



The Horsemen's f Newsletter

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\$700K Bonus Program Returns For MD Breds

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA) and The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC) have announced the return of the Maryland-Bred Owner & Developer Bonus Program for summer 2026, continuing a successful initiative that supports Maryland-bred horses during the state's annual live racing break.

Following a strong debut in 2025, the program will return with the same structure and rules, with one key enhancement, a \$700,000 Bonus Pool.

This represents a \$100,000 increase from last year's program, further strengthening incentives for Maryland-breds competing out of state during the summer months.

The bonus program was approved by the Maryland Racing Commission (MRC) at its April 8 meeting.

Program Overview

The bonus program is designed to support Maryland-bred horses racing at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park during Maryland's live racing hiatus.

The 2026 program will run from July 3, 2026, through August 23, 2026, aligning with the Laurel Park summer break.

Eligibility

Maryland-bred horses that finish 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in non-restricted overnight races at Colonial Downs or Delaware Park.

Exclusions: Stakes races, Certified races, State-bred restricted races.

Payout Structure

The \$700,000 bonus pool will be distributed using a points-based system tied

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LAMAR JACKSON TO HOST NTL EVENT AT LAUREL PARK

The National Thoroughbred League (NTL) will open its 2026 season in Maryland with a Kentucky Derby weekend event at Laurel Park on Saturday, May 2, hosted by Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson.

Jackson's involvement brings a high level of visibility to the event and represents a unique opportunity to showcase Maryland racing to a broader audience during one of the sport's biggest weekends.

The Laurel Park program is part of a two-day NTL Derby weekend celebration,

which will begin Friday, May 1 at The Horse You Came In On Saloon before shifting to Laurel Park for Saturday's live racing event. The league is promoting the weekend as a coordinated experience designed to engage fans both on and off the racetrack.

The NTL operates as a team-based, season-long competition featuring city-affiliated teams that earn points based on race results at events held across the country. Horses compete on behalf of these teams in designated races, with standings tracked throughout the season to determine an overall champion.

At Laurel Park, Races 5, 6, and 7 will serve

as official NTL events:

Race 5 – The Charm City Cup

Race 6 – The Golden Horseshoe Classic

Race 7 – The Baltimore Blitz

These races will count toward team standings and represent the core of the league's competition for the day.

Each NTL event combines live racing with enhanced promotion and fan engagement, positioning the sport in a way that appeals to

both traditional participants and new audiences. For horsemen, the Laurel Park stop offers an

opportunity to compete on a nationally promoted stage with increased exposure.

Maryland previously hosted an NTL event at Pimlico in 2025, which was widely viewed as a success, generating strong fan interest and engagement. That momentum helped position Laurel Park as the league's 2026 season-opening venue.

With Derby weekend drawing attention across the sport, this Saturday's event provides an additional platform to highlight Maryland racing and connect with new fans. Efforts like the NTL reflect a broader industry focus on growing the sport and expanding its reach.



NATIONAL THOROUGHbred LEAGUE



Industry Communication Groups Active On Whatsapp



Pension Signups Continue Until 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 are underway with more than 135 submitted. The deadline is June 1. The online registration form is available at: <http://backstretchpension.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 Race-track 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.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve communication and coordination across Maryland racing, the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association continues to utilize WhatsApp groups as a real-time communication tool for horsemen and industry participants.

These groups have proven to be an effective way to share timely updates, facilitate productive discussion, and streamline communication among key stakeholders.

Current WhatsApp groups:

- MJC Racing Office
- MJC Counts
- Laurel Park Trainers
- Backstretch Discussion
- Maryland Jockeys

All groups are connected within a broader Maryland racing community structure, allowing all participants to receive important alerts, announcements, and updates relevant to their specific role, while also maintaining the ability to communicate within their individual groups.

The platform has been particularly useful for:

- Track surface feedback and updates
- Racing office communications
- Weather-related notifications
- Community announcements
- General day-to-day coordination

Each group is moderated to ensure conversations remain professional, constructive, and on-topic. WhatsApp is intended to be a productive communication tool, and inappropriate or inflammatory behavior will not be permitted.

Participation continues to grow, and additional groups may be added as needed to further enhance communication across the Maryland racing community.

If you are not currently part of a group and would like to be included, please contact the MTHA. Please note that the Laurel Park Trainers and Maryland Jockeys groups are restricted to members of those respective communities.

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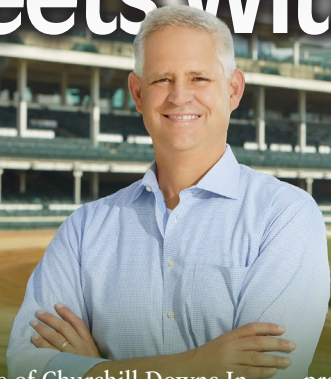


We've Got Your Ticket

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

The advertisement features three logos at the top: the Baltimore Orioles (orange and black), the Bowie Baysox (blue and white), and the DC United (white and red). The background is black with the text in white and gold.

Churchill Downs CEO Meets With MTHA



In the wake of Churchill Downs Incorporated (CDI) announcing an agreement in principle to acquire the intellectual property rights to the Preakness Stakes and Black-Eyed Susan Stakes from 1/ST RACING for a reported \$85 million, CEO Bill Carstanjen met with the MTHA Board of Directors to discuss the transaction and its potential impact on Maryland racing.

The agreement transfers ownership of the trademarks and branding associated with the Preakness but does not affect operational control of racing in Maryland, which remains with the non-profit Maryland Jockey Club. CDI will assume the role previously held by 1/ST RACING as the intellectual property holder, with those rights licensed back to the State under the existing framework.

Direct Engagement

During the meeting, Carstanjen emphasized that CDI is “stepping into the shoes” of 1/ST RACING and is not acquiring additional rights beyond those already in place. He indicated the deal is fully executed and expected to close in the near term—likely in the second or early third quarter of 2026—subject to standard conditions.

The discussion gave Board members an opportunity to hear directly from CDI leadership regarding their intentions, priorities, and long-term outlook for Maryland racing.

A Willing Partner

Carstanjen made clear that CDI does not intend to disrupt Maryland's existing racing structure or dictate its direction.

“We are not going to be disruptive to Maryland racing. We feel we can help,” he said, noting that key governance decisions—including the non-

profit structure of the Maryland Jockey Club—will remain with Maryland stakeholders.

Strategic Vision

CDI's interest in the Preakness aligns with its broader strategy surrounding the Triple Crown. As the owner of the Kentucky Derby, CDI views the Preakness as a critical component of both its portfolio and the sport's overall structure.

Carstanjen described the Triple Crown as central to CDI's identity, emphasizing the importance of enhancing its long-term viability and national appeal.

Regional Collaboration

Discussion also focused on the Mid-Atlantic racing circuit, particularly the evolving relationship between Maryland and Virginia. That collaboration expanded in 2025 through coordination between the MTHA and CDI Director of Racing Gary Palmisano.

CDI emphasized the importance of continued cooperation between the two jurisdictions, suggesting that Maryland and Virginia are best positioned as a unified circuit rather than competing entities.

Carstanjen noted that Maryland racing has “fantastic bones,” citing the strength of the purse structure and overall foundation. He also pointed to opportunities to enhance the circuit through calendar optimization, investment in turf racing, and more effective use of regional resources.

Looking Ahead

While CDI's acquisition represents a meaningful shift in ownership of the Preakness intellectual property, the immediate operational structure of Maryland racing remains unchanged.

Timonium Meet Set for Seven Days in 2026

The 2026 Timonium meet will consist of seven days of live racing during the Maryland State Fair, following a one-year operating agreement between the non-profit Maryland Jockey Club and the Maryland State Fair Board of Directors. Under the agreement, The Maryland Jockey Club will provide the necessary staffing and operational support to ensure the meet can be conducted.

Racing will be conducted over two weekends:

Friday, August 28 – Sunday, August 30
Friday, September 4 – Monday, September 7 (Labor Day)

“Timonium continues to be an important part of our summer racing schedule,” said longtime Racing Secretary Georganne Hale. “We're pleased to once again offer a seven-day meet that provides opportunities for horsemen in a unique and competitive setting.”

Timonium remains a distinctive stop on the Maryland circuit, offering a short, concentrated meet on the fairgrounds' five-furlong track.

Additional condition book details and stall information will be made available as they are finalized.

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Expanded Backstretch Recreation Program Continues to Thrive



The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association's expanded Backstretch Recreation Program continues to gain momentum in 2026, with a full and diverse schedule of events planned for May and June at Laurel Park and beyond.

Since Bryant Paz, operator of the track kitchen, assumed coordination of the program, participation has steadily increased, and feedback from backstretch workers has remained overwhelmingly positive. The MTHA Board of Directors continues to recognize the program as an important quality-of-life initiative for the community.

On-Track Events - May 2026

- May 4 (Noon): Basketball Tournament
- May 5 (Noon): Cinco de Mayo Party
- May 11 (Noon): Hot Dog Day
- May 18 (Noon): El Salvador Pupusa Day
- May 20 (Noon): Poker Tournament
- May 25 (Noon): Memorial Day BBQ
- May 26 (Noon): Billiards Tournament

Off-Site Trips - May 2026

- May 12 (11:30 AM): National Zoo - Washington, D.C.
- May 19 (Noon): Centennial Park

The expanded 2026 schedule continues into June with an even broader mix of activities:

On-Track Events - June 2026

- June 1 (Noon): Burger Day
- June 8 (Noon): Italian Ice Day
- June 9 (Noon): Horseshoe Tournament
- June 11 (3 PM): Mexico World Cup Game
- June 15 (Noon): Spaghetti Lunch
- June 16 (5 PM): Video Game Tournament
- June 22 (Noon): Taco Monday
- June 29 (Noon): Hot Dog Day

Off-Site Trips - June 2026

- June 2 (11 AM): Sandy Point Beach
- June 23 (10 AM): Ocean City Day Trip
- June 25 (6 PM): Nationals vs. Phillies Game
- June 30 (11 AM): Greenbrier State Park

As the summer progresses, the MTHA remains committed to building on the program's success by offering a wide variety of recreational, cultural, and social opportunities tailored specifically for backstretch workers. From sporting events and tournaments to beach trips and community meals, the initiative is designed to provide meaningful breaks from the demanding daily routine of life on the backstretch while fostering a stronger sense of community.

For more information or to register for upcoming events, backstretch workers are encouraged to contact Bryant Paz directly at 240-319-1892.

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to race conditions and Maryland purse equivalents.

Total points earned across all eligible races will determine value per point.

Each horse's share is based on total points accumulated.

Bonus payments are split evenly 50% to Owner(s), 50% to Developer(s).

The Developer is defined as the owner at the time of the horse's first career start.

Points System

The program will again utilize a four-tiered points structure aligned with Maryland purse levels.

Level	Categories	MD Purse	Points for 1-2-3
A	No price; CLM \$50K & Up	\$47K & Up	10 pts. 5 pts. 2.5 pts.
B	CLM \$30K - \$45K	\$33K - \$41K	8 pts. 4 pts. 2 pts.
C	CLM \$16K - \$25K	\$26K - \$30K	6 pts. 3 pts. 1.5 pts.
D	CLM \$6K - \$12,500	\$15,500 - \$24K	4 pts. 2 pts. 1 pt.

Starter Handicap races receive points equivalent to two claiming levels higher.

Continuing Support

This program complements Maryland's existing Owner & Developer Bonus structure, which provides:

30% purse bonuses (15% Owner / 15% Developer).

For Maryland-breds finishing 1st-3rd in eligible races at Laurel Park, Pimlico, and Timonium.

In 2025, the out-of-state bonus program delivered significant returns, with nearly 200 Maryland-bred horses earning bonuses while competing at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park.

Building On Success

"The response to this program last year was extremely positive," said Katharine M. Voss, President of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association. "Our goal is to make sure Maryland-breds remain competitive and financially supported even when racing shifts out of state during the summer. Increasing the bonus pool to \$700,000 reflects that commitment and the importance of this program to our horsemen."

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