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WINNER OF THE
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Career Excellence In Turf Writing



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NICK LUCK
WINNER OF THE
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Career Excellence In Broadcasting



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JOE HARPER
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Meritorious Service To Racing



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PERRY OUZTS
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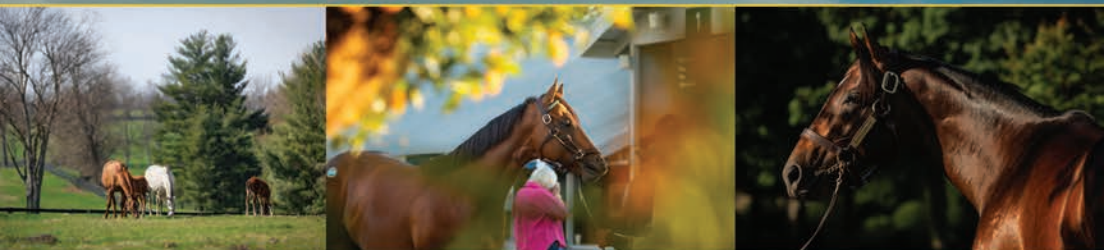
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GREETINGS FROM NTWAB PRESIDENT, BYRON KING

Welcome back to Del Mar, “where the turf meets the surf,” as this picturesque Southern California racetrack readies itself again to host the Breeders’ Cup World Championships Oct. 31-Nov. 1. It marks the fourth time the two-day event will be held here, and it is a fitting backdrop for the National Turf Writers and Broadcasters to gather tonight at The Brigantine Del Mar for our 65th Annual Awards Dinner.

Before turning our attention to this evening’s honorees, I’d like to express some words of gratitude to our membership and to the board members who give so generously of their time. This spring we welcomed our newest board member, BRISnet’s Vance Hanson, who joins a dedicated board comprised of Nathan Campbell, Dick Downey, Jennifer Kelly, Nicole Russo, Scott Hazelton, Steve Byk, Sara Gordon, Carlos Morales and me.

Tonight’s dinner and program also come together thanks to the behind-the-scenes efforts of Tom Law, Graham Allen, Loren Hebel-Osborne, Julie and Jay Sarno, Dick and Steve.

Tonight’s dinner is a night of celebration and camaraderie, while also serving as our non-profit’s sole fundraiser. The proceeds support Thoroughbred industry charities and fund internships designed to cultivate the next generation of racing journalists. In 2024, the NTWAB proudly co-funded five internships. From that group, Paullick Report intern Lillian Davis has already stepped into a full-time role as assistant news editor—a clear sign the internship program is helping to propel young people into our profession.

This winter, we hope to announce the expansion of this internship program further in 2026. If your media company is interested in hosting an intern, or if you’d like to learn more, please reach out to us.

Without further ado, let’s shine the spotlight on this year’s honorees.

They include 71-year-old riding legend Perry Ouzts, awarded our Mr. Fitz Award for typifying the spirit of racing. In honoring Ouzts, the NTWAB recognizes the achievements and longevity of the veteran rider, who began his career in April 1973, just weeks before Secretariat won that year’s Triple Crown. Besides holding the mounts record, he is one of the oldest winning riders in American racing history. He is the fifth winningest rider in North American racing history and reportedly seventh by wins worldwide.

Joe Harper is the recipient of the Joe Palmer Award for meritorious service to racing, having served as a track executive at Del Mar Thoroughbred Club since 1978, guiding the Southern California track through a period of significant growth. During this time, Harper has overseen Del Mar’s emergence as one of the nation’s top racetracks for daily average handle and attendance. He also contributes as a board member for numerous organizations, including as chairman of Winners Foundation, a drug and alcohol counseling center for the California racing industry.

Fellow Southern California resident Steve Andersen is the recipient of the Walter Haight Award for career excellence in turf writing. The longtime news correspondent who joined the Daily Racing Form in 1994, Andersen is entrusted with chronicling the news by writing race previews, recaps, notes and features in coverage of one of the top circuits in the country.

Andersen’s passion for the sport extends beyond Thoroughbred flat racing to jump racing, and to Quarter Horse racing.

Nick Luck, one of international horse racing’s most respected and recognizable broadcasters, is the Jim McKay Award winner for broadcast excellence. In his native United Kingdom, Luck’s insightful coverage has resulted in him being named Racing Broadcaster of the Year nine times by the Horse Race Writers’ & Photographers Association in Britain. Twice, they honored him as Reporter of the Year.

In the United States, Luck has been a vital presence in American horse racing television for nearly two decades, widely recognized for his analysis and interviewing skills on display during NBC’s broadcasts of the Breeders’ Cup and Triple Crown.

Please join me in congratulating our award winners and the Breeders’ Cup Media Award recipients that will be announced this evening. Bravo!

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NICK LUCK
JOE HARPER
PERRY OUZTS



**Congratulations to all of this year's National
Turf Writers And Broadcasters winners**

**Perry Ouzts | Joe Harper
Steve Andersen | Nick Luck**



Photo By: Benoit


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REMEMBERING WALTER HAIGHT

Walter Haight died in October of 1968 at the age of 69. He was a racing columnist for the Washington Post.

The facts concerning Walter's career are not hard to uncover. During his 45 years on the Post, he rose to a position of great influence as a writer and public speaker.

But, it is not alone the accomplishment of Walter's life that set him apart from other press box sports reporters.

His chief contribution to the world was his personality. A friendly, oversized bear of a man, Walter made humor his life's theme. He would rather have told a joke which brought laughter than bet on a winner. And he loved to bet winners, too.

It is conceivable — but only barely so — that somewhere in the world there was someone who didn't enjoy and appreciate Walter Haight. But that man, whoever he is, didn't work in the press boxes of America's race tracks. When Walter was on hand, the day was certain to begin with a friend at the next typewriter.

Not among Walter's survivors was his creation, Molly Mutuel, a woman horse player. She died when Walter wrote his final column. Although Molly was an imaginary character, everyone who read Walter's column knew her well. She was talkative, superstitious, dowdy, gregarious and thoroughly likeable. Her principal passion was betting on horses.

Molly was a sucker for a tip. She was also a grandstand habitué who viewed the Turf Clubbers with outspoken derision. Hers was the real world. The world of short bankrolls and the hunch bet which got her even.

Because Walter couldn't bother himself with memorizing the names of his male friends, he called everyone "Bub." It was only natural that his friends responded by calling him "Bub."

On the morning of a big race, reporters would leave Bub alone. He would hunch his wide frame and several chins up tight against his typewriter, pecking out words that he more frequently than not discarded.

He would be striving to write the funniest lead ever carried in a newspaper. He would write it hours before the race was run, knowing all the time that if the horse he had selected failed to win, all his pre-race writing would be wasted. But Walter frequently chose the right horses — especially when the favorite was 1-to-2 or 2-to-5.

One would wish that Molly were alive to comment on this Walter Haight Award. She would probably have something pithy to say about the time she bet her last \$2 on a sixth-place finisher touted by Walter.

— Snowden Carter



STEVE ANDERSEN

WALTER HAIGHT AWARD

Daily Racing Form congratulates
DRF Southern California correspondent
Steve Andersen and the rest of
this year's NTWAB award winners.

PERRY OUZTS

MR. FITZ AWARD

JOE HARPER

JOE PALMER AWARD

NICK LUCK

JIM MCKAY AWARD



STEVE ANDERSEN

WINNER OF THE WALTER HAIGHT AWARD

Career Excellence In Turf Writing

By Jay Privman

There is no such thing as a typical day in the life of Steve Andersen, the most atypical of writers at Daily Racing Form.

His assignments can range from a morning at the local tracks like Del Mar, Los Alamitos and Santa Anita Park to gather material for advances and notebooks; previews and recaps of races in Australia, Europe and Japan; perhaps a Quarter Horse preview for a big Los Alamitos stakes race, and the combat pay that comes from having to slog through a California Horse Racing Board meeting. If there's a major jump race in England or Ireland, he'll be on that, too.

"It's the only thing I know," Andersen said of his passion for racing, and for his work. "Devotion. Craziiness is probably the best answer."

Andersen has been the Southern California beat writer for DRF since the fall of 1994, chronicling a circuit that has seen plenty of highs and lows in those 31 years. If there's a new apprentice in town, or a Grade 1 stakes that needs to be advanced, and anything and everything in between, he's on it.

"I enjoy the day-to-day nuances, keeping readers informed of the people and the runners," Andersen said. "It's a big-league sport, but you can get to anyone in an instant. You appreciate what they do, and hopefully they appreciate what you do as a messenger."

His brethren certainly appreciate what he does, as evidenced by the National Turf Writers and Broadcasters tonight honoring Andersen with the Walter Haight Award for career achievement as a Turf writer. He is the 12th person to receive the Haight Award while employed by Daily Racing Form, starting with Don Fair in 1975 and through Mike Welsch, a co-winner in 2022.

"It took me by surprise," Andersen said of learning he had won. "I never thought folks around the country read all my stuff. I'm not a regular at the Triple Crown races. I'm more of a provincial presence. I'm honored to see me with some amazing names. Red Smith, Bill Leggett, Joe Hirsch and Steve Andersen. One of those is not like the other."

Andersen, 58, first went to the races on the 4th of July in 1975 at Evangeline Downs, near where his family was living at the time in Lafayette, La.

"They had one of the best restaurants in Lafayette," he said. "We went there three times in five years."

His father, Larry, worked for Sears, and was promoted from Lafayette to the regional headquarters near Dallas. Andersen went to high school in Richardson, Tx., a Dallas suburb, where his love for journalism blossomed. Racing, though, was yet to be top of mind.

In 1982, during a vacation to Southern California, an aunt took him and a cousin to Hollywood Park. "That helped sustain my interest, which was minor at the time," he said.

While still in high school in 1984, Andersen procured an entry-level job at the Dallas Morning News, which at the time had one of the most-celebrated sports sections in the nation. He worked there for nearly seven years. The coverage of everything, including racing, was stellar. That environment helped ignite his interest in the sport.

"The coverage was unparalleled," he said. "Oaklawn and Louisiana Downs. I took up interest quickly. Thursday, Aug. 15, 1985, I went to Louisiana Downs. Jack Van Berg and Frank Brothers had horses in a grass race. I'd never heard a sound like that. The rumble. I remember it like it was yesterday."

(A quick aside here: Andersen has some Rain Man-like qualities when it comes to facts and dates. During the interview, there were several dates he cited, day of the week included, like the Aug. 15, 1985 example above, and each time, during a subsequent fact check by the author, the day of the week was spot on. He did this from memory.)



Steve Andersen regularly takes in racing overseas.

Andersen's visits to California as a youth made him want to live there, and he had an opportunity to move west in the early 1990s, to work for *QuarterWeek* magazine, helmed by Los Alamitos racing executive Brad McKinzie. Andersen's entry point to racing was via Thoroughbreds, but in the late 1980s his interest in Quarter Horse racing had blossomed, too.

"Same sport, different flavor," he said.

His three years at *QuarterWeek*, and particularly with McKinzie, catapulted him forward.

McKinzie, who died in 2017, "changed my life," Andersen said.

"I was 24. I was a hothead. He grabbed me by the shoulders," Andersen said.

In March of 1994, Andersen was hired by Daily Racing Form to head up its coverage of the opening of a new track, Sam Houston Race Park. By that fall, though, the Southern California beat opened.

"I asked for it. I really wanted it," Andersen said. "I didn't think I'd get that job at age 27."

He's been there ever since.

One of his first days after taking the new job is illustrative of his passion and work ethic. On Saturday, Dec. 17, 1994, he covered the Thoroughbred races at Hollywood Park – Serena's Song won the Hollywood Starlet – and that night the Champion of Champions Quarter Horse race at Los Alamitos, won by Refrigerator.

"Heck yeah, no way I was missing that afternoon or evening," said Andersen, who for more than 30 years has lived in Seal Beach, just eight miles from Los Alamitos.

Over the years, his interest in jump racing, and in particular England, has become an important part of his make-up. Andersen attended jump racing at Aintree for the first time in 1993, igniting a passion that is unquenchable. Andersen has attended racing at Cheltenham 45 times, and has been to England more than 50 times.

He follows the sport “eagerly, enthusiastically,” he said.

Quarter Horse racing too remains top of mind. During his time at *QuarterWeek* in the early 1990s, he authored a weekly report on Quarter Horse racing for the Los Angeles Times, and since 1994 he has contributed regularly to *TRACK* magazine.

At DRF, Andersen has worked alongside Brad Free since 1994. California reintroduced racing in 1933 after a nearly 25-year hiatus, meaning Andersen and Free have chronicled racing in the state for one-third of its recent existence.

“It’s cool to have that longevity as a duo,” Andersen said.

Jump racing, Quarter Horse racing, foreign racing. Andersen does it all, and more. Want to know the best craft beer joints between Del Mar and Morro Bay? He’s on it. Want to know specific directions to his favorite pubs in London? No problem.

It’s his steady, reliable, decades of beat work on the Southern California Thoroughbred circuit for which Andersen is best known, though, and which contributed most to his receiving the Haight Award. So, raise a pint to this tireless, devoted reporter.

Cheers, mate!



Walter Haight winner Steve Andersen at the races in Hong Kong.

Wire to Wire

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REMEMBERING JIM MCKAY

Change can come slowly to the racing industry. Members of the media involved in covering the sport are not exempt from that. The idea of adding broadcasters to the National Turf Writers Association was bandied about for years but not acted upon until finally, an organization with more than half a century of tradition happily morphed into the National Turf Writers And Broadcasters.

The expansion brought together two hard-working groups who could not be more passionate about the sport we cover. It provided broadcasters with a long overdue voice in voting for the Eclipse Awards. The only remaining issue was to find some means to salute broadcasting excellence during Breeders' Cup week at the organization's annual awards dinner.

This proved to be no issue at all. When the honor was first considered, numerous voices spoke up on behalf of the Jim McKay Award for broadcasting excellence. McKay is nothing short of an American icon who had a profound effect on racing. In his adopted state of Maryland, he is fondly remembered as the founding father of the Maryland Million.

McKay was born James McManus in 1921 in Philadelphia. He and his family moved to Baltimore at age 13. He graduated from Loyola College before serving as a captain in the Navy during World War II. He returned to Baltimore after the war and worked as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun before joining WMAR-TV in 1947.

Fittingly, his was the first voice ever heard on television in Baltimore, and his first broadcast was at Pimlico Race Course in 1947. It was the start of a love affair because racing captivated him like nothing else.

McKay left Baltimore in 1950 to join CBS. He eventually hosted ABC's Wide World of Sports for more than 25 years. Devoted viewers of that program can still hear his voice as he opened each program: "Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sport... the thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat."

McKay was the first sportscaster to win an Emmy for news coverage. He would win 13. He covered more than 100 different sports in 40 countries. Spanning the globe, indeed.

He received the International Olympic Committee's highest honor, the Olympic Order, in 2002. He covered 12 Olympics, none more memorably than the 1972 Summer Games in Munich. He anchored the telecast when news broke that terrorists kidnapped 11 Israeli athletes. And it was McKay who grimly informed Americans that a raid to rescue athletes who had gathered in a spirit of harmony had ended tragically.

Whenever he could find some free time, McKay would retreat to his farm in Baltimore County. He lived there with his wife, Margaret, until his death on June 7, 2008. That was the day Big Brown was abruptly eased in the Belmont Stakes and failed to win the Triple Crown, becoming an enduring image of the "agony of defeat."

—Tom Pedulla

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Photo by: Britney Eulton

NICK LUCK WINNER OF THE JIM MCKAY AWARD

Career Excellence In Broadcasting

By Steve Dennis

Racing people are prone to anthropomorphise the horses they watch, but it works the other way as well. If Nick Luck were a horse he would run 20 times a year, never miss the board, win Grade 1s from Saratoga to Churchill Downs to Del Mar and suavely snag the best-turned-out award every time.

He's that fortunate blend of solid and scintillating performer, renowned in Britain as one of the hardest-working racing presenters in the business – hardly a day goes by without Luck's amiable, authoritative presence on screen or behind a microphone. Now he has been recognized by his fellows in the U.S. with the accolade of the Jim McKay Award, for his work on NBC's coverage of the Triple Crown series and the Breeders' Cup, the first British presenter to be so honored by the National Turf Writers and Broadcasters.

The Jim McKay Award is a celebration of career excellence, an appreciation of a significant body of work, and as McKay was an acknowledged master of the genre such official approval is a very big deal, as Luck admits.

"The significance of this award is not lost on me," he said. "I'm incredibly honored to win the award named after Jim McKay, who was one of the all-time greats of broadcasting. I knew I was on the ballot, but I never expected to get the vote.

"It's also an honor to follow in the footsteps of last year's winner Laffit Pincay; we started our broadcasting careers at around the same time and it's been my great good fortune to work with him on my visits to the U.S. This award is definitely right up there among my proudest moments. To be recognized by the U.S. media is huge for me – it's not my job to win awards but when they come along the recognition is always very special, and especially so in this case."



Photo by: Britney Eulton

Nick Luck (center) with the team at the 2023 Kentucky Derby.

Hard work is its own reward, of course, but sometimes it brings awards with it, particularly in the case of Luck, 47, whose trophy cabinet at his London home creaks at the seams under the weight of silverware. He has been acclaimed as Broadcaster of the Year a record nine times by the Horserace Writers and Photographers Association (HWPFA), the British equivalent of the NTWAB, and twice decorated as Reporter of the Year – for his daily podcast, of which more later – by the same committee.

These are the sparkly spoils of a career that began in October 2002 and reached mainstream prominence through Luck's role as lead presenter (2012-16) of Channel 4 Racing, the former terrestrial television home of horse

racing in Britain. By then, however, Luck had long been a familiar face to the nation's hardcore racing fans through his on-camera role at Racing UK (now Racing TV), the satellite broadcaster that covers the lion's share of day-in, day-out action at British racecourses, and had already made his mark stateside.



Photo by: Britney Euton

Jim McKay winner Nick Luck at Royal Ascot.

Luck covered his first Breeders' Cup in 2003 for NBC's Players Show, working alongside Randy Moss, himself a winner of the Jim McKay Award and now the anchor analyst for NBC's racing broadcasts. Moss is a pal and a colleague past and present, in the box-seat when it comes to providing a little professional analysis of the Englishman at work.

"Not only is Nick the best in racing at what he does – which is basically everything and anything – he might be the best who's ever done it," said Moss. "Hand him a microphone and follow him with a camera in the saddling paddock, and he's must-see-TV – precisely the overflowing personality you'd expect from someone with two middle names and a dog named Buffingham Sea Breeze."

Luck moved to ESPN to lend a European viewpoint to their Cup programming between 2006 and 2011, and then returned to the NBC fold where he has become a mainstay of the network's coverage of the biggest events of the racing year.

"Horse racing shows in the U.S. are a different ballgame, the requirement to be more precise and concise is greater than anywhere else," said Luck. "There is no broadcasting experience like the Kentucky Derby, an intensely enjoyable program to work on. I don't think I have ever felt as invigorated as when doing the walkover for the Derby or the post-race interviews."

He reckons that he spends 20% of his time in the U.S., a schedule that contributes to his sobriquet 'the busiest man in racing' – "I'm very bad at saying no to anything" – and frequently elicits from him heartfelt admissions about the patience and understanding displayed by his wife Laura and their three daughters Clemmie, Hebe and Xanthe (and, presumably, Buffingham Sea Breeze) while he spends so much time on the road.

Luck is a broadcasting heavyweight, his reach considerable but never exceeding his grasp. His weekly Racing TV breakfast program Luck On Sunday turns him into a chat-show host, interviewing the biggest names in the sport and dissecting the major issues of the moment; his daily podcast garners a wide audience for its pithy analysis and topical views; and then there are

what he calls “the bits on the side,” which take him to more platforms than there are at Grand Central Station.

These include the role of equestrian commentator for the BBC, covering the Olympics and world championships; filling a similar commentary position at the big-league occasions of the Badminton and Burghley Horse Trials; and compère at a multitude of corporate events, dinners and awards ceremonies, including the 2018 Eclipse Awards. He pivots from one discipline to another, from events of global magnitude to quotidian afternoons at minor racecourses, bringing the same professionalism, urbanity and insight to each element of the job.

It's a wonder he gets the chance to ship in to shine for NBC, but it's clear that the time he spends with those he calls his NBC family is very close to his heart.

“It's a little harder when I work away from home, I learn more about myself and the job at the same time, and on both a personal and professional level it is so satisfying to work with people I look up to as colleagues and rely on as friends,” Luck said. “I'd like to mention Rob Hyland, who was much more than a boss to me at NBC, and his successor Lindsay Schanzer, who has been a delight to work with on the Kentucky Derby. Also, Randy Moss, Jerry Bailey and Britney Eurton, who has been my partner in crime on so many shows. Working with my NBC family has made me better at what I do. They're great people and I am very lucky to work with them.”

Jim McKay would have approved. He would also have approved of that old tongue-in-cheek aphorism, sometimes attributed to the great golfer Gary Player, that dictates “the harder you work, the luckier you get.” In this particular case and this particular hard worker, we know it's not luck, because it's Luck.



Photo by: Britney Eurton

Nick Luck, with fellow NBC broadcaster Britney Eurton, regularly works the Breeder's Cup World Championships.

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Photo: English shipper Wimbledon Hawkeye, under international riding star Frankie Dettori, edges Blue Grass Stakes winner Burnham Square to capture the DK Horse Nashville Derby Invitational.



REMEMBERING JOE PALMER

Joe Palmer took, publicly, no serious view of the world he loved. Flinching under the resounding titles of “Racing Editor of the New York Herald Tribune” and Columbia Broadcasting System’s “Turf Analyst,” he insisted he was “no noted lover of the horse, but of a way of life of which the horse was once, and in a few favored places still is, a symbol—a way of charm and grace and ease and leisure. Grace and charm should perhaps not be tampered with at this late date, but at whatever risk of boasting, I am as good at ease and leisure as any man alive.”

This was a lie, of course. (Joe was a prodigious liar where truth was not important.) No man who wrote had more grace and charm; few men had less ease and leisure, for he wrote all the time.

And Joe was too prolific—infuriatingly so to those who worked with him in the press boxes and bled at chores which he tossed off without apparent effort.

At any rate, this was racing as Joe Palmer saw it: Horses like Man o’ War, “as near to a living flame as horses ever get...” Places like Saratoga, which wears tradition lightly “because it is a graceful, irresponsible, gay tradition, and its ghosts are pleasant ghosts...” People like Lying’ Fitz, whose wooden-legged table cat could “catch mice with one hand and blackjack’ em with the other;” and like the minister’s son who grew up in a church painted in the racing colors of its irreverent benefactor—so “what chance did a boy have?”

To him racing was fun. Or, rather the life which racing made possible and which revolved around racing, was fun. He looked for fun always, even when he was at the typewriter sketching the outline for a chapter of a book on racing.

It seems hardly necessary to observe that, unlike most other writers in his field, Joe Palmer offered no system for beating the races nor any banal suggestion that “all men are equal on the Turf or under it.” A realist, he recognized the one as nonexistent; a man of discriminating tastes, he rejected the other as undesirable.

Nor did he ever refer to a Sport of Kings. A sport of ladies and gentlemen with cheerful brigands and small, skillful boys was good enough for him.

— Red Smith

Anything but your average Joe.



The entire team at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club is proud to salute our long-time leader, Joe Harper, as he is recognized by the National Turf Writers and Broadcasters. Joining Del Mar in 1978, he has guided the seaside track's rise to one of the top and most entertaining racing venues in America. Congratulations, Joe, for always furthering the quality and safety of the sport of Thoroughbred racing.



HOME OF THE 2025 BREEDERS' CUP





JOE HARPER **WINNER OF THE** **JOE PALMER AWARD**

Meritorious Service To Racing

By Lenny Shulman

Filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille became a Hollywood legend for producing and directing spectacular extravaganzas that employed thousands of extras and garnered huge popularity at the box office. It should not be a shock, then, that his grandson

Joe Harper has a knack for putting on shows that also keep thousands of patrons entertained.

Harper has headed the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club since 1978, and for the fourth time in the last nine years, the Southern California track will host the two-day Breeders' Cup Oct. 31-Nov. 1. Del Mar has been Breeders' Cup's most frequent host site over the past decade.

Harper, who as a child had bit roles in his grandfather's films "The Greatest Show on Earth" and "The Ten Commandments," grew up among horses and entertainers. His mother rode horses professionally for an equestrian team put together by the Carnation dairy company and also had a stable of racehorses in Southern California and a couple of dozen broodmares.

"I remember as a little boy sitting at Hollywood Park and Santa Anita with my mother, waiting for the sun to come up," Harper said.

In his youth Harper lived with generations of his family, and sat around the dinner table listening to DeMille talk about the film business and that day's shooting. His uncle was actor Anthony Quinn, and house guests included John Wayne and Charlton Heston.

"Yul Brynner gave me my first transistor radio for Christmas," said Harper. "What that environment taught me is there's not a lot of difference between how we get people to see a film and how to get them to come racing. It's about being entertained. So, we've tried to keep up the entertainment value at Del Mar; we've expanded the options beyond just racing."

Initially, getting the Breeders Cup' to consider Del Mar as a host site was an arduous fight. Improvements such as the widening of the turf course were done with the specific intent of bringing the event to the Southern California shore.

"I remember going to the first Breeders' Cup at Hollywood Park in 1984 and thinking about what we would have to do to get one here," Harper said.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and Harper well remembers his when he initially came to Del Mar as a cameraman back in the 1960s.

"There was a happy feeling to it," he said, "a relaxed atmosphere. Coming here from Santa Anita or Hollywood Park, you relaxed; your shoulders went down a little bit, and you see the Pacific Ocean and hear the sea gulls, and it was a fun place to be, no matter how hard the work. I noticed even the surly employees from Hollywood Park weren't quite as surly when they got down here."

Harper has taken full advantage of the playground that Southern California has proven to be. During his younger days, he threw good-natured fear into

his friends by taking them for acrobatic helicopter rides; pursued sharks and deadly eels while scuba diving, and for many years rode the surf, all in the name of fun and entertainment; two mantras of his beloved Del Mar.

Dr. Stephen Dorros, a neuroradiologist who has known Harper for more than 45 years, called him “the funniest person I’ve ever met, and one of the most generous and nice. We used to jog in the backcountry, and Joe would always run ahead of me. One day I asked him why, and he said, ‘The first runner wakes the rattlesnakes, and the second runner gets bit.’



Photo by Benoit Photo

Joe Harper is all smiles in a fun moment on horseback.

“Joe’s style has been very effective at Del Mar. He’s helped assure young people come out, and he treats everyone like family, from the shoe-shine guy to the horsemen. He’s just that type of person.”

Harper didn’t parlay his supporting roles as a child into a Hollywood career, but he remains active in the film industry. His family runs the Cecil B. DeMille Foundation that supports film preservation and education through the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

But his first love is the track that Bing Crosby built, and Harper, now in his 80s, remains an executive fixture at Del Mar.

to be as visible as possible.”

“People appreciate it when management cares about them,” he said. “It’s important

It doesn’t take long to realize Harper takes that job and his passion for Del Mar personally. His life has revolved around horses from childhood, and he’s had lifelong love affairs both with his wife, Barbara, and the racetrack by the sea.

The sport of racing hasn’t changed much—it’s still horses running around in a circle. But the surrounding world has changed a lot, from off-track betting to advance-deposit wagering. It’s a far different industry than the days when everyone showed up to the track in a black car and wearing suits and hats.

As Breeders’ Cup approaches, Harper will be honored by the National Turf Writers and Broadcasters with the Joe Palmer Award for meritorious service to racing. It’s fitting, as Harper – besides his leadership that has made him the face of the track – additionally has served as a board member for numerous organizations, including as chairman of Winners Foundation, a drug and alcohol counseling center for the California racing industry.

The NTWAB honor is not the first prize for Harper. He received the Eclipse Award of Merit in 2019 in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding achievement in Thoroughbred racing. He was also inducted into California Thoroughbred Breeders’ Association Hall of Fame in 2023.

Yet it is for his leadership at Del Mar for which he is known, having guided it through a period of growth to become one of the nation’s top racetracks for daily average handle and attendance. He is widely appreciated for his steady presence, whether its communicating with horsemen on its backstretch or patrons during racing.

"I enjoy every day being associated with this place," he said. "Building the new grandstand, widening the turf course, putting in new video boards. The formula for Del Mar has worked really well.

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Condensed and updated profile reprinted with permission from BloodHorse, which chronicled Harper in the Oct. 28, 2017, edition of its magazine



Photo by Benoit Photo

Standing railside, Joe Harper takes in the scene.

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Photo by: John Engelhardt



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REMEMBERING 'MR. FITZ'

Over a century ago - in 1885 to be exact - a smiling, handsome young lad named James E. Fitzsimmons took himself to the old track at Sheepshead Bay and launched a 78-year career which may never be surpassed in the annals of U.S. training achievement. The record, of course, will show that the man, whose problems with weight ultimately steered his career from that of a jockey to one as a trainer, saddled 148 stakes winners among his 2,266 winning races (and, incidentally, winning purses of some \$13,001,500). But what no record could show is the personal record of this great and lovable humanitarian.

His refreshing good nature and even disposition soon earned him the nickname of "Sunny Jim" and, in his later years, "Mr. Fitz," as he became known by every American race-goer, was the seat of wisdom to whom all horsemen, fans and racing journalists turned for advice or a friendly word of encouragement.

Mr. Fitz, although he trained for many owners during his long career, was most closely associated with the Woodward and Phipps families. And although his stakes winners were many, including such names as Captain Alcock, Flambino, Diavolo (one of his favorites), Faireno, Dark Secret, Granville, Johnson, Seabiscuit, Vagrancy, Busanda and Hitting Away, he will probably best be remembered for his successes in the classic races. He won two Triple Crowns, with Gallant Fox and Omaha, a Preakness with the fabulous Bold Ruler (sire of Secretariat), and both a Preakness and Belmont with the great Nashua.

One of the many high points of Mr. Fitz's celebrated career came in the summer of 1955 when a match race was arranged between Kentucky Derby winner Swaps and Nashua. After training the latter for over a month on the deep, tiring Saratoga track (while Swaps was working on Chicago's faster Washington Park strip), Mr. Fitz and Eddie Arcaro journeyed west. Their confidence seemed unrealistic to the Swaps rooters who flocked to Chicago to watch the California-bred colt repeat his Derby victory. This hardly bothered Mr. Fitz, who noted calmly, "Training in Saratoga makes a horse fit. In a match race the object is to run from the gate, and the fittest horse wins." Nashua beat Swaps by more than six lengths.

Hardly more than a furlong away from Saratoga's National Museum of Racing, Mr. Fitz would hold daily court in the Saratoga track paddock. He sat, each August afternoon, on the same bench under the same elms and no one needed an appointment to sign up for a bit of learning. "Son," he would say to anyone within earshot, "the owners of race horses are the greatest people on earth. They pay the bills with little chance of making any money."

— Whitney Tower

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PERRY OUZTS **WINNER OF THE** **'MR. FITZ' AWARD**

Typifying The Spirit Of Racing

By Byron King

1973 and 1974 were vintage years for jockeys beginning their riding careers. Legends Chris McCarron, Pat Day and Russell Baze all began their apprenticeships during that two-year period, riding their way into the Hall of Fame.

But they've all been outlasted in the saddle by another: 71-year-old Perry Ouzts.

Let this sink in: he won his first race at Beulah Park aboard Rablue in April 1973, weeks before Secretariat would win that year's Triple Crown.

And he's still riding and winning. As Ouzts likes to say, "Guess I'm the last man standing."

On July 26 at Belterra Park, he rode his way into the record books by eclipsing Baze for the most rides in North American racing history in guiding So Far So Good to a third-place finish in his 53,579th mount. And he's racked up more mounts and wins since.

One of the oldest jockeys to win a race and fifth all-time in North America by wins, Ouzts scored earlier on his milestone day when Blazing Tony won in the jockey's record-tying ride.

Asked of his thoughts as he crossed the wire in third on So Far So Good, eclipsing Baze, Ouzts said, "I really didn't think about it, just another day at the office. It was more thrill the race before, when I won. That was awesome."

Day, a fellow 71-year-old and 20 years removed from his riding days, traveled an hour and a half to Belterra Park near Cincinnati from his home in the Louisville area to support Ouzts on his history-making day.

Blessed with a light frame and the good fortune of having avoided career-ending injuries, Ouzts has, like every rider, still experienced his share of crushing falls and broken bones.

"There's a saying on the racetrack: if you make it to the shower under your own power, it's been a winning day," Day said leading up to the milestone.

For all his longevity and success, Ouzts remains somewhat unknown outside the two-state area of Ohio and Kentucky in which he regularly rides or his home state of Arkansas, akin to a minor-league baseball star who never became famous in the majors. Having ridden mostly at low or mid-level tracks, he has never won a graded stakes race, and his earnings, relative to his Hall of Fame counterparts, are a fraction of what they earned.

"I like to win and more than I like to make a bunch of money," Ouzts said. "Yeah, I mean I've made a decent living, you know, here in Ohio and Kentucky, but I didn't get rich or anything. But I built a house, I paid for it, put two kids through college, and never really wanted for anything. So, I think I did all right."

Visit Turfway Park or Belterra Park – formerly River Downs – and there is admiration among attendees for his six decades in the saddle.

“He just did it in a different place at a different level, but it doesn’t negate at all his athleticism and his spirit and his will to win,” said John Engelhardt, who served as the longtime director of publicity and public relations at River Downs and for a couple years at Belterra Park.



Photo by: River Downs Archives

Perry Ouzts won his first race weeks before Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby in 1973.

Stories about Perry Ouzts, nicknamed “Iron Man,” are legendary, and few know the tales better than Engelhardt, who spent more than 30 years publicizing Ouzts.

He is friends with Ouzts and his wife, Toni – having photographed their wedding at Beulah Park in Grove City, Ohio. Beulah is closed, but the couple is still going strong. She grooms and owns some horses, one of whom, Loy Pike’s Calculated Move, gave Ouzts his 7,500th victory in May.

When Ouzts isn’t riding horses, quite often he is riding his custom Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

“I’m addicted to speed,” he said.

Just like his career in the saddle, he has maintained his motorbike-riding passion, even after a frightening crash in 2012 following morning training at River Downs.

“There’s that classic story – I’m sure you’ve heard it before – where after the morning workouts, he was driving home, and this car comes across (a couple) lanes at 65 miles an hour and wipes him out,” Engelhardt said. “He goes tumbling across the highway. His bike’s mangled.

“He goes, ‘First thing I do is wiggle my toes.’ He goes, ‘OK. All right, that’s good.’ And then he stands up, dusts himself off. He goes, ‘All right, all right. Well, my bike’s gone.’ He calls his agent. Agent comes, gets him, changes his clothes (and he) goes back and wins both ends of the daily double.”

Ouzts continues to exercise horses in the mornings – he was aboard five the morning of his milestone achievement – taking pleasure in working with close friends and with Toni, a hands-on horsewoman. Engelhardt recalled Ouzts once driving home in a sports car filled with dirty horse bandages Toni had given him to run in the laundry.

In appreciation of his riding skill, a horse was named after the jockey more than 40 years ago: Rob-Ran Stable’s Oats n’ Ouzts, bred by Mrs. Dale Freeman. The horse captured two of three starts, the last of which came in 1985 with – no surprise here – Ouzts aboard. According to Engelhardt, the owner told him the horse was given that name because “for this horse to win he only needs two things: Oats n’ Ouzts.”

More fans of the jockey would be created in watching Ouzts “Boot ‘N Scoot” his mounts to the lead. But even off-the-pace runners would benefit from his riding ability.

"I would say that through the eyes of the people there (at Belterra), he's the guy that you were able to cash a bet on before the day was over," Engelhardt said. "And I think that's what 'Joe Six-Pack' admires about Perry Ouzts is tenacity.

"He'll ride just as hard for second or third because he understands the people on the backstretch and that getting that horse's nose down for the second spot or the third spot matters. That might be \$300, and what's that? You know, it might be able to pay the hay man, be able to pay a farrier. He understands the level that he's competing at and how much even a couple hundred dollars or \$1,000 means to the people he's riding for."

Decked out in all black during morning training, Ouzts might dress like Johnny Cash, but Engelhardt recalls a song from another late musician when he thinks of the rider.

"The lyrics from an old John Lennon song would encapsulate it ... a working man's hero is something to be," Engelhardt said.

Condensed, edited and reprinted with permission from BloodHorse, which chronicled the achievements of Ouzts in its September 2025 edition.



Photo by John Engelhardt

Toni Ouzts leads Takemetohollywood and Perry out for morning training at Belterra Park.

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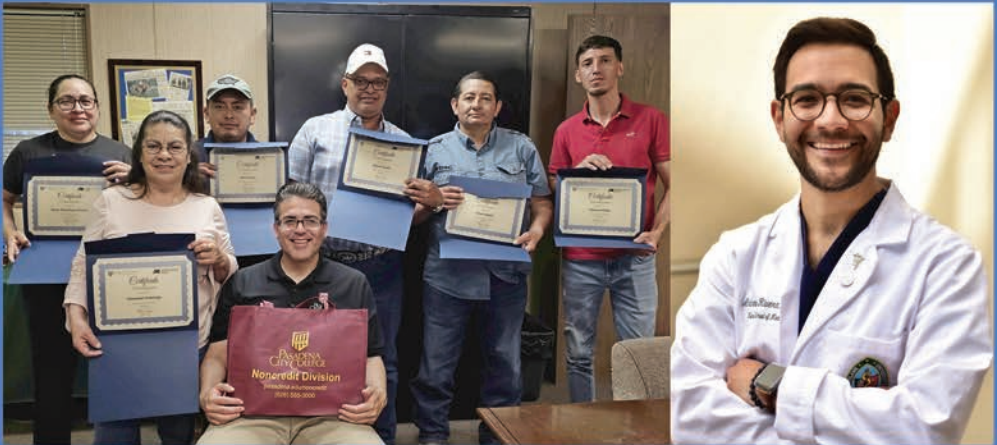


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2022 CHRIS LINCOLN	2017 RANDY MOSS	2014 CHARLSIE CANTEY
2021 STEVE BYK		2013 JACK WHITAKER



RECENT RECIPIENTS

JOE PALMER AWARD MERITORIOUS SERVICE TO RACING

2024
**BACKSIDE LEARNING
CENTER**

2023
**EDWIN J. GREGSON
FOUNDATION**

2022
**BARBARA
LIVINGSTON**

2021
DAN SMITH

2019
RICK VIOLETTE

2018
JIM GLUCKSON

2017
**WINNERS
FOUNDATION**

2016
AAEP

2015
CATHY SCHENCK

2014
GOT CAMPBELL

2013
**MARYLOU WHITNEY
& JOHN
HENDRICKSON**

2012
**RAYMOND
"BUTCH" LEHR**

2011
NANCY LASALA

2010
**OLD FRIENDS
EQUINE**

2009
DR. JACK ROBBINS

2008
CHRIS McCARRON

2007
DR. LARRY BRAMLAGE

2006
**DR. DEAN
RICHARDSON
& NEW BOLTON
CENTER**

2005
PETE PEDERSEN

2004
NOBLE THREEWITT

2003
LAFFIT PINCAY JR.

2002
**RICHARD L.
DUCHOSSOIS
& EUGENE MELNYK**

2001
**SHIRLEY DAY
SMITH**

2000
JIM McKAY

'MR. FITZ' AWARD TYPIFYING THE SPIRIT OF RACING

2024
**TEAM KENNY
McPEEK**

2023
**TEAM CODY'S
WISH**

2022
JIM McINGVALE

2021
JOHN SHEAR

2019
D. WAYNE LUKAS

2018
MIKE SMITH

2017
RICK PORTER

2016
RUSSELL BAZE

2015
**TEAM AMERICAN
PHAROAH**

2014
ART SHERMAN

2013
RAMON DOMINGUEZ

2012
**MARIO GUTIERREZ
& IVAN PUHICH**

2011
TERRY WALLACE

2010
RICHARD MIGLIORE

2009
LARRY JONES

2008
LUKE KRUYTBOSCH

2007
CALVIN BOREL

2006
TEAM BARBARO

2005
NICK ZITO

2004
PATRICIA COOKSEY

2003
SACKATOGA STABLE

2002
CHRIS McCARRON

2001
ALLEN JERKENS

2000
PAT DAY

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Oaklawn is proud to join the
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in honoring Jockey **PERRY OUZTS**,
track executive **JOE HARPER**,
turf writer **STEVE ANDERSEN**,
and broadcaster **NICK LUCK**.



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Cyberknife

Dornoch

Forte

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Into Mischief

Jackie's Warrior

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Maximus Mischief

Mitole

Mo Donegal

National Treasure

Omaha Beach

Rock Your World

Taiba

Temple City

Thousand Words

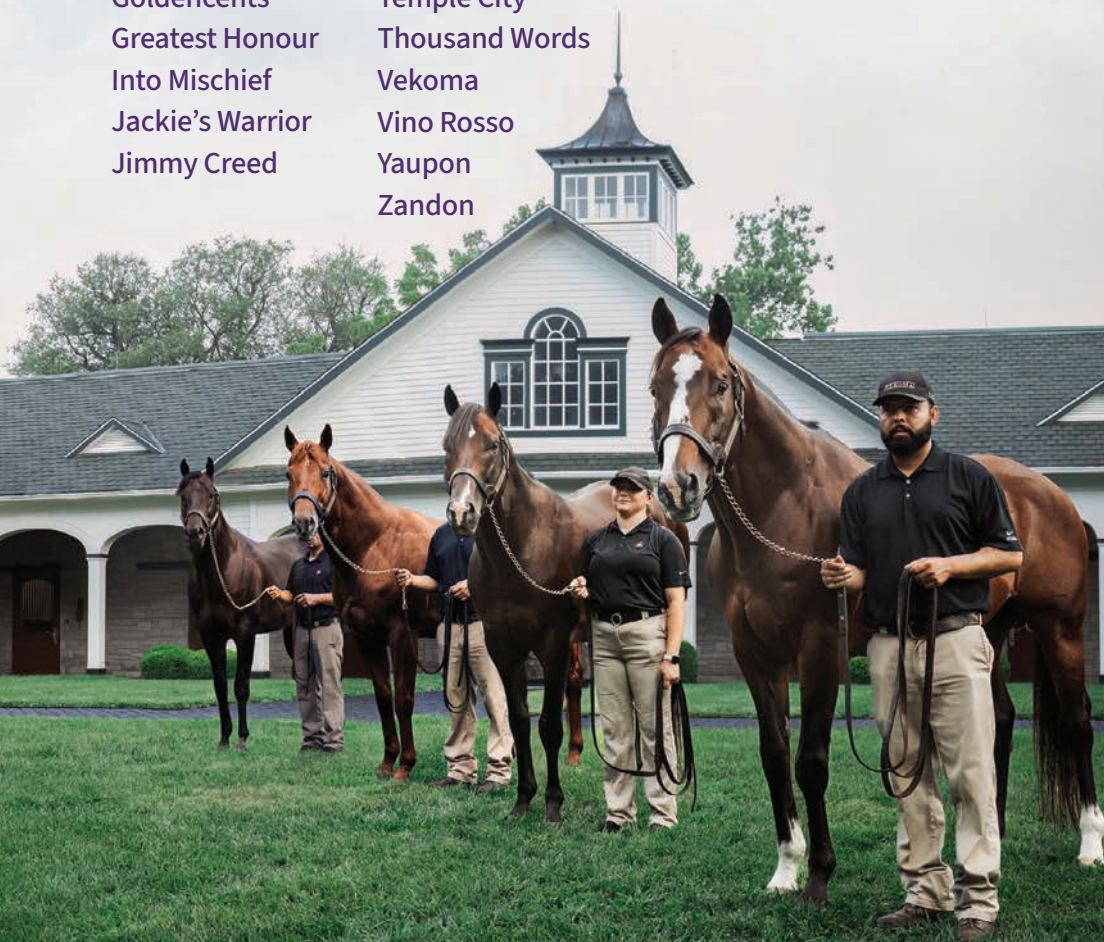
Vekoma

Vino Rosso

Yaupon

Zandon

HOME TO LEADING SIRES.



SPENDTHRIFT

Sol Kumin and his team would like to congratulate
the winners of this year's NTWAB Awards
and for their contribution to our industry!

Steve Andersen

Walter Haight Award

Nick Luck

Jim McKay Award

Joe Harper

Joe Palmer Award

Perry Ouzts

Mr. Fitz Award





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**WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS
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NTWAB AND OF THIS EVENT:**

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Steve Byk



congratulates all of tonight's
deserving honorees!

We are proud to celebrate your work.

**Congratulations to tonight's honorees
for your contributions to our sport!**

Steve Andersen

Walter Haight Award

Nick Luck

Jim McKay Award

Joe Harper

Joe Palmer Award

Perry Ouzts

Mr. Fitz Award

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**Trainer of 2016 Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist
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TOC

On behalf of the
Thoroughbred Owners of California

Congratulations

to tonight's winners of the
NTWAB Annual Awards

HONORING EXCELLENCE
IN HORSE RACING

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Keeneland Applauds the 2025 National Turf Writers & Broadcasters Honorees

Every year, members of the NTWAB work tirelessly to capture the complexity and thrill of Thoroughbred racing for a global audience. They do it so the sport's passion, history and excitement can be shared, appreciated and carried forward. By bringing racing to life, they transform tradition into living, shared experiences and turn complexity into understanding. These dedicated professionals play a vital role in connecting the racing world, ensuring that the and legacy of Thoroughbred racing endures for generations to come.



JENNIFER LAWRENCE



Elegance is an attitude
LONGINES




LONGINES
PRIMALUNA