



## At Last! Showtime at Saratoga

The tried, the true, and the new-and-improved await the loyal fan base, horsepeople, and the two-and four-legged stars putting on the show as Saratoga Race Course welcomes visitors for its 141st race meeting, commencing Wednesday, July 29.

The consistent quality of the attraction and the experience will continue to attract the faithful, though they're been some changes made in your regularly-scheduled programming. The American Graded Stakes Committee's new dictates necessitate that all Gr. I races must carry a purse value of a minimum of \$300,000, thus affecting seven Spa fixtures (the Whitney, Ballerina, Go For Wand, Test, Forego, Spinaway and Hopeful). As an aside to this, careful observers will note a single Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" race on this season's Spa schedule, - August 8's Gr. I Whitney H., with the winner earning express-lane status to this year's Breeders' Cup Classic.

Horsemen will note that NYRA officials have announced a reduction in the scope (from ten races, to nine) of non-holiday weekday cards.

Some measure of compensation will be derived from the results of NYRA's July 17 announcement of significant Spa purse incentives, based on field sizes. Any dirt race which leaves the paddock with more than eight betting interests will have its purse increased 10% (maiden and/or claiming races) or 15% (allowance races/overnight stakes) . . . a new wrinkle, for '09. And in races of nine furlongs or more, incremental increases will take effect for every betting interest above six (on dirt) or above eight (on turf) that leaves the paddock: \$4000 in maiden races, \$6000 in allowances, and \$8000 in

money allowances/overnight stakes.

The 140th running of Shadwell Travers Stakes on Saturday, August 29 could well host a spectacular field, as the event could conceivably attract Kentucky Derby winner Mine That Bird, Preakness Stakes winner Rachel Alexandra, and upset Belmont Stakes winner Summer Bird . . . Off his West Virginia Derby third, Mine That Bird is already at Saratoga, while the world awaits Rachel Alexandra's next move, off her Haskell romp. The deep Travers Day card (first post: 12 noon) will also feature the \$300,000 Gr. I NetJets King's Bishop, the \$300,000 Gr. I Ballerina, the \$200,000 Gr. II Ballston Spa H. and the \$100,000 Gr. III Victory Ride S.

One new development which will increase the entertainment options on an already-explosive Whitney Stakes weekend will be the inaugural Fasig-Tipton Festival of Racing August 8-9, leading into Fasig-Tipton's Select Yearling Sale August 11-12, and their Preferred Sale for New York-breds August 15-16. No fewer than 235 yearlings have been catalogued for the Select sale, forty more yearlings than in the 2008 book. Accordingly, starting



PHOTO: NYRA/ADAM COGLIANESE

times for sale sessions have been advanced one hour, to 6 PM.

As evidenced by their intensified promotional levels of their two-year-olds in-training sale at Calder this past winter, Fasig-Tipton has ramped up sales-promotional activity since being purchased last year by Dubai-based Synergy Investments Ltd., an operation headed by Abdulla Al Habbai, an ally of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

*Continued on page 3*

## Six Firms In Hunt For Aqueduct VLT Franchise

The determination of the identity of the operator of Aqueduct's 4,500 long-awaited video lottery terminals draws closer, as the half-dozen competing bidders presented their cases to pivotal state decisionmakers through the last week of July.

At stake is a 30-year deal (with a 10-year extension possible), contingent on performance. A \$250 million state bond issue would float the costs of construction. Six firms submitted bids by the May 8 deadline: Aqueduct Entertainment Group, the Delaware North Companies, Development Associates LLC (a subsidiary of Wynn Resorts, Ltd.), The Peebles Corp. & MGM/Mirage, Penn National Gaming,



Gov. Paterson

and the SL Green Realty Corp./Hard Rock International. In a previous round of bidding last fall, Delaware North submitted the high bid and won the contract, but the firm failed to meet financing requirements in March.

The participation of multiple new bidders in this cycle has contributed to the delays.

Additional setbacks resulted from lack of clearcut Senate leadership through most of June and

early July, due to a brief dalliance by a couple of Senate Democrats. This was finally resolved July 9, when Bronx Democrat Pedro Espada returned to his party's fold.

Informed sources now believe the decision will be announced prior to the Labor Day completion of the Saratoga meeting.

Eventual implementation of the legislation has been dependent on blanket approval by Gov. David Paterson, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and State Senate President Malcolm Smith.

Once commenced, construction is likely to take close to a year. Gov. Paterson has stated that the facility must be fully operational no later than October of 2011.

Broad estimates project that the facility could generate some \$400,000,000, annually. This is a compelling figure, given that Gov. Paterson noted on July 30 that the state faces a \$2.1-billion deficit in the fiscal year now underway (which began April 1).

# President's Letter

**MEA CULPA:** I will be the first to admit that the biggest failing of our organization (and of myself, as President), is our failure to consistently communicate with our membership. We hope that with this relaunch, our newsletter will be interesting . . . sometimes provocative – and at the very least, informative.

**VLT's:** Governor Paterson has announced that he will select an entity to be the VLT provider by the end of August. That certainly belongs in the "We've heard that before" category.

Hopefully, we can hold his feet to the fire and keep him to his promise. At our last board meeting, Terry Finley said it best. "Do you realize that virtually everything we have talked about for the last three hours would have been solved if the VLT's were up and running?" The items on the agenda included purse reductions at both Belmont and Saratoga, dormitories and living conditions for our backstretch workers, health benefits for those same workers, aggressive state-of-the-art drug testing (including equipment), and certainly not least: thor-



PHOTO: NYRA/ADAM COGLIANESE

**Richard A. Violette, Jr.**

oughbred retirement. It is hard to believe that responsible people could allow millions and millions of dollars to slip away while the state's economy is in dire straits and the thoroughbred industry is in rapid decline. Many of our major investors are leaving New York for states that can offer a bigger bang for their investment. This is not "smoke and mirrors", or The Boy crying "Wolf!" New York is an expensive state in which to do business. Our purse monies must

increase significantly for it to make business sense to stay in New York and race. VLT's will do that. Right now there is a \$100,000,000 gap between the purse monies available and the maintenance cost of thoroughbreds. The gap does not include purchase/breeding costs; merely training/upkeep costs. VLT's will provide \$30-\$40,000,000 towards purses; they don't bridge the entire gap, but it's a start.

**B.E.S.T:** B. E. S. T. is the entity which provides health care/drug/alcohol rehabilitation and other valuable services to our backstretch personnel. Unfortunately, on April 1, health benefits were suspended. B.E.S.T. was essentially bankrupt. Contrary to some divisive misinformation, NYTHA did not stop the benefits – nor did they stop funding B. E. S. T., or cause the suspension of health benefits. These benefits were stopped because B.E.S.T. was \$500,000 in debt, with another \$200,000 in losses projected through the end of the year. B.E.S.T. could not afford to continue these benefits. Obviously, many changes were necessary. There was a change in governance – so that now NYTHA and NYRA each have five seats apiece on a ten-member board. There was a change in leadership which NYTHA had been suggesting, for more than a year. There is now a sustained review of all aspects of B. E. S. T. – at the insistence of NYTHA.

We were willing and able to increase some intermittent funding, and recently saw legislation passed to allocate some \$500,000 towards health benefits. However, we were unwilling to trigger any of the funding until the organization was righted and a functional plan in place. The beginnings of that plan are in place. Last month, NYTHA provided

another \$125,000 to B. E. S. T. NYRA donated \$63,333, with another \$61,667 to come. The health benefits were revamped – and reinstated July 30.

For fifty years NYRA has contributed to funding these benefits, averaging a bit over a million dollars a year over the last 15 years. It is a legacy that they can be proud of. We hope that with the advent of the VLT's, NYRA will not only continue doing the "right thing" for our neediest population in racing, but increase their annuity so that along with the money donated by horsemen, B.E.S.T. will be effective for years to come.

**TOE GRABS:** We were delighted that the Jockey Club Safety Committee reversed itself and recommends allowing the use of toe grabs of 4mm or less. We have been working on this issue for a year, beginning with the premise that the decision-making for what kind of shoes a racehorse should wear (absent extremes) should rest with the people who see them every day – the trainers. We also had expert statistical analysis done on the research that supported the original mandate. That research was found wanting. Delaware took matters into their own hands and allowed longer toe grabs because too many horses were literally stumbling out of the gate. Nationwide, the numbers showed that the number of fatalities was not reduced since the ban on toe grabs. It is encouraging to see that the committee had the courage and integrity to realize that the initial recommendation had little merit – and reacted accordingly. Perhaps now, we might also get them to allow toe grabs with inserts in front, which some horsemen (including Hall of Famers) feel are even safer – and more responsible.

Over the past few months, we have been in serious discussions with John Unick of the MOC Insurance Company. We have been examining ways to lower the cost of workers' compensation insurance in New York. Some of the talks have been focused on creating a blanket policy that would be similar to the New York Jockey Injury Compensation Fund (NYJICF), which provides insurance for the jockeys and exercise riders. The goal is to save 30-50% on overall premiums. Stay tuned.

All the best,

Richard A. Violette, Jr.

## Witt New Editor

Racing/journalism veteran Richard Witt has been brought aboard as Editor of this relaunch of the NYTHA quarterly newsletter.

"This publication was missed, by so many," Witt noted. "It serves a vital need, I'm pleased to be a part of it again, and look forward to chronicling the good things done by the organization."

Witt acted as advertising sales representative for the previous NYTHA publication. Earlier, Witt worked in statistical, editorial and management roles under four separate administrations at Daily Racing Form, including serving as National Advertising Director during the '90s. Since, he's been best-known in New York for his contributions to the sports pages of the New York Post, analyzing horse racing, college and pro football, college basketball, auto racing and other sports for the Post since 1997.

## NYTHA Newsletter

Published quarterly by the  
**New York Thoroughbred  
Horsemen's Association, Inc.**

P. O. Box 170070

Jamaica, NY 11417

Saratoga Phone: (518) 581-1034

Saratoga Fax: (518) 581-1037

Editor: Richard H. Witt  
e-mail: [wittnytha@gmail.com](mailto:wittnytha@gmail.com)

e-mail: [info@nytha.com](mailto:info@nytha.com)  
Web site: [www.nytha.com](http://www.nytha.com)

Reporting and updating news regarding vital issues of interest to NY horsemen. We welcome your comments.



## Other NYTHA Benevolent Endeavors

The New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association underwrites an eyeglass and dental program for Aqueduct and Belmont Park backstretch workers – in the amount of \$200,000 – through the good offices of Dr. Patrick Sheehan, whose Franklin Square facility is within easy public-transportation access for Belmont Park workers. Vision services are provided nearby, via EyeMart.

In addition, NYTHA financially supports the Racetrack Chaplaincy of America (New York division) in its charitable and recreation programs . . . along with the Backstretch Education Program, which teaches English as a second language (ESL), and instructs the Groom Development Program to aid in the development of backstretch workers, both linguistically and in practical experience. NYTHA

also funds and supports Belmont Park's Childcare Center, also known as Anna's House. The amount of support for these endeavors is \$160,000.

In this regard, NYTHA has supported equine research in the past and most recently has underwritten the purchase of state of the art analytical equipment for Cornell University's Equine Drug Testing Program to test for anabolic steroids and other hard to detect substances, which has amounted to \$420,000 for the fiscal year.

Without this financial commitment from NYTHA, Cornell University nor the State of New York had the wherewithal to pay for the testing for anabolic steroids which could have impacted the grading of stakes races by the American Graded Stakes Committee.

# Saratoga - Return to the Land Of Hope and Glory

*Continued from page 1*

New Saratoga stakes named after famous Fasig-Tipton historical figures will be the John Hettinger Stakes at nine furlongs on the dirt on Whitney Day and the Finney Stakes for fillies and mares at 5 1/2 furlongs on the turf on August 9. Hettinger's major investment in the company in the '90s proved critical, and John M. S. Finney (son of former F-T President Humphrey S. Finney) served with distinction as President of Fasig-Tipton in the late '80s.

Additional competition-oriented promotions will include the inaugural Fasig-Tipton Jockey-Trainer contest August 8-9. Trainers and jockeys will earn points in each of the weekend's 21 races. Scored on a 5-3-1 scoring scale (for win/place/show), double points will be awarded for

horses which passed through the Fasig-Tipton ring. The top three scoring jockeys will garner cash awards, as well as NYRA contributions to the Permanently Disabled Jockey Fund in their names. The leading trainer trio will win contributions to their preferred equine charities, funded by Fasig-Tipton.

And don't overlook the inaugural Fasig-Tipton 5K run (to commence in front of the Humphrey S. Finney Pavilion) for two-legged participants August 15. Proceeds are earmarked to benefit The Anna House, the Backstretch Employees Service Team, the New York Racetrack Chaplaincy, and the Backstretch Education Fund.

Among sires represented in Fasig's main sale: Storm Cat (seven yearlings, from his last full crop), A. P. Indy, Dynaformer, Medaglia d'Oro,

Bernardini, Ghostzapper, Mr. Greeley, Street Cry and Tiznow.

The broad exponentially-important idea is to generate serious, sustained interest from new players who will stay with the game, once familiarized with its joys and satisfactions.

As Fasig-Tipton President Boyd Browning recently told *The Blood-Horse*:

"We need to find out ways to attract new owners into the business. The one area where we just don't see enough activity in to really help the market is the addition or the strength of new faces (who) are willing to be significant participants in the industry. There is the possibility of some new faces at Saratoga, but there were no dramatic new faces (at F-T Kentucky/July)."

## Just Under The Wire...

### Breeders/Farm Owners Rally In Albany

Inspired to specific action by the New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc., some 150 horsemen - including such prominent New York-based trainers as Gary Contessa, Mike Hushion, and Linda Rice - converged in Albany July 27 in an effort to coax the state government into prompt action regarding the oft-delayed designation of one of a half-dozen corporate bidders to gain the right to commence the process of building and operating the long-awaited VLT installation at Aqueduct.

Including a horse named Free and Brave, a miniature haystack, and horsemen bearing pitchforks, the noon rally at Capitol Park West sought to reiterate that without the machines, New York

State is facing gradual erosion of its thoroughbred business base, with surrounding VLT states (Pennsylvania and West Virginia, among them) currently enjoying marked competitive advantages.

The VLT plan requires final approval by Gov. David Paterson, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and state Senate President Malcolm Smith. Previously, the governor had promised that the winning corporate bidder would be named no later than August 1, a deadline which has since been shifted back an additional month.

NYTB Executive Director Jeffrey Cannizzo has noted that the absence of the machines is likely costing the state some \$1 million in revenue, daily.

### BCCA Dinner/Auction Aug. 26

Trainer Kieran McLaughlin and jockey Edgar Prado will be honored as the Belmont Child Care Association holds its 12th annual benefit at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs.

"A Fun Filled Fiesta" will be the evening's theme, accentuated by the presence of special guests Ambassador Ruben Beltran, Counsel General of Mexico in New York, and Mrs. Rosa Maria Beltran.

D. Wayne Lukas will act as celebrity auctioneer.

More than 120 silent-auction items will include Rachel Alexandra and Mine That Bird halters, and five New York City "Nights On The Town" (pairs of theatre tickets and accompanying

restaurant certificates). The live auction will feature a trip to Peru (in honor of Prado) and Ireland (honoring McLaughlin), a child's ride-on electric Ferrari, a trip to the Sonoma wine country, and a John Deere riding lawnmower.

The BCCA remains a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to sustaining Anna's House, the on-site child care center at Belmont Park, dedicated to assisting New York racing's working families while they're meeting the challenges of their daily schedules.

The Fiesta kicks off at 6:30 PM. Tickets: \$250. For ticket information, call the BCCA at (516) 527-4746.

### Whitney/Hendrickson Backstretch Benefits

Marylou Whitney will not be holding her traditional Saratoga gala at the Canfield Casino in Congress Park this season, out of respect for the state of the economy.

But as quoted in the Schenectady Gazette, John Hendrickson noted that Whitney is not Curtailing

her personal Spa schedule . . . and in conjunction with various NYRA backstretch-help support groups, Whitney and Hendrickson will again host catered Sunday dinners, movie nights (Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday), Monday karaoke and Thursday bingo.

## Benevolence Bulletins

### Exceller Fund Appeal by Gary Contessa

TO ALL HORSEMEN: It's a tough task, finding good homes for racehorses no longer performing. As President of the Exceller Fund, I must remind you of how many horses are in need. We never turn any horse away - and not one person who works with us gets paid for what they do.

Yes, times are difficult - so you know they're even tougher on horses which need our help the most. No donation is too small . . . no help, insignificant. Ask yourself where you'd be without the efforts of these stalwart performers. All Exceller Fund contributions are 100% tax-deductible - and 100% of funds generated go to HORSES. Send your check to: The Exceller Fund, Box 206, Hoosick, NY 12089. The horses thank you.

### NYTHA Gives \$10K To SPCA

The New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association donated \$10,000 last month to the Columbia-Greene County Humane Society/SPCA, earmarked for the care of horses discovered at Ernie Paragallo's Center Brook Farm in April. "NYTHA is proud to support CGHS/SPCA in its efforts and we can't thank them enough for their care and speedy efforts in taking care of horses in need of human kindness", NYTHA President Rick Violette said.

This contribution is in addition to the \$25,000 pledge the NYTHA made last month to the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, which provides befitting retirement options. NYRA committed \$50,000, while The Jockey Club also will donate \$25,000. "This is an example of industry stakeholders working together to do the right thing for the welfare of racehorses when they can no longer race," TRF Executive Director Diana Pikulski said.

## “La Escuelita” - Belmont’s Language Lab

by Lisa Ford (Director - Backstretch Education Fund)

The sparkling-new backstretch language lab/communications center at Belmont Park – “La Escuelita” -is where backstretch workers can study English, learn computer basics, and employ the internet for communication. In addition, workers now can research legal issues and other vital life matters. Classes will be offered in ESL and computer usage (in addition to drop-in evenings for tutorials and various online activities) -and the lending library will continue to offer printed materials for educational and pleasure-reading usage.

To go with the multiple state-of-the-art laptops available, Microsoft has donated extensive software programs. Students in our classes and other users of the lab will be able to learn such



computer applications as Word and Power Point, access and create e-mail, as well as utilize the latest video communications (such as SKYPE), and social-network sites, including Facebook.

We would like to thank Elisabeth (Mrs. H. Allen)

Jerkens for her cooperation in the evolution of the building; NYRA, for underwriting part of the rehabilitation costs of the lab, in addition to the assistance provided by its wonderful facilities staff . . . and Rick Violette and the NYTHA for underwriting the purchase of the laptops. Without the kind support and generosity of these people - and the many donors to the Backstretch Education Fund - our vision for this center would not have become a reality.

## Pocket Cowboys stands up in New York Derby

Taking the track from the outset, owner-trainer Scott M. Schwartz' Pocket Cowboys wired the field to prevail by 1 1/4 lengths over Eric Brophy's Sleven in the \$185,590 New York Derby at Finger Lakes July 11. The Derby is the second jewel in the OTB Big Apple Triple series for New York-bred 3-year-olds.

Pocket Cowboys' win foiled any Triple aspirations for Lansdon B. Robbins III's Legal Consort, winner of the 7-furlong Mike Lee Stakes at Belmont Park June 21. Sent off at 6-5, Legal Consort could not sustain a wide bid on the final turn, finishing fourth.

By Wild Event out of the Thunder Puddles mare Lotsa Sprinkles, Pocket Cowboys covered the mile and one sixteenth in 1:45.12 over the sloppy, sealed surface to rake in \$95,640. Now 3-3-1 in nine career starts, Pocket Cowboys has earned \$185,580, to date. The final leg of the Triple, the \$150,000-added Albany Stakes, will be run at Saratoga Wednesday, August 26.

**NYTHA**  
**P. O. Box 170070**  
**Jamaica, NY 11417**

Address Service Requested

**August, 2009**

**PRESORT FIRST CLASS**  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**PERMIT NO. 50**  
**FREEPORT NY 115**

## NYTHA Scholarship News

The New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association has long maintained a scholarship program for backstretch employees and their direct dependents, in their pursuit of opportunities in higher education.

Linda Rice, Robert Ribaud, Joseph Brocklebank, Mike Hushion, Bill Terrill, Jimmy Ferraro, Barbara Murphy and Don Larkin comprise the Scholarship Committee, with administrative assistance from Dionne Johnson, NYTHA's office manager. In conjunction with College Financial Aid Consultant Barry Fox, an expert in applying for grants and other funding mechanisms, the dedicated oversight of the committee has been most valuable.

One recent success story out of the program is Dr. Tara O'Brien, VMD, currently working for Dr. James Hunt's veterinary practice. "The New

York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association's scholarship program was an invaluable resource, "Dr. O'Brien (daughter of veteran NYRA trainer Colum O'Brien) said. "I attended Siena College, and went on to the University of Pennsylvania, where I received my doctorate in veterinary medicine at New Bolton Center. It gives me great pleasure to return NYTHA's scholarship support by caring for the horses of the very owners and trainers who were so supportive. I love what I am doing and I have NYTHA to thank."

For the upcoming fall semester of 2009, NYTHA has approved financial support for thirty (30) recipients, distributing in excess of \$110,000 to those receiving aid. Contact Dionne Johnson at (516) 488-2337 for information regarding future benefits in 2010 and beyond.

## Breeders' Awards Trimmed By Fund

Reductions to the state's Breeding and Development Fund ("the Fund") Breeders' Awards for second - and third-place finishers - whether New York-sired, or sired out of state - went into effect July 1. Breeders of New York-sired second/third place finishers will now receive 10% (winners will continue to receive 20%) in all races. Breeders of New York-breds sired out of state will now get 5% for second/third place finishes (such winners will receive 10%, as previous), in all races. Last year's revenue shortfall of some \$1.6 million necessitated the adjustment to assure the sustained integrity of the long running program. For more, see May 7 entry on NYTB Executive Director Jeffrey Cannizzo's blog, at <http://www.nytbreeders.org/blog>.