



# The Horsemen's Newsletter

September 2007

Volume 17 • Number 9

## Franzone named Racing Commission chairman



John B. Franzone

Gov. Martin O'Malley has appointed John B. Franzone to serve as chairman of the Maryland Racing Commission. He succeeds John P. McDowell, who leaves a strong legacy of achievement as Commission chairman for the past two years.

Mr. Franzone, who leads the Commission's Keep It In Maryland (KIM) committee, previously served as Commission chairman from 1998 to 2001.

He has been a member of the Commission since February 1997.

"I'm grateful to Governor O'Malley for returning me to the chairmanship, and for the confidence he has placed in me," said Mr. Franzone. "There are important times ahead for the industry. As always, the Commission will work to preserve the integrity of racing, while supporting its growth in all respects."

Mr. Franzone, 50, is well versed in many aspects of racing. He became involved with the business as an owner, and maintained an active claiming stable for 11 years before becoming a member of the Commission. (Some of the Commission seats are open to owners and others are not; Mr. Franzone's place on the Commission restricts him from owning race horses.)

However, Mr. Franzone's father, John Franzone Jr., owns several horses who

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JIM MCCUE

## Special session could bring long-awaited relief

Indications are strong that Governor Martin O'Malley will call a special session of the Maryland General Assembly in November to focus on the state's budget issues.

Legalized slot machine wagering—with a portion of the revenue directed to racing—is expected to be a major component of the governor's proposed budget overhaul.

"We are cautiously optimistic," said MTHA President Richard Hoffberger. "Maryland racing is going downhill fast.

It is happening because surrounding states have expanded gaming—and we do not. That situation is, I believe, well understood not only by the governor, but also by Senate President Thomas V. 'Mike' Miller and House Speaker Michael E. Busch—each of whom, in his own way, has demonstrated willingness to take action on our behalf."

Added Mr. Hoffberger: "The MTHA will continue to work diligently on behalf of horsemen in the crucial weeks ahead."

## Perez reaffirms support for industry

Thomas E. Perez, who occupies a key post within Governor Martin O'Malley's administration as Secretary of the Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation, reaffirmed his support for the racing industry during a presentation at the September meeting of the Maryland Racing Commission.

Secretary Perez issued a 19-page re-

port in August, based on intensive research into issues affecting Maryland racing. His report concluded that the industry is in "serious economic distress" and that it is "well worth saving."

Secretary Perez advocates slots as a means of preserving racing, and stopping the flow of gambling dollars from Maryland to surrounding states.



Scholarship Fund, and 2007 scholarship winners will receive their checks.

MRMA will present its annual awards to Tom Bowman (Humphrey S. Finney Award for lifetime contributions to Maryland racing), Graham Motion and Mario Pino (Achievement Awards) and Joe Kelly (Unsung Hero Award).

Tickets are \$55 each, or \$500 for a table of 10. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door, or call David Richardson at (410) 239-7022.

It's almost time for the Maryland Racing Media Association's annual Crab Feast. The event will be held Friday, October 5, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Carriage Room at Laurel Park.

As usual, the menu includes all-you-can-eat crabs, plus a buffet featuring chicken and side dishes and an open bar with beer, wine and soft drinks.

A silent auction of racing-related items will benefit the Maryland Thoroughbred



# Hoofprints

## THA honors

### Wayne Wright

Wayne Wright, executive secretary of the MTHA, has been honored by the Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association for 30 years of continuous service to Maryland horsemen and horsemen nationally.

Mr. Wright is one of the longest-serving horsemen's executives in racing history.

He was presented with proclamations by Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley on behalf of the State and Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller and Speaker of the House Michael E. Busch on behalf of the Maryland General Assembly for his untiring commitment and service to horsemen, backstretch workers and the best interests of the racing industry.

The board of directors of the THA (a regional horsemen's group) presented Mr. Wright with a crystal horse.

Mr. Wright is widely respected among horsemen's organizations throughout the country and is credited with pioneering health care, recreation and education programs, protecting horsemen's economic interests and the establish-

ment of workers' compensation coverage for backstretch workers and jockeys.

## Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit

Planning is underway for another Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit, to take place March 17 and 18 at Keeneland in Lexington, Ky.

Meanwhile, the summit Web site has been updated to incorporate progress from committees, articles on equine health, research news, industry links and a newsletter.

For details visit [www.grayson-jockeyclub.org](http://www.grayson-jockeyclub.org) and click on the link to Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit.

## Third annual Maryland Horse Conference

The University of Maryland will sponsor its third annual Maryland Horse Conference on Saturday, November 10, from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. at Montgomery College in Germantown.

For more information visit [www.equinestudies.umd.edu/Extension/hors econference2007.html](http://www.equinestudies.umd.edu/Extension/hors econference2007.html), or contact Kelly Brannan at [kbrannan@umd.edu](mailto:kbrannan@umd.edu) or (301) 405-8746.

## MJC plans OTB site in Calvert County

The Maryland Jockey Club is moving toward the establishment of a new off-track betting site in Solomons (Calvert County).

The site, which could open for business in early 2008, would be located at Boomerangs Original Ribs restaurant at 13820 Solomons Island Road South. Boomerangs belongs to longtime horse owner Bill Wells, whose brother George Wells is a trainer based at Bowie. The brothers maintain Miracle View Farm near Huntingtown in Calvert County.

"We haven't done anything to expand our OTB network in quite some

time," said the Maryland Jockey Club's chief operating officer, Lou Raffetto. "And while we expect the handle, at least in the beginning, to be modest, we believe it is a worthwhile opportunity."

Maryland currently has four OTB sites.

The MJC operates the Cracked Claw near Frederick, North East Racing & Sports Club in North East and Riverboat Restaurant in Maryland waters near Colonial Beach, Va.

Ocean Downs, Bill Rickman's harness track in Berlin, Md., operates the Cambridge Turf Club in Cambridge.

## Cloverleaf OK's sale of Rosecroft

Penn National Gaming Inc.'s purchase of Rosecroft Raceway is expected to be completed in the near future.

Cloverleaf Standardbred Owners Association, which owns Rosecroft through its corporate subsidiary Cloverleaf Enterprises Inc., voted in mid-September to approve the deal.

It is now awaiting consideration by

the Maryland Racing Commission.

Potential impact from the expansion of Penn National's empire into Maryland is a matter of widespread speculation.

One of the largest gaming enterprises in the nation, PNG currently owns and operates two Thoroughbred tracks in this region—Penn National and Charles Town.

## No results with the Sun

Industry representatives, deeply concerned that the Baltimore *Sun* no longer provides racing entries and results in its print editions, discussed that issue and related matters in an hourlong meeting on September 13 with the newspaper's assistant managing editor for sports, Tim Wheatley.

"The *Sun* has shifted the entries and results to its Web site, and based on the discussion it appears unlikely that they will be returned to the paper," said MTHA executive secretary Wayne Wright. "Additionally, we did take the opportunity to discuss ways in which the *Sun* could enhance its coverage of racing."

The meeting was led by outgoing Maryland Racing Commission chairman John McDaniel.

Other participants were Lou Raffetto, chief operating officer of the Maryland Jockey Club; Jim Steele, president of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association; and Mike Hopkins, the Racing Commission's executive director.

## Committee bulletins

### Bowie

Backstretch chairman Phil Capuano reported:

- The track maintenance crew has worked hard to remove stones and debris from the race track.
- Trash pickup has been a problem.

## Franzone, from page 1

compete at Maryland tracks, and also breeds and boards horses at his Flying High Farm in Harford County.

Mr. Franzone is chief executive officer of Fawn Industries, a Timonium-based company that manufactures decorative automotive plastic components. He is also a licensed jet airplane pilot.

The MTHA congratulates Mr. Franzone on his appointment and expresses appreciation to Mr. McDaniel for his strong leadership, as well as his fair decisions and supportive actions on behalf of Thoroughbred horsemen.

The Commission has its full complement of nine members, with the others being Gregory H. Barnhill, P. David Bramble, David Clogg, Frank F. Favazza, Jr., William Gerweck, Jacqueline Nigh and Louis J. Ulman.



## Thoughts, from page 4

Those who designed and implemented the synthetic surfaces deserve to be complimented, certainly not condemned. Innovations are all too uncommon in racing, and the developers of the synthetic tracks made a laudable effort to improve conditions for the industry.

Still, at this time we have more questions than answers.

Synthetic surfaces appear to respond differently at training centers (where they have been successfully used for the past several years) and on tracks where they have recently been put to use for both training and racing. Why is that?

Perhaps the synthetic surfaces are OK—but we, as an industry, haven't figured out how to use them correctly.

Some people say that training regimens should be changed to adapt to the new surfaces.

Track superintendents have in some instances apparently had inadequate direction as to how to care for synthetic tracks—especially under severe weather conditions.

## IN MEMORIAM

The MTHA takes special note of the passing of former U.S. Senator **Daniel B. Brewster**, who died on August 19 at the age of 83. Senator Brewster was a revered member of Maryland's racing industry throughout his life.

Among the best horses to campaign for Sen. Brewster were stakes performers Seven Rogues and Rolling Cart.

## The Horsemen's Newsletter

Published monthly by the  
**Maryland Thoroughbred  
Horsemen's  
Association, Inc.**

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*The Horsemen's Newsletter*  
reports on issues and events of interest  
to owners and trainers in Maryland.  
Your suggestions are welcome.

Other issues that need to be addressed in the immediate future include:

- Did some segments of the racing industry move too quickly by installing (or, in the case of California, mandating) the new track surface?
- Do synthetic surfaces actually provide a truer surface on which to race?
- Which type of surface is best in which kind of climate?

Trainers, who are at the mercy of the tracks where they keep their horses, often don't complain. Owners who need to race and pay the bills frequently are not at the forefront of the training issues.

Certainly there are trainers who ap-

plaud the new surfaces, and their responses are often publicized by the tracks that have the new facilities. The press tends not to report on those who don't want to train on the new tracks. I thought it important to help express their opinions, and mine.

We need to develop a comprehensive system to record what happens to our horses, both during training and in competition, on all types of surfaces—dirt, turf and synthetic tracks.

Open discussion and improved data are imperative before we travel any further down the road of the unknown.

*/Richard J. Hoffberger,  
MTHA President*

## Recreation report

*From Dan Mangum,  
MTHA Recreation Director.*

*For information on the recreation  
program call (410) 802-5798.*

### Poker

A mock Texas hold'em tournament is planned for Monday, October 30 in the Bowie kitchen. Sign up in the track kitchens or call Dan.

### Basketball

Basketball season starts in January.

## Horsemen's calendar

### RACING

*Laurel* ..... Now through Dec. 31

### FASIG-TIPTON MIDLANTIC

#### AUCTIONS AT TIMONIUM

(410) 392-5555

*Eastern Fall Yearlings* ..... Oct. 1-3

*December Mixed* ..... Dec. 2, 3

*Winter Mixed* ..... Feb. 4

### OUT-OF-STATE AUCTIONS

#### Ocala Breeders' Sales Company

#### Fall Mixed

Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. .... Oct. 8-12

#### New York Breeders' Sales Company

#### Fall Mixed

Saratoga Springs, N.Y. (518) 587-1555. .... Oct. 14

*Virginia Tech MARE Center Yearlings*, Middleburg, Va. (540) 687-3521. .... Oct. 14

*Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Fall Yearlings*, Lexington, Ky. (859) 255-1555. .... Oct. 22-24

#### Fasig-Tipton Kentucky

#### Selected Fall Mixed

Lexington, Ky. (859) 255-1555. .... Nov. 4

#### Keeneland November Breeding Stock

Lexington, Ky. (800) 456-3412. .... Nov. 4-18

*Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Adena Springs Mixed*, Lexington, Ky. (859) 255-1555. .... Nov. 8

*Keeneland January Horses of All Ages*, Lexington, Ky. (800) 456-3412. .... Jan. 7-14

*Ocala Breeders' Sales Company*

#### Winter Mixed

Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. .... Jan. 16-19

*Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Winter Mixed*, Lexington, Ky. (859) 255-1555. .... Feb. 10, 11

## Maryland Million schedule

*Pre-Entry Deadline*: Oct. 4

*Entry Draw Brunch*, Laurel: Oct. 8

*Gala*, Maryland Club, Baltimore: Oct. 12

*Handicapping Seminar*, Laurel: Oct. 13

*Maryland Million Day*, Laurel: Oct. 13



# MTHA celebrates racing's unsung heroes



The MTHA's Backstretch Appreciation Day, held September 16 at Laurel, recognized backstretch employees for their day-in, day-out efforts that are a vital—but not often celebrated—part of the racing industry. A large crowd turned out to enjoy a picnic featuring pit beef and ham, and dance to the music of Absolute Sound.



*Barbecue grill was kept busy as hundreds of backstretch workers, including Gaetano Truppa and Anna Marie Starnes (in foreground) sat down to a delicious meal.*  
*Photographs by Russell Clark.*



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**September 2007**

## Thoughts and comment

Synthetic track surfaces have been hailed as the way of the future. In the beginning, I was a believer. But unfortunately what I have found out lately is making me more and more doubtful.

There is little official data on the subject, because records are not generally kept on horses who suffer career-ending injuries. But the anecdotal evidence is piling up, and it is coming from credible sources.

It is true that there are fewer catastrophic breakdowns with synthetic surfaces. And of course, as a bloodstock insurance agent, I am especially happy

about that. But that does not appear to be the entire picture.

Horses trained on synthetic surfaces appear prone to some types of injuries that rarely occur on dirt or turf. Trainers are finding numerous instances of soft tissue damage, back end problems and pelvic fractures—the latter being something we generally don't see on dirt.

Veterinarians have observed that when a horse's foot hits the synthetic surface it doesn't slide as it would on dirt or turf; this may be causing problems.

See **Thoughts**, page 3

## MTHA Board of Directors

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