

# PONIES 24-7

VOLUME 8/ISSUE 3/2022  
\$2.95 CDN

## Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre

At Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre, The Sun Never Sets!

## Jim Lawson

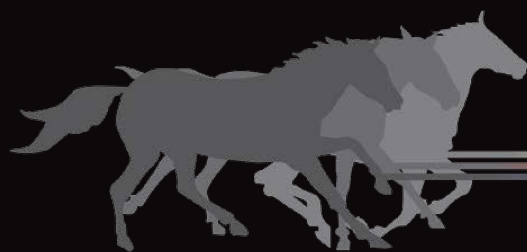
Woodbine's CEO Has His Eye  
On Another Eventful Stakes Season  
At The Two Tracks

## The Racer's Edge

The Handicapping Primer  
Continues

## Ellis Starr

Ellis Starr, the 'UBERCAPPER',  
National Racing Analyst for  
Equibase



# PONIES 24-7

HORSE RACING LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE



# TIOGA DOWNS LIVE HARNESS RACING RETURNS - 2022

FEATURING

## A DAY OF CHAMPIONS!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 • POST TIME 1PM & 6:15PM

TIOGA DOWNS LIVE RACING SCHEDULE 2022! 59 DATES OF LIVE RACING! **OPENING DAY SATURDAY MAY 7 • POST TIME 5PM**

PENDING REGULATORY APPROVAL

1:00PM 5:00PM 1:00 & 6:15 PM 6:15PM

MAY 10						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE 9						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JULY 12						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30

AUGUST 11						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

SEPTEMBER 10						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10  
**A DAY OF CHAMPIONS**  
**\$1.6 MILLION DOLLARS**  
**IN PURSES!**

### NY SIRE STAKES HIGHLIGHTS!

MAY 29 - 3-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT JUNE 26 - 2-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

JULY 15 - 2-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE JULY 24 - 3-YEAR-OLD FILLY PACE

AUGUST 13 - 2-YEAR-OLD COLT TROT AUGUST 21 - 3-YEAR-OLD COLT PACE

AUGUST 28 - 2-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT SEPTEMBER 3 - 3-YEAR-OLD FILLY TROT

**AUGUST 28TH \$500,000 EMPIRE BREEDERS CLASSIC FINALS**

**3-YEAR-OLD COLT & FILLY PACE**

**TIOGA DOWNS**  
RACING

Complete Stakes & Race Information available at [www.tiogadowns.com](http://www.tiogadowns.com) and [www.vernondowns.com](http://www.vernondowns.com) Text 'MEADOWLANDS' to 84700 for important Race Office info.



MUST BE 21+. GAMBLING PROBLEM? CALL (877-8-HOPENY) OR TEXT HOPENY (467369). STANDARD RATES MAY APPLY. TO OPT OUT, RETURN TO SENDER OR EMAIL [INFO@TIOGADOWNS.COM](mailto:INFO@TIOGADOWNS.COM). SCAN THE QR CODE TO TALK WITH SOMEONE NOW ABOUT YOUR GAMBLING.

Sponsored by Woodbine, Woodbine Mohawk Park, Ontario Racing and Rocket Ship Racing

# PONIES<sup>24-7</sup> THE RADIO MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE TO

**105.9**  
*The Region*

**SATURDAYS 8:00AM - 9:00AM (ET)**

Hosted by Jim Lang and  
Ponies 24-7 Publisher, Larry Simpson

**STREAMING LIVE AT 1059THEREGION.COM**  
**TUNE IN, OR AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD**

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



# AT THE POST



## WELCOME BACK!

Welcome back to PONIES 24-7 and our third issue of 2022. Yes, it's hard to fathom that when I was writing the 'AT THE POST' for last issue, there was snow on the ground, courtesy of some freaky mid-April snow storms, just part of a Winter season that just never really wanted to leave. Well today as I write this and we prepare to release this issue shortly, there's far from snow on the ground, in fact today there is a heat warning in place, with temperatures in the mid to high 30's, that's Celcius for our American readers.

With the good weather now in place and combined with the fact that COVID seems to be in the rear-view mirror now-fingers crossed- the horse racing industry is pretty much at full throttle, with most of the North American racetracks either racing, or about to start.

This edition of PONIES 24-7, features a Cover Story that I believe you will enjoy, when we speak with Lynne O'Brien, Executive Director of SUNRISE Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre, who after wrestling with the effects of COVID the past two years, are now able to celebrate their 40th Anniversary at their Puslinch, Ontario riding stable. Their therapeutic programs have brought smiles to everyone over these years, and now that their programs are back to normal so to speak, SUNRISE will continue to work at developing the full potential of children and adults with special needs through their Therapeutic Riding programs. Also in

this magazine, well in April Woodbine opened for their 2022 Thoroughbred racing season and CEO Jim Lawson had an exclusive interview with yours truly in this issue of PONIES 24-7. I urge you to check it out as we covered quite a few topics of interest to horse racing followers everywhere, including an update on Sports Betting and the role that Woodbine will play moving forward. Finally in our new regular 'PLAY IT AGAIN...' feature, which are segments of interviews previously heard on our radio show, 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE', we speak with Ellis Starr, the 'UBERCAPPER' and National Racing Analyst for Equibase and a regular handicapping contributor to Woodbine who recently penned an article on turf racing at the Toronto racetrack.

Enjoy this issue of PONIES 24-7 and if you want more 'PONIES', then once again, don't forget to tune in Saturday mornings to 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE' on the FM channel, 105.9 The Region and live streamed at 1059therregion.com. It's now 60 minutes of action-packed interviews, handicapping selections and informative content for racing fans everywhere and it all starts at 8:00 am ET. You will be glad you did!

Until next time,

Larry Simpson  
theponies247experience@gmail.com



### ABOUT THE COVER

40 Years of SUNRISE Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre is celebrated this year at their Puslinch Riding Stable.

## 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

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3  
JUNE 2022

PUBLISHER & EDITOR  
LARRY SIMPSON

ONLINE EDITOR  
KELLY SIMPSON

ART DESIGN  
MICHELLE SANTO

PONIES 24-7 Magazine is published by PONIES 24-7 Inc., and distributed bi-monthly across North America to racing fans, racetracks, racing associations equine supporters and those devoted to the love of horseracing. The contents are published as a matter of news, information and entertainment only and reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited.

FIND US HERE!



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



06 Sunrise Therapeutic  
At Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre, The Sun Never Sets!

22 Ellis Starr  
Ellis Starr, the 'UBERCAPPER', National Racing Analyst for Equibase



14 Jim Lawson  
Woodbine's CEO Reflects On Recent Business At Woodbine And Woodbine Mohawk Park

26 The Racer's Edge  
Another Handicapping Primer



# At Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre, The Sun Never Sets!

Developing The Full Potential Of Children And Adults With Special Needs, Through Horses, Riding And Farm Related And Social Activities.

By Larry Simpson

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of SUNRISE, a nationally accredited Therapeutic Riding Centre located in Puslinch, Ontario, just a stones throw away from nearby Guelph. Situated on a 102-acre farm home that has been the Centre's location since 1996, over these past four decades SUNRISE has provided opportunities that serves the vulnerable population that call SUNRISE home and have taken their Therapeutic Riding programs to new levels for children and adults with Special Needs.

Lynne O'Brien is Executive Director of SUNRISE and recently Larry Simpson had the opportunity to visit the Centre as they prepared for their annual Open House, 'Celebrate Sunrise' on June 26th and to meet up with Lynne and find out more about this 'hidden gem' in Puslinch.

**PONIES 24-7:** Lynne, let's talk first about the history of SUNRISE and the story behind its beginnings?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Well, this is our 40th Anniversary Larry, so it all started in 1982 and was founded by Ann Caine, who is still heavily involved here at SUNRISE as the Board President. Ann actually started SUNRISE after her husband had passed away from Cancer; the two of them and their four children

had come from England and actually had only been here for a short time, when her husband became quite ill and eventually passed. At the time, Ann and her husband owned their own horses and she saw the comfort that the horses brought her children after their father's passing and although Therapeutic Riding did exist when Ann was in England, it was still in its infancy here in Ontario. There really wasn't any Therapeutic Riding being offered back then in the Guelph area, so with her daughter, Ann opened SUNRISE and also CANTRA, which is our Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association and our governing body responsible for setting out the standards for medical, safety and Instructor certification here in Canada. Originally, Sunrise was located at several local stables, renting or leasing their premises as we needed them and actually for a long time we were at Guelph Lake, but it was really when we moved here to Puslinch in 1996, that the game changed so to speak, as we now had an indoor arena. SUNRISE could operate year-round and this helped our program to surge forward and grow and eventually led to the addition of other Therapeutic Riding programs. Also, it was great to be part of a community now and not constantly moving around to different locations like before.

**PONIES 24-7:** What was the overall goal for the Centre originally?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** To establish a Therapeutic Riding program for adults and children with Special Needs, physical and cognitive.

**PONIES 24-7:** Maybe for our readers Lynne, you can talk about the program itself, how many participants take part and what is their experience like?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** In regular times as obviously we were much quieter during COVID, we would have around 110 riders who would come through the facility at some time, six days a week, daytime and evening. This includes individuals that come here with their family, school groups that are forwarded to us through the School Board and others that are referred from agencies. It's a complete 'therapeutic experience', that also includes physical therapy which benefits the muscles and the core strength. With kids with cognitive issues, there's the therapy of working with their horse every

week, eventually learning the different parts of the horse and also the names of certain items that are related to riding. We also set up special games for the kids in the arena, to help them to stretch cognitively and establish a firm foundation in their learning. There's a whole myriad of benefits that comes with riding a horse for an hour and we do structure it as a riding lesson, as they are being taught to ride, but there are many therapeutic benefits included with the 'experience'. I should mention too, that when any rider comes into SUNRISE, they are assessed at first either by an Occupational Therapist or a Physical Therapist, along with our Instructors and this helps in setting their peak goals. Also, all of our Instructors are Certified through Equine Canada and CANTRA and are specially trained to work with kids and adults with Special Needs.

**PONIES 24-7:** That was actually my next question, whether your Instructors are specifically trained for the job they do at SUNRISE?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Yes they go

through special training and there are actually different levels of riding certification, the first is the BI and the BI2, that allows them to work with an individual rider or have a maximum of two riders in their lesson. There is also the II, which is the Intermediate, which does allow them to teach a group of four and then there is the SI, which is the Seniors Level, meaning that they can plan or run a program.

**PONIES 24-7:** Lynne, let's talk now about some of the special programs that you offer at SUNRISE and especially one that involves a horse by the name of 'Jack'. Tell me more about 'Jack'.

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** We were contacted around four years ago by Jack's owners, as he was actually being groomed for a life on the Standardbred racetrack, but one thing led to another and Jack was not able to continue training for the racetrack. His owners wanted to place him in a good home at the time and although we often get calls like this, it doesn't always work out as the horse needs to have a certain personality in order to do the work







that we require. But we met Jack and he stayed for his trial which I believe was about a month and a half and we pretty much knew right away that he was going to be a good fit for our program. He actually came with this little trick of unzipping people's coat pockets , because his trainer used to feed him peppermints .

PONIES 24-7: LOL, that's an old trick!

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:**Yes but we didn't know that at the time, (Laughs), but it was so great to see our riders react to that kind of interaction of the horse. Jack was just so very responsive to our riders right away and for some of our kids that have Autism and are very within themselves, he would help bring them out of this shell. He would nudge them or encourage them in his own way during their lesson, so we knew right away that Jack was going to be a great fit and he has been and he has a very special place here at SUNRISE.

**PONIES 24-7:** And he shares a very special bond with one individual at SUNRISE, correct?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Yes he does, the rider you met this morning, Nick, has been riding Jack for some time now and Nick has a complex medical and therapeutic background, which has made Jack a really good fit for him . The two of them work well together and you can see when Nick arrives , that he is ready to ride and not at all nervous now and this has been going on for two years. There are several other riders that Jack works with and it is just this bond between horse and rider that makes

the therapy work. If it wasn't for this bond, then the therapists would not be able to do their work.

**PONIES 24-7:** You have over 20 horses here at SUNRISE and they are all sponsored and Jack has a sponsor that many of our readers would know, correct?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Yes, Woodbine CARES is sponsoring Jack this year, as they donated \$5,000 which pays for his feed, his bedding, his paddock which he does share with two other horses and his routine veterinary expenses for a one- year period. SUNRISE is a very small charity with a small operating budget and we have a high standard of care that we expect for our horses and the community support that we are receiving from Woodbine and our other sponsors, means the world to us!

**PONIES 24-7:** Are all the horses at SUNRISE sponsored like Jack?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Yes, for the most part, I would say that 85 to 90% are and the goal is to have them all sponsored and we are continuously working on this.

**PONIES 24-7:** When we interviewed you on our 'Ponies 24-7', THE RADIO MAGAZINE' Show a couple of months back, we talked about SUNRISE celebrating their 40th Anniversary this year, a feat that is basically unheard of from a small not-for-profit, why has SUNRISE been so successful?



# WAGER ON LIVE RACING WITH A HPIbet ACCOUNT

# GET \$100\*

PLUS YOUR FIRST BET IS ON US!†



- Ability to Bet online or onsite, any time
- FREE to watch up to 4 live streams simultaneously
- Bet on over 500 tracks from around the world
- Receive HPIbet Rewards and much more!

LIVE RACING.  
HAPPENING NOW AT  
HPIbet.com



JOIN FOR FREE TODAY!



\*Visit HPIbet.com and click Promotions to view full terms and conditions. Know when to take the reins. ResponsibleGambling.org



**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** When I started in Therapeutic Riding some decades back, you very rarely met a person who had an understanding of what it was about. Back then, the medical community also knew very little about Therapeutic Riding, but now, family physicians often refer their appropriate patients to our therapy, which has only really happened, I'm going to say the past 10 years. I believe that SUNRISE and its success just gradually grew as the type of therapy became better known and more and more people with disabilities would spread the word on the success of that human/animal bond. Also, therapy animals grew in many ways, therapy dogs in particular, but having the medical community recognize Therapeutic Riding, has really been a great assistance. I might add too, that there has been a major explosion in the mental health field of equine therapy as well, where registered therapists will work with the client and the horse in the barn and do their counselling. No riding is involved, instead it's working with the horse on the ground and what is interesting is that these therapists will tell us that they have made many inroads with this kind of therapy and more so than sitting in their clinical offices. The horse is the difference maker and such a powerful motivator!

**PONIES 24-7:** How did you get involved with SUNRISE, Lynne?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** I started with SUNRISE in 1992 after leaving Toronto and having worked for the Royal Ontario Museum for seven years. I moved to Rockwood and as it happened SUNRISE was looking for a Special Events Coordinator, plus someone to look after their volunteers. At that time, they were leasing property and a stable at Guelph Lake and I met with them, we tried it and just went

from there. For a while, I was at CANTRA, which is our National Association and is based in Guelph, but in 2004 SUNRISE invited me to come back here and I became the Volunteer Manager, then the Operations Manager and finally the Executive Director. It has been such a privilege Larry, to watch the program grow to where it is at now and to work with all of the riders, families and volunteers that have come through the doors throughout the years. Being a small grass roots organization really allows you to get more involved and everyone here including the volunteers feel that they are contributing to a cause and an important part of the picture.

**PONIES 24-7:** Speaking of the cause, a major part of its continued success is securing donations, what is planned for Sunrise as far as special events this year, especially with COVID hopefully now in the rear view mirror?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Fundraising is very important to SUNRISE, as we really don't receive any regular funding from the government. Sometimes we may receive a Trillium Grant when we apply and during the Summer we collect the Summer Jobs Grant from the Federal Government, making ongoing fundraising a huge part of what we do here. Traditionally, we always had our Gala Event in June, which unfortunately shut down during COVID and was really missed, but it's coming back this June 26th and just in time for our 40th Anniversary celebrations. We are calling it 'Celebrate Sunrise' and normally the Musical Ride that our riders put on is in-person, but this year, because we still weren't sure of COVID, we taped 'the Ride' and there will be screens set up in the arena for our visitors to watch. There will also be a great meal by local chefs, a silent auction and a live

auction conducted by Robert Milburn who is not only our local auto dealer, but a fabulous auctioneer as well. Before COVID, this event raised \$80,000 every year, so to be honest, we are not really sure what to expect this year but are very happy to welcome everybody back and let them get a feel for what we are doing here at SUNRISE.

**PONIES 24-7:** Talk about one of your other horses Cadbury.

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Cadbury has been with our program a little longer than Jack, but he is still new to us. Again, we received a phone call one day as his owner just wasn't able to keep Cadbury any more and she wanted him to go to a good home. We did the trial process and like Jack, we knew almost immediately that Cadbury was going to be special too. Cadbury also arrived at the same time that we were developing a new program, as we had realized that with COVID, much of our Therapeutic Riding program was going to be curtailed. With most of our riders, we have to 'side walk' and touch them and also support them closely and at the beginning of COVID we really didn't think that we would be able to do this safely. Our Therapeutic Riding was shelved, but we came up with an idea of Equine Assisted Learning which is working with the horses on the ground and doing some various fun activities with them. Cadbury arrived right at the time that this plan was in place and we got him involved and he became a very good fit. Cadbury was really willing to work through those exercises with people and at the same time we were also training our staff to learn EAL and to facilitate it properly, so you could say that he was the horse that helped to train the staff. (Laughs) Now Cadbury is back in Therapeutic Riding lessons as well and remains a very important part of our program for sure.



**PONIES 24-7:** How many participants are currently taking part in your programs?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** In Therapeutic Riding alone there are close to 110 riders that come through every week to have their therapy lesson and then in our camp that runs through July and August, we have 50 kids on the property just for camp each day from Monday to Friday. Equine Assisted Learning participation is up and down. This past Fall we maybe had 35 different people, but one special thing that is happening now in EAL and Cadbury will probably play a significant role in this, is that we are now working with a local Community Centre in Guelph that services financially marginalized families. We received a Grant for these kids to participate in the EAL program and there's currently 30 of them between the ages of 12 to 16. These are kids that are very 'at risk' and their staff tries to assist them in finding their way with leadership skills and working at building their confidence, in order to support them for success. We are going to bring them to SUNRISE for a six-week EAL program and have them work with the horses on the ground, as none of these kids are riders or have disabilities that they need Therapeutic Riding, but they are still going to enjoy that bond by working with the horse. It's wonderful to see 'Youth at Risk' come here, especially the boys, as they are pretty tough at first and they don't want anything to do with horses, but quite often though and usually by their second visit, you see them petting the horse and whispering in its ear. The

horse is the secret ingredient, as they just seem to know that they are working with that special population and they make that magical connection!

**PONIES 24-7:** What do you think creates the special connection between the horse and human?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** I think that the horse is intuitive and many are responsive and they want to interact with a human. You can bond with a horse, much like a therapy dog I suppose, but the horse doesn't have to be controlled like a therapy dog who isn't meant to move during the interaction. A horse wants to form a bond with the rider and it's funny, but I can still remember one of our staff saying to me that Jack will always take good care of his riders and you know, it's true.

**PONIES 24-7:** I did meet some of the parents today and I noticed that you have a very strong bond with them as well, correct?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** We look at SUNRISE as a community and the family is part of that. They come in every week and some of them we have known for years and years, in fact our oldest rider Margaret Yaskovich started out at the Guelph Lake farm and she is in her fifties now! We are a community, with the riders and the young people downstairs in the arena, while the parents are in our viewing lounge upstairs bonding and getting to know each other. And the parents of the kids with disabilities, well you can usually find them supporting each other. It's not an easy road for some of these parents though, it's actually a struggle, but they soon get to know each other and there's a bond created that lasts many years. I would say that 75% of our riders stay with us for a significant length of time, as do our horses!

**PONIES 24-7:** How do the parents find out about SUNRISE?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** The medical community is really helping us with getting the word out now and we also make sure that all of the therapy agencies that deal with kids with disabilities, know about SUNRISE. We also spend many hours self-promoting and educating, since we don't receive any government funding.

**PONIES 24-7:** What is the reason for not receiving government funding?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** It's just not recognized as a medical procedure Larry, although we do have a medical committee that oversees our work here and



includes a family physician and other therapists like OT's, ET's, speech language and they are a continual resource for us. We are not recognized as a medical practice, rather, we are considered a therapeutic practice, but who knows what the future will hold. I would say though, that the health benefit providers, the Insurance Companies, seem to be a little more open now in considering Therapeutic Riding, but unfortunately the parents still cannot put the costs through their Insurance programs at work. I am receiving more and more calls though from Insurance Companies trying to find a way to include us, so you never know, coverage for Therapeutic Riding may arrive sooner than later, which would certainly be a great help to the parents.

**PONIES 24-7:** Lynne, wrapping up, do you have any goals going forward for SUNRISE this year?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Obviously, we would like to get back to normal with our events. This Summer we will have a full camp, as last year we were allowed to host only a small one and of course, having our June event back again will certainly help with our fundraising efforts. We have our EAL program but we also have an EFW which is strictly mental health counselling and we hope to get it up and running as we were just in the process of setting that program up when COVID hit. I wouldn't be surprised if Jack would be involved in that program as well as with EFW and mental health counselling, the horse reacting and responding to the person having the counselling, is the key to the entire session. However honestly, our very long term goal and dream which is still just in its infancy stages Larry, is a Capital Campaign to have a residential building containing 14 apartments for people who would make their homes here, adults with special needs, that enjoy working on the farm and also being involved with horses. We have submitted the architectural and site plans to Puslinch Township and step by step it is moving forward!

**PONIES 24-7:** Would the plan be for the residents to not only work with the horses but also participate in a full farming environment and grow crops as well?

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** Absolutely, right now our Life Skills program, which I haven't even mentioned about, is for adults and runs out of the house three days a week. These adults don't ride, but they do work with the horses and also with our Raised Garden, where they do grow vegetables that are eventually sold during growing season. That's a program we would really like to grow, (pardon the pun) and we hope that by the Fall we can get this program up to four days a week. We have many families calling us and looking for a place for their adult children, as it is very difficult, as a young person with Special Needs can go to High School until their 21, but then after that, well the next steps are not really that clear. But having a Life Skills program here at SUNRISE, for people that like a farm environment or animals, becomes a perfect fit and these young people can contribute so much during the day, meet some friends and also be part of a social circle, which is so very important now.

**PONIES 24-7:** This adult farm that you have outlined Lynne, how many years will it take to reach fruition? (pardon another pun)

**LYNNE O'BRIEN:** We have a group of people that have been heading up this project for the past five years as initiatives like rezoning and the site plan takes so much time to prepare. Some fundraising for the project has already started and we have heard that they may be breaking ground in two to three years, which is pretty exciting.





## Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre

Help us celebrate our 40th Anniversary Year!

**Celebrate Sunrise!**  
Sunday June 26  
Chefs Emily Richards & Connie Rasso  
Auctioneer Robert Milburn - Milburn's Auto Sales & Service

**Capital Golf Tournament**  
Thursday September 15

**Sunrise Open House**  
Sunday September 25

**Follow us!**  
@sunrisetherapeutic





For more info contact lynne@sunrise-therapeutic.ca or (519) 837-0558 ext.31



# WORLD CLASS RACING HEATS UP

**JULY 2**  
\$175,000 Roll With Joe  
\$175,000 Perfect Sting  
\$175,000 Crawford Farms  
\$175,000 Crawford Farms

**JULY 9**  
Meadowlands Pace Eliminations  
\$250,000 Open Pace & Open Trot Graduate Finals  
\$125,000 Mare Pace & Mare Trot Graduate Finals

**JULY 16**  
Over \$2.5 million in stakes including the  
\$700,000 Meadowlands Pace

**JULY 22**  
NJ Sire Stakes 2 Year Old Finals

**JULY 30**  
Hamletonian and Hamletonian Oaks Eliminations

**AUGUST 6**  
Hambletonian Day  
Over \$3 million in stakes races

JULY						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

AUGUST						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

SEPTEMBER						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

NOVEMBER						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

■ First Post 6:20 p.m. ■ First Post 12 Noon



# Jim Lawson

## Woodbine's CEO Reflects On Recent Business At Woodbine And Woodbine Mohawk Park

| By Larry Simpson

For Woodbine CEO Jim Lawson, the 2022 horse racing season couldn't come fast enough, especially after the past two years where racing was somewhat stymied, the victim of COVID. This past April, Woodbine opened for their 133 day Thoroughbred racing season, complete with a lucrative stakes schedule that offered more than \$16.9 Million in purses., 37 Graded events and two \$1 Million classic events, The Queen's Plate on August 21st and the Grade 1 Ricoh Woodbine Mile on September 17th. Not to be outdone, on the Standardbred side, Woodbine Mohawk Park, recently hosted the \$1 Million Pepsi North America Cup which was back in its traditional June slot and a potpourri of major stakes events planned over the Summer and Fall, including the Mohawk Million on September 24th and two nights of Breeders Crown racing on October 28th and 29th.

Recently Larry Simpson sat down with Jim where the subject was, no surprise, horse racing, of both the Thoroughbred and Standardbred variety and the following interview transpired.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim let's talk first about the current meets at Woodbine and Woodbine Mohawk Park. Obviously with Woodbine Mohawk Park you may have lost some race days because of Winter weather and in the early part of the Woodbine meet, there was an issue of short fields, correct?

**JIM LAWSON:** Well Larry it feels now that we are starting to emerge from the short fields at Woodbine and to be honest, they were also somewhat of a problem for us this Winter on the Standardbred side as well. This year we offered the 'Pop Up' Series which helped bring some horses to Woodbine Mohawk Park from other tracks, but really, there is no question that

this industry, including Ontario, has a horse supply problem. We are definitely feeling it at Woodbine now and in my opinion we are on an island up here much like California and It's hard to recruit horses. We have difficulty attracting horses across the Border, the primary reason being a labour shortage and the inability of the US trainers to get their help across the Border. There's other issues contributing to the problem of horse shortage and despite a lot of effort and investment on our part, we just haven't been able to attract the horses that we were hoping for at Woodbine. Also, we have lost far too many horses that were shipped up here and claimed and then sent to Fort Erie to race and this is not healthy for Woodbine, or the industry in general, which I believe needs to be addressed. Woodbine is the engine that drives the wagering in the province and has a horse shortage issue and we need to do everything we can to help the industry by protecting the horse population at Woodbine. We were millions of dollars off budget after a month of racing at Woodbine Thoroughbreds this year, which is directly and almost solely attributable to short fields and I might add too, quite frankly Larry, there was also less races. I can't remember ever running seven races on a day's race card, but that became somewhat of the norm on some of our early Thursday and Friday cards.

**PONIES 24-7:** But short fields are a problem all over North America, right?

**JIM LAWSON:** Absolutely, it's definitely a North American issue, but it is felt more in places like California and here in Ontario. As I indicated earlier, it's like we are on an island here and it's just very difficult to get horses across the Border to race at Woodbine.

**PONIES 24-7:** Turf racing opened up at Woodbine

recently, should that not help field size going forward?

**JIM LAWSON:** Yes, there was some 'pent up' demand by trainers and owners who were waiting to race their horses on the turf and so far the races have filled well. As you know Larry, our wagering is very strong on the turf, last year for example, races on the Inner Turf averaged \$459,000 and on the E.P. Taylor, the average was \$577,000. So, that's big numbers and our wagering is certainly helped when we race on the grass. I'm very hopeful that the turf racing will continue to help us get through what I would call a very difficult situation, probably the worst I have seen since I have been at Woodbine and I have been here in different roles since 2008. Our horse population is down and it's not from lack of trying, we've added incentives to attract new trainers and owners, but that Border is a bigger barrier than what you might expect!

**PONIES 24-7:** But you have had horses race so far at



Photo by Michael Burns





Photo courtesy of Ontario Racing

Woodbine from the barns of Wesley Ward and even Brad Cox, so you could say that people on the other side of the Border obviously know about Woodbine.

**JIM LAWSON:** No question, our brand is very good and most of our wagering growth has been in the US. Our own trainers here have US based owners that support us and they help to improve our quality of racing. We need to continue growing our brand and sell the quality of our facilities as they are second to none and that includes our turf courses and training facilities. Also, we have a reputation for integrity and being a well-run organization and our hospitality facilities are some of the finest available. Martha Wakely and the entire hospitality team under Jorge Soares do a great job of looking after our owners, but we also need to attract new owners and look after our Ontario breeders, as Woodbine will not survive without a strong Ontario breeding industry supporting us.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, you are almost into the heart of the Woodbine stakes schedule including the Queen's Plate and the Ricoh Woodbine Mile, do you think that this could help in attracting some new fans and possibly even new owners?

**JIM LAWSON:** Certainly, as we are about to embark on a nice build up to the Queen's Plate which is on August 21st this year, that includes the Marine Stakes on July 2nd and of course the Plate Trial on July 24th. And we shouldn't forget about the Woodbine Oaks on July 24th, as recently this race has also become a major prep for the Queen's Plate. There's plenty of stakes races over the Summer too, including the 'Ladies of the Lawn' Series that includes the Dance Smartly, the Canadian Stakes and the E.P.Taylor. Woodbine has two premier turf courses and we are putting much of our marketing focus on both of them. We have also put more emphasis this year on the Natalma and

the Summer Stakes and promoting them as the two premier two-year-old events in North America, leading up to the Breeders' Cup. Both have larger purses and their Grade I status is well deserved. It is very exciting where we are at with our brand now as people know about Woodbine, however more than anything else, our biggest issue as we talked about earlier, is lack of horses and hopefully with the great job that our Racing Department does, we will manage our way through and utilize our horse population to the best of our abilities.

**PONIES 24-7:** Hopefully moving forward, you will have full attendance for races like the Queen's Plate and the Ricoh Woodbine Mile with COVID remaining in the past.

**JIM LAWSON:** Absolutely, I am very excited about the Queen's Plate this year, as we are full speed ahead on planning a great event day. Woodbine's event calendar is going to be great this racing season, with Queen's Plate Day the Gold Standard.

**PONIES 24-7:** Let's talk some about Woodbine Mohawk Park now Jim, as you alluded to earlier there was an issue with field sizes and the Winter weather probably didn't help this, correct?

**JIM LAWSON:** Honestly, we struggled during the Winter and our projection is that we are going to struggle again next year. Trainers do leave to 'sunnier climes' and to tracks South of the Border, but I feel that we are getting back to normal now. The wagering has been very good but how many times have I said to you Larry, that wagering depends on field size, so we need those field sizes back. Woodbine Mohawk Park is doing well though, as an example, just a couple of weeks back we had a \$65,000 carryover on the Late Pick 5 on May 28th and it turned into \$400,000 of new money on the Early Pick 5 on May 30th. I don't

# THE EASIEST WAY TO GET IN THE RACE



**FREE \$30\*** **USE PROMO CODE GET30**



DOWNLOAD THE APP TODAY

**DarkHorseBets.com**

\*Visit DarkHorseBets.com for terms and conditions. Know When To Take The Reins. ResponsibleGambling.org





Photo by Michael Burns

think that there's any question that our Early Pick 5 is probably the leading bet in North America right now, at least on the Standardbred side, as we are topping well over \$100,000 a night on it. We are doing well and our brand remains good and with the number of race nights (223) and the quality of our horses and drivers, I am certain that we are one of the top Standardbred tracks now in North America.

**PONIES 24-7:** The Pepsi North America Cup was back with a June date this year and on September 24th, Woodbine Mohawk Park hosts the Mohawk Million and then in October, you have the Breeders Crown. That's quite a menu of top-class stakes events this year at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

**JIM LAWSON:** When I think about the Mohawk Million, I also have to mention about the Metro Pace, which is scheduled on the same night. It will be a 'Star's of the Future' night and we are working hard at attracting all of the top two-year-olds from the big stables to compete then. We have had great success with the Mohawk Million and a major shout out should go to Bill McLinchey, Jessica Buckley and our Racing Department for selling the slots again and also thanks to the owners who realize how important this event is to the Standardbred industry. The Mohawk Million has been a great initiative not only for the industry, but also for growing the Mohawk brand. In October, we will be hosting the Breeders Crown again this year and fingers crossed, with all of the fans in attendance, the two nights will be the 'icing on the cake' on a spectacular year of racing at Woodbine Mohawk Park, which began with the Pepsi North America Cup in June.

**PONIES 24-7:** Jim, you mentioned about 'Star's of the Future' night on the Standardbred side and then earlier Woodbine's Natalma and the Summer being preps for the Breeders' Cup. In most cases, these races include representatives of our Sires Stakes Programs and their racing success is a great way in attracting American buyers to buy Canadian or Ontario at our Yearling Sales, would you agree?

**JIM LAWSON:** I do and you are correct as our Ontario/Canadian-breds are proving day in and day out that they can compete against anyone. There's no question that our Ontario-sired program and bonuses continues to remain strong and our programs are probably as good as any other jurisdiction out there and they continue to maintain our industry. But I believe what we need to do, is a better job at getting more buyers up here to create more competition for those yearlings. If you have a decent Ontario-sired horse you are going to make a lot of money at Woodbine Racetrack and the Grassroots

and Gold Divisions offered on the Standardbred side can be pretty lucrative as well.

**PONIES 24-7:** Before we move on to the status of Sports Betting here in the province, I wanted to ask you about the recent post time changes that took place this week at Woodbine for the Thursday and Friday racing cards. Thursday's have moved now from 1:10 p.m. to 5:05 p.m. and Fridays have been changed from 4:50 p.m. to 1:10 p.m. What was the reasoning behind these changes?

**JIM LAWSON:** It mostly stemmed from our wagering department analyzing what other tracks were doing, for example, when was New York racing to complement our feed. We believe that our betting handle will be better on Friday afternoons and Thursday matinees in conjunction with other tracks, primarily the New York circuit. Another factor Larry, is that one of our 'duties' in this province is to promote horse racing and to expose a new audience and we have just invested millions of dollars in the new Stella Artois Terrace, which will seat approximately 300 people. I'm going to say that it will be the most beautiful patio overlooking the city and by racing Twilight on Thursdays, we are going to attract a bigger crowd and turn Thursday night racing into a big deal. With the millions of dollars that we have invested into the Terrace, that was certainly part of the conversation. The driving factor though is the economics and how Woodbine complements the wagering schedule of the other racetracks and working in conjunction with them. Certainly, another factor is that we want to expose horse racing to a whole new group of fans and we are going to do that by filling up the Stella Artois Terrace every Thursday night this Summer. Closer to home, I mentioned earlier that we needed to be able to fit into other racetrack's wagering menu and with this being said, we have a large crossover of bettors who play both our Thoroughbred and Standardbred products, which was another reason why we moved to a 1:10 p.m. start on Friday. Friday evenings are one of our bigger betting nights at Woodbine Mohawk Park and the late Woodbine post time was actually hurting our handle. It's a complicated puzzle though and needs a lot of hard work by our Wagering Department, however I do think though that the Stella Artois Terrace could become a real 'go to' destination this Summer!

**PONIES 24-7:** One question that I have been asked quite a few times is why did you get away from Wednesday night racing at Woodbine?

**JIM LAWSON:** It was simply wagering numbers. Woodbine just wasn't doing very well on Wednesday nights and our numbers have shown to be better on

Thursdays. You never say never, but right now we are very comfortable in moving to Thursday nights. One last thing I will say on this too, is that this industry stands still far too often and from the beginning when I took over as CEO in 2015, I have encouraged our people to be 'nimble' and to try new things and to consistently try. If you get it wrong, you get it wrong and then you need to correct the mistakes, but I believe that you are only going to make progress in this industry if you try and push for change. This is an industry that has sat on its hands far too long, but we all need to be 'nimble' and attempt new ideas-whether that means new conditions in our condition book, new stakes races, different starting times, whatever needs to be done, as we can't afford to be complacent. Instead, we have to work hard and try things differently, for if you don't, you will never get better and this is actually the culture that we promote at Woodbine. Can I guarantee that our Thursday nights and Friday afternoons are going to be better than before, or are Thursday nights going to be better than Wednesdays, well we think so based on our analysis and the only way we will know is to give it a try. If we are wrong, we will give everyone involved appropriate notice and switch things back to where they were, but at least we tried!

**PONIES 24-7:** Final topic Jim, what is the status of Sports Betting and how and when will Woodbine play a significant role?

**JIM LAWSON:** We are working Federally with the CPMA, to make sure that our prototype with the Sports Betting Operators that we have been working with, ensures that our content when it gets integrated in the Sports Betting platform, will be seamless to the customer. It needs to be pari-mutuel in order to be in accordance with the Criminal Code and also auditable and traceable as a separate product so that the regulators are satisfied. We are finishing up this exercise now and the trials have gone extremely well with the technology and the integration of our product with the Sports Betting Operators. Under the Criminal Code, as you know Larry, these Operators are not allowed to offer horse racing themselves, but there is nothing prohibiting them from hosting our product as long as it is pari-mutuel and we see these Operators playing a major and much needed role as a marketing arm for horse racing. The poster child recently was the Kentucky Derby, where over a million people in Ontario that have bet on horse racing regularly and illegally on Sports Betting Sites, were up in arms when they couldn't bet on the Kentucky Derby. They were going on to the Sports Betting Sites, that they used to bet horse racing on, like Bet365 for example and they couldn't bet the Kentucky Derby, as Bet365 like





Photo by Michael Burns

the other sites, does not offer pari-mutuel wagering. So, we are currently still working through the process and once we get the final sign off with the CPMA, we will then turn it over to the Ontario government who manages and controls in particular iGaming and I feel very comfortable that once we get the CPMA to regulate our product on to the sites of these Sports Betting Operators, we will be in action this summer. This will mean, that if you do go on to *Bet365*, or a host of other Sports Betting sites, you will be able to bet horse racing and that will be a large boon for the horse racing industry and in particular, Woodbine. Can you imagine all the marketing that could go on with the Queen's Plate? It will be great for our product, the province in terms of tax revenue and for horse racing. I'm frustrated though that it is taking so long, but good things will happen going forward. Hopefully, by the end of July we will be up and running on these Sports Betting sites and by the time the Queen's Plate comes along, we will have all the big names marketing the race.

**PONIES 24-7:** Did you ever believe the process was going to take this long to reach fruition?

**JIM LAWSON:** No not at all! Woodbine Entertainment was at the forefront of discussions about Sports Betting and was largely responsible for shutting down Sports Betting in the Private Members Bill in 2013 and we went along with it this time with the understanding that we would be working with the Sports Betting Operators, as our discussions with many of them had started long before. We had detailed discussions with many of the brand name companies and term sheets in front of us from some of them and our point to the Federal Government who wrote the legislation which

we also helped write when we went public in front of the Justice Committee, was that they (the Operators) can't offer horse racing themselves, so if you pull it out of the legislation, they will be forced to buy it from Woodbine. And that is exactly where we are at today, as this was always the structure and companies like *Bet365*, *FanDuel* and *PointsBet*, all have origins with horse racing companies and they love our product and are desperate to offer it. They were all going to make deals with us and somehow this was all forgotten and April 4th came along and we weren't part of the mix. I never could have contemplated this, given the major role that Woodbine Entertainment played as the only legal private Sports Betting Operator in the country. Now Sports Betting is legalized and all of these Operators can't offer our pari mutuel product. It's not right and I'm frustrated that we were delayed, but it will be worth waiting for and obviously great for the horse racing industry.

**PONIES 24-7:** Finally Jim, Woodbine was also working on trying to get Historic Racing approved, has it been pretty much placed on the back burner for now?

**JIM LAWSON:** Yes, unfortunately, listen it would probably take another Criminal Code amendment and there may be a way of operating as an iGaming operator, but we are caught in the gray area between whether Historical Racing is pari-mutuel or not. We believe that we should be able to offer it as a pari-mutuel product, much like they do in many racing jurisdictions in the United States. We have a product that is pari-mutuel like Historical Racing that is presently caught up with a Criminal Code interpretation that pari-mutuel racing is only live racing and really it's actually only a one word amendment, but it is difficult to get the attention of the Federal Government on this matter. We did raise it as part of our presentation of Sports Betting and it was just too much and too complicated. Frankly, what happened is the Private Members Bill that was forging ahead, just didn't contemplate anything like Historical Racing and it was very difficult legally to work it into the Bill. We haven't dropped the idea Larry, as we believe that Historical Racing is important for the industry, but we want to get over this hurdle first and then have discussions about Historical Racing and legalization. But at the same time, we also need to speak about Fixed Odds as there is no question in my mind, again depending on the structure, that Fixed Odds is going to be an important part of horse racing in the decades to come.



*Advocating for the Ontario Horse Racing Industry*

## *Three Breeds. One Vision.*



## **15** Good Reasons to Experience Ontario Horse Racing This Year!

**1** *QUARTER HORSE TRACK*  
*Ajax Downs, Ajax, ON*

**2** *THOROUGHBRED TRACKS*  
*Fort Erie Race Track, Fort Erie, ON | Woodbine Race Track, Toronto, ON*

**12** *STANDARD BRED TRACKS*  
*Clinton Raceway, Clinton, ON | Dresden Raceway, Dresden, ON | Flamboro Downs, Dundas, ON | Georgian Downs, Innisfil, ON | Grand River Raceway, Elora, ON | Hanover Raceway, Hanover, ON | Hiawatha Horse Park & Entertainment Center, Sarnia, ON | Kawartha Downs, Fraserville, ON | Leamington Raceway, Leamington, ON | Rideau Carleton Raceway, Ottawa, ON | The Raceway At Western Fair District, London, ON | Woodbine Mohawk Park, Campbellville, ON*

For information on Race Dates, Post Times, How to Place a Bet and our Horse Racing Ownership 101 Virtual Seminars visit

**ontarioracing.com**



# PLAY IT AGAIN...

Originally Heard On 'Ponies 24-7', THE RADIO MAGAZINE

In Conversation with Jim Lang & Larry Simpson

## ELLIS STARR

Ellis Starr, the 'UBERCAPPER', National Racing Analyst for Equibase

*Note: Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE, currently is the only terrestrial radio show about horse racing in Canada and one of only a handful of shows in the U.S. It airs Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Eastern on 105.9 FM, The Region, and live streamed at 1059theregion.com.*

*Missed a show? Past shows are available as a podcast on 1059theregion.com. As a new magazine feature, we are offering transcripts of pertinent guest interviews, previously heard on 'Ponies 24-7', THE RADIO MAGAZINE.*



**PONIES 24-7:** Ellis welcome to the show, first question for you, what does it take to be an 'UBERCAPPER' and where did the name come from?

**ELLIS STARR:** The name came from a long time ago. I was a Racing Analyst doing some handicapping for several websites and when I wanted to start a website of my own, my son who was a young man at the time said to me 'Why don't you call yourself the UBERCAPPER because that means you are the best?' So that's what I did and I went with it and the name has just stuck for many years since.

**PONIES 24-7:** Where did you acquire the interest in horse racing Ellis?

**ELLIS STARR:** I have been going to the races since I was eight years old and growing up in Southern California. My father and I used to go to tracks like Hollywood Park, Del Mar, Santa Anita, Los Alamitos and also when Hollywood Park had harness racing in the '70's. Later I had a family business and I answered an ad from a company called TrackMaster, which was the first company in the world I believe that provided Past Performances and some enhanced data on the Internet and this was in 1996.

**PONIES 24-7:** A lot of people who hear your story Ellis, are probably saying that they would like to have a job like yours, so what was the tipping point for you where you left a family business and became a full time handicapper?

**ELLIS STARR:** After signing on with TrackMaster, we talked to a lot of racing fans and found out what they wanted and from there we found that the

Photo by Michael Burns



people would not only buy the data, but they would also have questions like 'What would you do?' So from there we decided to not only sell the data but also provide handicapping advice and that's when I made the decision to supply information to the tracks that were interested. But I am blessed right now, as I get to do the Race of the Day at Woodbine and also one for Santa Anita and Keeneland when they are racing and then the regular Equibase Race of the Week. For me, I think it is just deciding what kind of voice that I wanted to provide and not only make selections, but also give people an opportunity to see how someone looks at a race and if the horses prove those factors are good, then we have done our job.

**PONIES 24-7:** Talk about a recent article that you provided, 'The Inside Track on Woodbine Turf Racing', why did you write it and what were trying to accomplish with it?

**ELLIS STARR:** Well it was a ton of fun to start and I obviously look forward to Woodbine's turf racing with the addition of the

Inner Course which is so unique. I wrote the article and I think I came up with some nuggets that people can look forward to when they handicap the turf races at Woodbine. Of course too, the E.P. Taylor turf course is much different to the Inner Course which is narrower and doesn't have the big sweeping turns that you find on the E.P. Taylor. I had some feelings in my head, but it wasn't until I saw the data that I wanted to write the article and share it with people.

**PONIES 24-7:** And to that end you were getting to the minutiae of turf racing as opposed to dirt and Tapeta, but handicapping is different on the three surfaces according to you, correct?

**ELLIS STARR:** Absolutely, no question, I work with a lot of groups around the country and in particular my home tracks at Churchill and Keeneland and I always surprise people when I say that races are run differently on Tapeta, dirt and turf, because the moment horses are breaking from the gate, on almost any race on the main track, they are going to be slowing down. Of course there

are some exceptions as Rich Strike actually sped up in the final eighth when he won the Kentucky Derby last month. With turf racing, I believe that you need a horse that can run at the same pace and then accelerate at the end and that is providing that they do have a place to run, as turf courses are sometimes narrower and clear sailing could be a challenge. But it is something to note for next time if the horses' path got stymied. At Woodbine, what was interesting on the Inner Course is that Posts 1,2, and 3 won 70% of the time and 50% in the money and just random betting on the 1, 2 and 3 in each of the Five Furlong races on the Inner Turf, resulted in a 7% profit. Can you imagine, and I'm not going to recommend this of course, but if you bet \$2 on the 1, 2 and 3 on the Inner Turf Course at 5 Furlongs to win, for every \$100 you bet, you are going to get \$107 back! I don't look at a lot of statistics when I handicap, but results like this certainly opened up my eyes.

**PONIES 24-7:** Ellis describe yourself as a handicapper, are you an angles player and do you have a favorite fall back angle?



**ELLIS STARR:**Well that’s a fantastic question and the answer is yes and no. With every race that I bet, my methodology would be what is it about that race that presents itself. So as an example, I may be looking at a claiming race and the Past Performances of a horse and then surface and distance of a race and other things will just fall into place. In my article for Woodbine, besides talking about the two turf courses, I did try to tie in my normal handicapping philosophy which is looking for a race where the horses’ past races will make it a contender and then deciding whether those races are repeatable today. The goal is to get the contenders down to three or four horses and then look at the odds board to help you decide which one of those horses have the best value.

**PONIES 24-7:** Back in the ‘90’s, how did you know that the handicapping world would just ‘eat up’ your handicapping selections on the web?

**ELLIS STARR:** That’s a very interesting question , honestly I think we just got lucky! I need to go back to 1996 when the average computer user was my age now, but we actually just took a shot and decided to do a selection a day for a racetrack, a couple of paragraphs of information and after a month or two, we had 10,000 hits a day. We actually had no idea that this would happen, as before this, I always thought that some of the people who did selections were really below board. I remember going with my Dad to Santa Anita and we had to leave after the second race as he had to get to work and in the parking lot , there were probably 100 sheets spread out showing their selection for the first race and they ‘nailed it cold’. (Laughs) But with us, we made the decision to be completely up front, and at 12:01 am, the day after the races , we would put everything out there including our selections for free from the previous day. We thought it was quite ethical and it paid off. We wanted to take a shot in the dark and see if people liked the product!

**PONIES 24-7:** What was it that sold you on horse racing, was it that you hit a big winner, or was there an actual horse or race that made you want to become part of the business?

**ELLIS STARR:** That’s also a great question and I am going to say that there are two answers. Going to the racetrack with my dad, I really loved the intellectual challenge. He used to buy a lot of tip sheets, where I would just try to handicap the race and we always had different opinions. But I think what sold me, was the intellectual challenge, where you could take a

contrarian view to the public at large and bet a horse at higher odds and if it won, then you got rewarded. I met the late Dick Mitchell, who wrote two or three books and his first one was called ‘*Modern Investment at the Races*’, and it wasn’t about buying million dollar horses at auction and Dick was the first one who said that the problem with people going to the races was that they were always betting the best horse rather than the best bet. Now when you think about it, with stocks and bonds, you don’t necessarily bet the most likely one, instead you buy the one with the most up-side. So that is what really got me interested, in addition to all the fun handicapping and sharing my opinion with people. Now this is a different nuance which won’t make everyone a huge winner, but it certainly cuts down losses, where you are betting on horses that may be the second or third choice but may beat the best horse, so you bet the contender with the higher odds. You asked earlier about a favorite horse, well mine was A.P. Indy, I remember his second race and at the time a local handicapper said to me, ‘*Old Mother Hubbard, take everything out of the cupboard and bet it on this horse!*’ (Laughs) A.P. Indy was so dogged and determined, also Zenyatta, well she was so much fun to watch as well.

**PONIES 24-7:** Ellis it has been a real treat doing this.

**ELLIS STARR:** Well thank you, I really enjoyed it.



Sponsored by Woodbine, Woodbine Mohawk Park, Ontario Racing and Rocket Ship Racing

# PONIES 24-7

THE RADIO MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE TO



**SATURDAYS 8:00AM - 9:00AM (ET)**

Hosted by Jim Lang and Ponies 24-7 Publisher, Larry Simpson



# Rocket Ship





# The Racer's Edge

## A Handicapping Primer

### Handicapping Through Body Language, Is Your Horse Talking To You?

By Larry Simpson



So you have finished all of your pre-race handicapping, completed all of your pace and speed ratings and then, made a note of race trends and track biases. So what's next? Well, welcome to the art of Body Language Handicapping.

There was always a common misconception around the racetrack, that horses were a type of machine but there really is nothing further than the truth. Horses

are not to be confused with a fine-tuned automobile, in fact your selection in the upcoming race, on paper can have all of the numbers he or she needs to be a contender, however, something minor like a 'tummy ache', could be all it would take to effect today's performance.

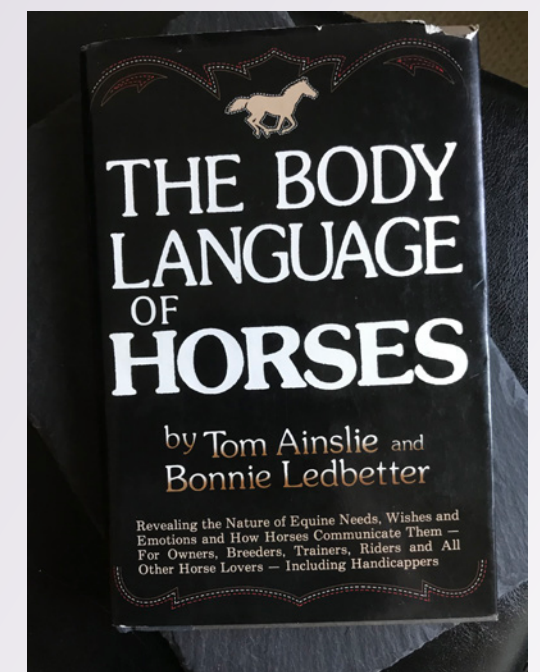
Some years back, a friend of mine gave me a copy of what has to be a classic as far as horse racing publications go, the Tom Ainslie and Bonnie



Ledbetter collaboration, 'THE BODY LANGUAGE OF HORSES'. Considered a 'book for the ages' when originally published in 1980, I still every once in awhile pick up the book and refer back to certain sections, as although it's over 40 years old, the contents have stood the test of time. If you are lucky enough to find a copy for sale, I would recommend that you do so as you won't be sorry. But back to this installment of The Racer's Edge, where we talk more about how the body language of a horse can possibly help assist you with your handicapping.

How many times have you been watching a Post Parade either on-track, or at a simulcast location and someone blurts out 'Boy, the five horse really looks sharp!' Probably quite a few times when you actually think about it, so with that being said what exactly do we mean when we say a 'sharp looking' horse? Well generally speaking, when a horse is referred to as looking sharp, in most cases you are referring to his or her energy level- a high energy that when the horse is on the track, looks to be literally prancing with their ears up and the eyes taking in everything from the people in the grandstand to the other horses around. On some occasions, which I might add is a very good sign that your selection will run its best today, is when the prancing is accompanied with a neck arch, almost tucked down to the chest and the tail pointed out and away from the body. Other good signs of a 'sharp horse' can include a shiny coat and if you are close enough, perhaps in the paddock or trackside, you may notice that the horse is actually making a grinding of the teeth sound.

It is also a good idea to keep an eye on pre-race warmups, as a 'sharp horse' that is eager to run, may sometime try to nip at the accompanying lead pony and when the lead pony breaks into a canter, watch how the horse beside him reacts. The 'sharp horse' will almost immediately break into a canter and then a gallop almost instantaneously. One important point to take into consideration when making your handicapping decision too, is when did the horse last race, simply put, if a horse is racing today after a lengthy layoff, despite looking very 'sharp' on the track, they may be expending too much energy before today's race. Ainslie and Ledbetter





mentioned this in the book that sometimes the ‘sharp horse’ is just too sharp, where they may have looked the part, but were just too eager to perform well enough to win. Keep some notes on this, as a horse that may be ‘too sharp’ today, could be a better play at the windows next time. Also a ‘sharp horse’ should not be confused with what is sometimes referred to as a ‘ready horse’ and unfortunately at times it becomes hard to distinguish one from the other. So then what is the definition of a ‘ready horse’? Well, here we are talking about a horse that looks a little more relaxed in the post parade and warm-up, then its ‘sharper’ contemporary. A ‘ready horse’ has a nice coat, looks ‘muscle up’ and appears alert to the surroundings. Although the ‘ready horse’ looks as healthy and ready to win as the ‘sharp’ one, he or she, by appearing a little more relaxed, will probably not expend as much energy and perform better when it counts in the race itself. According to Ainsle and Ledbetter again, on the track the ‘ready horse’ will walk or jog alongside the companion pony during post parade, then trot for a few strides before finally breaking into a warm-up.

Now then, we have discussed some positive points of a ‘sharp’ and ‘ready’ horse, what are some of the signs of a horse that may not be ready to perform well today? Again, watch the post parades and warm-ups as unlike the ‘sharp’ and ‘ready’ horse that will almost instantaneously break into a gallop or canter, the ‘dull horse’ will resist galloping and cantering, instead trotting along for many strides. Also stay away from horses that look scared or nervous-the scared horse has the appearance of actually trembling and their eyes move quickly and roll with their nostrils flaring.

A nervous runner will ‘sweat out’, to the point that the sweat turns into a white, foamy substance, a process that is referred to as ‘washing out.’ Front bandages on a horse are also usually a cause for concern, especially on a young horse for the first time. Older horses though may wear what are called ‘run-downs’ on a regular basis and many can perform well, but on a young horse, well that’s another story. Mind you, if this is the second time that the young horse has worn the ‘run-downs’ and performed well last time, then perhaps it may not be as serious of an issue today. The Daily Racing Form will usually indicate in the charted lines, whether the horse was equipped with front bandages last time out with the abbreviation.

So just to summarize, keep in mind that at the end of the day, it is still a horse race and at certain times, horses that appear ‘washy’ or appear to be listless on the track, will win occasionally. Smart handicappers though will do their ‘numbers’ and then do a visual inspection of the horse in both the post parade and on the track before the race. A horse that appears nervous or ‘washed out’ and is short odds on the board, to most bettors is not good value. On the other hand, the horse that looks ‘sharp’ or ‘ready’ might be worth a bet if they are good value on the board. And don’t forget to make some notes for next time, on the horse that was actually just ‘too ready’ when racing off a layoff today!



Photo by Michael Burns



# 2022 LIVE HARNESS RACING

APRIL							MAY							JUNE						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30		
JULY							AUGUST							SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
					1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	
OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							<div>HOME OF THE MIRACLE MILE</div>						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S							
						1			1	2	3	4	5							
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12							
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19							
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	<div>VERNON DOWNS RACING</div>						
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30										

POST TIMES 6:05PM 12:15PM 5:05PM

LIVE A LITTLE  
WIN A LOT

VERNON DOWNS  
RACING  
VERNONDOWNS.COM • 877-88-VERNON



# 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 Of Us 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  
[KnowYourNodes.ca](http://KnowYourNodes.ca)

For lymphoma resources or for further information, visit our website at [lymphoma.ca](http://lymphoma.ca)  
or call 1-866-659-5556.



LYMPHOMA  
CANADA

*Lymphoma Canada and PONIES 24-7 recommend that you*

# 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!**



PONIES 24-7  
HORSE RACING LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE



LYMPHOMA  
CANADA

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.



***You'll be  
amazed  
at what they  
can do!***

**We expect great things  
from our horses.  
Let's make sure that they  
can expect a happy and  
dignified retirement when  
their racing days are over.**

**LONGRUN**  
THOROUGHBRED RETIREMENT SOCIETY

416-675-3993 ext. 3440  
[www.longrunretirement.com](http://www.longrunretirement.com)  
[info@longrunretirement.com](mailto:info@longrunretirement.com)

 LongRunTB

