New Jersey-based stallion Walner was the No. 1 trotting sire in North America in 2023, with his offspring totaling $11.64 million for the season. Walner, who stands at Southwind Farms, was the leading sire of 2-year-olds, with $4.19 million, and 3-year-olds, with $5.05 million. He also had his 2- and 3-year-olds finish on top in average earnings.

Walner sired two Dan Patch Award winners, 2-year-old filly Soiree Hanover and 4-year-old mare Jiggy Jog S.

Muscle Hill and Tactical Landing, who both also stand at Southwind Farms, were among the trotting sire leaders as well. Muscle Hill ranked third in total purses, with his offspring collecting $9.97 million. Tactical Landing, whose oldest horses in 2023 were age 3, totaled $6.38 million, the top amount for sires with only two crops of racing age.

Both stallions were in the top five for purses earned by 2- and 3-year-olds.

Tactical Landing sired two Dan Patch Award winners, 2-year-old colt Karl and 3-year-old colt Tactical Approach. Muscle Hill sired the mare Annapolis, who is the mother of Dan Patch Award winner It’s Academic.

On the pacing side, Lazarus N was New Jersey’s top sire, with his offspring earning $3.04 million. The stallion, who stands at Deo Volente Farms, finished in the Top 10 in purses for 3-year-olds.

DID YOU KNOW? The sport’s top-five purse-winning trainers — Ron Burke, Ake Svanstedt, Tony Alagna, Nancy Takter, and Per Engblom — are either based in New Jersey or operate a stable in the Garden State.

In addition, the top-four purse-winning drivers — Yannick Gingras, Tim Tetrick, David Miller, and Dexter Dunn — all call New Jersey home.

MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT

The state Senate passed the Bill extending the appropriations for horse racing through 2029. That follows the State Assembly passing the bill unanimously with a vote of 73 - 0. However, Governor Murphy vetoed the bills more information to follow.
SVANSTEDT, TOSCANO, SETTLEMOIR RECEIVE HONORS

The New Jersey trio of Ake Svanstedt, Linda Toscano, and Jason Settlemoir were among the big winners when the U.S. Harness Writers Association announced its 2023 awards recipients during the final week of December.

Svanstedt became the fifth consecutive Garden State resident to be named Trainer of the Year. A native of Sweden who moved to New Jersey a decade ago, Svanstedt set career highs in 2023 with 162 wins and $9.85 million in purses. Only three trainers in history have posted higher earnings in a single year: Ron Burke, Jimmy Takter, and Mickey Burke.

In 2023, Svanstedt won 53 times on the Grand Circuit with 29 different horses. Four of those triumphs came in the Breeders Crown – with Bond, Jiggy Jog S, Southwind Tyrion, and Warrawee Michelle – a trophy total second to only Takter’s record six Crowns in 2015. Three-year-old filly Bond and 4-year-old mare Jiggy Jog S were named division champs in Dan Patch Awards voting.

Other top wins for Svanstedt came with Alrajah One IT in the Maple Leaf Trot, Up Your Deo in the Yonkers Trot, Southwind Tyrion in the FanDuel Open Trot Championship, pacer Stonebridge Helios in the Graduate Series final, and Khaosan Road in the Dexter Cup.

The previous four Trainer of the Year honors went to Jim Campbell, Nifty Norman, Nancy Takter, and Marcus Melander.

Toscano, too, was a past Trainer of the Year winner, with her recognition coming in 2012. For 2023, Toscano was honored with the William R. Haughton Good Guy Award for her cooperation with the media and thoughtful representation of racing.

The 2023 campaign saw Toscano earn $4.05 million in purses, the second-best total of her career. Her top victories included the Little Brown Jug and North America Cup with It’s My Show, Blue Chip Matchmaker final with Amazing Dream N, and Jugette and New Jersey Sire Stakes championship with Ucandoit Blue Chip. She won 24 times on the Grand Circuit.

In addition to her training responsibilities, Toscano is a director of the SBOANJ.

Settlemoir, the COO/GM of the Meadowlands, was voted a recipient of the Stan Bergstein-Proximity Award, presented by USHWA for outstanding achievement in the sport.

He received USHWA’s 2006 Lew Barasch Breakthrough Award for his work at Vernon Downs and in opening Tioga Downs and was inducted into the Upstate New York chapter of USHWA’s Hall of Fame in 2011.

In 2014, Settlemoir received the USHWA Monticello-Goshen Chapter’s “Good Guy” award for his “youthful enthusiasm and passion for our sport, combined with his progressive thinking which has positioned the sport for the next generation.” Three years later, Settlemoir received the President’s Award from USHWA for his hard work and dedication to the sport of harness racing.

In addition, Settlemoir has contributed to the overall success of harness racing by serving as a director of several top governing bodies (USTA, the Grand Circuit, the Little Brown Jug, as well as being the former president of USHWA) and also involving himself in community civic organizations. He also is a successful horse owner.

Svanstedt, Toscano, and Settlemoir will be honored Feb. 25 at USHWA’s Dan Patch Awards banquet at Rosen Centre in Orlando, Fla.
JERSEY A “10” IN DAN PATCH AWARDS

There was no shortage of Jersey representation when the U.S. Harness Writers Association announced the 12 divisional Dan Patch Award winners at the end of December.

Ten of the equine champions were connected to the state through either their sire, breeder, trainer, or owners. Those horses were trotters Karl, Soiree Hanover, Tactical Approach, Bond, It’s Academic, and Jiggy Jog S along with pacers Confederate, Captain Albano, Bythemissal, and Grace Hill.

New Jersey-stabled trainers with award-winners were Nancy Takter, Tactical Approach and Karl; Ake Svanstedt, Bond and Jiggy Jog S; Ron Burke, It’s Academic and Bythemissal; Lucas Wallin, Soiree Hanover; Brett Pelling, Confederate; and Noel Daley, Captain Albano.

State-based stallions to sire award-winners were Tactical Landing, Tactical Approach and Karl; and Walner, Jiggy Jog S and Soiree Hanover. New Jersey breeders with winners were Stephen Dey III, Bythemissal; and White Birch Farm, Grace Hill.

Owners from New Jersey were Christina and Nancy Takter and Black Horse Racing with Karl and Ake Svanstedt Inc. with Bond.

In addition, eight of the state-connected winners had drivers that live in New Jersey: Yannick Gingras, Karl and Bythemissal; Tim Tetrick, Soiree Hanover and Confederate; Dexter Dunn, Jiggy Jog S; Ake Svanstedt, Bond; David Miller, It’s Academic; and Captain Albano, Todd McCarthy.

Three-year-old colt Tactical Approach, the season’s richest trotter with $1.50 million in purses, hit the board in 17 of 19 races, winning 10, with his triumphs including the Hambletonian, Breeders Crown, and Kentucky Futurity.

Karl was the season’s fastest 2-year-old trotter, with a mark of 1:51.2, and earned $1.04 million. He was a nose from being undefeated in 10 starts, with his wins including the Breeders Crown, Valley Victory, Kindergarten Classic Series final, and a Kentucky Sire Stakes title.

Jiggy Jog S, a 4-year-old mare who earned $1.03 million in 2023, was no worse than second in any of her 11 races, winning eight. Her victories included the Breeders Crown, Dayton Oaks, and Graduate Series final, where she defeated male rivals. She was second in the MGM Yonkers International.

Bond was the leading money-earner among 3-year-old female trotters, with $847,071. She won eight of 13 races, including the Breeders Crown, Elegantimage, and Delmonica Hanover, and was second in the Hambletonian Oaks.

It’s Academic and Soiree Hanover both topped their respective divisions in purses, with 6-year-old stallion It’s Academic banking $951,911 and 2-year-old filly Soiree Hanover earning $607,955. It’s Academic hit the board in 16 of 18 races, with his eight victories topped by the John Cashman Memorial. Soiree Hanover was top three in nine of 10 races and counted the Jim Doherty Memorial among her six triumphs.

Bythemissal and Grace Hill were the leading money-earners in their respective divisions.

A 4-year-old gelding, Bythemissal won 11 of 16 starts, including the Breeders Crown, Aria Invitational, Allerage Open, and a division of the Sam McKee Memorial. Grace Hill, a 5-year-old mare, won 10 of 15 races on her way to $573,526 in purses. Her victories included the Dayton Distaff Derby, Roses Are Red, and Milton.

Confederate, the only unanimous selection, was this season’s richest horse with $1.63 million. In addition to leading the sport in purses, he became the fastest 3-year-old pacer in history thanks to his 1:46.1 score in September at Lexington’s Red Mile. The colt won 13 of 15 starts this season, including the Meadowlands Pace, Breeders Crown, Cane Pace, and Max C. Hempt Memorial.

Captain Albano, the season’s fastest 2-year-old male pacer, with a mark of 1:49.2, won seven of nine races. The colt was a Pennsylvania Sire Stakes champion in addition to winning Bluegrass and International Stallion divisions.

The division champions will be honored during the Dan Patch Awards banquet, presented by Caesars Entertainment, at Rosen Centre in Orlando, Fla., on Feb. 25. Pacer of the Year, Trotter of the Year, and Horse of the Year will be announced at the banquet.
New Jersey connections felt at home in Indiana. Eleven of this year’s 12 Breeders Crown winners at Harrah’s Horsier Park in Anderson, Ind., were linked in some way to the Garden State, including four champions from the stable of trainer Ake Svanstedt and two each from trainers Nancy Takter and Ron Burke. All three of those trainers rank in the Top 10 for Breeders Crown victories in history.

Svanstedt won the 2-Year-Old Filly Trot with Warrawee Michelle, 3-Year-Old Filly Trot with Bond, Mare Trot with Jiggy Jog S, and Open Trot with Southwind Tyrion. His four victories were second to only Jimmy Takter’s record six triumphs in 2015 for the most training wins in one year in Breeders Crown history.

“I’ve never had as many nice horses as I do this year,” said Ake Svanstedt, who is based in Wrightstown. “It’s easy to go out every morning to train the horses.”

Added Sarah Svanstedt, “I’m very happy for the team. The horses have great caretakers behind them, so all the credit to them and the owners. I’m so happy for them.”

Svanstedt is among the owners of Warrawee Michelle, a New Jersey-sired daughter of Walner, as well as Bond and Southwind Tyrion. Jiggy Jog S also is a daughter of Walner while Southwind Tyrion, bred by Southwind Farms, is a Jersey-sired son of Muscle Hill.

For his career, Svanstedt has won nine Breeders Crown finals.

Takter won her Breeders Crown trophies with 2-year-old male trotter Karl and 3-year-old male trotter Tactical Approach, both sons of New Jersey stallion Tactical Landing. Karl’s owners include New Jersey’s Christina and Nancy Takter and Black Horse Racing. Nancy Takter, based in East Windsor, has captured 10 Breeders Crowns in her career.

Burke, who is stabled at Gaitway Farm in Manalapan and ranks second all-time with 20 Breeders Crown trophies, won the Open Pace with Bythemissal and 2-Year-Old Filly Pace with My Girl EJ. Bythemissal was bred by New Jersey’s Stephen Dey III.

The remaining locals to bring home Breeders Crown victories were trainers Julie Miller, Chris Ryder, and Brett Pelling.

Miller, another Gaitway Farm-based conditioner, won the Mare Pace with Max Contract. The mare was driven by her husband, Andy, and is co-owned by Andy Miller Stable Inc. It was Julie Miller’s second career Crown.

Ryder, based at Winners Training Center in Chesterfield, won the 2-Year-Old Colt Pace with Gem Quality for his sixth lifetime Breeders Crown triumph. Pelling, based at Magical Acres in Chesterfield, won the 3-Year-Old Colt Pace with Confederate for Crown victory No. 13.

Continued to page 5.
Here are some other New Jersey-connected horses to win on the Grand Circuit since late September:

Southwind Tyrion – $350,000 FanDuel Open Trot.

Jiggy Jog S - $175,000 FanDuel Mare Trot.

Pizzelle – $428,000 Goldsmith Maid – trained by Noel Daley, sired by Walner.

Allywag Hanover – $350,000 FanDuel Open Pace – trained by Brett Pelling,

Twin B Joe Fresh – $175,000 FanDuel Mare Pace*, $117,550 Matron – trained by Chris Ryder, co-owned by Ryder, Dexter Dunn, Peter Trebotica. *First 3-year-old filly to win FanDuel Mare Pace.

Captain Luke – $454,000 Governor’s Cup – trained by Tony Alagna.

Karl – $423,000 Valley Victory, $267,500 Kindergarten.

Caviart Belle – $376,000 Three Diamonds, $205,900 Kindergarten – trained by Nancy Takter.


Point Of Perfect – $127,400 Matron - trained by Ron Burke, sired by Walner.

Maxim Hanover – $145,000 Matron – trained by Robert Cleary.


Tactical Approach – $205,000 Carl Erskine.

TAYLOR PALMER HONORED

Taylor Palmer Jr., one of the founders of the Standardbred Breeders & Owners Association of New Jersey, in December was honored for his decades of service to the state’s equine industry when the Rutgers Equine Science Center presented him with the 2024 Spirit of the Horse award. Palmer received the award during the Rutgers Equine Science Center’s 2023 “Evening of Science & Celebration,” sponsored by Mid-Atlantic Equine Medical Center.

Dr. Karyn Malinowski, founding director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center, said the Spirit of the Horse award “recognizes individuals whose lives have been profoundly changed because of their involvement with horses and who have acknowledged the impact by giving back to the horse industry.”

“I was very humbled by it and very appreciative, that’s for sure,” said Palmer, who is best known for owning and operating Boxwood Farm in central New Jersey. The Palmer family’s involvement in harness racing dates back to the early 1900s.

In addition to his duties at Boxwood Farm, Palmer has held a variety of leadership roles and continues to remain active in the SBOANJ. A strong supporter of connecting the equine industry with educational and research initiatives, he was the founding Chair of the Rutgers University Board for Equine Advancement (RUBEA) and continues to hold Chair Emeritus status on RUBEA. This board of elected members assists the Rutgers Equine Science Center in its decisions regarding its equine teaching, research, and outreach; and promotes and supports these activities through fund-raising and advocacy efforts.

He has also held positions on the Monmouth County Board of Agriculture, and in 2022 was honored with the MCBOA Lifetime Achievement Award. He has also embraced the state initiative of Farmland Preservation, which included placing his own farm into preservation status to ensure the land would remain free of future development.

“Anything to do with the Standardbred business was important to me,” Palmer said. “Anything to help promote the harness business is what I wanted to do. What little bit I could do. You don’t do it by yourself, there were a lot of people that I was involved with. We always had the privilege of having good people and we worked together.”

Dr. Karyn Malinowski, founding director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center, said the Spirit of the Horse award “recognizes individuals whose lives have been profoundly changed because of their involvement with horses and who have acknowledged the impact by giving back to the horse industry.”

She continued, “There is no other person that I can think of that has steadfastly spent decades fighting for, building, and preserving the equine industry in New Jersey. Taylor raised some of the finest mares and yearlings, dedicated his time to the agricultural community, and even allowed us to conduct groundbreaking research into weaning stress on his farm. Horses and the equine industry have certainly changed his life, but more importantly, he has profoundly changed the course of the New Jersey equine industry for the betterment of us all.”
NJ POSTS BIG NUMBERS AT YEARLING SALES

New Jersey horses and buyers showed up strong at last fall’s yearling sales in Lexington and Harrisburg.

In October, 214 New Jersey-eligible yearlings sold for a total of $17.8 million, an average of $83,201, at the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale. The average was a 4.3-percent increase compared to 2022.

State-based stallions Walner, Muscle Hill, and Tactical Landing all ranked among the top four trotting sires in gross sales.

The top-four buyers, and nine of the top 11, were trainers with stables in New Jersey, spending a total of $19.8 million. Overall, the sale grossed a record $67.9 million.

“It’s really exciting to see all these horses get paraded out there and everybody bidding and laying out their money for their next future star hopefully,” said owner Bill Pollock, who with his trainer, Andrew Harris, was among the top buyers at the sale.

In November, New Jersey-eligible trotting colt De Kooning (now named Hidalgo) was the top seller at the Standardbred Horse Sale in Harrisburg. The son of Muscle Hill sold for $600,000 to trainer Ron Burke and owners Brixton Medical Inc. and Hatfield Stables. He was bred by Stefan Balazsi’s Order By Stable AB and consigned by N.J.’s Concord Stud Farm.

“Bud (Hatfield) and those guys thought it was the best trotting colt in the sale,” Burke said. “They said buy it, pretty much no matter what. They’ve had really good success buying off Stefan and Concord, so they like to go back to where they’ve done well.

“I know Bud really wants to win a Hambletonian. He said that’s the best colt, he wants it. I give those guys credit for stepping up. It’ll be cool. It’ll be something different. I’m used to pressure anyhow, so it doesn’t bother me.”

Other top sellers at Harrisburg were a trotting colt named Hatfield and pacing filly Penny Benjamin. Both sold for $400,000 and are owned by the Jersey trio of Pollock, Harris, and Bruce Areman. Hatfield, a full brother to millionaire TCI, was bred and consigned by Concord Stud Farm. Penny Benjamin, a half-sister to Dan Patch Award-winner Bythemissal, was bred by Stephen Dey III.

Among consignors that sold more than three horses, Concord Stud Farm posted the sale’s best average, $77,397. The overall average for the sale was $44,284.

New Jersey-eligible yearlings averaged $50,981, missing the top spot for state eligibles by fewer than $2,000.

Muscle Hill averaged $146,250 to rank second among all trotting sires.

Buyers from New Jersey were active again, spending $11.6 million to lead all jurisdictions.

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 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: Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Assemblyman Joe Pennacchio, Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez, Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt, Assemblyman Bill Moen, and Assemblyman Louis Greenwald. In addition TrotPAC will be attending these events in the future for the following people: Assembly Appropriations Chair Lisa Swain, Assemblyman Roy Freimar, Senator Paul Sarlo, Senator John J. Burzichelli, and Assemblyman and Senate Candidate Raj Mukherji.

Gaitway Farm Medical Clinic

The BCAP Medical Clinic at Gaitway Farm. The clinic offers free medical checkups, 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).
PRESIDENT’S LETTER

As many of you know by now, Gov. Phil Murphy declined to act on a bill that would have extended the state’s annual appropriation for racing from 2025 through fiscal year 2029. The legislation was passed by the Assembly, 73-0, and by the Senate, 35-1, during the State Legislature’s lame-duck session that ended in early January. The governor felt that the new five-year appropriation legislation should be part of the normal budget process and not handled in the lame duck session.

Gov. Murphy and the members of the Legislature have been strong supporters of our industry, and we remain hopeful the appropriation will be approved during the new legislative session now under way. The SBOANJ board, TrotPAC, and our lobbying group will continue to work diligently toward that goal.

It was a lot of long hours and hard work to secure the first round of appropriations, and our efforts to generate an extension have been no different. But there can be no doubt the past appropriations resulted in strengthening our industry at a grassroots level while fostering growth and promoting breeding and racing in New Jersey.

Figures from 2023 illustrated the success, whether looking at stallions standing in the state, yearlings sold at auctions, the number of young horses competing in the New Jersey Sire Stakes program (at a level not seen in more than a decade), people living, working, and racing in N.J., or money generated from wagering at the sport’s premier track, The Meadowlands.

New Jersey-based Walner was the No. 1 trotting sire in North America in 2023, with his offspring earning more than $11.6 million for the year. The top five purse-earning trainers were either based in N.J. or have a stable in the state. And the top four purse-earnings drivers all called N.J. their home.

We saw N.J. residents Ake Svanstedt, Linda Toscano, and Jason Settlemoir honored for their accomplishments and leadership, as well as a number of state-connected horses recognized for their performances and successes on the track. We also saw the elections of Garden State residents Jim Campbell and Ed Lohmeyer to the Hall of Fame. Congratulations to all.

On the business side, The Meadowlands enjoyed an exceptional year. The average nightly handle in 2023 was $3.08 million – the best average since Jeff Gural took over The Meadowlands in 2011. Speaking of The Big M, I would also like to congratulate the track’s top driver and trainer for 2023. Yannick Gingras led the drivers with 123 victories and topped the earnings with $3.2 million. Ron Burke led the trainers with 112 wins and $2.9 million in earnings. Congratulations to you both.

Finally, thank you to everyone that has been involved in helping put the Economic Impact Study together. The report will become an invaluable resource when it comes to highlighting our industry’s growth and development in recent years and providing the Legislature with the information necessary to continue the state appropriations.

Happy New Year and best of luck in 2024.

Mark Ford
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