Thank you to everyone that attended and/or donated to the SBOANJ's 27th Annual Golf Outing. This year’s golf outing was held at Knob Hill on June 27. Despite the stormy weather, the clouds opened up just in time for our golfers to take the course. It could not have been planned any better, Mother Nature carved out a perfect window for our golfers to enjoy a lovely day, before the rain resumed at dinner time.

This year’s big winners of the whole tournament were with the best score were George Green, Kevin Darlington, Gary McCandess, and Phil McGee. The most honest foursome went to the very surprised team of Roger Janson, Brandan Bosch, Kevin Vanderschelden, and Jake White. The putting contest winner was Jamie McGovern. The longest drive for women went to Marjorie Roman, the longest drive for the men was Dave Deli. This year’s closest-to-pin for the men was Shay Cowan, for the women it was Annie Stoebe. The golfers were not the only ones to take home prizes at this event.

Miller Stable, Burke Racing Stable, and Gaitway Farm Inc. -- we appreciate your continued support of our event. Big thanks to Freehold Dodge for providing the 2023 Dodge Ram, for the Hole-In-One sponsorship. All proceeds from the event benefit TrotPAC and the horsemen’s benevolent fund.

At the end of the day the event was a huge success both on and off the golf course. Big thanks to the golf committee, office staff, and volunteers that came out to support and help put together another awesome event again this year. We cannot wait to see you all again next year.
New Jersey State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin visited the Rutgers University Equine Exercise Physiology Lab in May and got a hands-on look at some of the work done by the Rutgers Equine Science program.

Speaker Coughlin’s visit, which included a fundraiser and brunch, was hosted by the Standardbred Breeders & Owners Association of New Jersey and the state’s Standardbred industry’s political action committee TrotPAC. Speaker Coughlin even led his equine “research partner” Randy around the lab.

“It was neat to have Speaker Coughlin lead the mare around,” said Dr. Karyn Malinowski, founding director of the Equine Science Center at Rutgers. “He was a pro. I think he was surprisingly happy to see we had this kind of agriculture here in New Brunswick, and it was a good opportunity to get the word out about what we do. The cool thing is that we have students engaged; they learn, they become scientists, and we’re benefiting the horse and the equine industry.”

Monday’s event with Speaker Coughlin was the third of its kind to introduce the assemblyman to the many aspects of the equine industry in New Jersey.

His first visit to any equine facility in the state came in 2019 when he attended an SBOANJ event at Fair Winds Farm and the Hogan Equine Clinic. Last year, he spent a morning at Gaitway Farm Training Center, where he toured the grounds, talked with horsemen and horsewomen, and even climbed into a double-seated jog cart for a trip around the farm’s one-mile track.

Speaker Coughlin’s support was vital to the five-year, $100 million appropriation for the state’s horse racing industry that was approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Phil Murphy in 2019. A Democrat representing the 19th Legislative District, Speaker Coughlin has served in the State Assembly since 2010. The responsibilities of the Speaker include scheduling meetings and determining which bills will be considered within the Assembly.

“This was a very intimate event and I think it was very valuable,” said Anthony Perretti, the SBOANJ’s first vice president and Trot-PAC chairman. “I think to make it personal, to make it intimate, with legislators is a big deal. He can see what the industry looks like. He can touch and feel what the situation is on the ground.

“Instead of us just asking for support, we need to show the numbers at work, and the progress and the people behind it that are making it happen. It’s not a hard sell once you get involved. It really isn’t.”

When New Jersey State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin visited the Rutgers University Equine Exercise Physiology Lab in May (see related story), Standardbred Breeders & Owners Association officer Mike Klau used the opportunity to reiterate to the Speaker the value of the five-year, $100 million appropriation for the state’s horse racing industry that was approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Phil Murphy in 2019.

“I’ve said to him a couple times that this appropriation is the perfect example of government and private industry working together,” said Klau, who is the SBOANJ second vice president as well as chairman of the Breeder Committee. “The appropriation has worked in every aspect of our industry — the breeding, the racing, the sub-industries like hay, blacksmiths, veterinarians — as well as preserving green space.

“So, when they look at the appropriation and ask what they are getting for those dollars, we have concrete evidence that, yeah, this worked.”

According to the New Jersey Horse Racing Impact Report for 2016-2021, the number of Standardbred horses on New Jersey breeding farms grew by 55 percent during that period and the number of Standardbred broodmares bred to N.J. stallions increased by 248 percent. The were five Standardbred stallions in N.J. in 2016 but the number has not dropped below 13 in any year since the appropriation began.

Furthermore, yearling nominations for the New Jersey Sire Stakes program increased from 38 to 605 during the time span.

“The point I made to the Speaker is that all this doesn’t happen without the appropriation,” said Klau, who is the syndication manager at Southwind Farms. “The breeding industry is what feeds everything else, but without the racing, there is no breeding industry”

With the increased number of horses also came an increase in the number of vendors and employees for all Standardbred farms. In addition, handle at the Meadowlands in 2021 reached $276 million, its best year — by 17 percent — of the six years analyzed. Total races in 2021 also exceeded any of the prior five years.

“This industry has boomed since the appropriation,” Klau said. “Everything is on the upswing and that would not have happened without it. We’ve had multiple meetings with Speaker Coughlin and each time he asks good questions. He gets it.”
TOSCANO’S IT’S MY SHOW TAKES NORTH AMERICAN CUP

Linda Toscano added to her already Hall of Fame résumé on June 17 when It’s My Show held off favorite Confederate to win the Pepsi North America Cup by a head in 1:47.4 at Woodbine Mohawk Park. It was the trainer’s first victory in the million-dollar event for 3-year-old pacers.

It’s My Show, a homebred son of Sweet Lou-Put On A Show owned by Richard Young and Joanne Young, is a half-brother to Best In Show, who won the 2019 Meadowlands Pace for the same connections. Toscano, a director of the SBOANJ, is only the fourth trainer to win trotting’s $1 million Hambletonian as well as the Meadowlands Pace and North America Cup in their careers. The North America Cup was first held in 1984.

Toscano, who was inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in 2019, also sent out this year’s North America Cup third-place finisher, Fulton.

Scott Zeron drove It’s My Show to victory to get his second win in the North America Cup.

Seven of the 10 finalists in the North America Cup are stabled in New Jersey, including the top-six finishers: It’s My Show, Confederate (trained by Brett Pelling), Fulton, Youkefalas (Michael Russo), Save America and Christchurch (both Nancy Takter). Youkefalas was bred by New Jersey resident Michael Pagonas, who still owns the colt, and Christchurch was bred by New Jersey’s White Birch Farm.

The remaining finalist from New Jersey, Joe Holloway-trained Ammo, started from post 10, a spot that has not produced a Cup winner since 1994 when the race was moved to seven-eighths-mile tracks (Woodbine and Mohawk).

In addition to It’s My Show winning the North America Cup, here is a list of some other New Jersey-connected horses to also win on the Grand Circuit so far this year:

**Hellabalou** – $511,000 Borgata Pacing Series final – trained by Ron Burke and co-owned by NJ’s Larry Karr.

**Amazing Dream N** – $328,200 Blue Chip Matchmaker Series final – trained by Linda Toscano.

**Grace Hill** – $305,000 Roses Are Red – bred by White Birch Farm.

**Southwind Coors** – $250,000 Goodtimes – bred by Southwind Farms.

**Venerate** – $155,200 Arthur J. Cutler Memorial – trained by Marcus Melander

**Khaosan Road** – $137,775 Dexter Cup and $100,000 Bunker Hill – trained by Ake Svanstedt.

**Abuckabett Hanover** – $100,000 Mohawk Gold Cup – owned by NJ’s William Pollack, Bruce Areman and Andrew Harris, as well as trained by Harris.

**Ruthless Hanover** – $100,000 Joe Auger Memorial – owned by NJ’s John Cancelliere and trained by Tom Cancelliere.

**Max Contract** – $100,000 Betsy Ross – co-owned by Andy Miller Stable and trained by Julie Miller.

Last year, It’s My Show was winless in eight races. He was gelded after the season and his victory in the North America Cup made him a perfect 6-for-6 in 2023 and upped his career earnings to $523,715. His performances also put him No. 1 in the Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll in June.

“He disappointed me so much last year [but I thought] I can’t be this wrong about this horse and he’s come back and been nothing less than perfect,” Toscano said. “He’s an amazing horse. When you can win these kinds of races, this is what you do it for.”
Voukefalas and Ucandoit Blue Chip repeated as New Jersey Sire Stakes champions among 3-year-old pacing colts and fillies, respectively, while the sophomore trotting divisions went to filly Special Way and colt Air Power.

The finals for the pacers were held May 27 at The Meadowlands while the finals for the trotters were held a week later at The Big M.

Voukefalas, a son of Lazarus N out of Inittowinafortune, swept the three rounds of the series (two prelims and final) by a total of 8-1/2 lengths for driver Jordan Stratton and trainer Michael Russo. The colt, bred and owned by New Jersey’s Michael Pagonas, won the $240,000 championship with a career-best 1:49.4 mile.

“I was very nervous the whole way,” Russo said following the race. “I was nervous all week, but I was pretty confident coming in. He does all the work. He makes me look good.”

Through his first 12 lifetime starts, Voukefalas had hit the board 10 times, posting six wins and earning $455,183.

Ucandoit Blue Chip captured her $240,000 NJSS title with a 1:51.3 triumph off a pocket trip for driver Scott Zeron and trainer Linda Toscano.

“That’s just what we hoped for because she loves a helmet, and she knows what to do coming off a helmet,” Toscano said. “That’s her game, follow cover and finish. The plan was to do that [in the final] and it worked out real well.”

Ucandoit Blue Chip is a daughter of Walner out of Special Hill, the filly is owned by breeders Brittany Farms, Marvin Katz and Al Libfeld. In addition to her Horse of the Year honor in New Jersey, she was the Dan Patch Award winner for best 2-year-old female trotter of 2022.

Special Way, who spent the first two weeks of the sport’s Top 10 poll ranked among the top five horses in North America, had 10 wins and a second in her first 12 career races. She banked nearly $850,000.

Given her success, many wonder if Special Way will take on the boys in the $1 million Hambletonian on Aug. 5 at The Meadowlands. Fillies have posted two wins (Atlanta in 2018 and Ramona Hill in 2020) and a second (Joviality S in 2022) in the event’s past five years.

“I’m going to celebrate this [NJSS title] and we’ll go one step at a time,” co-owner Katz said. “How’s that for a political answer?”

Air Power, who was winless in three races as a 2-year-old, vaulted into the Hambletonian conversation with his New Jersey Sire Stakes performance. The colt swept his three starts in the series, taking the $240,000 final in a career-best 1:50.4 after rallying from eighth place at the half-mile point for driver Andy McCarthy and trainer Marcus Melander.

“I figured there’d be a fair bit of speed in there and I was hoping for a bit of a flow and trip on the outside, but that didn’t look too good,” McCarthy said. “So, we had to take a shot the other way. It worked out. He definitely had a lot of trot finishing up.”

Air Power, a son of Muscle Hill out of Beyond Blue, is owned by AMG Stable, Rick Wahlstedt, Kenneth Kjellgren and Heights Stable. He was bred by Order By Stable AB.
N.J. CONNECTED BROODMARES ENTER HALL OF FAME

Female pacers Road Bet, owned by Stephen Dey III, and My Little Dragon, bred by White Birch Farm, were honored for their careers as broodmares on July 2 with induction into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame.

Road Bet is the dam of female pacer Niki Hill, who was a Dan Patch Award winner in 2021 and has earned $1.34 million in her career, as well as male pacer Cattlewash, a world champion stallion who banked $1.31 million on the racetrack. Incidentally, her third of four racing offspring, 3-year-old filly Earthwindsfire, is a recent Grand Circuit winner and a 2022 New Jersey Sire Stakes Standardbred Development Fund champ.

Dey and his brother Greg, both equine veterinarians, operate Heritage Hill Farm near Allentown, N.J.

“I want to thank the Hall of Fame; it’s certainly a real privilege to be up here accepting this award for Road Bet,” Dey, a director of the SBOANJ, said during the Hall of Fame ceremony. “I want to thank my farm crew for the great job they do with helping us raise the mares and foals. My brother and I are often working on racehorses and my crew does a great job looking after those mares and foals for us.”

My Little Dragon was bred by White Birch Farm, also located near Allentown, and now known as Hot Lead Stables. She was a three-time Breeder’s Crown champion and two-time Dan Patch Award winner during her racing career, which saw her win 24 of 55 races and earn $2.31 million.

As a broodmare, her offspring include 2017 O’Brien Award-winner Stay Hungry and 2022 Dan Patch Award-winner Treacherous Dragon, who was bred by White Birch Farm and is owned by Hot Lead Farm. My Little Dragon was purchased by Cindy and Steve Stewart’s Hunterton Farm in 2019.

“Steve asked me if I would accept this award on their behalf,” David Reid said at the Hall of Fame ceremony. “He wanted me to recognize the original breeder and everyone that was responsible for her upbringing and racing career, and to know that she is in good hands at Hunterton Farm.”

RUTGER’S MALINOWSKI RECEIVED 2023 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Dr. Karyn Malinowski, founding director of the Equine Science Center at Rutgers University, received the 2023 Distinguished Service Award at the 2023 Equine Science Society Symposium in Grapevine, Texas, on June 9.

Presented to her during the Equine Science Society Symposium’s 2023 awards banquet, the award is the most prestigious honor that the Equine Science Society can bestow upon one of its members.

The Distinguished Service Award in Equine Science recognizes outstanding contributions in the field of equine science. Award recipients must also have a record of significant accomplishments in teaching, research and extension or service as it relates to the advancement of the equine sciences and horse industry.

“Dr. Malinowski’s passion and dedication to the field of Equine Science, her passion for improving the care of the equine athlete, and her dedication to ensuring the viability of the New Jersey horse industry exemplifies the qualities of those receiving this award,” said Dr. Kenneth McKeever, Associate Director of Research at the Rutgers Equine Science Center. “Dr. Malinowski’s career is a model of excellence in all three parts of the Land Grant Mission, research, teaching, and outreach/service.”

Dr. Malinowski has served as a faculty member at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences since 1978 in various roles, including Extension Specialist in Equine Sciences, Animal Sciences Professor, Founding Director of the Equine Science Center, and the Director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Her research and extension programs concentrate on improving the equine athlete’s well-being and quality of life while ensuring the equine industry’s vitality and viability, both statewide and nationally.

After having the opportunity to drive the famous Niatross, she was bitten by the bug and spent several summers learning how to drive harness horses. In 2001, Dr. Malinowski acquired her first Standardbred racehorse, Could Be Magic, who carried her to victory in her amateur debut in 2003 at Freehold Raceway.

“I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this prestigious award from the Equine Science Society,” said Dr. Malinowski. “It has been my extreme pleasure to have worked for over four decades with top-notch young people and horses!”

Dr. McKeever, FACSM, FAPS, Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at Rutgers University, was elevated to the rank of Fellow of the Equine Science Society during the 2023 Equine Science Society Symposium awards banquet.

The rank of Fellow of the Equine Science Society is an elite member status reserved to recognize distinguished service to the horse industry and to the Equine Science Society over the member’s many years of service.

“Dr. McKeever epitomizes what a Fellow of the Equine Science Society should represent in his long-standing contributions to the equine science field, which are vast; having truly changed the world of equestrian sports and its integrity, including horse racing,” said Dr. Malinowski. “I know of no other equine scientist who is more deserving of being named a Fellow by the Equine Science Society than Dr. Ken McKeever; he is truly extraordinary and will continue to give back to our profession for years to come.”
Medical Clinic Gaitway Farm

The BCAP Medical Clinic at Gaitway Farm dates will be announced soon. The clinic offers free medical check-ups, renewal of medications, blood work and more. BCAP’s Medical Clinic is located in Chris Samaha, Ph.D.’s office at Gaitway Farm (next to barn 17).

Chris Samaha’s office (BCAP: Backstretch Community Assistance Program), at Gaitway Farm is opened on Mondays during the summer months and on Monday & Wednesdays after Monmouth Park closes. Free and confidential counseling, advocacy and more assistance is provided for all N.J.-licensed horsemen. Feel free to call Chris @ 732-740-5376 for further information.

TrotPAC trustees continue to attend many political leaders’ fundraisers during these uncertain times to help ensure the long-term viability of Standardbred racing and breeding in New Jersey. With the recent changes in Legislators it is more important than ever that TrotPAC make its presence known in Trenton. TrotPAC trustees must now educate and promote the importance of our industry to all the State Legislators. Most recently TrotPAC trustees attended the events for the following people: Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, Senator Joseph Vitale, Assemblyman Daniel Benson, Senator Vin Gopal, John Burzichelli for Senate, and the New Jersey Democratic State Committee.
Let me start this letter by offering thanks to everyone – sponsors, staff, directors, and participants – who helped make the SBOANJ annual golf outing a success. The event benefits two important programs, the Horsemen’s Benevolent Fund and TrotPAC, and continues to get better every year.

Speaking of TrotPAC, the SBOANJ is continuing to work diligently to highlight to our state’s legislative leaders the importance, and unquestionable success, of the appropriations provided to the racing industry in recent years. We are grateful that Gov. Murphy’s 2024 budget includes an additional year of funding, and we will spend the remainder of the year working with both the State Senate and State Assembly to secure another five-year appropriation for the future.

The New Jersey Horse Racing Impact Report, which is being finalized with your assistance with your assistance, will help us support the success of the program. Additionally, the Meadowlands recently reported great numbers in terms of handle for the first half of the year.

“Our business has been surging,” Meadowlands COO and GM Jason Settlemoir said. “For 52 programs this year, we’ve bet $161,396,568, so we are averaging $3.1 million per card. We just missed the $7-million mark for two nights of racing last week, averaging $3,499,472 a night. This is the first time the average handle has been over $3 million per card for the first half of the season in decades. When you consider how successful our Fox Sports national television broadcasts have been, it’s hard not to be optimistic about the remainder of our Championship Meet.”

“So much of what has gone right at the Meadowlands this year can be attributed to Gov. Murphy and the New Jersey State Legislature for their continued support of the horse racing industry in the Garden State. Sometimes it’s hard to quantify how much legislation has helped, but that’s not the case here. Handle on the Meadowlands has exploded since the Governor signed the appropriation bill in February of 2019, bringing enormous attention to New Jersey, and vaulting The Big M to become the most popular nighttime signal in North America, regardless of breed.”

As for the racing, New Jersey again has been home to many of the top performers in North America. Congratulations to all our 3-year-old Sire Stakes champions and congratulations to SBOANJ Director Linda Toscano for her win in the North America Cup. Furthermore, it was fantastic to see broodmares Road Bet and My Little Dragon, who both have deep ties to New Jersey, inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame.

We also took time recently to honor our 2022 Horse of the Year, Special Way, and Breeder of the Year, Heritage Hill Farm. Congrats again to both.

Hopefully, we got a look at some future stars during last month’s qualifiers for 2-year-olds. As in the past, the SBOANJ, BCAP and Gaitway sponsored food for each week’s participants at Gaitway Farm.

Finally, we wish all the best to outgoing Department of Agriculture Secretary Doug Fisher, who retired effective July 1 after 14 years of service.

Mark Ford