



The Horsemen's f Newsletter

April 2026

Vol. 35 • Number 4

Minimum Purse Payments Increase

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA), in coordination with The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC), has approved an increase in minimum purse payouts for all placing positions, further strengthening support for horsemen across the Maryland racing program.

The MTHA Board of Directors approved the measure on March 19 following a recommendation from the MTHA Purse Committee, which includes representatives from TMJC.

The changes will take effect beginning with races on March 21 at Laurel Park and will remain in place through the Laurel Park summer meet, which concludes June 28. The structure will be reviewed at that time to determine whether it should be continued.

Under the revised payment schedule:

Fourth place will receive 5% of the purse or \$1,000, whichever is greater

Fifth place will receive 3% of the purse or \$1,000, whichever is greater

Sixth place will receive 2% of the purse or \$1,000, whichever is greater

Seventh through last place will receive a minimum of \$1,000

This adjustment ensures that more participants earn meaningful purse distributions, particularly in deeper fields, and reflects the continued commitment of both the MTHA and TMJC to supporting owners and trainers at every level.

Based on current projections, the revised structure is expected to allocate approximately \$1 million annually from the Purse Dedication Account toward increased payouts.



Pension Signups Open Thru June 1

Virtual signups will again be the primary means to participate in the Maryland Backstretch Pension Plan, which this year will receive a \$1-million contribution as approved by the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association Board of Directors.

Signups will be available beginning April 1, with a deadline of June 1. The online registration form is available at: <http://backstretch-pension.com>.

Backstretch workers and horsemen employed in the care of horses on the backstretch at Laurel Park, Pimlico Race Course or the Fair Hill Training Center, including trainers, are eligible to participate. However, the eligible employee must have worked a minimum of 1,000 hours during 2025 and provide documentation to that effect (with a W-2 or 1099 form, or a tax return).

Benefits become available when the employee reaches the age of 65, or at age 55 with 25 years of service. More about the program including qualifications is available at: <https://mdhorsemen.com/index.php/services/pension-program>.

As part of the signup process you must submit a W2, 1099 or tax return documenting

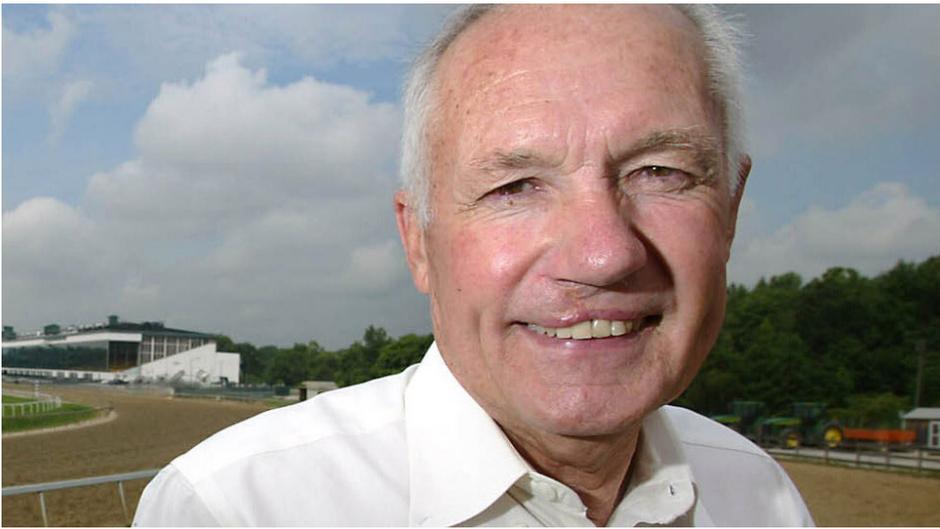
the earnings you reported on the registration form. You will also need your Maryland Racing Commission badge. You may do this by emailing a PDF or a photo of the tax documents and badge to info@mdhorsemen.com; texting a photo of the tax documents and badge to (443) 805-1995; or dropping forms off at the MTHA Racetrack Office at Laurel.

If you need assistance filling out the online form in English or Español, call Diana Pinones at 410-902-6844, Tom LaMarra at (859) 492-8365 or Jessica Hammond at (301) 776-0404. The MTHA staff would prefer that if you visit the office for assistance, please do so in the morning in the Recreation Room office at Laurel rather than during live racing. You are welcome to schedule an appointment.

You are not enrolled in the program until you receive confirmation of your successful registration. At this time you will also receive a current statement if you have been enrolled in the plan for at least two consecutive years. The following categories of licensees are not eligible to participate: owners (as opposed to owner/trainers), security, maintenance, valets, parking, mutuels, vendors, jockeys, or miscellaneous.

To Register, Eligible Horsemen Should Visit:

backstretchpension.com



Celebration Of Life Set For King Leatherbury

A Celebration of Life for trainer King T. Leatherbury, who passed away February 10 at age 92, is planned for Saturday, April 18, at Laurel Park. His family is participating in the arrangements.

The date coincides with the running of the King T. Leatherbury Stakes at 5 1/2 furlongs on the turf. The event will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Sports Book on the second floor of the clubhouse.

Leatherbury, a winner of 6,508 races, was inducted into the National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame in 2015. Born in Shady Side, Md.,

in 1933, Leatherbury got his trainer's license in 1958 and won his first race the following year with Mister L at Sunshine Park in Florida. By the time he retired in 2023, his runners had earned almost \$64.7 million.

Leatherbury, known throughout most of his career as a sharp claiming trainer, captured 52 training titles in Maryland, 26 each at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course, and four meet championships at Delaware Park. He led all North American trainers in wins in 1977 and 1978, and won 300 or more races each year from 1975 to 1978.

Off-The-Turf Races To Receive Purse Boost

In a continued collaborative effort to strengthen field size and enhance wagering appeal, the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA), in partnership with The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC), has approved a targeted purse adjustment for turf races moved to the main track.

The measure, approved by the MTHA Board of Directors on March 19 following a recommendation from the MTHA Purse Committee—which includes representatives from the Maryland Jockey Club—will take effect with the start of the Laurel Park spring meet on Friday, April 10.



Under the program, races taken off the turf that maintain seven or more betting interests will receive a 20% purse increase. The initiative will remain in place through June 28, 2026, and will be reevaluated for continuation ahead of the Laurel fall meet beginning in September.

Under the new structure, qualifying races that come off the turf but retain sufficient field size will see meaningful purse enhancements. For example:

A \$47,000 maiden special weight would increase to \$56,400

A \$24,000 lifetime claiming race would increase to \$28,800

During discussions, it was emphasized that maintaining larger fields in off-the-turf scenarios has a direct and significant impact on pari-mutuel handle. Data consistently shows that races with seven or more betting interests generate substantially stronger wagering activity compared to those with smaller fields.

This collaborative initiative between the MTHA and Maryland Jockey Club is designed to better align incentives, encourage participation when races are moved off the turf, and support a more competitive and attractive racing product at Laurel Park.

FREE PPV VIEWING PARTY FOR HORSEMEN IN LAUREL TRACK KITCHEN
TYSON VS MAYWEATHER
SATURDAY, APRIL 25 AT 8PM

The Horsemen's Newsletter

Published by the **MTHA**

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We've Got Your Ticket

Sign up for O's, BaySox or DC United ticket raffles by calling Dan Mangum at (410) 802-5798.

Renaissance Awards Winners Announced At Luncheon



The partnership of Madison Avenue Racing Stable, Morris Kernan Jr., and Jagger Inc. was named Owner of the Year, Brittany Russell earned Trainer of the Year honors, and apprentice rider Yedsit Hazlewood was voted Jockey of the Year at the 2025 Renaissance Awards luncheon held March 22 at Laurel Park.

Presented annually, the Renaissance Awards celebrate excellence across Maryland's Thoroughbred racing and breeding industry, recognizing the top owner, trainer, jockey, breeder, and stand-out horses from the previous year.

This year marked the first time the awards were presented during a live racing program, with the luncheon held in the afternoon at Laurel Park. The new format was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees and will be considered for future editions of the event.

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA) honors the leading owner, trainer, jockey, and top horses in five categories, while the Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MHBA) recognizes Maryland-bred champions on the racetrack, as well as Breeder of the Year, Stallion of the Year, and Broodmare of the Year.

Leading Connections Recognized

The ownership partnership of Madison Avenue Racing Stable, Morris Kernan Jr., and Jagger Inc. enjoyed a standout 2025 campaign, finishing as leading owner during the Laurel Park fall meet and recording 126 wins nationally.

"We were the second-leading owner in the country last year, won the title at Delaware Park, and were second in the standings

at Parx," said trainer Jamie Ness, who races as Jagger Inc. and was also a finalist for Maryland Breeder of the Year. "We're going to keep trying for a Mid-Atlantic triple."

"We work hard together," added John Witte of Madison Avenue Racing. "Thanks to Jamie, we had a very good year. Our goals for 2026 are to keep going."

Brittany Russell continued her dominance in Maryland, finishing 2025 as the state's leading trainer with 108 victories. Her Maryland-based runners alone earned more than \$4.1 million.

"A lot of work goes into what we do as trainers," Russell said. "Being a finalist alongside Gary Capuano and Mike Trombetta is an accomplishment in itself."

Apprentice jockey Yedsit Hazlewood, represented at the ceremony by his agent John Di Natale, was recognized for a breakout season in which he established himself as one of the region's rising riding stars.

Equine Standouts

Barbadian Runner, owned by AJ Will Win Stables and trained by Henry Walters, was one of the day's top honorees, earning both Maryland-bred Champion 3-Year-Old Male and Maryland Male Dirt Horse of the Year.

"He's the horse of a lifetime," said owner Scott Groh.

Mindframe, a two-time Grade I winner in 2025 bred by the late R. Larry Johnson, was named Maryland-bred Horse of the Year and Maryland-bred Champion Older Male. Mindframe is owned by Repole Stable and St. Elias Stables and trained by Todd Pletcher.

Johnson was also honored posthumously as Maryland Breeder of the Year.

Complete List of Award Winners

MTHA Award Winners

Backstretch Worker of the Year:
Charles Sniffen

Owner of the Year:
Madison Avenue Racing Stable,
Morris Kernan Jr. and Jagger Inc.

Trainer of the Year: Brittany Russell
Jockey of the Year: Yedsit Hazlewood

Male Dirt Horse of the Year:
Barbadian Runner

Male Turf Horse of the Year: Witty

Female Dirt Horse of the Year:
Complexity Jane

Female Turf Horse of the Year:
Lifelovelaughter

Claimer of the Year: Zero Blitz

MHBA Maryland-Bred Champions

Maryland-bred Horse of the Year:
Mindframe

Champion 2-Year-Old Male: Romeo
Champion 2-Year-Old Filly:
Dazzling Dame

Champion 3-Year-Old Male:
Barbadian Runner

Champion 3-Year-Old Filly: Onyx Ten
Champion Older Male: Mindframe
Champion Older Female: Splendor

Champion Sprinter: Splendor
Champion Turf Runner: Future Is Now
Champion Steeplechaser: Keys Discount

Broodmare of the Year: Slow and Steady
Stallion of the Year: Great Notion
Breeder of the Year: R. Larry Johnson



MTHA Establishes Dedication Email To Enhance Engagement



The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA) Board of Directors has unanimously approved the creation of a new, dedicated email address designed to strengthen communication and engagement with its membership.

Effective immediately, MTHA members may submit feedback, ideas, and suggestions directly to the full Board of Directors by emailing:

board@mdhorsemen.com

This new initiative ensures that all correspondence sent to the address will be shared with every member of the Board, allowing for greater transparency, improved responsiveness, and a more direct line of communication between horsemen and leadership.

The Board believes that open communication is essential to the continued growth and success of Maryland racing. By creating a centralized channel for member input, the MTHA aims to encourage constructive dialogue and ensure that the voices of its members are heard and considered in the decision-making process.

Members are encouraged to use this email to share their thoughts, raise concerns, and offer ideas that can help strengthen the industry.

HISA To Host Open Forum April 22

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) will be on-site at Laurel Park on Wednesday, April 22, as part of its ongoing national listening tour aimed at engaging directly with horsemen and industry participants.

HISA's leadership team will host a two-hour open Q&A session beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the Sports Bar.



This session is designed to provide horsemen with a meaningful opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and participate in an open and productive dialogue about HISA's rules, programs, and their day-to-day impact on the industry.

The goal is straightforward: to foster direct communication. HISA leadership will be available to listen, offer clarity, and engage in a constructive conversation about what is working, what challenges remain, and where improvements can be made.

Lunch will be provided at no cost for all attending horsemen.

Event Details

Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Location: Sports Bar, Laurel Park

Lunch: Complimentary

All Laurel Park horsemen are strongly encouraged to attend and take part in this important discussion.

For questions, please contact Mackenzie Kirker-Head at mackenzie.kirkerhead@hisaus.

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MTHA GOLF TOURNAMENT MON., APRIL 27

Walden Country Club
in Crofton,
Registration: 11 a.m.
Tee Off: Noon

\$65 PER GOLFER
Contact Dan Mangum
at 410-802-5798

