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HISA Update: Federal Oversight is Coming, But When?

BY JIM MULVIHILL

When the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA) was passed in December, proponents heralded the dawning of a new day for the American Thoroughbred industry. Nearly a year later, optimism still abounds but is tempered by growing concerns that the “new day” could be delayed by months or years.

HISA is supposed to go into effect no later than July 1, 2022. However, with time ticking down, U.S. racing jurisdictions have received little information to go on. The new Horseracing and Safety Authority (also going by the acronym HISA) has announced its board of directors, standing committees, and interim executive director, but legal challenges seem to have stunted their ability to proceed unabated.

NEW FACES READY TO HELP

The nine-member HISA board is comprised of heavyweights from politics,

law, academia, horseracing, and the wider sports world. Board chair Charles Scheeler was lead counsel to former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell in his independent investigation of performance-enhancing substance use in Major League Baseball.



Nearly a year later, optimism still abounds but is tempered by growing concerns that the “new day” could be delayed by months or years.

Other appointees are Steve Beshear, former governor of Kentucky and longtime horse owner and breeder; Adolpho Birch, senior vice president of business affairs and chief legal officer for the Tennessee Titans of the NFL; Leonard Coleman, former president of the National League for Major League Baseball; Ellen McClain, chief financial officer for Year UP and former president of the New York Racing Association; Joe DeFrancis, managing partner of Gainesville Associates and former head of the Maryland Jockey Club;

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Owner/Breeder Q&A: Lee Searing of CRK Stables

BY JIM MULVIHILL

In the last 21 years, Lee & Susan Searing's CRK Stable—named for children Christina, Richard, and Katherine—has won well over 200 races for more than \$15 million in earnings. CRK's graded/group stakes winners include such talented runners as Our New Recruit, Kobe's Back, Kettle Corn, Switch, and Candy Boy. Their best runner to date, though, has been the brilliant Honor A.P., devastating winner of the 2020 Santa Anita Derby and fourth in the Kentucky Derby despite a bad start and a nine-wide turn into the stretch.

Honor A.P. now stands at Lane's End, alongside his sire Honor Code, and resides in the stall of his legendary grandsire A.P. Indy.

Post Times contributor Jim Mulvihill caught up with Lee Searing, 73, to talk about his life with Thoroughbreds and what made Honor A.P. so popular in his first season at stud.

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COURTESY OF ANNE EBERHARDT KEOGH

HISA UPDATE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Susan Stover, professor of surgical and radiological science at the University of California, Davis; Bill Thomason, former president of Keeneland; and D.G. Van Clief, former president of Breeders’ Cup Ltd.

At the same time the Board was announced, the Authority also revealed the members of an Anti-Doping and Medication Control Standing Committee and a Racetrack Safety Standing Committee. The seven appointees to each committee suggest a concerted effort to balance industry knowledge with independent outside expertise, similar to the board.

Hank Zeitlin, executive vice president of the Thoroughbred Racing Associations and former head of Equibase, has been tabbed as HISA’s interim executive director through the end of this year.

While not technically a HISA appointment, perhaps most critical was the announcement that Dr. Tessa Muir, former head of the British Horseracing Authority’s anti-doping program and former regulatory vet for Racing Victoria in Australia, has been hired by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Terms of USADA’s involvement with HISA are still being negotiated but every indication is that they will enforce HISA’s rules, as they do for other high-profile and high-stakes endeavors like the Olympics and UFC.

LEGAL CHALLENGES SLOW THEIR ROLL

Two major lawsuits have slowed HISA’s implementation. The first was brought by the National Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA) and several of its affiliates (state- and track-level HBPA’s), alleging that HISA is unconstitutional on the basis of whether the federal government can seize control of a state’s authority and turn it over to what the plaintiffs see as a private entity, the newly created Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (also known by the acronym of HISA). The Authority, however, reports to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

“This goes way beyond setting rules for the sport of horse racing,” said Brian Kelsey, senior attorney at the Liberty Justice Center, a law firm founded by conservative think tank The Illinois Policy Institute, which has taken on the case. “This is not the NBA or the NFL. The ‘Authority’ has the power to make laws, issue subpoenas and effectively tax owners with little real oversight.”

National HBPA v. Black was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, with Black referring to Jerry Black, a member of the HISA nominating committee who resides in that district and is one of 13 named defendants from HISA and the FTC. A hearing is expected to be scheduled before November. That proceeding will consist of arguments on constitutionality and will not include testimony.

A second legal challenge is led by the state of Oklahoma, which joined with

other plaintiffs including the Oklahoma Racing Commission, the Oklahoma Quarter Horse Racing Association, the state of West Virginia, the West Virginia Racing Commission, the state of Louisiana, the U.S. Trotting Association, and racetracks Remington Park, Will Rogers Downs, and Fair Meadows.

In addition to the issue of whether HISA’s authority can be executed by a private entity, the Oklahoma case alleges that HISA’s ability to expand its scope to cover other racing breeds violates the Constitution’s non-delegation clause, which prohibits Congress from assigning its duties to private entities.

The Oklahoma case was filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky. A decision is expected to be roughly six months behind the HBPA challenge, which would put it less than 100 days from the legislated HISA implementation deadline. Appeals could drag on for years if they make their way to the Supreme Court, which is not unthinkable given the current makeup of justices that have demonstrated an interest in delineating states’ rights.

LOOKING FORWARD

Enacting HISA in 38 jurisdictions before July 1 will be a massive undertaking. Many racing states have already budgeted for their next fiscal year with little understanding of what their expenses might be or how they will be expected to cover them, but HISA and USADA officials have been meeting with state racing commissions and visiting racetracks to plan for a cooperative launch.

Several concerns were addressed publicly at The Jockey Club Round Table—the industry’s most important annual gathering—in August.

“We won’t have this where we want it to be on day one,” said Scheeler, the board chair. “But we will continue the job even after July 1st. Our program will not be a static one. It will be one that reacts to the events at the track and on the ground and one that strives for continuous improvement.”

Scheeler laid out a timeline that had the two Standing Committees presenting comprehensive programs for industry and public review by the end of the fall. The FTC will officially publish the rules, starting a required 60-day comment period. After reviewing feedback, the FTC will decide whether to adopt the recommendations of the Authority. The cost estimates and advice on structure that states need will be shared with them by winter.

“The program that we are planning will yield a stronger sport,” Scheeler said. “But this will only work if the industry is prepared to invest in its future. I submit to you that the potential upside is staggering and is worth the lift. Safer sport means more humane treatment, fewer equine tragedies, and greater public support.”

Jockey Club chairman Stuart Janney III wrapped up the meeting with a pointed message: “When the history of this is written, it will be clear who the obstructionists were and who opposed this industry’s best ever opportunity to right our badly listing ship.” ■



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Striking a Balance: Use of the Whip in Horse Racing

BY JOE NEVILLS

A growing spotlight has been given to the use of whips in races, as tracks and state racing commissions have grappled with their use as encouragement versus the growing negative public perception toward their use.

Striking that balance has been a point of contention between fans, regulators, jockeys, and trainers, and its biggest battleground to date has been in New Jersey. Last year, the state's racing commission announced that it would prohibit jockeys from using the crop in races, outside of necessary control for the safety of the horse or rider, during Monmouth Park's 2021 meet.

The announcement was immediately polarizing, with several prominent jockeys announcing they'd boycott the meet, including a rider so synonymous with Monmouth Park that it's in his nickname: "Jersey" Joe Bravo.

The Monmouth Park meet closed at the end of September, giving America the biggest data set it's seen for the safety and effectiveness of whipless racing, but our arrival to that point was decades in the making.

Whip regulations are still a fairly new development in the U.S., aside from basic rules against blatant abuse of the horses and other riders. For those looking for a preview on how the battles and compromises might play out in the long term, Europe offers several examples.

The lead other European nations have followed when setting their own whip restrictions has been Norway, which first enacted a total whip ban in 1986. After pushback from the country's horsemen, the country allowed riders to carry a small crop, only to be used for safety purposes, not encouragement. In 2009, the rule was adjusted again, allowing jockeys to carry whips only in 2-year-old flat races and steeplechase races.

Norway's initial foray into whip-free racing was a guiding factor in England's decision to enact its own restrictions in the late 1980s.

Public concern about whip use had entered the national conversation in England, and in 1988, the British Jockey Club enacted a rule handing jockeys a two-to four-day suspension for misuse or overuse of the whip, with an ensuing violation resulting in up to two weeks on the sidelines. Any jockey that was found by stewards to strike the horse more than 10 times, or that left marks on the horse, was subject to investigation.

It was a drastic raising of the ante by regulators after violators previously received fines, and British jockeys reportedly responded by refusing to speak to the media, even though the British Jockey Club claimed the rules were made after detailed consultations with the country's riders. Steve Cauthen, a Triple Crown-winning jockey in the U.S. who later moved his tack overseas, later came out as one of the rule's more vocal opponents after multiple suspensions.

The rules were tightened in 1993, when British riders were limited to five strikes, keeping the whip below shoulder height, and aimed at specifically allowed targets on the horse.

The country's jockeys and trainers were much more vocal to the media this time around, repeatedly demanding review of the rule before and after its enactment, and presenting a series of "what-if" scenarios of past races that might have seen different winners under the new provisions.



PHOTO BY OLGA_I / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



PHOTO BY OLGA_I / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

"We realize public opinion has to be taken into account, but it would cut out one of the many skills of jockeyship," jockey Richard Dunwoody told the Racing Post in 1993, reflecting a familiar refrain heard by today's American riders. "We don't cause pain to horses, and the vets can't prove that we do."

No other major jurisdiction had taken such a hard stance against whip use. Neighboring Ireland had restrictions on where a rider could strike the horse, but there was no firm number on strikes. Meanwhile, England's whip rules were the source of an occasional curious newspaper column in the U.S., where local riders defended its use, but no state or national jurisdiction enforced anything beyond outright savagery.

The rule faced a crossroads in 1996, when the riders of the top three finishers in the 2,000 Guineas received suspensions for whip violations, as did the top two finishers in the St. Leger. Frankie Dettori was involved in both races, and received a total of 10 days for both incidents.

A year later, the five-strike limit was lifted, and the decision to rule on improper whip use was left up to the stewards' discretion. Whip offenses were cut in half from the first half of 1996 to the same span of time in 1997. The decision received widespread praise from jockeys and trainers.

In the decades that followed, the British Horseracing Authority has tinkered with the country's whip policies, even going back to a seven-strike limit in 2011, and a five-strike limit inside the final furlong. The final-furlong provision was scrapped when the riders threatened to strike, but the seven-strike rule still stands in England today.

Whip reform has come much more gradually stateside. The first wave in the first decade of the 2000s focused on the types of crops used, with the Association of Racing Commissioners International adopting a model rule in 2009 giving specifics on the length and weight allowed for a rider's whip.

While the RCI had its model rules, change has come in America on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis.

The same year, American auction houses adopted a uniform policy for use of the crop during 2-year-olds-in-training under-tack shows, barring use within an eighth of the mile of the finish line and beyond the wire, as well as restricting where and how riders could strike the horse. The rules received an update in 2020, limiting pre-breeze strikes and further governing when and how a whip can be used within the breeze.

A variety of crops were developed in the 2000s claiming to reduce the amount of marks given to a horse when they are whipped, and pilot programs were launched around the country to test them in real-life situations. Softer whips, relying more on the sound they create rather than the contact itself, were mandated at tracks including Del Mar, Saratoga, Delaware Park, Philadelphia Park, and

Woodbine. Even so, North American racing never came to a consensus on a model whip.

The first numerical restriction on whip usage in North America came in 2009, when Ontario released a sweeping policy that included a limit of three strikes in a row without giving the horse time to respond. The following decade saw others follow on the other side of the border.

California was the first American jurisdiction to put a number on its whip rule, with the current limit being six strikes in a race, and two before giving the horse a chance to respond.

Prior to New Jersey's turn in the spotlight, California was considered the epicenter of the whip debate, furthered in 2019 when the California Horse Racing Board unanimously voted to limit whip use to safety only. The plan was quickly snuffed out, and riders around the country went on the record bristling at the idea of the whip being taken away.

Later that year, The Jockey Club's Thoroughbred Safety Committee called for the end of the whip as an encouragement tool, citing consumer research that whip use was a concern among both current and potential racing fans. The Jockey's Guild rebuffed the Jockey Club's stance, and filed an unsuccessful appeal to stop the New Jersey whip ban before the beginning of the Monmouth Park meet.

"While the Guild and its members are supportive of any changes that improve the well-being of the horse, we do believe that it is important to recognize that use of the riding crop is still necessary, not only for safety, but also for communication, control of the horse, and assurance of maximum placing," a Jockey's Guild release read. "This cannot be emphasized enough."

The Kentucky Horse Racing Commission adopted its own whip rule in May 2021, following discussions with the Jockey's Guild, limiting overhand strikes to six throughout the race, and two before response. Underhanded or backhanded use of the whip may begin in the final three-eighths of a mile, and do not count toward the six-strike limit. Violators would receive a \$500 minimum fine or a three-day minimum suspension, which could grow with aggravating factors.

Gulfstream Park adopted a similar house rule in August.

Whip rules around the country and around the world remain a work in progress. After more than three decades, England is still adjusting its policy to meet the growing demand to abolish crop use while appeasing the people working directly with the horses. Using that as past performance, a lasting, uniform policy in the U.S. is likely a long way off, if it ever arrives at all.

With that being said, the speed of reform has gained momentum with each passing year. Even if there is not a final answer on the immediate horizon, it appears several jurisdictions will continue trying to get closer to it. ■

The Lifesaving Work of the Grayson-Jockey Club Foundation

BY AMANDA DUCKWORTH



COURTESY OF GRAYSON-JOCKEY CLUB FOUNDATION

It is an unfortunate truth that when it comes to finding trouble, horses excel at it. Luckily for horse owners, the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation has dedicated itself to equine research for more than 80 years and disperses nearly \$1 million annually in grants.

Understanding its history—do you know who Grayson was?—and its

mission of helping all breeds of horses is important for the future wellbeing of equines everywhere.

“Equine disease and injuries extend to all types of horses,” said Jamie Haydon, the president of the organization. “These ailments do not single out one particular horse, breed, or discipline. All horse owners

may deal with laminitis, colic, musculoskeletal injuries, sick foals, respiratory issues and many others. Grayson has no alliance with any one university, so the foundation is able to fund the best research regardless of where it takes place.

“Grayson has achieved many levels of success in the equine research field over the past 80 years and is traditionally the leading source of private funding for scientific projects focused on ensuring the future of equine research and the health and safety of horses.”

The original Grayson Foundation was formed in 1940. It was named in honor of Admiral Cary Grayson, who had served as the personal physician to President Woodrow Wilson and was chairman of the American Red Cross at the time of his death in 1938.

In addition to science, Grayson also loved Thoroughbreds and owned Blue Ridge Farm. One of his top runners was My Own, winner of the Saratoga Cup, Saratoga Handicap, and Maryland Handicap.

Grayson also liked to combine business with pleasure when he could. This included in 1919 when he suggested President and Mrs. Wilson take a break from the Versailles Treaty negotiations to join Lord Derby for a day at the races at Longchamp.

In his final years, Grayson was connected to the formulative stages that led to the establishment of the foundation named in his honor. The Jockey Club was among the initial respondents, pledging 20 percent of the total capital needed.

The goal for many years was to disperse \$100,000 annually in grants to specific equine research projects. The Jockey Club created its own research foundation in 1984, and five years later, it merged with Grayson to be the entity it is known as today.

This merge led to a boost in the amount of funding available, and how that funding gets distributed got a major overhaul at the turn of the century, which in turn led to an even bigger impact.

“In 1999, Dr. Gary Lavin and Dr. Larry Bramlage recognized the

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Lane’s End Employee Peter Sheehan’s New Role

BY MICHELE MACDONALD



COURTESY OF LANE’S END

When Peter Sheehan arrived in Kentucky from his native Ireland in 2008, he was planning to work for a year at Lane’s End before departing to explore other parts of the world and the Thoroughbred business, having targeted a stint in Australia as a primary goal.

Yet more than a dozen years later, Sheehan has completely changed course. He no longer thinks of moving on, and instead is seizing the chance for moving up—in a big way—at Lane’s End.

After working with mares and young stock and then serving as the farm’s yearling manager for the past eight years, Sheehan will advance to become manager of the globally prominent Lane’s End stallion division following the retirement of Billy Sellers, who has been a farm mainstay for nearly 40 years.

While the soft-spoken Sheehan is keenly aware of the industry prominence of his new role, he is focusing solely on the details of the role he takes on in late September, describing himself as a man who prefers to “stay under the radar as much as I can, just keeping my head down and working.”

After the last horse left the ring at the Keeneland September Sale, to which Lane’s End consigned 140 yearlings, Sheehan looked ahead to his next phase in a journey that’s taken him far from the tasks he initially shouldered as a teenager labourer.

“You always want to go and be at the pinnacle of the industry, and I don’t think there’s a better place to be than to be the stallion manager at Lane’s End Farm, one of the best stallion operations in the world. It doesn’t get much better than that,” Sheehan said. “I started out at the bottom, weed-eating. You think about, and you dream, that you might one day get to the top, but for it to really happen is truly special.”

Sheehan was virtually born into the world of breeding and racing. His father was raised on the grounds of Owenstown Stud in Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland, a college and Thoroughbred nursery area about 15 miles outside Dublin, where his grandfather served as both gardener and horse caretaker.

“I’ve always been around horses,” Sheehan said, recalling his youth in Maynooth. “Horse racing was always on the TV on the weekends and I went racing with my parents and my grandfather. It’s always been part of our lives.”

Thus, it was a fairly natural progression for Sheehan to begin his working life as a farm hand at nearby Derrinstown Stud, the Irish base of the Shadwell empire forged by the late Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al Maktoum of Dubai.

“You always want to go and be at the pinnacle of the industry, and I don’t think there’s a better place to be than to be the stallion manager at Lane’s End Farm, one of the best stallion operations in the world.”

“I started off weed-eating, painting fences, mowing grass and those sorts of things the summer I turned 16. Then I went back to school and did some horse work on the weekends,” he recalled.

Over the course of seven years while he completed school, earning a bachelor of arts degree in geography and math and later a higher diploma in statistics at the Maynooth branch of the National University of Ireland, Sheehan worked at Derrinstown. And the more he was around the horses, the more they inspired him.

“I got the bug,” he admitted with a chuckle.

“I spent time in each department at Derrinstown, working with mares and foals and yearlings. I did a little bit with the stallions, but I was more with the mares and the yearlings.

“It’s a fabulous operation. Sheikh Hamdan was a great boss. He really took care of all his staff, and it was a shame to see him pass away this past year. He was a true gentleman and great boss to everybody who worked for him,” Sheehan said.

After finishing his graduate work, however, Sheehan decided to try something new, accepting a teaching job at the International School of Choueifat in Sharjah, the neighboring emirate of Dubai. Rather than handling young horses, he spent a year directing the math education of third, fourth and fifth graders whose families were from around the world.

“It was a great experience. I loved my time over there and it afforded me time to go travel. Anytime we had a few days off from school, we hopped on a plane and went somewhere exotic. We took trips to Oman, Jordan, Thailand, Kenya and Sri Lanka,” he said.

“But after a year of teaching kids, I decided I preferred horses,” he added before noting some similarities in job skills. “You need a great deal of patience with both. In both careers, you need to be patient and take

your time and work with the individual if you want to succeed.”

Returning to Ireland and Derrinstown, he worked for a year as a full-time staff member before again feeling the urge to see more of the world.

“I said to my manager there, Jimmy Lenehan, that I wanted to go and do some traveling and experience the industry in Australia and America. He recommended that I go to America first; he thought America was the most important place to go. ‘You have to do your time in Kentucky if you want to succeed in this industry,’ he said.

“So, he set me up with Lane’s End. He was the roommate of Callan Strouss (manager of Lane’s End’s Oak Tree division) when they were both young and working for Bertram Firestone, and they’re still great friends to this day. Jimmy set me up with a job and asked if Lane’s End would sponsor me for a year.

“I came over with the intention of staying for one year and then going traveling again, but one year has turned into 13, so far,” Sheehan said, crediting the horses and farm management for encouraging him to stay.

“Lane’s End is great—it is a top-class operation and they look after their staff superbly well,” he said.

In supervising the yearlings raised on the farm and working with those that Lane’s End consigns to sales for clients, Sheehan has had the opportunity to be hands-on with some of North America’s best horses of their generations.

Highlights he fondly notes include the seven-figure horses Lane’s End has sold and, particularly, the horses raised on the farm who have surged to glory in racing.

“You always love to sell the million-dollar horses. They’re always exciting, and when you have those seven-figure horses, you feel so proud. You know all the hard work the guys in the barns have put in throughout the year and their love for the horses, so to see them get rewarded with a high-priced horse in the ring and to see their excitement, I love that,” he said.

Some of the more recent headline-making horses to have emerged as seven-figure graduates from Lane’s End consignments include multiple graded winner Spielberg, by Union Rags and bred by G. Watts Humphrey, and the scintillating Flightline, a son of Tapit bred by Summer Wind Farm, who appears headed for stardom.

Yet Sheehan emphasized that the main goal with yearlings at Lane’s End is to develop racehorses, and he pointed particularly to the high-level

GRAYSON-JOCKEY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

need to reorganize the process by which Grayson approved projects to be funded,” said Haydon. “They merged the two existing committees of academics and practicing vets into one new committee to include 32 individuals representing various research specialties and veterinary practices from across America to recommend approved projects to the board.

“Currently using this process, Grayson is funding 50 active projects at 23 different institutions on three continents. Since the committee reorganization, the project publication rate has been exceptional, with 230 projects eligible for publication, resulting in 329 papers produced in peer-reviewed journals. Grayson is indebted to Dr. Lavin for all his hard work.”

For more than eight decades, Grayson’s research funding has advanced the wellbeing of equines in numerous ways, ranging from the first equine influenza vaccine to gene therapy for equine arthritis to cryotherapy treatment protocols for laminitis.

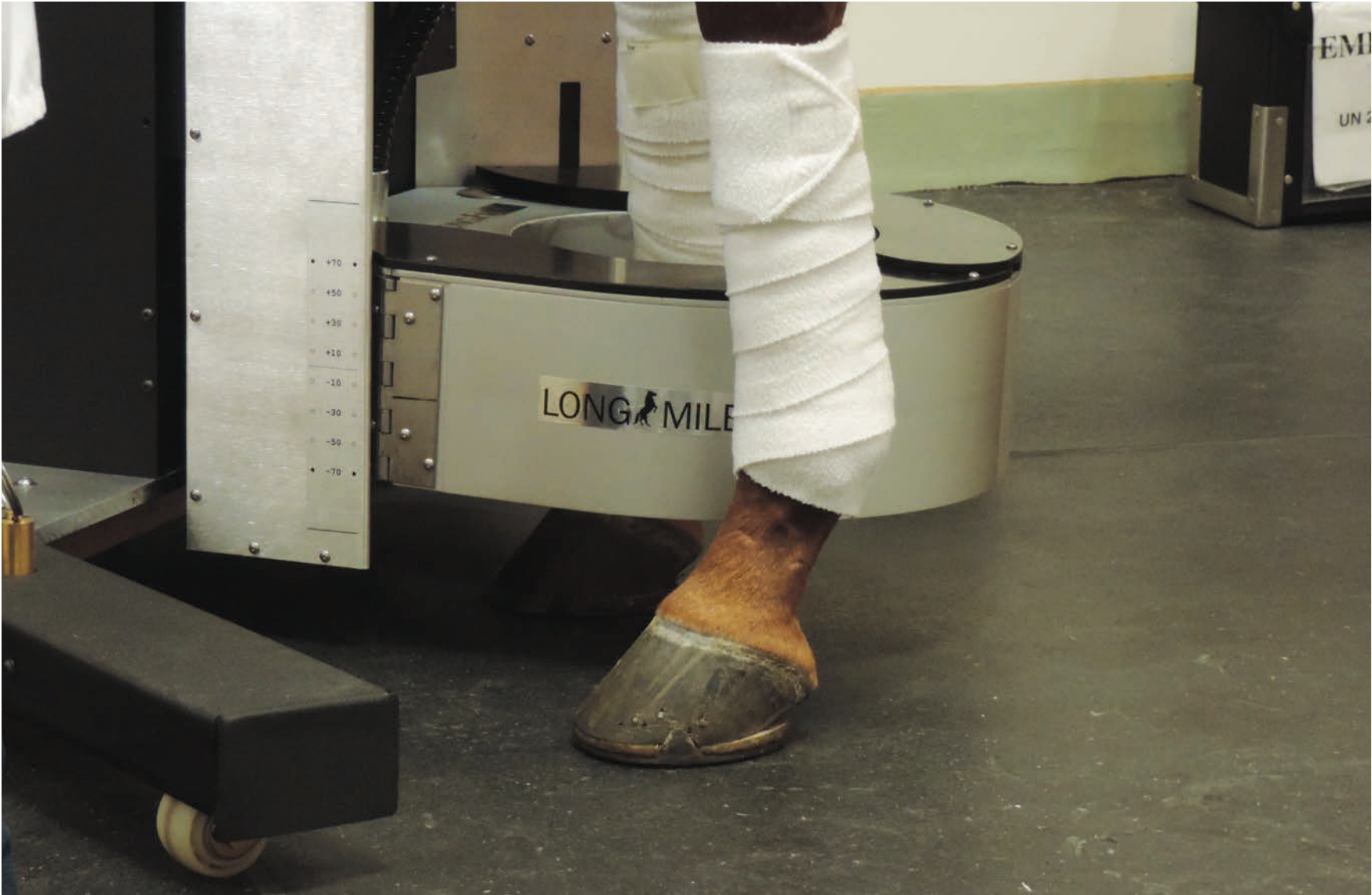
Recent research includes the funding of multiple studies that led to effective treatments to combat equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1), which is has become exceptionally timely once more with several outbreaks this year.

Furthermore, as safety and welfare continue to take center stage with racehorses, it is important to note that in 2015, it was Grayson which funded the first equine positron emission tomography (PET) scan. In 2019, the same research team developed a new machine that makes it possible to image the limbs of standing horses using light sedation, eliminating the need for anesthesia. That machine is now in use at Santa Anita as well as at the University of Pennsylvania’s New Bolton Center.

A current project being conducted by the Baylor College of Medicine with co-investigator Texas A&M University is using inhalation therapy to instantly protect newborn foals against infection caused by Rhodococcus equi. The technology to do so has become very familiar even to those outside the equine industry.

“This vaccine is composed of a lab-made messenger RNA molecule (mRNA), which is a blueprint that can be used to instruct cells to produce a specific protein,” said Haydon. “Yes, just like a few of our COVID-19 vaccines. Our equine researchers are also using the mRNA technology to help us protect some of our most vulnerable foals. This is the first time that mRNA therapy has been used for horses.”

Since 1983, Grayson has individually provided more than \$30.6 million to fund 397 projects at 45 universities in North America and overseas.



COURTESY OF GRAYSON-JOCKEY CLUB FOUNDATION

Some well-known funding has come through generous donations from major players in horse racing like Robert and Helen Kleberg, Paul Mellon, and John Oxley, but any horse lover can contribute to the non-profit.

“In addition to the regular donations, you also have the opportunity to donate in honor or memory of individuals,” said Haydon. “Our Tribute Program enables you to pay tribute to your favorite horse and tell your horse’s story. A dedicated tribute wall on our website enables you to share a photo and comments about your horse in memory or honor of them.”

The reality is that without these donations, Grayson would not be able to fund the incredible work it seeks to support, and the horses are the ones who would suffer for it.

“If those of us who reap the benefits of healthy, sound horses don’t support Grayson, the research simply will not get done,” said Haydon. “With universities strapping their expenditures and the federal government not funding equine research, investigators rely more heavily than ever on our foundation.

“While many efforts focus on helping a specific situation or a certain number of horses, scientific research has the potential to protect the largest numbers of horses today, tomorrow, and in the future. Ultimately, the greatest gratitude is reserved for our donors, without whose generosity and understanding of the importance of research, any of our accomplishments would not have been possible. There is plenty of gratitude, too, for the brilliant and dedicated individuals who conceive of, design, and accomplish the research. The horses benefit over and over.” ■

LANE’S END EMPLOYEE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

achievements of graduates who were three-year-olds in 2019.

“We get excited by having big-price yearlings, but it’s really rewarding when they go on and succeed at the racetrack.

“We had, in the 2019 Kentucky Derby, (eventual first-placed) Country House and (runner-up and William S. Farish homebred) Code of Honor. We also had Vekoma on the farm and War of Will, who was over at Oak Tree. We had so many horses in the Derby that year. That gives you great pride to have horses go on and do well on the racetrack—that’s what we’re all about.

“Code of Honor’s Travers Stakes win is probably a highlight for most of us here. Just seeing him win a race that means so much to Mr. Farish, and in Mr. Farish’s colors and being a homebred. That was a really special moment.”

Sheehan’s voice takes on an even more reverential tone when he speaks about champion Honor Code, who was bred by Dell Ridge Farm but later raised at Lane’s End prior to racing for a partnership between the

two farms that also included Teresa Viola Racing.

“The one that always sticks out in my mind as the best yearling that I’ve ever been around is Honor Code. When he came to the farm as a short yearling or weanling, he was a man amongst boys. And he was the first horse to go into Lane’s End Racing.

“For him to be from the last crop of A.P. Indy, to have the pedigree that he has and to be the physical specimen he is—he was by far the best looking yearling I’ve ever been around. He just took everyone’s breath away. And then for him to go on and be a multiple Grade 1 winner, that was exciting to see all of it come together,” Sheehan said.

In one of the most rewarding aspects of his new post as stallion manager, Sheehan said he is eager to be reunited with Honor Code and some of the other horses he has worked with as youngers, including Catalina Cruiser, Gift Box and Unified.

“Just to take care of these great racehorses and stallions and to help with the next part of their careers—that’s really exciting to me and I’m looking forward to being part of it,” he said, noting that he leapt at the new job opportunity when Bill Farish offered it to him.

“I think Bill saw it as a very important job to the farm and he wanted someone from within who he trusted. He asked me one day if I would be interested and told me to sleep on it. I immediately said, ‘Yes, but I’ll go home and sleep on it just to be sure.’

“I was honored when he asked me because it’s an important job to the farm, and for Bill to trust me with it meant a lot. If Bill wanted me to do it and trusted me to do it, I will be delighted and honored to do it.”

He also credited the dedicated staff he has worked with, as well as all those he has worked for over the years.

“I’m very thankful to everybody here and everybody who has helped me along in my career to get here. From the guys at Derrinstown that taught me the basics to everybody here at Lane’s End, Todd Claunch and Mike Cline and more—I could go on all day listing names, but if I did that, I’d forget somebody.

“And I wouldn’t be where I am today without the guys here in the barns, all these guys who have worked with me throughout the years helping to get things done. They are a special group of guys and I think we’ve got some of the best in the industry here at Lane’s End. They have the best interest of the horse in mind at all times, so it makes my job a lot easier and it makes me look good, but they’re the ones behind it,” he said.

Sheehan—who lives on the farm with his wife, Kate, a hunter-jumper rider who operates Taghadoe Bloodstock, and their daughters, five-year-old Sterling and three-year-old Lizzy, who share their parents’ love of horses—said he doesn’t plan on making any big changes in management of the stallions.

Sellers has pledged to be available at any time for help or advice needed, but he also has encouraged Sheehan to put his own stamp on the stallion operation. Sheehan, however, just wants to build on the 36-year record of success that his predecessor and Lane’s End have achieved.

“It’s gone well for many years under Billy’s watch, and I’ll try to keep everything in the same routine. We have a great staff of guys who have been doing this a long time. (A.P. Indy’s longtime groom) Asa Haley just told me he will be there 25 years as of September. So, I am going to try to keep the routine as much as possible.

“Billy and the guys on the staff have done such a great job in managing the stallions that I just want to keep on. If I can do as well as Billy did, I’ll be happy,” Sheehan said. ■



COURTESY OF LANE’S END

The Number Zero

BY AMANDA DUCKWORTH

Among the many highlights of Keeneland’s Spring Meet this year was the number zero, as there were no racing incidents at the track. It was a celebratory moment for Keeneland’s Vice President of Equine Safety Dr. Stuart Brown and his team.

In June 2020, Keeneland brought Brown on to lead an effort to develop, communicate, and enforce safety and integrity policies for both racing and sales operations; review all racing-related accidents with the goal of prevention; assess relevant equine health and safety research; and proactively communicate best practices to the racing community and public. It is a job he has taken on with gusto.

“It’s a responsibility to be great stewards of the horse, and the people here are very committed to that promise,” said Brown. “I’ve always wanted to be able to take care of horses, and this has become a really interesting way to do that in my career. This role is still getting defined almost every day, and we keep trying to improve upon it all the time.”

Brown’s unique background made him an obvious fit for the job, at least in the eyes of Keeneland. He was walking hots at the track by the time he was 15 and parlayed the knowledge he learned from those well-coming horsemen into his internationally respected veterinary career.

He spent almost three decades at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute before Bill Thomason, the president of Keeneland at the time, approached him about working for the racetrack.

“It was less of the what and more of the who that led me to take the job,” said Brown. “You have to give the credit to Bill. I worked with him for over a quarter of a century between our Mill Ridge days and serving on committees or other industry groups together. He saw something in me that I didn’t totally recognize with what he was trying to create at Keeneland.

“Now, we are fortunate to have Shannon Arvin leading here. Something she and I talk about a lot is how to find ways to help the public understand just how much we do care for horses and the lengths we will go to protect them.”

While the day-to-day details of Brown’s position are continually evolving, the cornerstone of his mission has been clear from the beginning.

“The charge I got from Bill the first day I got here was that ‘every place we touch a horse, we want to find you,’ ” said Brown. “We are constantly looking for ways to improve efforts to keep the horses as safe as possible. No matter what the situation is, we want to make sure we always do right by the horse. It is a very gratifying job.

“The role that I have is so comprehensive, and I talk to and spend time with a lot of employee groups. We all own a piece of safety here because we all have the opportunity to make novel observations about something that might keep a horse safe. There may be very narrow windows of opportunity where we can have an impact, and if we miss them, shame on us.”

The demands on Brown’s schedule shift depending on if there are races or sales going on, but no matter the time of year, he points to some specifics that have helped elevate equine safety. A key change hap-

pened shortly before Brown was named to his role, when Churchill Downs and Keeneland jointly announced that they were establishing equine safety agreements.

“Those agreements at the time were somewhat revolutionary in our jurisdiction,” he said. “Keeneland worked with Churchill Downs because we share a population of horses between us, and we wanted those standards to be raised for everyone we sought to serve. It’s not so much that it’s defined by looking for something that is wrong, but rather it’s a filter through which we can look at horses and then have conversations about their wellbeing.

“The equine safety agreements connect every horse on our grounds to a trainer, to an attending veterinarian, and to me. When you look through these filters, and try to understand where they are on the range of potential risk exposure, you can then go and have the qualitative conversations and say, ‘Help me understand how that horse is doing.’”

Because it is impossible to be everywhere at once, Keeneland also has a video system in place to help.

“We have been able to develop a video surveillance system that surrounds both the main track and the training track,” Brown said. “We are able to capture really unique video from multiple different angles so we can do gait analysis and look for evenness of movement and things like that. This camera system also gives us the ability to go back and look at anything that has occurred so we can improve upon what we are doing the next time. It’s been a tremendous tool.”

However, Brown is not content to rely on just technology, and his team’s accessibility plays an important role in the success of the position.

“We are all united by the fact we work for the horse,” said Brown. “To me, 85% of life is showing up. So, I come here every morning at 5:30. I am here when the track is opened, so I can be available to have conversations with anybody that wants to have them.

“What’s gratifying to me is how many horsemen and their veterinarians want to come up and have those conversations. They know that all I am trying to do is help everybody put their best foot forward.”

A key member of Brown’s team is Dr. George Mundy, who can often be found watching morning works from Keeneland’s fourth floor, which provides an unobstructed view of all of the happenings, or across town overseeing Keeneland’s other training facility, The Thoroughbred Center.

“I am helped a lot in this role by Dr. Mundy, who works as our racing safety officer,” said Brown. “He brings 30 years of regulatory veterinary experience to the table. We have been able to work in a 1 and 1A kind of arrangement so we can support one another and all the horsemen at both locations.”

While Keeneland has positioned itself to be a leader in equine safety, Brown believes that if other jurisdictions learn from the systems that have been put in place, it will lead to better days for everyone.

“We hope that others will join us and follow in these kinds of efforts because we believe so strongly in what we are doing,” said Brown. “If all us were doing all of these things together, think of the incredible impact we could have no matter where our horses travelled.

“Keeneland is such a unique organization in terms of what it means to the industry both on the racing and the sale side. We can talk about all the great things we can do as a community advocate, as an entertainment center, and all the other things we do for fan engagement and involvement, but it starts with us taking care of the horse first.” ■



LEE SEARING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

JM: How did you first get interested in Thoroughbreds?

LS: My mother and father lived in El Segundo, close to Hollywood Park. When my grandfather came from Ireland he loved the horses and went to Hollywood Park every day. We’re talking 1948 to 1956, when they took me for the first time to the races.

From there it became a family affair. On weekends we would attend the races, whether it was Santa Anita, Del Mar, or Hollywood. My father became involved in horse ownership right away down at Agua Caliente and I’ll bet you that from 1956, when I was eight, to 1966, when I turned 18, we attended 80 percent of weekends there. We won more than 100 races at Agua Caliente and we loved Tijuana.

I purchased my first horse, Secret Touch, when I was 18. I said to my father, “They have \$2,000 races down there; would you split a horse with me?” I was working by then, while going to college, so I put up \$1,000 and I paid my fair share of the expenses. Our trainer was L.W. Jenner, whose nickname was Swede. He wore a suit and tie to Caliente every Saturday and Sunday. We won our first three races with Secret Touch and I was off and running.

How did you come to run such a successful business?

When I graduated from college, in 1970, I went to work for my father, who had just started a business making welded steel tubing. The tubing goes into construction, homes, fencing, medical equipment, screen doors, furniture, scaffolding. It goes into everything.

By 1985 I wanted to own my own company so I put together a group that included my brother, Jim, and my father, who came out of retire-

ment to help me out. We started with no money, no machinery, no sales, no anything. We started Searing Industries out in Los Angeles. That company spent five years growing and almost going broke before we moved out here to Rancho Cucamonga near a steel mill, which gives me my raw material. From 1990, when we moved out here and started to grow, things got better. We continued to buy equipment, we continued to grow. By 2012 we opened up a huge 400,000-square-foot facility in Cheyenne, Wyoming. We now have two locations and 200 employees.

How has your racing stable and breeding program grown?

There were about 10 years after we started the company when we had no money so we didn’t own any horses and I didn’t really even have time to follow the sport. But around 2000 I started to buy 2-year-olds-in-training and claim high-priced horses with John Sadler. Now my horses are with John Shirreffs and Peter Eurton.

I have a breeding program trying to raise horses and buy better mares with [bloodstock agent] David Ingordo. I buy six to eight yearlings every year and I have a broodmare band. We race some and we sell some. The past few years I have doubled down on horse racing and today I own many more horses than I’ve ever owned in my life.

How did you come to campaign Honor A.P.?

He was bred by George Krikorian and David is friends with him so we knew about the horse a little bit. When they put them in The [Fasig-Tipton] Saratoga Sale, David called and said, “Lee, we have to get this horse, but he’s going to cost a lot of money.” I said, “Just send me a picture.”

I looked at the pedigree and the horse was by Honor Code, who stands at Lane’s End, just like his sire A.P. Indy did. We only had a chance because Honor Code was just getting started and we were lucky enough to buy

him. He was an expensive yearling (\$850,000) and he trained well from the beginning. I named him but I felt I had to check with Lane’s End first. They loved that I was going to do that.

He ran his first race and got a bad start or he would have won that one, too, but then immediately took off. We put him in a two-turn race and he showed his brilliance.

When he won the Santa Anita Derby, if you watch it, Authentic looked him in the eye and Honor A.P. was bigger, stronger, and faster. Then in the Kentucky Derby we got a bad break but we obviously ran the fastest time [adjusted for ground loss]. I think we had the best 3-year-old in the country and we just had really bad luck with a very minor injury after the Derby.

What were Honor A.P.’s greatest attributes that you hope to see in his progeny?

He’s always been an absolutely gorgeous horse and every quality that you want to be a stallion, he’s got it. He had a tremendously strong foreleg, tremendously well-defined hip and shoulder, and a beautiful head on him. He is definitely a horse that can go two turns so he has a lot of brilliance. Stamina was never his problem; he was precocious.

When we decided we would syndicate him there was a lot of interest right away. He bred 110 mares in his first year and I’d say that’s sure admirable.

Is it true he’s in A.P. Indy’s old stall?

There was never a horse in A.P. Indy’s stall until we made this deal. Honor A.P. got the stall, his pasture, and his groom. That’s just such an honor and so exciting for me. It’s something people haven’t really heard about yet and was done rather quietly but maybe once Honor A.P. produces something really special you’ll read about it more. ■



WORD SCRAMBLE

LARFINAOC _____
IPSIMHCNAOHP _____
EYOKCJ _____
ISLCASC _____
OFDRBURAS _____

PEREDGIE _____
EOOHVS _____
ILTLNOSA _____
NESKBRIL _____
RHETLA _____