



OHHA News

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JUNE 2021

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THIS IS THE PLAN DOMINATES BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE BY AYERS RATLIFF



This Is The Plan **Photo:** JJ Zamaiko Photography

This Is The Plan etched himself into harness racing history books as the fastest horse to ever win on a half-mile track when he won the \$200,000 Battle of Lake Erie in 1:47.3 at MGM Northfield Park June 5.

Yannick Gingras drove This Is The Plan for harness racing's all-time leading trainer, Ron Burke to a 5-1/4 length victory over Western Joe and Aaron Merriman. Catch The Fire with Mike Wilder was third and Stars Align A, with Joe Bongiorno, finished fourth.

This Is The Plan started from post three and yielded the early lead to Stars Align A before making his move approaching the quarter, taking the lead in 26.2.

"I didn't want to take any prisoners," Gingras explained. "(This Is The Plan) has been super sharp."

This Is the Plan never experienced an anxious moment the rest of the mile, leading his competition through fractions of 53.3, 1:20.3 and 1:47.3.

"The faster you go, he just doesn't get tired," Gingras said.

The 1:47.3 clocking represents the fastest race ever on a half-mile track and lowered the Northfield Park track record by more than a full second.

The mile topped the old record of 1:48.1 on a half-mile track set by Pet Rock at the Delaware County Fairgrounds in 2013.

It was also a career best for This Is The Plan, the gelded son of Somebeachsomewhere, whose previous best was 1:48.2, set as a four-year-old at The Downs at Mohegan Sun Pocono.

This Is The Plan increased his career bankroll to \$2,206,200 by taking home the lion's share of the healthy \$200,000 purse for owners Burke Racing Stable, Weaver Bruscemmi LLC, J&T Silva-Purnel & Libby and Lawrence Karr.

Rounding out the field for the 2021 Battle field, were Hesa King-slayer N, Little Rocket Man, Gold Digger King, Century Farroh and Southwind Amazon.

"Records are meant to be broken and we just broke one," Gingras said. "I gave the people a little show tonight."

Ohio Sire Stakes Second Leg Kicks Off

Three-year-old filly pacers and colt trotters kicked off the second leg of the Ohio Sire Stakes June 5 at MGM Northfield Park.

In the first division for the fillies, Summer Touch went off as a huge favorite and did not disappoint. Chris Page took the daughter of Well Said to the front and never looked back, winning her second consecutive OSS leg for

trainer Ron Burke. Summer Touch tripped the wire in 1:52.3, 3-1/4 lengths in front of Ball Diamond and Billy Davis Jr. Summer Touch is owned by Burke Racing Stable, Knox Services, Slaughter Racing and Weaver Bruscemmi.

"There's no other word for this filly than special," Page said. "Last year she won the



Summer Touch

continued on p. 2

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Brett Merkle
Northfield Park
Amy Hollar

Ohio triple crown and came back great this year at three.”

Summer Touch is 3 for 4 this year and has won nine times in 11 career starts, earning more than \$350,000 in her lifetime.

In the second division, Hunter Meyers picked up his first Sires Stakes victory behind Smothastenesewisky for owner-trainer Brian Haynes.



Smothastenesewisky

“She didn’t leave the gate the way I had wanted to, so I got a second over trip and then when I pulled her three-wide down the backstretch, she had a lot of go and it worked out,” Myers said.

Smothastenesewisky cleared around the final turn and pulled away to win by four lengths.

The daughter of Nob Hill High went off at 7-2 and stopped the timer in a career-best 1:52 ahead of Shameful Eyes with Aaron Merriman. It was her first win of the season and brought her career earnings to \$105,981.

On the colt side of the ledger, trainer Chris Beaver and Merriman won both divisions as Panzano took the first division and Winning Ticket won the second division.

Panzano, the son of Coraggioso, stalked Street Gossip until the final turn before taking over and pulling away to win by five lengths in 1:55.3 for the Spaaartners



Panzano ownership group. Panzano and Street Gossip were co-favorites at 4-5 odds.

“Chris’ horses are always tight and ready to race,” Merriman said.

With the win, Panzano pushed his career earnings to \$139,724, with his fourth career victory in 13 starts.



Winning Ticket

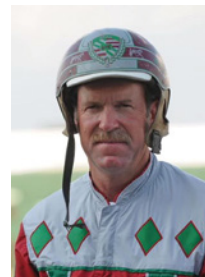
Winning Ticket made it 5 for 5 in 2021, rolling to an easy six-length victory for the ownership group of Beaver, Steve Zeehandelaar, Tim Homan and Jim Burnett.

The son of Triumphant Caviar has won the first two legs of the OSS.

“I love this horse,” Beaver said. “He’s the nicest son of Triumphant Caviar that I’ve trained. My goal is to keep him on track for the three-year-old Championship here at Northfield in September. He should have won last year’s two-year-old championship but came up sick for that race.”

Photos: JJ Zamaiko Photography

Hall of Famer Dan Ater Passes Away



Former Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association Director and Untied States Trotting Association Director Dan Ater passed away May 24 after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

The 66-year-old Ater spent more than four decades in harness racing, winning 1,697 races as a driver. He captured driving titles at Balmoral Park, Lebanon Raceway, Northfield Park and Scioto Downs.

As a trainer, Ater won 1,686 races and captured the 2018 training title at Miami Valley Raceway. In 2017, he finished second in the training standings at Miami Valley and Scioto Downs.

Ater was first diagnosed with prostate cancer and in 2001 tests revealed pancreatic cancer. He was given five years to live.

More than a decade after the diagnosis, he established career highs as a trainer with 150 wins in 2017 and for the first time surpassed the million-dollar mark, earning \$1.53 million. The following year, he won 110 races and \$1.42 million.

Ater was elected to the Ohio Harness Racing Hall of Fame in 2016. He was awarded the USTA’s President Award in 2018.

“Racing is a book of dreams,” Mr. Ater said in 2017. “The story of my life.”

He is survived by his children Kyle, Nick, Mackenzie, and Daniel.

HORSEMEN HONOR JEFF COX



Photo Credit: JJ Zamaiko Photography

MGM Northfield Park horsemen honored the passing of Jeff Cox prior to the Battle of Lake Erie June 5.

Cox, passed away May 23, trained four-time Battle of Lake Erie entrant Cambest Prince

in 2002-2005. Cambest Prince finished second twice, fourth, and third.

The third race on the Battle of Lake Erie card was named the Jeff Cox Memorial. Aaron Merriman took Rockinatheryman to the lead and never looked back giving the daughter of Rockin Image her fourth win of the season.

The Cox family presented the winning connections, trainer Billy Rhoades, a memorial

blanket. Caretaker Ashley Carpenter then gave the blanket to Jeff’s wife Fran.

During the win circle gathering, horsemen and women in the backstretch gathered on the track outside the paddock while announcer Ayers Ratliff read a poignant eulogy to Jeff.

During this time Jeff’s good friend and longtime golfing partner, Calvin Hollar teed up a ball on the track and hit, what many considered his best shot ever into the infield pond in Jeff’s memory.

Veterinarian **Dr. Dan Wilson** Retires

BY ROGER HUSTON



After nearly 50 years of service to the equine industry, veterinarian Dr. Dan Wilson is retiring.

Wilson a familiar face to horsemen in Northeast Ohio, announced his retirement last month.

Wilson was raised on a farm in Sabina, Ohio, halfway between Washington Court House and Wilmington. It was a general farm where his family raised dairy cows and a little bit of everything else including chickens, pigs, sheep and horses.

But it was his love of horses that led him into the veterinary trade.

“Growing up, I couldn’t get enough of the horses,” Wilson said. “It’s a great satisfaction to be able to improve their life, make them feel better and make them healthier.”

Wilson says he is a racetrack practitioner, and the rewarding part is to see what you’ve done and accomplished. “It’s just wonderful to see them go out and do what they are supposed to do.”

His love for horses was assured when he went to the Little Brown Jug and saw Adios Butler win the Jug in 1959. Adios Butler was a local product from the Fair Chance Farm in Washington Court House.

Wilson said he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps, but his mother had other plans. “My mother pushed me to go to college and vet school.”

Following his graduation from The Ohio State University School of Veterinary Medicine in 1975, he went to work in Chicago with Dr. Tom Duncan. Wilson said he couldn’t adapt to the asphalt, cars and people, so he returned to the Buckeye State and settled in the Cleveland area.

Wilson went to work with Dr. Ronald Genovese, a man who Wilson said was his mentor, friend and hero. “He was “The Man,” Wilson said.

After working in the mornings with the seasoned veterinarian, he would make his way to Northfield Park to enjoy harness racing. His love for racing was twofold. As a youngster, Wilson loved the horses that he and his father raised. He loved the jogging and training but says he wasn’t good at driving.

At one point, Wilson was called to treat the great pacing mare Areba Areba during her three-year-old career. He made the trip to New York to treat the mare but got a thrill of a lifetime.

“I got to ride in a Rolls Royce for the first time and probably will not get a second ride, ever,” Wilson said.

As his client list grew each year, Wilson had to choose a specialty. He said it was an easy decision and that was to work with his clients at Northfield Park. He began Lake Equine Associates in 1986.

He partnered with Dr. Genovese and Dr. Brett Berthold in 2006 to form Cleveland Equine Clinic. In 2015, he and Dr. Michael Latessa revived Lake Equine Associates to focus solely on Northfield Park. In 2002, he was awarded the Ohio Veterinarian Medical Association Distinguished Service award.

Wilson has seen veterinarian medicine evolve over the years.

“When I began, we had an endoscope that we would shove into a horse’s nose for an internal look and now we have top-of-the-line fiberoptic equipment and ultrasound, which are commonplace.”

One of Wilson’s proudest moments was caring and treating a gray standardbred named Flying Metro, which had a very bad suspensory injury. During a four-month period of treatment, rest and plenty of tender-loving care, the mare has become a very nice riding horse for his wife Barbara.

Almost immediately after retirement, Wilson spent about a month cleaning up his yard, which had accumulated nearly 40 years of junk, but now the avid hunter and fisherman plans to spend more time with his wife, his sons Dan and Doug and his three grandchildren.

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TRACK NOTES



Aaron Merriman **Photo:** Dawnelle Mock



Heart of Chewbacca **Photo:** Brad Conrad

Aaron Merriman collected his 13,000th win of his career June 2. The win was with Biggiessecondshot at The Meadows. Merriman's mounts in his career have won more than \$88.5 million.

"It's a lot of wins and I'm actually very proud to have reached 13,000," he said. "One day, I'll start looking back and reflecting on this and the names around me on that list. I haven't won a bunch of major stakes, but I'm just as happy winning a Non-Winners-of-\$750-in-the-last-4. Every win means something to the sport, and it means something to the owners."

“It's a lot of wins and I'm actually very proud to have reached 13,000.”
— Aaron Merriman

Merriman had four days in May when he collected five or more wins on the card. In addition to his big 10-win day split between Northfield and Miami Valley on May 1, he had six wins on May 18 and had five wins on May 22, racing at Northfield and The Meadows.

Also on May 22, Ronnie Wrenn Jr. recorded seven wins, driving at Scioto Downs and The Meadows. Chris Page and Ryan Stahl had six-win days last month with both coming at one track. Page collected six wins at Scioto Downs on May 19, while Stahl notched his six wins at Northfield May 22.

Trace Tetrick won his 6,000th race of his career. Tetrick, a regular at Miami Valley, finished second in wins at the track earlier this year.

Heart Of Chewbacca and Dan Noble set a track record at Eldorado Scioto Downs on June 12. Chewbacca tripped the wire in 1:48.4, setting a new mark for three-year-old-colts.

The Tiffin County Fair has changed race dates for their two-day meet. The fair originally was scheduled to race Sunday, July 25 and Sunday, July 26. The races were pushed back a day and will now take place July 26 and 27.

TOP OHIO DRIVERS AND TRAINERS NATIONAL RANKINGS THROUGH MAY 2021

Drivers - Wins

1	Aaron Merriman	306
3	Trace Tetrick	237
4	Tony Hall	223
5	Ronnie Wrenn Jr.	221
6	Brett Miller	192
7	Dan Noble	189
10	Chris Page	171

Drivers - Earnings

4	Aaron Merriman	\$2,196,615
7	Trace Tetrick	\$2,094,067
8	Dan Noble	\$2,024,554
10	Brett Miller	\$1,928,554

Trainers - Win

1	Ron Burke	332
6	Sam Schillaci	78
T-7	C. Brian Loney	70
T-7	Virgil Morgan Jr.	70
9	Tyler George	65

Trainers - Earnings

1	Ron Burke	\$4,987,150
8	Tyler George	\$ 693,807

Be There!

BY ROGER E. HUSTON

The county fair season is underway here in the Buckeye State. It started in Paulding and runs through Lancaster in October. So many people look forward to this time of the year. With the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020, many fairgrounds were regulated to junior fairs and harness racing venues. This year's fair season will feel more like it did before the pandemic. There will be rides for the youngsters, games of chance to win a teddy bear and special entertainment for everyone who attends.

When I began my announcing career in 1960 at the Clinton County Fairgrounds in Wilmington, it was the beginning of a lifelong love affair with harness racing. It would expand to parimutuel racetracks thanks mainly to Dick Wilson and Castleton Industries, who hired me to call races at Pompano Park and the Red Mile. At that point, I was known as a county fair announcer. It was a descriptive title that I was ever so proud to hold. To this day, there are those who still use that term to describe my style, but those who say it are not being all that complementary in today's world.

My love for county fair racing has resulted in announcing nearly 50 county and state fairs in Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Indiana, Michigan and West Virginia.

Throughout the years, I have witnessed some never-to-be-forgotten events. It started when I was just a few years old. Living in Greene County, my parents would take me to the fair, and I was mesmerized by the announcer so much that they said I would ride my

tricycle on the sidewalk calling out horse names that I had heard. That progressed to placing the insert of the dinner table across the overstuffed arms of a living room lounge, placing a kitchen chair in front of it and attaching two of my father's belts as driving lines. I forgot we had a weeping willow tree in the yard and the willows made pretty good driving whips as we would mimic drivers we had seen at the fair.

When I was about 10 years old, the family went to the Champaign County Fair in Urbana. The races were the main attraction, and we had seats in the top row of the grandstand. The announcer and presiding judge was Hap Shreve. I would listen to his call and in a few races, would announce right along with him. I think we sat in the last row so we would not bother others with my calls.

When I announced the Madison County Fair in London, I worked with Shreve. It was mind boggling to work along someone I looked up to. McKinley Kirk was in the process of changing the great pacer Great Pleasure to the trot in one of those early years. After winning the race, McKinley returned to the winner's circle and Hap asked him, "McKinley was she pacing coming home?" McKinley, a bit sheepish, responded, "She sure was Hap." Great Pleasure was disqualified and placed last.

Another wild event was with Cliff Albertson Jr. and the pacer Ray Barnes. The horse had been barred from racing at Lebanon Raceway and thus had to race at the county fairs. Barnes had a mind of his own, having



torn up the paddock. That night at London, he failed to make the turn going to the three-quarter pole and went right into a cornfield. About four or five minutes later, here they came out of the cornfield with corn stocks intertwined with the harness and sulky to the finish wire. It was a five-horse race, and he was given fifth place money of \$30.

The first night that I announced at the Warren County Fair, the big race was between Sweet Singer with Charlie Miller and Terrymite with Eddie Morgan Sr. Both drivers wore brown colors, but Morgan was about 100 pounds heavier. I got them mixed up and announced Terrymite the winner by several lengths. The presiding judge came to the announcer's booth and complimented me on a great call but it was the wrong call. It was really embarrassing when Russell Terry, the owner of Terrymite, came to the winner's circle and was greeted by Sweet Singer.

There are so many similar stories to tell, but we will wait for another time. I hope you enjoy the fairs as much as I have. If you can't make it to a fair this year, you can always tune in for all the action on the OHHA Facebook page.

Be There!

LITTLE BROWN JUG LICENSE PLATE ONE STEP CLOSER

The Ohio Senate has passed Senate Bill 12, which would create a Little Brown Jug license plate.

Senator Andrew Brenner (Delaware) sponsored the bill, which will give Little Brown Jug fans the opportunity to support the event by purchasing the new license plate for \$30. The Little Brown Jug Society will receive \$20 from each plate to assist in maintaining, promoting and operating the Little Brown Jug. The remaining portion is a service fee for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

"For 76 years, the Little Brown Jug has brought thousands of people from around the world to Delaware on one Thursday ever year," Brenner said. "From the economic benefits of the Jug to the opportunities available from the events during Jug week, this license plate gives Ohioans a chance to give back to this iconic event."

The Jug, one of the largest harness racing events in North America, was established in 1945 and races every year on the third Thursday in September following Labor Day. Despite COVID-19, the 75th Little Brown Jug was contested last September with Captain Barbossa winning.

To create a specialty license plate, at least 150 people must indicate in writing to the BMV registrar that they intend to apply and obtain the special plate.

The bill now moves to the Ohio House of Representatives.

OUTSTANDING GROOMS

BY ASHLEY DAILEY

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association congratulates groomers Garret Frantom and Travis Wood for being named Outstanding Grooms for the month of May.

Frantom, got his start with Standardbred horses alongside his grandfather, trainer Steve Brannan. He has been working with Brannan for almost five years and splits the responsibilities in their stable.

Frantom says his favorite part of harness racing is just like everyone else's – winning.

"All the hard work pays off in the winner's circle and it is a reminder to keep going on the hard days," Frantom said.

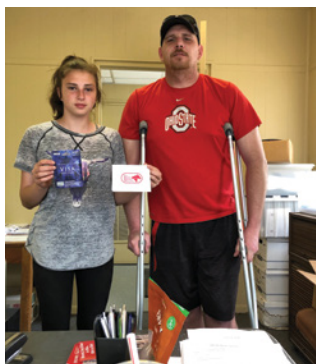
Brannan thought his grandson deserved this recognized simply because "the kid works very hard."

Wood was introduced to harness racing at a young age by his uncle, Lloyd Gabbard. Currently a member of Brian George's Team, Wood jogs horses, helps put them away and assists with shipping to all the Ohio tracks.

Last month, Wood's wife Daneta Wood received the Outstanding Groom Award for April.



Garret Frantom



Travis Wood

Gambling Revenue Strong in May

Despite being down from the record-setting month of April, Ohio had another strong month in May.

The state took in more than \$209 million in revenue from the four casinos and seven racinos, down from the record \$217 million in April.

With the pandemic's negative impact on 2020, revenue was up almost 24 percent when compared to 2019.

Ohio's racinos showed a drop of 1.7 percent in May according to the Ohio Lottery. May revenue was \$122,362,592, down from \$124,529,077 in April.

Casino revenue was down about \$6 million from April. Comparing May 2021 to May 2019, casino revenue is up 29 percent.

U.S. Harness Racing Revenue Up in May

Total wagering on harness racing in the United States in May was up more than 10 percent, despite a decrease of 166 races compared to May 2019. The comparison to 2019 is due to the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in only 154 races last May.

Through the first five months of 2021, the total handle on races nationwide is almost \$79 million, an increase of 12 percent compared to 2019.

The May increase is up more than 10 percent from 2019 despite a decrease in the number of races. May 2021 saw 3,355 races contested, while May 2019 there were 3,521 races. The five-month comparison between 2021 and 2019, races are down 5 percent. There have been 12,280 races this year compared to 12,937 in 2019.

(From USTA release)

OHHA SENDS OUR CONDOLENCES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF

Theodore "Ted" Black • D'Vita Franklin
Dick Frinrock • John "Jack" D. Tatham
Jeff Cox • Dan Ater

Thank You to our 2021 P.A.C.E.R. Contributors

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Rebecca Ewing-Buckner	Randy & Tia Leopard	Robert & Lisa Schwartz	



Thom Pye and Austin Scott prepare for the broadcast.



Don Holden with Trot and Pace shoots the action.

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association kicked off coverage of the 2021 Ohio County Fair racing season June 14 at Paulding County Fair.

The OHHA will live stream this summer from 65 county and independent fairs. A total of 126 race cards are scheduled to be live streamed.

For a complete schedule, visit HarnessRacingOhio.com.

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

Ohio Fair Racing Coverage

The Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association will again live stream races from county fairs across the state. In 2021, the OHHA plans to cover over 125 races cards. Last year's coverage was seen in Ohio as well as 30 other states and nine countries. For more information about 2021 Ohio Fair Racing coverage email: ffraas@ohha.com

Saturday Night at the Races

The OHHA will cover Ohio's biggest racing nights as part of "Saturday Night at the Races." Planned coverage includes: The Ohio Sire Stakes Finals, The Buckeye Stallion Series Finals, The Ohio Fair Championships, the Ohio State Fair Finals, and the Next Generation. Sponsorship includes commercials within the live coverage. For more information e-mail ffraas@ohha.com.

The Buckeye Harness Horseman

The official publication of the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association is published four times a year. The next issue will be published in August. The deadline to reserve your advertising space is August 1st. For more information e-mail: publications@OHHA.com.



Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association
2237 Sonora Dr.
Grove City, OH 43123

Ohio Breeders Award Requirements

Mares registered in 2016 (Foals of 2017) mare registration date 12/31/16

Foal Age	Membership Requirement
Bred 2016	Grace Period, No Membership Required
Foal Born 2017	No Membership Required
Yearling 2018	No Membership Required
2 & 3-Year-Old 2019, 2020	Membership Required

Mares registered in 2017 (Foals of 2018) mare registration date 12/31/17

Foal Age	Membership Requirement
Bred 2017	Membership Required
Foal Born 2018	Membership Required
Yearling 2019	No Membership Required
2 & 3-Year-Old 2020, 2021	Membership Required

Mares registered in 2018 (Foals of 2019) mare registration date 11/30/18

Foal Age	Membership Requirement
Bred 2018	No Membership Required
Foal Born 2019	Membership Required
Yearling 2020	No Membership Required
2 & 3-Year-Old 2021, 2022	No Membership Required

Mares registered in 2019 (Foals of 2020) mare registration date 11/30/19

Foal Age	Membership Requirement
Foal Born 2020	Membership Required
Yearling 2021	No Membership Required
2 & 3-Year-Old 2022, 2023	No Membership Required

Mares registered in 2020 (Foals of 2021) mare registration date 11/30/20

Foal Age	Membership Requirement
Foal Born 2021	Membership Required
Yearling 2022	No Membership Required
2 & 3-Year-Old 2023, 2024	No Membership Required

Registration Fee: \$20 per mare. For mares registered in 2019 forward, in addition to the \$20 registration fee per mare, registrations received from December 1st to December 31st must add a \$100 per-mare late fee. Registration will not be accepted until all fees are paid in full.

Membership Requirements: All owners of the mare (including those in businesses or stables) are required to join as Active OHHA Members. All business entities or stables listed as owners are also required to join as Associate Members.

Mare Residency: Mare in foal to an Ohio Stallion, must foal in Ohio, and reside in Ohio for 187 consecutive days in the year of foaling.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you have recently moved, please notify the OHHA office. This will ensure that you continue to receive the Association's publications. A current address is also very important if you are eligible for any breeders awards, retirement and insurance..

Also, if a family member who is an OHHA member passes away, please contact our office so we can update our records.