



The Horsemen's Newsletter

January 2009

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Planning to retire? It may be wise to wait

If you are planning to retire in the near future, and rely on a withdrawal from the MTHA's Backstretch Pension Plan, it may be wise to wait.

That's the urgent message from William W. Whitescarver, who developed the plan and has administered it since its inception.

When signing up for the 2008 benefits (see *registration schedule* on page 4), participants will be handed a statement showing their individual share of the fund's assets.

However, this statement is based on figures from 2007—not 2008.

In 2008, the backstretch pension fund—like investment accounts everywhere—incurred losses. The distribution can't be recalculated until the registration process for 2008 is completed, Mr. Whitescarver explained.

"We have a strategy for the coming year that hopefully will help achieve some measure of positive return," said Mr. Whitescarver. "Meanwhile, it's very important that people are not misled into thinking that their share of the assets amounts to more than it really does."

Commission seeks to end appeals

The Maryland Racing Commission, at its December 16 meeting, agreed by majority vote to pursue a rule change that would eliminate appeals of stewards' judgment calls involving the running of a race.

The change, if ultimately approved, will not take effect for some time.

The MTHA board did not have an opportunity to discuss the issue prior to the Commission's action, but was expected to take it up at this month's meeting.

Deadline nears for slots license applications

With applications for Maryland's five slots licenses due by February 2, interest is apparently strong among would-be operators of slots facilities.

When the Maryland State Lottery Agency, which will administer the slots program, held a conference for potential license applicants on January 12 in Baltimore, approximately 150 people turned out for the event, many of them keen on gathering more information.

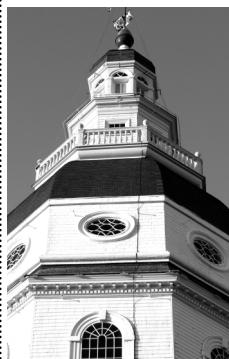
Representatives from Laurel Park and Ocean Downs—the only race tracks eligible to become slots sites—participated in the conference.

Many hurdles remain before the Video Lottery Facility Location Commission announces the successful bidders for slots licenses this coming fall.

It is unlikely that the Maryland General Assembly, currently in session until April 13, will take steps to substantially revise the slots program.

The program, allowing up to 15,000 slot machines, was created by legislation approved in a special session of the state legislature in November 2007; it automatically took effect when an overwhelming majority of Maryland voters approved slots in the statewide referendum last fall.

EVERY DOLLAR ADDS TO OUR EFFORTS



If you haven't yet made a contribution to the Thoroughbred Horsemen's PAC, please consider doing so immediately.

Your donation will go toward the election campaigns of state officials who hold the best promise for our industry.

The Thoroughbred Horsemen's PAC advocates for the entire Maryland Thoroughbred industry, while promoting the interests of horsemen.

Please make checks payable to Thoroughbred Horsemen's PAC. Send checks to

MTHA, 6314 Windsor Mill Road, Baltimore, Md. 21207.

AMOUNT OF DONATION

\$100 \$250 \$500 other

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

By authority Wayne W. Wright, Treasurer



Breeders' Cup allocates \$200,000 to stakes in Maryland

Maryland's portion of funds from the Breeders' Cup Stakes program will amount to \$200,000 in 2009, an amount identical to last year, reported Georganne Hale, Laurel/Pimlico's director of racing.

In mid-December, Breeders' Cup officials announced plans to suspend the nationwide stakes program for 2009 due to budget constraints. But that decision was quickly reversed after an outcry arose from throughout the industry.

Breeders' Cup enhancements for Maryland stakes will likely be concentrated within the Pimlico meet, said Ms. Hale, although the schedule has not yet been determined.

Tax law change favorable to horse owners

From the National Thoroughbred Racing Association

Starting in 2009, the equine industry benefits from a faster depreciation schedule for all young race horses. There is a uniform three-year schedule under new tax law. After a race horse's 2-year-old year, 62.5 percent can be depreciated, compared to only 29.85 percent under the previous seven-year schedule.

In the past, young race horses were depreciated over either three or seven years, depending on when the horse was placed in service. Race horses over the age of 24 months (from date of foaling) when placed into service were depreciated over three years; otherwise they were depreciated over seven years.

The new law allows an owner to recover his/her costs over the period of time the horse is likely to race. In a given crop of horses who make it to the track, about half will start as 2-year-olds. Most race horses are off the track by age 5, making a seven-year depreciation schedule unrealistic. Yearlings are included in the new schedule.

For more information contact your tax advisor.

Hoofprints

Heros Reward takes honors

The Maryland Racing Media Association will honor Heros Reward with its Maryland-based Horse of the Year award during ceremonies to be held at Laurel Park on February 21.

Owned by Bob Haynes's Rob Ry Farm and Jayne Marie Slyszyk and trained by Dale Capuano, Heros Reward starred in the Turf Sprint before the Preakness day crowd at Pimlico last year (in a repeat of his 2007 triumph). Also victorious in the Grade 3 Scotts Highlander Stakes at Woodbine and Pennsylvania Governor's Cup Handicap during a three-race win streak, he concluded the season with a highly creditable fifth-place finish in the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint.

Cole, Lake take year-end titles

Robert L. Cole, Jr. and Scott Lake posted banner seasons once again in 2008, to repeat as Maryland's leading owner and trainer.

Mr. Cole ranked as the state's leading owner for the third year in a row, with 39 wins from 118 starts (a 33.1 percent win ratio). He led the nation by wins (234) and placed 14th by earnings (\$3,289,150).

With 113 wins at Laurel and Pimlico, Mr. Lake added his fourth consecutive trainer's title. Nationally, his stable racked up 421 victories, second only to Steve Asmussen.

Passmore's career is a tough act to follow



Bill Passmore

The Maryland Racing Commission has yet to permanently fill the steward's position vacated last fall when William J. (Bill) Passmore officially retired. It's a particularly challenging assignment, because no one can truly hope to "replace" Bill Passmore.

Now 75 and struggling with the effects of emphysema, Mr. Passmore represented Maryland racing with dignity and excellence for more than a half-century.

A longtime leading Maryland jockey, Mr. Passmore rode his first winner at New York's now defunct Jamaica race track in 1948, and retired from the saddle in late 1984. His record shows 3,533 wins from 29,490 mounts and nearly \$23 million in purse earnings.

He immediately launched into a second career as a Maryland steward, and in recent years was part of a trio with current stewards John Burke and Phil Grove (also former riders).

"Bill's experiences out there on the track, along with his cool temperament and understanding of the business, made him an unbeatable asset to Maryland racing," said MTHA President Richard Hoffberger. "We wish Bill and his wife, Charlene, the very best in their well-earned retirement."

Perrone wins Eclipse Award

The MTHA congratulates Vinnie Perrone, whose memoir on the late Clem Florio, published in the July 2008 issue of *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred*, won an Eclipse Award as Thoroughbred racing's best feature article of 2008.

A former longtime racing writer for *The Washington Post*, Mr. Perrone has previously received several Eclipse honorable mentions.

Mr. Perrone's prize-winning article is posted at www.marylandthoroughbred.com/pdf/ClemFlorio_Perrone.pdf.

Nigh's new post

Jacqui Nigh has resigned as a member of the Maryland Racing Commission in order to accept a position as director of corporate business development for the Maryland Jockey Club.

Ms. Nigh, who had served on the Commission since 2006, was previously chief of staff for state Senator David R. Brinkley (R-Distr. 4, Carroll and Frederick Counties).

AHC renews quest for immigration reform

Immigration reform—a key issue for many segments of the horse industry—is one of the many initiatives that the U.S. Congress is expected to address in the coming months.

“The problems with immigration and a large undocumented work force have not gone away and Congress will have to deal with this,” said American Horse Council (AHC) president Jay Hickey, “although it is not likely to be one of the first issues to be considered.”

Explained Mr. Hickey: “The AHC supports a comprehensive approach to our immigration problems that would address a better guest worker program and a way to handle undocumented workers in the U.S.”

“The last Congress considered the AgJobs bill that dealt specifically with undocumented agricultural workers and would have reformed the H-2A program.

IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth C. (Betty) Bird, a widely accomplished horsewoman, died on December 30 at the age of 81. Mrs. Bird, who made her home in Unionville, Pa., was a member of the well-known Bosley clan, which includes trainers J.B. Secor and John M. Bosley.

Edward J. (Jim) Meehan, a popular Charles Town-based farrier whose clientele extended into Maryland, died on December 2. He was 67.

Bob Witbam, 65, a widely respected on-farm trainer and exercise rider who launched his career in Maryland in the early 1970s, died on December 17.

The Horsemen's Newsletter

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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.



Steroid ban now in effect

Reminder: Maryland's steroid ban took effect on January 1.

The state lab has been testing for steroids since last summer, and all results have been within the required limits, according to Maryland Racing Commission executive director Mike Hopkins.

“The word to trainers is—keep doing what you’re doing,” said MTHA President Richard Hoffberger. “Maryland trainers have handled this transition very well.”

In addition, the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act would have provided some cap relief to H-2B users. Both of these bills will be debated again.

“The agricultural industry laid a good foundation for reform with the AgJobs bill and that will be pushed again in this Congress,” said Mr. Hickey. Representative Hilda Solis (D-Calif.), President Obama’s nominee for Secretary of Labor, supported AgJobs, “so there is reason to hope for action in this Congress,” concluded Mr. Hickey.

Don't wait to name your 2-year-olds

The Jockey Club reminds owners that a valid attempt to name foals of 2007 must be made by February 1, 2009, to avoid a \$75 late fee.

A variety of resources are available for owners who submit applications on The Jockey Club’s Web site at www.registry.jockeyclub.com.

The Web site provides a list of previously used names that have been recently freed for use, and allows owners to check the current availability of a name.

Owners who name their Thoroughbreds through The Jockey Club’s Interactive Registry program online reportedly receive their first choice approximately 75 percent of the time.

Applications may also be mailed to The Jockey Club, 821 Corporate Drive, Lexington, Ky. 40503-2794.

Recreation report

From Dan Mangum,
MTHA Recreation Director.

For information on the MTHA's
year-round recreation program call
(410) 802-5798.

Basketball

Basketball games are held Sunday evenings at 6 p.m. at Meade High School in Laurel.

Come out and cheer for your favorite team!

Horsemen's calendar

RACING

Laurel Now through April 11

Pimlico/Laurel dates for the remainder of 2009 are not yet determined

Timonium Aug. 29-Sept. 7

Fair Hill May 23

**FASIG-TIPTON MIDLANTIC AUCTIONS
AT TIMONIUM**

Two-year-olds in Training May 18, 19
(Entries close Feb. 16)

OUT-OF-STATE AUCTIONS

Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Winter Mixed
Lexington, Ky. (859) 255-1555. Feb. 9

Donations

The following generous people recently donated clothing, reading material and/or other items for distribution on the backstretch: Christine Bricker, Gene Gilhooly, Charles Hadry, Jr., Georganne Hale, Sylvia and Arnold Heft, Ruis Katzenellenbogen, Thomas Mitchell, Dennis Noel, Karen and Eddie Przybyla, Russell Schalk/Raintree Stable and Lydia Williams.

**Ocala Breeders' Sales Company
Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training**
Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. Feb. 17

**Fasig-Tipton Florida
Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training**
Calder Race Course, Miami, Fla.
(859) 255-1555. March 3

**Ocala Breeders' Sales Company Adena
Springs Two-Year-Olds in Training**
Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. March 16

**Ocala Breeders' Sales Company
Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training**
Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. March 17, 18

Keeneland Two-Year-Olds in Training
Lexington, Ky. (800) 456-3412. April 6, 7

**Ocala Breeders' Sales Company
Spring Two-Year-Olds in Training**
Ocala, Fla. (352) 237-2154. April 20-23



MTHA's Backstretch Pension Plan Registration

**Failure to register
will result in the loss
of your 2008 benefit**

Attention All Backstretch
Employees (Assistant
Trainers, Exercise Persons,
Grooms, Hotwalkers, Stable
Foremen, Trainers, etc.)

Pension Plan Registration for the
year ended 2008 will take place at
the following times and locations.

Bring your Maryland Racing
Commission Badge and W-2, 1099, or tax
return for 2008.

For more information call the
MTHA office at (410) 265-6842.

April 13 through April 17
Pimlico MTHA Office,
10 a.m. to noon

April 20 through April 24
Bowie Track Kitchen,
Office Next Door,
9:30 a.m. to noon

April 27 through May 1
Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

May 4 through May 8
Pimlico MTHA Office,
10 a.m. to noon

March 30 through April 3

Bowie Track Kitchen,
Office Next Door,
9:30 a.m. to noon

April 6 through April 10

Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

MTHA

6314 Windsor Mill Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21207

January 2009



Thoughts and comment

The MTHA is justly proud of all the programs it sponsors for backstretch workers, but none of them fulfills our mission quite like the Backstretch Pension Plan.

One of the first programs launched by this organization after its founding in 1987, the pension plan for backstretch workers has been managed effectively yet conservatively, and over the years it has improved the long-term well-being of countless individuals upon retirement.

Our plan has served as a model for other horsemen's groups attempting to offer the best possible program for backstretch employees.

Unfortunately, for the first time ever,

the pension plan suffered a substantial decline in 2008 (see article on page 1). Like all of the economic troubles currently plaguing the nation—and the world—it's a situation to be taken seriously. But backstretch employees counting on this money for their retirement need not panic.

All possible steps are being taken to get the fund moving in a positive direction.

As always, the plan is free to all backstretch employees who sign up (see schedule at the top of this page). It's still one of the best bets around.

/Richard J. Meyer, MTHA
Vice-President, Health and Welfare
Committee Chairman

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