

Saturday,  
January 7, 2012

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**Meadowlands Roars Back Into Action**

By Bill Finley

When asked what sort of impression he hoped he had made on his Meadowlands patrons last night, Jeff Gural didn't hesitate to answer.

"That we are trying," he said. "That we are really trying hard."



Jeff Gural and Andy Miller celebrate the first race at the New Meadowlands (Lisa Photo)

Whether or not the Meadowlands will thrive under its new leader, Gural, remains to be seen, but it was evident last night as a new era began at the Big M that the management team was going to pull out all stops to make things work. The turns at the track had been reconfigured in hopes that that would lead to more competitive racing, fans did not have to pay for admission or parking and the racing department had put together a card that featured 12 races with full fields.

"I feel better about this place than I have in a long time," driver John Campbell said. "With Jeff Gural here there is so much that can be done that never could have been accomplished when the state ran the place."

The handle for the opening night card was \$2,166,584. The Meadowlands opened on a Tuesday in 2011. On the first Friday night card of 2011 the handle was \$2,266,921, but there were 13 races that night. On-track wagering was \$380,499 vs. \$245,139 the previous year, a 55 percent increase.

Whether or not the Meadowlands will thrive under its new leader, Gural, remains to be seen, but it was evident last night as a new era began at the Big M that the

One of Gural's big hopes for the meet was that the style of racing would change with the banking of the turns. He believed that racing at the Meadowlands had become too speed oriented. Last night's races included a little of everything, with horses winning on the front end and coming from off the pace. **Reilly's Daughter** (Sportsmaster) won the first closing from fifth, but winners **Silent Swing** (Northern Luck) and **Western Graduate** (Western Hanover) would win in gate-to-wire fashion, proving that you didn't have to come from off the pace.

"The track is absolute great shape," driver George Brennan said.

One of the highlights of the night was the win by Silent Swing in the "We're Not So Young Anymore" Pace for 10-year-olds and upward. The overwhelming favorite at odds of 3-10, the Mark Ford trainee romped by 4 1/2 lengths for his 51<sup>st</sup> career win.

Andy Miller was the driving star on the night, winning four races. He swept both halves of the early double with horses trained by his brother, Erv.

Dining with about a dozen friends and members of his family, Gural watched the action from the trackside restaurant. He had accomplished the near impossible saving the (continued page 2)

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Meadowlands and bringing it back to life but he seemed to be taking everything in stride.

"It took a long time to get this done and there were plenty of times when I thought it wasn't going to happen," he said. "When Tioga opened it was like, 'I can't believe I own a racetrack.' This feeling is different but satisfying."

## **Banca Banned at Meadowlands, Mulls His Next Move**

*By Bill Finley*

Trainer Richard Banca has been informed by Meadowlands racing officials that he will not be permitted to compete at the meet. It appears that nine or 10 trainers have been banned at the Meadowlands, a list that also includes 2010 and 2011 leading trainer Lou Pena.

"This is something I never expected," Banca said. "I've been racing there for years and have never had a problem. They didn't tell me why, just that it was in the best interests of the track."

Pena has filed suit against the Meadowlands seeking an injunction that will allow him to race. A hearing is scheduled for Monday on the Pena matter, and Banca said he will be watching with interest.

"I don't know what I am going to do," he said. "I'm just not sure what steps I will take. Right now, I'm pretty upset by this."

Banca had 32 winners from 117 starters in 2011 for a winning percentage of 27.3.

## **Sears To Stay at the Meadowlands**

Driver Brian Sears, who had said he was giving serious consideration to driving full time at Yonkers, said last night that he will remain a regular at the Meadowlands.

"This place means a lot to me and there's nothing like driving here," he said. "It's also close to my home. I am totally behind what Jeff Gural is trying to accomplish here and he has my support. I know the purses are going to be better at other places, but there are other things to consider, like the fact that so many top horses come out of here, especially later in the year."

Sears was the leading driver at the Big M in 2011. He said he will continue to drive at Yonkers on nights when there are not conflicts with the Meadowlands.

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## **Drivers Comment on Shorter Races at Yonkers**

*by Dean Hoffman*

Yonkers Raceway recently announced that it would revert from 1-1/16-mile races back to the standard mile distance. The added-distance was designed to give horses a longer distance to the first turn at the Hilltop track and thus give horses drawing outside posts a better

chance to be competitive.

George Brennan enjoyed great success in 2011 at Yonkers and other tracks and he prefers the 1-1/16-mile distance because it's done what it was supposed to do---give a fighting chance to the horses starting outside.

"In a mile race, those horses in posts 5,6,7 and 8 are at a big disadvantage," said Brennan.



"We're right into the turn after the start. And then those horses often have to race from behind."

Brennan said he's had success driving both distances, but he said that some horses, particularly trotters, are more likely to stay on gait if they have a longer distance to the first turn.

"You can just sort of slide out of there and let a horse get set before you ask him for any speed," he said. Brennan said he thinks that bettors would prefer the longer races as it would give more horses a chance in each race.

"I know that Yonkers has publicized how many winners have come from the eight hole from time to time," he said.

Driving whiz Jason Bartlett agrees with Brennan in preferring the slightly longer races.

"The 1-1/16 races gave more opportunity to the horses on the outside," said the Maine native. "In a mile race, you had to leave really hard with an outside horse to get him into the race at Yonkers."

While the inside horses have a significant advantage over their rivals in a mile race, that edge disappears in a longer race.

"The one horse doesn't really have a big advantage in a 1-1/16 mile race," Bartlett points out.

Bartlett echoed Brennan in saying that the extra distance gave him the chance to steady a horse away from the gate before he had to grab into his horse going into the turn.

"One thing that might have been confusing to bettors were the times," said Bartlett. "They would see a mile in 2:05.3 with a final quarter in 35.3 and that would confuse them. They didn't know how to compare it. Basically, you just subtract seven seconds to compare it to a mile time, but that might have presented problems for people when horses shipped in that had been racing at a mile."

Bartlett speculated that Yonkers may be going back to **(continued)**

the one mile distance as an experiment to see if it affects the pari-mutuel handle.

Jeff Gregory was currently golfing in California and was surprised to learn about the change of distance at Yonkers, but doesn't see it making a great difference.

"It's six of one, half-dozen of the other," he said. "The 1-1/16-mile distance makes a big difference to the horses with posts six, seven and eight. They can really get a jump on the field going to the first turn."

By contrast, Gregory said that the 1-1/16 mile races hurt the horses on the inside.

"You really had to leave really fast with those inside horses to try to keep someone out," he said. "The outside horses had a jump on you."

He pointed out that the wire at Yonkers is so close to the first turn that the starter has to let the horses go well before the wire even in one-mile races.

Gregory saw the races going a second or second-and-a-half slower at the mile distance because the horses left so much faster in the 1-1/16-mile races.

"They were getting down to the first quarter between 26 and 27 seconds," he said.

Added-distance events were once quite commonplace at Yonkers. In fact, in the first eight years of the Yonkers Trot (first known as the Yonkers Futurity) the race was contested at 1-1/16 miles as was the Cane Pace (then Cane Futurity).

The International Pace at Yonkers, the counterpart to the International Trot at Roosevelt, began as a one mile event, then bumped up to a 1-1/2 mile test. The Good Time Pace, a longtime Yonkers feature in its early years, was primarily a 12-furlong contest.

## Put On A Show Set For Return

By Lucas Marquardt



### Put On A Show Is Coming Back

She has not started since finishing second in the Nov. 13, 2010 American Nationals.

"We are confident that she'll be every bit as good as before," trainer Chris Ryder said. "If we didn't feel that we wouldn't be bringing her back. We don't want her to come back and do poorly. We're very happy with her at the moment. Knee surgeries are knee surgeries, but everything is good and we are optimistic."

Ryder said the Overbid was selected because it is held early enough in the year that Put On A Show could still be bred if her comeback does not go well.

"There was a small amount of consideration given to

retiring her," he said. "The owners' decision was to not retire her but to give her the time off and bring her back to race. The idea of bringing her back in the Overbid is if things go wrong there still be time to retire her and breed her. I am definitely excited. Horse like that are very hard to come by."

Put On A Show was 12 for 16 in 2010 with earnings of more than \$1.1 million.

## Winbak Farm Announces Discount For Early Booking

Winbak Farm will be giving a \$1,000 discount to anybody who books by the end of February to Riverboat King and Village Jove.



Riverboat King

Riverboat King, p, 2, 1:54.1; 3, 1:50.1; 4, 1:48.3 (\$1,234,576), is a son of Cam's Card Shark, out of the No Nukes mare, Why Won't Ya. He is the sire of 2011 Dan Patch Award Winner, Anndrovette, p, 2, 2:01.4h; 3, 1:52.1s; 4,

1:49.2s -'11 (\$1,325,080) who recently won the 2011 Breeders Crown for Older Pacing Mares. His offspring also includes: Sailing Cruise, p, 2, 1:55.1f; 3, 1:51.3f; 4, 1:50.2f (\$612,085) and La Diavla, p, 2, 1:59.1h; 3, 1:55.1s; 1:51.4f (\$412,480). His 2011 two-year-old crop was led by Memory King, p, 2, 1:53s (\$39,100) who was a New York Sires Stakes and New York Late Closer winner. His offspring average \$52,494 per starter.

Village Jove, p, 2, 1:51.4; 3, 1:49.4 (\$284,365), is a son of Cam Fella and a full-brother to Village Jiffy, p, 2, 1:53.2f; 3, 1:52.4f; 1:50 (\$1,527,683). He is the sire of Grand-Circuit winner, Winbak Speed, p, 2, 1:54.4; 3, 1:52.2f; 1:49 (\$879,682), New York Sire Stakes winners, Golden Reciever, p, 3, 1:51.4f; 4, 1:48.4 (\$653,733), and Winbak Dimensions, p, 2, 1:55.3h; 3, 1:53.2h; 1:50.4f -'11 (\$562,246). His offspring average \$60,118 per starter.

Both stallions normally stand for \$4,000. All booking questions should be directed to Winbak of New York at 845-778-5421 or email [stallions@winbakfarm.com](mailto:stallions@winbakfarm.com). Find more information at [www.winbakfarm.com](http://www.winbakfarm.com).

**Tonight's number: 3,516**

(subscribers, that is.)

Harness Racing Update continues  
to grow every day!

Thank you to all of our readers!

## STATS CORNER

### 2011 Leading Breeders (stats courtesy USTA)

Breeder	Starters	Wins	Earnings
Hanover Shoe Farms	1000	2449	\$28,743,929
Winbak Farm	1044	2095	\$22,504,095
Kentuckiana Farms	284	593	\$8,860,318
Perretti Farms	352	740	\$8,236,944
Brittany Farms	228	539	\$7,364,802
Perfect World Ent.	201	386	\$5,721,752
Peter Pan Stables Inc	144	435	\$4,932,368
Blue Chip Bloodstock	152	336	\$4,808,048

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By Brett Sturman

#### Race 6: Invitational

Take your pick between **WESTERN SHORE** and **GOLDEN RECEIVER**; one way to go could be to put more emphasis on whichever one offers more value nearing actual race time. The former makes his first start since September, but has been a monster here in past winters. He comes off a strong qualifier and should be put in play at some point from the rail as Campbell's pick. The latter has had two months to freshen up, and left 2011 by beating the likes of Rockincam, Vlos and Silent Swing. That recent qualifying came with trainer Harder in the bike too; now gets Sears. **ANNIESWESTERNCARD** was used tremendously hard in a number of those Chester races from over the last couple months, I'm curious to see how he does now. **VINTGAGE MASTER** was in less than peak form when last seen and now is stuck outside; **FOREIGN OFFICER** and **VLOS** should be going forward early.

#### Race 7: N/W \$10,000 in Last 5 Starts

There are three millionaires in this field and a number of others loaded with talent in their primes, but based on form these are a lot of suspect looking horses. **MICKEY HANOVER** is one that offers intrigue although I'd be wary of any short price. Went wire to wire from post 10 over Rollwithharry in his recent qualifier; Dube should be gunning from the start for the high percentage winning Allard barn. **ASTREOS FLASH** should have been much better in his last at Chester; now gets Bouchard and should at least offer a square price to see if he can bounce back. **GET IT**

**NOW** invades here for Burke off a lone qualifier; this one has been here before and that 1:49:4 mark was taken over this surface the year before last. **DEFIANCE N** was third last out to Gallant Yankee over at Yonkers; that one would crush these and is a longshot possibility. I think **HYPNOTIST** is on his way down the ladder; ditto for **BLUERIDGE WESTERN**.

#### Race 8: Preferred

Trainer Alagna put up Sears on **DOUBLETROUBLE**, but since he opted to the horse on his immediate inside we get Pantaleano; no problem. This one raced very well a number of times here last year, showed solid pace on both ends of that qualifying mile, and should have a say in this as a double digit chance. **GO GO SOLANO** is an obvious short priced contender with Brennan. Is the classiest on paper, and you can be sure he'll be on the engine. **SAND SUMMERFIELD** has been sharp since the Robinson claim; and **NOB HILL HIGH** has rounded into his better form for Saunders. I don't recall **ANDY ROO** having raced much on the mile sized tracks; conversely **LIVEFREEORDIEHARD** has gone a number of big miles at Woodbine and Mohawk in the past; that was a very strong looking sweep to take his last at Chester.

#### Race 9: Claiming Price \$30,000

**ALL SHUTTLE** gets the very tepid call in a field that you might as well through a blanket over. Claimed by Allard in November, this one was used hard multiple times in his most recent at Yonkers to come away with a gutsy and well earned win. Is obviously no stranger to this track and will look to be the controlling factor. **WHITE MOUNTAIN TOP** makes his first start for Buter. Had no shot last out in that blitz by Strange Hanover; and prior to that was chasing Delivered From Zin. **COME TOGETHER** almost shocked at 30/1 from post 8 at Yonkers, now draws all the way inside here. **DEAR MAC** drops to the proper level now for Surick, and it's hard not to think that Coleman won't have **LETTHETROCKBEGIN** ready to go. Her and Dave Miller were a good combination all last year. **CESSNA FLIGHT** is tough to feel good about tossing because of the barn, but is generally an underachiever.

**\$16 ticket:** 1-8 / 5-9 / 3-9 / 4-8

**\$64 ticket:** 1-8 / 3-5-9-10 / 3-9 / 1-4-5-8

**CORRECTION:** In the Jan. 6 issue of Harness Racing Update, Jeff Gural, New Meadowlands Racetrack LLC, New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, Dennis Robinson and Meadowlands Racing Secretary Peter Koch were listed as plaintiffs in a lawsuit involving the banning Lou Pena. They are, of course, the defendants.

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## Meadowlands Report

### Friday's Results:

**5, M, \$20,000, Pace, THE WE'RE NOT SO YOUNG ANY-MORE 10 Year Olds and Up, 27.1, 54.3, 1:23.2, 1:51.4, FT**



**Golden oldie Silent Swing**  
(Lisa photo)

**Silent Swing (g, 10, Northern Luck--She Cantsay No, by Die Laughing), \$20,000 2003** KY O-David E Shea, CA & Mark S Ford. B-Robert L Maxon & Thomas M Neppell Jr. T-Mark Ford. D-Andy Miller, \$10,000, Lifetime Record: 191-51-27-22, \$1,642,427  
To view replay click [here](#)

**6, M, \$25,000, Pace, Mares Preferred, 27.2, 55.2, 1:24.0, 1:52.1, FT**

**Ginger And Fred (m, 6, Real Artist--Graceful Motion, by Beach Towel), \$25,000 2007 LEX-SEL O-Howard A Taylor & Robert M Feldman & Edwin J Gold & Jerry Silva.** B-Ronald Mersky. T-Ron Burke. D-Yannick Gingras, \$12,500, Lifetime Record: 82-23-14-14, \$1,510,435  
To view replay click [here](#)

**10, M, \$30,000, Trot, Invitational, 28.0, 56.3, 1:26.0, 1:55.2, FT**

**1-Equity (g, 6, Kadabra--Earl Of My Dreams, by Earl)** O-Charalambos Christoforou, CA & Banjo Farms. Farms & Charalambos Christoforou, CA & William L Jones. T-Ron Burke. D-Yannick Gingras, \$15,000, Lifetime Record: 59-20-13-8, \$604,488

**2-Celebrity Hercules (g, 6, Kadabra--Bravura Hanover, by Balanced Image), \$72,000 2007 LEX-SEL O-Ddt Stable, CA.** B-Paul Simmonds, CA. T-Nikolas Drennan. D-George Brennan, \$7,500

**3-The Budster (g, 7, Broadway Hall--Distaff, by Self Possessed), \$20,000 2006 SHS-HBG O-Jeffrey K Bartels.** B-Bluestone Farms LLC. T-Eli Scott Jr. D-Matt Kakaley, \$3,600

Calls: 1, 1T, 2T, 3T, H

Finish Order: Rose Run Hooligan, Aisling, Baby Blaze, Salutation Hanover, Shoeless White Sox, Pembroke Prayer  
To view replay click [here](#)

Equity (Yannick Gingras, \$5.40) made it three in a row with a down the road score in the Invitational Trot. Sent from post seven Gingras sent Equity to the lead past the opening quarter which clocked in 28.0. From that point on it was catch me if you can as they rolled along uncontested through a 58.0 middle half. Gingras opened up some separation at three quarters and kept the 6-year-old gelding to his task. Celebrity Hercules (George Brennan) closed with steady trot after a ground saving trip to finish second while

The Budster (Matt Kakaley) rallied off stalling cover entering stretch to get up for third.

## The Meadows Report

### Friday's Results:

**7, Mea, \$22,500, Pace, \*F&M NOT LISTED/PREFERRED HANDICAP\* P.P.1-6 DRAWN; 7-9 DRAWN, 27.0, 56.0, 1:24.1, 1:52.4, FT**

**Red Star Hottie (m, 7, As Promised--Whitehorse Fever, by Rumpus Hanover), \$9,500 2006 BC O-Burke Racing Stable LLC & Weaver Brussemi LLC.** B-Merianne L & Martin A Fess, CA & Dave A McDonald, CA. T-Ron Burke. D-Dave Palone, \$11,250, Lifetime Record: 89-34-18-7, \$524,030

To view replay click [here](#)

## Woodbine Report

### Friday's Results:

**2, Wdb, PACE, \$42,000. FILLIES & MARES OPEN, 27, 56, 1:24.1, 1:51, FT**

**Rebeka Bayama (b,m,5 - Leader Bayama-Joyce Bayama-Run The Table) O/B-Bayama Farms Inc, QC T-Justin Fillion D-Sylvain Fillion** Lifetime Record: 30-17-6-2, \$312,928  
To view replay click [here](#)

**9, Wdb, PACE, \$27,000. FILLIES & MARES, NW 4 RACES OR \$110,000 LIFETIME. AE: 4 & 5 YEAR OLDS, CLAIMING \$50,000, 27.2, 56.3, 1:24.4, 1:53.1, FT**

**Day To Ponder (b,m,4 - Ponder-On This Day-Camluck)** O-Robert McIntosh Stables Inc, C S X Stables, John D Fielding B/T-Robert McIntosh Stables Inc, ON D-Randall Waples

Lifetime Record: 27-9-7-2, \$200,244

To view replay click [here](#)

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