

# PONIES 24-7

VOLUME 7 / ISSUE 1 / 2021  
\$2.95 CDN

## Jim Lawson

Woodbine CEO Reflects On  
The Year It Was And Moving  
Forward In 2021

## Bill O'Donnell and John Campbell

Two Hall Of Famers Once  
Again Go Head To Head

## The Racers Edge A Wagering Primer

## David Anderson

Continuing To Wear Many Hats  
Within The Horse Community



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PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BURNS

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## THE RADIO MAGAZINE

**SATURDAYS 8:30 AM (ET)**

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For advertising opportunities and to receive a downloadable link to the show, email Larry Simpson at, [theponies247experience@gmail.com](mailto:theponies247experience@gmail.com)



# Do You Know What Lymphoma Is?

**Lymphoma Is A Group of Cancers Affecting the Lymphatic System.  
Thousands of Canadians Are Engaged In The Fight, Yet Many Are  
Unfamiliar With The Disease!**

We are familiar with many parts of our body and how they relate to our overall health, but when it comes to the lymphatic system and our lymph nodes, Canadians are not as informed. Many of us have heard of lymph nodes and know where they can be found in the body, but beyond that, details about the lymphatic system and lymphoma often remain a mystery.

Since the word “cancer” is not in the name, lymphoma is not commonly recognized as a type of cancer. Did you know that **lymphoma is the fifth most common cancer in Canada**, the third most common cancer in children aged 0-14, and the most common cancer diagnosis for adolescents and young adults from 15-39? There are over 80 different types of lymphoma and over 100,000 Canadians currently living with this illness.

**Lymphoma Canada** is the only national organization in Canada that is focused entirely on lymphoma. It is our mission to empower patients and the lymphoma community through education, support, advocacy, and research.

**Lymphoma Canada** provides information to patients and their caregivers through comprehensive resource manuals, educational forums, webinars, and national conferences. Lymphoma Canada advocates for equal access to lymphoma treatments and supports Canadian lymphoma researchers in Canada. With your help, we can continue to raise awareness, assist newly diagnosed patients, and seek equal access to treatments across Canada.

No one should have to face lymphoma alone. **Lymphoma Canada** provides resources and support to patients through the difficult journey of diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.

Take the ‘Know Your Nodes’ quiz to see how you score at  
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For lymphoma resources or for further information, visit our website at [lymphoma.ca](http://lymphoma.ca)  
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# DON'T HORSE AROUND WITH LYMPHOMA

Thousands of Canadians are engaged in the fight against lymphoma, yet a large percent of the population are unfamiliar with this type of cancer. Lymphoma affects your lymphatic system, namely the lymphocytes that together with other cells of the immune system, work to fight infection and prevent disease.

Lymphoma is also the most common cancer diagnosis for adolescents and young adults in Canada. Though common early signs and symptoms can be minimal or mimic other conditions, it is possible that the lymphoma can remain undetected for many months or possibly years.

**Did you know that both humans and horses can contract lymphoma?**

With your support and through our  
**‘Don’t Horse Around with Lymphoma’**  
campaign, we can help create awareness, promote early detection, assist newly diagnosed patients and support lymphoma research that one day may lead to a cure.

**We are committed to hoofing out lymphoma!**



Visit [lymphoma.ca/ponies](http://lymphoma.ca/ponies) today, to learn more about lymphoma and to support the  
**‘Don’t Horse Around with Lymphoma’** campaign.

# AT THE POST



## A MESSAGE TO OUR VALUED PONIES READERS

Welcome to a New Year and hopefully one that promises to bring some sort of new normal, whatever that may be. Little did we know almost a year ago the path that together we would all be going down, with a world in the battle of its life against a pandemic, would not only wreak havoc, but cause a tremendous amount of sickness and death and financial despair for many. It has unfortunately been crazy times that we continue to live in and one can only hope that better ones, be it in a new normal state, are just around the corner.

On a positive note, since we last communicated, our radio show, 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE', has continued to gain traction and since its inception last summer has offered a guest list of the 'who's who' of horse racing, from both sides of the border. The show is now sponsored by Woodbine, Woodbine Mohawk Park and Ontario Racing and continues for your listening pleasure on Saturday mornings, from 8:30 until 9:00, Eastern Time. It is aired on 105.9 The Region, a local FM radio station, and is also available for streaming on their web site, [www.1059theregion.com](http://www.1059theregion.com). If you haven't given us a listen yet, why not check the show out, as it provides something for everybody and remains the perfect enhancement for our PONIES 24-7 digital magazine.

Also new to our promotional arsenal this year is a special cause that PONIES 24-7 has aligned itself with- the 'Don't Horse Around with Lymphoma' campaign. Even though thousands of Canadians are 'fighting the fight' against lymphoma, many people are not even familiar with this type of cancer and unaware too that this disease can also affect horses as well. More on 'Don't Horse Around with Lymphoma' can be found on page 4 of this issue.

Finally, as we have continued to mention in our last few issues of PONIES 24-7, please take the opportunity to allow this edition of the magazine to again act as perhaps a positive distraction to the everyday challenges that we all continue to face together, and to remain positive as we look ahead to healthier times. Please feel free to share this magazine with friends and family, to assist in filling the possible void of time during their day and again as a further show that together we will continue to fight the fight. Also, tell them to tune into our radio show, "Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE" – they will be happy you did!

Until next time

Larry Simpson  
[lsimpson@ponies247.com](mailto:lsimpson@ponies247.com)



### ABOUT THE COVER

Woodbine photographer Michael Burns, catches the Anderson Farms-bred Gretzky the Great in full flight.

## EDITOR Larry Simpson

Larry Simpson is an avid and passionate writer, horseplayer, handicapper, and marketer for both Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing. He has published and edited several horse racing journals, conducted handicapping seminars for both breeds and is a major proponent for the education of new racing fans through publications like PONIES 24-7, and initiatives that develop 'fresh' demographics for racing, produce cultured bettors and promote the value of the horse racing advertising space!



## LIVING THE HORSE RACING LIFESTYLE

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# DAVID ANDERSON

Continuing To Build On The Family Legacy And Becoming One Of Canadian Horse Racing's Newest 'Movers And Shakers'

By Larry Simpson

If you happen to run into Ontario Thoroughbred breeder David Anderson at a local convenience store and he happens to be in line to purchase a lottery ticket, you may just want to try and partner-up with him! To put it mildly, the native of St. Thomas, Ontario and breeder of 2018 Canadian Horse Of The Year Wonder Gadot, enjoyed a remarkable journey in 2020 to say the least. Besides adding to his St. Thomas farm's breeding laurels with the on-track performances of the two-year-old son of Nyquist, aptly named Gretzky the Great and a starter in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, David was also rewarded quite handsomely at the Kentucky yearling sales where a number of Anderson Farms-breds continued to bring top dollars. Finally, a recent foray back into the Standardbred

'game', saw him adding a new trophy to display on the 'mantel piece', thanks to a part ownership in the Little Brown Jug winning Captain Barbossa.

Although 2020 proved eventful and fruitful for David, he also still found the time to have a seat at the table for the HBPA Ontario, Jockey Club of Canada and Ontario Racing Boards, where he worked tirelessly on several important horse racing industry related issues. Recently, PONIES 24-7 caught up with David, yes actually in between horse sales, where we found out more about one of the busiest men in horse racing.

**PONIES 24-7:** David as a second-generation

horseman, obviously this is where your passion for horse racing came from?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** Yes, I was literally born and raised on the farm, and my father (Bob) was a longtime Thoroughbred breeder. It was only natural that I grew up mucking stalls and prepping yearlings, painting fences, pretty much what all 'farm kids' do!

**PONIES 24-7:** How old were you when you realized that you wanted to be in horse racing full time?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** Actually, when I was young, I only knew the horse business, so I pretty much knew all along that this is what I wanted to do on a full-time scale. My father was really doing well in the 'game' and like any father/son team you certainly have your 'ebbs and flows', (laughs), but I decided when I was in my early twenties that it was time for me to go out on my own, and I did!

I worked at several businesses and finally landed my current company (Phoenix Performance) in my late twenties and I have

been at it now for 22 years. I continued to, you could say, 'dabble' in horse racing though, owning several horses in partnership with my Dad and then I got involved in Standardbreds back in 2000. We bought a few yearlings and had a great run for about 10 years and then unfortunately my father passed away quite unexpectedly and I made the decision at that point to get out of the harness side, and really focus on the Thoroughbreds. The Thoroughbred market back in 2010 and 2011 was really down, so I began buying some mares and building up my broodmare band up. Actually, we started with one mare and now we are up to 30! A couple of years ago, I decided that the Standardbreds still held a 'soft spot' in my heart, and I bought a couple of yearlings in partnership, and I have been having a lot of fun since. It certainly has been a great experience!

**PONIES 24-7:** You mentioned

Phoenix Performance earlier, maybe you can tell our readers more about this company?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** Phoenix started out making the Tipperary Safety Vests that the riders wear, and from there we kind of 'morphed' into a full-blown protective sportswear company. Over the years we have made products for all types of contact sports, hockey, baseball, football, you name it, and it's really been a great business. I have it set up now with some top-shelf people running the company for me, which allows me more time to spend with my horses and travelling.

**PONIES 24-7:** At one time you were making hockey equipment for Bauer, correct?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** Yes, we were actually the largest custom hockey pant manufacturer in the world. We made hockey pants for all of the top brands including Bauer and we also manufactured all of their goalie equipment as well.

**PONIES 24-7:** You seem to be a very busy guy David?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** I am, I have a wife and two kids also, so I have to try and fit them in too, which sometimes is difficult! (laughs). My oldest daughter is at the University of Edinburgh this year so I don't get to see her as often and my youngest daughter is at home with my wife and I. With COVID, I can't leave the house because of quarantine, so the three of us get to spend quite a bit of time together. I do think though, that it is definitely a challenge for



Queen's Plate winning Wonder Gadot, Michael Burns Photo



any business owner with a young family, as you have to try ‘juggling’ building your business with raising a family. I am sure that many fathers out there probably look back now and say that they missed a lot of time with their kids because of their business. It’s really a difficult balance!

**PONIES 24-7:** David, with all of your business interests and travel, how do you juggle everything?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** You have to be very organized and the key for me Larry is really the people who work for me. I have an incredible staff and they are the



stronghold of our success. As I mentioned earlier, I have set everything up now, where they basically tell me what to do. (laughs) Honestly though, I have my staff to be thankful for!

**PONIES 24-7:** Getting back to your horse racing operations (Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds), you have had some very nice horses over the past few years, what’s your secret?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** We have been very lucky and as you know Larry, it’s not like a manufacturing business, where you design a product, make your molds and away you go. Instead, with horses, it’s a long, drawn out process and of course they come with so many variables and unknowns. Honestly though, I think you have to spread your risk and play the numbers game a bit, but at the end of the day, you have to buy the best quality that you can afford. You also need discipline! I have always said that discipline is the key to the horse

business as the easiest thing a person can do is to walk into a sales arena and throw their hand up and buy a horse! My father always said to me, ‘*you make your money when you buy, not when you sell*’ and every time I am bidding on a horse now, those words continue to roll around in my head.

**PONIES 24-7:** Let’s talk more about your Standardbreds David, you have had some tremendous luck lately including Captain Barbossa this past season?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** The Standardbreds have been great Larry. In my first foray back into harness racing, we underbid on Greenshoe, who had a successful run the last couple of years and has since been syndicated for a lot of money. We managed to buy a horse though called Pilot Discretion, who raced in the Hambletonian and the Breeders Crown and won the Goodtimes and was second in the Canadian Trotting Classic at Mohawk. He was then sold to stand at stud in the US and that was really a fun ride! Actually, and surprisingly, the first pacing colt I have ever owned was Captain Barbossa, and when he won the Little Brown Jug this year, I can tell you unequivocally that it was the most exciting horse race that I have ever been involved in. My vertical hasn’t been more than six inches the last 10 years but I can bet you that it was more than 30 that day! (laughs) But unfortunately, I wasn’t able to attend the Jug in person, which was very sad, because it is such a great fan-based event. You win it but can’t go! It really took away a lot of the ‘pizazz’ for sure, but on the other hand, nothing will change the fact that there is a brown ceramic jug sitting proudly in my trophy case!

**Ponies 24-7:** How did you get involved in owning Captain Barbossa?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** To be honest, I had nothing to do with it. Trevor Ritchie, who is a Hall of Fame former driver from Canada, actually bought the horse and contacted me about buying a piece of him. I said absolutely, as I have quite a bit of respect for Trevor although I don’t usually get involved in partnerships without doing my own deal. But in this case, I trusted Trevor and knew the other partners and thought it would be a fun experience, whether we had a good horse or not. We certainly have had a lot of fun and I’m hoping to have some more fun this year as I recently bought five yearlings at the Lexington Standardbred yearling sale. Hopefully, there’s another Captain Barbossa in the group!

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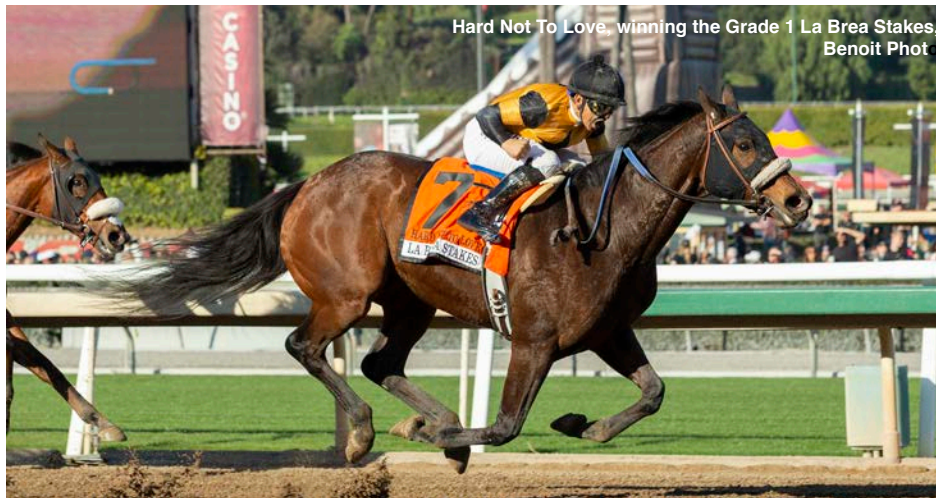
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Hard Not To Love, winning the Grade 1 La Brea Stakes, Benoit Phot

**PONIES 24-7:** Besides your racing operations, you are also quite busy with the various horse racing associations. Tell our readers more about this.

**DAVID ANDERSON:** In the past I never really got too involved with racing boards, more so on purpose, as I had so many irons in the fire with my businesses. I really didn't think that I could do them justice time wise, but the last couple of years though, I thought that it was time to start giving back. Sue Leslie (President of the HBPA Ontario), called and asked me if I would run for their Board a couple of years ago and to be honest, at the time I didn't really know a lot about the HBPA and the work that they did behind the scenes. So, I ran and won and I have really enjoyed my time there. I think that Sue is a tremendous leader, and the horse racing game in Ontario would suffer a major loss if she wasn't involved. She works tirelessly behind the scenes and gets very little recognition and I know for a fact that her phone is on 24-7. I have so much respect for Sue and the job she does! I am also a Steward of The Jockey Club of Canada and have been working hard with a couple of the other Stewards on Section 31 of the Income Tax Act. Recently, I was asked to sit on the Board for Ontario Racing, representing the interests of the breeders of Ontario.

Again, I really enjoy working on this Board also, as we have put together some new initiatives and incentive programs to buy mares and bring them into the province of Ontario and to breed to Ontario Sires, and generally to improve the quality of the Ontario bred. We also revamped the Breeders Awards this year and added some new Reward of Excellence programs for Ontario-sired and bred horses, including some big bonuses for the Triple Crown races and other premier races. Overall though, I think that we are heading in the right direction!

**PONIES 24-7:** You also have some Percherons and Clydesdales, how did this come about?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** When I was a kid my father had Percherons on the farm as nurse mares for the Thoroughbred mares. There was an old Percheron mare that I used to ride and I fell in love with and I thought that someday if I could afford it, I would own a few Draft Horses of my own. Well 100 of them later, (laughs), I have more than a few! We show them literally all over the world and have been lucky to show and win the Cawdor Cup in Scotland which is like their Super Bowl. We

also have won three World Shows for both breeds, Clydesdales and Percherons and multiple US National Championships as well. The horses and the shows act as great outlets for me, where I can just let my hair down, grab a Bud Lite, and kick tires with the real people!

**PONIES 24-7:** Where are they stabled?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** They're on a farm in Iowa. My manager Robert Detweiler, actually drove the Budweiser hitch for 11 years, and when he decided to leave Budweiser, he built up one of the top Percheron operations in the world. When the owners of the operation decided to sell out, I hired Robert as fast as I could! Robert does an incredible job on the farm and you could probably say that he is the Bob Baffert of Draft Horses.

**PONIES 24-7:** So, David I have to ask, what do you do in your spare time?



**DAVID ANDERSON:** I don't have any spare time! (laughs) My phone is in my ear from the time I get up to the time I go to bed. I enjoy my work though, and you could probably say that my work is my hobby. You know, I can honestly say Larry, that I have never woken up and begrudged going to work, because I enjoy it and if I don't enjoy something, I get out.

**PONIES 24-7:** Is there anything you haven't achieved in your life yet that is still on the bucket list?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** There's so many goals in the horse business, breeding a Kentucky Derby winner or a Breeders Cup winner, but in this stage of my life, I want to see my kids achieve and live their dreams. That would be most satisfying to me!

**PONIES 24-7:** You said earlier that your interest in racing stemmed from your father and growing up as a 'farm kid', but would you say that there was also perhaps a 'special horse' that helped seal the deal?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** That had to be Northern Dancer! Actually, when I was small, my Dad and I would jump in the old station wagon and drive to Windfields Farm in Oshawa, Ontario. My father was still learning the business at the time, and you could pretty much say that Mr. Taylor took him under his wing, and really if it wasn't for Mr. Taylor, my father would never have ended up where he did in horse racing. He sold my Dad a share in Northern Dancer and at the time my father didn't have

any money and it was up to him to go out and raise enough money to pay for this share. He raised the money, and bought the share that Mr. Taylor gave him at a discounted price and he made a million dollars on it in a couple of years!

**PONIES 24-7:** Horse racing has continued to struggle bringing new people into the business as owners and fans, and now COVID has increased the challenges. What can we do moving forward to sell this great industry to new people?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** I believe there are a couple of things. First the way our pari-mutuel system is set up is archaic and we need new and innovative bets to keep people more engaged. Secondly, give people the opportunity to make more money wagering. There is so much product and competition out there now that horse racing seems to be behind the eight ball and we need to continue working with the regulators and come up with some new products including

fixed odds wagering that maybe give horseplayers a chance to win some life altering payoffs.

From the owner's perspective, horse racing needs to change the tax laws, period!! Section 31 is totally outdated, as it only allows a write off of up to \$18,000 a year which is ridiculous. We are the only business in the country that can't write off losses which has single handedly driven the Thoroughbred business in the United States and that is who we are competing against in terms of breeding and ownership. We have to be on the same level playing field to be able to compete fairly.

**PONIES 24-7:** Finally, David what is your opinion on the status of Thoroughbred racing in the province of Ontario?

**DAVID ANDERSON:** We are very fortunate here that we have a long-term sustainability program in place with the Ontario government, which I think truly gives us an advantage over other racing jurisdictions especially ones with casino driven revenue. This program allows us to maintain our purses, if not surpass other racetracks across North America, and in turn, helps in providing quality racing at Woodbine, while making racing here more appealing to trainers and owners from other racing jurisdictions. Having two world class turf courses at Woodbine, and a safe racetrack that never gets sloppy, is also a major draw for horsepeople everywhere!

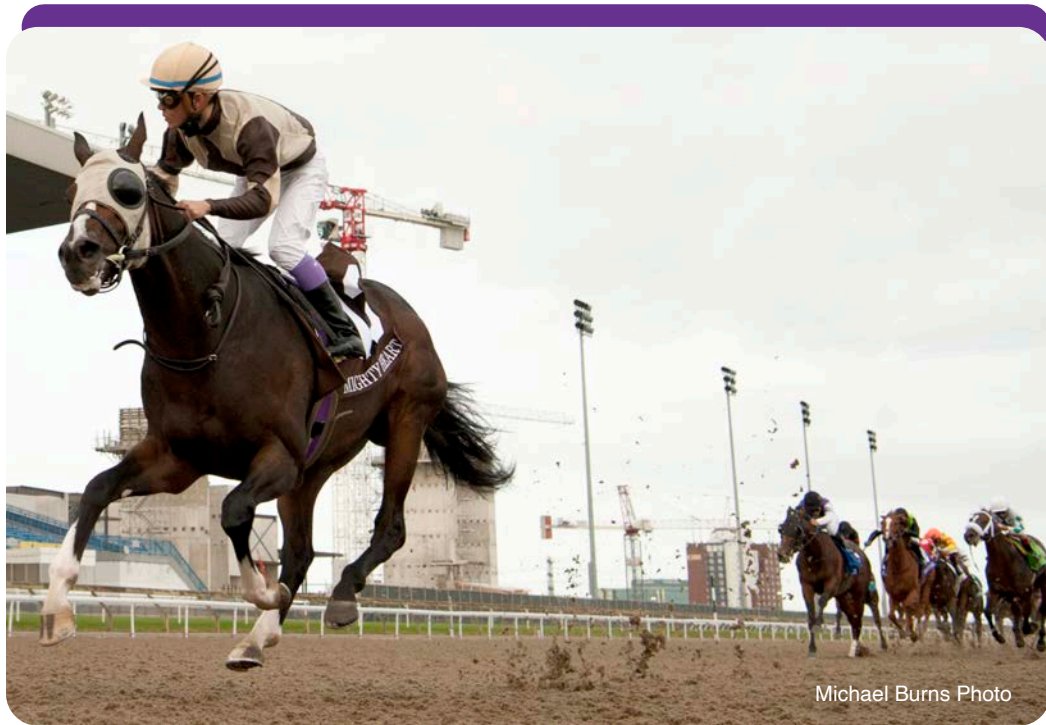


## THE BUSINESS OF HORSE RACING

# Jim Lawson

## Reflecting on the Year it Was...And Racing's Future

By Larry Simpson



Michael Burns Photo

For Jim Lawson and the team at Woodbine Entertainment, 2020 could probably be considered more than challenging, as the perils of COVID-19 continued to wreak havoc everywhere, including with their own business. Not your average business, especially when you consider the horses and the horsepeople in the backstretch, the front side staff and management team and of course Mohawk Park and the challenges to keep the Standardbred set racing in a safe environment.

A regular feature in PONIES 24-7,

is a year-end interview with Jim, where he reflects back on the 'year it was' for Woodbine and what the future of racing looks like from the eyes of the Woodbine CEO. Here's the 2020 'wrap'.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, we are at the end of another racing season at Woodbine and Woodbine Mohawk Park, in obviously what has been a year of continuous challenges. Taking into consideration COVID, what kind of year would you say it was for horse racing at your two tracks?

**JIM LAWSON:** It was a really good year for our horsepeople as we were obviously thrilled to start Thoroughbred racing at Woodbine the first week in June, which was a culmination of some hard work by our people and the government officials in terms of putting protocol procedures in place. Actually, I believe that Woodbine led the way as we were the first professional sport to go live in Canada, a result of us taking the proper steps, not only on the Thoroughbred and Standardbred sides

but more pointedly, in managing our backstretch in March, April and May and allowing horses to get ready to race. We did it carefully and thoughtfully, earning the respect of the government, so when it came time to have the discussions about opening up the province in phases, we had earned credibility as a result of our careful management and in particular the way we handled our backstretch. I think that this credibility led us to be able to open in Phase 1 of the province and I am quite sure that no one would have predicted back then that one of the

first essential businesses to open would be horse racing.

**PONIES 24-7:** But then with 12 days of racing remaining the Ontario government 'pulled the plug' so to speak on live racing at Woodbine, which must have been very disappointing. Was this a case of not enough time spent on getting an overall understanding of the situation by the provincial government?

**JIM LAWSON:** Actually, once the government made their decision to shut us down Larry, quite frankly, I was not that optimistic that we would get them to reconsider. We tried and there was some hope, but for me, what I found most frustrating was the fact that the government really didn't have a full understanding of the magnitude of their decision and that it would prematurely put a couple of thousand people out of work. It would also cost us another \$50 million in lost revenue, this after we had already been down \$100 million for the first two months of non-racing activity at Woodbine and Mohawk. Woodbine's the 'driver' of the entire industry and we have certainly made our financial situation well known to the government and for them to not understand what their decision was going to cost us, while putting a further 2,000 people out of work and basically taking an additional \$5 million of purse money away from them, was the frustrating part. When you consider these facts, then I honestly believe that a decision of such importance and I am not going to say that it was the wrong one, but it should have involved some consultation with us in advance. Let's

keep in mind too that we were only talking about one property and one racetrack here, as it was only Woodbine that was impacted. Had they appreciated the importance of their decision, then there would have been some consultation before and some comprehension that we only had 12 days of racing left. They would not have allowed one property to continue on with training only, because as you and I both know, there was no need for further training. Unfortunately, to me, this is evidence that the provincial government really didn't grasp the full ramifications of their decision, where they impacted the families of 2,000 people employed by one business. I think that you should have consulted with that business first before making your final decision.

**PONIES 24-7:** But the government allowed you to reopen in May, what changed?

**JIM LAWSON:** The government let us reopen on May 27th as a Phase 1 business. In April and May though they allowed us to do training and I believe that is what happened here, as we turned back the clock so to speak, where it was realized as essential to let horses exercise. The difference now though and this was my pitch to the government when I tried to get them to reconsider, was the history of our risk profile,

where we went from training to racing at the end of May and we conducted live racing on a very safe basis since. The protocols and procedures which the government accepted back then, were the very same ones that kept us safe for 5 ½ months. So, this was my point that I tried to make, that 'guys', you have turned the clock back to April and May without due consideration of the fact that you blessed our protocols for live racing which weren't any different from training. Had they understood this, there would have been a realization that the risk profile of live racing was no different than training and I just wish that they would have come to us and considered all of the relevant factors in the first place.

**PONIES 24-7:** It also had to be difficult times back in March too though with all the uneasiness caused by COVID, pretty much forcing the Standardbreds at Woodbine Mohawk Park to shut down, correct?

**JIM LAWSON:** It was difficult to close down the Standardbreds. We approached the government, both the AGCO and the OLG and talked about our decision to shut down Mohawk and also to ultimately delay the start of the Thoroughbred season and we suggested that we use purse monies and set up a relief fund for our horsepeople that ultimately manifested itself in payments based on a per horse basis. This program I might add, was managed by Ontario Racing, and allowed us to open up our two tracks and thereafter Larry, our people did a great job, as we were able to carry on with our major events. On the Thoroughbred side, the Triple Crown brought some extra excitement this year and Mohawk offered a schedule of summer



Michael Burns Photo



stakes events that was second to none and all were conducted in a COVID free environment and done safely.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, speaking of major stakes races you were forced to reschedule many of them on different dates throughout the season. One popular race that wasn't rescheduled was the Pattison International, was this more a case of travel restrictions?

**JIM LAWSON:** Yes, that was the original thought, Larry, as we just felt that the International and its placing on the calendar, was just going to be too difficult. Recently, the International has not been a prep race for the Breeders' Cup, rather that fell to the Ricoh Mile, so that race became our focus and although we did run the Northern Dancer with some of the same horses that would have been part of the International, unfortunately the European horses did not show up. Overall, there was a great reluctance by trainers to ship across the border this year for all of our major stakes races, as they didn't want to ship without their grooms and because of COVID this became an impossibility. Also, although we have a great jockey colony here at Woodbine,

when there's big money involved, it becomes a hard call to take a regular rider off of a horse and name a local jockey to ride. The International just didn't make sense this year, as we weren't going to get the European horses or the odd American horse and we were right! As for the Woodbine Mile, the Summer Stakes and the Natalma, all three were Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" events, so trainers were probably more apt to overlook the fact that the groom couldn't come across the border, especially if they have a shot at winning a "Win and You're In" race.

**PONIES 24-7:** Speaking of jockeys, one of the hot topics now is the use of the Riding Crop. I am sure that you are familiar with the letter that Hall of Fame jockey Mike Smith sent to the California Horse Racing Board on behalf of The Jockeys' Guild, where he criticized a restrictive Riding Crop rule that recently went into effect at California racetracks. Mike also had some serious concerns for the safety of the horses and riders and the integrity of the sport. Jim, what is your opinion on this issue, and Woodbine's stance on the use of the Riding Crop?

**JIM LAWSON:** We are very comfortable where we are at now



with our Riding Crop rule that applies to our jockeys. Ours started out as an experiment and sure, initially the jockeys didn't like it and we were sympathetic at that point. There was some pressure being put on the industry to look at 'urging' both on the Standardbred side where it started initially, and then with the jockey's Riding Crops at Woodbine. We experimented in 2019 and it went well so the AGCO put the rule in place for what we believe is permanently at the Ontario Thoroughbred tracks. I believe our riders are now used to the rule and sure not all of them love it, but I think for the safety of

the horse and the betterment of the industry, it is the correct thing to do. Other racing jurisdictions are continuing to take a look at the use of the Riding Crop and I think that it is great that Ontario has taken a leadership role. We (Woodbine Entertainment) are not afraid to try new things that we believe are good for the industry.

**PONIES 24-7:** Maybe Jim for our readers sake, you could briefly outline the use of the Riding Crop rule for jockeys here in Ontario?

**JIM LAWSON:** As you are aware Larry, the riders can only use the crop in an underhand motion and only hitting certain portions of the horse. The jockeys are also allowed to 'urge' the horse a couple of times and then they have to pause. We believe our rule is good for the perception of our sport and the good news is that we have not noticed any negative impact on our wagering handle.

**PONIES 24-7:** When I interviewed Mike Smith recently on our *Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE Show*, he said that for jockeys now, it has become very confusing when they are riding in various racing jurisdictions, as they all have a different

Riding Crop rule in effect. As an example, California, where he is based, apparently says that a jockey can only use the Riding Crop six times on a horse during a race and no more than twice in succession. Is there any way that the industry could get together and have the same Riding Crop rule in effect everywhere?

**JIM LAWSON:** Mike is absolutely correct that riding at various tracks with separate rules does pose a problem for the riders. This was actually one of our concerns of jockeys coming north to ride at Woodbine, where they would have

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to use the Crop differently and that they would be fined if they didn't comply. I agree, there has to be a consistency across the board, and up to now that hasn't happened, as once again it is the reluctance by the industry to bring about change. I happen to fall into the 'camp' Larry, where I feel that it is important that the jockeys carry a Riding Crop. It is a safety issue, as there are certain times where you need to urge a horse to get through a hole, or maybe stop it from bolting to the outside fence. I know that there is some 'noise' from a few of the jurisdictions where they would like to eliminate the Riding Crop completely but I believe the right thing to do moving forward though is to try and move to a consistent rule instead.

As for Mike's other concern of only being able to use the Crop six times in a race, from our own standpoint, we took a hard look at the AGCO at the various rule adaptations around the world and one thing that we concluded was that it was wrong to limit the amount of 'hits'. Not only is it unfair to the bettors, but once again it comes down to safety, as sometimes you may have to hit a horse a number of times at the start just to safely put it into the right place of the race. So, if you use up most of your hits there, then it becomes unfair to the bettors, the owners,

pretty much everyone, especially if you can't urge the horse on in the stretch because you ran out of hits. Also, I think the jockey already has his or her hands full guiding a 1,000 pound horse safely around the track without also expecting them to have to count the hits, which was a concern of Mikes too.

**PONIES 24-7:** As you know Jim, Ramon Dominguez is a pretty good friend of *PONIES 24-7*, and has been interviewed both in the magazine and our radio show. He has developed what is considered to be a more humane Riding Crop, the 360 GT (Gentle Touch), that a significant many of the jockeys, including some at Woodbine are using. Would the solution to the Riding Crop issue be to have this Crop mandated across North America?

**JIM LAWSON:** It is certainly part of the solution and I think that you will see Ramon's Riding Crop or one similar, becoming more prevalent and even legislated as this topic becomes more scrutinized and focused on. I am sure that this is something that the US racing jurisdictions will be taking a look at.

**PONIES 24-7:** Let's look at 2021 now, which I know is quite difficult currently as no one has a crystal ball and can foresee if we will still be

looking at COVID times. In any case, Woodbine needs to continue to look at the future and find additional ways of increasing revenues. The obvious is to build out your online wagering platform currently in place, with the introduction of new gaming products. What is the latest update on the legalization of sports wagering, and Historical Horse Racing?

**JIM LAWSON:** Recently, the Federal Government proposed a bill to amend the current Criminal Code

and allow single event sports wagering in Canada and permitting fixed odds betting on most sports, but excluding horse racing. We had some original concerns that horse racing would be included where fixed odds wagering would be allowed and that would have proven to be catastrophic for the future of Canadian horse racing, so we are actually pleased with the proposed legislation now. Presently, Woodbine Entertainment is the only private entity that legally offers both online and single event wagering (on horse racing) through our HPIbet which is supported by a very robust system operated by an innovation and technology department that is second to none in the industry. Woodbine can also provide a large customer base and the entire infrastructure to play a major role in delivering sports wagering when it does become legalized. We also have Greenwood, WEGZ, our two racetracks and over 60 off track wagering locations, many of which would be ideal sportsbooks and what's more important, is that we are a heavily regulated non-profit Canadian company. There are just so many reasons why Woodbine Entertainment should play a role in the delivery of sports wagering moving forward.

As for Historical Horse Racing, it is now a product that can have



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the characteristics somewhat of a skilled wager and with technology, we are now able to provide some past performance information about the horses. Also, Historical Horse Racing has always been in a pari-mutuel pool, but the reluctance years back, was that it looked and felt essentially like a slot machine product. This is no longer the case, as we have a data base of 25 to 30,000 races from Woodbine, and up to 100,000 races in another database and these races can run

date in mind when we may be able to bet on sports, or Historical Horse Racing?

**JIM LAWSON:** It's really difficult to predict as sports betting is a very complex issue and it is so important that the proposed bill be well thought out. If the process starts now, and it gets incorporated into the budget and the Attorney General's office and the Ministry of Finance review it on some basis, then I could see single event sports wagering

taken place rather than one to take place, then we could have Historical Horse Racing up and running very shortly. Of course, Historical Horse Racing won't have the priority from a government perspective revenue wise as what sports wagering offers, but we could work with the CPMA and the AGCO to the point that I would think that we could have it up and running in three or four months.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, last question, it's quite obvious that COVID has been very challenging financially for businesses of all sizes, Woodbine Entertainment included. Having the foresight to launch the Dark Horse product certainly must have helped though?

**JIM LAWSON:** Dark Horse is certainly something that can be a major boost not only for Woodbine Entertainment but to the entire horse racing industry as well. Since launching Dark Horse, we have received some tremendous customer feedback and thus made some changes to the point where now, it is a product that straddles the line of appealing to complex sports bettors and new people to horse racing. And of course, we are trying to make sure that the product accommodates both. I think the Artificial Intelligence and the capability to watch live races and wager on them on your mobile phone, could be a game changer, for the horse racing industry. The first launch has been great and we are making some alterations and hopefully we will be able to expand Dark Horse into the United States, as we believe that it is superior to anything else out on the market.

either in a pari-mutuel pool, or on HPIbet with the entire races shown. Historical Horse Racing is a product that Woodbine desperately needs, especially now with COVID as our expenses continue to increase and our margins are becoming thinner. We need new products like Historical Horse Racing and we have made both the Federal and Provincial governments aware of this. The CPMA is already prepared to regulate it and I am very hopeful that this will happen soon.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, do you have a

happening as early as next Spring or Summer. I do believe though that it will take some time to have all of the provincial jurisdictions working together and to help deliver the product.

Historical Horse Racing is a different story though, as I believe that it would take the CPMA only a short time to get comfortable with the product and how to regulate it. If we could get the necessary changes made to the Criminal Code, which effectively would interpret racing as an event that could already have



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# The Racer's Edge

## A Handicapping Primer

### A LESSON IN PATIENCE

*A Realistic Approach to Investing For Profit at the Racetrack*

By Larry Simpson

*(Note: This article originally was published in a North American horse racing publication in the early 2000's, but the content continues to withstand the test of time, the article has been updated in certain areas to reflect current horse racing handicapping conditions.)*



one track and Standardbreds from another, the importance of practicing patient handicapping has reached epic proportions. Nobody in their right mind can successfully handicap a plethora of racing cards, they can try, but chances are that by the end of the day, they will be so fatigued that the last race will become nothing more than a handicapping blur, or a last chance effort at getting even for the day. But the sharp investor (notice I said 'investor') should always approach their handicapping decisions as if it were a business, meaning to pass on certain races and search for that almost perfect betting situation, and trust me, with the large menu of races being offered nowadays, there will always be plenty to choose from.

### What constitutes a passed race?

To each his own, as it always comes down to an exercise in what class of horse you have previously handicapped successfully. However, to me, the key ingredient here is doing your homework the night before. You wouldn't buy a new car before test driving it, so why would you try to handicap races without some prior studying of the Racing Form? I like to buy the Form two nights prior), (note-back then this was possible) which gives me almost two whole days of handicapping. From there, I go through the exercise of attempting to find that ideal betting situation by following these simple steps.

## 1 - RECENT FORM

By quickly scanning the past performances in the Daily Racing Form I can eliminate any horse who has not raced or shown a serious workout for the past 21 days. By serious workout I mean one of three furlongs or more, with a comment of 'handily' or better. Although it may be argued that a horse has not raced for over three weeks because there wasn't a race 'written' to meet his or her conditions, a short breezing workout, in my opinion, does not necessarily constitute a totally fit horse.

## 2 - JOCKEY AND TRAINER PATTERNS

Like any athletes, jockeys can be subject to 'slumps'. Again, by quickly scanning the Past Performances in the Racing Form, I will eliminate any horse that is not being handled by a jockey that has won with at least 10 percent of his or her rides at the current meet. Sure, once in a while, jockeys with a smaller win percentage do win an occasional race, however, by eliminating them in the initial handicapping steps, you are putting the odds in your favor. Remember, we are passing races for good reasons.

As for trainer patterns, again I look at the trainer summary line provided in the Racing Form. Like their jockey counterparts, trainers too have good and bad streaks, however, good, successful trainers perennially usually average around 15 per cent winners. These people are serious about their work and they are the ones that I want to put my money on. I should point out too, that while I am scanning the trainer's summaries, I make careful notations of horses that have been claimed in their most recent start. At every racetrack, there are trainers who, while continuing to win at a regular 15% basis, are doing so while making a living claiming horses, stepping them up a class and winning first start back. Make some mental notes of who these trainers are at the racetrack that you are playing as you will be glad you did!

## 3 - CLASS

It is necessary to 'hone in' on horses which have shown that they are competitive racing at today's class level, at today's distance and carrying today's weight. This competitive race may have been the horse's last, or perhaps its second last start, but the key here is that he or she has shown the ability to compete successfully at today's

standards. By compete, we mean any horse that has either won or finished within three lengths racing at today's classification. Don't be afraid to go three races back in order to find a key race, especially if the horse in question was a victim of poor racing luck in either or both of their last two races, or possibly raced on a bad track surface or had a poor post position. Providing that the horse has raced, or had a quality workout in the past 21 days, he or she just might become that betting opportunity that we are searching for today.

As this ends our primary handicapping where we have separated contenders from pretenders, the balance of our homework will take place trackside or at the betting parlor the day of the race.

## SUMMARY

A famous North American handicapper and racing personality and also an advocate of 'patient handicapping', once said to me that he would never wager on a horse unless he felt comfortable betting at least \$50 on it. Any smaller wager to him was a sign that his confidence did not match the ability of the horse in question. Although you do not need to have the same \$50 minimum as our famous North American friend, it is still a good practice to determine a comfortable minimum wager that will enable you to take a major stand when the time comes. In other words, if the bet isn't worth risking \$20 or whatever you arbitrarily decide, then obviously your confidence is not at the level it should be when it comes to having an opinion on a particular race.

The other rule of thumb that should help you separate pretenders from solid plays, is the 3-1 theory. In my own case, I was a protégé of one of the best handicappers in North America, who was able to carve out a full time living from not only his wagering, but also as a trailblazer

for running handicapping seminars, providing regular newsletters, etc. I was privileged for several years, to travel the seminar circuit with him and during this time, many good 'nuggets' of betting advice continued to resonate with my own betting convictions, and I might add, still do today. He also was the one that actually introduced me to the 3-1 theory of betting to win and it is one good betting edict that I still practice religiously today. In other words, as it was constantly drilled in to me, if you are looking for a win bet and your horse's odds are not 3 to 1 or better, then you don't have a solid, value bet, as part of the key to becoming a good handicapper is unlocking good solid value. Yes, some handicappers do feel that getting 2 to 1 on a horse is good value and yes compared to say a 3 to 5 shot it may be, but at 3 to 1 or better, your horse just may be considered an overlay, especially if they meet all of our handicapping criteria, that we have outlined in this article. Something to add to your wagering arsenal and at the end of the day, abiding by the 3-1 rule may act as the last criteria your selection has to meet before you make your wager.

The old adage 'good things come to those who wait', has never been so true when it comes to wagering on horses. You will probably find that by eliminating horses because they do not meet the above elimination criteria points will help to make you a better handicapper and in better control of your betting bankroll. Betting horses, it has been noted in the past, can be compared to a game of golf or bowling, whereby you are constantly competing against another person, or several, similar to horse racing where you are actually competing against the other horse bettors. With this in mind, it is imperative that you continue to develop an edge or a competitive advantage over your fellow bettors and what better way than by developing that often-forgotten virtue of patience!

### How do we find that perfect betting race?

Actually, with the introduction of simulcast wagering and combination cards now with Thoroughbreds from

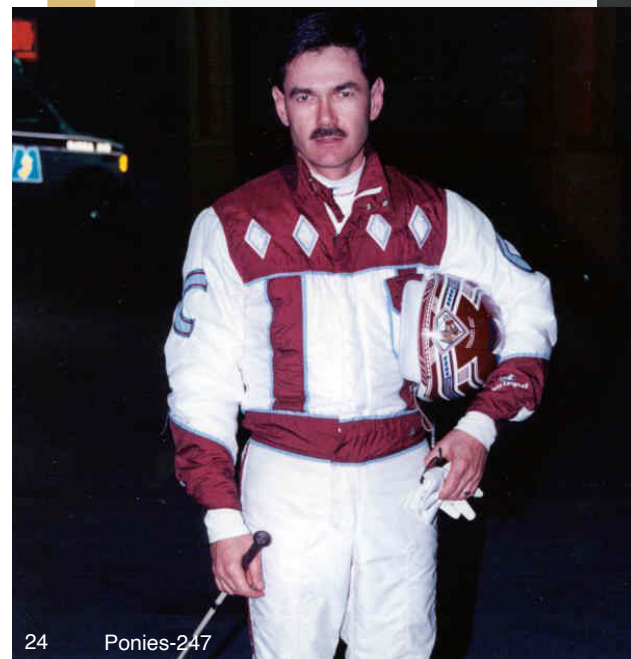
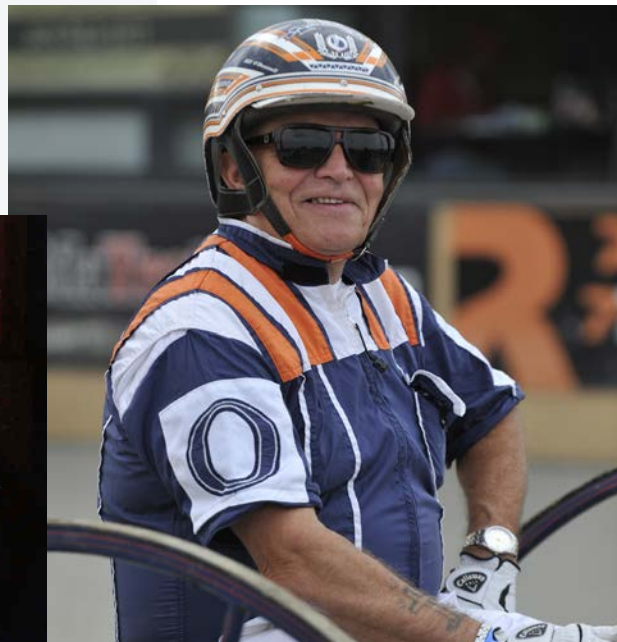


### 20 MINUTES WITH TWO LEGENDS OF HARNESS RACING

# BILL O'DONNELL AND JOHN CAMPBELL

Reflect Back On Their Hall Of Fame Careers

By Larry Simpson



Photos Courtesy of Breeders Crown

**B**ack in the late 1980's, if you were a regular follower of Meadowlands harness racing like me, you probably noticed two drivers in particular who seemed to always be standing in the winner's circle. Yes, whether they helped you to cash a ticket, or they were constantly beating you, there was no denying that Bill O'Donnell and John Campbell were at the top of their game back then and still are now in their new careers, Bill as President of COSA (the Central Ontario Standardbred Association) and John holding the title of President for The Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown.

In the past, it has always been PONIES 24-7's format of conducting interviews on a one-on-one basis, however this issue we thought that it would be entertaining to do separate interviews with Bill and John and as an extra twist, have them shed some light on the other Hall of Famer's career.

**First in the interview chair will be Bill O'Donnell, the man commonly known as the 'Magic Man'.**

**PONIES 24-7:** First question Bill, was it difficult for you to walk away from the sport as a driver?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** I don't think it was, because as I started to get older, I wasn't getting the top drives like I once did and I found that my competitive edge was waning somewhat. Also, you reach a point in life where because you are not as sharp, you really are not doing the owners any justice driving their

horses. That's when it is time to walk away.

**PONIES 24-7:** Did you miss driving at first?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** For sure Larry, but I think at first though, you feel that you can still drive better than some of the drivers on the track, especially when you are watching the races from a comfortable seat in the grandstand or your living room. *(Laughs)* Harness racing was my entire life and all I ever knew, but I was fortunate to be able to move into my role at COSA and continue to contribute something positive to the industry. I believe, It's important to keep giving back to an industry that has been so good to you!

**PONIES 24-7:** You were one of the first so called professional catch drivers, what led to this career change for you?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** Actually, the first few years at the Meadowlands I was both training and driving and had around 30 horses at one time in my barn. But I got so busy driving that it just became too difficult to drive 10 or 12 races a night, travel all over the country to race in stakes events and then still train, so I made the decision to just drive and that lasted for about 20 years.

**PONIES 24-7:** And I am sure winning a few races certainly helped the 'resume' as a catch driver?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** It did, *LOL*, actually if you were winning races and you were available, you could connect with some of the exclusive trainers in the New York area and grab some drives. The industry actually changed back then though, as the trainers who were racing their

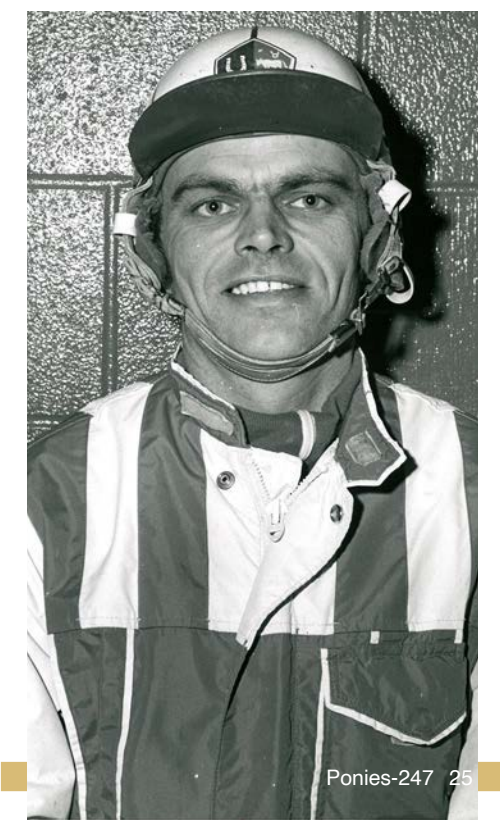
young stakes horses on the Grand Circuit, wanted someone who was available to drive on a track to track basis, which meant you were driving more than just overnight races. Back then, you could drive one horse for a \$200,000 purse in a stakes race, compared to maybe driving 10 for \$75,000 in total purses a night.

**PONIES 24-7:** Who was the greatest horse you ever drove?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** It had to be Nihilator! He won 35 of 38 races, and raced against the best horses in North America. I didn't drive him from the very beginning, but I felt honored that (trainer) Billy Haughton had me drive him in some of his major stakes.

**PONIES 24-7:** Last question Bill, and I think I already know the answer to this but here goes, what was your favorite racetrack to drive on?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** Has to be The Meadowlands! I think I won around 6,000 races in my career and 4,800 of those were there.







Back then, a mile track was very new to me, as I was used to driving on a half or five eighths and at first, the Meadowlands was very intimidating, especially when you looked down the long stretch and saw the New York City skyline staring you in the face. My Uncle, who was with me at the time, said to pick one driver to follow and to watch how he drove, which turned out to be some very good advice. Just then Greg Wright walked by and he was one of the top drivers and my Uncle pointed to him and said 'Pick him, he's the driver to follow!' So, I did! I watched Greg drive for the first two months and this was 1979 and a driver by the name of John Campbell was also just starting out at the Meadowlands and I did learn quite a bit from him as well!

**PONIES 24-7:** Bill, what a perfect segue way into the next part of our interview where you talk about John!

## Next, Bill chats about John.

**PONIES 24-7:** Bill, back in the 1980's you and John Campbell fine-tuned the art of catch driving at the Meadowlands. How competitive did it get between you two on the track?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** We were great friends and still are, but as soon as we went behind the gate, there was no more friendship. On the racetrack, sometimes I would let him go, or he may let me go, but my theory was always "I'll let you go, I'll let you in, I'll let you out, anytime, if it is going to help me!" Back then, some of the trainers stopped driving their own horses and they started using us, I don't know the reason why, but I am certainly glad that they did! *(Laughs)* John and I were very competitive when it came to securing catch drives though, as that was our business, but we were always friendly.

**PONIES 24-7:** What made John difficult to drive against?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** John had the uncanny ability to put you in a bad spot most of the time



and actually, I would try to do the same to him. He was always a student of the game and is one of those guys that would be successful at anything he tried. John always stayed focused as a driver and had a great 'set of hands', so he could relax a horse and save some energy for the last quarter of a mile. John could take a good horse and make it into a great one, I know I witnessed this on many occasions.

**PONIES 24-7:** How long did it take until you finally realized that John was a seriously talented driver?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** I was racing at Saratoga in 1979, but also did some driving at The Meadowlands, where I had a chance to watch John win with so many horses that looked like they had no shot at all. Actually, to be honest, I remember when John was 18 and I watched him drive a good horse for his father, Derby's Gent at Monticello and of course, he won with him too!

**PONIES 24-7:** Both you and John are Canadian born, in your opinion, why does Canada produce so many top harness drivers?

**BILL O'DONNELL:** I think it is all about the foundation we have. Both of us started young and were

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brought up around horses and you ‘learn the ropes’ from your father, grandfather, or uncle and driving a horse soon becomes second nature. In fact, I think that you begin to think like a horse. *LOL* Keith Waples, (Hall of Fame Driver) once touched upon this in an interview, and said that you need to have the ability to not get rattled in a race which is something that I believe we all learn from our mentors.

**PONIES 24-7:** Bill, you had a pretty good seat in the house to watch John drive, in your opinion was he better with a horse that raced on the front end, or off the pace?

**BILL O’DONNELL:** I don’t think it really mattered. When I first met John at the Meadowlands, he was winning with many horses from off the pace and they were 15 to 20-1 shots. But I think that once you start driving better horses and you have the horse to beat that is comfortable on the front end, then you drive him that way, which is what John did. He could beat you either way though!

**PONIES 24-7:** Was John a very ‘low key’ individual?

**BILL O’DONNELL:** John was

quiet and this he was able to pass on to the horses that he drove, as he had a knack of keeping them quiet on the track. He was the type to lead by example and I believe is the perfect role model for any young person that wants to get into the horse racing business.

**PONIES 24-7:** How would you rank John as a driver, is he one of the best of all time?

**BILL O’DONNELL:** Until someone breaks his record of \$304 million in purses earned, in my books he is number one!

### Next in the chair, John Campbell.

**PONIES 24-7:** John, how difficult was it for you to ‘call it a career’ as a driver?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** It was something that took a lot of thought! I talked it over with my wife Paula and my three daughters and I have to admit that it was a very tough decision. But I looked at it realistically Larry, for at the time I was almost 62 and when I finally decided to take the job with Breeders Crown, I knew that at my

age going forward, job opportunities would be limited. Breeders Crown offered a great opportunity, kept me in the game and was the right decision.

**PONIES 24-7:** Was there some hesitancy in moving to the position with the Breeders Crown though?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I actually looked at the situation there, with Tom Charters retiring and Moira Fanning, who has been at the Breeders Crown as COO for almost forever, comfortable in staying and this became a major factor in me taking the position. Tom was also very instrumental in the transition and I still lean on him for advice and I lean on Moira too!

**PONIES 24-7:** Did you miss not driving at first?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I did, especially the first year, but more so when the weather was good. When it rained or once the cold weather set in, I didn’t miss it at all. *LOL*. The first summer was hard, especially when I was travelling from track to track for the stakes races and I would look at the program and see some pretty nice horses that I maybe would have had a chance to drive and I missed driving them. But let’s face it, at 65, if I went back to driving now, I don’t think that I’m going to be any better at it!

**PONIES 24-7:** John is it a different business now, compared to when you and Bill started out, maybe with less family connections to the sport?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I think because the world is so much smaller now, there is much more scrutiny on the younger guys coming up. I know from my own standpoint when I started driving,

I wasn’t very good at it, but there weren’t many people that knew that! *LOL*, I was just racing at the small tracks in Ontario back then and the communication and exposure was very limited at the time and this gave me a better chance to make mistakes and probably become a better driver and become less scrutinized.

**PONIES 24-7:** Like Bill, you started out at the Meadowlands training and driving, correct?

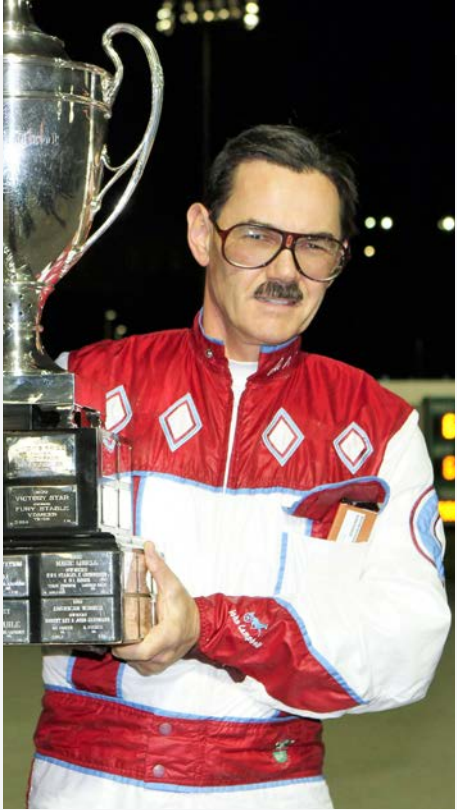
**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I originally took 14 horses to the Meadowlands in January of 1978 and the purses were so good back then that I was able to upgrade my stable from January to August. Things really took off for me and we eventually got the stable up to between 40 and 45 horses in the early 1980’s.

**PONIES 24-7:** How did the transition into catch driving take place?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** My stable kept increasing in size and at the same time I was receiving more opportunities to catch drive for other trainers and sometimes there were conflicts, where obviously I would have to drive my own horse. To be perfectly honest though, it’s so much easier to catch drive than to drive and train! The hours involved and the communication with owners is totally different and it actually got to the point that I could drive most races on a card and it didn’t matter whether I had my own horses or not.

**PONIES 24-7:** John, you drove many good horses, but if you had to single out just one, who would it be?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Mack Lobell! He was great at two when he set a



world record and won the Breeders Crown and then he came back at three and won the Hambletonian, set a world record of 1:52 and then won the Breeders Crown again. At four, he went to France and won the Elitloppet and then did it once again as a six-year-old. It’s a pretty easy choice for me.

**PONIES 24-7:** And I am sure this is an easy answer too, your favorite racetrack and why?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Well, that’s not as easy as you think Larry, obviously the Meadowlands because of what it meant to my career, but I did enjoy travelling to different racetracks. The Little Brown Jug with the crowd almost on top of you was special, I enjoyed racing at the Red Mile and anytime I got to travel to Woodbine and Mohawk was great because I felt like I was going home.

### Finally, John discusses Bill.

**PONIES 24-7:** John, you and Bill

have been considered the pioneers of the art of catch driving in harness racing, would you agree?  
**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I don’t know if you could say that we were the pioneers, instead I think it was more a matter of timing, as we came along when catch driving was just starting to expand and we were able to take advantage of this. Before us though, guys like Herve Fillion, Carmine Abbatiello, Buddy Gilmour and George Sholty were doing a lot of catch driving at Yonkers and Roosevelt, probably 15 to 20 years before we even started at the Meadowlands. We arrived at a good time though when more and more trainer/drivers were starting to concentrate on just training, which created additional driving opportunities for both of us.  
**PONIES 24-7:** How competitive did it get between you and Bill on the track?  
**JOHN CAMPBELL:** It was very competitive! Once we both got established and we were one and two back and forth in the driver’s standings for a number of years, there was always competition between us, as we both wanted to have that number one status. Being ‘Number One’ made a big difference on who got ‘named’ on a horse, especially with the stakes horses.  
**PONIES 24-7:** When asked, Bill said that there was always friendly competition between you two when on the track, but at the end of the day, you remained pretty good comrades, is this true?  
**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Absolutely, we went at it pretty hard when we were driving against each other, but we left everything on the track and were good friends off. We socialized a bit as our families knew each other, but the





socializing always stopped when we put our driving silks on and went back to work.

**PONIES 24-7:** What was it with Bill that made him so difficult to drive against?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Billy was a really good horseman and could get along with any type of horse and this is what helped him become a great driver! I believe that great drivers are born and have an innate ability to communicate 'through the lines' and have a sense of timing which gives a horse confidence. Billy possessed these skills and the fact that he had such a good background as a horseman, gave him a major advantage. He also 'read' races well, and knew how to stretch a horse so that it could go further in the mile.

Bottom line, Billy was the 'entire package' and was as good as any driver I ever drove against.

**PONIES 24-7:** How long did it take you to finally realize that Bill had some talent as a driver?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Billy actually arrived at the Meadowlands a little after me. He was only there a short time in 1979 and started to drive more in the Spring of 1980 and I remember that during the last three months of the Meadowlands meet, he was winning a lot of races. I knew then that he was really going to have a great year as he had also established more contacts for new driving opportunities. That's when

Billy really made an impression on me and I knew that he was going to be a driver that we all were going to have to deal with!

**PONIES 24-7:** Both you and Bill are Canadian born, why do you think Canada produces so many top harness drivers?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** With so many of us, we grew up in rural areas and around horses which certainly gave us a tremendous education, and probably an edge. This



included myself, Billy, Herve Filion, Ronnie and Keith Waples, actually all the Canadian born drivers. We were born with the advantage of being introduced to horses at a young age and I think that for this reason we were able to drive at a top level on a regular basis.

**PONIES 24-7:** John, in your opinion was Bill better with a horse that raced on the front end, or off the pace?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Yes!

**PONIES 24-7:** Which one?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** That's what made him great, it didn't really

matter and this made him a 'great' driver as he could win from anywhere! Billy didn't try to make his style of driving fit the horse, instead he made whatever worked for the horse, work for him.

**PONIES 24-7:** Would you say that Bill was a very 'low key' individual and this was reflected in his driving skills?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** I think he was a lot like me, wanting to be at an 'even keel', whether things were going good or bad. Driving horses is like any business, sometimes it is good but if it goes the other way, then you need to be able to handle the emotion. I believe that we both were able to control our emotions, no matter how things were going. Off the track though, Billy was pretty 'low key', on the track, well that was a different story as that's when his competitive juices

started to flow.

**PONIES 24-7:** John, rank Bill as a driver, would he be one of the best ever?

**JOHN CAMPBELL:** Absolutely, his body of work when he was at the top of his game was second to none, so he has to be considered one of the best ever!

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