

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

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EDITOR'S EYE

Out of the grandstand and into the paddock

Thestable.ca offers everyone the chance to own a horse

By Derick Giwner

Life is way too often filled with excessive talk and little action. Rather than sit on the sidelines, I elected to step up to the plate to get a first-hand feel for the talk of the sport, **THESTABLE.CA**.

Usually my involvement includes a conversation with particulars of a horse or venture and concludes with a story. In this case, long before I picked up the phone to call founder Anthony MacDonald, I had other plans.

Rather than simply writing a story about the new fractional ownership opportunity, I elected for the test-drive approach. That's right, I purchased a share in a horse. Well, actually a filly named Ohello Blue Chip. And unlike my first experience with trying to buy a horse more than 15 years ago, this one came with no hassles or fuss. But let's provide a bit of background first.

TheStable.ca offers anyone who wants the opportunity to purchase shares of a horse with limited financial responsibility. Each horse has 100 shares with new owners able to come in for as little as 1% (right up my alley). The venture started with 24 horses and 2,400 shares and has been so successful that only 146 shares remain.

Daily maintenance (training) is set at \$2,000 per month but does not include major vet work (my share would be \$17 a month). If a horse is not in training and is turned-out to a farm, the fee would be dropped to coincide with the basic costs (\$600 per month).

One visit to the website and you can find all of the horses in the stable with detailed reports, videos, and just about everything



The availability of shares in Ohello Blue Chip. Derick Giwner's 1% is in yellow.

you need to make an informed decision on a purchase. But the biggest selling point has to be MacDonald himself.

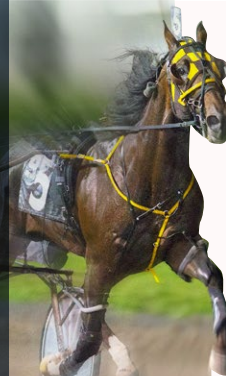
You have to appreciate anyone that has a passion for what they do and MacDonald is all-in, literally, on this venture. Rather than just sit back and earn his training fees, he even refinanced his house to invest personally.

"I took some equity out of my home to purchase an interest in some of the horses," said MacDonald, who added that he was surprised that his wife agreed. "I felt that I make a living in the industry and why wouldn't I invest in it?"

The first year of business is always tricky and MacDonald admits that the 2015-16 season is unlikely to produce a profit. "We put a substantial amount of money into marketing,"

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- 1 year program duration



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TheStable.ca can make horse ownership affordable

said MacDonald.

What started as simply an opportunity for MacDonald to build a business has molded into an entirely new ballgame for the 39-year-old Ontario-based conditioner. He has story after story of people calling from Wisconsin, Maryland, or even Europe looking to become more involved with harness racing.

"What this site can do for the industry is immense," said MacDonald. "It has increased exposure by bridging the gap between our industry and the general public."

TheStable.ca does more than just offer the "Average Joe" a chance to own a horse. MacDonald stressed that it provides another viable option for breeders who didn't quite get the amount they had hoped for their yearling at the sale or for a smaller breeder that wants to retain a percentage of their horse. They can now place the horse with MacDonald and begin the process of training down while at the same time selling off pieces of the horse to prospective buyers.

My horse (all 1% of her) is one such horse that fit into one of the above categories. Ohello Blue Chip was hammered down for \$19,000 as HIP 934 in Harrisburg last Fall but was never sold by Blue Chip Farms.

"It doesn't show it on paper, but her mother was very talented. This is her first foal," said Blue Chip Farms owner Tom Grossman, who had a \$20,000 minimum on the daughter of



BLUE CHIP FARMS PHOTO

Blue Chip Farms owner Tom Grossman sees TheStable.ca as a great help for the breeding industry.

American Ideal-Cheer My Dear. "It cost me a \$10,000 stud fee and \$20 to \$25,000 to raise her. I'm not going to sell that horse under the cost of production. I know she (Cheer My Dear) can throw a champion."

Grossman was thrilled with the opportunities that TheStable.ca could potentially bring to the industry, saying that he wanted to place two to three horses with MacDonald but he ended up selling some privately.

"Anthony is a well-organized, articulate and honest guy," said Grossman, who compared the new venture to that of the pin-hooking business on the Thoroughbred side. "I've tried twice to get the pin-hooking thing

started in harness racing. Selling 2-year-olds in training is a giant part of Thoroughbred racing. For whatever reason it hasn't taken off in this sport, but there are plenty of \$20,000 yearlings that go on to be champions. This has the potential to be a huge help for the breeding business."

One of five horses with shares still available, Ohello Blue Chip is now the sole member of the Giwner stable. All it took was a phone call, an envelope, stamp, and a check for \$325.00 (U.S.) to purchase my one share (total included stakes fees and first month of training) of the New York Bred filly priced at \$35,000 CDN. I will have to get an owner's license again as MacDonald strongly feels that all owners should be licensed, but he promised to help me and any of his other new owners with the process. "That's my job," said MacDonald.

I'm certainly not looking at the purchase as an investment and I'd be shocked to see her in September racing for \$225,000 on NY Night of Champions at Yonkers Raceway, but it seemed like something that was worth an experiment. From what I've seen so far on her **PERSONAL PAGE**, she lacks the picture-perfect gait. It is early April and plenty can happen between now and June.

So my journey begins with Ohello Blue Chip and I invite you all along for the ride. I'll post periodic updates on her progress and at the very least, hopefully have a good story to tell all year for my investment.

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Plenty to like about Hoosier Park in 2016

By Bob Pandolfo

We always gripe about how the popularity of harness racing has declined. But in some places, it's doing just fine.

Harness racing takes center stage at Hoosier Park, which commences its 2016 harness meet this Friday (April 1) at 5:45 p.m. with 14 live races. The Indiana track, part of a casino and racing complex, will race Friday and Saturday the first week before moving to a Thursday to Saturday schedule in week two. Starting on April 12, the track picks up its regular schedule of racing Tuesday through Saturday. The meet goes from April 1 through November 12.

"I just found out that in both of our main restaurants, the Homestretch Clubhouse and the Steakhouse, table reservations are already sold out for Saturday. Both restaurants have new menus this season," said Emily Gaskin, Hoosier Park's racing commentator, publicist, and marketing specialist. "Opening weekend is exciting, we'll be busy."

The host of the 2017 Breeders Crown, Hoosier Park is also adding two new restaurants this year to entice patrons to visit the track. Voodoo BBQ & Grill, a popular Cajun style restaurant chain down south, and Caballo Loco Mexican Grill and Cantina join the wide selection of culinary offerings

If you can't make it to Anderson, Indiana to watch the action live, the recent addition of High Definition cameras will make the remote viewing a more pleasurable experience for all fans and handicappers.

Hoosier is also adding a passing lane and a fair start pole. I'm not a fan of the passing lane, but at a track like Hoosier, which is a 7/8's track with a long stretch, the passing lane might be okay. Hoosier is not speed favoring like many harness tracks, so drivers sit in and wait for the long stretch anyway. Hoosier's passing lane is 1/8 of a mile long, the longest in harness racing.

The fair start pole is something that should be in place at every track. It allows bettors the opportunity to get a refund if their horse cannot stay within a reasonable distance of the field when the gate swings open to start the race.

One of the keys to good racing is full fields. Hoosier plans to card 14 races a night, but will cut races if need be to ensure full fields. Right now, things are looking good. Hoosier received 150 more stall applications than they did at this time last year.

There will be some new names on the track and behind the scenes in 2016, including horsemen from California. Trainers Steve Wiseman, Roger Welch, Bob Johnson, Kenny Collier, and Mike Arnold applied for stall space.

"I couldn't be happier with the response we received for our opening day card," Hoosier Park's Director of Racing and Racing Secretary, Scott Peine noted. "I am very enthusiastic about the 2016 meet and if opening night is any indication of what we have to look



LINSCOTT PHOTO

Horses will head around the Hoosier track starting on Friday at 5:45 p.m.

forward to this year, we will offer racing fans nationwide one of the best harness racing programs in North America."

Peine has scheduled a good mix of mini-series races throughout the meet. There are claiming, Non Winners of 1 or 2 races, and Indiana-bred races on the docket. In addition, there will be Indiana Sire Stakes races and Grand Circuit events. The marquee race on the calendar is the Dan Patch Free For All, which will be held on Friday, August 12 and once again offers a purse in the \$300,000 range.

Last year the average handle was \$555,172 and the track fell just short of \$1 million on several nights. The track's handle took a bit of a hit when NY OTB's were unable to wager on the track because of a contract dispute. Negotiations continue in 2016 with the hope of a resolution coming in the near future.

One new bet has been added this year, the Hoosier High 5, which will be in the last race each night. With the High 5, you have to pick the first 5 finishers in the exact order. The High 5 wager has a 10-cent minimum. If there are no winning tickets sold, the net money wagered is carried over.

A key to handicapping Hoosier is to look for horses that can finish well. I'm not suggesting that you only bet on closers. Although it's tougher to go wire to wire at Hoosier than it is at most tracks, horses that leave for position do win. But at Hoosier, horses come from far off the pace because of the long stretch. For a front runner to hold them off, the horse has to have something left. Whether you're betting a closer or leaver, I'd suggest focusing on horses that have shown that they're capable of pacing a solid final quarter.

A horses' current shape or fitness is always an important handicapping factor. But at Hoosier, which has two turns and a long stretch, it might be more important. Horses that have stamina and can sustain their energy to the finish have an edge. Something to keep in mind when wagering at Hoosier, favorites don't dominate. Plus, it's a track where the exotics often pay big.

JL Cruze looks to get up to speed on Friday at the Big M

By Derick Gwerner

Voted 2015 Older Trotter of the Year by the United States Harness Writers Association, JL Cruze will make his first pari-mutuel start since September of last year when he faces six foes in an Open Handicap at The Meadowlands on Friday night.

JL Cruze won 16 of 21 starts in his championship season including a sparkling 12 wins in 14 races (including two seconds) at The Meadowlands. His stellar record was topped by a sparkling 1:49 4/5 win in the Graduate final last July, establishing a world record for trotting speed on a mile track.

One of the reasons JL Cruze stopped racing last September was a virus that was affecting his heart. While it is impossible to say whether he can repeat the freakish speed he displayed in 2015, regular driver John Campbell said the son of Crazed has come back bigger and stronger this year.

"I was very happy with the way he trained down and he is much better than he was at the end of last year," said Campbell. "I'm hoping he gets back to that (1:49 4/5 time). There is no reason to think he can't."

Now a 5-year-old, JL Cruze prepped for his comeback with two qualifiers at The Meadowlands. He just nosed out Waiting On A Woman, who he faces on Friday night, in the first qualifier, a 1:54 2/5 win. His next outing was a 12-length romp in 1:54 2/5 where he was urged late in the mile while perhaps bothered by a persistent headwind.

"I was very happy with both qualifiers. The times were a little deceiving since there was a strong headwind both weeks, but I left the (ear) plugs in both times," said Campbell. "I stretched him out a little more the second time. You kind of have to keep his attention when he is on the lead. He was like that last week as well."

Installed as the 8-5 morning line favorite from post seven, JL Cruze may find his toughest competition to be 5-2 second choice Opulent Yankee (post five). The Julie Miller trainee has a pair of wins and seconds in his previous four starts against Open competition.

"I will play it by ear," said Campbell on his strategy for Friday night. "The one thing about him is that he is versatile. He is just as good off the pace as on

JL Cruze will race Wednesday at Dover, too



DERICK GIWNER

JL Cruze was named the best older trotter in 2015.

the lead. I sure want to win with him and I'm going to try to get him in a spot where he can win."

JL Cruze, who is trained by Eric Ell for owners Kenneth Wood, Bill Dittmar and Steve Iaquina, will not get much time off

after the Friday race. After he was unable to race last week because none of the upper-class events filled, he took the opportunity to enter right back Wednesday (4/6) in a \$36,000 Open Preferred Handicap at Dover Downs (race 10).

Meadowlands Pace eligibles down slightly

March stakes payments are now in the books and 40 hopefuls remain eligible to the 2016 Meadowlands Pace. The total represents a 10 percent decrease over 2015 when 45 horses were still eligible to the signature event at the New Jersey track.

Leading the list of 40 is last year's 2-year-old pacing colt champion, Boston Red Rocks. The Steve Elliott-trained youngster won the Governor's Cup at The Meadowlands and the Breeders Crown at Woodbine during his championship campaign.

Despite the slight drop in Pace eligibles, the total purse money currently available for the final in 2016 (\$228,550) remained rather consistent with 2015 when \$239,000 was in the kitty as of March 15. The 2015 Meadowlands Pace offered a final purse of \$706,000.

On the positive side, the TVG series for older horses saw a healthy increase nearly across the board in nominations. The Male Pace attracted 25 (up from 19 in 2015), and the Female Pace and Trot showed nice gains, luring 33 (up from 26) and 22 (up from 19), respectively. The Male Trot declined slightly from 26 to 25.

The track's two other older pacing stakes—William Haughton Memorial and U.S. Pacing Championship—remained relatively flat at

26 and 25 entrants, both up one from 2015.

Taking the biggest hit were the 2-year-old stakes, with the Jim Doherty (110 in 2015 vs. 83 in 2016) and the Peter Haughton Memorial (108 vs. 86) both down over 20 percent.

All of the above stakes have another sustaining payment due on April 15.

MEADOWLANDS PACE ELIGIBLES

All The Cookies	Mindtrip
American Passport	Nocturnal Bluechip
Another Daily Copy	Pretty Boy Hill
Big Top Hanover	Racing Hill
Boston Red Rocks	Rock Power
Check Six	Rollaroundtheworld
Control The Moment	Santafe's Prince
Dr J Hanover	Show The Fashion
Good Living	Some Gold
Highlandbeachycove	Sossy's King Kong
I'm Some Graduate	Stonebridge Beach
Ideal Rocky	Tailgunner Hanover
Jj Flynn	Talk Show
Jk Will Power	The Catamount Kid
Katies Rocker	Tom Hill
Lindy Beach	Travel Playlist
Lyons Snyder	Uncle Nicky
Major Hill	Undrafted
Manhattan Beach	Voracity
Mcdave	Western Dynasty

BURNING QUESTION

Which horse will be crowned the best 3-year-old male pacer at the end of 2016?

If you ask owner Myron Bell, the answer is his American Passport.

"I think he is the best in the nation," said Bell, who added that the colt is aiming for the North America Cup and Meadowlands Pace.

American Passport won \$198,096 during his 2-year-old campaign and set a lifetime mark of 1:51 4/5.

If American Passport makes it to the Meadowlands Pace, the question becomes whether Bell will actually attend. The prominent owner has stated that he will not show up at the Jeff Gural-operated track until the rule forbidding foals of sires retired before their 4-year-old season was rescinded.

"I haven't made that determination yet," said Bell on whether he would show up. "I had lunch with Jeff when I was in New York last weekend and we came to an understanding. He agreed that if there was no additional volume in betting or attendance by 2020 that he would rescind the rule."

-- Derick Giwner

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