

FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2016

Featured Tracks

Meadowlands (FRI)

Woodbine (FRI)

Yonkers (FRI)

Meadowlands (SAT)

Woodbine (SAT)

Yonkers (SAT)

[Get Analysis](#)

Top Stories

Down Under import a strong Levy contender for Tritton [READ MORE](#)

Jamieson back at Yonkers to drive Sandbetweenurtoes [READ MORE](#)

Wiggle It Jiggleit makes his 2016 debut at Dover Monday [READ MORE](#)

Jason Bartlett is the King of the Hilltop at Yonkers [READ MORE](#)

VIDEO: Levy preview with Derick Giwner & Matt Rose [READ MORE](#)

HARNESS LIVE: Real-time updates & analysis every Saturday [READ MORE](#)



FOR ADVERTISING CONTACT:

Derick Giwner

EMAIL Dgiwner@drf.com

PHONE 212-366-7709

BREEDING COMMENTARY

Understanding the declining foal crops

By Bob Marks

The North American standardbred foal crops have been in a gradual state of decline for quite some time now. That may seem surprising to some considering that overnight purses, especially in casino fueled states, have never been higher.

In reality, the number of North American foals registered in 2015 is about half of what it was in 2000, and that number was far beneath what it was in the 1980's.

Unfortunately, the level of overnight purses mean little if anything to breeders as the overwhelming purchasers of yearlings are seeking to acquire stakes prospects to be raced as 2- and 3-year-olds. Simply put, most buyers are not playing the long game and looking for older stars.

I consigned and sold at least 2,500 colts and fillies during my tenure at Perretti Farms and can safely say that I never sold one for any kind of decent money on the premise that he or she would be an exceptional Free-For-All performer.

I noticed Money Maven in the Yonkers Open Trot on Sunday, and while he didn't win it, he's proven a solid money earner over the years. Money Maven is by the now exported Revenue S from a pretty nice mare named The Raven. While Revenue S would be considered a successful sire, as many of his earlier offspring inhabit upper class trotting events at major raceways, he was distinctly unsuccessful when it came to producing quality 2- and 3-year-olds. As that reality became increasingly apparent, it was much harder to get Revenue S youngsters looked at and even more difficult to actually sell them for any kind of money.

As it was, Money Maven, a foal of 2009,

brought all of \$2,200 at the September sale at The Horse Park in 2010. It was almost impossible to get him out of the stall to get looked at. Few, if any buyers, asked to see him or even humored me by seriously looking at him if he happened to be standing on the floor.

Was he a bad horse? Heck no. It's just that what in 2007 seemed like a good idea, breeding The Raven to Revenue S, as she did sell a nice Revenue S colt for good money the year before, evolved into a bad idea three years down the road. And that is a problem all breeders face, as often what seems right at the time is not so right a few years and perhaps \$20,000 later when the conceived embryo actually reaches the auction ring.

Most breeders estimate a cost of approximately \$20,000 to get a foal from the point of conception to market, and that's not including the stud fee. In the case of Money Maven there was no stud fee, as Revenue stood at Perretti Farms, but still the \$2,200 we got for him represented a fiscal disaster.

Money Maven is just one many examples. Pacing star Rockeyed Optimist might have brought less than \$2,200 if he wasn't reserved for the \$10,000 his selling price is listed as. That's not counting the fact that his sire, Rocknroll Hanover, stood for a \$15,000 stud fee at the time of conception.

While it's true that many yearlings oversell and become high priced disasters to their purchasers, not enough sell high enough to balance the breeder's books for the large numbers that undersell. One look at the Horseman & Fair World's annual Breeders Book will illustrate that approximately 75% of all

DRF Bets

Up to a

\$200

Speed-Up Bonus!



**Break From the Gate
Fast with DRF Bets**

FIND OUT MORE

powered by **xpressbet.**



Breed with Bellino Stable Stallions



Rock N Roll Heaven

p,2 1:50.2 3,1:47.3 (\$2,748,818)
 2010 Horse Of The Year
 Standing at Deo Volente Farms
 Stud Fee :\$6,500
 Call:908-782-4848
 Book Today!



Pet Rock

p,4 1:47 (\$1,780,454)
 Multiple World Record Holder
 Standing at Midland Acres
 Stud Fee: \$6,000
 Call:740-437-7800
 Book Today!



Muscle Network

†,2,1:53.2 (\$335,930)
 Standing at Cool Winds Farm
 Stud Fee: \$3,500
 Call:419-227-2665
 Book Today!

RENAISSANCE INCENTIVES

FOALS OF MARES BRED TO NJ PACING/TROTting STALLIONS IN 2016 TERMS:

- Upon foaling, refund 25% of the paid stud fee up to a maximum incentive payment of \$1,500 as a bonus to breeder if mare was bred to a NJ Pacing/Trotting Stallion.
- Stud fee payment is required.
- Incentive payment will be issued once the stud fee has been paid by registered owner.
- Stud fees paid after August 1, 2017 results in disqualification for incentive payment.
- 1 year program duration



Please Visit the Team: To The Moon Facebook page and donate to a great cause!

Easiest solution to declining foal crops is redistribution of purses

yearlings sold bring prices of \$25,000 or less, which means that the occasional six-figure yearling we all covet has lots of dead wood to drag up the proverbial hill.

Basically, breeders produce sufficient numbers of yearlings for the stakes market. The problem is harness racing is not limited to stakes races alone. There's also the race-track market, as tracks constantly complain about not having enough horses to fill racing programs. If we can't sell them as yearlings, where will they come from? It's not like we can warehouse horses until they're needed as aged horses.

It's kind of like the situation in the automotive industry. Used cars may go through

multiple owners during their lifetimes, but as new cars, both the dealers and factories got paid. Conversely, race horses also may have multiple owners during their racing careers, but as yearlings, very often their breeders did not get what they consider adequate prices.

In that breeding farms are basically factories manufacturing a product, in this case race horses, sooner or later they stop producing those they know or highly suspect will not sell sufficiently as yearlings. The end result becomes a dwindling foal crop and of course fewer horses for the racetrack overnight market.

One possible solution would be a revamping of the purse structure allocating more money for the non-stakes caliber younger set and less for the lower level claimers, many of whom

race for upwards of 80% or more of their listed value. Thoroughbred racing does it this way, with maiden special weight races going for very respectable purses. My system provides the chap who spent \$40,000 on a yearling and pretty close to that number getting him to the races, a reasonable shot to redeem something in the event he's not blessed with a grand circuit or even sires stake prospect.

The above idea has been banded about before and over the last year some tracks have increased purses for younger horses, but thus far it has been too sparse to make a difference.

While it would be nice to end with better news, the status quo agendas don't provide for much improvement in the foreseeable future.

Bottom line needs to dictate Meadowlands racing schedule

By Darin Zoccali

In the sport of horse racing, especially harness racing, everyone has an opinion. While in my position at The Meadowlands, which was a very public position given the wide array of responsibilities I had, this was evident. One of the issues that I received a great deal of input on was the racing schedule at The Meadowlands. In fact, just last year, Daily Racing Form's own Jay Bergman wrote a piece on the subject.

On the surface, The Meadowlands should race as much as possible from December 1st through March 1st. After all, the only other track racing is Yonkers and the entry box is full and overflowing at times, especially around the holidays. But, this ignores the business aspect of the industry. By racing four nights a week in the winter as opposed to weekends throughout the year, The Meadowlands would ensure two things, fuller fields overall and less handle overall. While fuller fields leading to less handle sounds ridiculous, the fact is The Meadowlands will handle more money, especially on-track, with a 12-race card with 105 horses on a Saturday than they will a 13-race card with 130 horses on a Wednesday. In fact, they will handle substantially more on the Saturday.

Furthermore, while there are opinions everywhere, there is one fact that really cannot be disputed. The current Meadowlands facility, especially when compared to other racetracks, is gorgeous. That doesn't mean it is the most conducive to the horse-player or is the same simulcast factory the old facility was. But there is no question that on a spring or summer Friday or Saturday night, the rooftop, the party decks and The Backyard are some of the best locations at a racetrack in the entire industry. What is found at these locations are younger crowds who spend money on food and liquor and bet a little. They provide needed operational revenue to company. By not racing on weekends in May, June or September, The Meadowlands loses a great deal of revenue and without finding a



LISA PHOTO

Meadowlands Racetrack on a packed Hambletonian Day.

way to match the same crowds during those warmer months with non-racing events each and every weekend, it's not financially feasible to sacrifice racing on those nights.

In my opinion the racing schedule at The Meadowlands that would yield the biggest fields would be a calendar consisting of 58 racing dates (which is well below the minimum required by the SBOANJ contract). The Meadowlands would begin racing Thanksgiving weekend, and then race three nights per week through Saturday, March 4th (excluding Christmas Eve). This would be the 2016-17 Winter Meet, a total of 43 dates. The Meadowlands would then go dark through June 17th and would return on Friday, June 23rd with a weekend-only "Championship Meet." That meet would run through Hambletonian Day, August 5th, while racing an additional night the week of the Hambletonian for the Hambletonian Festival. The meet would consist of 15 racing dates, with the track reopening again after Thanksgiving.

The date reduction would help the overnight purses and obviously would maximize participation in the entry box. With this schedule, The Meadowlands would likely see 90% of its races consist of fields of nine horses or more.

The bettors would be thrilled and The Meadowlands would be bankrupt, because they cannot sacrifice so many weekends of being "dark" while not being able to use the facility in the prime months of the year. Not only does the handle on Thursday nights pale in comparison to the weekends in the spring and summer, but events in the warmer months bring out bigger crowds than racing lures. The food truck events like Jerseyfest pack The Meadowlands more than a harness event like Meadowlands Pace night. Nights like that cannot be sacrificed to race 12 races on a Thursday night in December in front of 1,000 people.

This is the challenge of a racetrack doing everything it can to find a balance between putting out the best product it can while finding a way to survive in a declining industry. Without the revenue from other forms of gaming, every decision made is crucial to the operation.

Now, if someone could find a way to put the same number of people in the facility on weekends from mid-March through mid-June, without racing, then you effectively solve

“They’re sure to attract
a *lot* of attention...”

Multiple World Champion A Rocknroll Dance’s first crop of foals will head to the yearling sales this fall, and they’re sure to attract a **lot of attention from leading buyers**.

Not only are they a **great-looking** group with excellent size, athleticism and conformation, but with him being the most accomplished of this year’s first-crop pacing sires, there’s **plenty of pedigree** on hand as well.

Diamond Creek has a brother to Pure Country and the first colt from See You At Peelers, and other leading breeders like Hanover, White Birch, Charlie Keller, Spring Haven and Steiner Stock Farm also have standouts they’ll be bringing to the sales.

The market value of his foals already looks secure. And when they race, that value could skyrocket. Don’t miss your chance to get on board — **book now, before he is full and closed for 2016.**

A ROCKNROLL DANCE

p,2,1:49.1–3,1:48.1f–4,1:47.2 (\$2,429,441)

Rocknroll Hanover - Wichita Hanover
by Cam’s Card Shark

Fee \$5,000

CLICK FOR A
CLOSER LOOK

ONE OF THE RISING STARS AT

Diamond Creek Farm
— of PENNSYLVANIA —

151 Warrington St., Wellsville, PA 17365 | diamondcreekfarm.com

Bookings (717) 638-7100 | Email diamondcreek2@gmail.com  

GSI, LLC 2016 | Photo: Lee Thomas

The Meadowlands is the exception to the rule

the problem, but to say this is no small task would be a monumental understatement.

The bottom line is the harness racing industry from a handle standpoint cannot sustain The Meadowlands as a business entity any longer if the track were to race on weeknights. While it would be ideal for The Meadowlands to be able to race more race dates during the time when they have the access to the most horses, the handle on every night but Friday and Saturday is not sufficient enough to support such a racing calendar.

In 2001, the average handle for a standard-bred racing program at The Meadowlands was \$3,616,869 according to the 2001 Annual Report provided by the New Jersey Racing Commission, available at <http://www.nj.gov/oag/racing/downloads/ar2001.pdf>. The amazing part of that number is in 2001, The Meadowlands raced five cards per week, averaging over \$2 Million on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, over \$4 Million on Friday and roughly \$5 Million on Saturday. With those numbers, you can certainly justify racing during the week. Those numbers just

don't exist anymore though, so asking The Meadowlands to race the same type of calendar with wagering figures 40 or 50% below that of when the racetrack was thriving is unfair and unrealistic.

In the article I wrote regarding decoupling, I stated that the idea that an increased purse structure leads to increased handle has been proven false. While that is true, I do believe that if The Meadowlands were to receive the purse subsidies that Yonkers, Pocono, et al received, The Meadowlands would be the exception to that statement. It would be hard to think that bettors would not wager more on four \$50,000 claiming races on a Saturday night as opposed to four NW5000 condition events. After all, the decline of handle at The Meadowlands falls in-line with the period of time when they began to lose horses to slot-enhanced racetracks. I think some of that handle would be recouped were those horses to return, how much is tough to say. But one thing I do know, the kind of racing schedule we all would love to see at The Meadowlands is simply not possible until that time comes, so in the meantime, give them a break, they can use one.

Foiled Again closing in on 250 career starts

You can't stop Mother Nature and time will always tick on. Add Foiled Again to that list of unstoppable forces. The now 12-year-old gelding will make the 248th start of his storied career on Saturday night at Yonkers Raceway while trying to pad his career earnings total of \$7,342,988.

Starting in the third of five George Morton Levy Memorial divisions (race 7), Foiled Again looks to rebound from a fourth-place finish in the opening leg of the six-week series.

On paper his seasonal debut looks honest enough. He gained a length in the final quarter and paced home in a solid 27 3/5. But visually he wasn't sharp and lacked his typical fight in the stretch.

"He was a little short, maybe, but he should have been better," said regular driver Yannick Gingras.

While Foiled Again will face opening round longshot winner Texas Terror N, the Ron Burke trainee appears to have avoided many of the perceived "top guns" in the series.

Post time for the 12-race Saturday card at Yonkers is 7:10 p.m., with the Levy races scheduled as races 5,7,8,9 and 10.

--Derick Gwerner

Follow
DRF Harness



HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

By Derick Gwerner

Some of the best information and opinions are available for public consumption on social media. After searching Facebook and Twitter over the last two days, I found the following views and tidbits of information.

Joe Faraldo posted at 10:27 pm on March 23

"Rumor has it that the NYS official lab is beginning to report Cobalt positives and that trainers are being notified similar to the Glaucine reports made to the Commission. The Cobalt positives are pursuant to the newly enacted regulation."

Gwerner Commentary: An additional source confirmed that at least one trainer was notified but the NY Gaming Commission denied comment on the matter.

Nancy Takter Johansson at 1:51 pm on March 22

"I know a lot of people complain about the smell of the paddock at Yonkers which I agree is terrible but what annoys me just as much is that there is no real woman's locker room! Every race track has a woman's locker room where we woman trainer/drivers can get changed,

shower and leave our things except for Yonkers. With the amount of woman that are training horses that race at this track it is despicable that there isn't one. Here are pictures of what is suppose to be the "woman's locker room" I'm sure many will be appalled by the looks of it!"

Gwerner Commentary: Nancy makes a great point. Every track should have ample facilities for women. Kudos to SOA of NY President Joe Faraldo for noticing the comment and saying he would take action by bringing the issue up with management.

Anthony DeFrancesco III at 12:13 pm on March 24

"Updated claiming rules at Pocono and Harrah's Philadelphia.. If you claim a horse you must raise the horse up 1 class there next start.. Also if your horse has won 2 outta there last 4 races in the class there in or higher they must go up a class as well. So no horse can win 3 in a row in the same class... Thank you Phha for these fair changes .. Any complains about these rules is just looking to complain about something period."

Gwerner Commentary: This rule originally read that a horse must stay up in class for 30 days but was amended in less than 24

hours after many horsemen objected. I tend to agree with Anthony that the revised rule is very fair.

Pocono Racing Secretary Rick Kane said, "This is all experimental and we'll see how it goes. We can always change it."

The logic behind both rules is to avoid horses going off as heavy favorites week after week at the same claiming level. It certainly makes sense to me.

Chris Gooden at 8:30 pm on March 23

"Well, all in all, I had a good day filming in the paddock and at the finish. For the time being, the paddock videos will be posted after the races. Heather and I are hoping we can get WIFI in the paddock ASAP. That would fix everything. On Saturday, I'll have the live feed at the finish line back on Facebook Live like we had before. See you then!!"

Gwerner Commentary: It is great to see The Meadows and MSOA working hard to offer fans a different feel and view of the races. Check it out on Facebook!

Pullthepocket via Twitter on February 20

"Harness racing lives inside this strange bubble; oblivious to the outside world. I don't think in all my years I've seen anything like it."

Gwerner Commentary: This sport, just like anything in life, can be frustrating at times. Let's keep fighting the good fight and try to change things for the better.