



West Virginia

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

February 2020

United for our industry

By Jeff Gilleas

Recently, the Thoroughbred racing industry has come under attack, threatening the livelihood of thousands of backstretch employees, business subsidiaries, a noble animal and ultimately endangering a symbiotic relationship that has successfully coexisted for centuries.

This isn't the first time my beloved profession has been in the proverbial cross-hairs, but with potential federal and state intervention looming, it may be the most crucial juncture in its storied history.

Do I profess to be so naive that every aspect of this enterprise is faultless and changes aren't necessary to the status quo?

Obviously not, but what troubles me is which organizations are calling for radical modifications, who is responsible for implementing them, and at what cost?

Racing has been in my blood since the age of 6 and over the span of my lifetime has received multiple infusions of fidelity.

Individuals who share my experiences with our four-legged

wonders know firsthand the majesty, intelligence and sacrifices they are capable of.

Twenty years ago, I began a journey that eventually landed me in a small corner of the Eastern Panhandle, titled Charles Town.

Agriculture, horse racing and a love of antiquity were the champions of this quiet community, contiguous to the Blue Ridge mountains.

Citizenry of this town are hard working, family oriented and faith-based.

Charles Washington, the founder of Charles Town and full brother to our first president, named many of the streets after his relatives and was rumored to have conducted horse races on its earthen highways.

In 1932, Thoroughbred horse racing became an ordained partner with Jefferson County. In 1997 the racetrack was purchased by Penn Gaming Inc.

NFL legend and Hall of Fame inductee Sam Huff organized the inaugural West Virginia Breeders Classics... the graded Charles Town

Classic has become one of the richest Thoroughbred contests in the United States.

Names like Baird, Berry, Boyer, Brown, Carlisle, Casey, Condon, Contreras, Daniel, Engle, Espinosa, Figgins, Funkhouser, Grams, Hagy, Hilton, Holden, Long, Mckee, Meehan, Miller, Moore, Moscarelli, O'Bannon, Pennington, Runco, Russell, Servis, Smith, Starkey, Stehr, Thomas, Tobin, Walters, Watson and Woodson have indelibly left their mark on the racing landscape of the Mountain State.

When confronted with any attack on their profession, horsemen understandably react emotionally.

This isn't a casual pastime, but a 24/7, year-round profession. It's a career, with no days off and no 401(k)s.

Racetrackers take it personally when individuals or groups assign blame to them, especially on issues that generally possess few facts and restricted knowledge.

Nationally, the media is demonizing our sport, with their end-all being extinction.

West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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John Funkhouser, *President*

Diana McClure, *Secretary*

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Antagonists to horse racing like to fall back on the nouveau argument that we have become a non-agrarian vocation.

In my home state of West Virginia, I would beg to differ.

Most of my horse-oriented friends and colleagues own or lease the land they reside on.

They raise hay and straw, grow crops, stand stallions, manage broodmares, cattle, sheep or poultry, and take in any variety of stray animal needing shelter.

In the dictionary, culture is defined as, "the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively."

In West Virginia, the culture of casino and racing is a quid pro quo.

Generational personalities may seem to change little, but their impact on the modernization of the Thoroughbred industry is significant.

Aided by Penn Gaming Inc., the West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association, Charles Town Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association and the West Virginia Racing Commission together have forged a proactive team to implement rules and regulations ensuring the integrity of our sport.

In a recent press release, Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races revealed that for the fifth consecutive year, the 86-year-old track was able to achieve a new annual high in wagering per race, while 2019 established the local breeding program as a dynamic force in the region.

West Virginia-bred Runnin'toluvya, a son of West Virginia stallion Fiber Sonde, captured Charles Town's marquee event – the \$1 million Charles Town Classic-G2 – becoming the second West Virginia-bred and sired runner to win a graded event at the track, the other being Late Night Pow Wow.

Take note of the Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races 2020 condition book and you will see a myriad of rules and regulations designed to protect both horses and horsemen.

Additionally, this year Charles Town Races will partake in the regions popular MATCH Series.

In 1968 the West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association was founded, with their mandate being to foster and promote Thoroughbred breeding and racing industries within the state. Benefits available to members include the West Virginia Thoroughbred Development Fund, supplemental purse awards, a minimum number of accredited West Virginia races daily and West Virginia-accredited stakes.

The Charles Town chapter of the HBPA lists in their informational packet that Thoroughbred racing provides over 5,000 jobs in West Virginia, while it brings in millions in revenue for the community.

Thoroughbred racing also has an immense agricultural impact by preserving and protecting green space.

Their pamphlet goes on to describe the legislative intent of video lottery and table games

is to assist horse racing/breeding industries, while enhancing tourism, agriculture and employment within the state.

The Aftercare Charles Town program (ACT) was formed in 2013 to help local horsemen find suitable homes for retired racehorses.

Since its inception it has placed over 200 retired horses in safe and appropriate homes.

ACT is run entirely by an uncompensated volunteer Board of Directors.

In the near future, I can envision every racing jurisdiction shadowing Keeneland's lead, by installing charitable donation buttons on self-service wagering terminals to aid our equine retirees.

The West Virginia Racing Commission presides over all racing within the state.

Their major responsibility is to regulate the sport and ensure the public's confidence.

In a response to the Mid-Atlantic's efforts to focus on equine health and welfare, the WVRC will establish a Medical Review Board at the state's two Thoroughbred facilities.

The moral compass for the proliferation of Thoroughbred horse racing in West Virginia is clear and comprehensively assigned to the aforementioned groups.

The Fellowship of the Oval will weed out bad apples, ensure the future for horsemen, their families, employees and most importantly, the welfare of our equine partner.

NOTES TO MEMBERS

- ◆ **The 10-10-10 program** is now called the **Supplemental Purse Award Claim**, for which there are new forms. All claims must be submitted to the WV Racing Commission within 15 days from the date the purse is awarded. Claim forms are available on the WV Racing Commission website, racing.wv.gov.
- ◆ If you are selling or planning to sell your accredited WV-bred and/or sired horse, please contact the WVTBA. The WVTBA has started supplying sellers of **accredited WV-bred and/or sired horses** with **hip stickers and stall-card stickers** to make it easier for buyers to identify these horses. Contact the WVTBA office at (304) 728-6868 or by e-mail at wvbreeders@gmail.com.
- ◆ **WV Certificates** will be issued seven to 10 days after the WVTBA receives the original registration form application, all required paperwork and payment.
- ◆ The new WVTBA office is located at 110 South George Street, Suite 4, Charles Town, WV 25414. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. More information may be found at www.wvtba.net.

