

Buckeye Harness Bulletin

October 2, 2026



'What He's Done This Year Has Been a Blessing'

Unraced at 2, Touchedbythesea Now Aiming for BSS Championship



Touchedbythesea and driver Chris Page win in the fifth leg of the Buckeye Stallion Series at the Delaware County Fair on Sept. 24. Credit: Conrad Photo

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By Wes Mayberry

If you like consistent success, Touchedbythesea is probably not the horse for you. But in the Buckeye Stallion Series Finals on Saturday (Oct. 3), he's not to be counted out.

"He didn't race as a 2-year-old. He showed some ability but was just a little colt sore," says Kris Brechler, of Knox Services, which owns Touchedbythesea with Burke Racing Stable, Slaughter Racing Stable, and Weaver Brusceci. "We brought him back this year, and he raced pretty good early. Then he kind of hit a little wall, and now he's racing good again."

That's right, Touchedbythesea enters Saturday's BSS final for 3-year-old colt pacers with some positive momentum after winning in the fifth leg of the series at the Delaware County Fair on Sept. 24. Driven by Chris Page, the Downbytheseaside gelding out of Summer Touch won that race by a length in 1:54.2 to make Little Brown Jug Day that much more exciting for his connections.

"It's awesome to win at Delaware," Brechler says. "We had 20-some people there with us, and everyone got to go get their picture taken (in the winner's circle). It was a fun day at Delaware, and getting the win like that gives us confidence going into the final."

The Ron Burke trainee hasn't always inspired confidence, however. A homebred for the ownership group, Touchedbythesea was a complete unknown going into his sophomore season. So, as far as expectations, there really weren't any.

"We heard that he was fast, but we didn't know if he would stay sound, so there were really no expectations for him at all," Brechler says.

Touchedbythesea scored his first career win in just his second start, taking an overnight race at The Meadows on April 29. Just over a week later, on May 9, he added a victory in the first leg of the BSS at Eldorado Scioto Downs, edging Tsunami Seas by a quarter of a length in what remains a lifetime mark of 1:52.3.

"I thought he raced well with it being only his third lifetime start," Brechler says. "It was great for him."

A victory in the second leg of the BSS on June 6 at Northfield Park — this time by one and three-quarters lengths over Fire The Prez in 1:54.3 — inspired even more confidence.

"He drew the two hole, which is always a good thing, and he got to the front, and (driver) Chris (Page) just controlled the race from there and sprinted home," Brechler remembers. "That was good for him. It showed that he has some ability and that he could keep getting better."

That confidence was soon dampened, though, as Touchedbythesea missed the board in six of his next seven starts going into the fifth leg of the BSS at Delaware. That stretch included finishes of third, fourth, two fifths, two sixths, and a seventh. So, what was behind that prolonged drought of success? His connections were uncertain.

"He had a couple bad post-position draws, which maybe hurt, but there really wasn't any one thing to pinpoint," Brechler says.

Whatever it was, it didn't impact Touchedbythesea's performance at Delaware. His third BSS win of the season and fourth victory overall increased his earnings to \$41,275 from 13 starts and re-solidified his status as a contender going into the final.

"It shows that he belongs in the final and gives us some confidence that maybe he's bounced back a little bit," Brechler says. "What he's done this year so far has been a blessing for us."

With Page back in the sulky on Saturday, Touchedbythesea will look to beat out his eight competitors — Odds On Sugar, Ultimate Catch, Legends Rule, Odds On Mase, Odds On Rpj, Brix's On Fire, The Ebony Dragon, and Odds On Phil — for the title of 2026 BSS champion in the sophomore colt pace division. He finished the five legs of the BSS as the points leader with 160, seven points ahead of Odds On Sugar and 13 up on The Ebony Dragon. But he was not among the top three choices on the morning line for Saturday's race.

After drawing the six hole, Odds On Rpj (Luke Hanners) opened as the 9-5 favorite ahead of 5-2 second choice Odds On Sugar (Dexter Dunn) and 7-2 third choice Ultimate Catch (Brett Miller), who will leave from posts one and two, respectively. Touchedbythesea is the 6-1 fourth choice and will leave from post four in what will be his first career start at Dayton Raceway. Brechler said the horse's inexperience at Dayton shouldn't be an issue, and he's looking forward to seeing if he can come away with a win.

"It all depends on post position, and he drew the four

hole, which is good for him and gives Chris some options with him,” Brechler says. “We’re looking forward to watching him race. It’s going to be a tough race — there’s a lot of nice horses in there. But we’re hoping for a good night. It’s a great race card, and hopefully he gets the job done.”

That race is one of eight \$80,000 divisions of the Buckeye Stallion Series Finals at Dayton Raceway on Saturday. The 14-race card also includes four \$250,000 Dayton Derby Grand Circuit events. First-race post time is 6:30 p.m.

A brief look at each of the remaining seven BSS events is below.

3-Year-Old Colt Trot

Bitcoin King (Aaron Merriman) will leave from post two as the 2-1 morning-line favorite. The Chris Beaver trainee has hit the board in 13 of 17 seasonal starts with six wins, including two BSS victories. Time Has Come (B. Miller) opened as the 3-1 second choice after drawing the far outside post.

3-Year-Old Filly Pace

Shehasaway (B. Miller) is the 5-2 morning-line favorite after drawing post five. Trained by Steve Bauder, she has two wins this season, both of which came in the BSS. Takeaway Hanover (Braiden Rhoades) drew the rail and opened as the 7-2 second choice.

3-Year-Old Filly Trot

Dream Of Charlotte (Rhoades) will leave from post five as the 5-2 morning-line favorite. The Bill Rhoades trainee scored a victory in the fifth leg of the BSS and has seven wins and seven seconds in 17 seasonal starts. Princess Karolyn (Sam Widger) opened as the 7-2 second choice.

2-Year-Old Colt Pace

Trained and driven by Kayne Kauffman, Passing Gear opened as the 5-2 favorite after drawing post four. He has four wins in seven seasonal starts, including three BSS victories. Declamation (Page) is the 7-2 second choice.

2-Year-Old Colt Trot

Obsessed With Me (B. Miller) and Lou Armstrong (Anthony MacDonald), both three-time winners in the BSS this season, opened as the top choices at 2-1 and 3-1, respectively. Matthew Burkholder trainee Obsessed With Me has four wins in eight seasonal starts and will leave from post eight. Easter Bb, the lone four-time BSS winner this year, drew the rail and opened with 9-2 odds.

2-Year-Old Filly Pace

Midnight Haze (Ronnie Wrenn Jr.) is the 5-2 morning-line favorite. The Edward Miller trainee will leave from post three with three wins in six seasonal starts. Sea Jazz (Ronnie Gillespie) is the 7-2 second choice after drawing the far outside post. Our Grey Heart (David Miller), a three-time BSS winner this year, opened with 6-1 odds.

2-Year-Old Filly Trot

Sweet Stevie, trained and driven by Kurt Sugg, opened as the 5-2 favorite after drawing post eight. She has four wins in eight seasonal starts, including three BSS victories. Leaving alongside her from post seven is 7-2 second choice Been Thru Hill (Carson Conrad). Sweet Valorie (Hanners), who joined Sweet Stevie with three BSS wins in this division in 2026, drew the rail and opened with 8-1 odds.



Freshman colt trotter Easter Bb enters the Buckeye Stallion Series Finals with four BSS wins in the series' five legs.

Credit: Conrad Photo



2026 Buckeye Stallion Series Final Standings Divisional Top 10



3-Year-Old Colt Pace

1. Touchedbythesea- 160
2. Odds On Sugar- 153
3. The Ebony Dragon- 147
4. Ultimate Catch- 129
5. Brix's On Fire- 112
6. Odds On Phil- 108
7. Odds On Rpj- 102
8. Global- 90
9. Odds On Mase- 85
10. Legends Rule- 84

2-Year-Old Colt Trot

1. Easter Bb- 204
- T2. Lou Armstrong- 153
- T2. Obsessed With Me- 153
4. Little Dirt Cowboy- 143
5. Great Start- 117
6. Senor Julio- 112
7. East King Street- 108
8. Dollar Guard- 104
- T9. Inrange Anytime- 91
- T9. Camsflashyaction- 91

2-Year-Old Filly Pace

1. Our Grey Heart- 192
2. Midnight Haze- 116
- T3. Lyons Cartier- 115
- T3. Sea Jazz- 115
5. Ds Ava- 113
- T6. Tina Fire- 103
- T6. Poseformiki- 103
8. Sempre B Bella- 102
9. Gillette- 93
10. You Go Cocoa- 92

3-Year-Old Colt Trot

1. Lane Holding Court- 137
2. Ready For Pictures- 128
3. Time Has Come- 115
4. Royal Enterprise- 112
- T5. Mile Range- 103
- T5. Bitcoin King- 103
7. Eckert Hill Brady- 88
8. Ready For Sunshine- 79
9. Max The Mighty- 78
10. Jogging Diamond- 73

3-Year-Old Filly Pace

1. Eyes Up- 134
- T2. Shehasaway- 102
- T2. Bad Girl Up- 102
4. Baxter Tough- 99
5. Ima Beach Girl- 97
6. Blood Queen- 92
7. Cruzin Tothe Pier- 91
8. Climate- 76
9. Takeaway Hanover- 71
- T10. Racing Artist- 65
- T10. Jamie Amanda- 65

2-Year-Old Filly Trot

1. Sweet Valorie- 175
2. Sweet Stevie- 153
3. Been Thru Hill- 147
4. Aunt Jessie- 141
5. Rose Run Classy- 128
6. Lady Martinique- 124
7. Indigo Times- 121
8. Wishinghallofchina- 112
9. Mitey Lil- 110
10. Ds Alisson- 105

2-Year-Old Colt Pace

- T1. Into The Blaze- 153
- T1. Passing Gear- 153
3. Mental Up- 116
4. On Fire- 103
5. Hear The Thunder- 101
6. Kb Moneyball- 78
7. Declamation- 77
8. Rose Run Champ- 67
9. Monte Be Good- 65
10. Seaside Saint- 55

3-Year-Old Filly Trot

1. Dublins Breanna- 167
2. Flirtin Tomi- 141
3. Chasingstardust As- 121
4. No Approval Needed- 109
5. Lynn Range- 104
6. Til The End As- 102
7. Dream Of Charlotte- 100
8. Mockingbird As- 99
9. Princess Carolyn- 88
10. Moolah In The Bank- 79

Consolations

Oct. 2 - Dayton Raceway

Finals

Oct. 3 - Dayton Raceway

Ohio Sires Stakes Veteran Championships

Sunday, Oct. 4, 2026 - Northfield Park Racino

'The Heart of a Champion'

Jailhouse Pearl Looks to Add to Impressive Resume in OSS Veteran Championship



Jailhouse Pearl and driver Brett Miller win at Eldorado Scioto Downs on July 3 in 1:51.2, equaling the track record for 4-year-old mare trotters. **Credit:** Conrad Photo

By Wes Mayberry

Jailhouse Pearl's list of achievements is impressive. An Ohio Fairs Championship winner as a freshman, she went on to become an Ohio Sires Stakes champion and the Ohio 3-Year-Old Filly Trotter of the Year last season. Now she's looking to add an OSS Veteran Championship to her resume.

Jailhouse Pearl, a homebred for Casey Clemens, of Malta, Ohio, is one of eight horses in the \$100,000 OSS Veteran Championship for mare trotters on Sunday (Oct. 4) at Northfield Park Racino. Despite her past success, the 4-year-old Long Tom mare out of Jailhouse Broad opened with 12-1 odds after drawing the far outside post.

"Any time you get the eight hole at Northfield, you just shake your head. Everything just has to work out right, and up at Northfield, it hardly ever does," says trainer Eric Nesselroad. "She's never been 12-1 on the morning line, but that's just because of the eight hole."

With Luke Hanners in the sulky, Jailhouse Pearl will look to overcome the unfavorable post position against a talented field of competitors, including early 8-5 favorite Abbey D (Dan Noble) and 3-1 co-second choices Sugar Instead (Chris Page) and Jurassic Hattie (Brett Miller).

"She'll race hard and will be coming on at the end of it," Nesselroad says.

While Nesselroad has plenty of confidence in her now, that wasn't always the case. In fact, she proved quite



Jailhouse Pearl and driver Austin Hanners win at Eldorado Scioto Downs on Sept. 6, 2025.

frustrating to work with as a 2-year-old.

“She wouldn’t do anything as a 2-year-old — she wouldn’t go around the track, and she wouldn’t train. I’d train her, and I’d have bags on my whip just to shake it to try to get her to do something,” Nesselroad says. “When stake time came, I told the owner, ‘This horse isn’t going to do any good. She won’t give us anything.’ But we kept going.”

That persistence ended up paying off, as Jailhouse Pearl piled up 10 wins and five seconds in 15 starts, most of which came at Ohio fair tracks. She was a runner-up in a leg of the Buckeye Stallion Series at Northfield and capped the season by winning the Ohio Fairs Championship for freshman filly trotters.

“We finally got her ready to race, and she went to the county fairs and learned how to be a racehorse,” Nesselroad remembers. “She’s always loved to pass horses. That’s her game — she loves to have a target, and she’ll go after it.”

Jailhouse Pearl banked \$63,377 that year, and her performances gave her connections a level of confidence that she could develop into something greater. Clemens and Nesselroad remained only cautiously optimistic, believing her ceiling to be the Buckeye Stallion Series. But after a second-place finish in the first leg of the BSS, they decided to move her up to the OSS. She delivered.

“Danny Noble was parked every step of the mile, and

she never quit,” Nesselroad says.

She won that OSS race by a length in 1:54.4 and went on to win the \$300,000 OSS Scarlet Championship at Dayton Raceway with Austin Hanners in the sulky. But there was still more to come, as she was later named Ohio’s 3-Year-Old Filly Trotter of the Year for 2025. Not bad for a horse that refused to cooperate in training just one year prior.

“We put her in the Sires Stakes, and she just took off, and the rest is history,” Nesselroad says. “She has a big heart and takes care of herself every day. She’s not hard to deal with. She’s not the prettiest horse or the biggest horse, but she has the heart of a champion.”

Jailhouse Pearl finished her sophomore campaign with a 5-5-2 record in 14 starts, banking \$309,317. Nesselroad was proud to have such an accomplished horse in his stable.

“I’ve been doing this for over 35 years, and to get one like that and have everything just click as the year went along and be good at the right time was amazing,” he says.

As a 4-year-old this year, Jailhouse Pearl has compiled a 4-4-4 record with \$69,547 in earnings from 16 starts despite some bad luck in post-position draws. She has a pair of victories in Open II races at Eldorado Scioto Downs and finished third in the Ohio Breeders Championship at Delaware. But perhaps her biggest season highlight was equaling the track record for 4-year-old

trotting mares at Scioto Downs on July 3, winning in 1:51.2 to match Jurassic Hattie's mark from 2025.

"That was a big achievement for her," Nesselroad says. "Every time she races, we just shake our heads. If you look at her, you wouldn't think she should be that good. But when she races, she puts her heart out there."

Miller was in the bike for that achievement, but he'll be driving Jurassic Hattie on Sunday as Jailhouse Pearl looks to add to an already impressive resume. A victory in the OSS Veteran Championship would be the cherry on top of an already successful career.

"It'd be another great achievement for her," Nesselroad says.

A brief look at each of the other three \$100,000 divisions of the OSS Veteran Championships is below. First-race post time for Sunday's 15-race card at Northfield is 6 p.m.

Veteran Mare Pace

Odds On Chesapeake (L. Hanners), the 2025 Ohio

3-Year-Old Filly Pacer of the Year, opened as the 2-1 favorite after drawing post five. The Virgil Morgan Jr. trainee has hit the board in nine of 15 seasonal starts, earning \$163,945. Hey Hey Mama (Aaron Merriman) is the 3-1 second choice and will leave from the rail.

Veteran Horse & Gelding Trot

Hung Over (Noble) is the early 6-5 favorite and will leave from post five. Trained by Bob Stewart, he has a 1-2-2 mark in 11 seasonal starts. Caviar Gold (Merriman), the 3-1 second choice on the morning line, drew the rail.

Veteran Horse & Gelding Pace

Paris's Dragon (Page) is the 2-1 morning-line favorite after drawing the rail. The Ron Burke trainee has a 4-4-2 record in 19 seasonal starts. Clever Cody (Luke Ebersole) and Charlie May (Noble) opened as co-second choices at 4-1 and will leave side by side from posts two and three, respectively.

2026 National Leaderboard - Ohio Connections

As of Sept. 30

Driver Wins

1. Justin Irvine- 469
3. Chris Page- 434
4. Aaron Merriman- 386
5. Ronnie Wrenn Jr.- 378
7. Luke Hanners- 371
9. Dan Noble- 352
25. Brett Miller- 254
26. Braiden Rhoades- 252
27. Chris Lems- 250
28. Tyler Smith- 245

Driver Earnings

5. Ronnie Wrenn Jr.- \$8,122,308
6. Chris Page- \$7,054,284
12. Luke Hanners- \$5,464,795
14. David Miller- \$4,842,263
16. Brett Miller- \$4,662,634
18. Tyler Smith- \$4,425,875
21. Justin Irvine- \$4,334,426
25. Aaron Merriman- \$4,032,978
31. Austin Hanners- \$3,317,334
33. Chris Lems- \$3,246,266

Trainer Wins

1. Ron Burke- 778
3. Virgil Morgan Jr.- 264
12. Herman Hagerman- 152
15. Cory Kreiser- 141
29. Steve Carter- 114
31. Rosy Weaver- 110
32. Hank LeVan- 109
33. Todd Luther- 108
33. Sam Schillaci- 108
36. Heather France- 105



Dayton Raceway Opens 2026 Season



Hollywood Gaming Dayton Raceway opened its 2026 season on Monday, Sept. 28. Flagman (pictured, #4) won the first Open event of the meet, taking the \$30,000 Open Trot in 1:53 on Tuesday, Sept. 29. Luke Plano drove the 9-year-old Guccio gelding for trainer Rick Plano and owner Maryann Plano. The 2026 meet at Dayton Raceway runs through December 30. **Credit:** Conrad Photo

APPROXIMATE ODDS | RESULTS | WIN | PLACE

SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE RACES

PRESENTED BY OHIO HARNESS HORSEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

LIVE COVERAGE OF THE

BUCKEYE STALLION SERIES FINALS

HOLLYWOOD DAYTON RACEWAY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD

POST TIME 6:30 PM

WATCH ON THE OHHA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

A photograph of a harness racing horse, #1, running on a track. The horse is wearing blinkers and is pulling a sulky. The background is a blurred track and fence.

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2026 New All-Age Track Records at Ohio Fairs

Pacing

Circleville - Burnout, 1:56
Bellefontaine - Gypsy's Brother, 1:56.1
Mount Vernon - Gypsy's Brother, 1:55.2
Marysville - Fired Up Henry L, 1:54.3
Sidney - Ants Marching, 1:56
Athens - Gc's Legend, 1:56.1
Celina - Ants Marching, 1:52.3
Zanesville - Hunka Hunka, 1:56
Napoleon - Woodrow Blue Chip, 1:56.3
Lima - Carbine, 1:54.3
Woodsfield - Gc's Legend, 1:55
Canton - Stoke The Fire, 1:57
Findlay - Carbine, 1:55.1
Canfield - Charlie May, 1:53.1
Kenton - Heerzadiamondstud, 1:55.4

Trotting

Bucyrus - Lynn Range, 1:58
Athens - Out Of Range, 1:59
Berea - Where Theres Smoke, 1:59.4
Napoleon - Macmorris Hanover, 1:59.3
Wellington - Macmorris Hanover, 1:58
Woodsfield - Out Of Range, 1:59
Findlay - Jefferson Hanover, 1:58.2
Marietta - Lady Lena, 2:00.1
Wauseon - Macmorris Hanover, 1:56.2
Kenton - Tango L, 1:57

Ohio Fair Racing - Upcoming Schedule

Dates and start times subject to change

Monday, Oct. 5

Montgomery County Fair (Dayton Raceway), 2 or 4 p.m.

Coshocton County Fair (Coshocton, OH), 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 6

Coshocton County Fair (Coshocton, OH), 12 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 10

Ohio Fairs Championships (Northfield Park), 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 14

Fairfield County Fair (Lancaster, OH), 1 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 15

Fairfield County Fair (Lancaster, OH), 1:30 p.m.

