawk Park on Monday, April 24. It went off at 9:47. Ken Middleton, a die-hard Boston Bruins fan couldn't resist. Late in the stretch, a 5-year-old gelding named Toronto was surging up in the middle of the track, about to pull an upset win.

"Here on the outside with a late push comes Toronto," declared Middleton. "Toronto will win and that's the only time you will hear that tonight."

At the time, that was a cheeky and pretty funny race call. At 9:49, as Hensley pulled up his winning pacer past the finish line, the Maple Leafs were trailing in Tampa Bay 4-1 with less than 11 minutes to play. Perhaps someone relayed Middleton's call to the Maple Leafs bench. In a span of 6:20, the Leafs got 2 goals from Auston Matthews and a tying goal from Morgan Reilly. At the 4:17 mark of sudden death, Alex Kerfoot deflected a shot from Mark Giordano, giving Toronto the 5-4 win, a 3-1 series lead and sufficient momentum to skate the Lightning out of the playoffs in game 5.

This gets a little more incredible. Toronto, the horse trained by Ashley Hensley, went off at 19-1. At the precise moment that he won, betting sites were offering 19-1 to anyone crazy enough to make an in-game bet that the Leafs would win a game in which they trailed 4-1. *Down The Stretch* has failed to find anyone with both a win ticket on Toronto and an on-line late game wager on the Maple Leafs.

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Episode 165 March 20

This podcast has many races from Gulfstream featuring wins by **Emma-Jayne Wilson**, **Chantal Sutherland**, **Bill Tharrenos**, **Marty Drexler** and **Bruno Schickedanz**. **Tedson Holder** talks about his important connection to It's a Gamble, the recent winner of the Sandy Lane Barbados Gold Cup. **Jeff Hunt** didn't drive his first standardbred until he was 32, but that was worth waiting for it – we have Hunt talking about his great first impression. **Kathleen O'Connell** made racing history by becoming the winningest lady trainer in North America. We also have **Liam Burke**, oldest winning jockey in Ireland and 80-year-old **Robert Sampson** still winning harness races in Maryland. **Saulsbrook Victor** continues to dominate at Mohawk and we have more proof that Gulfstream's **Pete Aiello** is the brightest race-caller on this side of the Atlantic.

Episode 166 March 27

This podcast takes us all over the planet – to South Africa and a winning race from jockey **Ryan Munger**, who, as we hear from his agent, **Mike Luider**, is coming to Woodbine this year. Canadians continue to use U.S. racetracks as their personal ATMs; **Chantal Sutherland** and **Kevin Attard** with wins at Gulfstream and **Steven Chircop** scoring at Aqueduct. This podcast has 3 Kentucky Derby preps and we document an amazing Japanese sweep at the UAE Derby in Dubai. Then we go to the Jeff Ruby Steaks at Turfway Park in Kentucky and the Sunland Derby in New Mexico. **Dan Vella** talks with us about retiring from training and taking on a new position at Woodbine as the horse people's liaison. There was a horse racing question on Jeopardy last week. We would have nailed it but all 3 contestants blew it. And possibly the most important story we have ever done - when **Jody Jamieson** put a picture of his creamy chicken dumpling soup on Facebook, we got him on the phone to tell us how he makes it.

Episode 167 April 2

Chantal Sutherland was on a 14-1 winner at Gulfstream. **Nick Gonzalez** cashed in Hallandale and Cheifswood's Weyburn took down a Stakes race. An amazing Saturday at Gulfstream as the Ortiz brothers, **Irad and Jose** won 10 of the 14 races, including the Florida Derby. We also have the Arkansas Derby from Oaklawn. Jockey **Steven Bahen** talks about his career after announcing his retirement at the age of 56. Does that mean there is an opportunity for another good rider? Jockey **Ryan Munger** e-mailed audio from South Africa, explaining why he's coming to Woodbine this year. Trainer **Josie Carroll** commiserates with host **Peter Gross** over the probability neither of them will win the Sovereign Award in their respective categories. **James MacDonald** won 6 at Mohawk Saturday night, including both New Holland Series finals and when you hear our interview with 11-time Sovereign Award-winning writer, **Curtis Stock**, you will want to get a copy of his latest book about the 5 Turcotte brothers who were all jockeys.

Episode 168 April 9

This podcast has a nice package of Canadians cashing \$US at Gulfstream - **Chantal Sutherland**, **Mike DePaulo**, **Marty Drexler** and **Bruno Schickedanz**. We go to Aqueduct, Keeneland and Santa Anita for Kentucky Derby preps; wait until you hear what the winner of the Wood Memorial paid! With just a few days until the April 13 Sovereign Awards, we break down the more significant categories; can you say Moira? There's controversy at the Meadowlands and it concerns some rules about what drivers can and cannot do in a race and both writer **John Berry** and driver **Scott Zeron** tell **Down The Stretch** the potential punishment is excessive. How many pop stars have made it as jockey? **Troy Hearn** has been trying to win a thoroughbred race for over 20 years, but as **Troy Fernandes**, he's found the YouTube winners circle as an appealing singer. It was Easter weekend, and at Mohawk Saturday night, **Doug McNair** carved out the sign of the beast - 3 straight wins, all from post 6. And how about that 'tip' that **God himself** gave the Aqueduct bettors on Good Friday?

Episode 169 April 16

We have complete coverage of the 48th Sovereign Awards, including interviews with **Kevin Attard**, **Bruno Schickedanz**, **Kazushi Kimura** and **Slade Jones**. The always accessible **Jim Lawson** explains his reasons for stepping down as Woodbine's CEO. Harness trainer Teesha Symes went 4 for 4 at two tracks recently, but gave **Peter Gross** blowback when it was suggested it was the greatest night of her career. It was last chance time for Kentucky Derby candidates – the Lexington Stakes at Keeneland. Mohawk ran three legs of the Ontario Sired Graduate Series. **James MacDonald** continues to win in bunches and we couldn't resist having some fun when a horse named **Somebody** ran at Parx.

Episode 170 April 23

April 22 was Opening Day of the thoroughbreds at Woodbine and this podcast is all over it. We talk with first race winner **Amanda Vandermeersch** and her fellow apprentice rider, **Sofia Vives**. **Robert Geller** shows he's game ready in the broadcast booth and fans grabbed their free Woodbine fanny packs to stuff with their winnings. **Raj Maharajh** explains how a palace intruder and a Trinidad Calypso star helped him name his two-year-old Sovereign Award winner. **Philip My Dear**. **James Macdonald** continues to crush it at Mohawk – he scored hattricks on both Friday and Saturday. Less than two weeks until the Kentucky Derby, but we have a debuting two-year-old who popped huge at Keeneland. And we embarrass race analyst, **Andy Serling** who emphatically claimed a certain horse could not win. Guess what happened?

Episode 171 April 30

There was a disqualification in the 1st Stakes race of the year and it was all about not checking the Blind Spot. Expert handicappers **Jim Bannon**, **Jennifer Morrison**, **Garnet Barnsdale**, **Jim McKenny** and **Peter Gross** submit their Kentucky Derby picks. We talk with the latest Horse Racing Hall of Fame inductees, **Irwin Driedger** and **Chris Christoforou**. **Ailsa Morrison** broke through at Gulfstream. **James MacDonald** knows how to rinse and repeat at Mohawk. Chad Rosema explains the brave expensive move that Grand River Raceway is undertaking and what was it that **Ken Middleton** said in a recent race call that aroused the ire of 1000's of Maple Leafs fans?

Episode 172 May 7

As exciting as the 149th Kentucky Derby was, with a 15-1 upset, it wasn't the best story at Churchill Downs on Saturday, it was the Churchill downs Stakes in which **Cody's Wish** won for teenager **Cody Dorman**. We have the three finals of the Ontario Sired Graduate Series at Mohawk and we talk with **Mark Etsell**, the owner and trainer of the wonderful Adare Castle. How about **Ryan Munger**? In the South African jockey's first ride at Woodbine, he delivered a 10-1 shot, then told us how he did it. We chat with both **Brad Grant** and **Yvonne Schwabe**, who were named respectively to the Standardbred and Thoroughbred racing committees at Woodbine. In recent weeks horses named Toronto and Boston won on the pace, but were those wins accurate predictors of what would happen in playoff hockey series? And on the same day that **King Charles III** was being coronated, a horse owned by the king was racing in a Stakes event at Newmarket.