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## YONKERS RACEWAY

# Stratton seeks stakes sweep at Yonkers with Bit Of A Legend N, Sell A Bit N

By Jay Bergman

Driver Jordan Stratton needed a little bit of luck on Tuesday morning and he got it. Stratton, a major player in this year's George Morton Levy Series and Blue Chip Matchmaker, saw his mounts land inside for Saturday's rich finals at Yonkers Raceway.

"I'm very happy with the draw," Stratton said.

Indeed, Stratton's two "Bits", Bit Of A Legend N and Sell A Bit N, are positioned for a big part of the pie in the \$309,800 Blue Chip Matchmaker final (race 7) and the \$609,000 George Morton Levy (race 9).

"He acted like a great horse from the time I qualified him," said Stratton of Bit Of A Legend N, a 7-year-old son of Bettor's Delight that may in fact reach legendary stature with a victory on Saturday. The Pete Tritton-trained gelding has a chance to win five straight Levy preliminary legs and the final. That's rarified air and the gelding certainly deserves to be breathing it.

Last week Stratton raced the horse from behind and had to deal with 2015 Horse of the Year Wiggle It Jiggle it through the stretch. Somehow the two finished on the wire together, but Stratton wasn't sure that would be the result.

"I thought Wiggle It Jiggle it had him collared in mid-stretch," said Stratton. "But he didn't want to lose."

Such has been the case since arriving on these shores. Purchased by owner Harry von Knoblauch, he's already earned-out this year, winning seven times in nine tries on U.S. soil.

Perhaps what has made the horse so impressive is his ability to race using any tactics



MIKE LUZZI

**Driver Jordan Stratton sits 11th in North America in earnings this year.**

Jordan Stratton lays out for him. "He can leave or come off the gate. It really doesn't matter," said Stratton.

"I think his best race in the series had to be when he came from last (April 2) and won. The Red Sea had to part and when it did he took off," said Stratton of the last-to-first victory.

This Saturday, post two puts Bit Of A Legend N next to Take It Back Terry, a three-leg winner from the Burke stable that drew the coveted pole position for driver George Brennan.

"He's a very good horse," said Stratton of Take It Back Terry. "Actually I don't think the series has ever been as strong as it was this year."

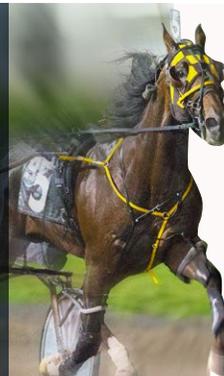
Take It Back Terry will be joined by All Bets Off (post 5) as one of three entries in the eight-horse field. Trainer Jeff Bamond Jr. has 2014

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## 'Legend' vies to stay undefeated in Levy



MIKE LIZZI

**Down Under import Bit Of A Legend N is riding a five-race win streak and has never finished worse than second in nine North American starts.**

Levy winner PH Supercam (post 3) and Mach It So (post 7) as a formidable entry. Jason Bartlett drives the former with Tim Tetrick behind Mach It So.

Completing the Levy field will be Texican N (post 6), with Yannick Gingras driving the import as part of an entry with Bit Of A Legend N, Texas Terror N (post 4) with Brett Miller and Lucan Hanover (post 8) for driver Brian Sears.

Stratton guided Sell A Bit N to two victories against the girls in the Blue Chip Matchmaker prelims and is quite excited about her prospects for the final.

"She was very good finishing in the last two legs," said Stratton. "You can leave with her and she'll give you everything finishing."

Sell A Bit N drew post three and Stratton appeared quite happy that the powerful Jeff Bamond Jr. entry of Venus Delight and Krispy Apple landed posts seven and eight respectively.

Last year Venus Delight won the Blue Chip Matchmaker from the pole position.

"There are a lot of good mares in there," said Stratton. "Al Raza N can close with any of them."

Stratton was referring to the mare he piloted to three Blue Chip Matchmaker leg victories before ceding the drive to David Miller. Al Raza N landed post 5.

The Blue Chip Matchmaker winner has started from the rail in the last three years and Lady Shadow hopes to make it four in a row. The daughter of Shadow Play won a division in the first round of the series but has since finished third, second and fourth in series action. Corey Callahan will be in the bike for trainer Josh Green.

Yagonnakissmeornot, a beaten favorite in the 2014 final of this event, landed post 4 with Dan Dube driving for trainer Rene Allard. The rugged 7-year-old mare captured three preliminary legs.

Regal Elektra (post 3) with Tim Tetrick driving and Mach It A Par (post 6) with George Brennan in the sulky complete the Blue Chip Matchmaker field.

Post time for the 13-race program at Yonkers is 7:10 p.m.

## BURNING QUESTION

On Saturday night, Yonkers Raceway is hosting the \$609,000 George Morton Levy Final with a full field of eight horses. Unfortunately there are only five betting interests.

What happened to the New York rule which was supposed to allow for uncoupled entries in stakes races worth more than \$50,000?

The rule for Thoroughbreds was announced in late April of 2015 and officially passed on July 6 of the same year. The Standardbred rule was approved 5-0 at a September 24, 2015 meeting but no action has been taken on the issue.

According to a NY Gaming Commission official, the matter is "undergoing an administrative regulatory review before it becomes adopted."

How is it that the Thoroughbred rule went through review in in under three months and the harness rule is at seven months and counting? Does harness racing take a back seat in New York?

One can certainly debate the merits of coupling versus uncoupling, but certainly an eight-horse field with trifecta and superfecta wagering is more palatable than a five-horse field with just win and exacta bets available.

- Derick Givner

## HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

The one item that really struck us on Facebook this week came from driver Aaron Merriman.

The nation's leading driver in terms of wins (277) took the time to congratulate a fellow driver at Northfield Park.

"A little late - but I noticed driver Kurt Sugg got no publicity for his 6 win night at Northfield Park on Tuesday night. He won with 6 out of his 10 drives. After Ronnie Wrenn Jr. being on absolute fire of late it even says more about this. Well give Kurt a little love. Somehow his accomplishment was over looked."

Sugg is having a solid year with 99 wins from 733 starters as of Thursday (April 21). Horses driven by him have earned \$550,623.

Merriman has a 75 win lead over fellow Northfield regular Ronnie Wrenn, Jr. He is on pace for approximately 900 wins in 2016.

Kudos to Aaron for calling attention to Kurt's accomplishment and from all of us at DRF Harness, congrats Kurt!

### Stakes Spotlight - Best Bet

Yonkers Raceway  
Saturday, April 23

#### #4 CAROLSIDEAL

Race 6 - 3/1 Morning Line

Is clearly back in top shape now and the Rene Allard trainee should be close enough to strike from the inside post.

### Stakes Spotlight - Value Play

Yonkers Raceway  
Saturday, April 23

#### #2 SANTA FE BEACHBOY

Race 8 - 12-1 Morning Line

He left hard last week but aborted that move to take back to last. Trainer Richard Banca has already sent this guy out to multiple sub 1:51 wins here.

# Tracing the best sires from 1961 to recent on-track stars

By Bob Marks

Courtesy of the Harness Racing History group on Facebook, I saw a list of the top 12 stallions in terms of money-winning producers for the year 1961. Having followed Harness Racing since then, I was well aware of each of these horses and their offspring, but the fascinating part is which of their paternal lines have endured and are still flourishing in the current era.

The leading money winning stallion back then was Adios, considered by many the most dominant progenitor of any breed. We've all heard of his headliners: Bret Hanover, Adios Butler, Adios Harry, Bullet Hanover, Shadow Wave, Adios Boy, Countess Adios, Dotties Pick, etc.

Actually, the Adios line is still evident but through an unlikely source in his son Henry T Adios, himself an unsuccessful sire except for son Silent Majority. Apart from one son, Abercrombie, Silent Majority was also an unsuccessful sire. Abercrombie had two great sons in Artsplace and Life Sign. In turn, Artsplace sired Art Major, he a leading contemporary sire, and Artiscape, he but marginally successful. However, Artiscape sired Yankee Crusier, who in turn sired 2014 Horse of the Year Sweet Lou. Life Sign meanwhile sired Real Desire, who in turn produced Tell All and last year's aged pacing champion, State Treasurer. Though, it appears Life Sign's influence is waning at this point.

There's another link to Adios through Bret Hanover's fastest son, Warm Breeze, he but marginally successful except for son Falcon Seelster. That one sired current-day Ohio stallion McArdle.

The Adios lineage sustains in this era but it will be up to Art Major to extend it via a significant siring son, which Art Official has not proven to be.

Second on the list is the trotter Rodney, whose son Speedster sired Speedy Scot, the sire of Speedy Crown, the dominant sire of the 70's and 80's. Many Speedy Crown sons were tried at stud and one came up big, that being Speedy Somolli, who in turn gave us Baltic Speed. That one was but marginally successful, though he did sire Valley Victory and Peace Corps from his first crop. From Valley Victory came five siring sons: Victory Dream, Donerail, Lindy Lane, Yankee Glide, and Muscles Yankee. From Muscles Yankee comes the current siring leader in the sport, Muscle Hill, sire of Trixton and early 2016 Hambletonian favorite Southwind Frank.

There's another link to Rodney through the infertile Victory Dream, who did sire the great Self Possessed. That one had his fertility problems but he did sire the exceptional stallion Cantab Hall, who in turn provided Father Patrick.

Thus the Rodney line has indeed endured and is likely to continue for some time.

Ranking third was Good Time. Like Adios, he was a son of Hal Dale and father of several siring sons including Race Time, Best of All, and Columbia George. None of those endured

and it's hard to find a male line link back to Good Time under the current spectrum.

At number four was Tar Heel, himself a great sire with many siring sons like Thorpe Hanover, Nansemond, Painter, Tar Boy, Isle Of Wight, and Steady Beau. None endured and there's no male link back to Tar Heel today.

Fifth was Gene Abbe, another with many siring sons, foremost of which was Big Towner. Big Towner shows up on the female side of contemporary pedigrees and he may have an obscure grandson through Towner's Big Guy or Walton Hanover in a remote region.

Coming in sixth was Hoot Mon, a son of Scotland, though his fate may have been sealed when his greatest son Scott Frost came up sterile. The other Hoot Mon's, like Blaze Hanover and Caleb, couldn't cut it, though his daughters combined with Star's Pride to produce some memorable trotters including the great Nevele Pride and Ayres.

At number seven was Star's Pride, who had many stallion sons although only Super Bowl truly endured. Super Bowl sired American Winner, who in turn produced current stallion star Credit Winner and that one's leading son, Crazed.

There's also a European branch from American Winner via his outstanding son Viking Kronos, who has several siring candidates on that side of the pond.

Star's Pride is all over the pedigree of \$1.8 million earner Kadabra. Going back five generations on sire Primrose Lane's paternal side, we find Star's Pride as sire of Nevele Pride. The maternal line of Kadabra's sire also shows Star's Pride as sire of Lindy's Pride, who produced Barb's Pride, dam of Primrose Lane. Star's Pride also happens to be five generations back on the top and bottom of Kadabra's maternal line through Quillo.

Like Rodney, Star's Pride's extensions are enduring and are likely to continue.

At number eight was Knight Dream, who accounted for major sons Duane Hanover, Torpid, Adora's Dream, and Lumber Dream. Of those, none endured, though it's possible there could still be a minor link to Lumber Dream in the Southern Hemisphere as he was a significant sire down there.

Ranking ninth was Poplar Byrd, who gave us Bye Bye Byrd and Rum Customer. Bye Bye Byrd sired Armbr Nsbit, Keystone Ore and Nardin's Byrd, though none of those endured. Armbr Nsbit shows up as the sire of Sunburn, dam of Beach Towel, who sired Where's The Beach, dam of Somebeachsome-where.

At 10 was Florican, who had some decent sons in Spectator, Songcan, Big John and Florlis, though none endured.

Eleventh was Victory Song, sire of Noble Victory who had two sons, Noble Gesture and ABC Freight. Noble Gesture was not overly fertile though he did sire marginally fertile Mystic Park, who in turn sired Mack Lobell and the mare Feelin Great, dam of Self Possessed.

ABC Freight sired Garland Lobell, who has provided the three contemporary brothers Andover Hall, Conway Hall and Angus Hall. Of those, Conway Hall sired the good Broadway Hall while Andover Hall is the sire of Donato Hanover.

Despite stemming from an unlikely source in ABC Freight, Victory Song's influence through Noble Victory is thriving at this point.

Rounding out the top 12 is Kings Counsel, who sired the dam of Meadow Skipper who every contemporary pacing horse traces back to one way or another, but left no succeeding male line.

I'd be remiss in not mentioning number 15, Sampson Hanover, a double-gaited Volomite stallion. Sampson Hanover's son, Sampson Direct, sired Direct Scooter, who in turn sired Matt's Scooter and In The Pocket. Of those, Matt's Scooter sired Mach Three, who has revitalized the line through his son Somebeachsome-where and that one's son, Captaintreacherous.

In The Pocket, while moderately successful "Up Over", became a major force Down Under, providing their stallion great Christian Cullen who is still thriving.

Could I have predicted back then who would have endured and who would not? Doubtful indeed, but that's the fascination with breeding.

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# Following today's morning line can be a recipe for wagering disaster

By Jay Bergman

When we touched on the odds last week, it was with the idea that drivers should drive horses according to how they perceive the race to be contested as opposed to how bettors viewed the order of selection. Odds play an incredible part in the day-to-day running of a racetrack. In an era where there are so many multiple-race bets on a given program, gamblers have been known to handicap a few races and then add combinations based on morning line preference.

As someone that started in this business when there was ample time between races to handicap just one race, in today's world with so much going on in front of you and so many win, exacta and triple wagers at your disposal, it's no wonder that the attention of bettors wane in Pick 4s and 5s.

Even daily doubles and Pick 3s are not immune from the betting public's incredible reliance on the morning line as a tool when either time or attention span causes a player to go outside their own instincts and follow others.

The morning line has over time become what players believe to be a valuable guide to the identity of the favorites in a particular race. Granted favorites don't always win, but when playing a game with odds, most will choose those that have the odds in their favor as opposed to ones that don't appear to belong.

The level of accuracy in morning lines is rather significant to those playing the game and especially to those playing multi-race bets. The pre-set odds can be the difference between a player putting in a horse in the third or fourth leg of a bet or throwing one out. When horses are set at odds of 15 or 20-1, they can often be left off a player's ticket just because they appear to be "throw outs."

With the industry trying to steer players into multi-race bets and especially those with carryovers, it is imperative that morning line accuracy is demanded to a high level.

The Meadowlands has done an excellent job of promoting its multi-race wagers. Pick 5s with carryover pools tend to activate bettors' attention far and wide. Many of those

155	ODDS	10
27	610	11
38	72.5	12
460	86	13
532	965	14

people set the time aside to pore through each and every race and make a play based strictly on past performances. Some that have had their attention squeezed by other races and other tracks tend to rely heavily on the morning line hoping the odds laid out by the track handicapper will give them a realistic chance to cash a big bet.

But what if the morning line odds maker is really no better than those looking for his guidance? What if the pre-set odds guide the less sophisticated player in the wrong direction? Is that the type of advice we should be offering customers?

This past Saturday at the Meadowlands only four of the 12 morning line favorites actually went off as the post time favorite. That's a 66.6 percent failure rate. That is not to say The Meadowlands is the only track where the morning line can come up short.

Also on Saturday, Freehold Raceway and Mohawk had just 5 of 10 correct morning line favorites.

Of course, when the morning line can't select the favorite with seamless accuracy there tends to be an inverted effect on the rest of the odds. Still, there should be few if any situations where a horse labeled at 15-1 or 20-1 in the morning line can come close to being the betting public choice. This error in judgment by the track oddsmaker (or computerized line) can make gamblers think they are being played with.

That's right, public perception, while likely inaccurate, can be that the oddsmaker is purposely leading them off the track both

literally and figuratively.

The impact of this unintentional misdirection is a player left in the third or fourth leg of a multi-race wager suddenly seeing the long-shot in the morning line being played heavily.

Such was the case on Saturday night when Jacksluckytoo, 20-1 in the morning line and racing in the sixth race, final leg of the Meadowlands early Pick 4, won the race for driver Jim Marohn Jr. and trainer Patti Harmon as the 5-1 third choice in the field. It is of less significance to the bettor that in this race the oddsmaker pegged the proper favorite in 1-2 shot Odds On Equuleus.

That 10-1 shot Transcending was the post time favorite at 9-5 in the second leg of the early Pick 4 probably didn't bother that many people as he failed to hit the board.

The late Pick 4 was another misread proposition as in the eighth race Capozzo, admittedly not the same horse he was last year when he scorched the Meadowlands in 1:48 flat, was returning from a two-race freshening at Freehold for a non-winners of \$5,000 conditioned race. The horse had routinely been at low odds at this level at the Meadowlands before his journey to Freehold. Tabbed at 20-1, Capozzo went off as a 2-1 choice.

To some at wagering outlets those following the morning line to such a fine degree deserve whatever they get. When the odds are assessed incorrectly there is room for others with finer opinions to profit. That has always been the nature of gambling on the sport of horse racing. We are in fact betting against others and their opinions, whether misguided of their own accord or led off the rails by others is a source of potential increased profit.

The lesson in today's world for those serious about playing any multiple race wager is to take the time as far in advance as humanly possible and handicap the races without the morning line. There is no place for reliance on others. Realistically the game is still about selecting winners and just because the bet asks to Pick 3, 4 or 5 in succession, there is no reason to quit handicapping after the first and let someone else select the rest of the horses "you" like.

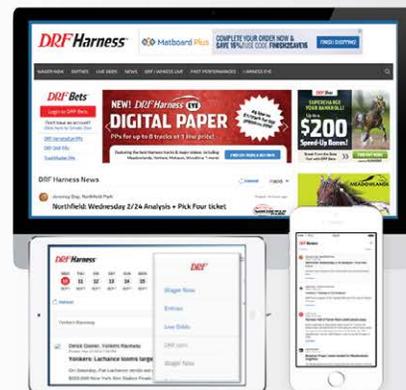
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