



The Horsemen's Newsletter

Septmeber 2015

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Capital Improvements Continue At Laurel Park

It's out with the old and in with the new in the Laurel Park grandstand, as the Stronach Group continues its plans for capital improvements at the track first built in 1911.

Underway is the remodeling of the Wilwyn Theater, which is also getting a new name – Silks. It's part of the Stronach Group's plan for continuing to brand its business. Silks will correspond with Silks at Gulfstream Park, but Maryland Jockey Club president and general manager Sal Sinatra said, "I believe ours will be better."

And when you hear Sinatra describe what's coming, you might agree with him.

New carpet and a new color scheme, he said. But he's just warming up. There also will be 90 new flat-screen televisions. Nice, but he's not done.

"The center wall will have a state-of-the-art, high-definition, 17 1/2-foot diagonal picture," he said. "It's a \$70,000 TV. The horses look like they're going to run over you!"

There will be better carrels, work desks, with granite tops and their own individual lighting. Each desk will have a plug for an iPad or computer – and a headphone system also is being installed.

"Right now we have 20 TVs on the wall with telecasts from various tracks, but you only hear Laurel," Sinatra said. "We are developing an app where I can program 16 channels. You plug your headphones in and you can hear whatever track you want. No one else has that."

"We're trying to get the 'WOW!' factor. You'll see it right there. We're planning to have those earbuds available at guest services. You can bring your own or you can get ours free and they're yours to keep. I'm hoping people will get them, hold on to them and bring them back each time they come."

Sinatra anticipates the new Silks will become a very popular spot, and it is supposed to be done by Sept. 12, when Laurel Park opens for the fall meet, that will run on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

What exactly is coming in the long-term may be better known after Frank Stronach gives his input.

In the meantime, Sinatra is leading the redevelopment

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MRC Introduces New Stewards

When veteran stewards John Burke and Phil Grove retired this spring, Mike Hopkins, executive director of the Maryland Racing Commission, launched a national search for strong candidates to replace them. What he got are two experienced men – Ross Pearce and Russell Derderian – who bring maturity, integrity, congenial personalities and new perspectives to the stewards' stand.

"We had 26 applicants and Ross' and Russell's credentials as stewards over a long period of time stood out," said Maryland Racing Commission board member David Hayden, who served on the search committee. "Wherever they were they did a very good job. We'll miss the old guys, but guess what? We hired two new very experienced old guys to replace them. We're excited to have them on the team."

Pearce, 59, and Derderian, 66, joined chief steward Adam Campola, 53, the first week of August.

"I am still the youngest," said a smiling Campola, who became chief steward this spring after four years as a Maryland steward.

While the men joke about their ages, Hopkins, who made the hires, said age was never a factor in his decision. "It was all about their experiences and abilities," Hopkins said. "How they interact with people was very important. They have to learn to get along with each other every day. Personality is huge."

Hopkins said the fact the newcomers are accredited by Racing Officials Accreditation Program (ROAP) is also of major importance to him.

"It's not a requirement in Maryland," Hopkins said. "But the fact that they both are shows a good base of understanding."

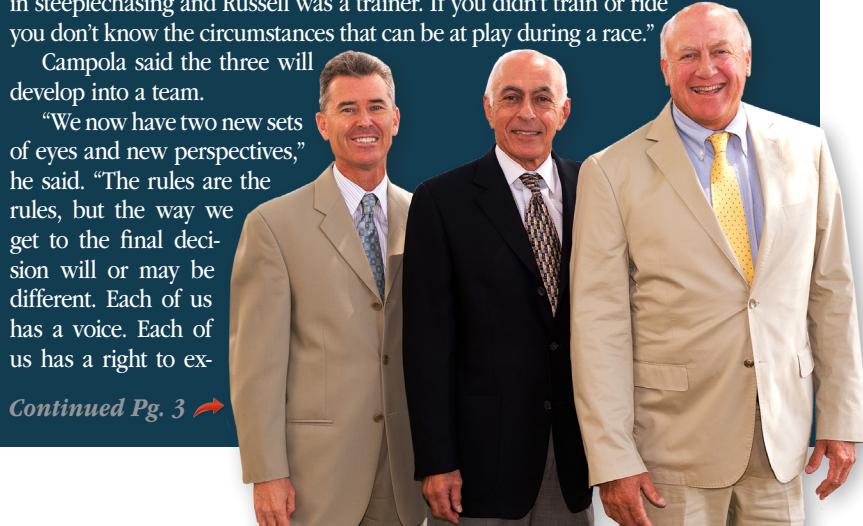
The camaraderie already seems to be growing. Campola though sad to be saying goodbye to two very experienced men who had become his friends, expressed satisfaction with saying hello to two others with long horse racing backgrounds.

"You need people in this job with full horse backgrounds so you can have an educated view," the chief steward said. "I was a jockey, Ross was a trainer and in steeplechasing and Russell was a trainer. If you didn't train or ride you don't know the circumstances that can be at play during a race."

Campola said the three will develop into a team.

"We now have two new sets of eyes and new perspectives," he said. "The rules are the rules, but the way we get to the final decision will or may be different. Each of us has a voice. Each of us has a right to ex-

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charge at Laurel. Besides Silks, a lot more is going on – or about to at Laurel Park.

When you arrive at the track for Opening Day, you'll have a few more food choices. A new Barbecue and rotisserie chicken stand will be open near the current pizza stand and grill. And there will also be a bakery/sweet shop with candy and ice cream.

"It's not just for the kids," Sinatra said, chuckling.

New flooring is going in throughout the grandstand Sinatra said.

There is also a new bar set up on the track apron along the front stretch, with indoor/outdoor service. If inside, there are 14 bar seats with good views of the track and if you're outside, you can simply walk up and order your cocktail.

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Counseling Corner

by Jasmine Arian

Drinking too much can take a serious toll on your health. Whether it is a single occasion or over time, you are putting your life in danger. Alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways. Often times one may notice while under the influence, there is a change in their mode and behavior. This is because the alcohol consumption is affecting the way the brain works and looks. Drinking over a course of time or binge drinking in a single occasion can also cause damage to the heart. Alcohol abuse puts the heart at risk for cardiomyopathy, arrhythmias, stroke, and high blood pressure. The liver takes a "beating" as well, since repeated alcohol use can cause inflammation of the organ. Now that's not the only thing that can become inflamed. The pancreas will begin to produce toxic substances that will eventually lead to pancreatitis, which is a very dangerous inflammation in the body. Lastly, you run the risk of developing cancers in different parts of the body. Alcohol abuse is known to cause cancer of the mouth, esophagus, throat, liver, and breast. Overall, it weakens the immune system, making your body a much easier target for disease. Now what's the fun in that?



MTHA Clothing Drive Efforts

The MTHA Clothing Drive makes necessary clothes, shoe, books, winter coats etc available to backstretch workers in need at Laurel Park via a distribution center open seven days a week.

Two collection bins are easily accessible for donations at Laurel Park located in front of the stable gate and at the horsemen's entrance to the track.

All donations to the program are tax-deductible. Please email info@mdhorsemen.com with the details of your donation for an IRS-approved donation letter.



Summer Meet Successful



When Ellen Charles, owner of Hillwood Stable LLC, comes on the line, she sounds almost giddy.

"How exciting," said Charles, 78. "I'm the No. 1 owner – how nice!"

Charles, Mike Trombetta (trainer) and Victor Carrasco (jockey) took the top honors for the summer meet at Laurel Park.

Charles credits her trainer, Rodney Jenkins, for the success of her horses. "I just feed them, by paying the bills," she said with a laugh. "Give credit where credit is due."

Reminded that she did hire Jenkins, who sent her horses to post 11 times, won three and collected purses of \$108,300, she laughed again.

"I did do that," she said. "It is wonderful being No. 1. And I'm so glad it was at Laurel. I'm really Laurel-based and lived most of my life in Maryland."

July 3 to Aug. 22 was a giddy seven weeks for many Maryland horsemen at Laurel Park. They hadn't experienced a summer meet at Maryland's major tracks in 10 years. Everyone wound up happy, even the Maryland Jockey Club.

Sal Sinatra, the MJC's president and general manager, said the track had a live racing handle up well over \$1 million for the summer dates and the import handle up more

than \$500,000 per day over comparable fall and winter Wednesdays. He also noted the popularity of twilight racing, family days and Maryland Pride Day.

"These last two months have convinced us that Laurel needs to run a portion of the summer in the future," he said.

Trombetta, who earned the training title with \$260,110 in purse winnings, said that is very good news.

"Oh, God, to not have had racing for three months in the summer, for what, a decade?" he said. "This was a breath of fresh air. So many things were good about it – less travel, local horses getting a chance to run here, local fans being able to come out to the track."

Like Charles, Trombetta didn't set out to be No. 1 – though he's been a Top 10 trainer for the past eight years - but he likes what it says about his program.

"We all want to do better," he said. "But good, honest efforts out of your horses, it's all you can ask. Sometimes it's not about the percentages, it's just about consistency."

Carrasco (157 starts, with 25 wins, 27 seconds and 23 thirds for purse winnings of \$737,083) has been nothing but consistent. In 2013, he won the Eclipse Award for outstanding apprentice. Last year, without the bug, he finished second at all three Maryland meets.



Rec Report

Softball

The MTHA pickup softball games held each Monday in the summertime were so successful that we extended them from five weeks to eight weeks. Everyone had a wonderful time and the games were not only fun but very competitive! Thanks to all who participated.

The MTHA is sponsoring a competitive softball team in a fall league that starts soon. It will be on Monday evenings at Fairlands Park in Burtonsville. For further info call Dan Mangum at 410-802-5798.

Soccer

Soccer will start back up for a fall league beginning in September. To sign-up a team or to play as an individual please call Dan.

Bowling

The MTHA is planning a bowling league to begin in September. The teams will consist of 3-person teams with one alternate. We will bowl on Monday afternoons at Laurel AMF Lanes. Awards will be given out at the end of the year.

Baseball Ticket Winners

The winners for the Orioles Ticket Drawings were as follows:

Bob Plummer - 8/31 vs Tampa Bay

Lou Garner - 9/12 vs Kansas City

J.D. Brown - 9/28 vs Toronto

Anthony Aguirre, Jr. - 9/30 vs Toronto

The Bowie Baysox Tickets are almost gone but there are a few remaining. Please sign-up at the track kitchen. They will be distributed on a first come/first serve basis.

Basketball

The MTHA has installed a new professional-quality basketball hoop behind the track kitchen and it is already being utilized. There will be a three-on-three tournament starting in mid September. Please sign-up at the track kitchens.

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MTHA

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press our opinions and then we'll come to the final decisions."

Racing stewards oversee race meetings. In Maryland, the stewards enforce the rules of the state during races, investigate possible infractions, conduct hearings and take disciplinary action against those found guilty of violations, like handing out fines or suspensions.

Derderian grew up with horses, riding hunters and jumpers when he was 10 and going to work at the racetrack for the past 47 years, first working as a hot walker and groom. He has been accredited twice as a steward, once in 1994 and again in 2011, when he returned to a steward job after years of horse training. He got his training license as a 24-year-old and has more than 20 years of training experience at both public and private stables, including those of Frank Stronach, who owns the Maryland racetracks.

In Maryland, it should be noted, the stewards don't work for the tracks the way they sometimes do in other parts of the country. Instead, they work for the state.

But Derderian said when he saw the steward's job advertised in Maryland, he was excited to apply for it because he knew who owned the tracks.

"My feeling was Maryland racing is on the up-swing due mostly to Stronach's dedication to the racing business," he said. "[Stronach has] a different vision. His company wants racing to continue and is all in as far as racing is concerned. The tracks that have improved purely on casino money in other states have seen that money taken away. Stronach wants to develop racing to make it on its own.

"With Tim Ritvo [chief operating officer of racing for The Stronach Group] and Sal Sinatra [Maryland Jockey Club president and chief operating officer] in place here, I don't think I could find a better home."

Derderian said to be a good steward, a person has to have "a judicial temperament."

"Sometimes things come at you," he said. "As a steward you have to be able to listen to everyone. To rule fairly is very important to me."

He added however, he hates the word consistent.

"Everyone wants you to be consistent," he said. "Umpires and stewards have to be consistent – that means without variation in each case. Well, in racing each race is different. The rules are the same, but the stewards, what we're challenged to do is interpret and enforce those rules. In racing

you sometimes need to have the latitude to interpret [the rule] differently."

Pearce, the other new steward, trained horses for 20 years at Buckland Farm in Kentucky, winning 50 stakes and several Grade I's, before becoming a steward for the National Steeplechase Association in 2003. At the same time, he also worked as an alternate steward at the thoroughbred races at Delaware Park. He says the challenge of the job is making "split-second decisions with a lot of thought."

Three stewards, he said, might not see the same thing the same way every time and noted ongoing discussions occur during many races. Campolla and Pearce recalled a recent incident at Laurel Park that demonstrated Derderian's point about consistency.

The rule states a jockey can't intentionally interfere with another horse. When a jockey moved his horse in front of another coming down the stretch, Pearce noted the jockey had looked back, "but I might have thought he was trying to stop the other, closing horse."

But Campolla said he believed the closing horse was coming so fast it was difficult for the other jockey to judge his closing speed. After a discussion, the move was judged a "natural occurrence," but the rule didn't change.

"The most valuable trait for a steward is a level head," said Pearce. "To see situations from both or all sides and make a rational decision is what you want and have to do."

Pearce is from Monkton, where he lives on Oakland Farm, which has been in his family for at least 200 years. His Maryland roots, he said, run deep.

"There is an old story that our farm was owned by Col. Jacob Myers Pearce during the War of 1812," Pearce said. "It is said that his son, a 12-year-old, drove him [by horse and wagon] to the battle of North Point. While Col. Pearce fought in the war in which our national anthem was written, his son came home to harvest the crops and take care of the farm until his dad came home from fighting. We have five houses on it now and over 100 acres. It's not owned just by me, but by our whole family, my cousins share the ownership. We share the barns, too, and we get along well enough to keep it in the family. A lot of people have had to let their farms go. We're very lucky."

He said he is also very lucky to have his new job.

Thankfully, Mike Hopkins hired me," Pearce said. "I'm glad to be here."

When will the new program begin?

September 12.

When will I be able to see a doctor?

MedStar physicians will be able to see walk-ins and patients with appointments from one hour before the first race until the conclusion of the last race.

Also on non race days, MedStar physicians will be accessible off site by appointment.

What does the program cost?

There is no cost to horsemen for routine medical care provided.

Do I need insurance?

There is absolutely no insurance requirement to utilize the new program.



HORSEMEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

Do I need to make an appointment to access the new system?

Appointments are preferred for on-site care, however not required to see a doctor on race days. Appointments are required for off-site care.

How do I make an appointment?

For appointments to see a MedStar physician, call 410-902-6844 in English and Spanish.

Where is off-site care offered?

Off-site care is offered at two MedStar facilities within a few miles of Pimlico and Laurel.

Dr. Armstrong: 14201 Laurel Park Dr. (open Mon - Fri, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.).

MedStar Prompt Care: 1419 Reisterstown Rd. (open Mon - Fri, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. and weekends and holidays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.).

What if I need transportation?

Both off-site facilities are located within easy reach of Pimlico and Laurel Park.

If you require transportation to or from your appointment, please note this when calling for the appointment and transportation will be provided free of charge via UBER® ridesharing service.

**MTHA**

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September 2015

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