



# The Horsemen's f Newsletter

July 2026

Vol. 35 • Number 7

## MEDSTAR Doctors Available During Break



With live racing at Laurel Park on its annual summer hiatus, MedStar Health physicians serving the Maryland Horsemen's Health System will be available on a limited schedule until racing resumes.

The Laurel summer meet concluded on Sunday, June 28, with physicians working their regular race day schedule through the end of the meet.

During the break, physicians will see patients at the MTHA office in the Laurel Park grandstand on the following dates:

Dr. Jason Pothast: Friday, July 10 and Fri, August 7, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Dr. Kelly Ryan: Friday, July 24 and Friday, August 14, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Laurel Park will remain open for simulcasting throughout the summer break, and the MTHA office may be accessed through the grandstand during normal operating hours.

To help ensure timely care, horsemen are encouraged to schedule an appointment in advance so physicians can anticipate patient volume. To schedule an appointment or obtain additional information, please contact the MTHA office at 410-902-6841.

## MTHA Applauds Gov. Moore's Decision To Secure Preakness

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association applauds Governor Wes Moore and the State of Maryland for exercising the State's right of first refusal to acquire the intellectual property rights to the Preakness Stakes and Black-Eyed Susan Stakes, ensuring permanent Maryland ownership of one of the state's most valuable sporting and economic assets.

By matching the \$85 million purchase offer, the State will acquire ownership of the Preakness name, trademarks, branding, and associated intellectual property—preserving the future of the Middle Jewel of the Triple Crown for generations to come. The acquisition represents another landmark step in Maryland's comprehensive effort to revitalize Thoroughbred racing through the redevelopment of Pimlico Race Course, modernization of racing infrastructure, and implementation of a long-term nonprofit operating model for the industry.

"This is a defining moment for Maryland racing," said MTHA Executive Director David Richardson. "Governor Moore's leadership ensures that decisions regarding the future of the Preakness will remain in Maryland's hands while protecting one of our state's most recognizable and economically important brands. We look forward to working alongside the Governor, the Maryland Jockey Club, and our industry partners to build a stronger future for Maryland racing."

The Governor's action eliminates long-term uncertainty surrounding ownership of

the Preakness brand while ensuring that future revenues and opportunities generated by the event remain focused on benefiting Maryland's racing industry, agricultural community, and economy. State officials have indicated that the acquisition will be financed through revenue generated by the Preakness and Black-Eyed Susan Stakes, without the use of General Fund tax dollars.

The decision comes as Maryland continues implementation of the Pimlico Plus plan, including the redevelopment of historic Pimlico Race Course into a year-round racing and entertainment venue and the transition to a modern, nonprofit racing operation designed to provide long-term stability for Maryland's horsemen, breeders, owners, and fans.

For Maryland's horsemen, the announcement represents another significant milestone in securing the future of live Thoroughbred racing in the state. Combined with the ongoing investment in new racing facilities and infrastructure, permanent Maryland ownership of the Preakness provides a strong foundation for future growth and reinforces the state's commitment to maintaining its position as one of the nation's premier racing jurisdictions.

The MTHA extends its appreciation to Governor Moore, the Maryland General Assembly, and all of the industry stakeholders whose collaboration and commitment continue to shape a stronger future for Maryland racing.



# Groom Awards Program Returns

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association is pleased with the restart of a program by which a selection is made for the best-turned-out horse in the paddock before every race at Laurel Park.

Now called the MTHA Best Turned Out Award program (rewarding excellence in horsemanship), the grooms selected were presented with a sealed envelope containing a commemorative card listing the date and race number as well as a \$25 Amazon gift card. The program returned Friday, June 20, and continued for the six live rac-

ing programs through June 28, closing day of the summer meet.

The MTHA thanks Heather Rolon, a backstretch employee who also works for the Maryland Racing Commission, for agreeing to make the selections from her regular post in the paddock.

The MTHA looks forward to the Laurel fall meet, which begins Friday, September 11, when the program will continue on a daily basis. Thanks to all who participated and congratulations to the winners.

# Board Of Public Works Approves State Purchase Of Laurel Park

Maryland's plan to preserve and strengthen the state's Thoroughbred racing industry took another significant step forward today as the Maryland Board of Public Works approved the purchase of Laurel Park by the Maryland Stadium Authority.

The approval authorizes the State to complete its previously announced acquisition of the 229-acre Laurel Park property, which will become Maryland's permanent Thoroughbred training center as part of the Pimlico Plus redevelopment initiative.

The purchase follows months of evaluation after the State determined that the previously proposed Shamrock Farm site was not the most practical or cost-effective location for the long-term training center. State officials concluded that utilizing Laurel Park's existing infrastructure will substantially reduce construction costs while minimizing disruption for Maryland's horsemen and the thousands of horses that train in the state each year.

## Under the long-term plan:

Laurel Park will transition into a year-round, state-owned Thoroughbred training center.

The facility will continue to provide approximately 1,200 stalls along with established dirt and turf training surfaces.

The newly rebuilt Pimlico Race Course will operate as a ship-in racing facility when construction is completed.

Consolidating training operations at Laurel is expected to reduce operating costs while preserving a stable home base for Maryland horsemen.

The acquisition is a key component of Maryland's broader effort to modernize its racing infrastructure while ensuring the long-term future of the industry. State officials have projected significant capital and operating savings by repurposing Laurel Park rather than constructing an entirely new training facility elsewhere.

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association has consistently supported the plan, emphasizing that maintaining Laurel Park as Maryland's centralized training facility provides long-term stability for owners, trainers, backstretch workers, breeders, and the many businesses that depend on the racing industry.

Additional planning and design work for the Laurel Park training center will continue as the Maryland Stadium Authority advances the redevelopment process alongside construction of the new Pimlico Race Course.

# Horsemen Mourn Passing Of Edwards, Balsinger and Hairfield

The Maryland racing community is mourning the recent loss of Derrick Edwards, Troy Balsinger and William Hairfield.

Edwards began his career at Charles Town Races in West Virginia before working at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course. He was the steady, trusted hand assigned to three Preakness Stakes winners: California Chrome in 2014, American Pharoah in 2015, and Justify in 2018.

In May of this year, Edwards traveled to Churchill Downs to be part of the starting gate crew and handled Golden Tempo, the eventual winner of the Kentucky Derby.

Bruce Wagner, the starter for TMJC, said Edwards was part of this team for about 18 years. He said Edwards regularly worked on the gate crew for the Kentucky Derby, was on the Saratoga Race Course gate crew for several summers and also worked at Colonial Downs.

"He went to work the Derby every year, and I went with him two of those years," Wagner said. "Last year, we both went to Del Mar to work the Breeders' Cup. He was one

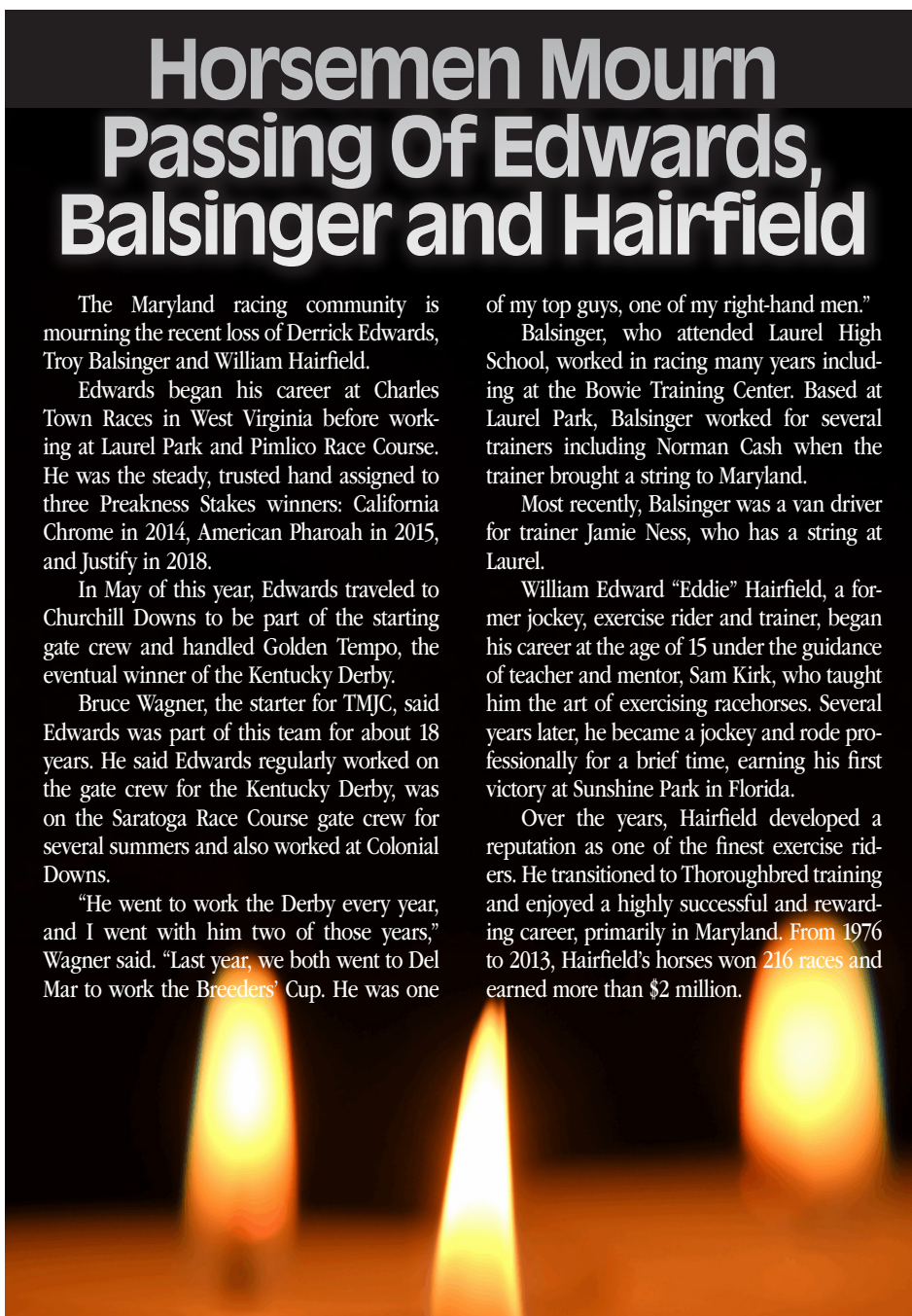
of my top guys, one of my right-hand men."

Balsinger, who attended Laurel High School, worked in racing many years including at the Bowie Training Center. Based at Laurel Park, Balsinger worked for several trainers including Norman Cash when the trainer brought a string to Maryland.

Most recently, Balsinger was a van driver for trainer Jamie Ness, who has a string at Laurel.

William Edward "Eddie" Hairfield, a former jockey, exercise rider and trainer, began his career at the age of 15 under the guidance of teacher and mentor, Sam Kirk, who taught him the art of exercising racehorses. Several years later, he became a jockey and rode professionally for a brief time, earning his first victory at Sunshine Park in Florida.

Over the years, Hairfield developed a reputation as one of the finest exercise riders. He transitioned to Thoroughbred training and enjoyed a highly successful and rewarding career, primarily in Maryland. From 1976 to 2013, Hairfield's horses won 216 races and earned more than \$2 million.



# Timonium's State Fair Meet: A Highlight of Summer

When the dark period for live racing in Maryland ends in late August, the action will again return to the Maryland State Fair at Timonium for two weeks.

The Timonium meet, always a highlight of the summer in Maryland, will span seven days as has been the case in recent years. The Maryland State Fair Board of Directors opted to run the seven days it requested from the Maryland Racing Commission and has a one-year agreement with The Maryland Jockey Club, which handles many aspects of the racing operation.

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

Racing will be Friday, August 28, through Sunday, August 30; and Friday, September 4, through Monday, September 7.

The Timonium condition book is now online at Equibase.com, with hard copies coming soon.

Hale confirmed that Timonium again will sponsor the \$20,000 Maryland State Fair Trainer Bonus program to reward strong performances during the meet. The bonus is divided into two categories to give trainers of all sizes a fair shot at earning a share of the prize money.

The first category is open to trainers who have started 65 or more horses in Maryland between January 1 and July 31, 2025. The second category is reserved for trainers who have started between three and 64 horses over the same period. Each category carries a \$10,000 bonus pool, with prize money awarded to the top five point-earners.

## Bootstraps Scholarship Apps To Be Available Soon



Online applications will be accepted soon for the Ferris Allen Bootstraps Scholarship—an award created to support individuals working within the Maryland Thoroughbred racing community who aspire to further their education.

Eligible applicants include those who have been employed on the backstretch at Laurel Park or Pimlico Race Course or have worked in a related support role in Maryland racing within the past three years. Candidates must also be enrolled—or planning to enroll—in a four-year college or university beginning in the fall of 2026 or shortly thereafter.

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association launched this meaningful scholarship program in 2023, thanks to funding from longtime Laurel Park-based trainer Ferris Allen, who also serves on the MTHA Board of Directors. The program provides a significant financial award to one deserving individual each year to assist with college expenses.

A total of \$10,000 will be awarded annually to a single recipient following a thorough application review. The deadline to apply is August 15. Applications can be submitted at [ferrisallenscholarship.com](http://ferrisallenscholarship.com).

"I believe our industry must do more to offer real and lasting educational support to members of our backstretch community," Allen said. "This program selects one exceptional candidate each year and provides meaningful financial assistance to help them pursue their goals and aspirations. We encourage everyone in the racing community to spread the word and support applicants."

Since the scholarship was launched in 2023, the four individuals selected (there were two winners in 2024) have all been enrolled in college programs.





## Our Mission

To facilitate the safe, responsible and enriching placement of retired Maryland-based racehorses and provide education and advocacy surrounding this issue.



**MTHA**  
500 Redland Court, #105  
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

**July 2026**

STANDARD  
PRE-SORT  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT #15  
WESTMINSTER, MD



## Board of Directors

A. Ferris Allen, III  
R. Thomas Bowman  
Lacey A. Gaudet  
Linda S. Gaudet  
David Hayden  
JoAnn Hayden  
Michael F. Horning  
Timothy L. Keefe  
H. Graham Motion  
Joseph P. Pons, Jr.  
Charles J. Reed  
Brittany T. Russell  
Michael J. Trombetta  
Katharine M. Voss  
David H. Wade