

# DOWN THE STRETCH

CANADA'S MOST INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING HORSE RACING NEWSPAPER

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# THE EDITOR DRIVES HOME HIS POINT



It was May 21, 1983. I was standing on the roof of Pimlico Racetrack. I had bet \$700 U.S. on Sunny's Halo to win the 108<sup>th</sup> Preakness Stakes. In my entire life, this is the most I have ever bet on anything. I went heavy on Sunny's Halo because 2 weeks earlier, I had sent \$50 with a friend to Churchill Downs with the instructions that he should put that \$50 to win on Sunny's Halo.

(Here's a little back story. Sunny's Halo was owned by a man named David "Pud" Foster. I once interviewed him, and he revealed that he used to place bets with my grandfather who operated a small tailor shop in the Kensington Market area. I was thrilled to learn that my Zaidy had a part-time gig as a bookie.)

Of course, Sunny's Halo won that Kentucky Derby and my \$50 turned into \$150. I was convinced he could not lose the Preakness. At the time, my friend, the late John Saunders, formerly of Citytv was a popular sports reporter with WMAR in Baltimore, and he was able to secure me a media pass for the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of the American

Triple Crown.

Earlier in the week, David Cross, trainer for Sunny's Halo did little to hide the fact that the horse was suffering from a rash. It stands to reason that anyone with a bothersome itch on their body would probably not excel at a mile and three-eighths gallop with an aggressive little man working away on top. Foolishly, I ignored the bad news and funneled my American bills through the window.

Sunny's Halo challenged for the lead early, but well before the far turn, from my excellent vantage point, I could see that he was done. The winner was a locally owned horse, Deputed Testamony, who carved out a very nice career with 11 wins from 20 races. Sunny's Halo finished 6<sup>th</sup>.

I was reminded of my poor decision making when I read a recent Finnish study that claimed men with higher IQs are more likely to bet on the horses. My own lack of effective cognizance notwithstanding, we examine that

report on page 9 with additional commentary from horse players Jim Bannon, Garnet Barnsdale, Tommy Massis and the wisest man ever to wear #18 for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Jim McKenny.

One does not have to be Albert Schweitzer to see that this is another stimulating and informative issue of *Down The Stretch*. We have a boatload of Kentucky Derby Preps that take us from the Fairgrounds to Aqueduct to Gulfstream, Tampa Bay, Golden Gate and Turfway Park. That stuff can be found on pages 10-11.

Canadians continue to plunder purses in the U.S. On pages 16, 17 and 18, we document wins by Emma-Jayne Wilson, Katerina Vassilieva, Chantal Sutherland, Marty Drexler, Jim and Susan Hill, Bruno Schickedanz and Steven Chircop. In fact, Chircop's stunning run of success at Penn National compelled us to make him our Thoroughbred Owner of the Month (page 19).

Our Standardbred Owner of the Month (page 20) is Brett MacDonald. We gravitated to him thanks to the amazing start of his Saulsbrook Victor, who, the last time we checked, had won 6 of his last 10 races, including a blistering 1:49.2 on a night when it was -3°C at Mohawk.

We have full coverage (page 4) of the O'Brien Awards, the night that Bulldog Hanover got all of his deserved bling. We show you who has been nominated for Sovereign Awards, and excuse the lack of modesty, but for the second year in a row, the *Down The Stretch Podcast* is a finalist in the Audio-Visual Broadcast Category. We have no chance, but as the cliché goes, we're just happy to be mentioned in the same breath as Horse Racing Alberta and Woodbine Entertainment (A full description of the past several weeks of the podcast can be found on page 24).

There's much more. A story about Jessica Paquette who calls the races at Parx (page 13), a Grade 1 win at Santa Anita for Woodbine's reigning champion, Kazushi Kimura (page 14), a summary by Jennifer Morrison of the Quarter Horse Awards (page 12), the two grooms, Amber Hutchinson and Ricardo Nichalson who already know they are getting Sovereign Awards (page 8), and the big gamblers who have already tossed \$100,000 into the pot to have a 2-year-old trotter compete in the next Mohawk Million (page 13).

We celebrate Kathleen O'Connell (page 14), who just recorded her 2,386<sup>th</sup> training win making her the all-time winningest female conditioner.

And of course, there is our page of Oddities and Entities (page 23) on which you can see race caller Peter Aiello's famous t-shirt, comedian Phyllis Diller in a racing bike, and the story about the stewards at Sunland Park who watched the wrong replay and used it to DQ an innocent horse.

Wow, that's a lot of horse racing material, wouldn't you say? Only people like you, people with a remarkably high IQ who are interested in this fabulous sport, would find these stories informative, entertaining, and provocative.

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# Bulldog Hanover Night at the O'Briens *by Jeff Porchak*



Bulldog Hanover winning the 2022 Canadian Pacing Derby Ont.

New Image Media Photo

The O'Brien Awards, recognizing excellence in harness racing from 2022, took place at the Hilton Meadowvale Hotel in Mississauga on February 4, with the winners announced by Standardbred Canada. The ceremony was hosted by Ken Middleton and Randy Waples.

Bulldog Hanover stole the show, winning the **Somebeachsomewhere Horse of the Year** title, taking the **Older Pacing Horse** division, and he was also honoured as the 2022 recipient of the prestigious **Cam**



Driver of the Year James MacDonald

New Image Media Photo

**Fella Award.** Some of the other big winners of the night included Millar Farms, winner of the **Three-Year-Old Pacing Filly Category** with homebred Silver Label and taking home a second consecutive O'Brien in the **Armstrong Breeder of the Year** category. Owner Brad Grant had two O'Brien winners – Bulldog Hanover, and Atlanta in the **Older Trotting Mare** category. Bulldog Hanover captivated the hearts of harness racing fans across North America, becoming the fastest Standardbred the sport has ever seen when he stopped the clock in 1:45.4 in the William R. Haughton Memorial at The Meadowlands. It was a memorable season for the Jack Darling-trained son of Shadow Play that saw him win 14 races in 16 starts for \$1,858,210 in earnings. Some of Bulldog Hanover's other notable victories came in the Dan Patch Stakes and the Hoosier Pacing Derby at Hoosier Park, the Dayton Pacing Derby, the Canadian Pacing Derby, the Breeders Crown and the TVG Open. Bulldog Hanover was recognized for his exploits on the racetrack as well as his ability to be an outstanding ambassador for harness racing with the Cam Fella Award. Millar Farms, recognized with the **Armstrong Breeder of**



Trainer of the Year Richard Moreau

New Image Media Photo

**the Year** award, was the leading breeder in the 2022 Ontario Sires Stakes (OSS) program and, in total, saw 34 starters earn more than \$2.1 million. Some of the most notable 2022 starters bred by Millar Farms were O'Brien Award winner Silver Label and Simcoe Stakes winner Velvet Stinger. Richard Moreau added a record 10<sup>th</sup> O'Brien trophy to his mantle, with another **Trainer of the Year** title. In 2022, he topped the charts for all trainers in Canada with 330 wins and \$5,254,296 in purse earnings. He was the leading trainer of 2022 at Flamboro Downs, Georgian Downs and Woodbine Mohawk Park. Two of Moreau's trainees also picked up O'Brien Awards – Gaines Hanover in the two-year-old trotting colt category and Fashion Frenzie in the Older Trotting Horse division. James MacDonald was honoured as the **Keith Waples Driver of the Year** for the second consecutive year following a career best season. MacDonald shattered his personal bests last season, winning 451 races with more than \$9.9 million in purse earnings. In addition to leading all Canadian drivers in wins and earnings during this career season, he added a second consecutive Lampman Cup, which is awarded to the leading driver in the OSS program. Other accomplishments include winning the inaugural Charles Juravinski Memorial Cup at Flamboro Downs with Linedrive Hanover in a Canadian-record time, as well as an historic night at Woodbine Mohawk Park which saw him win eight races on a card – a new WEG/OJC record. MacDonald was the regular driver for three O'Brien Award winners – So Much More, Adare Castle and Twin B Archie. In 2022, Dr. Ian Moore, winner of the **O'Brien Award of Horsemanship**, enjoyed one of his best years to date, finishing with a career high \$2.4 million in earnings. Most of his success came courtesy of two-year-old pacing colt Stockade Seelster, winner of the O'Brien Award for his division, and O'Brien finalist Tattoo Artist. Stockade Seelster swept every race in the provincial program this year and added a Metro Pace title at Woodbine Mohawk Park, giving Moore the first Metro of his career. Tattoo Artist finished with more than \$1 million in earnings in a single season for the first time in his four-year racing career. Samuel Fillion, honoured as the **Future Star** winner, improved from 100 victories and \$574,000 in purses in his first Future Star-nominated season in 2021 to 164 wins and more than \$1.1 million in

2022. The Quebec native won the Quebec/Eastern Ontario Regional Driving Championship and was one of the leading drivers last season at Rideau Carleton Raceway. Sylvia Hanover won the O'Brien as the country's top **two-year-old pacing filly**. The daughter of Always B Miki finished off her nine-start year with a record of 8-1-0, and \$903,300 in the bank for trainer Shawn Steacy. Owned by Hudson Standardbred Stable of Quebec, her list of accomplishments included victories in the Champlain Stakes, She's A Great Lady Final and the Breeders Crown Final, which were all held at Woodbine Mohawk Park. In the **Two-Year-Old Pacing Colt** division, Stockade Seelster was awarded the O'Brien trophy. The son of State Treasurer had a stellar year for trainer Dr. Ian Moore, finishing with eight wins in 11 tries and bankrolling \$917,470. He was perfect in the provincial program (five-for-five), capped off with a win in the OSS Super Final. His biggest payday came from his win in the \$900,000 Metro Pace. Silver Label won the title of **Three-Year-Old Pacing Filly** of the year. In 2022, victories for the daughter of Bettors Delight included the final of the SBOA and the Ontario Sires Stakes Super Final, and her seasonal earnings came in at \$498,138. In the **Three-Year-Old Pacing Colt** division, Pebble Beach, the leading money winning horse in Canada with \$1.038 million earned on Canadian soil, won the O'Brien Award. The son of Downbytheseaside was a perfect five-for-five over the Woodbine Mohawk Park oval this year. Trained by Noel Daley, Pebble Beach's signature wins in Canada included the \$1 million Pepsi North America Cup and the Breeders Crown final, both of which he won in dominating fashion. So Much More picked up a second O'Brien trophy for her connections in the **Older Pacing Mare** division. Trained by Don Beatson, the daughter of Big Jim continued her dominance in Canada's upper fillies and mares ranks in 2022, where she made 34 starts, winning 16 times and earning \$427,707. She had 29 top-three finishes overall, which included a third-place finish in the Breeders Crown final. In 2022, she also surpassed the \$1 million mark for career earnings and achieved her 50<sup>th</sup> lifetime win. Righteous Resolve won the **Two-Year-Old Trotting Filly** honours. Just like her full brother Duly Resolved did a year ago, Righteous Resolve had a dominant freshman campaign, winning 8 of 10 races while earning \$623,704. The daughter of Resolve won the Champlain Stakes, the Peaceful Way and four Ontario Sires Stakes events, including the OSS Super Final. She also finished third in the Breeders Crown final for trainer John Bax. In the **Two-Year-Old Trotting Colt** division, Gaines Hanover won the O'Brien Award. The son of Cantab Hall won four of eight starts last season and bankrolled \$493,851 in earnings. The Richard Moreau trainee won the Champlain Stakes in September, but his biggest moment came when he captured the final of the Breeders Crown in October. Adare Castle was crowned champion in the **Three-Year-Old Trotting Filly** division. This daughter of Muscle Mass, trained by Mark Etsell, matched her win total from a year ago (seven) and earned \$668,654 in the process. Her stakes wins included four Ontario Sires Stakes Gold events, the SBOA Final and the Casual Breeze. She finished second in the Elegantimage, the Simcoe and the OSS Super Final. Twin B Archie captured

his first O'Brien Award in the **Three-Year-Old Trotting Colt** division. In 2022, the sophomore gelding by Archangel racked up six wins and \$490,502 in earnings for trainer Scott McEneny. He won the SBOA Final, two OSS Gold events and was second in the Goodtimes Final. **Older Trotting Mare** Atlanta picked up her second O'Brien Award in this division, the first coming in 2019. The daughter of Chapter Seven, trained by Ron Burke, won six races in 15 starts and amassed \$493,721 in 2022, with stakes wins that included the Armbro Flight and the Miss Versatility Final. She also finished second in the Breeders Crown. In the **Older Trotting Horse** category, Fashion Frenzie won the O'Brien after a season where he won seven of nine starts and more than \$226,000 in purses for trainer Richard Moreau. Most of the victories for the son of Archangel were in Woodbine Mohawk Park's Open Trot, with his notable stakes win coming at Georgian Downs where he won the Earl Rowe Memorial and set a new track record in the process. The Media Excellence Awards and Outstanding Groom Award were also presented during the O'Brien Awards Gala. Dave Briggs won his fourth Media Excellence Award in the **Outstanding Written Work** Category for his feature, "[\*There's still some magic left in the old game.\*](#)" The story, which was published on July 19 on *Harness Racing Update*, covers this past summer's magical evening of harness racing at The Meadowlands, highlighted by historic performances from Canadian stars Bulldog Hanover and Beach Glass. Horse Racing Alberta added its third Media Excellence Award in the **Outstanding Broadcast** category for the "[\*2022 HRA Fun For Fans Promo.\*](#)" a video that tells the story of the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association's Fun For Fans charity initiative that has spanned 10 years and raised more than \$250,000 for charities province-wide. Produced by Jeff Robillard of Horse Racing Alberta and Mike Little of Shine Light Entertainment, the video first aired on the Horse Racing Alberta website and social media channels on September 22. Defending champion in the **Outstanding Photography** category, Clive Cohen captured his seventh Media Excellence Award for his photograph, *The Long Shadow*. The photo, which captures a striking bird's-eye view of a Standardbred casting a long shadow on the racetrack, was taken on June 2 at Woodbine Mohawk Park and published on the track's social media feeds. Kayla Chappell, of Millet, Alta., was recognized with the **Outstanding Groom Award**. Chappell has worked for the Duane Marfisi stable for just over a year, paddocking, warming up, shipping and grooming horses. Before relocating to Ontario, she groomed horses for several Alberta-based trainers, and she was also a member of the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association social media team. Chappell is known for her attention to detail and treats every horse with great care. In addition to grooming, she has both her trainer's and driver's licenses and took part in the 2022 International Women's Day Race at Woodbine Mohawk Park last March.

A full list of winners and connections follows:

## 2022 O'BRIEN AWARD WINNERS

### PACERS

#### Two-Year-Old Pacing Filly

SYLVIA HANOVER

Owner: Hudson Standardbred Stb Inc.,

Hudson, QC

Breeder: Hanover Shoe Farms Inc., Hanover, PA

#### Two-Year-Old Pacing Colt

STOCKADE SEELSTER

Owners: Sally MacDonald, Souris, PE

Paul MacDonald, Toronto, ON

Breeder: Seelster Farms Inc., Lucan, ON

#### Three-Year-Old Pacing Filly

SILVER LABEL

Owner: Millar Farms, Stouffville, ON

Breeder: Millar Farms, Stouffville, ON

#### Three-Year-Old Pacing Colt

PEBBLE BEACH

Owners: Patricia Stable, Massapequa, NY

Joe Sbrocco, Brecksville, OH

Country Club Acres Inc., Findlay, OH

Laexpressfoderadeovolente, Chesterfield, NJ

Breeder: Brittany Farms LLC, Versailles, KY

#### Older Pacing Mare

SO MUCH MORE

Owners: Don Beatson, Granton, ON

Ken Beatson, Palgrave, ON

Cole England, Exeter, ON

Breeder: Doug Mac Phee, New Haven, PE

#### Older Pacing Horse

BULLDOG HANOVER

Owners: Jack Darling Stables Ltd, Cambridge, ON

Brad Grant, Milton, ON

Breeder: Hanover Shoe Farms Inc., Hanover, PA

### TROTTERS

#### Two-Year-Old Trotting Filly

RIGHTEOUS RESOLVE

Owners: Bet Max Stables Inc, Casco, MI

Benenati Inc, Clinton Twp, MI

Breeder: Bet Max Stables Inc, Casco, MI &

Benenati Inc, Clinton Twp, MI

#### Two-Year-Old Trotting Colt

GAINES HANOVER

Owner: Gestion J Y Blais Inc, Montreal, QC

Breeder: Hanover Shoe Farms Inc., Hanover, PA

#### Three-Year-Old Trotting Filly

ADARE CASTLE

Owners: Mark Etsell, Rockwood, ON

Robert Newton, Walkerton, ON

Graham Hopkins, Chesley, ON

Peter Porter, Port Dover, ON

Breeder: Ed Lohmeyer, Cream Ridge, NJ

#### Three-Year-Old Trotting Colt

TWIN B ARCHIE

Owners: Scott McEneny, Puslinch, ON

Domenic Chiaravalle, Hamilton, ON

Floyd Marshall, Jarvis, ON

Martwest Racing Stable, Mississauga, ON

Breeder: Twinbrook Limited, Embro, ON

#### Older Trotting Mare

ATLANTA

Owners: Crawford Farms Racing, Syracuse, NY

Brad Grant, Milton, ON

Howard Taylor, Philadelphia, PA

Breeder: Order By Stable, Boras, Sweden

#### Older Trotting Horse

FASHION FRENZIE

Owners: Ecurie Francis Richard Inc, Becancour, QC

Mario Bourgea, Stanbridge East, QC

Pierre Guillemette, Becancour, QC

Sylvain Richard, Becancour, QC

Breeder: John Petrik, Moorefield, ON

### PEOPLE AWARDS

#### O'Brien Award of Horsemanship

IAN MOORE

Cambridge, ON

#### Armstrong Breeder of the Year

MILLAR FARMS

Stouffville, ON

#### Keith Waples Driver of the Year

JAMES MACDONALD

Guelph, ON

#### Trainer of the Year

RICHARD MOREAU

Puslinch, ON **Future Star Award**

SAMUEL FILLION

Mont-Joli, QC

### SOMEBEACHSOMEWHERE HORSE OF

#### THE YEAR

Bulldog Hanover

### CAM FELLA AWARD WINNER

Bulldog Hanover

### Media Excellence Awards

**Outstanding Written Work:** Dave Briggs for [\*There's still some magic left in the old game\*](#)

**Outstanding Film, Video, Broadcast:** Jeff Robillard, Horse Racing Alberta and Mike Little, Shine Light Entertainment for the Fun For Fans Promo Video.

**Outstanding Photography:** Clive Cohen for [\*The Long Shadow\*](#)

**Outstanding Groom Award:** Kayla Chappell, Millet, AB





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# The Jockey Club of Canada Announces 2022 Sovereign Awards Finalists

The Jockey Club of Canada is pleased to announce the finalists for the 2022 Sovereign Awards honouring Canada's champions and recognizing their outstanding achievements in Canadian Thoroughbred Racing and Breeding.

The winner of each category, along with Canada's Horse of the Year for 2022, will be announced during our 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Sovereign Award ceremony which will be held on the evening of Thursday, April 13, 2023 at Universal Eventspace in Vaughan, Ontario.

Please call or email us for more information and to reserve your tickets today! Tickets can also be purchased online at: <https://jockeyclubcanada.com/online-payments/>.

## 2022 Sovereign Awards Finalists

The finalists in each of the following categories are listed in alphabetical order.



### Champion Two-Year-Old Female

Cairo Consort  
Last Call  
Renegade Rebel

### Champion Two-Year-Old Male

Philip My Dear  
Poulin in O T  
Velocitor

### Champion Three-Year-Old Female

Moira  
Sister Seagull  
Souper Hoity Toity

### Champion Three-Year-Old Male

Hall of Dreams  
Ironstone  
Sir for Sure

### Champion Older Main Track Female

Infinite Patience  
Lady Speightspeare  
Our Flash Drive

### Champion Older Main Track Male

Soy Tapatio  
War Bomber (Ire)  
Who's the Star

### Champion Female Turf Horse

Fev Rover (Ire)  
Lady Speightspeare  
Moira

### Champion Male Turf Horse

Filo di Arianna (Brz)  
Philip My Dear  
Ready for the Lady  
Sir for Sure

### Champion Female Sprinter

Hazelbrook  
Lady Speightspeare  
Our Flash Drive

### Champion Male Sprinter

Arzak  
Filo di Arianna (Brz)  
Lucky Score

### Outstanding Broodmare

Cosa Rara  
Count to Three  
Include Katherine

### Outstanding Breeder

Adena Springs  
Sam-Son Farm  
Tall Oaks Farm

### Outstanding Owner

Schickedanz, Bruno  
Ulwellig, Al and Bill  
X-Men Racing, Madaket Stables LLC and SF  
Racing LLC

### Outstanding Trainer

Attard, Kevin  
Carroll, Josie  
Casse, Mark E.

### Outstanding Apprentice Jockey

Jones, Slade  
Prescod, N'Rico  
Santo, Kimal

### Outstanding Jockey

Hernandez, Rafael Manuel  
Husbands, Patrick  
Kimura, Kazushi  
Wilson, Emma-Jayne

### Horse of the Year

The Horse of the Year finalists will be announced during the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Sovereign Awards ceremony.

### Audio-Visual Broadcast

Peter Gross – Down the Stretch Podcast 146  
Horse Racing Alberta – The Canadian Derby  
Feature – Above and Beyond  
Woodbine Entertainment Group – The Queen's Plate

### Photograph Category

Allan de la Plante – The Catch  
Lisa Thompson – Belcarra Park  
Julie Wright – On Cloud Nine - 2022 EP Taylor  
Champions

### Writing Category

Ivan Bigg – Brandon Greer's Quiet Success  
Dave Briggs – Why Can't Horse Racing Partake in  
Ontario's Sports Betting Boom  
Ron Gierkink – Queen's Plate Feature Sunday Aug. 7  
Chris Lomon – Mike Keogh: Canada's Gentleman  
Horseman Calls it a Career  
George Williams – Derby Winner has a Manitoba Mother

The 2022 Media Sovereign Awards finalists, the winner of the Award for Outstanding Groom and this year's E. P. Taylor Award and Special Sovereign Award winners will be announced in the coming days.

The winner in each of the three Media Sovereign Awards categories will be announced, along with the other Sovereign Awards winners during the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Sovereign Awards ceremony on the evening of **Thursday, April 13, 2023 at Universal Eventspace in Vaughan, Ontario.**

For more information please contact The Jockey Club of Canada at (416) 675-7756 or [jockeyclubcanada@gmail.com](mailto:jockeyclubcanada@gmail.com).



# Two Grooms to be Honoured at the Sovereigns

No one will be upset with the news that the Outstanding Groom Award at April's Sovereign Awards banquet will go to two hard-working individuals. The Jockey Club of Canada has declared a dead heat between Amber Hutchinson and Ricardo Nichalson.

Hutchinson is now in her 17<sup>th</sup> year as a groom for veteran trainer Mike Doyle, and she learned of the award under unusual circumstances.

"I had my phone on airplane mode because I was on vacation," says Hutchinson. "I opened it up at 3 in the morning and my phone went bananas. I thought, 'Everybody's crazy!'"

That Doyle was the person who filled out the recommendation for the award means a lot to Hutchinson.

"I think it's awesome. I greatly appreciate it," she says. "I will work for him until he doesn't want me anymore."

Traditionally, grooms tend to move around a lot. Hutchinson has stayed in the same place because the conditions are so beneficial.

"Between Mike Doyle and Brett Harris – they run a

wonderful shedrow and I feel at home," she says. "You find your home and you stay there."

When asked to name her favourite horses, Hutchinson has an immediate response.

"Number 1 would be Peyton," she says. "He was my boy. I loved him to pieces, even though he was a very evil creature. We built a bond."

Peyton raced through 7 seasons, but did his best work from 2011-2013, winning 5 times from 23 starts. He earned over \$500,000 for his career.

"My current favourite is Taranto Titan," she adds. "He'll be coming back this year. I call him Big Sexy."

Taranto Titan raced 6 times as a 3-year-old in 2022 and won twice, earning a cheque in each of his races.

Honouring grooms just makes sense. They spend the most time with the horses and make the least money of everyone in the sport.

"It's hard work, insanely crazy hours," says Hutchinson. "As long as you love your animals, they will love you back and give you everything that they have."

Ricardo Nichalson, 41 has been with Ian Black for at least 19 years. Early on, he recognized what a good space

he was in.

"You just go to work, and once you're in a good environment and have a good trainer, you want to be there," says Nichalson "It's like a team. Once I'm in a good place, I stay there and observe a lot. This makes me better at everything, and I can achieve the things I want to achieve. The second year I was with Ian, I started to see a lot of good horses coming in. Everybody had a Stakes horse. You enjoy this to see how far you can go with the horses."

Nichalson is proud of the good work he does and enjoys being celebrated.

"I keep on getting groom of the day and groom of the week," he says. "So, when the boss told me that I was groom of the year, I remembered what it was like in high school when I kept getting awards."

Nichalson is somewhat famous for dressing up in the silks of the owners when Doyle sends out a horse. Will that sartorial creativity be on display at the Sovereigns?

"I am thinking of a suit already," he says. "You can think of something extravagant, but it will be appropriate for such a big event."



Ricardo Nichalson celebrates a win with Emma-Jayne Wilson

Will Wong Photo



Amber Hutchinson

Will Wong Photo

## Woodbine Entertainment and HBPA agree

Season Set to Open on April 22

On MARCH 17, Woodbine Entertainment and the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association of Ontario (HBPA) jointly announced that they have reached an agreement for a new two-year deal that commits to \$62M in purses for the 2023 and 2024 thoroughbred racing meets.

The deal also includes a 133-race day meet in 2023, and 129 race dates in 2024. Despite the fewer race days in 2024, Woodbine expects the number of races offered to be substantially the same as 2023 through more optimized race scheduling during the meet.

The upcoming 2023 season will kick off on Saturday, April 22.

"We are pleased to reach this new agreement with the HBPA so we can now collectively focus our energy on the incredible season of thoroughbred racing that lies ahead,"

said Jim Lawson. "Over the last few years, our industry came together through difficult times and put forward a world-class racing product that continues to grow globally. Now, with a new agreement with the HBPA, and the exciting and transformative initiatives happening around the track, we are poised for one of the most exciting racing seasons in our storied history and can't wait to get started."

"On behalf of Woodbine and our Board, I would like to thank the HBPA for working diligently towards a result that is positive for all industry stakeholders."

As part of the agreement, Woodbine Entertainment is also pleased to continue a contribution of \$300,000 to the HBPA in each year of the deal for improving working benefits and conditions for those working on the Woodbine backstretch.

"We are also pleased to come to an agreement with Woodbine Entertainment so we can work together and in partnership for the betterment of horse people and the

industry," said Sue Leslie, President of the HBPA. "There is a tremendous amount of opportunity to grow our sport in the coming years and that is best achieved by working together, shoulder to shoulder. We believe Woodbine Entertainment is committed to this partnership. We look forward to this renewed partnership and are equally excited to open the starting gates on April 22."

The 2023 season at Woodbine Racetrack will be highlighted by the first running of the \$1 million King's Plate in 70 years, which will take place on Sunday, August 20. Overall, the 2023 stakes schedule includes more than \$17 million in purses, 39 graded stakes, and features the \$1 million Grade 1 Ricoh Woodbine Mile, the return of the \$750,000 Grade 1 Canadian International, the \$750,000 E.P. Taylor Stakes, the \$500,000 Grade 1 Summer and Natalma Stakes, and the \$500,000 Woodbine Oaks presented by Budweiser.



# RACETRACK HUMOUR



## Perry & Mooch

### Finnish study shows that men with higher IQs will bet on the horses



**Summary:** The higher a man's IQ, the more likely he is to partake in betting on horse races, a new study concludes.

**Source:** University of Eastern Finland

The higher a man's IQ, the more likely he is to bet on horse racing, according to new research from academics at the University of Eastern Finland and the University of Liverpool.

In a study published in the *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* found that men with higher numerical IQs were more likely to engage with skill-based gambling, such as horse racing, choose more complex betting products and spend more money.

The study involved more than 15,000 Finnish men who had completed an IQ test as part of their compulsory military service when joining the Finnish Defence Forces. This was cross-referenced with extensive records of the men's online gambling behaviour and data on their socioeconomic status, income and education from Statistics Finland.

The data did not include women as only men in Finland are required by law to complete military service and take an IQ test.

Commenting on the findings, Professor David Forrest from the University of Liverpool Management School said: "Our research found a strong correlation between men with a high IQ and those who take part in skilled gambling, such as betting on horse racing.

The study does not provide a definitive answer on why men with higher IQs would enjoy betting on horse racing, but the researchers believe this could be because men with higher IQs enjoy the mathematical challenge posed by such skill-based betting.

According to the study,

"It is important to note that our findings can't necessarily be generalised to chance-based gambling, such as gaming machines. However, there is very little previous research on the association between intelligence and skills-based gambling and so finding such a strong link is significant."

Associate Professor Jani Saastamoinen of the University of Eastern Finland said: "Betting could be compared to solving crossword puzzles. Perhaps, bettors like to crunch numbers and find the winning horses - even though they know they'll end up losing money in the long run."

#### Jim Bannon, longtime Woodbine handicapper

"It's well founded from my experience. When I was learning and teaching, some of the people I first ran into were highly educated individuals. I spent a lot of time with Tom Ainslie, an extremely well educated man. Andy Beyer, Stephen Crist, and the late Stephen Davidowitz were all writers and all had higher levels of university educations. There seems to be a link there. These people gravitated to the game that way."

#### Tommy Massis, the guy who hit a \$1.1 million pick 6 at Hong Kong

"Definitely it takes a higher IQ and contrarian thinking to beat horse racing successfully and to do it in the long run. But I have also noticed that people I know and like who are real smart people, that when they get into gambling, they become dumber than a piece of wood."

#### Garnet Barnsdale, Ontario harness racing handicapper and Scotty Barnes' biggest fan

"One glaring example of my lack of intellectual superiority occurred at London's Western Fair Raceway, where I thought it would be a good idea to take all but one in one of the legs of a Pick-4 which came in and paid over \$1,000. You can imagine what happened. The one I didn't have was dead last of 8 at the half, and I was smiling and laughing about how smart I was until this horse pulled 4-wide on the backstretch, circled the field, and won going away, costing me \$1,000 because I used all but one. How dumb is that?"

#### Jim McKenny, former Maple Leafs defenseman and passionate horseplayer

**DTS:** What's higher - your IQ or the number of goals you scored in the NHL?

**McKenny:** I have no idea how many goals I scored.

**DTS:** The stats say you scored 82.

**McKenny:** Are those all into the opposing net? They didn't count my own goals, because I'd be well over 100.

**DTS:** A dead heat then?

**McKenny:** I think my IQ is a little lower, but that's OK.





# Kentucky Derby Preps

The Fair Grounds, January 21, \$200,000 Lecomte Stakes:



Instant Coffee  
Hodges Photography

With 20 Derby points to the winner, the Lecomte Stakes at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> attracted just 6 runners, and the crowd installed Instant Coffee as the 6-5 choice. Under jockey Luis Saez, the 3-year-old colt made a breathtaking move, rallying from last down the backstretch, swooping past rivals with impunity and soaring to the finish line an easy winner by 2 ½ expanding lengths. Owned by Gold Square LLC and trained by Brad Cox, Instant Coffee won for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 4 races and paid just \$4.60. Despite his remarkable off-the-pace win, the history of the race suggests Instant Coffee will not a likely be a winner on the first Saturday in May. Since the Lecomte was first run in 1944, not a single winner has gone on to capture the Kentucky Derby.

Oaklawn Park, January 28, \$750,000 Southwest Stakes:



Arabian Knight

The bettors crushed Arabian Knight down to 2-5 and they nailed it. With John Velazquez calling the shots, Arabian Knight was in front after a quarter mile in :22.98 and just sailed along for the rest of the mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> race, pouring it on in the stretch to win by an expanding 5 lengths in 1:43.50. Arabian Knight is trained by Bob Baffert for Zedan Racing Stables, and with his second win in as many starts, he paid just \$2.80.

Gulfstream Racetrack, February 4, \$250,000 Holy Bull Stakes:



Rocket Can

Trainer Bill Mott had two horses in the 8-horse field, and he loved the finish. Rocket Can, off as the second favourite at 2.60-1, benefitted from an excellent ride by Junior Alvarado who rated his mount nicely in mid-pack for the first half mile, then cued him 4-wide on the turn. In the stretch, Rocket Can was brave, gaining the lead with under 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a mile to go and repelling the late-moving Shadow Dragon (Jose Ortiz) who rallied from last to finish second. Both of those horses are trained by Mott. The winner is owned by Frank Fletcher Racing and the win ticket was worth \$7.20. Rocket Can won for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 5 tries.

Santa Anita, February 4, \$200,000 Robert B. Lewis Stakes:

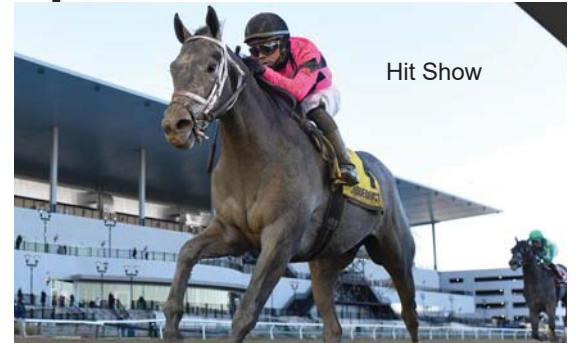
There were only 4 runners in this race and all 4 had Bob Baffert listed as the trainer. Apparently, when the gates opened, Baffert was heard shouting, "Come on anybody!" Newgate was the even-money choice and he had to work hard for the win. Jockey Lanfranco Dettori urged him from 4<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch to engage Hard to Figure



(Ramon Vasquez) at the head of the stretch. Those two battled to the wire with Newgate inching away in the final strides to get it by a neck in 1:43.11. Newgate won for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 6 races and paid \$4 to win.

Aqueduct, February 11, \$250,000 Withers Stakes:

The 6-5 choice in this 1 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile test was Hit Show ridden by Manny Franco, and that money was well placed. Hit Show was 5<sup>th</sup> after half a mile, but when given his cue, started passing rivals on the turn and pulled away in the stretch to win by over 5 lengths. As impressive as that might have been, the time of 1:54.71 might intimidate



Hit Show

some \$10,000 claimers but won't have Secretariat rolling over in his grave. Hit Show won for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 4 races for trainer Brad Cox and the owners, Mary and Gary West. The bettors cashed \$4.60.

Tampa Bay Downs, February 11, \$250,000 Sam F. Davis Stakes:



Litigate

This one was a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> with a field of 11. The favourite, Dubyuhnell at 2-1 was never a factor after being jostled out of the gate. Luis Saez gave Litigate a well-timed ride, rallying from 5<sup>th</sup> after a half to take the lead in mid-stretch, winning by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:44.83. Litigate, a son of Blame (get it?), won for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 3 tries. He is trained by Todd Pletcher for Centennial Farms, and he paid \$7.60.

Golden Gate Racetrack, February 11, El Camino Real Derby:

A field of 8 went 1 1/8 miles on the Tapeta, and Chase the Chaos was well rated by jockey Armando Ayuso, charging from mid-pack through the stretch and finding the finish line 1 ½ lengths the best in 1:51.68. All things being equal, that's about 15 lengths better than Hit Show did at Aqueduct. Even so, traditionally horses doing well



Chase the Chaos

on synthetic surfaces struggle when put on the dirt, and no winner of the El Camino since 1982 has ever won the Kentucky Derby. Chase the Chaos is trained by Ed Moger and owned by Adam Ference and Bill Dory. The win ticket was worth \$10.40.



**The Fairgrounds, February 18, \$400,000 Risen Star Stakes:**

A huge field of 14 came out of the gate for this mile and an 8<sup>th</sup> race, and the 9-5 favourite, Victory's Formation was not a factor, finishing a well-beaten 9<sup>th</sup>. Determinedly (Reylu Gutierrez) led for the first 6 furlongs in a strong 1:12.21, then stopped badly and finished last. Angel of Empire, under Luis Saez was 9<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch, made a 4-wide move on the turn in and around rivals and was powerful through the stretch, winning by a length over another late-comer, Sun Thunder (Brian Hernandez). The 13-1 odds were very generous considering that Angel of Empire was winning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 5 races. The



Angel of Empire was 13-1

Hodges Photography

3-year-old colt is trained by Brad Cox for Albaugh Family Stables and those who bet the winner cashed \$29.40.

**Oaklawn Park, February 25, \$1,000,000 Rebel Stakes:**

Confidence Game Rebel-led against his odds



Image courtesy Equiphoto

The 3-2 favourite was Verifying, but we can verify he didn't hit the board. The upset was on as James Graham gave Confidence Game a nicely timed journey. The pair was a comfortable 5<sup>th</sup> at the half, and the time for that post of :46.17 was probably a little fast for the early leaders, all of whom faded late. Confidence Game gained momentum with a 4-wide move around the far turn and carried his energy into the stretch, gaining the lead with less than a furlong to go and finding the wire a safe length the best in 1:44.21. Confidence Game is trained by Keith Desormeaux and owned by the Don't Tell My Wife Stable, though she probably knows it was the horse's 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 7 starts, which makes the \$39 win price easy to take for those who bet him.

**Gulfstream Racetrack, March 4, \$400,000 Fountain of Youth Stakes:**



Forte

Adam Coglianese Photo

Even though it was his first start of 2023, Forte was bet down to 1-2 by the bettors who were clearly impressed with his 4 for 5 record as a 2-year-old. That wagering faith was justified, as Irad Ortiz had Forte 5<sup>th</sup> of 9 after half a mile in this mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> race, but then asked and Forte responded, passing horses easily with a 4-wide move into the stretch. To the wire, Forte was much the best, winning by 4 1/2 lengths in 1:43.12. That made the 3-year-old colt 5 for 6 in his career. Todd Pletcher trains for the Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable. The bettors had to be happy with a \$3 win ticket.

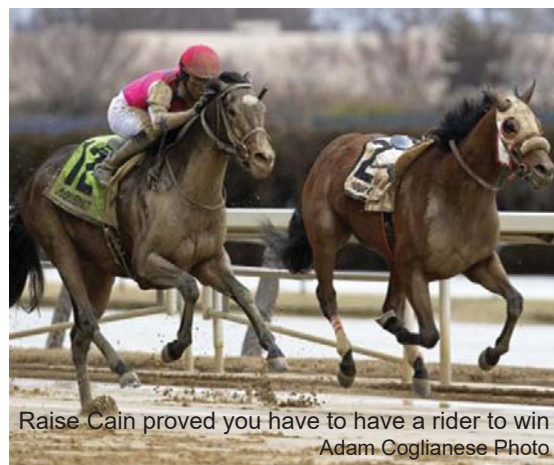
**Turfway Park, March 4, \$150,000 John Battaglia Stakes:**



Congruent

This was the runt of the litter on the first Saturday in March, run at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> on synthetic, only 20 points to the winner and the purse was a diminished \$150,000. In this race, the early speed collapsed and allowed runners from the back of the field to rally with authority. It was 16-1 bomb, Congruent, under Sonny Leon to explode from 9<sup>th</sup> halfway through to swallow up the faders and win by several lengths in 1:43.02. Leon is the rider who brought in 80-1 shot, Rich Strike in the 2022 Kentucky Derby. Congruent, trained by Antonio Sano, won for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 9 races and paid \$35. No winner of the John Battaglia Stakes has ever gone on to win the Kentucky Derby.

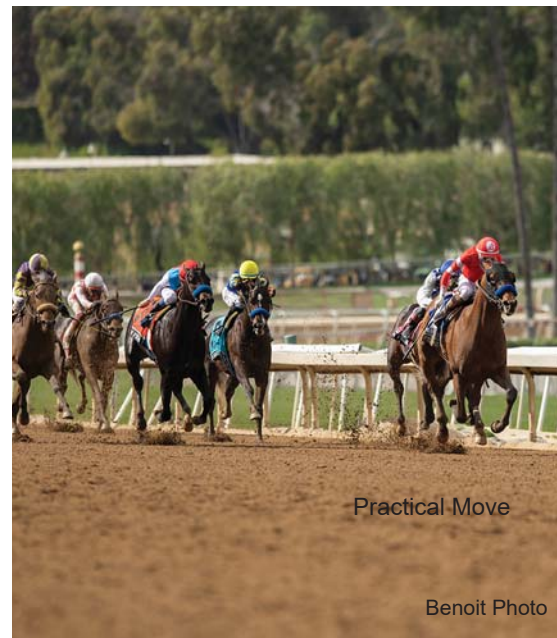
**Aqueduct, March 4, \$300,000 Gotham Stakes:**



Raise Cain proved you have to have a rider to win  
Adam Coglianese Photo

A field of 14 contested this one at a mile. Out of the gate, Howgreatisnate tossed his jockey and preferred to run the rest of the race unaccompanied. It was Raise Cain and jockey Jose Lezcano, avoiding the rider-less horse and rallying from 11<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch to produce a crushing victory by a resounding 7 1/2 lengths in 1:38.09. Trained by Ben Colebrook and owned by Rania and Andrew Warren, Raise Cain won for 2<sup>n</sup> time in 6 races and paid \$49.

**Sant Anita, March 4, \$402,000 San Felipe Stakes:**



Practical Move

Benoit Photo

Trainer Tim Yakteen sent out 4 of the 9 runners in this mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> prep that also offered 50 Derby points and he cashed several cheques. Yakteen got the big payoff when his Practical Move carried Ramon Vasquez to the win by 2 1/2 lengths in 1:42.01. Horses prepped by Yakteen also finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Practical Move has won half his 6 races for the owners Pierre Jean and Leslie Amestoy and Roger Beasley. The win ticket as worth \$10.40.

**Tampa Bay Downs, March 11, \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby:**



Tapit Trice

This one had a definite "Zenyatta" feel to it. Tapit Trice, ridden by Luis Saez went off as the 1-2 betting choice in the field of 12 going a mile and 16<sup>th</sup>. But Tapit Trice walked out of the gate and was last by several lengths before the first horses even passed the finish line for the first time. This was no problem. Saez was patient, allowed his horse to find his best stride and with a 5-wide move around the far turn, the pair started to pass rivals. Even so, Tapit Trice was still 8<sup>th</sup> coming for home, but that's where it got impressive. He simply gobbled up horses in front of him with a ferocious kick in the final 8<sup>th</sup> and won going away by 2 lengths in 1:43.37. This was Tapit Trice's 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 4 races. He is trained by Todd Pletcher for Whisper Hill Farm and Gainesway Stable and he paid just \$3 to win.



# He Had to Be Horse of the Year by Jennifer Morrison

Carol and Jaime Robertson's Ontario homebred **Had to Be Ivory** was named the 2022 Quarter Horse of the Year at the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario and Ajax Downs awards banquet at the Ajax Convention Centre on Saturday, February 18. This was the first in-person awards ceremony for the Quarter Horse community since 2019.

A moment of silence was observed before the event in honour of **Norman Picov**, who passed away at the age of 87 earlier in the day. Mr. Picov was responsible for the building of Ajax Downs and furthering the growth of the Ontario Quarter Horse industry, following in the steps of his father, Alex who founded Picov Downs in 1969.

Had to Be Ivory, a son of Ivory James, was winning his second Horse of the Year title, having been voted the 2019 overall champion by the QROOI board of directors. In 2022, the Ontario-bred 7-year-old, owned and bred by Carol and Jaime Robertson of Hillsburgh, ON, won all six of his starts including the Alex Picov Memorial Championship, Picov Maturity, and Ontario Bred Maturity. Trained by Bryn Robertson, the big bay gelding also won the Distance Series which included a track-record setting score at 440 yards of 21.41, earning him a whopping 112 speed index.

The Robertson family dedicated Had to Be Ivory's Horse of the Year title to his dam Had to Be Fandango, who passed away the day before the awards. Had to Be Ivory is expected to race again in 2023.

Divisional awards were presented to horses and horse people that accrued the most QROOI Awards Program points based on top four placings in various levels of races throughout the racing season.

For the fourth consecutive year, **Jason Pascoe** of Pontypool was the High Point Trainer of the Year with an impressive 528 points. Pascoe led all trainers with 44 wins and purse earnings of over \$697,000. Pascoe's main



client, **Milena Kwiecien** of Burlington, was the High Point Owner with 288 points, and led all owners with 17 victories. Kwiecien raced the top 3-year-old filly, **Eye Live for Candy**, co-champion 2-year-old filly **Valiant Chick Insnow**, and Sprint Series winner **Carneros**.

**Tony 'TP' Phillips** won a tight race for leading jockey with 262 points (25 wins), edging **Ramiro Castillo** and **Brian Bell** who tied for runner-up riders with 247 points. It was Phillips' second jockey title.

**Christine Taveras** won her sixth High Point Breeder award in the last nine years with 10 winners and 152 points.

John Wilson and Scott Reid's **Night Leader** was the year's top 3-year-old male, as the Ontario-bred gelding had 35 points from four wins in six races, including the Ontario Sired Derby. A full list of winners is below.

The 2023 Quarter Horse season at Ajax Downs is

scheduled to begin on **Wednesday May 10**. Visit [www.ajaxdowns.com](http://www.ajaxdowns.com) for the complete schedule and all the news. You can also follow Ajax Downs on social media @AjaxDowns on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

## QROOI / AJAX DOWNS AWARDS 2022

- Horse of the Year - Had to Be Ivory
- 2-year-old filly - First Prize Charlotte/Valliant Chick Insnow (tie)
- 2-year-old colt or gelding - Shades of Cold
- 3-year-old colt or gelding - Night Leader
- 3-year-old filly - Eye Live for Candy
- Aged Male - Had to Be Ivory
- Aged Mare - Fly Belle Cartel
- Distance Series Champion - Had to Be Ivory
- Sprint Series Champion - Carneros
- High Point Jockey - Tony Phillips
- High Point Trainer- Jason Pascoe
- High Point Owner -Milena Kwiecien
- High Point Owner/Trainer - Bryn Roberston
- High Point Breeder - Christine Tavares



This was posted  
by Colleen Dalos,  
breeding manager  
at  
Tall Oaks Farm

First foal of 2023!

A new years baby.

Born Jan 1, 2023... that's a first.

beautiful filly by Connect out of our new mare Carrera Cat.







# Mohawk Million Slot owners revealed

On February 27, Woodbine Entertainment announced that the fourth edition of the Mohawk Million will officially be held on Saturday, September 23 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

The Mohawk Million for two-year-old trotters follows a 'buy-in' format. A total of nine slots were available for purchase at the cost of \$100,000 (CAD) each for entry in the \$1 million (CAD) race. The deadline to purchase a slot passed on February 15 with all nine slots sold.

The tenth and final slot will be awarded to the winner of the William Wellwood Memorial on August 26.

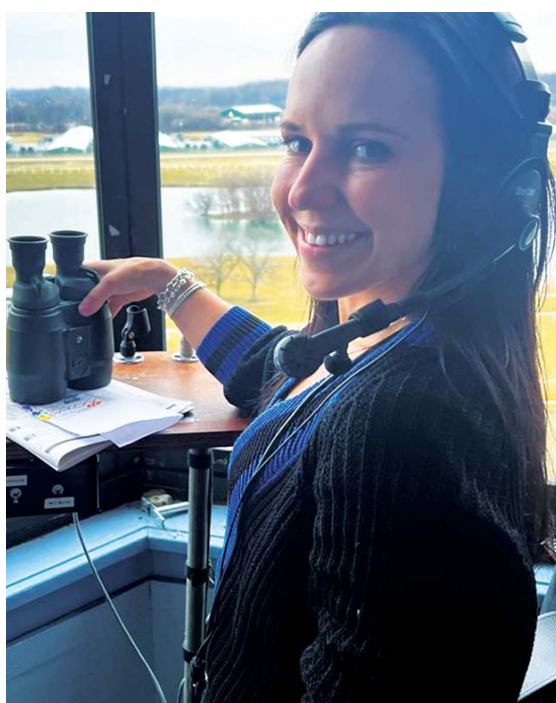
The slot owners for the 2023 Mohawk Million are listed below:

Anthony Lombardi  
Courant Inc.  
Determination (Two Slots)

Ecurie CSL  
Gino Toscani (Two Slots)  
Greg Luther  
Hunterton Farms & Partners

The owners of the slots are not required to declare a two-year-old trotter for the race until entry time and the slot is an entity that may be sold, traded or subject to lease. Each slot owner was required to submit \$50,000 by the February 15 deadline. The remaining \$50,000 is due by June 1.

The Mohawk Million on September 23 is the feature event on one of harness racing's richest cards of the year. More than \$3.3 million in purses will be up for grabs on the 'Million' card with the \$850,000 Metro Pace, \$600,000 Canadian Trotting Classic, \$540,000 Shes A Great Lady and \$375,000 Elegance all slated for September 23.



## Party of One Jessica Paquette – the only female track announcer in the U.S.

were some nerves, so that kind of feedback was entirely valid. But I've also received extremely vulgar, violent, sexist, really horrific messages and e-mails. I do try to keep a sense of humour about it. One gentleman emailed me and said that he goes to the racetrack to get away from his old lady's voice."

There are as many as 350 thoroughbred, standardbred and quarter horse racetracks in North America, but right now, Paquette is the only full-time female race caller. She's not the first woman in the booth, however. Ontario race fans had the benefit of hearing Dawn Lupul who occasionally subbed for Dan Loiselle calling the thoroughbreds. She also did a few cards of harness racing from Mohawk. Melissa Keith has announced cards out east and at The Track On 2 in Alberta. *Down The Stretch* recently did a story on Dani Jackson, an English woman who guest-announced at Turfway Park for a week early in 2022.

Paquette's style is like Lupul's. It's relaxed, contained and confident. Paquette is aware of potential judgement if she dares to go full-frontal Roger Houston.

"It's very much in my mind not to be *hysterical*," she says. "You don't want to be called hysterical or shrill. You try to find your own voice without attracting the negative criticism."

So, which of the present race-callers has influenced her the most?

"Jason Beam at Tampa Bay is one of my best friends both in real life and professionally, and he is a constant source of encouragement," she says. "It's really fun getting to have shop talk with him now that we are both announcers. It's a fun added layer to a really great friendship. I'll call him on my drive home and we will talk a little bit about how our day went calling and it's really fun to have someone to do that with."

If you catch Paquette calling races from Parx, you will hear a woman whose skills are improving. She'd probably not encourage you to go back in the vault to hear her early calls.

"I mean, they weren't great," she admits. "I was slow out of the gate. I'll be the first to admit there were some stumbles. For me, the memorization was really hard to start. I kind of treated that like a muscle. I'm an athlete and I just kept telling myself, like any muscle, 'the more you use it the stronger it's going to get and the quicker the reflexes will kick in.'"

That reference to being an athlete is intriguing. We don't have to worry about her losing energy in the booth.

"I run marathons and I show horses," she says. "I am actually running the Boston Marathon this spring. It'll be my second full marathon. I ran Chicago this October one year to the day since I broke my back."

Paquette adds that a fall from a horse in October 2021 left her with a broken back that fortunately has healed and left her with no permanent damage.

And though we have emphasized her rookie-esque status as a race caller, Jessica Paquette certainly has a fully stocked background in horse racing.

"I was a broadcast analyst and paddock handicapper starting at Suffolk Downs," she says. "I was the intern that never left. I was the senior vice-president of marketing there until racing stopped in 2019. I have been at Colonial Downs for the past couple of summers as their paddock handicapper, and also at Sam Houston, and I have worked with the Retirement Foundation in marketing and communications. Every real job I have ever had has been in racing. It's the only thing I really care about."

Last November, Parx Racetrack near Philadelphia named Jessica Paquette their full-time race caller. This was necessitated when the previous announcer, Chris Griffin accepted the job at Monmouth Park. It was a brave call for Parx as Paquette's previous experience in the genre was not expansive.

"I called my first race in 2014 at Suffolk Downs, which was a one off," says Paquette, who is 38. "Our track announcer got stuck in traffic while there was a tornado, so I just filled in. It was a great thrill with no prep and that was a great memory at my favourite place in the world. Then a few years ago, I got the opportunity to be a fill-in announcer at Sam Houston in Texas calling quarter horses for a weekend, and it was really fun, so the following year I did it again. After the third day I kind of went, 'Wow I'd really like to give this a shot.' So then when Chris was moving on from Parx and they asked if I'd be interested in talking about it, I said, 'Why not?' It was a tremendous opportunity and they took a real big swing with someone who had so little experience."

Sadly, it's not surprising that Paquette has had to deal with unpleasant blowback from individuals not happy to hear a woman's voice call their horses.

"I've received some really valid criticisms because I know it was rough when I first started," she says. "There



# History for Kathleen O'Connell



Tampa Bay Downs Photo

The 5<sup>th</sup> race at Tampa Bay Downs on March 12 was an ordinary 6-furlong sprint for ten 3-year-old maidens, all of whom could be claimed for \$16,000, but the result turned out to be pretty significant. When Antonio Gallardo delivered My Eagle Soars to a ½ length win, it gave trainer Kathleen O'Connell her 2,386<sup>th</sup> training win, allowing her to vault ahead of Kim Hammond, who stills trains, but does not have a winner from the 16 runners she has sent out this year.

O'Connell's training career goes back to the

early 80s. She grew up in Detroit and absorbed the game from trainers like Jack Van Berg and Bill Mott. O'Connell has a career strike rate of just over 14%, and her horses hit the board at 39%. Since 2009, horses trained by Kathleen O'Connell have earned more than \$1,500,000 per year.

My Eagle Soars is owned by O'Connell and P and G Zambelli, and anyone betting that she'd make history in this race cashed \$14.40 on the win end.

# Kimura's Brilliant Ride

Woodbine champion jockey Kazushi Kimura scratched one off his bucket list when he delivered

Kilroe Mile on March 5 at Santa Anita. A field of 8 older horses were required to run a mile on the grass, and Kimura

Gold Phoenix stuck to the hedge from the outset until the field turned for home, at which point he was 5<sup>th</sup> with a wall of opponents ahead of him. Kimura was looking for room and took his horse 4-wide in the stretch, got into the clear and repelled the late-charging Du Jour (Lanfranco Dettori) by a long neck at the wire. The mile was completed in 1:34.45. This was Kimura's first Grade 1 win in the United States. He had previously won the Grade 1 Summer Stakes with Gretzky the Great, and the Grade 1 E.P. Taylor Stakes with Rougir. Both races were at Woodbine.

Gold Phoenix is trained by Philip D'Amato and owned by Marsha Naily and Little Red Feather Racing and Sterling Stables. This was Kimura's 9<sup>th</sup> win at Santa Anita from 73 rides, and that had him in 8<sup>th</sup> place in the Santa Anita jockeys standings. Gold Phoenix paid \$23.60.



Benoit Photo

longshot Gold Phoenix in the \$501,500 Grade 1 Frank E.



A Grade 1 win for Kimura

gave Gold Phoenix an efficient and perfectly timed ride.

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# PERFECT TIMBER

PERFECT SOUL (IRE) – TIMBER ICE, BY WOODMAN



# TOP 5

Canadian First Crop Sire 2021  
Canadian Second Crop Sire 2022

First-crop winners include 2022 SW **TALK TO YA LATER**,  
3 ½-length winner of Woodbine's \$100,000 Algoma S.

Second-crop winners include 2022 stakes filly **Fortyfiveventy**,  
a game third in Woodbine's \$250,000 Princess Elizabeth S.

Third crop includes a **\$55,000 colt** at Fasig-Tipton's 2022  
October Yearling Sale.

[ Stud Fee - Private | Property of Charles Fipke ]

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WWW.COLEBROOKFARMS.COM

Photo by Dave Landry





# Canadians Out of Town

February 8, Gulfstream:



January 18, Gulfstream:

Emma-Jayne Wilson had a very live one in the 2<sup>nd</sup> – a 5 ½ furlong dash for \$12,500 claimers. Aboard the 3-year-old filly, Too Much Vino, Wilson’s prospect didn’t look too promising early, as she was 5<sup>th</sup> several lengths from the leader. But approaching the far turn, Too Much Vino hit a powerful stride and was passing rivals easily. The filly had the lead as the field turned for home and expanded the advantage every step to the wire, winning by over 7 lengths in 1:06.15. Too Much Vino is trained by Bill Tharrens and owned by James William Fleming. This is the first win in 2023 for Wilson with just her 8<sup>th</sup> riding assignment at Gulfstream. A bet on Too Much Vino might not even buy a glass of wine – she paid \$4.20 to win.

January 21, Gulfstream:



The Sunshine Turf Stakes offered \$75,000 to a field of 6 older Florida-breds. Woodbine trainer Katarina Vassilieva sent out Roaring Forties under jockey Shaun Bridgmohan, and Bridgmohan rode Roaring Forties as if he believed he was on the best horse. It turns out he was – Roaring Forties led at every call of this grassy mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> and prevailed by half a length. Owned by Borders Racing Stable, Roaring Forties gave Vassilieva her first win of 2023 and paid \$17 to win.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> race was at 5 furlongs with a field of 7. Chantal Sutherland didn't waste time thinking about what to do with the 3-year-old No Deliberation. She took him right to the front and stayed there, winning by half a length in :56.61. No Deliberation is trained by Jorge Delgado and paid \$7.40.

February 9, Gulfstream:



In the 3<sup>rd</sup> race, Sutherland found herself far behind down the backstretch of this 5 ½ furlong dash. She was on a 9-1 shot named Forty Flash. But around the far turn, Forty Flash found his best stride and began passing horses. In the stretch, all the leaders collapsed, and Forty Flash surged past to win by 1 ¼ lengths in 1:03.77. The 5-year-old Forty Flash won for just the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 26 tries and paid \$21.60.

February 10, Gulfstream:



Race 8 had a field of 10 going a mile on the grass in this allowance race with a purse of \$88,000. Javier Castellano gave Souper Dormy a perfectly timed trip, rallying from 6<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch to win by a half length in 1:34.71. Souper Dormy gave trainer Marty Drexler his first win of 2023. The 6-year-old gelding won for the 5<sup>th</sup> time in 20 races for owner Bruno Schickedanz, and that generated a \$21 win ticket.

February 11, Gulfstream:

Emma-Jayne Wilson made it 4 days straight of Canadians winning in Florida. She was aboard the first-timer, Gold Magic for trainer Kevin Attard in the 3<sup>rd</sup> race, a 6-furlong test for maidens with an attractive purse of \$84,000. Wilson stalked the pace from 3<sup>rd</sup> down the backstretch, surged to the front as the field turned for home, and Gold Magic was sharp to the wire, winning by 2 ¾ lengths in 1:10.35. Owned by Attard’s most supportive backers, Al and Bill Ulwelling, Gold Magic returned \$20.60.

February 15, Gulfstream:



Seven fillies and mares, all claimable for \$6,250, took part in this 6-furlong dash. Chantal Sutherland rode Sophie’s Storm, the 9-5 favourite, as if she knew she was much the best, and she was. Sutherland had the 4-year-old filly on top at the quarter and the lead was never relinquished. Sophie’s Storm won by 3 lengths in 1:11.86. The trainer is Reynaldo Yanez for Just For Fun Stable and by winning first time out, Sophie’s Storm paid \$5.80.



That same day, race 8 offered \$84,000 to a field of 9 fillies and mares in a 5-furlong optional claiming turf race. Frozen Solid, under Kevin Krigger stalked to the head of the stretch, came wide to overhaul the leaders, and won by 1 ¼ lengths in :56.24. Frozen Solid is owned by Jim and Susan Hill and trained by Brian Lynch. With his 2<sup>nd</sup> straight win, Frozen Solid returned \$11.60.

February 16, Gulfstream:





Canadians continued to extract American dollars from the Hallandale track. The 8<sup>th</sup> race asked the field to go a mile on the grass. All runners had a \$20,000 tag. The lukewarm favourite at 7-2 was Perhaps Tonight, but there was nothing lukewarm about his performance as Edward Zayas ripped the 5-year-old mare from 9<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch to a resounding win by almost 3 lengths in 1:35.79. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> win in 16 races for Perhaps Tonight who is owned and trained by Marty Drexler. The win ticket was worth \$9.

**February 17, Gulfstream:**

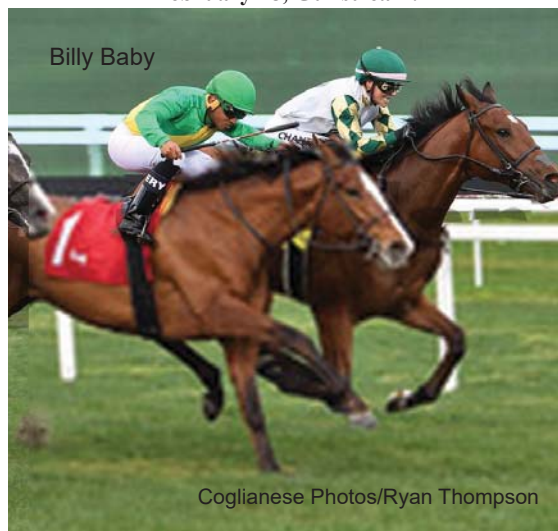


Selfmade was another winner for Marty Drexler

Adam Coglianese Photo

Marty Drexler made it 2 wins in 2 days when he sent out Selfmade to take down the 8<sup>th</sup> race, a mile on the turf that had 9 contestants, each eligible for a \$16,000 claim tag. Selfmade got a perfect ride from Irad Ortiz, as the pair rallied from mid-pack down the backstretch to hit the wire just in time, a head the best in 1:35.01. Selfmade is a 6-year-old gelding who notched his 7<sup>th</sup> win in 30 tries. Drexler trains and owns, and a \$2 win ticket was worth \$5.50.

**February 18, Gulfstream:**



Billy Baby

Coglianese Photos/Ryan Thompson

Chantal Sutherland gave a textbook ride on the 3-year-old Baby Billy in the 9<sup>th</sup> race, which was a mile and an 8<sup>th</sup> on the grass. A patient Sutherland kept Baby Billy along the inside and scooted up the rail in the stretch to find the wire first by a head in the good time of 1:47.53. Baby Billy is trained by Jack Sистерson and with his first win in 5 tries, he paid \$21.

**February 23, Penn National:**

Steven Chircop continues to win races at Penn National. The 6<sup>th</sup> race was for maiden \$10,000 claimers with a purse of \$13,600. Chircop's Hushemup, a 5-year-old mare was 4-5, and under leading jockey Julio Hernandez, she romped by 3 widening lengths at the end of a mile and 70 yards. Hushemup, owned by Chircop and his partner, Eric Ross didn't look like a horse that had lost its first 13 races and she didn't pay off like a horse just 1 for 14. The win ticket was \$3.60. That was Chircop's 11<sup>th</sup> training win from just 36 starters.

**February 24, Gulfstream:**



Mehlek

Adam Coglianese Photo

The 9<sup>th</sup> race was at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>, and it attracted a compact field of 6 horses, all eligible to be claimed for \$12,500. Trainer Bill Tharrenos sent out the 3-year-old colt, Mehlek under jockey Irad Ortiz, who had already had a great day at the Hallandale track. Ortiz rallied Mehlek from last down the backstretch, roared through the lane and won by 2 expanding lengths. This was Mehlek's 2<sup>nd</sup> win in 5 races for his owners Bull and Bear Stable. For Ortiz, it was his 5<sup>th</sup> win on the card. Mehlek paid \$5.60, giving Tharrenos his 6<sup>th</sup> win at Gulfstream from 20 starters.

# Steven Chircop's Great Streak



Simple Souvenir won at Penn For Chircop

Steven Chircop, 38, would be the first to tell you how hard it is to win races and be financially flush at Woodbine. He is coming off a good 2022, in which he fell less than \$5,000 short of a million dollars in purses, and his 29 win tally was a career best. Those 29 winner's circle pictures came from 229 starts, a strike rate of 13%. That's pretty good, but in January at Penn National, a track about 160 kilometers northwest of Philadelphia, Chircop was crushing it, winning 6 times from the first 16 horses he sent out.

The streak started on January 11<sup>th</sup>. In the first race, Julio Hernandez romped by almost 7 lengths with the 6-year-old mare, Simple Souvenir. Two races later, Hernandez delivered the 4-year-old colt, Factotum in a \$10,000 claim race at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>. The next night, it was Hernandez again with High Heat, winning at 6 furlongs over 7 other \$10,000 claimers. Then on January 25, it was an all-Chircop daily double as Simple Souvenir carried Tyler Conner to victory at odds of 5.8-1 in race 1, and Hernandez rode Romantic Gamble to a first-place finish in the next race at 3-5. Chircop owns or co-owns all those horses except for High Heat who races for his uncle, Joseph Chircop.

Chircop brought 20 horses down to Penn but admits he has had a very long learning curve.

"I came here my first year training, because I saw that a lot of

More on Steven Chircop - he is our Thoroughbred owner of the Month - page 19

Woodbine horses came down here and did well," he says. "I didn't know anybody or even where it was. All I had was a GPS and that I needed to make money. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to continue as a trainer. I started making connections and meeting people. My horses didn't do any good, but while I was here, I was paying attention to what kind of horses you needed at this track. After doing that for so long, it became a second home with a lot of friends, and I knew what kind of horses to go after and that worked out over a few years."

As for the terrific start in 2022 at the track located about 100 kilometers northwest of Philadelphia:

"We've been running horses aggressively and running them in the right spot. The leading rider, Julio Hernandez is a personal friend of mine, so we have the right horse in the right spot with the right jockey - it's a good combination."

And the great start in January carried over to February. On February 2, Ground Hog Day, 6 \$10,000 claimers saw the shadow of All Time Classic who broke his maiden on the 10<sup>th</sup> try. Robert Marzilli is the owner, and All Time Classic, under Hernandez, produced a \$3.60 win ticket. The next day, Chircop sent out the 3-year-old Ontario-bred filly, Celtic Revival, and with Hernandez again riding brilliantly, Celtic Revival snapped her maiden on try 11, winning by 4 lengths in the slumberous time of 1:28.43. Celtic Revival paid \$21.60 and gave Chircop his 8<sup>th</sup> training win out of 22 starters.





**March 8, Gulfstream:**



The first race had a field of 9 asked to go 5 furlongs on the turf, each with a claim tag of \$35,000. Irad Ortiz was aboard Silent Flash, a 9-year-old gelding. The pair were galloping easily in 4<sup>th</sup> early, then made a 3-wide move into the stretch and powered home to win by half a length in :55.18. Silent Flash, trained by Marty Drexler for Bruno Schickedanz won for the 6<sup>th</sup> time in his 38<sup>th</sup> start and he paid \$10.80.

**March 9, Gulfstream:**



Drexler and Schickedanz made it 2 wins in 2 days. They sent out Alley Oop Johnny in the 5<sup>th</sup>, a one-mile grass race with 10 runners. Under jockey Javier Castellano, Alley Oop Johnny tracked the leader from 2<sup>nd</sup>, came out in mid-stretch to assume the lead and found the wire 1 ½ lengths the best in the very good time of 1:40.32. Alley Oop Johnny is a 6-year-old gelding who won for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in his 28<sup>th</sup> race and he paid \$7.80.

**March 10, Gulfstream:**



Emma-Jayne Wilson can check off another item on her bucket list – she outrode Irad Ortiz. The 1<sup>st</sup> race had a field of 11 \$25,000 claimers going 7 ½ on the turf. Wilson had Calling All Angels near the front from the beginning and in the stretch, she came a little wide to haul down Ortiz aboard the 8-5 favourite, Run for Cover. Calling All Angels, a 3-year-old filly won by 1 ¼ in 1:29.22. Mark Casse trained both the winner and the runner-up. Calling All Angels won for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 7 tries and paid \$7.60.

**March 12, Gulfstream:**



The 6<sup>th</sup> race was at a mile and a 16<sup>th</sup> on Gulfstream's synthetic track. Seven older horses were competing for a purse of \$54,000. Emma-Jayne Wilson was aboard Souper Cohiba, who did not get much affection from the bettors, going off at over 6-1. That led to a lot of wagering regret as Wilson rallied Souper Cohiba from 6<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch, overpowering rivals in the lane and winning easily by 3 ½ lengths in the good time of 1:42.33. Woodbine trainer Katerina Vassilieva sent this one out for Karen Lee McLeavee. Souper Cohiba is a 6-year-old gelding who notched his 6<sup>th</sup> win in his 26<sup>th</sup> race. He paid \$15, which could buy you a very nice cigar.

**March 15, Gulfstream:**



The 3<sup>rd</sup> race was 5 furlongs for \$16,000 claimers. Junior Alvarado rallied Housebuilder from 5<sup>th</sup> down the backstretch to win by 1 ½ lengths in :57.71. The winning trainer was Bill Tharrenos, who shares the horse with Frank Russo. Housebuilder paid \$8.60.

The next race had a field of 4 going 7 panels. Emma-Jayne Wilson was aboard Morstachy's, who went off at 45-1. Not realizing he had no chance, Morstachy's came from last at the half and almost overhauled the 2-5 favourite, losing by a neck. Morstachy's paid \$19.60 to place.

In the 6<sup>th</sup>, Wilson rode an 8-1 shot, Fedalia in this 5 ½

sprint. Fedalia exploded from last down the backstretch and was flying through the stretch, with sufficient momentum to win, but the leader, Dreaming of Audrey drifted badly into her path. The stewards saw that and disqualified Dreaming of Audrey, Placing Fedalia first. The 5-year-old mare paid \$18.50.

The 7<sup>th</sup> race had 8 contestants trying a mile and 70. Martin Drexler sent out Carrothers for Mad Dog Racing Stable and with Edgar Perez calling the 4 shots, Carrothers got there just in time, winning by a neck in 1:39.19. Carrothers returned \$.6.20.

**March 16, Gulfstream:**



There were two wins in two days for Emma-Jayne Wilson. In the 3<sup>rd</sup>, she rode Murder Hornet in a 5 ½ furlong dash. This was another masterpiece from Wilson as Murder Hornet started last of 11 but gathered steam coming into the stretch and passed all her rivals to win by neck in 1:05.11. Murder Hornet is a 4-year-old Ontario-bred filly trained by Mike Dunslow for Bruno Schickedanz and at 16-1, she paid \$34 to win.





Steven Chircop is an owner/trainer who absorbed his lumps early in his career. If the learning curve dealt him bumps and bruises along the way, he certainly has figured out how to apply the painful lessons in a positive fashion. Now in his 15<sup>th</sup> year as a trainer, Chircop got off to a sensational start at Penn National Racetrack this year. Penn National is in Grantville PA, about 160 kilometres northwest of Philadelphia. Chircop hit with 5 of the first 12 horses he sent out and by the end of February he was the leading trainer at the track with 10 wins from 31 starts.

"I came here my first year of training because I had seen that a lot of Woodbine horses would come down here and do well," says Chircop. "At that point in time I didn't know anybody or even where it was. All I knew was that I had a GPS and that I needed to make money because otherwise I wouldn't be able to continue training. After coming here, I started making connections and meeting people. For awhile, my horses didn't do any good, but while I was here, I was starting to pay attention to what kind of horses you need to compete at this track. So, after doing that for so long, it became like a second home with a lot of friends, and I knew which kind of horses to go after and that's starting to work out."

Chircop's assault on the Penn National purses began on January 11. The first horse he sent out in 2023 was Simple Souvenir, a 5-year-old Ontario-bred mare. It was the first race – a sprint of 6 furlongs. The jockey was Julio Hernandez, and Simple Souvenir stalked for the early part of this dash, took the lead as the field turned for home, and just kept widening to the wire, winning by almost 7 lengths in 1:12.12. That was Simple Souvenir's 4<sup>th</sup> win in her 27<sup>th</sup> try, and successful bettors had the choice of taking their ticket home as a simple souvenir or cashing in for \$7.

In the very next race, Chircop's 4-year-old colt, Factotum, also an Ontario-bred, led for most of the mile and a 16<sup>th</sup>. The jockey, again, was Hernandez, and Factotum crushed by 8 lengths for his 2<sup>nd</sup> win in his 11<sup>th</sup> race. He paid \$4.60 and Steven Chircop was the winning trainer/owner of the first 2 horses he entered at Penn.

Win 3 didn't take long. The next day, race 2 went at 6 furlongs and was contested by eight \$10,000 claimers. High Heat, under Hernandez, refused to lose, hanging on by a head in 1:11.23. This 5-year-old horse would be claimed in his next race, but was owned by Chircop's uncle, Joseph Chircop for this one and, improving to 4 for 19, he paid \$4.40.

That made it 3 wins from 6 entries for Chircop. Obviously, his strategies were playing out nicely.

"We've been running horses aggressively and running



them in the right spot," he says. "As well, Hernandez, the leading rider is a personal friend of mine so that always helps too. When you've got the right horse in the right spot with the right jockey, that's a good combination."

The amount won by Chircop's first 3 winners totals just under \$25,000. That's nice coin in hand, but certainly much less than 3 winners in 2 days would render at Woodbine.

"I think sometimes we get spoiled at Woodbine," says Chircop. "The money is big, but the competition is very tough. A trainer like me is not hitting the same percentage there that I can do at Penn. With the wins and the conversion of 30%, it definitely adds up."

Typically, Chircop's love of the game was inherited.

"My dad, Godfrey and my uncle Joseph had horses when I was a kid. Tino Attard is my uncle and Kevin Attard is my cousin. Kevin's mother is my father's sister. I was around horses a lot during summers and March breaks. I used to live with Tino, and me and Kevin, we're very close. When Kevin went out on his own, I used to work for him when I was his only employee."

Chircop's relationship with his uncle Joseph is obviously important. Chircop paid tribute to his uncle by naming a horse after him.

"It was probably one of the best horses I have ever had," he says. "Uncle Joe we named after him. When Chircop is told that his interviewer once had a lovely uncle named Joe, he responds.

"Everybody can relate to an Uncle Joe."

Uncle Joe, the horse, is now a 4-year-old. He is owned by Steven, Godfrey and Joseph Chircop and he did some terrific things in 2022. Of his 8 starts, he won in Maiden Special Weight, was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Lake Huron Stakes, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Lake Erie Stakes and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Lake Superior Stakes. Uncle Joe is clearly a freshwater athlete, who has earned \$145,234.

When asked to recall some of his early thrills in the game, Chircop cites one of the horses that his uncle Tino Attard trains.

"I once went to Saratoga to watch Milwaukee Brew run," he recalls fondly. "That was fantastic."

That event would have been the 2000 Travers Stakes and

Milwaukee Brew was in about as deep as a horse can be. The race was won by Unshaded, and Milwaukee Brew, under Jerry Bailey was 7<sup>th</sup> about a dozen lengths from the winners.

Over the years, Chircop's training and owning strategies have slowly morphed.

"At the beginning, I was strictly just claiming," he says. "I liked the mid-range and I wanted to own my horses, or own parts of them, so that restricted me to claiming horses that I can afford between the 10 and 20 range and I found a lot of success with those horses. However, after I was in the business for a while and starting to pick up clients, I started training babies and breeding. I've developed some decent younger horses. Last year, my two highest earners were Uncle Joe and Lady Brew, both 3-year-olds at the time."

Chircop was hitting it out of the park in the claim races early this year at Penn, but like any veteran horseman in Canada, he has his eyes on bigger prizes.

"Everybody wants to win the Queen's Plate," says the cousin of a Queen's Plate winning trainer. "Woodbine is a great place and I have participated in some big races. I had a horse named Kara's Orientation run in the International Horse and the Woodbine Mile, and a couple of horses in the Breeders' Stakes. We never got close to winning, but the excitement was definitely for real."

Despite an 11<sup>th</sup> place finish under Emile Ramsammy in the 2011 Woodbine Mile, Kara's Orientation was hardly disgraced. The race was won by Turallure, and the first 6 horses were barely 2 lengths apart. Kara's Orientation was about 7 lengths from the winner.

Kara's Orientation finished his career in September 2012 with a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in the \$250,000 Presidents Cup Stakes at Parx. He ended up with 6 wins from 30 races with earnings of \$453,795.

As for the elements that make Chircop wake up every day immersed in a great sport –

"I love the racing aspect more than the training part," he admits. "I love the competition. One of my favourite things is when I claim a horse and I can see the horse changing. How do you explain the rush when you win a race? It's a great feeling. I swear the next day you wake up so much easier."





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Could 2023 have started any more brilliantly for Brett MacDonald? On January 21, the 26-year-old steered the 4-year-old pacing mare, Got Charlie to a 3-1 victory in the first race at Flamboro Downs and with that, MacDonald surged past the \$10 million mark in purse earnings. That's a remarkable figure, considering he does most of his harness driving at "B" tracks like Flamboro and Western Fair. Then on January 27, in a snowstorm at the London, Ontario track, MacDonald won the 5<sup>th</sup> race with R J Hooker. That was his 1,500<sup>th</sup> winning drive.

Those two milestones notwithstanding, the most significant moments of the new year came courtesy of the pacer, Saulsbrook Victor, who is co-owned by MacDonald and Brent MacLennan. The 5-year-old had won his last 2 starts in 2022, including a 1:49.2 mile in allowance company followed by a win in the \$34,000 Preferred category at Mohawk. Saulsbrook Victor proceeded to win his first 3 races of 2023, all at the highest Preferred level. His 5-race win streak ended when he was nailed by a nose on January 28. Through his last 6 races, spanning 42 days, Saulsbrook Victor earned just over \$90,000. That's a nice return for a horse that was purchased less than 2 years ago for \$11,250.

"We bought him late in his 3-year-old year. He was making breaks," says MacDonald. "We had a couple other ones in the family. We had two sisters and a brother out of the same mare, Atlanta Girl, so we thought we would take a shot on him."

Dad Ron, though not easily, was able to solve the problem of Saulsbrook Victor deviating from the pace.

"He cross-fired really bad when we got him," explains MacDonald. "He used to hit his quarters with his hind feet. It took a long time. You figure something out, then something else would turn up. It took a long time to get him to relax and that's what turned him into being a good horse. He's so relaxed now. You can do what you want with him. He will sit when you don't want him to go, so it's easy to get breathers. He can leave. He can come off the pace. He got brave and he got to where he was sound, and he's on top of his game right now."

On December 19, with the temperature at Mohawk reading -3°C, Saulsbrook Victor came first up for Austin Sorrie and won by 1 ½ lengths in 1:49.2, a remarkable time for such a chilly night.

"What I saw was a horse making 3 moves," says MacDonald. "John Campbell always said, 'Good horses have two moves, great horses have three.' Saulsbrook



showed he could go fast and get used a couple times too. He left hard, then moved, then he got home really well. It shows where he was versatile enough that you could do whatever you want with him."

Typically, as the child of a horseman, MacDonald got into harness racing at an early age.

"The first horse I ever owned was a Rustler Handover horse that my dad bought cheap," he says. "I was probably 12 or 13 years old. His name was Yankee Apollo. He was a nice horse. Dad bought him off of Rob McKenzie and he raced for a long time."

Standardbred Canada indicates that 25 of Yankee Apollo's 256 starts were with Ron MacDonald training, of which he won 3 times and hit the board 6 other times.

One family horse that MacDonald knows really well is What A Rush, now a 12-year-old trotter, who has gone to work 241 times producing 34 wins. MacDonald drove that one 114 times.

"I got my first win on What A Rush," he recalls. "He raced at Mohawk through the classes. When I was a small kid, my dad had Ready Cash that raced in the Preferred, but never won. I think Ready Cash finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to Admiral's Express one night. That's the closest Dad ever got to winning a Preferred at Mohawk."

The MacDonalds have had a small taste of Stakes victory.

"We had a horse named Dancing Queen that won a Grass Roots at Clinton," says MacDonald.

It was a \$22,000 event on July 5, 2020. MacDonald was driving and Dancing Queen went off at 9.50-1. MacDonald took advantage of post 1 and ripped Dancing Queen to the front where she stayed through benevolent fractions of :30, 1:01 and 1:31.3. A final quarter trotted in :29.3 discouraged all rivals, as Dancing Queen prevailed

by 3 lengths.

Considering his significant experience as a driver, one might expect that MacDonald would prefer to drive Saulsbrook Victor at Mohawk, but it turns out that's not the case. Austin Sorrie, who has won about 800 fewer races in the bike than MacDonald, handles the pacer on the big track at Mohawk.

"Austin Sorrie is my best friend," explains MacDonald. "I have a lot of commitments to Flamboro and London, so when I couldn't go, he drove him and that worked out good, so I just keep doing what I'm doing on the 'B' tracks and he keeps driving Saulsbrook."

It can take guts to deny yourself a chance at glory when you know someone else can deliver a better result, but clearly MacDonald is able to check his ego at the door. He understands a horse like Saulsbrook Victor doesn't come along every day.

"We never dreamed that he was going to be the horse he's turned into," says MacDonald. "If he had been a 55 horse on the 'B' tracks, we would have been just as happy with that. But he's turned into something special."

Saulsbrook Victor is not staked to any major races in 2023. MacDonald and partner, Brent MacLennan are happy keeping the pacer in his comfort level.

"We're just kind of riding high right now," says MacDonald. "If he raced at this level all winter and had a month off in the summertime, that wouldn't bother me. You never know when something like this could end."

MacDonald uses Saulsbrook Victor as an example of the random nature of harness racing.

"It's a thrill," he says. "You never know what can happen. The game is always changing. You never know what some horses can do or what they're capable of until they do it."



# Tedson Holder's one degree of separation: It's a Gamble Wins the Sandy Lane Barbados Gold Cup



Tedson Holder



Jockey Jalon Samuel celebrates his 6th Gold Cup

Although he was not officially listed as the trainer, Woodbine's Tedson Holder's satisfied strut was justified after the 5-year-old It's a Gamble won the 40<sup>th</sup> running of the Sandy Lane Barbados Gold Cup run at the Garrison Savannah Course. The purse was \$216,000 Barbadian dollars (\$140,000 Canadian).

It's a Gamble was ridden by Jalon Samuel who allowed his horse to lay off the pace early in the race at 1,800 meters. With about 3 furlongs to go, Samuel asked It's a Gamble to challenge for the lead, and late in the stretch, the horse surged to the front, winning by about ¾ of a length in 1:50. The second-place horse, Tallahatchiebridge was ridden by Patrick Husbands.

It's a Gamble took an interesting route to the big race in Barbados. His first 21 races were spread over Gulfstream, Aqueduct, Belmont, Saratoga, Monmouth, and Laurel. On January 18, he finished 4<sup>th</sup> in a mile turf race at Gulfstream and was claimed for \$35,000 from that contest by trainer Saffie Joseph. Joseph was acting on behalf of Mark Goodridge. Goodridge's trainer in Barbados is Rommell Lovell, but he asked Holder to prepare the horse in Florida for the Sandy Lane. Holder was given 42 days to get It's

a Gamble ready.

"Mr. Goodridge has asked me to quarantine horses for him in the past," says Holder. "When he asked me to work with the horse and get it in shape for the Sandy Lane, being Barbadian, I thought I should prepare the horse as if it was one of my own."

At first, Holder was not convinced that It's a Gamble had the mindset for such an important race. In all of his races, It's a Gamble was running counterclockwise. In Barbados, the horses go clockwise.

"For the first week, he was refusing to go clockwise," says Holder. "He was sticking his toes in. I started tweaking the equipment."

The solution was a cross-check snaffle. Apparently, that got the horse's mind back in training mode.

"That was the key," says Holder. "After day 9, he started buying in to what I was trying to do. By the 12<sup>th</sup> day, I saw the lightbulb go off. By the end of the second week, I was so excited that I called up my son and told him I was booking him a ticket to Barbados to join me at the Gold Cup."

Holder and his son were guests in the commentary

booth to watch the race.

"I concentrated on him making the top turn, which we call the paddock bend," he says. "I was adamant that as long as he made that turn without any problems, he'd win. I knew it was over. I held my son's shirt because I wanted him to get out and get downstairs to lead in the horse with me."

The winning jockey, Samuel won the Sandy Lane for a record 6<sup>th</sup> time.

"It means a lot, to extend the lead again, to give them something to catch," said Samuel Holder. He admits that the celebration after the race was "subdued."

I had some close friends there from Canada and from Barbados and we all went out to Jean Mark Cozier's place for dinner afterwards. He's the trainer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishing horse, So Suave, a horse I claimed back in November for Louis Cavalaris, and Cozier bought the horse from him because he figured it would fit the Gold Cup."

The win by It's a Gamble was an unforgettable moment for Holder.

"That was actually my first time being connected to a gold Cup winner," he says.



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# ODDITIES & ENTITIES

Gulfstream race caller Pete Aiello with a message that resonates with all us degenerates



Comedian Phyllis Diller was an avid harness racing fan



Diller was best known for her outrageous stunts as a stand-up, and film and television comedian. Also, while living in California, she was routinely found in the stands at Los Alamitos, Hollywood Park, and Santa Anita during both the harness racing programs and thoroughbred races. In the spring of 1963, Diller returned to the Buckeye State for an appearance on the Mike Douglas Show. That afternoon, Douglas aired his top-rated show from the streets of Cleveland. Police blocked off the streets surrounding the station so that Douglas and Diller could help promote the opening of Northfield Park's summer meet. Diller and Douglas, both wearing racing colours and helmets, took turns driving the 2-year-old pacer, Jeff Armstrong through the Cleveland streets, to great fanfare. Diller passed away on Aug. 20, 2012, but it's a sure bet that Northfield fans will always recall the promotion she provided for that opening night.

by Kim Rinker,  
*Harnesslink Inside*

Bulldog Hanover by Michelle Hogan

**Bulldog Hanover**  
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## Oops!

This was a serious candidate for the worst ruling ever by a group of racetrack stewards. It was the 7<sup>th</sup> race at Sunland Park in New Mexico on March 3. Sunland Park is a quarter horse track, and this race was at 400 yards. The #2 horse, Separate Star, trained by Raul Saucedo and ridden by Omar Iturralde went off at 7-2 and raced bravely, leading for most of the sprint, only to be nailed at the wire by My My My My Corona. The winner was 4-1, so that meant having Separate Star to place and show and in exactors and triactors meant a worthwhile payoff. Except, moments after the horses crossed the wire, the stewards lit up the board with an "inquiry." Anyone with a bet on Separate Star could see from the replays, especially the head-on camera, that their horse had never left his path, had never come close to another horse and completed the race without committing any offence. No other jockey, trainer or owner lodged a claim of foul against Separate Star.

Even so, within minutes, the announcement was made that #2 Separate Star was disqualified and placed 4<sup>th</sup>. Over the next few hours, social media exploded with furious horse racing fans, apoplectic that a horse could be punished when no crime had been committed.

It soon became clear how the judges could make such a glaring mistake. They had called up a replay of the race, but instead of race 7, they got race 6, during which the #2 horse clearly smashed repeatedly into its neighbour, the #3 horse. There had been no change in the official order for that race because the #2 had finished 7<sup>th</sup>. That none of the 3 stewards that afternoon recognized they were watching the wrong replay is beyond puzzling.

The next day, New Mexico Racing Commission Executive Director, Izzy Trejo admitted that the judges screwed up.

"We want to apologize to the people who make the bets on this race," Trejo said.

Trejo said the Sunland stewards, Connie Estes, Gary Terrien and David Lupo, who made the call on the disqualification are hard working and good stewards.

It has been decided that the owners of Separate Star will receive the \$6,845 that belongs to the official 2<sup>nd</sup> place horse, but as far as compensating bettors who should have cashed on the horse, those people are more than likely shit out of luck.



# DOWN THE STRETCH PODCAST

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

### Episode 156, January 16:

In this collectors' edition episode, we present some of the most appealing songs about horse racing, which will include **The Hollies, Carly Simon, The Band, George Jones, Bing Crosby, Chris de Burgh, The Pretenders, Betty Grable and Lisa G Fly**. We have an interview with **Jim Hill**, who, with his wife **Susan**, is a leading Canadian thoroughbred horse owner. Television producer, **Curtis MacDonald** talks about the Sam McKee Award his company won for coverage of the Hambletonian. **Jason Portuondo**, once a broadcaster, now a racing official, takes the **Down The Stretch** judging exam, trainer **Marty Drexler** pulled off a win at Gulfstream, and we have an embarrassing moment for a race-caller at Sunland Park when he proclaimed a winner a little too early.

### Episode 157, January 23:

In this podcast, we feature wins in Florida from jockey **Emma-Jayne Wilson** and trainer **Katerina Vassilieva**. We have the Lecomte Stakes from the Fair Grounds, and we advise that **Instant Coffee** might be nice in the morning, but don't advance bet him for the Kentucky Derby. **Bulldog Hanover** will dominate the February 4 O'Brien Awards and we talk with his owner/trainer **Jack Darling** about the recent announcement that the Bulldog is the next recipient of the Cam Fella Award. Trainer **Julia Ezra** explains who you can get into her **Double Blooded Syndicate** for a small price and big thrills. Owner **Carol Robertson** talks with us about her **Had To Be Ivory**, who has just been named Canadian Quarter Horse of the Year for the 3rd time. And host **Peter Gross** made the mistake of running his life-long betting theories past a very cynical **Garnet Barnsdale**.

### Episode 158, January 30:

This week, we run the upset of the Pegasus Stakes and tell you how the winner has a Woodbine connection. **Bob Baffert** sent out the winner of the Southwest Stakes at Oaklawn. **Patrick Husbands** won the Coolmore Stakes in Barbados and we have the race call. We interview **Emma-Jayne Wilson** who is getting fit and riding a few at Gulfstream and we chat with **Steven Chircop** who is the leading trainer at Penn National. **Brett MacDonald** hit a nice harness driving plateau and tells us how his pacer **Saulsbrook Victor** is exceeding all possible expectations. Woodbine's **Chris Lush** explains why we can't phone in our bets anymore, and Oaklawn's **Vic Stauffer** gets props for his colourful call of the week.

### Episode 159, February 6:

This podcast has all the winners from the O'Brien Awards, also known as **Bulldog Hanover** appreciation night. We've got a couple of Kentucky Derby prep races, dominated by **Bob Baffert** and **Bill Mott**. Woodbine trainer **Steven Chircop** continues to win races at Penn National and Laurel. Trainer **Sara Baillargeon** talks about winning at Mohawk for the first time and driver **Tyler Borth** also delivered his first winner at the Campbellville track. **Irad Ortiz** is the best jockey in North America and he proved it again by winning 7 straight at Gulfstream. And some 39 years after he took the lovely **Janice Groom** to the 1984 Queen's Plate, host **Peter Gross** finds her to see if a subsequent date is a possibility.

### Episode 160, February 13:

This podcast features win at Gulfstream from **Chantal Sutherland, Emma-Jayne Wilson, and Martin Drexler**. We have stretch calls from Kentucky Derby preps at Aqueduct, Tampa Bay and Golden Gate. Harness trainer **Carmen Auciello** talks about the upcoming New Holland pacing and trotting series at Mohawk and what it's like to be the runner-up year after year in the O'Briens to **Richard Moreau**. **Michael David** is the son of long-time local jockey, **Daniel David** and because we saw his Facebook page, we called him to talk about his riding career. **Jessica Paquette** is the only full-time female announcer in the U.S. Her race calls are sharp and her interview in this podcast is fascinating. And how did we edit in **Chuck Berry, Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney** into a story about a pacing mare that won 17 straight?

### Episode 161, February 20:

We've got a nice package of Canadians - **Chantal Sutherland, Marty Drexler, Jim and Susan Hill** - winning at Gulfstream. There was a 13-1 upset in the Risen Star Stakes on the road to the Kentucky Derby. **Jennifer Morrison** files from the Quarter Horse Awards Banquet, which had a sad subtext. Trainer **Willy Armata** assesses the chances of Ironstone for a Sovereign Award in the 3-year-old colt category and Woodbine's **Mark McKelvie** reveals how the Free For Alls at Mohawk will mean bigger purses for harness people. We were fascinated by a Finnish study that determined that men with high IQs are more likely to bet the horses, so intellectual giants like **Jim Bannon, Tommy Massis, Garnet Barnsdale** and **Jim McKenny** submitted their opinions. And a guy had just one job at Rosecroft Raceway - how could he not know there was a race going on?

### Episode 162, February 27:

Another podcast jammed with fascinating, relevant and historic horse racing material - a \$Million Kentucky Derby prep race at Oaklawn and a history making win by trainer **Steve Asmussen** at that same track. This podcast always emphasizes success by Canadians and we have **Bill Tharrenos** sending out a winner at Gulfstream and trainer **Steven Chircop** continuing to score at Parx. **Natasha Day** was mic-ed up at Flamboro and thanks to **COSA's Wired 360**, we play her descriptive audio as she does play-by-play of her pacer. Also in this podcast, racing commentator **Jeff Bratt** tells us how excited he is to be hosting the upcoming Sovereign awards, and long-time broadcaster **Chad Rozema** explains his move from the studio to the job of running the show at Grand River Raceway. And just to drop your jaws, a night at Flamboro when the first 5 winners all came from the same post, and a 6-year-old pacing mare who didn't let a 78-race losing streak discourage her.

### Episode 163, Mar 6:

With the Kentucky Derby just 2 months away, we run Derby preps from Gulfstream, Aqueduct, Santa Anita and Turfway Park. We have another winner at Penn National for **Steve Chircop** who tells us why his lead in the trainers' race is probably temporary. **Roger Atfield** chatted with us from Payson Park about the 4 Sovereign Awards his horses might score. Groom **Ricardo Nichalson** already knows he's a Sovereign Award winner and he tells us how good that feels. Woodbine's champion jockey **Kazushi Kimura** had a big win in a Grade 1 race at Santa Anita and we wish we had bet it. **Mark McKelvie** explains the thinking of Mohawk Park when it did two different things on snowy nights in Ontario. **Saulsbrook Victor** won again, and the way he did it is worth listening to, and **Vic Stauffer** is a great race caller - but wait until you hear how he announced a race when he couldn't see the horses.

### Episode 164, March 13:

This is another full package of exciting, spiningtling, mind-blowing horse racing results, stories and interviews. We go to Tampa Bay Downs for the Tampa bay Derby, a Kentucky Derby prep. We go to Gulfstream and find Canadians winning races, specifically - **Marty Drexler, Bruno Schickedanz** and **Emma-Jayne Wilson**. Last Thursday at Mohawk there were 2 races in which all the drivers were women. That same night, a rare result in a 10-horse trot. We talk Sovereign Awards with **Mark Casse, Kevin Attard** and Groom of the Year **Amber Hutchinson**. And how would you feel if your horse ran straight and true, didn't impede anyone, didn't break any rules and the judges disqualified it after watching the wrong replay? Believe it or not.. that happened.