

DOWN THE STRETCH

CANADA'S MOST INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING HORSE RACING NEWSPAPER

4 Days at Saratoga

Pages 6-7



Thoroughbred Owner of the Month – John Fielding

Page 19

Standardbred Owner of the Month – Bruce Richardson

Page 20

Quarter Horse Owners of the Month – Five Fillies Racing

Page 21

Anthem Auditions	Page 2	N.A. Cup	Page 5
Editorial	Page 3	“Philly”	Page 7
Woodbine Stakes	Page 4	Raffy’s Big Day	Page 7

ALSO INSIDE

Preakness Stakes	Page 8	Gunnar Lindberg	Page 14
Cartoon	Page 9	David Grant	Page 17
Had to Be Ivory	Page 12	Oddities & Entities	Page 23
		Podcast notes	Page 24

Patrick Husbands

Pages 10-11

Jessica Hallett

Page 16

Ryan Munger

Page 18

North America Cup Night at Mohawk



page-5

2024 NISSAN Rogue®

Own Your Adventure

- ▶ AVAILABLE 12.3-INCH TOUCHSCREEN DISPLAY, 12.3-INCH DIGITAL CLUSTER & HEADS-UP DISPLAY
- ▶ INTELLIGENT EMERGENCY BRAKING WITH PEDESTRIAN DETECTION
- ▶ AVAILABLE PROPILOT ASSIST 1.1 SYSTEM HELPS YOU STAY CENTRED IN YOUR LANE
- ▶ 201 HP, 225 LB-FT TORQUE, 8.4/6.7 L/100KM CITY/HWY
- ▶ STANDARD INTELLIGENT ALL-WHEEL DRIVE SYSTEM
- ▶ 5 DRIVE MODES

AIRPORT NISSAN



NISSAN



Build your Rogue®

3095 Queen Street East, Brampton, ON L6T 5V5

905.791.4900

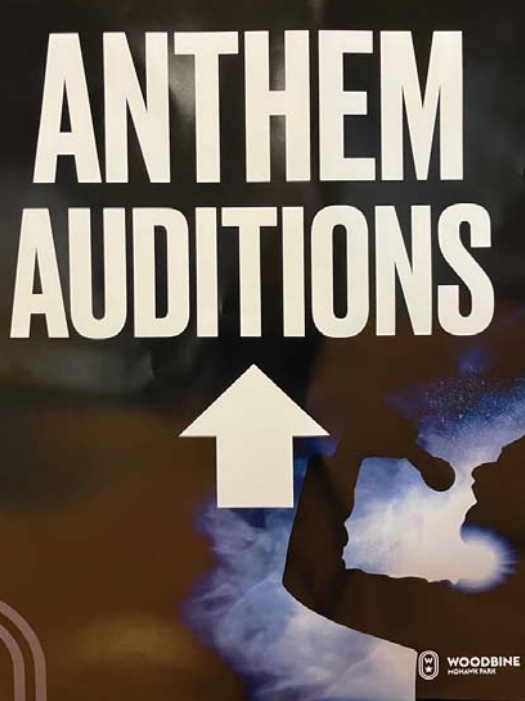
AirportNissan.com



Starting at \$35,778 MSRP
(Plus Freight & All Taxes)



ANTHEM AUDITIONS



The Auditions

On Saturday, May 25, about a dozen aspiring singers auditioned before the harness races began at Mohawk. Each candidate performed a version of the Canadian or American National anthem, hoping to be chosen to deliver some stirring melodies before the larger racing nights at Mohawk Park. *Down The Stretch* editor, Peter Gross was joined by the town of Milton's mayor, Gordon Krantz, Central Ontario Standardbred Association President Bill O'Donnell and his Executive Director, Dale O'Neill as judges, which was no easier than escaping a mid-stretch box on the Campbellville track. Every performer brought something special, so those of us who are basically tone deaf had a challenging afternoon deciding who was the best. Not that it really mattered – according to Mohawk Park General Manager, Heather Flaherty, the track likes the idea of entertainment between races, even on nights when they don't have a \$1 million race. I can say this – all of us were extremely impressed with 11-year-old Olivia Patfield, who was momentarily nervous in front of us – that is until she launched into a beautiful version of *Oh Canada*. Thanks to her powerful and inspiring rendition, Peyton Rhys was chosen to sing the anthem on North America Cup night. Jennifer Beehler with her strong, note-perfect voice was selected to perform when the Mohawk Million is run.

Sophia Vijayan



Olivia Padfield



Joanne ApSimon



Peyton Rhys



Alan Teo



Delaney Prangley



Leslie Quinn



Andrea Rivera



Rob Hewlett



MacKenzie Clair



THE EDITOR WEIGHS IN



It's not as ridiculous as the rift between the Democrats and the Republicans in the U.S., but there is definitely a glass half full/glass half empty dialogue about horse racing in North America. The detractors point to dwindling crowds, oppressive takeouts, computer nerds changing odds in the final seconds, and the bad guys juicing their horses. The crowd preferring their glass half-filled however, can certainly be enthused about recent events. The Belmont Stakes at Saratoga was deserving of the word "awesome." On the Saturday they had to cap attendance at 50,000 (though images of the crowd suggest there were more). The racing was sensational, the longshots were heart-pounding, and the bettors participated with unreserved glee, pouring over \$125 million through the windows (or their phones or laptops) for the 14-race Belmont card.

On Saturday night, June 15, Mohawk ran the North America Cup and several other big money Stakes races. On a warm late spring night, there is really nothing quite

like a big crowd on the apron of the track as the horses thunder to the wire. Consider John Fielding. Along with West Wins Stables and Marc Dumain, he owns Nijinsky, winner of this year's NA Cup. Normally Fielding would have been at Mohawk, but obligations had him at a wedding in Massachusetts. He watched the big race with some 50 others gathered around. And despite that great standardbred win, Fielding (page 19) is our Thoroughbred Owner of the Month. Fielding told **Down The Stretch** there is plenty for racing fans to get excited about with the sport.

"The thoroughbred business is really strong from a spectator point of view," he says. "What's going to save the thoroughbred industry is these racing syndicates which are really good for the game because they involve so many people, like West Coast Thoroughbreds and MyRacehorse. I think they're fantastic for the game."

Strictly speaking, Five Fillies Racing is not a syndicate, but just four ladies and their special filly, and

that fivesome comprises our Quarter Horse Owners of the Month content (page 21).

There are all sorts of criteria when we choose a Standardbred Owner, but this month, we selected Bruce Richardson, more than anything else because he named his horse No One. No one should go through the pages of this issue without reading about Richardson on page 20.

One of the great plots of horse racing is that age doesn't seem to interfere with success. When Seize The Grey won the Preakness at Pimlico (page 8), 88-year-old D. Wayne Lukas was the winning trainer. And on June 12th at Belterra Park in Cincinnati, Perry Ouzts rode 3 horses to victory, making his career win total 7,441. Ouzts will be 70 in mid-July. We have that story on page 12.

And Patrick Husbands is 50, so appropriately, the most words written in this issue are about him (pages 10-11). Woodbine held a Patrick Husbands Day, and the wily jockey enhanced it with a pair of wins from just 3 mounts.

I find it's good to have some notoriety. Thanks to my profile, I get neat requests, like the opportunity extended to me from Mohawk Park's General Manager, Heather Flaherty to judge some national anthem singing auditions. On page 2, we have photographic evidence of many of the talented performers.

As usual, we have all the Woodbine Stakes summaries (page 5), which include props to Kazushi Kimura, Julia Carey, Sahin Civaci, Kevin Attard, Patrick Husbands, Mark Casse and Rafael Hernandez.

Ryan Munger, the young jockey who flew from South Africa to ride at Woodbine, is profiled on page 18. He started the year winning 25% of all his rides.

Twice in this issue we have sampled some great writing from Woodbine's Chris Lomon. He gave us permission for one of the Patrick Husbands stories (page 10), and he also wrote about David Grant, the guy in charge of all the jockeys' silks at Woodbine. (page 17).

Down The Stretch, in recent months, has also borrowed from the irresistible Jessica Hallett, the writer, photographer and artist, whose love of harness racing has no bounds. Have a look at her captivating image on page 17. Page 9 is where we put our cartoon, and we deviated a little this month to publish an amazing picture of jockey José Ortiz mugging for the camera after an upset win in a huge Stakes race at Saratoga.

On page 14, the affable Gunnar Lindberg talks to us about winning the Avelino Gomez Memorial Trophy. This bling goes to a jockey whose work in Canada has made a significant impact, and you will see just how qualified Lindberg was to be named to the impressive list of riders who have been so honoured.

And, as we have done in every issue since our 2008 inception, we have a page of Oddities & Entities (page 23), reflecting the idea that stuff happens in horse racing that doesn't occur anywhere else.

And by the way, this is the 144th issue of **Down The Stretch**. 144 is 12 dozen, also known as a Gross.

STAFF

PUBLISHERS: Anthony and Milagros Kalloo

EDITOR: Peter Gross

ART DIRECTOR: Gord Steventon

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Susan Nash

CONTRIBUTING WRITER: Jennifer Morrison, Chris Lomon

Our Publication Mail Agreement Number Is 41710012.

Mail:

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

Phone: 416-873-5250 pgross@rogers.com

DOWN THE STRETCH is available at:

Woodbine Racetrack, Woodbine at Mohawk Park, Ajax Downs

DOWN THE STRETCH assumes no responsibility for claims made by advertisers and makes no recommendations as to the purchase or sale of any product, service or other item. All letters or comments sent to DOWN THE STRETCH Newspaper become the sole property of DOWN THE STRETCH Newspaper and may be used and published in any manner whatsoever without limit and without obligation and without liability to the author thereof.

Woodbine Stakes

June 1, \$162,000 Jacques Cartier Stakes:

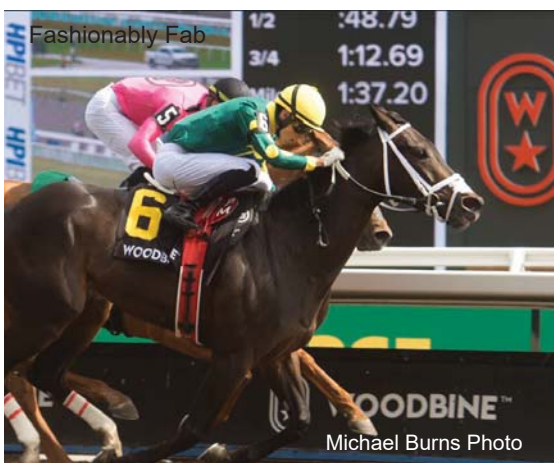
This 6-furlong heat attracted 7 runners, and Kazushi Kimura put Flag Of Honour on the front right from the



start and repelled all challengers to win by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:09.79. The 5-year-old son of American Pharoah won for the 5th time in 10 races for trainer Julia Carey and the owners, R.M. Wanless and Mrs. J.M. Wanless. The winning bettors got \$5.60.

\$162,000 Belle Mahone Stakes:

This one was at a mile and a 16th for fillies and mares, and it had an emotional outcome as apprentice rider, Pietro

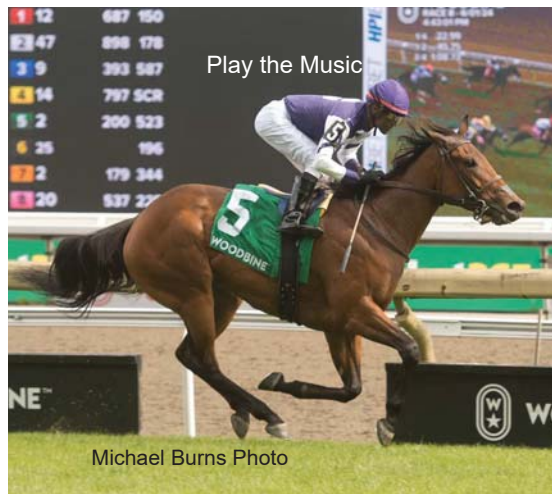


Moran, in his first Stakes ride, delivered Fashionably Fab to the win by a neck over a determined Solo Album (Sahin Civaci). Fashionably Fab is owned by the Terra Racing Stable and trained by Kevin Attard who used the apprentice when he might have had a choice of veteran riders.

“I love this kid,” said an excited Attard. “Not only is he a great jockey, but a better human being. Pietro gave her a dream ride.” Even though this was Fashionably Fab’s 8th win in 12 races, she paid a healthy \$16.20.

\$162,000 Royal North Stakes:

It was a Saturday and a Stakes race, so Mark Casse and Patrick Husbands were in their comfort zone. Husbands never left the hedge with Play the Music in this 6 ½ furlong grass race and in mid-stretch, Play the Music surged to the lead enroute to a 2 ¼ length win in 1:14.85. With her 8th win in 13 races, Play the Music returned \$6.



Michael Burns Photo

\$210,000 Eclipse Stakes:

We got more of more Mark Casse as he sent out 3 of the 7 at a mile and a 16th. In mid-stretch, Casse was 1-1-2-3 with Get Smokin, Paramount Prince and Palazzi, but it



Michael Burns Photo

was Palazzi under Sahin Civaci that roared up late to win by ½ a length over a late-moving Tyson in 1:43.86. Gary Barber owns this 6-year-old gelding who improved to 8 for 13 and paid \$15.10.

June 8, \$125,000 Fury Stakes:

Mark Casse had 2 horses in this 7-furlong dash for 3-year-old fillies, and the one most expected to win didn’t, but the other one did. Rafael Hernandez got Olivia Rose



Olivia Rose

Michael Burns Photo

to the top after a quarter mile, and she was motoring – a half in :44.23, and 6 furlongs in 1:09.10. Despite those withering splits, Olivia Rose was in charge down the stretch hitting the wire an expanding 4 ¾ lengths the best in 1:22.63. Casse’s other entry, Lunch With Bernie (Patrick Husbands) went off as slight 5-2 favourite and finished 3rd. Olivia Rose is owned by Gabe Grossberg. This was her 3rd win in 8 races and she paid \$10.60.

June 9, \$125,000 Queenston Stakes:

This steppingstone for the King’s Plate pretty well covers all the royal references. My Boy Prince, under Sahin Civaci, was pounded down to 1-5 and ran accordingly, taking the lead after a quarter mile, sizzling



My Boy Prince

Michael Burns Photo

past the half in :44.09 and finishing the 7-furlong test in the excellent time of 1:21.90, almost 5 lengths better than his stablemate, Essex Serpent (Patrick Husbands). Both horses are trained by Mark Casse. Gary Barber owns the winner. My Boy Prince was the 2023 Sovereign Award winner in the 2-year-old colt category and now assumes favouritism for the King’s Plate. The win ticket was just \$2.70.



My Boy Prince

Michael Burns Photo

NA Cup Night

Saturday night, June 15 Mohawk Park offered a card jammed with big money Stakes races and it culminated with the 41st North America Cup and its \$1 million purse. It's good to be lucky in a race like this, but it's better to be great, and that's what Nijinsky was. Driven by Louis-



Philippe Roy, Nijinsky, who left from post 4, never saw an inside lane, but did benefit from very live cover as the field went into the far turn. Legendary Hanover and James MacDonald went first over, and Roy followed that one into the stretch. Despite the extra ground covered, Nijinsky was powerful in the final 8th, surging to the front, and with a :26.2 final quarter, won by more than a length over the slight 5-2 favourite, Captains Quarters (Jody Jamieson). The winning trainer is Tony Beaton, and the owners are West Wind Stables, Marc Dumain and John Fielding. Fielding was unable to be at Mohawk that night as he was attending a wedding in Massachusetts.

"I'm at Phil Antonacci's wedding at Frank Antonacci's golf course," Fielding told *Down The Stretch*. I watched the race on my phone with Jimmy Takter. My horse was parked the whole mile. I couldn't believe it and then he hit the front. I had 50 people around me screaming like crazy. It was all good."

Nijinsky is having a dream season. He has won all 5 of his races and he paid \$7.90.

\$233,000 Armbro Flight Final:



The crowd sent M Ms Dream off as the 1-5 favourite in this trot for fillies and mares, but Call Me Goo got a nifty ride from Tim Tetrick to pull off the small upset. Just after the start, Call Me Goo, who left from post 5, was comfortably in 5th with M Ms Dream one position ahead in 4th. The field, led by Tipsy Moni, reached the half in a mild :56 and passed ¾ in 1:23.3. Just as the field began to negotiate the last turn, M Ms Dream made the first over move for driver David Miller. That gave live cover to Call Me Goo who capitalized on her ideal trip to collar M Ms Dream late in the stretch to win by half a length in 1:51.2.

Call Me Goo is trained by Jason Skinner and owned by Graham Grace Stables. This was her 4th win in just 5 starts and she paid \$8.70.

\$225,000 Goodtimes Final:



Highland Kismet was pounded down to .55 on the dollar in this field of 3-year-old trotting colts and geldings, and he performed accordingly. Bob McLure was a confident passenger, taking Highland Kismet to the top early, cutting out reasonable splits of :55.2 and 1:24.4, then firing a :26.4 final quarter at his overmatch opponents to win by more than 3 lengths in 1:51.3. Highland Kismet is trained by Marc Etsell and owned by Highland Thoroughbreds, and he generated a \$2.90 win ticket.

\$100,000 Mohawk Gold Cup:



This was one of 3 wins on the night for James MacDonald. He had Linedrive Hanover in 3rd for most of the race, came out in the stretch and overhauled the 2-1 choice, Abuckabett Hanover to win by a nose over a late moving Taurasi in 1:47.2. This was another win for trainer Tony Beaton and a 2nd on the night for owner John Fielding. Linedrive Hanover won for the 17th time in his 43rd race and paid \$23 to win.

\$405,000 Fan Hanover Final:



Its A Love Thing sure deserved her win in this one. James MacDonald had no choice but to take the 3-year-old Bettor's Delight filly first over approaching the far turn and Its A Love Thing was in charge to the wire, flashing a :26.2 final quarter to win by a length in 1:48.2, the fastest of her 9 wins from 17 races. Dave Menary trains and It's A Love Thing paid \$10 to win.

\$305,000 Rose Are Red Final:



Twin B Joe Fresh took most of the bettors' money, going off at 1-2 and never really offering any chance at all to her 9 opponents. Dexter Dunn sent Twin B Joe Fresh to the lead, discouraged all followers with sharp fractions of :26.2, :54.2 and 1:21.2 and, just to rub it in, she paced her last quarter in :26.3 to win by a length and a quarter over a very game, but well-beaten Sylvia Hanover (Bob McClure). Twin B Joe Fresh is trained by Chris Ryder, who shares the filly with Dunn, Barry Spak and Peter Trebotica. Twin B Joe Fresh won for the 23rd time in her 32nd race, which explains the \$3.10 win price.

Four Huge Days at Saratoga: big payoffs, a Belmont surprise and uninhibited wagering.

The 4-day Belmont meet at Saratoga might very well make the New York Racing Association think, “Why didn’t we do this before?”

Not only, typically, was the racing superb and profoundly thrilling, but attendance hit the max, and the bettors broke records with their exuberant participation.

The races spanned Thursday, June 6 through Sunday June 9. On the first day, the feature race was the \$250,000 Belmont Gold Cup at 2 miles on the inner turf. Not only



long lines at the washroom

would the winner earn \$137,500, but also included was a “Gold” ticket to the Melbourne Cup, the historic Group 1 race of 3200 meters in Australia in November. Melbourne Cup race caller Matt Hill was a guest of the track, and he called the Belmont Gold Cup.

“The Melbourne Cup is our biggest sporting event in Australia,” said Hill. “When the Melbourne Cup is run at 3 o’clock on the first Tuesday in November, it stops the nation. It doesn’t matter if you’re a hair stylist or a mechanic or someone at school, everyone stops to watch the Melbourne Cup, and the trophy itself has been to about 600 destinations around the world.”

Hill did a cracker job on the Belmont Gold Cup, which had a sensational finish as The Grey Wizard, under John



Close finish to the Belmont Gold Cup - the winner was # 11 The Grey Wizard

Velazquez, surged in final stride to win by a head over Champagne Juan (Joel Rosario, who was just a head better than Limited Liability with Eric Cancel). The Grey Wizard, trained by H. Graham Motion won for the 4th time in 14 races and paid \$14.40. The top 3 finishers in this race were all greys, and the all-grey triactor was worth \$444 for a \$2 bet.

For a while, we have considered that José Ortiz, by far, is the best jockey in North America when riding at

a distance on the turf, and he proved that emphatically during the Belmont weekend at Saratoga. Ortiz rode only the Friday and Saturday at the Spa, but those who bet on him were thrilled. Ortiz rode in 6 races at mile or longer on the grass and won 3 of them. After a 12th place finish with Big Night Out in a starter allowance race at a mile and an 8th, Ortiz came back later in the card with a perfectly timed ride on Didia in the \$750,000 New York Stakes which had a field of 13 fillies and mares. Ortiz had Didia 4th down the backstretch, always near the leader, made an aggressive 4-wide move into the stretch and surged past others to win by 1 ½ lengths. Didia is a 6-year-old mare, trained by Ignacio Correas, and those who backed her got



Ice Chocolate was 24-1 in the Poker Stakes

paid \$20.60.

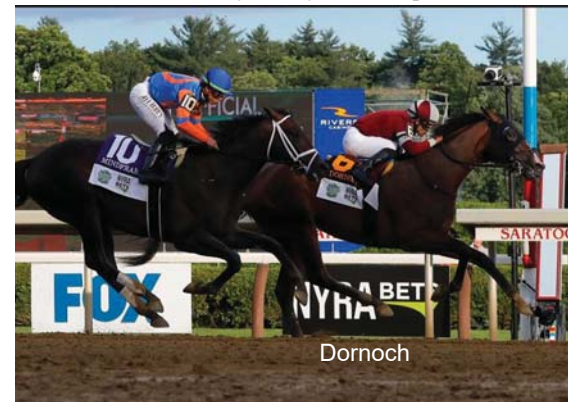
On Belmont Saturday, Ortiz won 2 of his 8 races, both coming on the lawn. The 5th race was the \$350,000 Poker Stakes, a Grade 3 event at a mile on the inner turf. Icy Chocolate was ice cold on the board, ignored at 24-1 in the 7-horse field. But Ortiz took Icy Chocolate straight to the front and froze the others with easy fractions of :48.17 and 1:11.34. With plenty of fuel in the tank for the stretch drive, Icy Chocolate won by a length in 1:33.97. Mark Casse trains this 6-year-old gelding for Gary Barber, and those who ignored this one did not participate in the \$50 win ticket.

The 13th race on June 8 was an \$85,000 maiden special weight and again, the bettors offered little confidence in Ortiz’s horse, Downtown Channel, a 3-year-old filly making just her 2nd start and unraced in 10 months. The distance was a mile and a 16th on the inner turf, and Ortiz gave the filly a patient steer, holding her 8th down the backstretch, coming 5-wide behind a wall of rivals into the stretch and gobbling up other horses to find the wire in first place by a half-length. Downtown Channel, a daughter of the great grass stallion English Channel is trained by Horacio DePaz, and she produced a \$44.40 win ticket.

Anyone betting \$2 to win on José Ortiz in the 6 distance grass races on the two days he was at Saratoga cashed \$115.20, or an ROI of over 1400%.

On the Saturday of the Belmont at Saratoga, attendance was capped and announced as 50,000. From the TV images of the shoulder-to-shoulder mob on the tarmac, it looked like a lot more. Line-ups at betting windows and for beverages required great patience. One fan posted a lineup about 100 people long for the men’s room.

The 156th Belmont Stakes, worth \$2,000,000 went off as the 12th race and the 8th Stakes race in a row on the Saturday card. Because of Saratoga’s configuration, the race was at 1 ¼ miles instead of the traditional mile and an 8th. Three horses attracted most of the gamblers’ investments: Kentucky Derby runner-up, Sierra Leone



Dornoch

went off at 8-5. Derby champion, Mystik Dan was a 6-1 shot. Seize the Grey, winner of the Preakness was installed at 5-1. None of those three were a factor, although Seize the Grey led for the first 6 furlongs in 1:10.67 before faltering to a 7th place finish. Dornoch, ridden by Luis Saez was a comfortable 2nd for most of the trip, took over the lead when Seize the Grey tired, and then had to repel a gritty stretch challenge from Mindframe (Irado Ortiz). At the wire, it was Dornoch by half a length in 2:01.84.

Dornoch paid \$37.40 to win. The horse, trained by Danny Gargan has won half of his 8 races, but the bettors obviously were discouraged by a 10th place result in the Kentucky Derby in which Dornoch was sandwiched badly coming out of the gate, losing several lengths. Dornoch is owned by West Paces Racing Stable, which includes former Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Jason Werth, who played 41 games for the Toronto Blue Jays from 2002-2003.

“Horse racing is the most underrated sport in the world,” said Werth. “This is as good as it gets in horse racing. This is as good as it gets in sports.”

This was a first Triple Crown win for the trainer, Danny Gargan and a second Belmont Stakes for Saez who scored with Essential Quality in 2021.

On many levels, the Belmont at Saratoga was a huge success. The handle for Thursday was \$19 million, about \$9 million more than on last year’s Thursday before the Belmont. The bettors poured in \$38 million more on Friday, and the Saturday total of over \$125 million was the most ever bet on a Belmont when there was no Triple Crown sweep possibility.

“Philly”

There was one weird moment from the Fox coverage of the 156th Belmont. A few seconds after the fantastic description of the race by announcer Fran Mirahmadi, a voice was heard saying,

“A filly won the Belmont.”

Dornoch, of course, is a colt and it defies logic that any announcer or television reporter wouldn’t know this. On social media, Mirahmadi was roasted by uninformed individuals who believed he was calling the Belmont winner a “filly.” He wasn’t.

“I did not say that” insisted Mirahmadi, “and nobody



Frank Mirahmadi

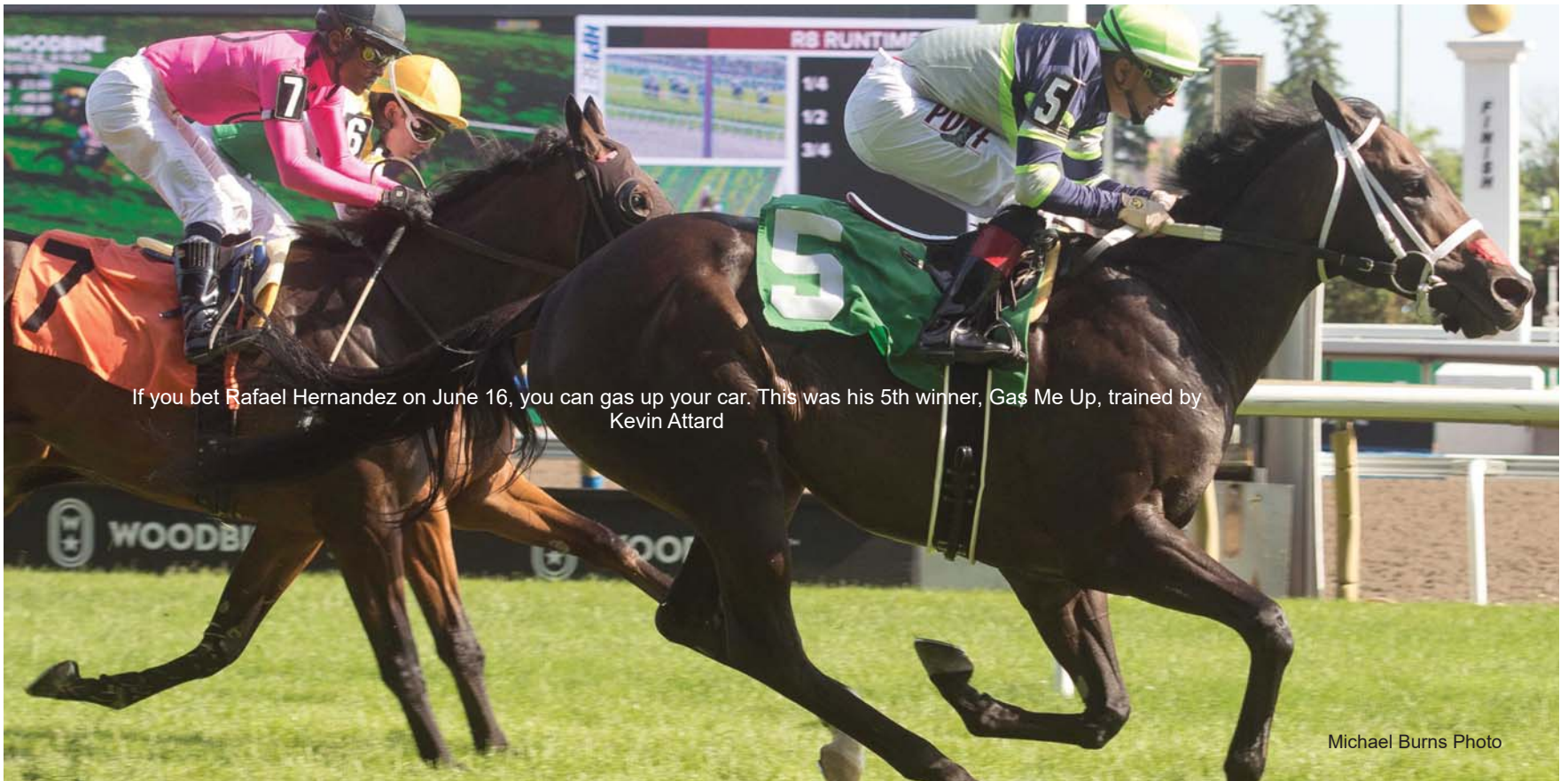
thought it was a filly.”

When all the haters calmed down, the mystery was solved. The Belmont winner, Dornoch, is owned by West Paces Racing Stable, of which former major league All-Star, Jason Werth is a principal. It was analyst Curt Menefee making a witty play on words as the horses passed the finish line.

“A Philly in the Belmont as co-owner Jason Werth knocks it out of the park,” quipped Menefee.

Jason Werth hit 229 home runs, 2 of them with the Toronto Blue Jays, during his 16-year major league career.

Raffy’s Big Day



If you bet Rafael Hernandez on June 16, you can gas up your car. This was his 5th winner, Gas Me Up, trained by Kevin Attard

Michael Burns Photo

It had been an excellent, if not dominating start to Rafael Hernandez’s season at Woodbine. Through his first 169 riding assignments, he’d won 25 times, good for a strike rate of almost 15%, and that had him close to the lead among the jockey colony. That all changed on Sunday, June 16, when Hernandez had 8 rides and won with 5 of them.

His most excellent day started in the 2nd race, a \$25,000 claimer at 6 furlongs. The crowd didn’t think much of Gem Quality, but Hernandez stalked the pace from 3rd, asked his ride as they entered the stretch, and Gem Quality pulled away late to win by 3 lengths in 1:11.15. Gem Quality is a 4-year-old colt, trained by Katerina Vassilieva for Borders Racing Stable and with his 2nd win in 5 races, he paid \$22.50.

The next race was 7 ½ furlongs on the grass for maidens that could be claimed for \$25,000. Hernandez was on the 4-5 favourite, Stonks who rallied from 6th down the backstretch, made a 5-wide move in the stretch and won by 1 ½ lengths in 1:31.08. This was the 2nd straight win for trainer Vassilieva, this time for the owners Domenic Savides and Ciaglia Racing. Stonks broke the maiden on his 17th try and paid just \$3.90.

Hernandez completed the natural hattrick by taking down the 4th race with the appropriately named Quite Ready. This was a 6 ½ furlong dash for \$25,000 claimers, and Quite Ready moved from 3rd to first in the final quarter, won by a neck and was timed in 1:15.00. Donald McRae trains for Michael Lay, Mike Loughry and D Mac Racing Stable. Quite Ready is a 5-year-old gelding with 7 wins in 24 starts and he returned \$17.40. The all-Hernandez pick 3 was worth \$151.65 for a \$1 bet.

Race 7 was an allowance race with a purse of \$110,700. Once again, the Hernandez horse was ignored in the wagering. Souped Up went off at 18-1 in this 7-furong heat and led almost from the start, getting to the finish line more than 5 lengths the best in 1:23.34. Ronald Sadler trains this one and the owners are Harri Hosein and Linda Theil. The bettors blew this one – Souped Up had hit the board in each of his last 3 races, including a 3rd place finish in the Lake Ontario Stakes. Despite that excellent form, the 4-year-old gelding paid \$38.20.

Hernandez’s 5th winner came in the 8th race, also an allowance, with \$113,200 on the table. The distance was 6 ½ on the turf and Hernandez had Gas Me Up 8th at the half, but first at the wire by ¾ of a length in 1:14.36. Gas Me Up won for the 2nd time in 5 races for trainer Kevin Attard and the owners, Michael Jawl, Aaron Kennedy, Tom Zwiesler and Extra-Border Racing. Gas Me Up paid \$9.20.

With those 5 wins, Hernandez surged out of a logjam for the riders’ lead at Woodbine. With 25 wins, he was 3 ahead of Sahin Civaci and 7 better than Kazushi Kimura and Sofia Vives.

Preakness Stakes, 2024

There will not be a Triple Crown winner in the U.S. in 2024, but there was a great story from the 140th running of the Preakness Stakes which had a purse of \$2



million on May 18 at Pimlico. With Muth scratched, there was a field of just 8, certainly more compact than the 20 that contested the Kentucky Derby. In fact, Derby Champ, Mystik Dan was one of only 3 from the Run for the Roses to contest the 1 3/16th mile Preakness. The other two were Just Steel and Catching Freedom.

Mystik Dan was bet down to 2-1, but on a track listed as muddy, it was Seize the Grey under Jaime Torres who took the lead from the start and galloped on the lead all the way around, cutting out professional, but not exhausting fractions of :47.33, 1:11.95 and 1:37.53 for the mile. Mystic Dan and Brian Hernandez looked dangerous with a challenge at the top of the stretch, but Seize the Grey



repelled the Derby winner and hit the wire 2 1/4 lengths the best in 1:56.82.

Seize the Grey ran on May 4, but not in the Derby. He won the \$600,000 Pat Day Mile Stakes. In that race he was 9-1, and the bettors overlooked him again. Seize the Grey paid \$21.60 in the Preakness.

Seize the Grey, now a winner of 4 of his 10 starts, is owned by the MyRacehorse syndicate, and his trainer is the 88-year-old D. Wayne Lukas. This was a 7th Preakness win for Lukas who won his first with Codex in 1980, a mere 44 years ago. Bob Baffert's 8 Preakness wins stand as the record, and Lukas had a message for his friend:

"I'm only one behind him. I warned him already," Lukas said. "It never gets old at this level, and I love the competition. I love to get in there with the rest of them."

Seize the Grey was the 48th horse that Lukas has entered in the Preakness, and he loved what he saw in the middle

of the race.

"I thought his action down the backside was beautiful, and I knew that he was handling the track," Lukas said. "I said, 'Watch out, he's not going to quit.'"

This was a first win in the Triple Crown series for jockey Jaime Torres, the Puerto Rican who didn't even decide to be a jockey until he saw horse racing on TV in late 2019.

"I have no words," said Torres. "I'm very excited and very thankful to all the people that have been behind me helping me."

The 150th Preakness might be a little weird. It is scheduled for Pimlico, but the track and grandstand are about to be demolished. It's a sad fact that Pimlico racetrack has been deteriorating over the years. Next year's Preakness will somehow be run amidst the construction.



Baffert congratulates Lukas



Advertise in

DOWN THE STRETCH

Rates:

Full page \$1050

Half page \$550

Quarter page \$300

Eighth page \$200

Business card \$125

PHONE:

(905) 990 1171

pgross@rogers.com

RACETRACK HUMOUR



Perry & Mooch



Jockey José Ortiz is usually a low-key guy, not inclined to draw unnecessary attention to himself, but he couldn't resist flashing the camera after a superb winning ride aboard Didia in the \$750,000 New York Stakes at Saratoga. You'd be smiling too if you bet the 6-year-old mare - she paid \$20.60 to win.

Patrick Husbands Day



Brown, the Mayor of Brampton where Husbands resides. "I know a lot of people look up to him and say, 'Here's an example we want to follow.'"

The Counsel General of Barbados, Sonia Marville-Carter flew in to add to the admiration.

"We are exceptionally proud of you, Patrick. You have done a wonderful job here in Canada at Woodbine," said Marville-Carter.

Gifts for Patrick



"I have a great Patrick story for you," added host Jeff Bratt. "One winter, Patrick was riding really well. I said, Patrick, you're from Barbados. Why are you winning so many races when it's freezing cold out? 'I want to be the first one back to the jocks' room,' he said."

Husbands was gifted in multiple ways. Woodbine

presented him with a custom engraved bottle of Johnny Walker and an impressive framed photographic collection of his 3 Plate victories – Wando, Lexie Lou, and last year's King's Plate win with Paramount Prince. From his followers in Barbados, he got a lovely painting of himself on a horse and a custom-made jacket in Barbados colours.

Husbands spoke with gratitude of all the grooms, valets, owners and trainers who have supported him throughout his 30-year career at Woodbine. He saved special mention for trainer Mark Casse, with whom Husbands has won over 100 Stake races.

"One of the most powerful men at Woodbine supported me," said Husbands, "Mark Casse. Oh my God! He pushed me to the top and he made me a man. He made sure that every week, I eat."

And, typically, with all the eyes on him, Patrick Husbands was the riding star on his own day. He had just 3 riding assignments and he scored with 2 of them. In the 7th race, he went off at 11-1 on Lantana Lady and rocketed the 4-year-old filly from 10th and last down the backstretch to rip past all rivals for a 2-length win at the end of this 5-furlong allowance heat. Lantana Lady is trained by Steve Attard and owned by Brian Cullen, and those who bet Husbands in his first ride on Patrick Husbands day, got back \$24.30 to win. Husbands came 3rd in the 8th race with Midsummer Mo, then won the 9th race, which was the \$120,000 Ruling Angel Stakes for 3-year-old fillies. The distance was 7 furlongs and Husbands and Witwatersrand was last of the 5 after half a mile, but when he cued the filly, she responded, surged between horses as the field turned for home and was much the best to the wire, winning by 4 expanding lengths in 1:21.99. Witwatersrand, the Sovereign award winning 2-Year-Old Filly in 2023, won for the 3rd time in 6 races. It was just another Stakes win for Husbands, Mark Casse and owner, Gary Barber. The win price was \$4.60.

Patrick Husbands' extraordinary career was celebrated after the 1st race at Woodbine on May 18. Woodbine CEO, Michael Copeland praised the 50-year-old jockey as someone worthy of emulation.

"Of all those Plate victories, 2003 has to stand out with Wando winning the Triple Crown. You're a legend here and we're so happy to be able to celebrate today."

"How proud the city of Brampton is to have this icon, this legend, someone who has made history," said Patrick



A 30-Year Woodbine Thrill Ride

by Chris Lomon for Woodbine Entertainment

when it happened with Wando it was unbelievable. And to win a Triple Crown, that took many months to sink in. Wando was a true champion."

Despite a rash of injuries over the years, some serious, others minor, Husbands' competitive fire and fondness for the sport's equine stars always kept him coming back for more.

Over his time in the irons, Husbands has partnered with some of the greatest names in Canadian racing.

That list includes Hall of Fame horse Sealy Hill, and Plate winner Lexie Lou, who was inducted into the CHRHF in 2019.

Other notable wins include a stunning score in the 2001 edition of the Grade 1, \$1 million Woodbine Mile with Numerous Times, and a prosperous trip to Belmont Park where he guided Exciting Story to a famous 56-1 victory in the same year's \$750,000 Grade 1 Metropolitan Handicap.

A sure sign of his enduring talents was on display throughout 2023.

Not only did he win his third Plate with the Gary Barber-owned and Mark Casse-trained Paramount Prince, but Husbands also led all Woodbine riders in stakes wins in 2023.

His body of work with Casse has delivered one of the most potent one-two, jockey-trainer combinations in the history of Canadian Thoroughbred racing.

"Racing has given me so much," said Husbands, who was named to the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame's Class

of 2024 this April. "I have been very lucky to ride so many great horses for amazing trainers and owners."

Husbands has over 3,600 career victories and earnings of nearly \$179 million (U.S.).

With 369 stakes victories, a career win rate hovering near 20 per cent and a 50 per cent top three average, consistency remains a hallmark of an outstanding life in racing.

In 2014, he was the recipient of the prestigious Avelino Gomez Memorial Award, a nod to his contributions to Thoroughbred racing.

"I've heard all the stories about Gomez," recalled Husbands, who was inducted into the Brampton Sports Hall of Fame in 2005. "He was a top-class rider, and no one ever has a bad word to say about him. When I came to Canada, I always hoped that it would turn out well, but I never dreamed that one day I would be at a stage to receive the award named for one of the greatest jockeys ever to ride at Woodbine. It's an absolute honour."

While the final chapter of his career is still to be written, Husbands' impact on racing, both in Barbados and Canada, has produced a remarkable success story.

Now, as always, he is happy to let the horses do the talking.

"I enjoy going out there and competing. It has always been a team effort. Trainers, owners, exercise riders, grooms, hotwalkers, my agent Leroy Trotman – so many people have helped me achieve success over the years. I am grateful for that."

Patrick Husbands has always preferred to let the horses do the talking, and what a story they have to tell!

Over his 30-plus years in the saddle, Husbands has crafted an enviable riding resumé, one that showcases countless high-profile triumphs in some of Thoroughbred racing's top events.

From three King's Plate victories to a record eight Sovereign Awards as Canada's champion jockey, the pride of Barbados has earned a rightful reputation as one of the best to have ever ridden at Woodbine.

Emigrating to Canada in 1994 from his homeland, Husbands, whose father also rode, had already established himself as a legitimate talent in Barbados.

In 1990, at age 16, Husbands became the youngest rider to win the Cockspur Cup. He also won the Bajan riding title in 1993.

If there were any question marks about his ability to succeed outside of Barbados, Husbands provided an emphatic answer soon after he moved his tack to the Toronto oval.

His greatest moment, no doubt, came in 2003 when he guided future Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Inductee, Wando, to Canadian Triple Crown glory for the late Gustav Schickedanz and trainer Mike Keogh, also Honoured Members of the Hall.

"There were so many butterflies," recalled Husbands of his Triple Crown coronation. "I hadn't won a Plate yet, and

Down The Stretch met with Patrick Husbands and his agent, Leroy Trotman two days before the ceremonies at Woodbine:

DTS: You're not necessarily a guy who likes to attract a lot of attention. How do you feel about all of these ceremonies? Are you embarrassed, or are you comfortable with it?

Husbands: Embarrassed is not really the word. I'm in shock. I'm still riding, and the goals keep coming. My friends came up from Trinidad to support me. I just have to cross one bridge at a time.

DTS: I'm showing you your riding record on Equibase – since 1994, millions and millions of dollars and thousands of wins. You have an incredible history of race riding behind you.

Husbands: It's a lot of hard work. A lot of discipline. A lot of bumpy roads. At the end of the day, you tell yourself how much it takes to achieve these types of goals. Owners want results. The trainers work hard. The grooms work hard. Nobody wants to hear your excuses. My key is to win to win to win.

DTS: What is it you do in terms of your fitness to ride at such an elite level?

Husbands: I have a big gym near Woodbine Racetrack. In the spring you have to get your legs back in shape. You have the muscle there, but you have to get the blood back in there. I have a sauna at home. I do a lot of work at home. I keep busy.

DTS: How much steel do you have in your body?

Husbands: I've got the whole left side and part of the right side

DTS: I've got a theory about Patrick Husbands. I think you are the most pure jockey. There are no distractions. No scandals. You've never run for office. You don't do commercials. I looked you up on Facebook. There's no picture. You have one follower.

Husbands: Outside of horse racing, I love cooking.

Cooking is my favourite. Any dish throughout the world, I'm there.

DTS: I think after a full day at the track you go home, and you read the form for the next day.

Husbands: The number of times I read the form is unbelievable. Because I just want to get back on the next horse. I can't sleep. I read the racing form. So, when I come in the paddock, I have the whole race in my mind. If you miss the break, you go to plan "B." Your horse can't get in front of two horses by the turn, you go to plan "C," then you go to "D" – whatever to get the job done.

DTS: Talk about your relationship with Mark Casse. I think there are at least 100 Stakes win at Woodbine between you and Mark.

Husbands: I have been riding for Mark for at least 28 of 30 years at Woodbine. He likes to win just as much as I do. I come to him like a son. He has guided me from scratch. I am proud to ride for him.

DTS: What's your relationship with your agent, Leroy Trotman like?

Husbands: Leroy is not only my agent. Leroy is slash, slash, slash. Leroy's getting it easy now that he just walks around Woodbine, picking this horse and picking that horse. He's been my agent for 7 years, but if he'd been with me 20 years ago, he'd be as grey on top as you.

DTS: You're a little more selective now than you used to be. What's the rule – you only want to ride maiden special weights and high claimers? You don't want to ride the cheaper claimers? How does it work?

Husbands: A lot of people might say that to Leroy, but that doesn't make any sense. That's a slap in my face. If people say you only want to ride good horses, that is nonsense. I tell you, just put me on horses. If people say that Patrick only wants to ride good horses, that is stupid.

I only want to ride horses.

DTS: You're going to be 51 soon, which means you'll soon be 60. What are your plans for after your career?

Husbands: I just want to sit back, watch my kids grow, have a couple horses. You can't leave the sport. Have some fun back home, have some fun here. Nobody knows the future. I worked hard my whole life – almost 50 years in horse racing. It's good to see my kids grow up and have some fun with them.

DTS: Is there an easier job in the world than being the agent for Patrick Husbands?

Leroy Trotman: I wouldn't say it's easy, but it's good to have a rider of that caliber. Being the agent for the first time, in my first year, he offered me to be his agent. How can you refuse that?

DTS: It's not as if you have to grovel from barn to barn saying, "give my jockey a break."

Trotman: Sometimes you have to do that, but he is Patrick Husbands. We do get the right horse, and having Patrick does make things easier.

DTS: What is Patrick like as a person?

Trotman: Patrick is a great person. He's got a great heart that a lot of people don't see, They just see that competitive edge inside of him. I mean, he's competitive at everything. If you pitch marbles, he's competitive. If you play tennis, he's competitive. If you have an argument about anything, he's competitive. He wakes up being competitive and he goes to sleep being competitive.

DTS: Does he ever talk about when it's going to come to an end?

Trotman: I don't know where the end is for Patrick. Horses are Patrick's passion. Horses are Patrick's life. He eats, drinks and sleeps horses.

Aspiring apprentice flanked by Patrick Husbands and agent Leroy Trotman



Patrick Husbands revealing all to *Down The Stretch*

Had to Be Ivory's Triumphant Return, and the Battle of the Breeds *by Jennifer Morrison*



Two-time Canadian Horse of the Year, Had to Be Ivory proved that age is just a number, as the 9-year-old returned from a seven-month vacation and rolled to an easy win in the 11th Norman Picov Maturity at Ajax Downs on May 15. The \$30,915 Maturity wrapped up a spectacular day of Quarter Horse racing that kicked off with Summer Retreat becoming the first thoroughbred to win at Ajax Downs, as the Fort Erie-based gelding won the popular Battle of the Breeds race.

Had to Be Ivory, trained by Bryn Robertson for his wife Carol and daughter-in-law Jaime, was welcomed back with open arms by fans who bet the Ontario bred down to 4 to 5 favoritism in the field of eight. With regular rider Josh Scott aboard, Had to Be Ivory broke well from post position seven and in a few strides, was in front of a top field and on his way to a one-length win in the 300-yard dash under a hand ride. Classy stakes winner Spy for the Senate, owned by Milena Kwiecien, finished second at 5 to 1 with 19 to 1 longshot Quick Asa Hiccup grabbing third.

Had to Be Ivory was winning the Picov Maturity for the fifth time and it was the big bay gelding's 26th career win from 34 races. He sped the distance in 15.266 for a sharp 103 speed index.

"As soon as I got on him today, he told me, 'It's game time son,'" said Scott. "He just took me from there. I never even had to ask him."

A two-time Ajax Downs' Horse of the Year, Had to Be Ivory is the richest Ontario-bred Quarter Horse in history with earnings of over \$430,000. The Robertson family bred him at their Hillerin Farm in Hillsburgh.

Alysha Robillard's Summer Retreat broke sharply from the gate at the outset of the 770-yard Battle of

the Breeds, turned away a strong challenge from Quarter Horse mare Jess a Deal, and romped to a five-length win under jockey Ismael Mosqueira. Trained by Fort Erie racetrack's leading trainer Julie Mathes, Summer Retreat, a Thoroughbred, entered the history books by winning the second edition of the Battle of the Breeds, a unique, one-turn race.

Bred in Ontario, Summer Retreat was making his first start since September of 2023 and his Ajax Downs victory was the 12th of his career. The handsome dark bay raced the distance in 41.444, a track record. Jess a Deal finished second for Marie Broadstock and the Picov Cattle Company with Tdz Barton Grand, a Quarter Horse, getting third over another Thoroughbred, Seattle Point. Azures Royalty, who won the first Battle of the Breeds, was scratched.

The mother and daughter team of Mathes and Robillard brought Summer Retreat to Ajax Downs following plenty of fast workout times at their home track.

"I couldn't believe he outbroke the Quarter Horses from the gate," said Mathes. "Then when I saw his ears pricked forward, I was pretty confident."

It was a poignant moment for Robillard, who has developed a strong bond with Summer Retreat over the past three years. When he was claimed by another owner from a race late in 2021, she raised the money to claim the horse back.

"He's always been special to me," said Robillard who recently graduated from Georgian College as an assistant veterinarian. "For him to come here, to a different track, and make history is really special."

Brian Bell, last year's leading jockey, won two races on the afternoon, as did the newest addition to the Ajax Downs jockey colony, Christian Benitez. Bell won on the filly Ivy League Sugarbaby in race two for owner Jennifer Zurowski. Ivy League Sugarbaby, making just her second career start, is the first winner for new Ontario breeders Cassidy Brown, and Kim and Kyla Traviss. Bell's second winner, A Shades of Cold, won in a dead heat with Hanover Hill Theresa, ridden by Benitez for owner James Bogar. Benitez also won on Bogar's Lady Alice in race four.



Horse Racing Has Been Perry Good to Me

On Wednesday, June 12, Perry Ouzts won 3 races from just 4 riding assignments. He urged the 4-year-old filly, Desdemona Kay to victory in the 2nd race for trainer Barbara Riley, producing a \$23.40 win ticket. Then, in race 4, Ouzts prevailed aboard Mamba Forever, a 4-year-old colt who scored by 2 lengths at the end of a mile for trainer T Haehn. That one paid \$19.80. The 5th race was for \$15,00 claimers at a mile on the turf and Ouzts persuaded Some R Blessed along the rail to win by a head, paying \$20.80. Some are blessed with remarkable longevity – Perry Ouzts will be 70 in July. That 3-bagger brought his win total to 7,441 from a career that began in the early 70s. This year, Ouzts has won 22 of 109 assignments – a stunning strike rate for a man approaching his 8th decade on the planet.

2024 AJAX DOWNS RACETRACK

4 LIVE QUARTER HORSE RACING

Race days: ■ First Race: Summer Wednesdays at 1:30pm
Sundays & Fall Wednesdays at 12:55pm

May						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

June						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	27	26	25	24	23	22
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

July						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

October						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

Events For The Whole Family!

WEDNESDAY RACE DATES 2024

Wednesday
May 8, 15, 22, 29
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday
June 5, 12, 26
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday
July 3, 10, 17, 31
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday
August 7, 14, 21
1:30pm First Race

Wednesday
September 11, 18, 25
12:55pm First Race

Wednesday
October 2, 9, 23
12:55pm First Race

Special events!

SUNDAY RACE DATES 2024

Sunday June 16
Father's Day
12:55pm First Race

Sunday July 21
Craft Brewery Day
12:55pm First Race

Sunday August 25
Family Fun Day
12:55pm First Race

Sunday September 1
Labour Day Weekend
12:55pm First Race

Monday October 14
United Way Day
12:55pm First Race



Gunnar Lindberg, Avelino Gomez Award Winner



Gunnar Lindberg, 68, is the 2024 recipient of the Avelino Gomez Memorial Award for his long-time contribution to Canadian horse racing. Lindberg rode 997 winners during his 16 years in the saddle (1976-1991). Since then, he has served in a variety of positions in the sport, including being an Ontario Racing Commission steward since 2002. Lindberg got the pleasant news from Julie Bell of Woodbine's Stakes Department.

"It was really nice hearing it from her and quite a surprise," says Lindberg. "It's quite an honour, and I wasn't sure that I deserved the award. But I'm grateful."

There are at least two important points of reference that Lindberg has with Gomez. The start of his career covered the last few years of the famous Cuban.

"Avelino was a bit of a mentor to me," says Lindberg. "When I started out with Sam-Son, he rode some horses for Art Warner, and he used to help me along. When I won my first race, he led the charge for my initiation. He was a good guy. He was a pleasure to watch, and he looked out for me."

In those days, the "initiation" was often on the politically incorrect side of life.

"Yes, amongst the buckets of water, he and Chris Rogers blackballed me," laughs Lindberg.

On a more appropriate note, Lindberg is a director of the Avelino Gomez Memorial Foundation.

"That's a charity that helps people in our industry in need across Canada," he explains. "I've been on it since 1989, and we've helped many people who are encountering dire times."

Lindberg stopped riding when he was 35. It might have been unfortunate for him to continue.

"I'd had enough," he says. "I couldn't fight the weight anymore. I needed to do something else. And that's when I got the job in the mutuels department."

During his productive career, Lindberg competed with a veritable who's who of famous jockeys.

"I rode with so many, from Angel Cordero, Chris McCarron, Sandy Hawley, Robin Platts, Steve Cauthen,

Lester Pigott and Willie Shoemaker. I had the opportunity to ride in the states and I was based out of Maryland for about 8 years. Up and down the east coast, within 200 miles, you've got 8 racetracks from New York to West Virginia to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware."

For some of the brighter jockeys, the transition from rider to steward is a benefit to the sport.

"It really gives you a good perspective on what happens out there," he says. "You can foresee things happening. I believe that they need a rider in the stand. It's easy to adjudicate a race but to be a regulator – that takes a special talent as well."

With that in mind, *Down The Stretch* pressed Lindberg on his opinion over the controversial finish to this year's Kentucky Derby. In that race, Sierra Leone, under Tyler Gaffalione finished second, a mere nose better than the Japanese entry, Forever Young, ridden by Ryusei Sakai. Late in the stretch, the video showed Gaffalione's left hand reaching out and making contact with Forever



Young. That's normally a serious infraction worthy of disqualification. Not only did the stewards at Churchill Downs not take down Sierra Leone, but they also didn't even post an inquiry.

"I don't have all the angles, but you can't go by a still picture," says Lindberg. "It looks like he may be pushing that horse. As far as interference, you could have deemed it 50-50. But there was no claim of foul, so I would have left it alone."

Lindberg can tell us about a riding career that began 58 years ago. His father Herb, inducted into the Canadian Horse racing Hall of fame in 1991, rode from 1934 into the late 50s, and his grandfather, Joe Cowley was also

a professional jockey.

"I actually was on the back stretch every year since I was 10, living in a tack room at Fort Erie," says Lindberg. "My grandfather and my father were both great riders, and that's all I ever wanted to do. I was given a chance when I was 16 and I'm not even sure that I was quite ready then. But you learn fast once you get out there. My heart was set on being a rider."

There are at least a couple of horses that stand out from the 8,641 he rode.

"Definitely a horse called So Spirit," he says. "I won Stake races on him with the bug. He was an amazing animal. We set track records at 3 different racetracks, and he took on some of the best. He beat Royal Chocolate in the Dominion Day. He was just a big, competitive colt. Another horse was Pole Position. I won 7 Stakes on him, and he helped me make amends because I got beaten in the John B. Campbell, my first 100-grander on a horse called Spirit Rock. I came back years later on Pole Position and won that same race."

For some reason, Lindberg's numbers and accomplishments don't seem as impressive to him as they are to the typical race fan.

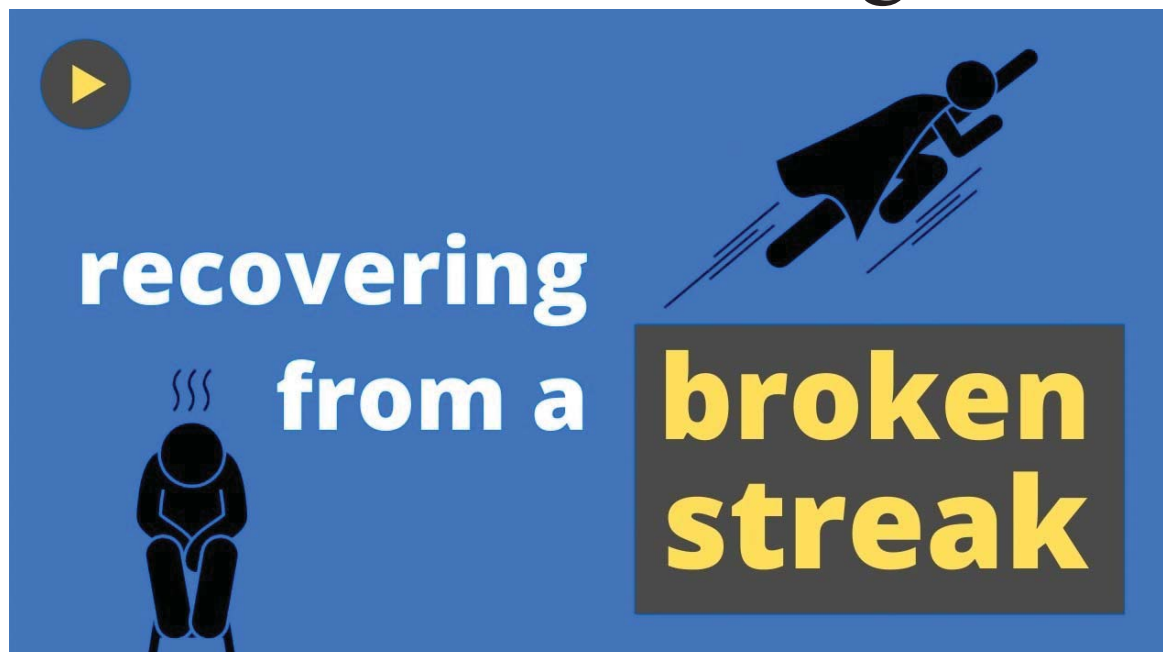
"Maybe I had a mediocre career," he says. But I really had a great experience. I had a lot of fun and was able to ride in a lot of big races with a lot of big riders.

And now Gunnar Lindberg joins a long list of great riders, all worthy of this lovely honour. Previous winners of the Avelino Gomez Memorial Award are:

Ron Turcotte, Johnny Longden, Sandy Hawley, Don MacBeth, Chris Rogers, Jeff Fell, Lloyd Duffy, Hugo Dittfach, Robin Platts, Larry Attard, Don Seymour, David Gall, Richard Grubb, Irwin Driedger, David Clark, Jim McKnight, Chris Loseth, Richard Dos Ramos, Robert Landry, Francine Villeneuve, Sam Krasner, John LeBlanc Sr., George HoSang, Jack Lauzon, Robert King Jr., Stewart Elliott, Emile Ramsammy, Steve Bahen, Mickey Walls, Patrick Husbands, Quincy Welch, Gary Stahlbaum, Gary Boulanger, Emma-Jayne Wilson, Frank Barroby, Eurico Rosa da Silva, Slade Callaghan, and Russell Baze.



...and now they have a 1-race winning streak



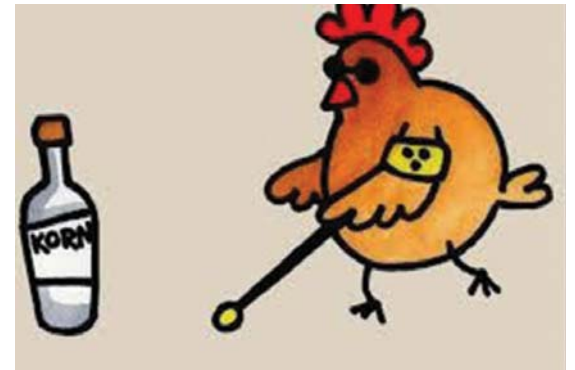
The long losing streak in horse racing is like the proverbial banging of your head against the wall – it feels so good when it stops.

At Grand River Raceway on June 10, in consecutive races, a pair of horses broke dreadfully long losing streaks. The 3rd race that night was a pace for a purse of \$4,500 for horses that could be claimed for \$8,000. It would be difficult to delve into the bettors' brains, but

they bet Miss M A K down to 6-5 favouritism, even though she had lost her previous 53 races. But as they say, "past is prologue" – driver Austin Sorrie got Miss M A K to the lead from post 1, led into the stretch, and had just enough with a :30.1 final quarter to win by a head for trainer Joe Pereira in 1:57.3. This was Miss M A K's first win since March 19, 2022, and she paid \$4.60 to win.

Did this stand as an act of inspiration? We're going with "yes", because the very next race was a \$5,800 trot, and the gamblers, who obviously can determine a focussed animal from a less consistent one, bet Southwind Caesar down to 2-1, apparently unconcerned that this 6-year-old gelding had failed to find the winner's circle in any of his previous 69 attempts. It must be true – even a blind chicken can find a kernel.

Mark MacDonald rallied Southwind Caesar from the back of the pack and flew past rivals late in the stretch to win by 1 ½ lengths in 1:59.1. This was Southwind Caesar's first winner's circle appearance since September 20, 2022, at Hoosier Park. The trainer is Jody Cullen and Southwind Caesar with his 9th win out of 121 starts, paid \$6.20.



ELECTION OF HBPA OF ONTARIO DIRECTORS

**ELECTION DAY— FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2024
NOMINATIONS CLOSE AT NOON ON TUESDAY JULY 2ND, 2024**

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DIRECTORS

- **Owners:** Must be a member in good standing, who is currently, or was during the prior 12 months, licensed as such by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and who has started a thoroughbred race horse in the current or prior year.
- **Trainers:** Must be a member in good standing, who is currently, or was during the prior 6 months, licensed as such by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and who has started a thoroughbred race horse in the current or prior year.
- **Must be 18 years or older.**
- **Must be a resident of the Province of Ontario on or before July 1st, 2023.**
- **Must not work or serve on a board of a racing association, a racetrack operator, a horse breeding association or be a member of a racing commission.**

A nomination committee has been formed by the HBPA. They will be composing a list of nominees that will be filed with the office of the Secretary Treasurer of the association by noon on Tuesday July 2nd, 2024. Additional candidates may be nominated by completing a nomination form, available by contacting the HBPA of Ontario head office or Lesley Barker lbarker@hbpa.on.ca, which must be signed by a least fifteen members in good standing with the association.

The deadline for filing election nomination forms is noon on Tuesday July 2nd, 2024. Nominations may be submitted by fax: 416-747-9606; email: lbarker@hbpa.on.ca, mailed or delivered to the HBPA of Ontario Administrative Office at 135 Queen's Plate Drive, Suite 420, Toronto, Ontario M9W 6V1.

Should you have any questions please our Head Office by phone at 416-747-5252 or 1-866-779-3067. or by email at general@hbpa.on.ca

Election ballots are scheduled to be mailed on August 12th, 2024.



HBPA
of
Ontario

Administrative Office

135 Queen's Plate Drive,

Suite 420,

Toronto, Ontario M9W 6V1

Telephone: 416-747-5252

1-866-779-3067

Fax: 416-747-9606

Email: general@hbpa.on.ca

Website: www.hbpa.on.ca

Writer, photographer, artist, harness horse lover Jessica Hallett has a unique view of the sport:



“Guiding the way”

I’ve thought a lot about this lately especially with a story I’m writing for Hoof Beats currently. The idea that we carry our horses that are no longer with us, with us everyday. And the idea that they can help guide our horses to the winner’s circle when we need it the most.

The most recent example would be Lee and Kayla Morris’ Tech Titan who scored in an 83-1 upset as their first win back at Tioga or their horse Aryiana Star who won in an upset at Batavia just 20 days after the fire. Even dating back to 2016 after the fire at Classy Lane and the sole survivor of Chantal Mitchell’s stable, Rakin It In, won his first career race just seven days later.

I know there are more examples. Horses are just powerful in themselves, but I do believe they have a little help from up above when it comes to special moments like these. Just a thought I had.

By Jessica Hallett

Wheels On Fire’s Comeback



Cullen) and Wheels On Fire going down. Both Cullen and McNair were ejected from their sulkies and thrown violently to the track.

“We were lucky that none of us drivers got hurt too badly,” says McNair. “And, obviously the next most important thing is that the horses all came out a bit unscathed.”

McNair may be selling this a little on the soft side. He elected to vacate the rest of his rides after scoring with Grace Hill and he didn’t compete on the next two Mohawk cards. As for Wheels On Fire, even though he didn’t suffer significant harm, he did not race again in 2023.

“He weighs 1,500 or 1,600 pounds,” says McNair. “We’re going 30 miles an hour. You know, there’s going to be a little damage, but he was still alive. So that’s the main thing. We just wanted to make sure he’s healthy.”

Wheels On Fire, now a 9-year-old gelding, returned to the races in March of this year and he was clearly rusty. In 9 races, he finished 2nd 3 times, with a 3rd and a couple of 4^{ths}. He was not quite the horse that had won 47 of his first 156 races.

On May 25, Wheels On Fire had post 4 in a \$24,000 pace. McNair had him sitting 3rd most of the way, tipped to the outside as the field turned for home and this time, Wheels On Fire responded with a :27 final quarter to win by a head in 1:49.3, his fastest mile since a 1:49.1 in November 2023.

“That was a long time coming,” said McNair. “It’s been almost a year since the accident. I guess for those other starts, he just didn’t feel like the same horse, but he’s finally getting back to his old self. I think he’s still got a little way to go yet.”

Wheels On Fire is obviously special to McNair. According to Standardbred Canada, that win on May 25 was the 100th time that McNair had driven Wheels On Fire. That heat was for non-winners of \$14,200 in their last 6, and a week later, Wheels On Fire stepped up to Preferred, outpacing his odds (7-1) to finish 2nd to Saulsbrook Victor. Wheels On Fire paced his last quarter in :26.1 and was timed in 1:49.2.

Wheels On Fire may not have ever won a big-money Stakes race, but he’s one of those horses who just makes money for his owner, Brad Grant. The biggest cheque the son of Somebeachsomewhere ever earned was \$21,325 from an added money event at Hoosier in 2018. But talk about consistency – Wheels On Fire has won 24 Preferred races at \$18,000 each with a Free For All cheque for \$21,000 thrown in for good measure. That 2nd place finish on June 1st raised his career earnings to \$1,145,418.

“He’s been a fun horse to have around,” said McNair. “He’s the biggest racehorse I’ve ever seen or ever sat behind. He’s kind of unique to look at, and most horses that big can’t pace :25.2 or :26 second quarters like he can. He’s pretty special.”

Many years from now – let’s say in 2090, when Doug McNair is telling his great grandchildren about the great moments of his driving career, he will almost certainly mention the night of June 17th, 2023. In the 6th race that night, McNair pulled off an impressive upset in the 5th race, which was the \$210,000 Armbr Flight final, when he won with Refined at odds of 7-1. In the 9th race that night, McNair steered the sensational Grace Hill to a stunning 1:47.4 win in the \$305,000 Roses Are Red final. What made that even more amazing is what happened the race before in the \$100,000 Mohawk Gold Cup. McNair was driving Wheels On Fire, who went off at 74-1, but was in the thick of it as the field turned for home. When the leader, Billy Clyde went off-stride, a chaotic chain reaction resulted in both Whichwaytothebeach (driven by Travis

The Colourful World of David Grant

by Chris Lomon for Woodbine Entertainment



It is a room defined by its unmistakable sights and sounds, home to a kaleidoscope of colours and the constant whirring of washers and dryers.

Every live racing day at Woodbine, David Grant is a perpetual man in motion from noon until the final race is run.

For the past two years, Grant has held the reins as Woodbine's "colours man," a role that is tailor-made for a longtime horseman with an enduring passion for the sport.

"I love it. I have been around racing for almost 40 years, and this is a good job for me."

Located at the end of the hall in the jockeys' room, the colours space is home to over 13,000 silks, the designs and colour combinations ranging from traditional to bold, and everything in between.

On the same rack, fluorescent pinks and yellows mingle with muted blues and greys and eye-catching reds, each with a story all its own.

A pair of heavy-duty washers and dryers, side by side, are put to work before and after the start of each race.

"After the race ends, the silks and saddle towels get a 25-minute wash," said Grant. "When the rain falls, that's when they get the dirtiest. The white towels the jockeys have for personal use get a 45-minute wash... and they use a lot of them," he quipped.

The day before live racing, Grant will hang the silks for that afternoon's card on a wooden rack that has slats divided by race and accompanying post positions.

"They are all pretty in a different way. They are people's creations, and they are very proud of them. They are nice to look at in this room, but they are more beautiful when you see the jockeys wearing them on the racetrack."

It is a view he knows well.

Grant's journey to the colours room started in his native Barbados.

His introduction to horses came at an early age.

"There was a horse farm close to my house. I would

see these horses every day. My friends and I were always interested in them."

Grant's inquisitiveness eventually led to a horse-related job.

"I started working with polo horses first, which were the first type of horses that I rode. It was great. You were a kid, so you loved the speed and the thrill of riding them. I also learned to bandage them and take care of them."

He did the same working with Thoroughbreds, not long after he started with polo horses.

Not far into his career, Grant realized he had a major life decision to ponder.

"There came a point where it was furthering my schooling or working with the horses. I thought, 'Horses? School?' I knew it was horses," he said with a laugh.

Grant had a familiar face in his corner as he dedicated more time to furthering his equine education.

"I went to school with Harold Fortune," said Grant, of his countryman who came to Woodbine in the 1990s and is the racetrack's Paddock Judge. "He was very likeable."

Fortune was also well-respected in the Bajan horse racing industry.

He held the role of prefect, a magisterial title of varying definitions, but essentially referring to the leader of an administrative area.

"Harold had that badge of prefect for Thoroughbred racing. He was also my neighbour, just two houses down from me. He helped me so much over the years."

So did high-profile racehorse owner, the late Sir Charles "Cow" Williams.

A Barbadian business magnate, Williams also ran a successful Thoroughbred operation.

"Mr. Williams had a stable of both polo horses and racehorses," recalled Grant. "I did almost everything working at his stable. You don't do just one job, so I rode both polo horses and racehorses. He had horses at the racetrack, so I would go to Garrison Savannah to gallop

horses for him at the racetrack starting when I was around 17."

Others soon took notice of Grant's work ethic and connection to the horses.

One of those people was Steve Klugman, who worked for HBPA Ontario.

He had come to Barbados looking for people who might be interested in a horse racing career in Canada.

"Mr. Klugman thought I worked hard and took good care of the horses. One day, he said, 'I want you to come to Canada.' So, I signed my paperwork with him. A month or so later, he called me and told me that I could head to Canada. I got my passport and the next thing you know, I was here at the age of 19."

Grant fit in seamlessly into his new surroundings.

The original plan called for him to work in the barn of respected Woodbine-based trainer Laurie Silvera.

"When I first came here, I was supposed to go with Laurie. But he was full, so I worked for [trainer] Tino Attard. I was a groom for Tino for 10 years before I started working horses for him. I went to Florida with him and did the same thing."

Grant has worked horses for other notable Woodbine trainers over the years, a list that includes dual Hall of Famer Mark Casse.

"I enjoy riding the horses – it gives me a lot of joy," said Grant.

He remains a fixture on the Woodbine racetrack in the mornings as a freelance exercise rider.

Typically, Grant gets on 10 horses each morning before he heads to the colours room.

There is an instant familiarity the moment he steps into his office.

"As a kid coming to the races at Woodbine, I always liked the colours. And I knew which ones belonged to each owner. When I got this job, I would see all the ones that I remembered. So, it did come easy to me."

There is one race day on the Woodbine calendar that Grant looks most forward to.

It is the most hectic day he will experience in a racing season, but also the most rewarding.

"I like King's Plate Day the best," he said of Canada's iconic horse race. "It's busy, but good busy."

It is how Grant, who reports to Alison Read, Clerk of Scales, often describes his role.

Read has high praise for the way Grant manages the colours room.

"From the moment he walked in, I knew Dave was the right man for the job. He already knew every single set of colours. Dave can tell you exactly what silks are in on which day, who the owner, trainer and jockey are, and where the horse finished.

"His brain is a database of information."

As for what constitutes a good day at the office, Grant never focuses on who crosses the wire first.

"It is when everything goes right for the jockeys and the horses. That's when I go home happy."

And when he returns the next day, there is one certainty in his job that Grant has come to appreciate.

"I know it's going to be colourful," he said with a laugh. "That is a guarantee."

Ryan Munger on the Woodbine Jockeys' Race:



There are about 58 jockeys playing their dangerous trade at Woodbine this year, and the race for leading rider just may be better than we've seen in many years. Of the 58 athletes, 32 have at least 1 win. Through June 12, Sahin Civaci and Rafael Hernandez had 19 wins each, though give the lead to Civaci, who had ridden just 61 times to Hernandez's 106. Apprentice Sofia Vives was 1 win behind, and in fourth place was Ryan Munger, who had won 16 of his first 74 assignments for a 22% win rate.

Munger joined the Woodbine gang in the middle of the 2023 season and made a positive impression, winning 48 times from 446 mounts. His agent, Mike Luider, also books for Emma-Jayne Wilson, who captured 15 races from her first 108 chances. Munger is pleased to list the good fortunes that have landed in his lap.

"There's a lot of things I'm grateful for," he says. "I've connected with a lot of the trainers and the owners, and they trust me now to ride their horses. I'm very grateful for my agent Mike who's really opened a lot of doors. I'm obviously getting on good horses. Trust me – that's the

most important thing."

Munger, 28, was a top-10 rider in South Africa and a champion jockey in Zimbabwe. He is credited with about 800 wins from tracks in his native land. But he admits his win percentage there was much lower than the one he's flashing in Rexdale.

"No, not as good as this," he says. "In South Africa racing is very different. You ride more horses because you have to cover the expenses of traveling. It's not like you're based on one racecourse like here. Right now, I'm getting a lot of quality rides as opposed to just quantity. I'm actually enjoying it a lot. I'd rather go to the races for 1 or 2 horses that can win than ride 8 horses that don't have that great a chance."

In retrospect, coming to Canada was a no-brainer for Munger, whose wife Kelsey is an assistant trainer and exercise rider. They've found a place within 20 minutes of Woodbine, and Munger doesn't have the exhausting routine of driving or flying to a different track every day. Also, the Woodbine purses are much more affluent than the ones he competed for in South Africa.

"I was racing in 4 to 5 different tracks a week," he says. "It was just a lot of traveling in South Africa and you can't compare Woodbine purses to the South African purses."

Munger's competition for the leading rider title comes from a variety of jockeys. Civaci, Vives and the indestructible Patrick Husbands (11 wins from just 46 rides), share most of the horses trained by Mark Casse. Does that create a disadvantage for Munger?

"I've just got to focus on what I'm getting," he says. "I can't worry about other people and what horses they

ride and for whom they ride. Keep in mind that they are also very good jockeys. So, I've just got to focus on my job, get the best out of my horses, and to be honest with you, it's working very well, so I'm just going to keep plugging away, be the guy that shows up, is consistent, and somewhere along the line, I might get that opportunity and I'll be ready for it."

Down The Stretch wondered how much Munger has got to know his stablemate, Emma-Jayne Wilson.

"She's a good jockey," he says. "She's proved herself. She's probably going to end up in the Hall of Fame here. And she's been helpful. If I've had to ask her for advice, she's been generous with it. She's got the experience to help you and she has been good to me. And I can also tell you, she is very competitive."

Like many before him, Munger has learned what a straight shooter Wilson is.

"She doesn't sugar coat things," he says. "Whether it upsets someone or not, she'll say something as it is. And I have to take my hat off to her because there's a lot of people that would rather not."

A look at the map tells us just how many fewer frequent flier miles Munger is accumulating in Canada. In South Africa, there is the Kenilworth course in Cape Town which is about 15,001 kilometres from Turffontein in Johannesburg, and it's a little hop of 550 kilometres to Greyville in Durban.

Imagine if jockeys had to ride Sundays at Woodbine, then Mondays in Halifax, then Wednesdays in Quebec City!

Advertise in

DOWN THE STRETCH

Rates:

Full page \$1050

Half page \$550

Quarter page \$300

Eighth page \$200

Business card \$125

PHONE:

(905) 990 1171

pgross@rogers.com





John Fielding is *not* our Standardbred Owner of the Month, but if he were, he'd be a great candidate. Fielding has owned some wonderful harness horses – See You At Peelers was a pacing mare that won 26 of 31 (22 in a row from 2010-2011) and earned over \$1.5 million. His Tactical Approach got a sensational drive from Scott Zeron to win the 2023 Hambletonian. And he also owns the great trotting mare, Manchego, who won 39 of 65, putting \$3,279,400 in the bank. In addition, Fielding has won 24 Breeders Crown races. And then, of course, Nijinsky, a horse he shares ownership of, looked sensational, winning the \$1 million North America Cup on June 15 at Mohawk Park.

But it was a \$111,000 Maiden Special Weight at Woodbine that made us consider Fielding as our Thoroughbred Owner. Fielding owns the 3-year-old My Girl Della, who, under Kazushi Kimura, ran away from 6 rivals to win by over 2 lengths at the end of a mile and a 16th. “I have roughly 100 thoroughbred mares in partnership with Fred Hertrich, who’s an old close friend of mine from the standardbred business,” says Fielding. “My Girl Della is a filly that I bought from my friend Dave Anderson at Keeneland two years ago. I just wanted to have a horse in Canada to race in Ontario in hopes of trying to win the Canadian Oaks or the Plate. She raced a couple times last year as a 2-year-old and this was her first start as a 3-year-old with Kevin Attard as the trainer. She ran really good. She went to the front, opened up a couple of lengths and she ran a 79 Beyer, which is great.”

The name of the filly, My Girl Della, means a lot to Fielding.

“She’s named after my little granddaughter,” he explains. “My daughter’s name is Katie, and the name of the dam is Katie Baby. My granddaughter’s name is Adelaide, and we call her Della.”

Fielding already has experienced the thrill of winning the Queen’s Plate. He is a member of X-Men Racing, the owners of Moira, who crushed 10 others by 7 lengths for Rafael Hernandez in the 2022 Queen’s Plate. Fielding has also had shares in some terrific thoroughbreds.

“I was part of the SF Bloodstock Syndicate that owned Authentic,” he says.

Authentic gave thousands of fans and small investment owners some ultimate thrills in his 8-race career. In 2020, when the Kentucky Derby was run in September, Authentic won the \$1,000,000 Haskell Stakes at Monmouth in July, then took down the Derby two months

later as an 8-1 shot. After finishing 2nd in the Preakness, Authentic ended his career with a tour de force win by over 2 lengths under John Velazquez in the Breeders’ Cup Classic at Keeneland.

“I also owned Charlatan with SF Racing,” adds Fielding. Charlaatn’s 5-race career was short, but amazing. He won his first 4 races, including the Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn and the Malibu Stakes at Santa Anita before a 2nd place result in the Grade I Saudi Cup in February, 2020.

Fielding’s investment in thoroughbreds started close to 30 years ago.

“Fred Hertrich was at a standardbred sale in the 90s,” says Fielding. “And he said, ‘Would you like to buy a couple of thoroughbred mares with me?’ And I said, ‘Sure, why not?’ So, we bought our first couple of mares, and we had early success. We bred a horse by the name of Shamardal who became a great stallion. He was out of Helsinki, a mare we bought who was actually carrying Shamardal at the time. He was the champion 2-year-old and 3-year-old in Europe and has gone on to become one of the greatest stallions of all time in Europe, owned by Sheikh Mohammed.”

Shamardal’s racing career was brief but spectacular. He won 6 of his 7 races, including the 2004 Group 1 Darley Dewhurst Stakes at Newmarket, the 2005 Group 1 Prix de Jockey Club French Derby at Chantilly, and the 2005 Group 1 St James Palace Stakes at York. Shamardal earned \$1,931,770.

“Shamardal died about two years ago” says Fielding “But after Fred and I bred that horse, we just kept building our portfolio of mares, and we probably have 100 mares now.”

Fielding insists that the breeding side is by far his greatest investment on the thoroughbred side, but he does have a few racing.

“We have a horse called Whiskey Decision, who’s really a nice horse,” he says.

Fielding shares Whiskey Decision with his friend Hertrich and so far, so very good. Whiskey Decision ran 4th in her debut, a 6 ½ furlong sprint on the all-weather at Turfway in February this year. The next time out, the 2-year-old filly bested 11 others in a \$70,000 Maiden Special Weight at Churchill Downs. Jockey Luan Machado had Whiskey Decision more than 7 lengths in front at the end of a mile timed in a 1:37.93. As the favourite, Whiskey Decision paid \$8.74. On May 10, she stepped up

into a \$127,000 allowance heat at Churchill and crushed again under Machado, cruising by 5 ½ lengths in 1:43.14 after a mile and a 16th on the grass.

For racing in Canada, Fielding has joined forces with Donato Lanni.

“Donato’s a very good friend of mine, and he started this Canadian based X-Men Racing,” says Fielding. “Dave Anderson and I got involved with a couple of other good Canadian owners – Clay Horner is involved, and I think Brad Grant’s involved, as well as Daniel Plouffe. It’s a real fun group of guys.”

There’s nothing more fun than winning the Queen’s Plate, which X-Men racing did in 2022 with the wonderful Moira, and that mare is being prepared for even greater thrills.

“We still have her,” says Fielding. “She’s going to be making her first start July 13th in the Grade I Diana at Saratoga. And then we’re going to sell her. She doesn’t have a Grade I win on her record, and she’ll be worth a whole lot more if she does.”

Since 2007, *Down The Stretch* has profiled more than 200 Standardbred and Thoroughbred Owners, but John Fielding’s vast experience with both breeds makes him the ideal guy to ask – “Which genre do you like the best?”

“They’re not equal as far as investment” he begins. “I invest more money in thoroughbreds. The standardbred is something that’s been in my blood since I was a kid. So, I can’t ignore it. And I’ve had a great experience with the Takter family over the years. But it’s not the same magnitude as the thoroughbred businesses. The thoroughbred business is hugely global – you see what’s going on in Hong Kong, Japan, France, England, even Italy and all over North America and even South America. I refer to it as a big boy’s game. The standardbred is a much more fun business. For example, if you have a champion like See You at Peelers, who won 22 races in a row as a standardbred. I own Manchego and the most you can sell a standardbred filly for is probably half a million bucks. A filly like that in the thoroughbred business would sell for 7, 9, \$10 million. Same as a stallion. We syndicated Tactical Approach last year for maybe \$7 or \$8 million. You take a horse like that in the thoroughbred business, you get \$50 million for him. That’s just a fact.”

And we do have to add, the night that Nijinsky won the NA Cup, Fielding was unable to be at Mohawk – he attended the wedding of a friend in Hampton, Massachusetts and watched the race on his phone.



The truth is, we're as sophomoric as the next arrested development horse player. On Sunday, May 19, the 3rd race at Flamboro downs was a \$7,800 trot, and a 3-year-old filly with the mischievous name of No One won by 4 lengths in 1:57 for owner/trainer/driver Bruce Richardson. Race caller Gary Guy demonstrated his sense of humour with the stretch call,

"And you know who's going to catch No One," said Guy. "No one's going to catch No One who is leading down to the finish."

Calling a horse No One more than qualifies someone to be this paper's Standardbred Owner of the Month, and it turns out, Bruce Richardson considered the silly name a long time ago.

"When I was a kid, I always thought it would be cool for the announcer to have to call a horse like No One or Someone," says Richardson, who bred No One out of his mare, Stormont Kate. "I wanted to get Stormont Kate and the stallion, Lookslikeeachpndale combined. So, we came up with Stormy Dancer."

Stormy Dancer was the name Richardson put on the application, but just for fun, he added No One as his second choice. Turns out there was some reason that Stormy Dancer was rejected.

"They didn't accept that name," says Richardson. "And then all of a sudden when the paper arrived, she was called No One."

Her name may suggest a non-entity, but so far so good for No One. In her 2nd lifetime start, she trotted up 2nd in a \$102,200 OSS Gold Leg at Mohawk, and 12 days later at Georgian Downs, prevailed by a head in another \$101,200 Gold heat, timed in 1:58.3.

It was always in the cards for Richardson to pursue a career with harness horses.

"My dad, Bryan raced horses when I was a kid," he says. "I got started through him cleaning stalls when I was in public school. Dad passed away when I was 20. He got to watch me win my first race and then about three months later, he passed away with cancer."

Richardson has pretty well owned horses for as long he's been driving them.

I bought a horse called Norwell Famenglory." He recalls. "He would be one of my first ones. I bought that. I was working for John Petrik over at Agri Lea Farms. Petrik is the guy who bred Fashion Frenzie."

From June 1998 into April 2003, the trotter,



Norwell Famenglory started 120 times for Richardson and produced 21 wins with 62 in-the-money finishes, good for \$171,652.

"I also had one called Norwell Rooster," adds Richardson.

Standardbred Canada shows that Norwell Rooster was owned by Richardson for 70 races, winning 8 times.

Bjs Fancy is another trotter that had a durable career, racing 133 times between 2007 and 2011. Richardson had that one for 29 races, during which the daughter of Angus Hall won 9 times and cashed about \$80,000.

"Bjs Fancy won 4 OSS Stakes and she also won a Trillium Series race at Hiawatha Horse Park," says Richardson.

The biggest purse that Richardson ever took down as an owner or driver was the winner's share of the \$101,300 OSS Gold at Georgian Downs with No One on August 8, 2023.

"I took her right to the lead and was able to cut out some easy fractions," he says. "Then James MacDonald tried to beat me down the stretch. It was getting close, but she hung on."

No One's dam, Stormont Kate, which Richardson still owns, did some lovely things on the track as well. She trotted 151 of her 159 races for Richardson and won 33 times, compiling \$333,963. On August 18, 2016, with Trevor Henry in the bike, she produced the fastest mile of her career, winning in 1:53.3 at Mohawk.

Richardson just might be the most accomplished harness driver with the lowest profile. His stats go back to 1990. At the time we interviewed him, he had 3,648 wins and a lifetime UDRS of .248. From 2004 through 2012, he had 9 consecutive years in which horses he drove earned more than \$1 million. And he did this driving mostly on the "B" tracks like London,

Flamboro, Georgian Downs, Hanover, and Clinton.

"I used to race 7 days a week there for quite a few years," he says. "I didn't race very often on the bigger tracks. I got more drives on the smaller tracks."

These days, Richardson is comfortable with a less hectic schedule and appreciates when a younger driver takes control of his horse. A good example of this is Like Chaos.

"Trevor Henry drives him mostly for me," says Richardson.

That's working out well. The last 11 times that Henry has driven the 3-year-old trotter, he's produced 3 wins, 2 seconds, and a 3rd. In 2023, Like Chaos won 9 times and banked over \$100,000. There's another reason, a better one, that Richardson is not in the bike 8 races a night, 7 days a week.

"I started going to a lot of my kid's hockey games," he says. "But, yeah, I'm getting older now so I'm kind of semi-retired, I guess."

These days, Richardson owns a total of 5 horses.

"I own and train 3 horses and I have a broodmare, and we have a 2-year-old as well," he says.

And no surprise – one of Richardson's horses is named Somebody. Somebody, like No One is also a trotter, but as much as Richardson might want to antagonize a race caller, he doesn't think the two will ever be in the same race.

"One of them is 2 and the other one is 3," he says. "I don't see them racing together."

Somebody is an unraced 2-year-old with the same parents (Lookslikeeachpndale-StormontKate).

We like to ask all our Owners of the Month what keeps them in the game.

"Just winning races gets you hooked," says Richardson. "You start winning the odd race and you just try to get a better horse every year."

Quarter Horse Owners of the Month: Five Fillies Racing



Almost since our first issue in 2007, we've been writing Owner of the Month stories, but until this one, all the owners were humans. As Nadia Faccin, one of the principals of Five Fillies Stable tells us, one of the fillies really is a filly.

"The first member, and the most important one is the horse, A Rushn Lilly," says Faccin "She's the first filly, and then it's myself, and Chantelle Bourgeois is probably the second most important because she's the trainer, and then Melissa Slute, and Vanessa Lawson is the fifth."

Vanessa Lawson is a former jockey, quite familiar with the history of quarter horse racing in Ontario. She rode at the original Picov Downs from 1998 into 2002, compiling 78 wins from 292 mounts, an exceptional strike rate of over 26%. Lawson and Bourgeois and the other ladies used to talk about getting together to make a purchase.

"We were just throwing things out there and saying how it's always been a dream to own a racehorse," says Faccin. "And then the dream became a reality. Chantelle approached us and said, 'There's this filly for sale. I think we should all go in on her.' None of us hesitated. We trust Chantelle so we jumped at the opportunity. It's the horse world that brought us together and all four of us have a strong connection that was due to our common love of horses."

The filly, of course, was A Rushn Lilly and the 4 ladies shared the \$7,500 cost, and even that was mitigated by a persuasive program operated by the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario.

"They had a loan that was up to \$7,500 and it was interest free," says Faccin. "We had six months to pay it off. So that made it a lot more feasible as well."

It's not considered polite to ask a woman her age, but Faccin does volunteer some figures.

"I'm the oldest of the four," she says. "Chantelle's just turned 50. Vanessa is high forties, and Melissa, I think is in her early twenties. So, there's a bit of a spread between the four of us."

Incredibly, Faccin had never been to a racetrack until she came to Ajax Downs the day A Rushn Lilly first ran.

"I never made it to a track," she admits. "I guess I never had a reason to go. I always said that the first time I go to a track it'll be to watch my horse race."

It's not as if Faccin doesn't have a good connection to horses.



The Five Fillies (from left to right):
Vanessa Lawson-Dulny
Chantelle Bourgeois
Nadia Faccin
Melissa Slute

"I was dabbling in some barrel racing," she says. "And I do have two quarter horses of my own on a small little hobby farm, though neither of them are racers."

A Rushn Filly's debut was pretty good. On June 18, 2023, with Cassandra Jeschke aboard, she finished 2nd in a maiden race. It was, in fact, Faccin's first visit to Ajax Downs and a day she will never forget.

"She was in first place up until close to the end and then she got passed near the wire," recalls Faccin. "It was very emotional. It was very joyful. It was years and years of dreaming finally coming to fruition."

The filly was 3rd in her next start and 9th in the \$52,000 Princess Derby. A Rushn Lilly's 4th start was beautiful. However, the horse left the gate without her rider.

"Someone in the gate crew pulled Cassandra off because Lilly was rearing up," says Faccin. "They just didn't get her back in time. The gate crew opened the gate and Lilly flew out without her jockey."

Without the added weight, A Rushn Lilly finished the race ahead of the others. Faccin laughs at herself for thinking this should have been recorded as a win. Horses, unfortunately, are required to have a jockey aboard when they hit the finish line.

"I was disappointed when they told me that," she says.

A Rushn Lilly would atone. In her next race, 5 weeks later, she was 4th in the trial for the Ontario Sires Derby and just 12 days later, carried Rachel Isaacs to a maiden breaking in a 250 yard dash. Five Fillies Stable got a cheque for \$7,500.

"We were really happy for Rachel who did a lot of work helping get Lilly ready on workdays and we were grateful she jumped in to ride her first win," says Faccin.

That was the last race of 2023 for A Rushn Lilly. She appeared next on Opening Day of 2024 at Ajax Downs in the first heat of the day. Cassandra Jeschke was back

aboard, and, as the 9-5 betting choice, A Rushn Lilly produced her best race ever, winning by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a length in 13.826 for the 250 yards. For that she received her highest ever speed index of 73. That was another \$7,500 for the Five Fillies team.

"It's very exciting," says Faccin. "We weren't expecting her to come out that strong on the first day after having the winter off. We just wanted her to go straight and have a good race and a good start. She definitely surprised us all." It was important for the Five Fillies to have their horse win under regular rider, Jeschke.

"She's the barn jockey," says Faccin. "So, she exercises Lilly. We're confident that she's the best rider for her and always has her best interests at heart."

So, we've got a filly winning for a lady trainer with a female rider for 4 other women. Of all the racetracks in the world, Ajax Downs certainly celebrates the contributions of females.

"It's nice to see women being successful in a sport that's been historically dominated by men," says Faccin. "At the awards ceremony that they had at the end of last year, you saw a lot of women going up there and accepting. It was empowering. It's the friendships I have developed and the camaraderie, and being surrounded by all these strong women who are there to support me."

For the time being, the 5th filly, the only 4-legged member of Five Fillies Stable

will be the only one carrying the team's colours. There are apparently no specific plans to purchase a 2nd horse.

"Not at the moment," confirms Faccin. "Chantelle does try to entice us once in a while by sending us pictures of horses that are for sale. But we're just getting our feet wet, and this is the first full year. So, maybe down the road but not right now, although Chantelle will keep trying."



RULE THE DAY

SAT AUG 17 | WOODBINE RACETRACK



TICKETS ON SALE NOW
KingsPlate.com

KNOW WHEN TO TAKE THE REINS. RESPONSIBLEGAMBLING.ORG
™ TRADEMARKS OF WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP.



ODDITIES & ENTITIES

We couldn't think of an appropriate caption for this shot from a race at Ballinrobe in Ireland.



A wonderful and stunning image of Secretariat working out under exercise rider, Charlie Davis. The horse alongside is Billy Silver and the rider is Canadian trainer, Lucien Laurin. Got to love Laurin wearing a jacket in the morning..



Can you tell who won?

This is the finish line win photo from the 1st race at Woodbine on June 6. If you're able to figure out the winner, you've got better eyes than we do. The judges determined that the upper horse, #6, Valley Victory was the winner, though the #2 horse, Coherence, under Ryan Munger seems to have his nose on the wire as well. Those who backed Coherence might have been incoherent when they saw this picture, but those who bet on Valley Victory had no issue with the judges. Valley Victory, a 3-year-old gelding was ridden by Desean Bynoe and paid \$71.20. This was Bynoe's first riding win of the year in his 12th ride. He broke his leg last November and spent the off-season healing.



How did they ever get him in the starting gate?



DOWN THE STRETCH PODCAST

On Apple, Google, Spotify, Stitcher, iHeartRADIO and wherever you get your podcasts

Episode 224, May 12:

The big Stakes races were all at Mohawk with 4 SBOA Finals. Last Monday was vintage **Jody Jamieson** night at Mohawk when he steered home 5 winners. Friday at Woodbine, 50-year-old **Shane Ellis** had 3 riding assignments – he won with all 3 for the biggest day of his 25 year career. **Down The Stretch** was at Ajax Downs for their Opening Day and we chatted with **Emilio Trotta, Ralph Peason, Cassandra Jeschke, Chantelle Bourgeois, Ramiro Castillo** and **Alexis Sanchez**. We've got an amazing Kentucky Derby pre-race prediction from **Kaitlin Free** and some animated audio from some Aussie race analysts as they buried the Churchill Downs stewards for missing **Tyler Gaffalione's** arm wrestling in deep stretch.

Episode 225, May 19:

On Patrick Husbands Day at Woodbine, Patrick Husbands emphasized his own greatness with 2 last to 1st wins. 88-year-old trainer **D Wayne Lukas** won the Preakness for the 7th time. We have impressive wins by **Legendary Hanover** and **Captains Quarters** in preludes to the North America Cup. Anyone know who won almost a quarter million in last Thursday's Pick-5 at Mohawk? How's your national anthem – would you like to sing it at the track? Jockey **Katie Davis** won a race at Belmont on Mother's Day. **Had to Be Ivory** proved again he is the greatest quarter horse in Canada, and 83-year-old **Don McKirgan** drove 2 winners on the same card at Northfield.

Episode 226, May 26:

This one is full of fun, facts, fame and ferocious stretch calls. We have 5 OSS Golds from Mohawk and the fastest mile of the year. **Pietro and David Moran**, father and son, each winning on the same day at Woodbine and **Ismael Mosqueira** completing a very rare race riding triple. The **Charles Juravinski Stakes** race from Flamboro. Jockey **Carly Furlonger**, trainer **Scott Reid** and owner **John Wilson** with a really nice day at Ajax Downs. **Gunnar Lindberg** talks about winning the Avelino Gomez Award. Did you follow **Garnet Barnsdale's** tips last week? You should have – he delivered an \$83 winner. No only do we have several tuneful artists auditioning to sing the Anthems at Mohawk, but we also have the exclusive Horse Players' Anthem, and everyone should pay attention to a race won by **No One**.

Episode 227, June 3:

There were 4 Stakes race at Woodbine Saturday and lots of big money events that evening at Mohawk Park and we are all over them. **Kazushi Kimura** won a big Stakes race at Santa Anita, We got New York Racing's **Keith McCalmont** on the phone to talk about 4 bonus days at Saratoga including this weekend's Belmont Stakes, and if you're making a lastminute trip to Saratoga, we may have good news for you. The Fort Erie thoroughbred meet is underway and day one was awesome. We've got races from Ajax Downs as we see how the jockeys and trainers' races are shaping up. **Doug McNair** talks about the outstanding pacer, **Wheels On Fire** and a satisfying comeback from last year's scary accident. Scary accident? **Kaymarie Kreidel**, the Preakness outrider, had one with her ponies just hours after she chaperoned **Seize The Grey** to the winners circle. And what's our connection between the **Trump** decision and the 3rd race at Churchill last Thursday?

Episode 228, June 10:

We couldn't go to Saratoga for the 4-day Belmont meet, but we have lots of content from the Spa. This podcast has the Fury and Queenston Stakes from Woodbine and the 3 North America Cup Eliminations from Mohawk. **Ryan Munger** tells us how riding at Woodbine is so much better than what he was doing in South Africa. We love to talk about the daily double and when one paid over \$2,400, we threw it into this audio. We've got the 1st race on the newly built 5/8ths track at Grand River. Driver **Chris Brown** carried an 87-race losing streak into a Stakes race at Century Downs – guess what happened? And announcer **Peter Berry** got a surprise at Mountaineer when a deer interrupted his call.

Episode 229, June 17:

We had another great North America Cup at Mohawk on a night of big money Stakes races. Imagine being **John Fielding**, the owner of NA Cup winner **Nijinsky** and you had to watch the race from a wedding in Massachusetts. Driver **James MacDonald** won a pair of Stakes races Friday at the Meadowlands and scored 3 more wins Saturday at Mohawk. Jockey **Rachel Slevinsky** is from St. Albert, Alberta; we've got her winning at Hawthorne on her birthday. At Ajax Downs last Wednesday, a natural hattrick for **Diego Benitez** and an unusual double for his younger brother, **Christian**. We go to Belterra Park where **Perry Ouzts**, who is almost 70, won 3 times on the same card, and moments of profound relief from Grand River – one horse broke a 53-race losing streak, then another snapped off a 69-race bummer.

ON AIR

DOWN THE STRETCH



A Podcast with Peter Gross

