

THE BUCKEYE Harness Horseman

MAY 2026 | VOLUME 56 | NUMBER 2

The Official Publication of the
Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association

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July 16, 2026 - OHHA 3rd Quarter Board of Directors Meeting General Session Meeting, 11 a.m., Eldorado Scioto Downs, Three Diamonds Room

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The Buckeye Harness Horseman 120-850 (ISSN 0194-7842) is published four times annually by the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association, 2237 Sonora Drive, Grove City, OH 43123. Phone 614-221-3650 or 800-353-6442. Single and back issues, if available, \$2.50. Periodical postage paid at Columbus, OH. Postmaster, send address changes to OHHA, 2237 Sonora Drive, Grove City, OH 43123.



THE BUCKEYE HARNESS HORSEMAN

The Official Publication of the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association
2237 Sonora Dr. Grove City, OH 43123
614-221-3650 | 800-353-6442 | (f) 614-221-8726
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Cover Photo: Brad Conrad | **Layout/Design:** Brelsford Creative

‘A Pleasant Surprise’

Disgruntled Carl Delivers Victories Following Surgery By Wes Mayberry



Late last season, Disgruntled Carl's racing future was uncertain in the minds of his owners.

"Toward the end of the season, he started not finishing well," says Jodi Schillaci.

Schillaci, along with her husband, Sam, form the Macedonia, Ohio-based Schillaci Stables group that co-owns Disgruntled Carl with Sam Bova Racing, of Irving, New York. While the horse posted solid numbers last year — a record of 10-3-2 with earnings of \$83,585 in 34 starts while setting a lifetime mark of 1:55.1 — he began to fade after recording three consecutive victories from Oct. 27 to Nov. 10. In his final six starts of the season, all Open-level events at Northfield Park, the International Moni gelded trotter out of Mamora Bay hit the board just three times. He rebounded from a fifth-place effort with a victory on Nov. 24 before closing out the season with finishes of sixth, second, fourth, and third. His owners believed an underlying health issue may have been causing the drop in performance.

"We had the vet scope him, and we found out he was having some breathing issues, so he had throat surgery," Schillaci says.

The success rate of equine throat surgery varies based on a number of factors, leaving Disgruntled Carl's owners unsure of how he would respond as a 5-year-old in 2026. It didn't take long for them to find out, though, as Justin Irvine drove him to victory in an Open at Northfield on Jan. 4.

"A lot of times those throat surgeries are hit or miss. It was definitely a hit with him," Schillaci says. "Before we did the throat surgery, he was basically a middle-condition horse. But the throat surgery turned him into an Open horse."

Disgruntled Carl won three of his first four races in 2026, and as of late April, had hit the board in 10 of 14 starts with six wins and \$75,355 in earnings competing in Open events at Northfield.

"We just thought it was a fluke — 'We got lucky and won an Open!' But as each week went by, we were like, 'Oh my gosh, maybe this is

real!'" Schillaci says. "We were just happy to have a nice little race-horse. We were never expecting this, that's for sure."

Irvine was in the sulky for all 14 of those starts.

"Justin loves him, and they work well together," Schillaci says.

There's no doubt about that.

"He's just a very well-rounded horse that Sam and Jodi have brought along the right way, and you can tell they took their time by the way his manners are on the track," Irvine says. "His best attribute is his versatility. He can step off the car in 27 (seconds) or can sit last and trot home in 28 (seconds)."

Disgruntled Carl is beloved by all his off-track connections as well.

"We all work together. Sam jogs and trains him, and Mariah Rice is his groom and paddocks him every week," Schillaci says. "Sam Bova is a dream as an owner, and I'm so glad for him that this horse turned out like this because he loves his horses."

Disgruntled Carl's current owners bought him from breeder Peter Barbato, of Demarest, New Jersey, at the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale in October of 2022. The Schillacis were familiar with his mother, having raced her as a 2- and 3-year-old to the tune of over \$313,000 in earnings. They liked the looks of him as a yearling and ended up buying him for \$10,000.

As for how Disgruntled Carl got his name, it came from his prior owner. His new owners considered changing the name but ultimately decided to keep it. In working with the horse over the years, they've found that "disgruntled" can be an apt descriptor at times. In the barn, though, he is anything but.

"In the paddock, he's a little hyper," Schillaci says. "But in the barn, he's a sweetheart. He does nothing wrong."

Irvine agrees, pointing out a change in demeanor from the paddock to the track.

"He's a quirky horse — very fractious in the paddock, and getting him onto the track is oftentimes hectic," he says. "But on the track, he's a gentleman. Put his nose on the gate, and he'll let you do whatever you want."

Though he has proven to be cantankerous at times, Disgruntled Carl has undoubtedly endeared himself to his connections. The on-track success following his surgery has simply been a bonus, and Schillaci can't wait to find out what the rest of 2026 has in store.

"This has been such a pleasant surprise for all of us," she says. "We're just riding the ride while it lasts."

'An Exceptional Horse'

Helium N Finds Success After Move to U.S. By Wes Mayberry

If you ask Dennis Owens about Helium N, you're likely to get a succinct response.

"He's an exceptional horse," Owens says.

Owens, of Hamilton, Ohio, co-owns Helium N with James Morris, of Chillicothe, Ohio. Morris is just as effusive as Owens in his praise of Helium N's racing talent.

"He's a really good horse to be around," he says. "He's an amazing horse, an absolute beast."

Morris and Owens, along with Carl Howard and Norman Rae Racing, purchased Helium N from New Zealand in February of 2025 and brought him to the U.S. to race. Sole co-owners since October of last year, Morris and Owens have been quite pleased with the success the horse has had in the U.S.

"He won some nice races against some very good horses and set a track record last year," Owens says. "I've been around horses all my life, so it's a thrill to me to have a good horse like this. He was a good horse in New Zealand and just got better over here."

Helium N made 19 starts as a 6-year-old in 2025, including the Canadian Pacing Derby and Battle of Lake Erie. The gelded son of Sky Major out of Cooking With Gas finished the year with a 7-2-3 record and \$124,537 in earnings. As a bonus, he broke the all-age track record for pacers at Eldorado Scioto Downs on Sept. 13 with a time of 1:46.4. That couldn't have happened at a better venue for Morris.

"I live in southern Ohio and have been going to Scioto Downs for 50 years — I love going to that place," he says.

The momentum from that success has carried over into 2026. Trained by Christi Noble and driven by Dan Noble in Open races at Northfield Park, Helium N won three of his first five starts of the year. By early May, he had hit the board in 10 of 11 starts with six victories and over \$74,000 in earnings, increasing his international and domestic career totals to 20 wins and \$259,549.

Helium N is part of a group of horses from New Zealand and Australia that Morris owns that also includes the likes of Artatac A, Bella Button N, Bettingsensation N, Bismarkduplessis N, Celtic Spirit N, and Magic Four N. Over the years, he has developed a system that has proven successful in identifying horses from those countries who have the potential for success in the U.S.

"I was intrigued about some of the New Zealand horses that seemed to do very well in this country and made a contact and struck up a pretty good relationship with a guy from New Zealand who had been a driver and a trainer and had sent a lot of horses to the States," Morris says. "It's been a formula of that guy finding the horses and also watching a lot of film. I have a buddy here in Ohio who's the best



film-watcher I've ever met, and I got him involved. When we watch the film, we make an educated guess about how to make the horses better."

While variables such as a horse's ability to adapt to a different climate and its physical limitations in terms of speed cannot be predicted through film study, the success of Helium N and others lends legitimacy to what Morris has devised.

"The system is working," he says.

That system is only a small part of what has made Helium N so successful, however. Morris credits all the horse's connections — including Owens, Dan and Christi Noble, and groom Dennis Ward as well as his contact in New Zealand and his film-watching partner — for their invaluable contributions.

"It really is a group effort," he says. "Dennis' knowledge, input, and financial support has been a blessing, and Danny and Christi have done an amazing job and have developed a special training system for the New Zealand horses that is making them really tough. Without them and everyone else that's involved, none of this would be possible."

Looking ahead, Helium N is staked to such high-profile races as the Canadian Pacing Derby, Dayton Pacing Derby, Alleraage Pace, and MGM Open Pace Series. Both Morris and Owens are hopeful that the horse's early-season success was just the tip of the iceberg of what's to come.

"If he stays at the level he's at right now, he's going to have a very good year," Owens says.

"I don't think we've seen the best from that horse yet," Morris adds. "I think there's a lot more to come."



Pacey Mindlin Memorial Winner

Prince Hal Hanover and driver David Miller won the \$100,000 Pacey Mindlin Memorial Invitational in 1:50.1 on May 2 at Miami Valley Raceway. The 4-year-old son of Captaintreacherous is trained by Dr. Ian Moore for owner Prince Hal Hanover Stable.



Burke, Miller Win Miami Valley Titles

The 2026 meet at Miami Valley Raceway ended May 2, and Ron Burke and David Miller stood atop the trainer and driver standings, respectively. Burke led all trainers at the meet with 79 wins, while Miller won the driving title with 161 victories.

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Victorious Quartet

Rose Run Banker, Crocodile Station, Charlies Moni, and Kb Wrecking Ball Win Hackett Memorial Finals

By Wes Mayberry



Rose Run Banker

The betting favorite won three of the four of this year's \$75,000 James K. Hackett Memorial finals at Miami Valley Raceway. Rose Run Banker, the 5-2 second choice, proved to be the exception.

"I thought we had a shot to win, or if not, at least be second, which would be great to start the year," says Kris Brechler, of Knox Services, which co-owns Rose Run Banker with Burke Racing Stable, Hatfield Stables, and Weaver Bruscerini.

Rose Run Banker was far from a long shot in the Hackett final for sophomore colt trotters. The son of In Range out of Hot Chili Girl hit the board in seven of nine starts and earned nearly \$190,000 last season and opened 2026 with a three-length win in the Hackett elimination race on April 16, tripping the wire in 1:55. But waiting for him in the final was Big Ranger — the reigning Ohio Horse of the Year who was unbeaten in seven starts and won the Ohio Triple Crown in 2025.

Big Ranger received a bye into the Hackett final and started from the rail as the 1-5 betting favorite. But things went awry early, as he broke stride before the start and lost touch with the field en route to a last-place finish in his seasonal debut.

"Anything can happen in a race, but I liked our chances better when Big Ranger made the break at the start," Brechler says. "It was unfortunate for him and his connections, but it gave us a little bit more confidence."

Driven by Chris Page, Rose Run Banker went on to post a gate-to-wire win in 1:53.4.

"It's always nice to win the Hackett," Brechler says. "It's one of the first big races in Ohio, and it sets him up for a nice start to the year."

Rose Run Banker opened last season with a third-place finish in the Next Generation at Scioto Downs and went on to post wins in the first leg of the Ohio Sires Stakes and the Ohio Breeders Championship. He closed out the year as the runner-up to Big Ranger in the OSS Scarlet Championship at Dayton Raceway.

This year has been even better. After the Hackett, Rose Run Banker went on to win a division of the opening leg of the Ohio Sires Stakes at Miami Valley on May 2, tripping the wire in a lifetime-best 1:53.3 for a 3-for-3 start.

"He raced really well last year as a 2-year-old, and I think he's come back a little bigger and stronger and more mature this year," Brechler says.

The James K. Hackett Memorial consists of four divisions for sophomores based on sex and gait. Gelded pacer Crocodile Station, filly trotter Charlies Moni, and filly pacer Kb Wrecking Ball joined Rose Run Banker as 2026 Hackett winners.

Crocodile Station



After selling Camera Lady to Spring Station Bloodstock for breeding in 2022, owner William Hartt and trainer Michael Hitchcock knew they wanted her foal. Camera Lady recorded 72 wins and banked over \$603,000 in her racing career, and Hartt and Hitchcock believed her offspring could be just as successful. So far, that foal, named Crocodile Station, is largely living up to those aspirations.

"Crocodile was in the sale down in Lexington, so I went down there and bought him," Hitchcock says. "He's been a gentleman horse ever since we've had him and has panned out for us."

The Downbytheseaside gelding won four of nine starts and banked \$153,232 as a freshman in 2025. Those victories included two legs of the OSS, the Ohio State Fair Stake, and the Ohio Breeders Championship. A third-place finish in an overnight race at Miami Valley to open 2026 didn't dampen expectations for a successful sophomore campaign.

"Dave Miller drove him and said he wasn't too concerned," Hitchcock says. "He just didn't want to push him too hard since it was his first start."

Miller went on to drive Crocodile Station to victories in the Hackett elimination in 1:52 and final in a lifetime-best 1:50.2.

"Dave was patient and drove well, and the horse was really sharp," Hitchcock says of those two wins.

The early success was promising, leaving Hitchcock hopeful for the OSS and Grand Circuit races that lay ahead for Crocodile Station this year.

"We paid him up into pretty much everything, and he's Kentucky-eligible, but we'll pick our spots and try to manage him," he says.

Charlies Moni



Following a rather uninspiring 2025 season, sophomore filly trotter Charlies Moni opened 2026 looking like a top contender.

"She's been a nice little surprise for us," trainer Vernon Beachy says. "She's been much better than we thought she would be."

The daughter of Ready For Moni out of Makes Me Crazy hit the board three times in eight starts with one victory and \$46,422 in earnings last season. She quickly surpassed that win total in 2026 with a 2-for-2 start. Coming off a four-length victory in the Hackett elimination race in 1:55.3, she won the final in a lifetime mark of 1:53.2 with Chris Lems in the sulky to increase her seasonal earnings to \$48,500.

"I thought we had a really good shot to win the final, and I was really pleased with her performance," Beachy says.

Charlies Moni is owned by 518 Group, Ryan Smith, Gitup Racing, and Hayden Myers, all of whom are based in Ohio. Myers' stake was passed down from his father, Hunter, a prolific harness racing driver who passed away last year. Beachy credits Hunter with recognizing Charlies Moni's potential even though she was really tough to train down.

"He trained her and couldn't stop talking about her," Beachy says. "He saw all kinds of potential in her — a lot more than the rest of us did at the time."

Charlies Moni didn't score her first win until Sept. 15 last year, taking an Ohio Fair Racing Conference event at Delaware. But the wait was worth it. As if in tribute to Hunter Myers, the horse appeared to be realizing the potential that he had seen in her.

"There were a lot of emotions when she won at Delaware last year," Beachy says.

“She’s been a nice little surprise for us. She’s been much better than we thought she would be.”
— Vernon Beachy

Beachy describes his journey with Charlies Moni as an emotional roller coaster. She raced in all five legs of the OSS as a freshman, recording a pair of fifth-place finishes before improving to fourth, third, and second in the final three legs. She capped the season with a fifth-place finish in the OSS Scarlet Championship but opened 2026 by impressing her connections in winning a qualifier at The Meadows on March 31 — so much so that they believed she could be a contender in the Hackett.

“We were planning on going to the Hunter Myers Series at Northfield because we thought it would be a really cool race to be in since this was his horse,” Beachy says. “But she qualified so well, so I called Chris Lems and said, ‘What do you think about taking a shot at the Hackett?’ And he goes, ‘With the way she qualified today, why not?’”

That proved to be a wise decision. With two wins in the books, her connections were hoping for even bigger things to come.

“We’ll see what the year brings us, but obviously our expectations have jumped up higher than they were before,” Beachy says.

Kb Wrecking Ball

Kb Wrecking Ball has exploded on the scene as a sophomore after not racing at all as a 2-year-old last year. The daughter of Fool Me Once out of She’s A Ball closed April having hit the board in all seven starts with six victories, including the Hackett final. Those results may have come as a surprise to some, but don’t count her trainers among them.

“All of her siblings that we’ve had in the past, we kind of rushed them into racing as 2-year-olds, and I just decided that she showed enough ability last year that we should just turn her out and wait for a year,” says Russell Swartz, who trains Kb Wrecking Ball alongside his wife, Deborah.

That patience paid off. After finishing second in her first purse start of 2026, Kb Wrecking Ball recorded six consecutive victories from

March 5 to April 23 for earnings of \$80,125. Swartz says driver Luke Hanners had nothing but positive feedback.

“Luke says that she just waits for him to call on her, and when he calls on her, she responds,” he says.

Kb Wrecking Ball was in the first of two divisions of the Hackett eliminations for sophomore filly pacers and won with ease, tripping the wire seventh lengths clear of the next horse with a time of 1:52.2.

“She shocked us when she just took off away from the other fillies because I thought that was the toughest division of the two,” Swartz says.

That performance inspired confidence for the final, and the filly delivered.

“She came first up against some really nice fillies, and I thought she was probably done coming off the last turn, but then she kicked in the afterburners,” Swartz says.

She won by one and three-quarters lengths in a lifetime-best 1:52.

“She’s impressed me every time, especially in the Hackett final,” Swartz says. “She’s really been an amazing filly. I’m very happy for her and the owner.”

Kb Wrecking Ball is owned by breeder Bradley DeLaney, of Wilmington, Ohio. He and the rest of the horse’s connections couldn’t have asked for much more from the sophomore to start her debut season. Moving forward, they planned on managing her racing schedule to keep her fresh for the end of the season.

“You don’t really have to train her hard. She seems like she really likes what she does, and I believe she has turned out well because of the way we have raced her,” Swartz says. “Now it’s just managing her the rest of the year so that she’s not tired at the end when we’re going for the real money.”





WE ARE RACING

2026 STAKES SCHEDULE

OHIO SIRES STAKES

2-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 11 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Mon. July 20 |
| 3 Scioto Downs | Thurs. Aug. 6 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Mon. Aug. 17 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Thurs. Aug. 27 |

2-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 Northfield Park | Sun. July 12 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 25 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sat. Aug. 8 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. Aug. 22 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Sat. Aug. 29 |

3-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 Miami Valley | Sat. May 2 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Mon. May 25 |
| 3 Scioto Downs | Sat. June 13 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Sun. July 12 |
| 5 Northfield Park | Mon. Aug. 24 |

3-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 Miami Valley | Sat. May 2 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Mon. May 25 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sat. June 20 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Mon. July 6 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Sat. Aug. 29 |

2-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 11 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Mon. July 20 |
| 3 Scioto Downs | Thurs. Aug. 6 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Sun. Aug. 16 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Tues. Aug. 25 |

2-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 Northfield Park | Mon. July 13 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Fri. July 24 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sat. Aug. 8 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Tues. Aug. 18 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Sat. Aug. 29 |

3-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Miami Valley | Sat. May 2 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Sat. May 30 |
| 3 Scioto Downs | Thurs. June 18 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 4 |
| 5 Northfield Park | Wed. Aug. 26 |

3-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 Miami Valley | Sat. May 2 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Sat. May 30 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sat. June 20 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 4 |
| 5 Scioto Downs | Fri. Aug. 28 |

BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES

2-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Tues. July 14 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Thurs. July 23 |
| 3 Urbana | Mon. Aug. 10 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Wed. Aug. 19 |
| 5 Delaware | Tues. Sept. 22 |

2-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 Northfield Park | Wed. July 15 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Fri. July 24 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sat. Aug. 15 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. Aug. 22 |
| 5 Delaware | Wed. Sept. 23 |

3-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Sat. May 9 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Sat. June 6 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Mon. June 15 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 18 |
| 5 Delaware | Tues. Sept. 22 |

3-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Sat. May 9 |
| 2 Northfield Park | Sat. June 6 |
| 3 Scioto Downs | Sat. June 27 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Sun. July 19 |
| 5 Delaware | Thurs. Sept. 24 |

2-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Fri. July 17 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Thurs. July 23 |
| 3 Urbana | Mon. Aug. 10 |
| 4 Northfield Park | Mon. Aug. 17 |
| 5 Delaware | Sun. Sept. 20 |

2-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Scioto Downs | Tues. July 14 |
| 2 Bucyrus | Wed. July 22 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sun. Aug. 9 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Thurs. Aug. 20 |
| 5 Delaware | Mon. Sept. 21 |

3-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 Northfield Park | Sun. May 3 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Thurs. June 4 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Mon. June 22 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Sat. July 18 |
| 5 Delaware | Mon. Sept. 21 |

3-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Northfield Park | Sun. May 3 |
| 2 Scioto Downs | Fri. June 5 |
| 3 Northfield Park | Sun. June 21 |
| 4 Scioto Downs | Fri. Aug. 7 |
| 5 Delaware | Thurs. Sept. 24 |

Championships & Consolations



\$400,000 SCARLET & GRAY CHAMPIONSHIPS

2- & 3-Year-Olds
September 11-12, 2026
Scioto Downs

\$100,000 VETERANS CHAMPIONSHIPS

4-Year-Olds & Up
October 4, 2026
Northfield Park



\$80,000 CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

2- & 3-Year-Olds
Saturday, October 3, 2026
Hollywood Dayton Raceway

\$25,000 CONSOLATIONS

2- & 3-Year-Olds
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Hollywood Dayton Raceway

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Ohio Sires Stakes Opens 50th Season

By Wes Mayberry

This year marks the golden anniversary of the Ohio Sires Stakes. For some, it's a time to celebrate the memories and glory from the past 50 years. For others, the focus is on what lies ahead. That's the case for the field of 2026 OSS competitors as they began their quest toward a championship on May 2 at Miami Valley Raceway. Pet Project and Tom Largo were among the victors that day, and their connections hoped that was the start of more success to come in this milestone season of the OSS.

Pet Project



Coming off a strong 2025 campaign, Pet Project proved he could again be a top contender in the OSS as a sophomore with his win in the opening leg. The Pet Rock gelded pacer raced side by side with Backninebar down the final stretch and took the win by a neck in 1:53.1.

"That was really exciting," says trainer Kim Dailey. "(Backninebar driver) Chris (Page) tried to keep us locked in, but we broke loose and got by him."

Dailey, of Mechanicsburg, Ohio, co-owns Pet Project with Jr Stable, of Orient, Ohio, and co-bred the horse with two other Ohio connections — Jerry Zosel, of Columbus, and Kathy Ratcliff, of Orient.

She's been connected with Pet Project from the very beginning and has been impressed every step of the way. Early on, though, she saw no signs of the racehorse he would become.

"Going into his 2-year-old season, he was just an OK horse — nothing outstanding," she says. "He did what he had to do but didn't really show us anything until he went to the first qualifier."

He won that qualifier at Eldorado Scioto Downs and went on to be one of the top freshman colt pacers in the OSS. He followed a third-place finish in the opening leg with a win in the Ohio State Fair Stake that told Dailey just how talented of a racehorse she had.

"When he won the state fair, I thought, 'Holy moley, what do I have here?'" she remembers. "I wasn't expecting anything like that."

That was the start of four consecutive victories for Pet Project, as he proceeded to add three OSS wins to his ledger.

"He just shined," Dailey says.

After a fourth-place finish in the final leg of the OSS, Pet Project entered the Scarlet Championship as the points leader among 2-year-old colt pacers. A fifth-place finish in that race didn't dampen Dailey's impression of the horse's freshman season. She says her late husband, Ohio Harness Racing Hall of Famer James "Bill" Dailey, trained many great horses, and it was exciting to have

one of her own.

"I couldn't have asked for a better year," she says. "I'm thrilled to have a horse like that in my barn."

Pet Project has good pedigree, as his dam, Igottafeelinfran, was one of the talented horses trained by Bill Dailey. She won the Ohio Triple Crown as a 3-year-old in 2013 and went on to win OSS Veterans Championships in 2014 and 2015 en route to finishing with 29 career victories and earnings of \$569,650. As he set out to live up to those standards, Pet Project finished his 2-year-old campaign with earnings of \$128,700 in eight starts. Dailey credits driver Trevor Smith as instrumental to that success.

"I like Trevor's style of driving," she says. "He takes care of the horse — he doesn't ask any more of him than what he wants to give — and they get along great."

Smith, who has driven Pet Project in all 10 career starts, is just as complimentary of both Dailey and the horse.

"What stands out about him is how easy he is to drive. Kim did a great job training him down," Smith said of Pet Project during his freshman season. "He respects the driver and has the heart that you always want to see in a horse, which makes my job a hundred times easier to be able to do what I want to do in certain situations. When it gets tough, some horses will step down from the pressure, but he does nothing but step up to the plate and knows how to get the job done."

Affectionately known as "Rocky," Pet Project entered 2026 on track to continue the success he had as a freshman. But a 10th-place finish in an overnight race at Miami Valley on April 21 left Dailey leery of how he would fare against OSS competition two weeks later.

"I didn't like the way he performed that day," she says.

But he bounced back in spectacular fashion. And if that opening-leg win is any indication, the 50th season of the OSS could turn out to be extra special for Dailey.

"The 3-year-old colt final was the only one out of the eight divisions that my late husband never won, so winning that would mean a lot to me," she says. "That would be something if we could pull it off."

Tom Largo



As his name suggests, Tom Largo stands out for his size.

"He's a big horse," trainer Scott Cox says.

But as the OSS kicked off its 50th season on May 2, the 3-year-old gelded trotter also made an impression with his on-track performance.

"It was a nice mile for him," Cox says.

Cox isn't one to boast, even if the horse may have been worthy of it courtesy of a gate-to-wire win in his division of the opening leg of the OSS. Tom Largo finished three lengths ahead of second-place Max The Mighty, tripping the wire in a lifetime-best 1:54.4. Cox concedes that a fortunate draw — 2026 Hackett Memorial winner Rose Run Banker won the other division of sophomore colt trotters in 1:53.3 — was helpful. But Tom Largo still had to go out and perform, and he did just that.

"I didn't know how the race would go, but he was able to control it," Cox says.

As he was for the majority of Tom Largo's starts in 2025, Chris Lems was in the sulky for the victory that day.

"He's been driving for me for a while," Cox says. "He's easy to communicate with, which helps because we can change things along the way."

Tom Largo entered that race as the betting favorite, and for good reason. The son of Long Tom out of Smith Hall had a standout freshman campaign with five wins and one second and earnings of \$125,400 in nine starts. That included victories in the Ohio State Fair Stake, two legs of the Buckeye Stallion Series, and the BSS Final. But there remained some uncertainty surrounding his ability to compete in the upper-echelon OSS after recording two fourth-places and a fifth-place finish in the three legs he competed in last season.

"His last fourth-place finish in the Sires Stakes was actually a really good mile, but he has to step it up more this year because there are some really good trotters out there," Cox says.

Last year's runner-up finish in the OSS consolation final, known as the Gray Championship, was perhaps indicative of what Tom Largo would be capable of as a sophomore. Further growth and improvements over the winter helped spur him to victory in his first OSS start in 2026.

"He's developed a little bit of speed out of the gate, which gets him in better position," Cox says.

Cox noticed Tom Largo had this type of potential not long after he started working with him and praises the horse for his "pretty laid back" demeanor.

"He trained down well and was solid as could be all along," he says.

Tom Largo is a horse with many Ohio connections — Cox, of Streetsboro, breeder Midland Acres, of Bloomingburg, and owners Jughead Stables and Robert Kubiak, of Strongsville, and

G Peters, of Akron — and is looking to make his mark in this golden anniversary season of the OSS. But with just one leg in the books, Cox was cautious not to look too far ahead.

"I just try to stay humble," he says. "The hard part now is keeping him sound and healthy. We have to go clear to September, so it's a long season. But if we can improve a little bit each time out, then maybe we'll have a shot at the end."

Rising Star: Wyatt Farmer

By Wes Mayberry



How important are young people to the future of harness racing? Very, according to Hall of Fame harness racing writer John Berry.

“For me, the search for youth always continues, watching for youngsters to carry the torch for our sport for decades to come,” Berry wrote in the April 25, 2025, edition of *Harness Racing Update*.

Among the young stars Berry identified by name in his column was driver Wyatt Farmer, and he too is hopeful for a continual injection of youth into the sport. So, what can be done to make that happen? According to Farmer, there’s no easy answer.

“That’s a tough topic, but I feel like we just need more people to see it,” says Farmer. “I don’t think there’s enough advertising out there, and I feel like there’s not enough younger eyes seeing harness racing. There are parents who have kids who grew up with it, but we need other kids seeing it too. If more people see it, then more people might get involved.”

While Farmer, a third-generation horseman, was introduced to the sport through his family’s involvement, he has set an example for others of any background to follow. As of late April, he boasted over \$1.4 million in earnings and a career record of 151-166-196 in 1,992 starts, all before turning 21 on May 27. The Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association recognized his status as a promising up-and-comer in 2023, naming him the recipient of its Terry Holton Youth Award.

Taste of Victory

Farmer, of Toledo, Ohio, is the son of longtime horseman Billy Farmer, who has banked over \$3.2 million in career trainer earnings. The younger Farmer has thus been ingrained in harness racing his entire life. He started out helping his dad in the barn and jogging horses and later got the itch to drive.

“When I was around 15, I decided I wanted to be a driver and give it a shot and see what happened, so my dad has given me opportunities, and here I am now,” he says.

As a two-time letterman and MVP, Farmer was a standout hockey player at St. John’s Jesuit High School. But he quit playing hockey after his junior year and graduated fully intending to pursue a career as a harness racing driver. He began his career in 2021 and drove primarily for his dad early on. His first win came in just his second start, guiding Jumping Jillybean to victory on Sept. 15 at the Allegan County Fair in Michigan to earn \$456 of the \$830 total purse.

“The purse wasn’t very high, but it felt good just to win,” he says.

It was that thrill of victory that solidified his desire to become a full-time driver. He was the runner-up in his second race that day to pick up an additional \$212 in what marked his final purse start of the year. But there was plenty of success on the horizon.

Seizing Opportunities

While continuing to drive horses primarily trained by his dad, Farmer began to get more opportunities in the bike for other trainers in his second season. All 56 of his purse starts in 2022 were at fairs, and he finished with a record of 10-11-9 and \$27,583 in earnings. A regular in Signature Series races, he had success with the likes of Lil’ Day Drinkin, trained by his dad, and Lyons Friends, trained by Elizabeth Tolley. He made purse starts for eight different trainers across 18 fairs that year.

“I started showing up to more and more fairs, and more and more people started putting me down for drives,” he says.

Farmer nearly quadrupled his purse starts in 2023, giving him even more opportunities to put his skills on display. He started driving at pari-mutuel tracks that season and scored his first pari-mutuel victory on July 12 with Roy Murphy Jr. trainee Delishka N at Eldorado Scioto Downs. They won by four lengths, tripping the wire in 1:52.3.

“That horse was completely nuts, and nobody else really wanted to drive her,” Farmer remembers. “Scioto is a fast track, but going 1:52 with any kind of horse is a good feeling.”

Farmer drove horses almost exclusively out of his dad’s stable over the final month of 2023 and capped the season guiding Pine Master to victory at Dayton Raceway. He finished that year with 24 wins, 13 seconds, and 16 thirds in 203 starts while banking \$163,350.

“It was just a matter of good trainers giving me good opportunities,” he says.

The next year, 2024, was truly his breakout campaign. Opportunities to drive full race cards started presenting themselves, and he was

being paired with more talented horses. That formula resulted in Farmer notching 888 starts on the year and surpassing his goal of 50 victories. He finished with 59 wins along with 68 seconds, and 93 thirds while banking \$653,142 at just 19 years old.

Farmer entered the 2025 season with over \$844,000 in career earnings and went on to add more than \$520,000 to his total to easily surpass the \$1 million mark. Reaching that milestone is something he still finds hard to fathom.

“Wow,” he says, pausing a bit to comprehend that earnings total. “I didn’t even know I did that last year. To do that and be only 20 years old, that’s pretty cool.”

Now well on his way to \$2 million, Farmer had already amassed 127 seasonal starts and over \$108,000 by April 24 this year. Wearing his signature blue-and-yellow racing colors, he had nine victories to that point. By the end of the year, he hopes to have set a new seasonal best for wins.

“I’d like to get more than 60 wins, hopefully somewhere between 75 and 100,” he says.

He’d also like to get more experience in higher-level races after driving Troy Schuberg trainee The Great Escape in a Buckeye Stallion Series event last August. He believes those opportunities will come as he continues to improve. He’s already come a long way in a short amount of time thanks in part to a more patient approach during races.

“You have to make a move so fast, sometimes within seconds, and I feel like I overthink everything, so being calm has helped with that,” he says. “I focus on being more relaxed on the track, and horses can sense that.”

Busy Days, Promising Future

Now in his fifth season as a driver, Farmer is fully entrenched in his career. Between helping his dad and competing on the track, he barely has time for anything else.

“I’m always in the barn or at the track,” he says. “But I still play hockey every once in a while, and I like to watch sports on TV.”



Wyatt Farmer scores his first pari-mutuel win with Delishka N on July 12, 2023, at Eldorado Scioto Downs.

On a typical day, he gets up early to feed the horses and then eats breakfast before helping his dad with various tasks in the barn. Traveling to any of Ohio’s four pari-mutuel tracks from Toledo takes anywhere from two to two-and-a-half hours, meaning he needs to leave home in the early afternoon on race days.

“If I have drives, I help my dad jog horses and clean stalls, and then I leave between 1:30 and 3 o’clock depending on what track I’m going to,” he says.

After finishing his drives for the day, he packs up and returns home to get some rest and do it all again the next day. While it keeps him busy, he can’t envision himself in any other vocation.

“The pari-mutuel tracks have really good driving colonies, so it’s tough. But I’m still young, and I’ll take whatever opportunities I get,” he says. “I’m just happy to be out there.”

Farmer points to Scioto Downs as his favorite track and cites the adrenaline rush he gets from the speed and competition of racing as what he likes most about being a driver. The sport holds a special place in his heart, and he encourages other young people to give it a shot.

“I really love working with horses, and if you do what you love, you’ll never work a day in your life,” he says. “I feel like it’s a lot easier than most ‘real jobs’ out there, and if you’re good, you can make good money. It’s just cool to work with horses and watch them grow up and follow them throughout their racing careers.”

'She Will Represent the USA Well'

Chrissy Johnson Adds International Race to List of Many Ways She's Involved in Equine Industry

By Wes Mayberry



In the equine industry, it may be hard to find someone as multifaceted as Christina "Chrissy" Johnson.

"I've done so many things in my life because of harness racing," she says. "I have soaked up and taken in and tried to master every little part of it that I possibly can."

That's no exaggeration. Though her initial dream was to be a Thoroughbred jockey, she fell in love with harness racing once she was introduced to it and has been everything from a driver, trainer, and outrider to a blacksmith, transporter, and equine dentist and dental educator. This year, she'll add one more role to that list — international competitor.

Representing America

When it comes to selecting an American representative for the Bernie Kelly International Ladies Race, Hall of Fame announcer Roger Huston focuses on one overarching criterion.

"Since the formation of the Bernie Kelly International Ladies Race, I have tried to select someone who I think can compete with her European counterparts and represent the United States well at the international level," he says.

Initiated in 2024, the Bernie Kelly International Ladies Race is part of the annual Vincent Delaney Memorial Festival. Jazmin Short and Lauren Harmon have represented the Stars and Stripes well in the race the past two years with matching runner-up finishes. Early in 2026, Huston joined Dein Spriggs, of the United States Harness Drivers Club, and Steve Oldford, of the Great Lakes Amateur Drivers Association (GLADA), to determine a worthy driver to compete for the U.S. in this year's race. Johnson was front of mind.

"I first became aware of Chrissy when she won the Spring Haven Ladies Race at Delaware three years ago. It was very evident that she was quite a driver in that race, and I also got to see her drive in other races on the Ohio fair circuit," Huston says. "I contacted Dein Spriggs and Steve Oldford, who have driven with her in a number of races in the past, and the final decision to pick Chrissy was a joint decision by the three of us. We know that she will represent the USA well."

When Huston contacted her to tell her the good news, Johnson was elated. Her other life responsibilities would have to be put on hold to accommodate the trip overseas, but this was an opportunity she couldn't pass up. This year's Bernie Kelly International Ladies Race will take place Aug. 8 during the Vincent Delaney Memorial Festival at Tir Prince Raceway in Wales. The facility is lauded as the only all-weather half-mile floodlit track in the United Kingdom or Ireland, and Johnson is looking forward to driving in her first race outside of the U.S. and Canada.

"This is a really big deal to me. I'm really excited about meeting all the lady drivers from all the different countries and seeing how the racetrack and driving styles over there differ from here (in the U.S.)," she says. "When I first learned about that race, I reached out to Roger and asked him what you have to do to be considered for that opportunity, and he said that you have to be the best lady driver. I don't know if I'm the best, but I did work really hard, and I pounded the pavement putting a lot of miles on my vehicle to get to every race I could possibly be in so that when it came time for him to make a decision, I would be one of the ones he would think of."

Chrissy Johnson and Big Ranger

While her conversations with Short and Harmon about their experiences in this race have been sparse, Johnson discovered one particularly attractive aspect of the trip through Harmon's social media.

"I'm really looking forward to jogging a horse on the beach," she says. "I got to live vicariously through Lauren on Snapchat last year because she posted everything she did, and that's where I saw the jogging on the beach."

Early Years

Now 40 years old and living in East Sparta, Ohio, Johnson had a record of 45-45-37 and earnings of just over \$175,000 in 258 career driving starts as of mid-April to go along with 57 victories and more than \$235,000 in earnings as a trainer. Despite the success she's had, harness racing wasn't top of mind during her early years.

Johnson was born in Texas and moved to Michigan when she was 5 years old. At that time, her top goal was to become a jockey. She later jockeyed Quarter Horses before working her first job in harness racing as a groom for Leon Cable and then for Tommy Harmer. Under Harmer, she grew to love working with Standardbreds and was particularly impressed by his operation.



Chrissy Johnson at the Delaware County Fair Photo: Conrad Photo

"Tommy always had a beautiful, clean, well-kept stable, and he was very detailed and organized. He was very specific on how each horse was handled and made sure that each horse was treated as an individual because they're all different with different needs," she says. "I wanted to be a jockey, but there was just something about harness racing. It was so different, and I loved how much more hands-on you could be with the horses. I've jockeyed in Thoroughbred racing, and the camaraderie of the horsemen is so different from the Thoroughbreds to the Standardbreds, and I just fell in love with harness racing."

Johnson began her driving career in 2008 and made her first purse start in 2010. Her first win came at Northville Downs on Oct. 15,

2010, with Crystal Chris. She remembers that one well thanks in part to a pre-race slight from John Kina, the trainer of the betting favorite in the race, Crown Heights.

"I remember going into the paddock and John Kina walking up to me and saying, 'Chrissy, you might have the horsepower, but you are only going to be second today,'" she says. "I was so disheartened."

Crystal Chris, the 10-1 third choice, ended up edging Crown Heights by half a length for the win. Johnson went on to close out her 2010 season with back-to-back victories with Crystal Chris at Northville and has been the sole owner of the now 22-year-old mare since 2018. The daughter of Dragon Again out of Taylor Q retired following her 7-year-old season in 2011, finishing with 35 victories and over \$411,000 in earnings.

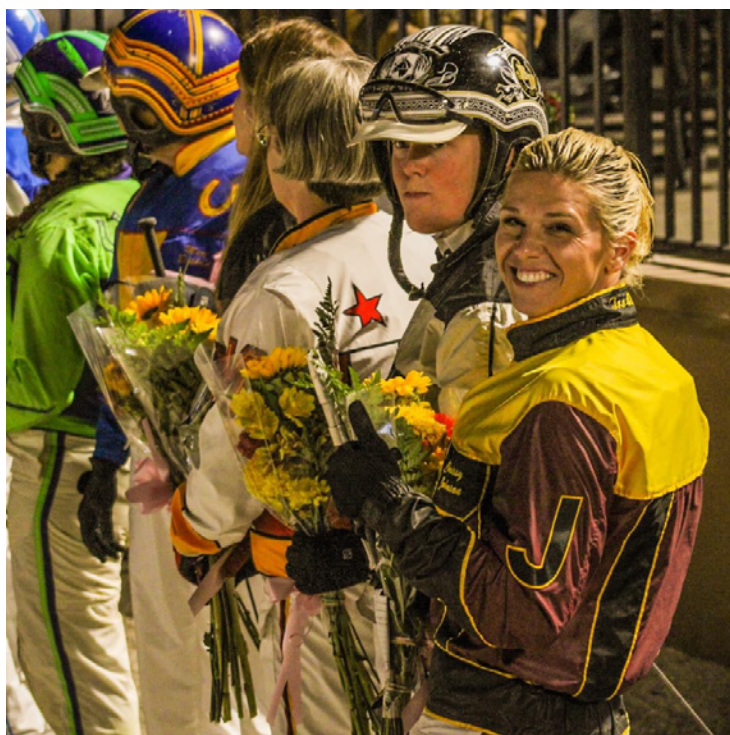
"Ned Simmons ended up giving her to me, and she is now a broodmare in my field," Johnson says. "She doesn't owe me anything. She gets to stand out in the field and live her best life."

Driven to Succeed

Since getting her first win, Johnson has gone on to become one of

the top female drivers in harness racing. She credits much of her improvement as a driver to her increased patience on the track. After telling her that she "made coffee nervous," fellow driver Nick Clegg advised Johnson to simply relax, have fun, and be patient.

"I've learned that patience is my friend. If you're patient, you get to see how the race unfolds, how the other drivers are making mistakes, and how other horses are moving in the race," she says. "When it comes to competition, I am not at all patient, so if I do something stupid, it's because my patience ran out. But when I'm patient, nine times out of 10, something opens up."



Along with learning patience, Johnson has found that she really enjoys the puzzle-like aspects of harness racing.

"I'm really good at puzzles, and when you get a horse, it's like a puzzle you have to put together. You have to figure out the horse's gait and what makes them happy and where they like to be placed in a race," she says. "There are so many moving parts with each harness horse, and I love being able to get one fresh and break it all down and figure out what piece goes where and putting it all together and seeing the horse succeed."

However, as a female, opportunities to drive have been less plentiful for Johnson than her male counterparts over the years.

"Being a female driver, it's really hard to get people to throw you on their horses because a lot of people worry that because some of those horses are so strong, we might not be able to handle them," she says. "It's a blessing and a curse. I'm grateful that people think of our safety as well as that of the horses, but sometimes it sucks that we don't get more of an opportunity."

Johnson appreciates every opportunity she gets to be out on the track and has driven in the GLADA from the start.

"When Steve Oldford started the Great Lakes Amateur Driving Association, I was one of the few drivers that participated in it to help move it forward," she says. "I'm really grateful that Steve asked me to be a part of that because it's been a great experience. I've gotten to go to a lot of different tracks with a lot of different drivers and have gotten to compete in the U.S. vs. Sweden competitions."

She is also a regular in the Spring Haven Farm Ladies Driving Series, which gives female drivers an opportunity to be in the spotlight.

"That is an all-or-nothing, survival-of-the-fittest kind of race because all of us girls are out there to be the first one to hit the wire. We're all friends standing on the sidelines, but when we get on the bikes and go behind the gate, it gets a little bit raunchy out there," Johnson says. "All of us girls want to make a name for ourselves and be the top dog,

so it's tough. We are competitive, and we all feel like we have a lot to prove because we are women."

In the Ladies Driving Series, Johnson competes against the likes of Harmon, Leslie Joyce, Jennifer Main, Bobbie Jo Brewer, and Mary Birkhold. She placed third in the points standings last year after winning the final and the overall points championship in 2024. She gets emotional thinking about all the support she received to make that achievement a reality.

"The people that stuck with me and kept putting me up on drive after drive and giving me all those chances were friends that I grew up with in the business who saw me start from nothing and build myself up to where I am now. Regardless of what I was driving or how the chips fell, they just kept putting me down, and the points just kept stacking up," she says. "I couldn't have accomplished what I did that year if not for the people that were willing to put horses in the box so I could make it to Delaware. It makes me want to cry just thinking about it."

Two days after driving Nothingbutadreamer to win the GLADA race at Delaware that year, Johnson returned to guide Black Tilly to victory in the final of the Spring Haven Farm Ladies Driving Series. Black Tilly was bred by Harmon's father and stepmother, Donald and Krista.

"We came four wide around the last turn to win by half a length," Johnson says. "When I hit the wire, I was in tears."

Johnson's other career highlights include winning the Tim Fouts Memorial Standardbred Driving Championship at Delaware in 2022 and the Pace for the Cure at Northfield Park in 2023 and 2024.

Multitalented

Johnson drove at nine different Ohio county fairs last year and points to Upper Sandusky and Delaware as her favorite tracks. But her involvement with Standardbreds extends far beyond that of a driver and trainer.

"I'm a full-time equine dentist, and I travel the country serving the harness racing community as well as a lot of riding horses," she says. "I'm also an outrider at Shenandoah Downs and sometimes at Northfield and was a blacksmith at Northfield for a long time."

Johnson was first introduced to equine dentistry through a graduate of the Virginia-based American School of Equine Dentistry. She had been showing Arabian horses for him and began assisting him in floating horses — a process of filing sharp and uneven surfaces on their teeth to reduce discomfort, prevent mouth injuries, and improve chewing efficiency. Once she was on her own in Ohio, she noticed a gap in the market that she could fill. At the urging of friends and colleagues, she followed her mentor's path of attending the American School of Equine Dentistry and obtaining certification as an equine dentist. She founded Whiskey River Equine Dentistry after graduation and has been extremely busy ever since.

"When I got home from school, I had so many horses booked, and I have been working seven days a week year-round, including holidays, since the day I graduated," she says. "I bought a truck and have all my dental tools on the truck, and when someone calls me, I go to their farm and work on their horses. I work everywhere — if you need me, I'm there."



She also serves as an instructor at the American School of Equine Dentistry.

“The day I graduated, I also got hired to be an instructor at the school, so I’ve been instructing in Virginia going on six or seven years now,” she says.

Though she works almost nonstop, she wouldn’t have it any other way, as she loves the flexibility and variety of what she does.

“I create my own schedule so I can work when I want and how I want, which has been a huge

blessing,” Johnson says. “I’m very busy, but I love to work and love my job. I get to see harness racing people every day as well as all my barrel racing people because I also train barrel horses and do breakaway roping at rodeos.”

Johnson has done dental work on several Little Brown Jug and Breeders Crown entrants and is the only dentist thus far to have worked on 2025 Ohio Horse of the Year and Ohio Triple Crown winner Big Ranger. She also served as an equine dentistry guest speaker at the 2025 Equine Affaire expo in Ohio.

Making Her Mark

Harness racing has historically been a male-dominated sport, but the presence of women continues to grow. Johnson and many others in key roles — drivers, trainers, owners, breeders, media members, and more — have undoubtedly made an impact as trailblazers and role models for other women to follow.

As a multitasking horsewoman herself, Johnson has certainly made her mark on the industry. This past March, she was one of 20 women selected to compete in one of two races featuring all-female driver fields as part of an International Women’s Day celebration at the Meadowlands. Driving Galante A, Johnson placed third behind Lauren Tritton and Marie Auger in one of the 10-woman fields. As events like these continue to grow in scale and frequency, Johnson hopes the increased exposure will showcase the opportunities that exist for women in the sport. Just as she did all those years ago, she wants other women to take a leap of faith and give harness racing a try.

“Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there because when you do, you’d be surprised how many people will try to open doors for you. If people see you out there doing good things, they’re going to want to be part of it with you,” she says of her advice to other women. “So, don’t be afraid to step in the limelight and grab the sport by the horns and go for it.”



Chrissy Johnson signs an autograph for a young fan.





Ohio Champion Continues to Excel After Racing

By Dot Morgan

Sectionline Bigry is a two-time Ohio Aged Pacer of the Year with 135 starts and more than \$1 million in earnings. A Bauder family favorite from the beginning, he was bred, raised, trained, and raced by the same family who also campaigned his illustrious dam, Aquatic Yankee, to more than \$750,000 in earnings.

In March 2025, the Bauders made the decision to retire their Ohio champion to New Vocations, where he would have the opportunity to shine in a new discipline.

Miranda Pflueger had been specifically searching for an off-the-track Standardbred and even made a list of everything she wanted in her next horse. Bigry checked every box — and then some.

“Rye has been nothing but amazing,” Pflueger says. “Everyone at my barn is so impressed with him and his wonderful demeanor. He has been an absolute gentleman for every single ride, whether it’s English, Western, or bareback. It’s really amazing — we’ll work on something one day, and the next day he’s basically already mastered it.”

Rye picked up a variety of groundwork patterns so quickly that Pflueger decided to enter him in an all-breed online show series that ran from January through April. The patterns, precision handling, and ring presence that were new to him at the beginning of the series were all confidently mastered by the end.

“Rye and I finished the series as Reserve Champion in the In-Hand division, which included Showmanship, Horsemanship, Lunging, Trail, and Jumping — all performed with me walking beside him,” Pflueger says. “Rye was also one of the high-point champions in the Halter division and one of the five high-point champions in the Off-Track Sport Horse division. We also earned a merit award, Champion of Honor, which came with a beautiful belt buckle.”

In addition to his standout accomplishments in hand, Rye continues to develop into a versatile horse under saddle. He is working comfortably at the walk and trot and is beginning to build consistency at the canter. He has also taken enthusiastically to trail riding. Like at the track, Bigry’s physical presence, strong work ethic, keen intelligence, and natural athleticism remain on full display in his new career.

“I just love everything about him. He always puts the biggest smile on my face, and I laugh so much with him,” Pflueger says. “He even has his own Facebook page, Sectionline Bigry’s New Beginning, where I’ve connected with Harold Bauder, his groom Joy, and others who knew him during his racing career. They’ve been nothing but supportive and kind as I share our updates and progress. I’m so impressed by the Standardbreds and truly honored to have been selected to adopt Rye.”



Equine Health Spotlight:

It's a brisk, snowy day in Columbus, Ohio, but the horses inside The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center's Galbreath Equine Center are kept cozy in their stalls. For one of those horses, the day marks his scheduled appointment to undergo an imaging procedure utilizing the facility's newest piece of equipment — a positron emission tomography (PET) scanner.

Tools of the Trade

Equine veterinarians have a number of diagnostic imaging tools at their disposal to help them identify possible injuries in the horses under their care. The Galbreath Equine Center acquired the PET scanner in January to expand its ability to accurately detect bone and soft tissue injuries in horse limbs to better determine appropriate treatments.

"The PET scan adds quite a bit to the other imaging that we have here," says Dr. Maureen Kelleher, Trueman Chair in Equine Clinical Medicine and Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Galbreath Equine Center had already been offering diagnostic imaging via X-rays as well as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT), and nuclear scintigraphy scans. While each type of scan has its merits, Kelleher recommends

the nuclear medicine options — scintigraphy, commonly called a bone scan, and PET scans — as the best way to detect bone injuries.

So, what exactly is a PET scan? It's an advanced, 3D imaging tool used to detect and assess early-stage injuries, such as microfractures and stress remodeling, in the fetlock, foot, and hock areas to prevent more serious structural injuries. Oftentimes, early-stage injuries are not visible on X-rays or CT scans, leading veterinarians to suggest nuclear imagery. When evaluating between a bone scan and PET scan, the optimal choice often comes down to where the injury is located. Bone scans can image the entire body, including the spine and pelvis, while PET scans are restricted to the limbs. However, PET scans hold an edge over bone scans in that they are much more sensitive in identifying areas of concern and require less time to complete.

"In the racing horse, we may be able to pick up something that may become a fracture much sooner than we would find it in a bone scan, and we can hone in on those areas much better than we can with a bone scan," Kelleher says. "Also, the isotope for a PET scan wears off very quickly, so the horse can come in and have a PET scan and leave in a few hours. With a bone scan, they're generally here two, and sometimes three, nights."

While PET scan images inform veterinarians of the location of disease or injury, they may not help them make a specific diagnosis. In that case, PET scans can be paired with X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs to provide a more precise picture of the malady.

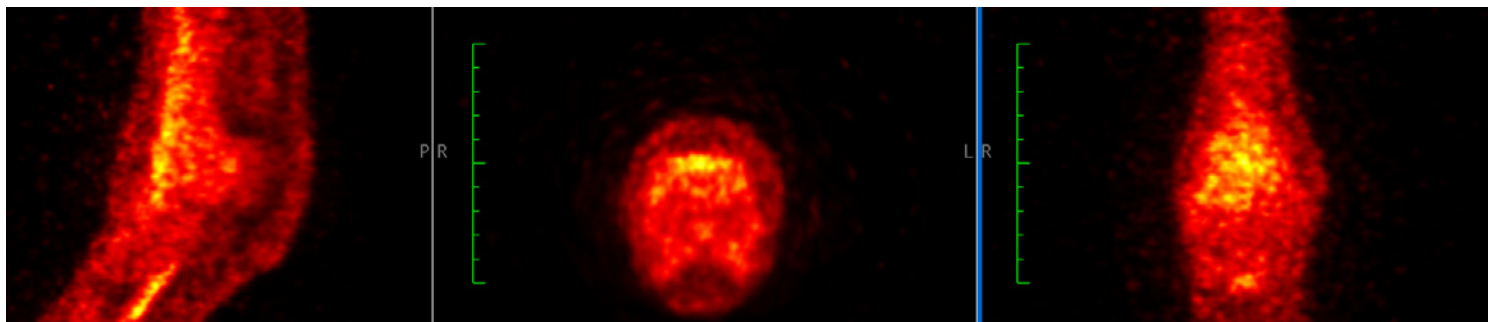
"I can take the three-dimensional PET scan image and marry it or fuse it to a CT scan or an MRI scan, and I can get a three-dimensional PET-CT or PET-MRI, and I can see exactly, in 3D, what is going on in that



A horse undergoes a PET scan of its front left leg at the Ohio State University Galbreath Equine Center.

PET Scans

By Wes Mayberry



PET scan image (credit: Ohio State University Galbreath Equine Center)

horse's bone," Kelleher says. "I can also take that three-dimensional image and apply it to some of the X-rays of the horse and get some depth of what's going on to let you and your vet know what's going on and where the location of that injury is. Then we can use that to follow up on injuries."

The Procedure

Remember the equine patient from the beginning of this story? On the day of his PET scan, a team of radiation technicians and registered veterinary technicians guided him through the process, which began with some physical exercise.

"Depending on what the horse does for a living, we'll either take them for a vigorous walk, or if they know how to work on a lunge line, we'll do a little bit of exercise on the lunge line," Kelleher says. "That just gets the heart rate going a little bit, gets the blood flowing, gets the horse warmed up. We'll also put polo wraps on their legs to keep the warmth and blood flow to their limbs."

Once the horse returns to his stall, an IV catheter is inserted into his jugular vein to facilitate the injection of the isotope bound with an active tracer molecule.

"That isotope is what we use to detect in the scanner, and the other molecule is very sensitive to bone that's active," Kelleher explains. "It distributes throughout their body, and it hones, or seeks out, bone and binds to that bone."

It takes about half an hour for the isotope-marker combo to distribute throughout the horse's body, during which time he relaxes in his stall with access to food and water.

Afterwards, the horse's team of technicians leads him into the nuclear medicine suite, positioning him in the center of the room so that all four legs are accessible by the mobile PET scan unit. The technicians then open the arms of the scanner's ring and place it around the leg to be examined. During the scan, the horse is lightly sedated.

"We just want them to be able to tolerate the machine moving around their legs and stand nice and quiet and still," Kelleher says of the purpose of the sedation.

Once the scan process is initiated, the ring slowly moves up and down for a set time period attempting to detect areas with high concentration of the isotope indicating where the bone is being remodeled. That information is transmitted to a computer, where it generates a 3D image helping the veterinarian determine a diagnosis and treatment plan.

"In a young racehorse, there's always going to be some bone remodeling. They're young and growing, so there's going to be high concentrations of bone remodeling at their growth plates, and their bones are going to be active in response to training," Kelleher says. "But we also know they can have abnormal areas where their bone may be remodeling in response to abnormal forces or they're not tolerating their training well. Most often, if we see a very, very high concentration of that

isotope, then we know that there could be a problem there."

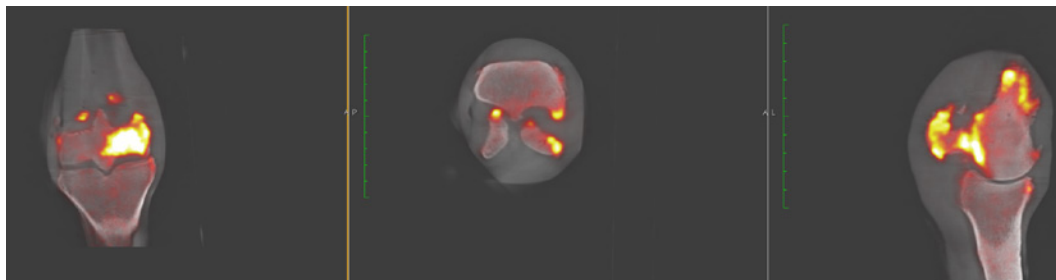
Monitor, Recover, Plan

PET scans also provide a distinct advantage over other imaging when it comes to the recovery process following a diagnosis.

"If we do PET scans every six or eight weeks, we can have a better physiologic idea of whether the bone is getting worse or getting better because the binding of that isotope and that marker is going to reduce as the remodeling of the bone goes away," Kelleher says. "So I can tell you whether the injury is healing on a more physiologic basis than just taking an X-ray or CT scan and not really knowing what's truly happening in the bone."

Now that the Galbreath Equine Center has PET scan capabilities, Kelleher encourages Ohio horsemen to take advantage of the technology to help them plan training and racing regimens catered toward minimizing the risk and severity of injuries to their horses.

"If we are worried about their ankles or their knees or their hocks, we can use this to say, 'Should we rest this horse?' and not race him just yet and hold off and train later for a bigger race, or 'He looks good, let's go ahead and keep training and push for this race now,'" Kelleher says.



PET scan image fused with CT scan (credit: Ohio State University Galbreath Equine Center)

10,000 Miles of Fun

Richard Miller Shatters Record in Winning Fair Passport Contest

By Bob Roberts



Richard Miller stands in the winner's circle with winner Charlie May and connections at the 2025 Mahoning County Fair in Canfield.

The gray 2020 Chevy Silverado, its engine off, sits on fresh tires in the driveway, pretty much getting time to recover from a non-stop summer of 2025. And there is a good chance the soft glow streaming through the adjacent house windows reflecting off the truck is emanating from a new, huge, flat-screen television.

Richard Miller, 61, of Attica, a small village of 870 residents in north central Ohio, owns the old pickup with new wheels and is enjoying the television because he's the winner of last year's OHHA County Fair Racing Passport Contest. Miller collected an astonishing 94 of a possible 127 stamps by visiting 60 of the 66 designated fairs.

His reward? That 65-inch television and two seats in the Pavillion Hill Tent for the Wednesday and Thursday programs of this year's Little Brown Jug week at the Delaware County Fairgrounds. Miller's prize package is easily valued at more than \$1,000.

Contestants competed by collecting a stamp for each fair harness racing program they attended and visiting the OHHA's broad-

casting team to have their passport validated. The only fair that wasn't included last year was the Ohio State Fair, conducted for three nights (July 31-Aug. 2) at Scioto Downs.

Changes have been finalized for the 2026 Ohio Racing Passport Contest, including a new tagline. In honor of America's 250th birthday, the competition has been branded "Stars, Stripes and Sulkies." It will be expanded to include the Ohio State Fair (Aug. 1 card only) as well as the Next Generation races, the Ohio Sires Stakes Final, the Buckeye Stallion Series Final, and the Ohio Fairs Championship. While details are still being worked out, to encourage participation by racing fans, the OHHA will reward those who reach attendance plateaus (ranging from 10 fairs to 40 fairs) with assorted gifts.

Miller, a retired union carpenter, crushed the 2025 competition with his record total. The runner-up, Rod Cooper, of Middle Point, Ohio, had 60 stamps. In 2024, the first year of the County Fair Racing Passport Contest, Roy James, of Tiffin, was the champion with 66 stamps.

"Even though I didn't compete in 2024, I got the idea to do so when I realized I went to more fairs than the winner did," Miller says. "I went to around 50 that year."

Miller isn't just watching the races; he's betting on them.

"I like trifectas, and I had some good pay-offs," he says. "I hit a tri at Wauseon for \$235. They have good pools there. Urbana, too."

While he only skipped six fairs, the one thing he never missed was his bed. Miller went home after each fair card, not spending a single night in a motel. His longest commute was to Washington County for the races in Marietta at the track on Front Street.

"It was a 200-mile drive for me," says Miller. "Took me three and a half hours each way."

With an extra 60 minutes thrown in for prep work.

"I like to get to the fairs an hour early, sit there and handicap, then watch the horses warm up," he says. "My favorite fair drivers are Case Bateson and Emanuel Miller. I liked



betting on them because I make money on their drives.”

Here’s Miller’s 2025 fair itinerary, month by month. He never reached for the Huff’s National Fair Directory, the bible of fair

horsemen and horseplayers, to map out his travels.

“Nope,” he says. “I used the OHHA website for dates and times.”

June

There were four fairs to kick off the season, and Miller made them all.

“I missed the first day at Paulding because I couldn’t make up my mind if I wanted to get involved in the Passport Contest for the whole year,” he says. “I was watching the first day of races on my phone, and that did it. I was in.”

Asked what he remembered about Paulding, Miller said it was the race program.

“The pages were all blank,” he says. “The 2-year-olds were all first-time starters.”

He recalls Marion as being “muddy both days.”

July

There were 24 fairs in the second month of the campaign, and Miller made 21 of them. He missed the Warren County Fair at Lebanon, the Lake County Fair at Painesville, and the Preble County Fair at Eaton.

“The reason I wasn’t at Lebanon was because I did a doubleheader that day (July 14) at Oak Harbor (Ottawa County) and Hilliard (Franklin County),” he says.

Miller missed Painesville because he instead took in the races at Sidney in Shelby County, and he wasn’t at Eaton because he was at Bowling Green for the Wood County races. While Miller is good for the fairs, due to his frequent visits to the betting windows — “I can’t get enough of it,” he says — he’s not a big fan of fair food.

“I get some, just not a lot. But when I do, it’s from the 4-H Club or the music boosters,” he says.

August

August was the busiest month on the Passport calendar with 28 fairs, and Miller made it to 26 of them. He only failed to show up at the Ashtabula County Fair at Jefferson and the Monroe County Fair at Woodsfield. Miller got the ultimate “home game” when the dates for the Attica Independent Fair popped up.

“I live so close to the track that I could have walked there,” he says. “But I didn’t. I drove over.”

Among the other August fairs, he points to Croton as one of his favorites.

“The grandstand sits right on the track. You are right on the edge of the action,” Miller says. “You have to lean back when the starting gate goes by.”

Another of his favorites is the Miami County Fair at Troy, which he describes as an “under-rated track.” Geauga County at Burton also rates high on his list of must-see fairs.

“They go fast there, the crowds are big, and there is lots of money in the pools,” he says.

Miller loved the races at the Darke County Fair so much that he went back and forth there from home three times.

“And Greenville is two hours from my house,” he says.

September

There were 10 fairs as summer turned to fall, and the only one Miller missed was the Williams County Fair at Montpelier because it conflicted with Old Washington. He fondly recalls his visit to the Hardin County Fair in Kenton.

“That is probably the best fair track I’ve seen,” he says. “The surface is so smooth, you could set a glass of water on a horse’s back and never spill a drop.”

Another favorite was the Guernsey County Fair at Old Washington.

“I love the track at Old Washington because where the grandstand is, you are about 12 feet above where the horses are,” he says. “You can stand there and look straight down at them. It’s like a cliff.”

Miller made all five days at Delaware County but also mixed in the nearby Ashland County Fair, doing both cards on the same day.

“I started the day at Ashland, went to Delaware, and then back to Ashland for an evening card,” he says. “Saw a lot of action that day. I think I bet on 37 races.”

October

With just one fair left on the shopping list, Fairfield County at Lancaster, Miller took a bit of transportation inventory.

“I’d say I drove an easy 10,000 miles going to the fairs and spent about \$3,000 in gas,” he says.

He had a successful invasion of Fairfield County.

“I hit an exacta that paid \$52,” he says.

‘Once is Enough’

One of Miller’s first thoughts after the final fair was quickly deciding not to defend his title in 2026.

“Once is enough,” he says. “I did 60 fairs because I wanted to make it difficult enough that if somebody wants to break my record, they are going to work really hard at it.”

That said, Miller says he’ll be at Paulding for the 2026 opener to the county fair racing season.

“I might make 40 fairs this year,” he says.

Or, could he perhaps make 61?



OHHA Awards 13 Scholarships to Outstanding Students

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association is awarding 13 scholarships, totaling \$25,000, to college students for the 2026-27 academic year.

This year's recipients are Sydney Ater, Garrett Bateson, Andrew Collins, Hannah Dingle-dine, Ryan King, Mason Konesky, Sarah Martin, Samantha Mayhugh, Sylvia Mayhugh, Alexa Nisonger, Kyra Suleski, Parker Twaddle, and Kamden Wolfe.



Sydney Ater, of Williamsport, Ohio, is a graduate of Adena High School and will attend Ohio University Chillicothe in the fall after two years at Glenville State University, where

she was a member of the golf team. She has grown up in the harness racing industry working alongside her dad, Brad Ater, and uncle, Bret Ater. She plans to graduate a year early with a degree in business management with the goal of pursuing a career as a real estate agent.



Garrett Bateson, of Rudolph, Ohio, is the son of Steve and Terri Bateson. A graduate of Bowling Green High School, he is entering his third year at Ohio University majoring in sports manage-

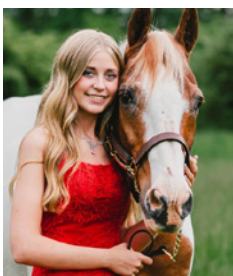
ment. During his time at OU, he has been a member of the Ohio Sports Business Association, Professional Selling Program, and the Schey Sales Centre and has worked as a football recruiting assistant and sports journalism intern. His family has been involved in harness racing his entire life. His dad has owned, trained, and driven horses and is a past president of the OHHA, and his brother, Case, drives and has a small stable. Upon graduation, he hopes to pursue a career in the sports industry.

Andrew Collins, of Washington, Pennsylvania, will begin his senior year at Grove City College in the fall majoring in marketing and management. The graduate of Trinity Area High School was a two-year member of the Grove City College men's basketball team



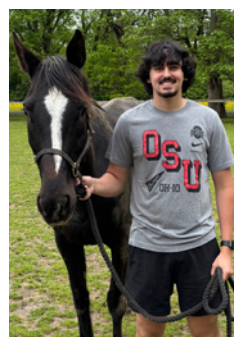
and has served as social chair and president of Nu Delta Epsilon fraternity. He has completed internships with the Washington County Tax Revenue Department and Human Resources

Department and currently serves as the head coach of a sixth-grade boys AAU team and director of player development for the entire organization. His father, Dean Collins, has been involved in harness racing as an owner, driver, and trainer for nearly 50 years and continues to operate a stable of 14 horses. The younger Collins owns a share of a horse with his dad and has spent countless hours assisting with daily responsibilities to keep the stable operating efficiently and for support on race days.



Hannah Dingle-dine, of Mechanicsburg, Ohio, is entering her junior year majoring in biological sciences with a pre-veterinary concentration at Wright State University. She

was also selected as the recipient of the OHHA's Future Equine Career Scholarship in January. She is the daughter of Randy and Amy Dingle-dine and a graduate of Mechanicsburg High School. Named the JV individual champion of the Raider Classic in November 2025 as a member of the WSU bowling team, she has also been involved with the WSU Activities Board and served as social media officer of the Bio Club and director of the Pre-Veterinary Chapter of the Pre-Health Society. She was introduced to harness racing through her family, and her passion for the industry grew through her involvement as one of the founding members of the first active Champaign County 4-H project for Standardbred horses in 2020. With support from her aunt, Kim Dailey, and Dailey Stables, the program has continued to grow each year. She has also supported the OHHA at several community outreach events and will serve as the chairperson for the first annual Dachshund Races at this year's Champaign County Fair. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree and a career as an equine veterinarian.



Ryan King, of Troy, Ohio, is majoring in animal science at Ohio State University and will enter his senior year in the fall. A graduate of Troy High School, he is the son of Zachary and Connie King. At

Ohio State, he is a member of the Pre-Vet Club and has played recreational football and basketball. His uncle owns multiple harness racing horses, and his dad is an equine veterinarian who focuses on track medicine. "Whenever I am home from college, I always make it a priority to go to work with my dad to watch him and gain as much knowledge of horses as I can," he says. Upon graduation, he hopes to further his education at the Ohio State School of Veterinary Medicine with the goal of following in his father's footsteps and becoming an equine veterinarian focusing on track medicine.



Mason Konesky, of Bowling Green, Ohio, is the daughter of Patrick and Wesley Konesky and a graduate of Bowling Green High School. She will be a sophomore at Purdue University in the fall and

is majoring in biochemistry. "Biochemistry is a major where I can combine my lifelong passions and pursuits in the fields of science and math to meaningfully contribute to the problems of humanity," she says. While at Purdue, she has been a member of the Biochemistry Club and has studied abroad in New Zealand. Her family has been involved in the harness racing industry for three generations as drivers, trainers, and owners. Her grandfather, John Konesky III, is a past president and active board member of the OHHA. She has assisted her grandfather with various equine-related tasks at his stable and competes in the non-Standardbred activities of dressage, stadium jumping, and cross country. She has also been involved in the United States Pony Club for eight years and is a nationally rated H-B member in horse management as well as vice chair on two national committees with the USPC National Youth Leadership Board.



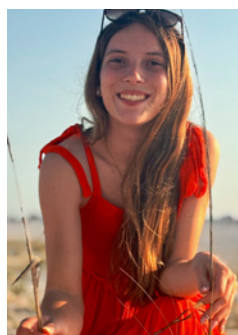
Sarah Martin, of Franklin, Ohio, is a graduate of Lebanon Christian School. The daughter of Tina Mohr, she will enter her freshman year at Wilming-

ton College in the fall and plans to major in equine science and minor in business. She has been a member of 4-H, horse camp counselor, varsity basketball player, and a participant in county fair horse shows, state fair junior horse shows, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Licensed as a groom, she paddocks State Of Fear and Illegally Funded for Dr. Scott McQuinn. She also works to help transition retired Standardbreds into riding horses. Upon graduation, she plans to attend veterinary school and earn a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree with the goal of working in the Standardbred industry. "I want to give back to the harness racing community as a veterinarian dedicated to the health, safety, and longevity of racehorses," she says.



Samantha and Sylvia Mayhugh, of Circleville, Ohio, are the daughters of Sean and Regina Mayhugh and graduates of Logan Elm High School. Samantha, the recipient of the 2025 Terry Holton Youth

Award from the OHHA, is majoring in agribusiness and applied economics with a minor in equine science at Ohio State University and will begin her third year in the fall. She is a member of the Agribusiness Club and Mount Leadership Society at Ohio State, leads the Backstretch Buddies program and assists with outreach events for the OHHA, and works for Litt Stables. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a career in outreach, broadcasting, or media within the harness racing industry.



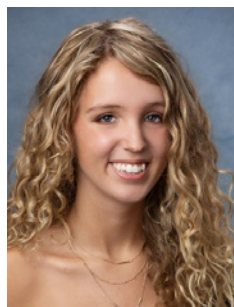
Sylvia Mayhugh will be a freshman at Columbus State Community College this fall and plans to pursue both an associate and bachelor's degree in nursing for a career in neonatal care or

as a radiology technician. At Logan Elm, she has been a member of the softball, soccer, and bowling teams as well as the marching and concert bands, and she has also been active in FFA and 4-H. Sylvia and Sam are actively involved in their family's Mayhugh Stables assisting with the daily care of Fear My Grace, Thereheisagain, and Really Sam. The family primarily races at Northfield Park along with various county fairs. The sisters also assist with race operations at the Pickaway County Fair.



Alexa Nisonger, of Lebanon, Ohio, is the daughter of Jeff and Stacey Nisonger and a graduate of Lebanon High School. She will be entering her sophomore year at Otter-

bein University majoring in exercise science while being active in athletics as a member of the women's basketball team, which advanced to the NCAA Tournament during her freshman campaign. Her family has been actively involved in harness racing, and she has helped her dad with various responsibilities around the barn. Upon graduation, she hopes to pursue a career in physical therapy. "As someone who has been involved in sports for much of my life, I understand how important recovery and rehabilitation are, and I want to use my education to positively impact others going through similar challenges," she says.



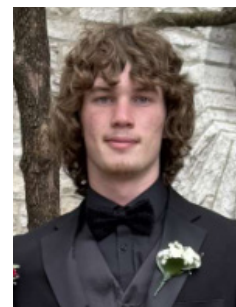
Kyra Suleski, of Mount Laurel, New Jersey, is the daughter of Ted and Sherri Suleski. A graduate of Lenape High School, she is going into her junior year at the University of Tampa

majoring in international business. At the University of Tampa, she has been active in the Entrepreneurial Club and has studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain. She is also a certified coach with USA Swimming and coaches the Tampa Bay Aquatics swim team. Her parents are Standardbred owners, and her father races at various locations along the East Coast. She plans to pursue a master's degree and a career in which she creates marketing strategies that help businesses expand ethically and foster cross-cultural connections.



Parker Twaddle, of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, is the son of Timothy and Sophia Twaddle and a graduate of Can-on-McMillan High School. He will be a freshman at Wash-

ington and Jefferson College in the fall and plans to major in business administration and entrepreneurship with the goal of becoming a successful business professional and investor. "I want to build businesses that provide value to communities, create jobs, and contribute positively to the economy," he says. He played football and was an honor roll student all four years of high school. An active member of the Christian Harness Horsemen's Association's Youth Foundation program, he has grown up around harness racing. His father has dedicated over 50 years to the sport and is the manager of the Twaddle Racing stable.



Kamden Wolfe, of West Milton, Ohio, is the son of Amanda Wolfe and a graduate of Miami East High School, where he was a member of the football and basketball teams. Entering his

sophomore year at Ohio Northern University, he is majoring in sports management and is a member of the football team. His long-term ambition is to work in elder care, specifically in the administration and oversight of nursing facilities, or as an athletic director. His family has been heavily involved in harness racing, and he has assisted with such responsibilities as cleaning stalls and feeding and grooming horses and preparing them for race days. His grandmother, Margie Polhamus, is a breeder and owner in the sport.

The OHHA Scholarship is available to graduating high school seniors and students enrolled in a degree or certificate program. Graduate students are eligible if they are enrolled in a harness racing-specific graduate or professional-level program. The scholarships are based on academic merit and must be used towards the cost and expenses related to coursework and a degree being pursued at a college or university. In addition, the applicant or a family member must be an OHHA member.

Catching up with **Lisa Schwartz**

How involved were your grandparents and parents in harness racing?

My grandparents on both sides had trotters, and my mom and dad raised babies. They worked someplace else, and it was kind of a hobby for them.

What is your first remembrance of harness racing?

We went to lots and lots of county fairs. We did have a horse that raced at Scioto Downs on Tuesday nights. I can remember standing in line to get a seat in the grandstand because it was full all the time.

After high school, did you continue your education and go to college?

I went to Ohio State University and studied banking and finance. That gave me a good head for numbers. I dove back into the horse world for a few years, and then I went to work for a construction company and worked there for 25 years.

In those years, were you in any way involved in racing?

I had some Thoroughbreds that raced at Beulah Park and River Downs.

What led to you meeting Dr. Bob Schwartz?

When I went to work for the construction company, I had two Thoroughbreds. One was an old stallion. I kept him at a small farm near where I worked. He needed some care, and I called Bob, and that's where we met.

What is your family's involvement in racing?

Bob and I have three sons, all from prior marriages. Bret is Bob's oldest son, and he trains Standardbreds. Bob's other son, Tim, lives in Las Vegas and works a "real job." My son, Matt, and his family live in Franklin, Tennessee. Matt is a software engineer for Amazon.

How did you finally make harness racing your life's work?

When I was 30 years old, my dad passed away from cancer. He was 52 years old, and I swore that when I was 52 years old, I'd retire from whatever I was doing and go do harness racing full time in some way. I was

lucky enough a few years ago for that to occur. As it happened, the Ohio Colt Racing Association needed a secretary-treasurer at that time. I took that job and also learned to chart.

How did you get involved in being a clerk of course?

I was a project manager for a larger commercial general contractor at the time, and Katie Meddles, who was the charter and clerk of course in the Western Ohio Colt Racing Association, told me about the USTA Charter Clerk of Course School, and I ended up doing it. Later that year, I retired from the construction company, and the first fair I clerked and charted at was the Allen County Fair in Lima that August.

In the past few years, you headed the Parshall Futurity operation. How did that come about?

That and the Signature Series were the first two jobs I did even before I left the construction company. Judy Foureman was doing the Parshall Futurity and thought it needed some younger eyes, so I took it on.

What are some other things you're involved in?

I'm a charter at Dayton Raceway, and I fill in as a charter at Miami Valley. All summer long, I chart county fairs. I've done qualifiers at Delaware a couple times.

How do we get younger people involved in the things that you're doing now?

Getting the youth involved is difficult. We have great outreach with OHHA — they go to the FFA convention and Equine Affaire every year. Scioto Downs has really made it inviting for the youth to come and view harness racing, and maybe from there, they'd like to become involved. I'm hoping some of the younger trainers' families might be interested in doing a job like mine at some point.

Do you have a favorite food?

Tommy's Pizza right off Lane Avenue on the Ohio State campus in Columbus.

When you have a night to get out with Bob, what's your favorite restaurant to go to?

We like Texas Roadhouse.



Do you have a favorite TV show?

I really like Landman because my dad and great-grandpa were in the oil business, and I have a little gig on the side with some wells in the eastern part of Ohio.

What was the last movie you watched?

Anaconda with Jack Black. It was pretty funny.

Do you have a favorite vacation spot?

We like to go to Las Vegas because we get to play some slot machines and enjoy some good weather and get to see family out there. I like to go to Florida. My best friend lives in Florida — she's a veterinarian at Gulfstream Park.

What is the greatest part of your harness racing involvement?

I like to chart better than anything else because I have a mind that sees patterns. Charting is the best thrill.

What is the No. 1 thing on your bucket list?

I'd like to chart some of the bigger races like the Breeders Crown and Dayton Derbies. I don't mind the pressure.



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Be There!

BY ROGER E. HUSTON



We are in the time of the year that we videotape our Freshman Focus shows featuring trainers and their 2-year-olds in training.

No matter who the featured trainer is, the one thing that stands out is the dedication of their entire family to our business of harness racing — the many 18-hour days combining the care and racing of their horses while at the same time most are raising a family as well. Many of those have a spouse who has a regular job to support the family.

Then I think about my life in the sport. In no way do I have to combine work and family. For me, the only time I had double duty was 1960-1967. Those were my college days at Wilmington when I was working at WHBM in Xenia and going to school 18 miles down the road.

That all started to change on the very day I received my diploma in 1965. On that day, I was contacted by announcer Phil Mauger to work the final week of the Spring Meet at The Red Mile. I learned that week I could handle double duty — work my 5 to 12:30 shift, drive 147 miles to Lexington, announce nine races, be back home by 2 a.m., and then be up again for the 5 a.m. shift for five straight days.

Since being hired to announce at Pompano Park and Delaware in 1967, I have made a living announcing full time. I didn't back off from that schedule until November 2019, leaving The Meadows for a position with the OHHA.

Recently, I was contacted by Tim Bojarski about a column for the June edition of Hoof Beats. Tim wanted me to pick five races from the 184,949 that I have called for the column. That also brought to mind a couple races that stood out but for a different reason.

The first was my actual first in May of 1960. I was a spectator at the Seratoma Matinee in Wilmington. After the first race, Uncle Don Huston paged me to the infield judges' stand. He asked me to do the post parade so he could make a quick trip to the restroom. As the horses were going to the gate, he hadn't returned, and the rest was the beginning of a 67-year career.

I didn't count at the age of 3 riding my tricycle and calling out names of horses I had heard at the county fair or the race at Urbana when I was 12 mimicking announcer Hap Shreve from the top row of that mammoth grandstand.

The other race was my audition for the Winter Capital of Harness Racing, Pompano Park, in August of 1967. Pompano Park officials unexpectedly showed up at the Greene County Fair. I spoke with them for all of two minutes before they made their way to the grandstand to watch and listen to a couple races. That race was a non-winners of \$200 lifetime trot with a field of 12. Eight horses made breaks, and the winner won by 10 lengths in 2:17. I looked over to the grandstand and saw that the officials had already left. Four days later, I was hired for Pompano and both meets in Lexington in 1967.

As Lou Gehrig said at his retirement in Yankee Stadium, "I am the luckiest man on the face of the earth." I haven't worked a day in my life.

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‘A Grand Building’

New Ohio Agricultural Center to Showcase ImAGine Ag Exhibit at 2026 State Fair

By Wes Mayberry



Rendering courtesy of Ohio Expo Center and State Fairgrounds

Harness racing is a staple of Ohio's agricultural fairs. The Ohio State Fair — with high-purse races held at Eldorado Scioto Downs — is no exception. But harness racing fans and fairgoers now have even more to look forward to thanks to a \$460 million renovation project involving the Ohio Expo Center and State Fairgrounds.

“It's been a fast and furious two-and-a-half years since this project began,” says Ohio Expo Center and State Fair Executive Director Adam Heffron.

With financing approved by the state legislature, the first phase of renovations began in the fall of 2023 as part of the Expo 2050 master plan. The massive project encompasses several improvements, including two new buildings and renovations to four existing buildings, a new main entry gate, the creation of a Town Square area and a historic district featuring an Ohio-themed carousel, and extensive underground infrastructure work and landscaping enhancements.

Of particular interest to those in the agriculture industry is the new 177,000-square-foot Ohio Agricultural Center, an innovative, multipurpose building featuring built-in kitchens, dining space, meeting rooms, and multi-use convention space.

“We want to showcase agriculture, and this new building is really a statement of that,” Heffron says. “It's a grand building.”

Slated for a June 30 completion, the Ohio Agricultural Center will host events both during and outside of fair season. During the Ohio State Fair, the building will combine functions of the Taste of Ohio Café and the Agriculture & Horticulture Building in partnership with the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and Ohio's agricultural commodity groups.

In describing the building, Heffron says fairgoers will enter into a courtyard atrium featuring a large dining area and storefronts where commodity partners in the dairy, beef, poultry, pork, and lamb industries will serve food. There will also be an area dedicated to Ohio-produced wine and beer as well as an exhibition showcasing Ohio-based foods and food products.

Beyond that, through a set of glass doors, is a 100,000-square-foot exhibition space anchored by ImAGine Ag with supplementary exhibits highlighting animal husbandry and horticulture. Heffron describes ImAGine Ag as an immersive journey featuring seven zones that showcase the science of agriculture and the high-tech means by which farming is done.

“The Ohio Farm Bureau is taking the lead on this exhibit, and the planning is done in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio State University, and the Ohio Expo Center,” Heffron says. “We have teamed up to envision this, and our partners at Farm Bureau have really brought this together in preparation for the fair this year.”

ImAGine Ag's seven zones include Storied Seasons, Harvest Hero, Crop Invaders, Weather WonderLab, Creature Comforts Trail, Buckeye State AgQuest, and Seasons of Innovation. Among many other interactive features in these zones, fairgoers will be able to fly a drone, drive a combine simulator, and experience how different types of weather impact the growing of crops. Attendees will also learn about how farm animals are cared for, innovations in agriculture, and the aspects of the industry that are special to each of Ohio's 88 counties. While each zone offers fun, interactive components, Heffron hopes the educational and career-oriented aspects are just as impactful.

“We want people to walk away from that building and exhibit saying, ‘I didn't know that about agriculture. That's remarkable,’” Heffron says. “We want people to understand and appreciate where and how their food is produced and to tell their friends and family how meaningful farmers are to their daily lives and how many opportunities there are for a career in agriculture.”

Attendees will have the opportunity to visit the Ohio Agricultural Center and ImAGine Ag exhibit during the 2026 Ohio State Fair, which is scheduled for July 29 through Aug. 9. Heffron says fairgoers are sure to be impressed with the entirety of the renovations undertaken by the Expo Center and State Fairgrounds and hopes the Agricultural Center gains must-see status.

“We want this to be like the butter cow — a destination that fairgoers are drawn to every year,” he says.



Harness Racing to be Highlighted in New ImAGine Ag Exhibit

By Wes Mayberry

Agriculture is a huge driver of Ohio's economy. In fact, according to the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the industry annually contributes \$124 billion to Ohio's economy and employs one out of every eight people in the state. To highlight that enormous impact and the diversity of Ohio's agriculture industry, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation has created an immersive exhibit set to debut in the new Ohio Agricultural Center at this year's Ohio State Fair.

"Every year, the Ohio Farm Bureau has had the opportunity to put together an exhibit that brings Ohio agriculture's industry partners together to tell the story of the industry," says Ohio Farm Bureau Federation Senior Director of Leadership Development Marlene Eick. "The 2026 Ohio State Fair has become an expanded opportunity with the opening of the new building, and we're really excited to have the chance to put together this exhibit."

Dubbed ImAGine Ag, the exhibit will cover 75,000 of the Ohio Agricultural Center's 100,000 square feet of multi-use convention space and features seven immersive experiences. Each experience has a themed area — Storied Seasons, Harvest Hero, Crop Invaders, Weather WonderLab, Creature Comforts Trail, Buckeye State AgQuest, and Seasons of Innovation — and visitors can explore a variety of agriculture-related topics in interactive ways.

"Some highlights include hands-on activities with drones to learn about innovative precision technology in agriculture, you'll get to experience some of the technology that's in place in modern barns that helps farmers take really great care of animals, and you'll get your own point of view from a cab of a combine to learn about the crops that are grown in Ohio," Eick says. "We really designed this experience to be an iconic destination that a family would visit every time they come to the Ohio State Fair."

The Ohio Farm Bureau staff partnered with Ohio-based companies Shift-ology and Exhibit Concepts Inc. to bring the exhibit from concept to reality, and agricultural commodity and industry groups have also been instrumental in providing ideas and creative elements for the exhibit.

"Ohio Farm Bureau's charge is to tell the story of Ohio agriculture on behalf of all of Ohio agriculture, so we wanted to involve a lot of the groups in order to get that story right," Eick says.

Just how diverse is Ohio's agriculture industry? According to the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio farmers grow or raise 200 different crops and livestock. Horses are a key part of the livestock component, as the Ohio Quarter Horse Association ranks Ohio's equine industry eighth nationally in terms of economic impact and estimates the state's equine population to number over 300,000. So, naturally, horses will be featured in multiple areas of the ImAGine Ag exhibit.

"In the Storied Seasons zone, there's a reference to harness racing in the summer as you visit fairs. In the Creature Comforts zone, a portion of the exhibit features the 'superpowers of animals' in which the equine sector is lifted up as bringing us excitement and entertainment," Eick says. "Harness racing is one of the really great sectors of our industry that highlights just how many different facets agriculture has."

The 2026 Ohio State Fair is scheduled for July 29 through Aug. 9, and Eick is eagerly anticipating what she hopes will be an overwhelmingly positive response to the new exhibit.

"The Ohio State Fair welcomes nearly one million visitors each year, and I am really excited to share this exhibit and the story of Ohio agriculture with fairgoers," she says. "It's going to be a space where visitors connect food, farming, science, and stewardship and really see the journey of food from farm to table and the diversity of Ohio agriculture. I'm really excited for it."

Thank You to our 2026 P.A.C.E.R. Contributors

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Cheryl Houck	Bret & Robin Schwartz		

OHIO BREEDERS AWARD REQUIREMENTS

Mares registered in 2021 (Foals of 2022)

Mare registration date 11/30/21

Foal Born 2022

Membership Required

Mares registered in 2022 (Foals of 2023)

Mare registration date 11/30/22

Foal Born 2023

Membership Required

Mares registered in 2023 (Foals of 2024)

Mare registration date 11/30/23

Foal Born 2024

Membership Required

Mares registered in 2024 (Foals of 2025)

Mare registration date 11/30/24

Foal Born 2025

Membership Required

Mares registered in 2025 (Foals of 2026)

Mare registration date 11/30/25

Foal Born 2026

Membership Required

Registration Fee: \$20 per mare. For mares registered in 2019 forward, in addition to the \$20 registration fee per mare, registrations received from December 1st to December 31st must add a \$100 per-mare late fee. Registration will not be accepted until all fees are paid in full.

Membership Requirements: All owners of the mare (including those in businesses or stables) are required to join as Active OHHA Members. All business entities or stables listed as owners are also required to join as Associate Members.

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Minutes of the Ohio State Racing Commission Meeting Tuesday, January 20, 2026

- (1) The Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC) held its monthly meeting at 10:00 a.m. on January 20, 2026, at the Vern Riffe Center, Room 1920, 19th floor, 77 S. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215.
- (2) Call to Order and Roll Call: Chair Beth Hansen called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Commissioners Tom Winters, Greg Simpson, Dan McCarthy, and Jeff Slyman were present. Commissioner Dan McCarthy arrived at 10:37 during public comments, just prior to Ms. Renee Mancino speaking as a limited representative for her clients regarding item 6(B).
- (3) Approval of Minutes from the December 16, 2025, Commission Meeting: Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the December 16, 2025, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance.
- (4) Ratification of Executive Director Approvals: Commissioner Simpson moved to ratify the Executive Director's approvals and Commissioner Winters seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance. Executive Director Dragone mentioned to be mindful of the upcoming freezing weather and to consider the weather in setting post parade times. Executive Director Dragone also asked for an update on Dayton's qualifier/stall situation. OHHA President Scott Mogan said that he discussed with Dayton's Racing Director Jason Bluhm about the possibility of the OHHA buying temporary stalls and mats for the horses to stay out of the weather until paddock stalls become available. Chair Hansen & Executive Director Dragone thanked the OHHA/Dayton and were appreciative of them working cooperatively on this issue.
- (5) Resolution of 2026-01 Casino Tax Revenue Distribution: Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the Resolution and Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance. Commissioner Winters asked if there was anything extraordinary in the resolution. Fiscal Officer Sherry White replied that this resolution is our typical quarterly distribution. Chair Hansen noted that the next quarterly distribution will consider the Quarter Horse purse distribution.
- (6) Approval of OSDF 2026 requests. Chair Hansen took the Budget, Rules, and Stakes Schedule as three separate motions. The motions were taken out of order with item 6(B) Rules being the last to be voted on.
 - A Budget: Commissioner Winters moved to approve the 2026 OSDF Budget as the 1st Item. Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. Commissioner Winters, the Standardbred subcommittee chair, said that the OHHA has been very diligent and will be just fine with the budget. Chair Hansen noted the revenue shortfall that will be made up by the OHHA. Chair Hansen asked the room if there were any questions, comments, concerns, or items of note. There were no questions or comments from anyone attending the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance.
 - B Rules: Commissioner Winters moved to approve the 2026 OSDF rules as the 3rd Item. Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. Commissioner Winters noted that the rules were similar to last year's rules, with some minor tweaks. Chair Hansen asked the room if there were any questions, comments, concerns, or items of note. There were no questions or comments from anyone attending the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance.
 - C Stakes Schedule: Commissioner Winters moved to approve the 2026 OSDF Stakes Schedule as the 2nd Item. Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. Chair Hansen asked the room if there were any questions, comments, concerns, or items of note. There were no questions or comments from anyone attending the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance.
- (7) OSDF Request to Reappoint Hugh "Sandy" Beatty as HHHRP Trustee: Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the appointment. Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote by all in attendance.
- (8) Update on Horse Fatalities: Dr. James Robertson updated the commission on horse racing and training fatalities at the parimutuel tracks in Ohio. For 2026 there have been 2 thoroughbred fatalities and 1 harness fatality. In 2025, the total number of racing and training fatalities for both thoroughbred and harness in Ohio was 41. At all thoroughbred tracks in 2025, there was a total of 31 fatalities: 22 racing and 9 training categorized into 30 catastrophic breakdowns and 1 sudden death. There were 14,991 thoroughbred racing starts with 22 racing fatalities for a racing fatality rate of 1.47/1000 starts, resulting in a corresponding safety record of 99.85%. The 2024 fatality rate was 1.31/1000, and in 2023 1.55/1000 starts. At all Ohio harness tracks in 2025, there were 55,735 harness starts with 10 racing fatalities - 7 catastrophic breakdowns and 3 sudden deaths. Chair Hansen questioned if the sudden deaths in harness racing are unusual. Dr. Robertson answered that they are not uncommon and we report more sudden deaths in harness than we do in thoroughbreds. Commissioner Slyman questioned if frequency of racing could also be a factor. Dr. Robertson answered there is no definitive answer to that, however, if a horse is predisposed to atrial fibrillation, it may be a factor. Dr. Robertson commented on winter racing, saying in general, the horse is resilient in cold weather due to their upper airway warming the air prior to reaching the lungs. However, some horses with asthma may be more sensitive to the cold, and cold air could trigger the asthmatic condition. In extreme cold conditions, trainers should have the option to scratch their horse if they feel it is not in the best interest of the horse to race. (Note: it is the practice of the commission to allow horsemen to scratch horses without penalty in extreme temperature conditions).
- (9) Monthly Financial Report: Fiscal Officer Sherry White said calendar year 2025 ended with the commission down \$54,000 for the six-month period July-December. When compared to last year at this point, we are significantly ahead. The deficit at this point last year was \$190,000. Revenues and expenses are both up, which is completely expected. Another category with a noticeable difference are the dues for ARCI licensing, which have been \$16,500 for many years. They now reflect a licensing system user fee of \$7,251 tacked on for the year. We will be in pretty good shape for the balance of this Fiscal Year. Last Fiscal Year had us gaining over \$300,000 during the six-month period of January-June. January has always been and will continue to be a very good month for the Commission with high licensing revenues and the Casino Revenue deposit. Additionally, expenses are low overall with just three tracks racing over the winter. No comments to note from Chair Hansen or Commissioners.
- (10) Commissioners' Comments: There were no Commissioners' comments.
- (11) Public Comments: Jeff Jarvis, owner of AFM Stables, LTD and a board member of the OHBPA commented on an incident at Mahoning Racetrack in October 2025. His horse had been disqualified for interference, and it was his opinion that the Stewards did not speak to his rider after speaking to the other rider involved in the incident. He felt this was a due process violation. He appealed the disqualification and was advised that 3769-7-42 only allows for appeals on rulings that penalize a licensee and the commission would not review his appeal because there was no ruling to appeal. He did not argue that his horse should have been disqualified. Deputy Director Boulmetis and AAG Todd DeBoe explained the process during a stewards inquiry: The stewards review the replay and they telephone the clerk of scales to speak to the riders involved in the inquiry. Notably, that day there were telephone issues. Hugh Drexler, Director of Racing at Mahoning, confirmed that there had been telephone issues between the Stewards and the Clerk of Scales. Dave Basler of the OHBPA also commented that he accompanied Mr. Jarvis up to the Stewards stand and was aware that there was an issue with the telephone calls. The commission had reviewed this issue when it occurred and found that the Stewards used their personal cell phone to communicate

through the clerk of scales to both jockeys. Mr. Jarvis asked how to request a meeting with the Commission, and he was told that he could call the commission at any time, or speak with Dave Basler, Executive Director of the OHBPA to arrange a meeting.

Renee Mancino made a formal appearance on behalf of her clients Dan Noble, Christi Noble and Norman Rae Racing, LLC. She provided each Commissioner with a letter titled "Public Objection - Proposed amendment to Ohio Sires Stakes Rules (Agenda Item 6)". This letter was a written

objection regarding item 6 on the agenda, which was the commission voting to approve the rules that were passed by the OSDF at their previous public board meeting (previously referred to in these minutes on page 2). Ms. Mancino read excerpts from her letter and stated jurisdictional and statutory objections.

- (12) Executive Session: Commissioner Winters moved to go into executive session at 10:50 a.m. Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- (13) Commissioner Winters moved to go out of executive session at 11:58 am and Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- (14) Adjournment: Commissioner Simpson moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Winters seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote, and the Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Date, Time, and Place of Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 1948 Riffe Center

Minutes of the Ohio State Racing Commission Meeting Tuesday, February 17, 2026

- (1) The Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC) held its monthly meeting at 10:00 a.m. on February 17, 2026, at the Vern Riffe Center, Room 1920, 19th floor, 77 S. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

- (2) Call to Order and Roll Call: Chair Beth Hansen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners Tom Winters, Greg Simpson, Dan McCarthy, and Jeff Slyman were present.

- (3) Approval of Minutes from the January 20, 2026, Commission Meeting: Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the January 20, 2026, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- (4) Ratification of Executive Director Approvals: Commissioner Simpson moved to ratify the Executive Director's approvals and Commissioner Winters seconded the motion.

- (5) Update on Horse Fatalities: Each month the OSRC reports the racing and training fatalities in Ohio at the parimutuel tracks. In January there were three Thoroughbred racing fatalities, all catastrophic breakdowns. Through February 9, 2026, there have been 1,011 starts with 3 racing deaths for a fatality rate of 2.97/1000 starts, with a corresponding 99.7% safety record. In January there were three Standardbred racing fatalities - two sudden deaths and one catastrophic breakdown. Through February 9, 2026, there have been 5,357 Harness starts with 3 racing deaths, for a fatality rate of 0.56/1000 starts with

a corresponding 99.94% safety record. Thus far in February, there have been no fatalities in either breed. As of February 16, there have been a total of 6 fatalities for both breeds.

- (6) Monthly Financial Report: Fiscal officer Sherry White reported when reviewing our Statement of Operations for Fiscal Year 2026, the commission was ahead for the month by \$268,000. The Casino Revenue was used for operations and had the addition of a couple of extra positions to better investigate at the tracks and handle administrative office duties. This has resulted in higher payroll expenses. In addition, testing expenses have been around \$35,000 more thus far this year; these expenses have been offset by the horsemen contributing \$18,000 more than last year. As mentioned last month, ARCI dues were \$7,200 more than last year. Chair Beth Hansen inquired about the basis for the increase in ARCI dues; Assistant Executive Director Holly Chandler explained the added increase was due to adding a user fee for maintenance and system updates because we use the ARCI system for licensing. She added that their licensing system is significantly less expensive than any other option. Casino Revenue payouts were sent on January 27th: Mahoning Valley received \$94,660.76, Belterra Park received \$88,326.58, and Thistledown received \$95,012.66 towards Thoroughbred purse pools. Miami Valley received \$131,538.22, Northfield Park received \$351,101.59, Dayton Raceway received \$107,339.63, and Scioto Downs received \$155,736.81 towards standard-

bred purse pools. Miami Valley and Scioto Downs each received \$148,058.14 towards commercial operations.

- (7) Commissioners' Comments: Commissioner Simpson formally recognized the attendance of Mr. Brian Baldrige, the Director of Agriculture, at this Commission meeting. Commissioner Simpson indicated his intent to introduce a resolution honoring David Miller for surpassing John Campbell's record as the all-time leading driver by earnings.

- (8) Public Comments: There were no public comments.

- (9) Executive Session: Commissioner Winters moved to go into executive session to discuss pending legal matters at 10:11 a.m. and Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote. Commissioner Winters moved to go out of executive session at 11:40 a.m. and Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call.

- (10) Adjournment: Commissioner Simpson moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote, and the Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Date, Time, and Place of Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 1948 Riffe Center

Minutes of the Ohio State Racing Commission Meeting Tuesday, March 17, 2026

- (1) The Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC) held its monthly meeting at 10:00 a.m. on March 17, 2026, at the Vern Riffe Center, Room 1920, 19th floor, 77 S. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

- (2) Call to Order and Roll Call: Chair Beth Hansen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners Tom Winters, Greg Simpson, Dan McCarthy, and Jeff Slyman were present.

- (3) Approval of Minutes from the February 17, 2026, Commission Meeting: Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the February 17, 2026, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Winters seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- (4) Commissioners' Comments: Chair Hansen commented that ODA-ATL had their RMTC accredita-

tion suspended for 60 days, and the OSRC was able to get samples from that day's racing to a different lab immediately.

- (5) Ratification of Executive Director Approvals: Commissioner Simpson moved to ratify the Executive Director's approvals and Commissioner Winters seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

- (6) Resolution 2026-02 – 5-year rule review: Chapter 7 amended and no change rules. Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the February 17, 2026, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Winters seconded the motion. Deputy Director Boulmetis discussed the three significant changes, and that the rest were routine corrections of previous spelling errors. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.
- (7) Approval of the 2026 Thistledown Meet Request: Commissioner Winters moved to approve the 2026 Thistledown meet request. Commissioner Slyman seconded the motion. Thistledown Director of Racing Operations Patrick Ellsworth said that they have been doing a lot of maintenance on the backside over the winter. Chair Hansen mentioned that the Commission would be going to Thistledown on March 18, 2026, to see what the conditions look like. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.
- (8) Update on Horse Fatalities: Dr. Robertson summarized the fatalities that have occurred since the February Commission meeting. In February, there was one fatality in a Standardbred, a catastrophic breakdown, and none in Thoroughbreds. In March, there have been two Thoroughbred racing fatalities: One catastrophic and one sudden death. To date in March, there were no Standardbred fatalities. In Thoroughbreds through March 10, 2026, there have been 2,095 starts with 5 racing deaths (4 catastrophic and 1 sudden

death) for a fatality rate of 2.39/1,000 starts with a corresponding Safety Record of 99.76%. In Standardbreds through March 10, 2026, there have been 9,946 harness starts with 4 racing deaths (2 catastrophic and 2 sudden death) for a fatality rate of .40/1,000 starts, corresponding with a Safety record of 99.96%. Dr. Robertson also commented on HERF (HISA Equine Recovery Foundation). HERF intervened when a horse at Mahoning suffered a significant injury. HERF took responsibility for the horse, had it shipped to Kentucky where it underwent surgery and will be rehabilitated and donated. Notably, on May 22, the HISA board of directors will be meeting to discuss the ban on Lasix. Currently, all racing states are under a 3-year exemption for the ban. It will take a unanimous decision by the board to allow the continued use of Lasix. If only one director disagrees, Lasix will not be allowed. HISA funded three studies on the use of Lasix, but none of the results of the studies have been disclosed. New York State contributed \$18 million for a 3-year imaging research project, which will be done at Cornell. NYRA also contributed.

- (9) Monthly Financial Report: Fiscal Officer Sherry White reported that due to timing our gain was nearly \$5,000 for the month compared to last February when we had a loss of over \$63,000. In 2025, the last payroll in February cycling on that last weekend, it pushed the debit into March 2025. This will result in March 2026 appearing worse than March 2025. Revenues are up 13%

for the Fiscal Year over last year due to the greater Casino Revenue distribution. Our legal costs are increased due to expensive appeal hearing invoices and legal costs incurred with the upcoming sale of Northfield Park, LLC. Although the cost differences are not significant, there are differences between this year and last year due to timing of the States' invoices for rent, IT, printing, etc.

- (10) Public Comments: There were no public comments.
- (11) Executive Session: Commissioner Winters moved to go into executive session to discuss pending legal matters at 10:45 a.m. and Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote. Commissioner Winters moved to go out of executive session at 11:09 a.m. and Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call.
- (12) Adjournment: Commissioner Winters moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote, and the Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Date, Time, and Place of Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 1948 Riffe Center



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