

## Talkin' Horses With Steve Haskin

**Greg:** You are listening to the premiere to Talkin' Horses with the *Blood-Horse* and Talkin' Horses with the *Blood-Horse* is brought to you by Horse racingFanShop.com, your one stop shop for equine apparel, books, and more and we're very, very proud to have Blood Horse as a new sponsor partner and this all new show, Talkin' Horses with the Blood-Horse, is going to help a lot of the sports fans on Prime Sports Network educate, entertain, inform what's going on in the Thoroughbred industry as something I've wanted to do for a very long time.

I'm your host, Greg DePalma and joining me each week will be Ron Mitchell. Ron, first of all, thanks for coming on with me each week because I definitely couldn't do this alone.

**Ron:** Thanks, Greg. We are certainly looking forward to the opportunities here and we're very excited from *Blood Horse's* perspective of partnering with you on this.

**Greg:** Well, let me just let everybody know every week we're going to have special guests that we're going to talk to and help us to make this, as I said at the open, a very educational process and it's going to educate me. That's what I'm excited about.

We'll do one a month at 12 noon and we'll let you know, of course, every month what the situation is on the day and all that but again it's a once a month show and then hopefully after a few months we're going to start to go week by week, that kind of thing. So we're really looking forward to speeding up the process, but again just let everybody know it's once a month, not once a week but our first guest this month will be Steve Haskin and Jerry Jamgotchian.

**Greg:** Tell me a little bit about, first of all, our first guest which will be on in about 10 or 15 minutes, Steve Haskin. What's the deal with Steve?

**Ron:** Steve is the Senior Correspondent for *Blood Horse* magazine and he also runs the very, very popular blog in our website called Hangin' with Haskin. He has been at this for a long, long time and is certainly probably the, as far as racing journalism goes, the preeminent authority on all things Kentucky Derby and the Triple Crown. He is interviewed a lot by not just other racing entities but mainstream publications so he's the go to guy for Kentucky Derby and Triple Crown.

**Greg:** Sounds great so we got the right guest. That's for sure for our first show.

**Ron:** Absolutely. You know this has been a very exciting Triple Crown season, you had a different horse win the Kentucky Derby (gr. I), a different horse win the Preakness (gr. I), and a different horse win the Belmont Stakes (gr. I). You had a jockey who was suspended for seven days as a result of how he rode a horse in the Belmont which by all accounts really screwed up Animal Kingdom, the Kentucky Derby winner, in his ability to win the Belmont. We don't know that he would have won it but certainly it was a factor in that race so it's been a very exciting Triple Crown season even though we did not have a horse going for the Triple Crown this year.

**Greg:** Tell us a little bit about Jammer.

**Ron:** Jammer is a Californian who owns a lot of horses. He raced primarily in California until moving most of his stock to Kentucky a couple of years ago. He is generally always let's say "jousting at windmills" so to speak. He files a lot of complaints, actions, litigation, whatever, primarily against racing regulators trying to defend owners' rights and protect what he thinks is the investment he and other owners have in horses. A lot of horses run in what are called claiming races. That means that the horse runs with a price on its head. Another owner or trainer can say I want to claim that horse, they put in a claim forward--sometimes if there's more than one, there's just a blind draw--but if you end up claiming that horse that means you're going to pay that person X amount whatever that claiming price was and you take possession of the horse.

Kentucky now has a rule saying that once you claim a horse like that there are restrictions on what you can do with that horse as far as racing it out of state. These things are designed to try to keep stock in the state and keep them from going elsewhere. Jammer has a horse he wanted to enter in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has now said that they will not honor these restrictions placed on this horse by Kentucky and so Jammer is continuing to challenge this Kentucky rule and a couple of years ago he's successful. He did the same thing in California.

**Greg:** Tell me what's the reason why the states have this rule. How does that benefit that states?

**Ron:** Well, again, if they can put restrictions saying you cannot race it outside of Kentucky that supposedly helps the Kentucky racing industry as far as keeping horses filling races, which has become a big issue in recent years as there are a lot fewer horses available to fill races.

**Greg:** Simple enough. But obviously the situation there is not very simple so we'll talk to Jammer later probably about 12:45-ish and again that's Eastern time and by the way we do have a date for our next show and it will be again on a Tuesday and again I'm assuming this is probably the third Tuesday of every month. It's July 19<sup>th</sup> and our special guest is Donna Barton Brothers.

**Ron:** Yes, a lot of racing fans and even non-racing fans would know Donna. She was a jockey. She is married to a retired trainer by the name of Frank Brothers and now he works as a consultant for a major racing stable. She is known to a lot of people after a lot of the major racing broadcasts. She's usually the one on horseback that's interviewing the jockeys so she really knows her stuff and she is also the author of a book that's going to be released later on this year. It's being published by Eclipse Press and that book is called "Inside Track: An Insider's Guide to Horse Racing" so Donna should be a very popular guest.

**Greg:** Alright, Ron, before we bring in our first guest, talk a little bit about your background and of course you have Talkin' Horses show on *Blood Horse*, the website, BloodHorse.com, just quickly talk a little bit about the difference between that show, this show, the reasons for it, and then of course if anybody on Prime Sports Network, any of our listener base doesn't yet have a

full grasp on *Blood Horse* and how important *Blood Horse* has been to the Thoroughbred industry, maybe you can enlighten them.

**Ron:** First of all, *Blood Horse* itself, the magazine is the pre-eminent International Weekly Thoroughbred magazine and 16 years ago, maybe a little longer than that, we started what has become the horse industry's premier website, BloodHorse.com. I've been a managing editor there for 16 years. It certainly is a go to place for a lot of people in the horse business not just in the U.S .but internationally.

Talkin' Horses, we started it as just a strictly online chat but as a text only kind of thing where readers send in their questions and we would just answer them with a guest and edit that and post those. It's morphed into more than that. It became a podcast about a year ago and now we're in partnership with you guys so that's how it's evolved and we still take questions from the racing fans to submit to our guests but certainly with this new format there'll be a lot more of you and I asking the guest our own questions and mixing it up a bit and then having, as we are today, having Jammer on.

**Greg:** Yeah. This particular episode we did allow a great deal of questions to come in to *Blood Horse* and we found out that boy there were a lot of inquisitive minds out there that wanted to know about Steve Haskin and of course that's how big Steve is and anytime they get an opportunity to ask him a question I guess they want to jump all over that opportunity.

**Ron:** Having just completed the Triple Crown races is primarily the reason we have him on and we're trying to keep the content today restricted to that and there were plenty of questions about that so some of these other questions we will not be getting but there'll be other opportunities for that. Also, I think everyone's more than welcome to go to Steve's blog at BloodHorse.com and submit your questions to him there and get more of that personal feedback from him on a daily basis anyway.

**Greg:** Again, we got this thing going with our interview segments I just want to get your opinion quickly about this past Triple Crown season.

**Ron:** With a different horse winning each of those three races no one really has emerged as the leader of the class yet. I guess because the Derby is considered the most prestigious of those races--Animal Kingdom won that race--so right now I guess by a lot of accounts and we'll find out from Steve, a lot of people consider him the leader of the 3-year old gang particularly when you consider all the problems he had in the Belmont which may have impacted his ability to show what he could do in that race. So it's still wide open but there are a lot of horses, a lot of good 3-year olds that are out there who did not compete in the Derby or the Belmont or the Preakness and so we can see, find out from Steve's perspective, who might be hanging in the wings there that we should watch for on down the road because there is this late summer group of races, the Haskell Invitational which is a big race run at Monmouth Park in New Jersey and the Travers Stakes which everyone calls the 'Mid-Summer Derby' that's run at Prestigious Saratoga racecourse in New York. So we have to wait and see probably as it gets closer end of the year to find out who really emerges as the leader of this three-year old class.

**Greg:** Is it too early for us to start talking or getting excited about the Breeders' Cup? I know they got early odds in the Breeders' Cup Classic already.

**Ron:** Breeders' Cup, well, again, that's something we can find out from Steve. At least the Breeders' Cup Classic, that's where all these 3-year olds who for the most part through the Travers and Haskell will be running against each other and it's usually in the Breeders' Cup Classic, which is going to be held in early November this year at Churchill Downs in Kentucky where the 3-year olds then for the most part will probably face older horses for the first time. So that's like when it all comes together when you really see who the best horse in America is and who the best male horses in America are. But in the Breeders' Cup there are a total of 15 races this year for all categories of horses, fillies, and mares, young horses, old horses so it is the championship day but certainly as far as the 3-year olds that participated in the Triple Crown series, you find out what you got there.

Certainly, horse racing is year-round now. Everybody--particularly the non-core racing fans -- focus on the Triple Crown races but it's certainly much more than that. Actually, from your listeners' point of view, as we continue down the road with this broadcast, their learning curves will certainly be enhanced and BloodHorse.com Talkin' Horses fans already know most of this stuff so.

**Greg:** Alright. Again, we'll have a lot of that kind of stuff to touch while we're going to have Steve on here very shortly. As I was going over the list of Triple Crown winners, of course it's been since 1978 with Affirmed and then 1977 Seattle Slew and 1973 with Secretariat that we had a Triple Crown winner.

**Ron:** That's what we've come to know as racing's heyday. Just in that short period of time we had those caliber of horses all running and they were on the national scene the whole time. We've not seen anything like that since. We had some bump ups with Smarty Jones, Smarty Mania and that type thing but certainly nothing that could compare to that period.

**Greg:** Do you think it's a slam dunk that Secretariat should be considered the greatest horse of all time?

**Ron:** Not a slam dunk. I mean you've got different eras. We don't know exactly what would have happened let's say if he had competed against Man o'War. We don't know what would have happened if he even competed against Affirmed. It really is so subjective and we can't say because they will never face each other so we can't say but by all regards, certainly, when you look at what Secretariat did in the Belmont Stakes that has left an indelible image in almost everyone's mind.

**Greg:** What is your-- everybody and of course and I'm sure Steve will give his opinion and everybody has an opinion—opinion on why there hasn't been a Triple Crown winner since 1978. What's your feeling? Is there a specific reason or reasons why you think that is?

**Ron:** I think just overall it's just such a tough achievement and I just don't think that today's horses are up to it. Frankly, it's three races in a short period of time at varying distances and it

really takes almost a super horse and we've not seen many super horses. There are several schools of thought on this. Some are that the breed is not as stout as it was in those days. I can't say that for sure. Others say medication used in horses has led to a less durable horse, breeding patterns. There are a lot of theories out there but no one can say for sure. Certainly, I think everyone does clamor for a return to the 70's if we could ever get back there with the same caliber of those horses.

**Greg:** I'll tell you what. We're going to try to get Jammer on because we're not able to get Steve on right now so I'll try to get him on the air here in the next couple of minutes. So now that the Triple Crown is over, talk about even just the average sports fan that might want to be interested in getting involved with horse racing in between the Breeders' Cup and the Triple Crown. What would you say is the best way of them going about doing that?

**Ron:** Well, certainly via websites. There's a lot of information out there and frankly for the non-racing fans if they came to our website, we update our website probably 25, 30 times a day with a lot of information. There's a lot of racing between now and the Breeders' Cup and what you get into are these races in July, August, September that are preps for the Breeders' Cup so it isn't like there's a void. There's a lot going on all the time. People need to engage in it.

**Greg:** Well, we're finally going to get Steve Haskin on here so let's go ahead and talk to him about a lot of the stuff that we've been bantering around here. Again, welcome, Steve, thanks a lot for taking the time out.

**Steve:** My pleasure. I didn't know that was you. I was ignoring that phone call. I thought it was coming on a different phone.

**Greg:** That's alright. Better late than never. It was only a couple of minutes. A couple of things that I was talking with Ron here about, the average sports fan that might want to get interested in horse racing, the Triple Crown is over, the Breeders' Cup ain't going to be for a few months, how would you advice them to get involved, get excited in between those two big parts of horse racing? What's coming up that you think can excite them about horse racing?

**Steve:** Well, ideally you want to get them interested before the Triple Crown or before the Breeders' Cup but if you have to use the window in between, I would encourage people to come out to either Saratoga or if you're on the West Coast go out to Del Mar and just make an entire racing experience out of it. If you're going to go out to Del Mar it's a totally different atmosphere. You wear your flip flops and your shorts and you go out to the beach in the morning and have breakfast somewhere and go out to the track. It's very casual. A lot of good looking people there. It's fun. In California you really, really love that.

Saratoga is much more historical. You go out to the backstretch in the morning and you can see all the horses working on the Oklahoma backstretch or the main backstretch, go out to breakfast, go to the museum, go out to the races in the afternoon. You take a walk down Broadway and go on to some of the shops, a lot of racing memorabilia there and arts and crafts and paintings and go out to dinner at night. So the history of Saratoga is still there as it was 60, 70, 80 years ago so

it's two totally different atmospheres but that's a great way to get interested in horse racing. Just go out to either one of those two racetracks.

**Greg:** Ron?

**Ron:** Well, I mean Steve is right. Certainly, these are all very, very nice racetracks. Anybody who goes to these tracks is going to have a great time. You're going to see some great horse racing particularly at Saratoga and Del Mar.

**Greg:** Let's talk about the Triple Crown now, Steve. It's all over. Another Triple Crown year where we didn't have the excitement, we haven't had the excitement of a Triple Crown winner since 1978, give me your reasons, I'm sure you probably are asked this every year when we don't have a Triple Crown winner, but give me your reasons why you think we haven't had one since '78.

**Steve:** Well, there are several reasons and everybody looks at the most logical one thing. No, the horses aren't that good, the horses are more fragile right now than they used to be, the three races in five weeks is too much on a horse. I think that it's a lot harder to win the Triple Crown right now. It's a lot harder to win the Derby right now because of the fact that you have a 20-horse field every year, 20 horses entered every year and every one of those horses must qualify by graded stakes earnings which means that when you go into the Derby you are up against 18 or 19 top class graded stakes horses whereas in the past if you look at Affirmed and Alydar that year, if you look at Secretariat's year, you'll find two, three, maybe four really top class horses and you'll have Kentucky Derby fields of 9, 10, 11 horses. And you go back into like the early 70's where they had 17, 18 horses and 10 or 11 of them would be claimers. Literally, cheap claimers, horses that did not belong in a stakes race never mind the Kentucky Derby because anyone could run in the race there so the Derby was not as taxing then as it is now. Just to get to the Derby and accumulate enough graded earnings... once you get there you've got to be very lucky and you've got to be a full field of horses that qualify and it was not like that years ago.

**Ron:** Yeah, definitely. That's a good point, Steve. It seems like we got into this era where anybody that has a good 3-0 that qualifies based on those earnings they're in the Derby so we're always pretty much going to see a 20-horse field and it's lot tougher to beat 19 others than it is to beat only 8 or 9 others.

**Steve:** Right. You have to remember too by the way that there are a lot of good horses that don't qualify that are late developers and those horses are going to wait to either the Preakness and Belmont so if you do get through the Derby there are a lot more quality fresh horses that you're going to be facing in the Preakness and Belmont especially the Belmont Stakes now than you used to. When Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes he won against four horses. Citation only ran against a few horses. Now, if you're trying for the Triple Crown you look at Smarty Jones, you look at Funny Cide, you've got full fields of horses there and you've got fresh horses. A lot of them now run in the Derby and skip the Preakness and they're much fresher for the Belmont Stakes and you have late developers like Ruler On Ice who were getting good later on so you've got to now come back and beat a completely different group of horses and the ones

you've already beaten are now fresher while you have that race in the Preakness in between so to me it is a lot tougher right now.

**Greg:** Considering this 20-horse field that we're probably always going to look at in the Kentucky Derby, do you agree with the calls to drastically reduce the number of horses that are allowed to run in the Derby or do you think it's any owner's right?

**Steve:** Actually, I don't. I mean logic says yes but I just don't think you can do it. Maybe I'm looking at it from a purest point of view, from a historical point of view but the way I look at it is this the horse's only shot in his life to obtain the immortality that goes with winning the Derby and it's hard to deprive 6 horses of that if you're going to lower the field to 14. You know you can try and make it a more fair race or you can leave it to some mystical event where you need the Derby gods to be smiling down on you. If you do lower it to 14 you cannot let the field be decided on the horses graded earnings in 2-year olds sprint races I don't think. I think you need a more balanced field than what they've accomplished as a 3-year old. You can't have 2-year old form trump big performances in races like the Florida Derby, Wood Memorial, Sanita Derby, Arkansas Derby. You have to find a happy medium to balance it out so maybe I'll just use half the earnings that a 2-year-old accumulates in 3-year olds sprint races. But as far as reducing the number of horses now--I think the Derby is an event more than it is a horse race--and if a Derby god is smiling on you or you are so far in a way the best horse then the Derby gods will find a way to let you win as they've done in several other years. Looking back, Frances Genter obviously with Unbridled. Nobody was going to beat Mrs. Genter that day when you saw what happens on TV. I say, look, leave the races alone and event and not to deprive any of these horses and their owners and trainers of possible once in a lifetime situation.

**Greg:** Steve Haskin joining us here on Talkin' Horses with the Blood-Horse and we've got a lot of email questions from our Blood Horse readers, Steve. One, Jennifer wants to know now that the Triple Crown races had been run, what horse most impressed you and why in any one of the Triple Crown races?

**Steve:** It would have to be definitely Animal Kingdom. First of all, Animal Kingdom is the one horse that actually dominated his field in the Kentucky Derby and he did it as a very lightly raced horse who'd never run on dirt before. So what he accomplished in that race, in a race where they closed very, very fast--his final quarter and final half is the second fastest in Derby history--second only to Secretariat. So I just think that he impressed me the most. He had a bad start in the Preakness. If he had been closer to the pace it might have been different, but he did have every chance to win and finished a solid second, and then in the Belmont Stakes was a total disaster when he clipped heels, almost went down, and then John Velazquez lost an iron. And on that racetrack, you could not make up ground and he's floundering back in last place while his jockey is trying to find his foot to get back into the stirrups again.

He made a huge move past six horses in an eighth of a mile and actually looked like he was going to win the race. But you can't make a move like that at Belmont on that kind of a sealed fluffy racetrack. As it turns out, he came out of the race with an injury which hampered his chances even more. So I think by far he was the most impressive horse in the Triple Crown.

**Greg:** Really, so as far as you're concerned one of the most impressive performances was not even a winning performance?

**Steve:** Exactly. I thought his race in the Belmont Stakes was extraordinary and this was even before I found out that he was injured in the race. If you look at the other races, every horse was coming from either on the lead or a length or two back and you know what happens at Belmont Park and a lot of tracks. When they have a sloppy track it becomes a conveyor belt and horses don't change positions and at Belmont Park when you make that big wide sweeping move on the big turn it's very hard to sustain it. And if you're injured on top of it and on that kind of a racetrack then they've sensed that he was not going to be able to sustain his run. But as it is, it looked like he had a shot to win and still finished well enough.

**Ron:** Animal Kingdom's Belmont aside just overall looking at everything, what was the best part of this year's Triple Crown, Steve?

**Steve:** Well, the way I look at it I think the best part in Triple Crown was to have the three races won by trainers that everyone likes. They were all just nice likeable guys, Graham Motion and Dale Romans and Kelly Breen. You can't find fault with any of them. They're all three honest great interviews. Dale Romans, he's just the guy that everybody likes and has been through the wars from the beginning and has worked on the racetracks since he was a kid. Same with Kelly Breen. He needed years and years, waiting for his break that never came until he hooked up with George and Lori Hall and he now is a private trainer. So I think having those three trainers win and also the whole story behind John Velazquez getting the mount on Animal Kingdom. You talk about the Derby gods, John Velazquez, I mean he's had such bad luck. He's been on the favorite for three years in a row and all three times his horse never made it to the Derby. Here he's floundering around, he has no Derby mount, his horse once again gets hurt in the race when he loses Uncle Mo. What happens is that Robby Albarado gets hurt and decides not to ride on the Friday before the Derby and your connections of Animal Kingdom think "so you know what, if he doesn't like Friday we don't know how he's going to be on Saturday." John Velazquez was open. They gave him the mount and boom, just like that, overnight he winds up on the Kentucky Derby winner. So that's what I mean about the Derby gods. You never know. There's always a story somewhere.

**Ron:** Yeah, the way that entire thing came about was very, very interesting. That brings us to what do you think was the worst part of this year Triple Crown.

**Steve:** Well, you know I hate to look at the worst of anything. I don't know. I think some of the injuries. I think the fact that Animal Kingdom did get hurt in the race and it hampered his chances. Again, I always like to look at the positive and I know some people will say well, you know Barry Irwin made some comments that he shouldn't have. Look, Barry Irwin, he's a straight-forward honest guy who talks from the gut. I mean I'll take honesty over controversy any day so when he starts talking "they lied to me" and this and that. Does he wish he could take it back? Sure. But that's the worst thing that happened in the Triple Crown and to me it was a pretty uneventful Triple Crown from a negative standpoint.



**Ron:** I like the positive attitude. Also, now that we're through the Triple Crown, when do you think we should evaluate this crop of 3-year olds?

**Steve:** I don't think you can evaluate this crop until after they meet all the horses and we see how they develop by Haskell and Travers time. You know we've got a lot of lightly raced horses. Like I said, I don't know what the situation with Animal Kingdom is going to be but if you look at the three Triple Crown winners, Animal Kingdom had four lifetime starts going into the Derby, Shackleford had five lifetime starts going into the Preakness and Ruler on Ice had six lifetime starts going to the Belmont. That's not a lot of experience in these horses and the fact that they were able to win the classics anyway, we don't really know how good these sources are. So they may develop by summertime, by fall, and turn out to be a lot better than they were. Plus we've had so many brilliant horses like Uncle Mo and several of the others like Premier Pegasus and Tapizar. I don't know the status of these horses. There are a lot of good horses that never made the Derby. We'll see if they come back in the summer and fall. Some of these really good horses that missed the Triple Crown races come back in fall. Then you have to include them obviously and you have to assess the crop a lot differently than you would right now. Plus we have a lot of horses this year that were grass/synthetic type horses and were bred more for stamina than speed, so a lot of these horses' speed ratings, speed figures are not going to be very high. But I think it's because of the fact that these horses are bred more for stamina and to me that's a good thing. I'd rather have a lot of stamina horses other than Shackleford. Look at the horses that won a lot of these races, they were all well bred distance looking type horses.

**Greg:** Steve Haskin joining us here on the premier program, Talkin' Horses with *the Blood-Horse* on the Prime Sports Radio Network. Before I get to another question from one of our *Blood Horse* readers, Steve, definitely I wanted to pick your brain on this one. I asked Ron this question before. Do you believe first of all that Secretariat is by far the greatest of all time. If he is, who do you think is right behind him second?

**Steve:** Normally I try to avoid answering questions like that because horses from different areas are so hard to compare. Yeah, you go back to a horse like Man o'War who, is running in three or four horse fields and you had crop of 5,000 horses as opposed to crop of 50,000 horses in the 80's. So it's completely different. If you're going to ask, if you're going to pin me down, I'll break it down this way. The greatest horse over a three-year period as a 2-year old, 3-year old and 4-year old that I ever saw with Spectacular Bid. What this horse did in those three years was unprecedented and will never be duplicated. I mean to me he was the best horse I saw over a three-year period. Secretariat had to be the greatest 3-year old for what he accomplished as a 3-year old and he was Horse of the Year at 2 as well. Another 3-year old I thought was one of the greatest 3-year olds I ever saw was Damascus and the best single year, the single year campaign of any horse that I ever saw was Dr. Fager who carried weight, broke world records, broke track records. These are some of the most extraordinary things I ever saw a horse do as a 4-year old. If you want to break it down that way, Secretariat let's say greatest 3-year old, Dr. Fager greatest 4-year old, and Spectacular did great combining two, three and four.

**Greg:** Here's another question from one of our readers at *Blood Horse*. It's from **Flummoxed** in Virginia. We heard in the post race press conference how Ruler on Ice's blood cell count were

low after his Sunland Park races but they were back up to acceptable levels for the Belmont. Isn't that sort of information something that would be of enormous value to serious bettors?

**Steve:** Well, I'll say to **Flummoxed** yes it would, but what would you have the racetracks or Equibase do about it? I mean handicapping big races, there's a lot more than just looking at the past performances. The horse's low red blood count was well documented in the *Daily Racing Form* and on a lot of the racing websites so you just have to read these publications if you want to get as much information as possible on the horses. You just can't go by the past performances. You can't put stats somewhere in the past performances that a horse had a high red blood count or a low red blood count or whatever. You've got to read up on these horses and do your homework and it was well documented. **Flummoxed** in Virginia, next time you get to a big race just read all the articles beforehand.

**Ron:** Actually, Steve, was that information pretty widely available prior to the race?

**Steve:** I read it. I saw quotes from Kelly Breen. Before the race I knew he had a low red blood count and I read it on the websites but I'm pretty sure it was in DRF and I'm sure it was on some of the others too.

**Greg:** Another question from a reader is WF. He wants to know if looking back on the prep race season, could you grade the major prep races--I guess just which ones stood out in your mind as the best?

**Steve:** Well, believe it or not I would have to give an A to the Sunland Derby of all races, for producing the Belmont winner and the third place finisher in the Preakness. When you can get a race like the Sunland Derby or any race that's going to produce two horse's in the Classic--that are going to win the Belmont and finish third in the Preakness--you have to rank that race right up to the top. Right after that I think they're pretty much the same. I would probably give the Florida Derby an A- for producing Shackleford who won the Preakness and Stay Thirsty who was second in the Belmont. And the winner, Dialed In, who did not run a bad race in the Derby and disappointed in the Preakness e made his presence somewhat felt. And I guess I would have to give the Louisiana Derby a B+ for producing the Derby second and third place finishers. Nehro and Mucho Macho Man both come out of that race and of course you'd have to give the Spiral at least a B for producing the Derby winner in Animal Kingdom.

**Ron:** You do mention the Sunland Derby and of course it gave us Mine That Bird, the Kentucky Derby winner.

**Steve:** Yeah and not only that but it also gave us this year's Kentucky Oaks winner.

**Greg:** Oh that's right.

**Steve:** Not the Sunland Derby but the Sunland Oaks. Plum Pretty, who won the Sunland Oaks by 25 lengths, came back and won the Kentucky Oaks so Sunland Park is certainly making its mark in the major races and classics.

**Greg:** Yeah it sounds like the sun is shining on New Mexico these days. Steve, onto another question here, Lenny says, “I truly believe that if Animal Kingdom’s connections had stayed with the original jockey, the outcome would have been different. What do you think?”

**Steve:** Well, I don’t know if he means different in a good way or different in a bad way. I don’t know if he means that the horse wouldn’t have won the Derby or he would have won all three races. I don’t think there’s any way you could tell. I don’t think Robby Albarado would have lost on the horse let’s put it that way. Robby Albarado is a top rider. Obviously he didn’t ride the horse and the horse won. If he had ridden the horse there’s no way to tell if the horse would have gotten beat. I don’t see why he would have gotten beat, considering how dominant he was in the race. So yeah many people are looking at it the other way. You can’t blame John Velazquez for any the two defeats in the Preakness and the Belmont so again I don’t know if he means this in a positive way or a negative way. But either way I don’t think anybody could really speculate on what would have happened with a different jockey.

**Greg:** Larry Oh says such big deal is made of the early interference in the Belmont. In the Preakness I thought Mucho Macho Man veered out even worse and pushed Dialed In into Animal Kingdom costing him the race. What’s your take on it?

**Steve:** Well, you know I don’t know. Again, is he blaming the jockey here? I mean the jockeys don’t contribute to slow starts. I mean they might get caught napping in one race but it’s hard to blame a horse’s defeat strictly on the start. If I’m going to blame any defeat with Animal Kingdom it’s going to be the Belmont more than the Preakness. I mean the Preakness start obviously didn’t help him by getting him too far out but you can’t say that it cost him the race. Again, if any incident cost Animal Kingdom the race it was the Belmont and the Preakness start wasn’t the best but he was in position to win for most of the stretch run. I just think Shackleford was the better horse that day but he was compromised. But you can’t come right out and state that that start in the Preakness cost him the race.

**Greg:** Steve Haskin, we’ve got him for a couple more minutes. Steve, the Triple Crown is now over and we’ve got a few months to go before the Breeders’ Cup. What should we all look forward to in this year’s Breeders’ Cup?

**Steve:** Well, basically the same thing, the same thing you do every year. Hopefully, the best 3-year olds and the best of all the horses will get together and let’s hope that the 3-year olds really mature and can hold their own against the older horses. This is not the greatest crop of all the horses. I mean we’ve got a few good ones that I’m high on – Twirling Candy out in California, Rail Trip and Friend Or Foe--I thought ran an awesome race the last time they ran. Tizway looked very good winning the Met Mile and I like Mission Impazible. He’s a good tough hard knocking horse.

Now, are there any stars there? No. Are there any stars in the 3-year old division right now? No, not big names like we’ve seen in the past. If I owned or trained a filly like Blind Luck, I might be inclined this year to maybe try the Classic because some of these other fillies that are developing might be tough in its own right. So Blind Luck is to me one of the most extraordinary horses. I think she might be the best horse in training regardless of sex and she loves a mile and

a quarter so I might be inclined to pick a shot there. And Aidan O'Brien made an announcement the other day that a horse named Await The Dawn, who's won four in a row now by huge margins and looks like he could be any kind--he looks like a mile and a quarter specialist--and they've been pointing for the Classic for awhile. And when Coolmore sets their sights on a race like the Classic well in advanced as opposed to what they've done previously, which is what make it an afterthought like after the Arc de Triomphe, so the fact that this horse is being geared toward the Arc, towards the Breeders' Cup Classic right now. I would certainly remember the name Await The Dawn but again it's early to try and assess what kind of field we're going to have. We'll see who comes back from earlier injuries and who stays sound the whole year.

**Greg:** I have one last question and then Ron will go but I did want to ask and this is important I think for a lot of fans like me that are trying to follow this sport better. What do you think that horse racing in general can do or what do you wish they could do to market themselves better to the general public?

**Steve:** Wow, that's definitely the million dollar question. First of all you've got to get somebody in marketing who knows what they're doing, who knows how to market.

**Greg:** There you go.

**Steve:** They've tried to come up with silly slogans here and there but they've got to look and study what poker has done and what wrestling has done and what NASCAR has done. You've got to come up with something to make racing identifiable. You can't just say oh, you know, for the thrill of coming out here and bet these horses and oh, for the beauty of the horse. You've got to take the beauty of the horse, the thrill, and thrust it to people's homes through their TVs and radios, computers or whatever. But you need someone to come up with a great angle. Sometimes the simplest thing can set a product off and we have to look at racing as a product. And we've got to hire the best marketing people available and come up with something to attract people. And not the way we're doing it now. Racing used to sell itself because it's a race where you actually become part of the sport. What you bet on a horse you are like the owner of the horse. You have money invested in that horse and you've got to enhance that angle and the beauty and excitement of the horse itself. You've got to combine those. I'm not a marketing person so I don't know of anything specific. We've got to combine those and get somebody who knows what they're doing.

**Greg:** Well, do you think like it would help to have like a specific day like a lot of other sports have like a specific day and time every week that you have an exciting race or something that everyone could say oh, it's Saturday afternoon racing on ESPN, you know something like that?

**Steve:** Well, we used to have that but nobody watched it so you can't just have racing on TV. You have to do something to make people watch that race. Maybe get them involve. I mean years ago they used to have all these supermarket contests where you can buy a card and you get a horse and then you can watch the races which happened to be run like five years, six years earlier but people got involved in it through supermarket sweepstakes. You know we used to have the Irish sweepstakes. That got people involved. If we could have something like an Irish

sweepstakes and get people involve and have a monetary interest in it that will open the door for them to appreciate the other aspects of the sport.

**Ron:** Steve, I got a couple other questions here from non-traditional site participants in our chat. One is from Jean Schnell and she says, “My question doesn’t pertain directly to horse racing. It is related so I hope it is chosen to be answered. As a journalism student who would like to break in to the world of race reporting, any words of advice or paths to take so students such as myself might join an esteemed writer such as yourself someday?”

**Steve:** Well, I like Jean right off the bat. I’ll say this, if you’re listening, the fact that you’re a journalism student, you obviously know how to write so don’t worry about that aspect of it and when you do write, don’t try to be Ernest Hemmingway. Don’t overwrite. I’m certainly not even close to being anywhere near a top, top writer. What you want to show in your writing is number one, your passion for what you’re writing about, in this case horse racing, and have the ability to tell a story. To me, being a storyteller is something that I enjoy doing more than trying to impress people with my writing. So if you can do that and tell a story and be creative and come up with a big opening and come up with a big closing and in between when you tell the story... you have to draw readers into your story with a good, interesting, creative opening and leave them with maybe a few goose bumps or a few tears and they’ll stay in the last part of it, to the last paragraph. And in between, you learn how to structure a story and make it into a story as if you’re writing a novel and just keep people interested and wanting to read more. That’s the best advice I could give anyone.

**Ron:** As far as getting published perhaps she should set up her own blog or website and go ahead and start working, doing her own work that way and try to get noticed?

**Steve:** Listen, you know I’ve suggested that to several people already. One person who contacted me who wanted to get into writing was a guy from Chicago named Brian Zipse and I told him, I said, “Look, you got the passion, you can write, you know your history, start your own website.” He started his own website, now he’s credentialed at the Derby and now he’s like an editor for Horse Racing Nation, one of the top racing websites which is a fan oriented website. He’s got thousands and thousands of followers so yeah, definitely. Set up your own website and bring that passion into it and bring it out there to as many people as possible and then if you have a story idea, you know what, write it and send it to the *Blood Horse*, send it to some of the other publications. It can’t hurt. You know what, even if you write it and have them publish it for free. I can’t tell you how many things I did in the beginning for free just to get published. You’re not going to get rich writing about horse racing anyway so you want to put your foot in the door, just get your name out there and get your work out there so people will know who you are and how well you write.

**Ron:** Thanks, Steve. Another non-traditional question here comes from 15-year old Anika Olesen who is writing from the Northwest Territories of Canada. “Mr. Haskin, in all your years of following horse racing, what race stands out and some most exciting you’ve ever seen? I love your writing. Sincerely, Anika.”

**Steve:** Thank you, Anika. I appreciate it. Well, there are so many to choose from. Of course you have to go with Affirmed, Alydar in the Belmont and Sunday Silence, Easy Goer in the Preakness. But a couple others that really resonated with me and got me excited were both of Tiznow's Breeders' Cup Classic wins, both times when he defeated European horses, Giant's Causeway and Sakhee especially the second year when he beat Sakhee. That was just less than two months after 9/11. And the other two at the top of my head would be Forego's Marlboro Cup where he was carrying a staggering weight of 136 pounds and came flying in the slop to get up right at the end and beat a very good horse in Honest Pleasure. And I think he had everybody just basically gasping and cheering him on in that race. The other one would have to be Personal Ensign, also another race in the slop where Personal Ensign came up and secured her undefeated career by beating a Kentucky Derby winner in Winning Colors. I mean that race and Forego with – I think I might have said 136, I meant at 137. Forego came at 137 pounds. It was just unbelievable. It looks like he had no response so I would say those that I mentioned, those half dozen races are the ones that stick in my head right now, the ones that I'll never forget.

**Greg:** Steve, we're going to pretty much wrap up our segment with you here with this last question. From Natalie Heights, "In the past Derbys who do you think (horse wise) should have won or deserved to win a Derby but did not?"

**Steve:** Who? Let's see. Well, again, I will have to go back and I think the most obvious one would be Native Dancer who got into trouble in that race and was beaten. That's the only race he ever lost in his life. Gallant Man of course when Bill Shoemaker misjudged the finish line and he was beaten. He definitely should have won that Derby. I would definitely have to say Empire Maker who was supposed to win the Triple Crown in 2003 and get beat by Funny Cide in the Wood Memorial. He came down with a bruised foot a week before the race and was not able to train at all the entire week leading up to it. I mean he couldn't even gallop and for him to go into the Derby with basically no training at all, no workouts, no gallops--one time he did go out to gallop, he aborted it by bolting to the outside fence --and he still ran second in the race and he was a better horse than Funny Cide and I think he definitely should have won the Derby that year.

I would have to include Afleet Alex who ramped in the Preakness. We all know what happened to him in that Preakness with the stumble. He almost went down and romped in the Belmont and he'd won the Arkansas Derby by eight lengths. But in the Derby he finished third and everybody said "well, you know it was a rough trip he had" But what people don't realize is that he had come out of the race with a lung infection which he had before the Rebel and the connections did not want to make it public to make it sound like they were making excuses so they never said anything. I didn't find out about it until well after the fact but he did come out of the Derby with a lung infection. Had he not had that lung infection I think Afleet Alex definitely would have been a Triple Crown winner.

Just thinking back a heartbreaking loss was Cavonnier who got beat by a good horse in Grindstone. But I think Cavonnier should have won that Derby because of the fact that he got whipped across the face turning for home and that just really spooked him and stunned him and you could just see him throw his head up in the air. When he opened up he looked like a sure winner in the stretch and Grindstone just beat him like a half a nose right on the wire. I'm not

going to put Cavonnier in the same category as the others but he probably should have won that year's Derby so those are the ones I would think of right now.

**Greg:** Alright, Steve. Well, we've taken up more than enough of your time and anybody else out there. Of course we didn't have time to read all of your questions but you've got a blog, Hangin' with Haskin on BloodHorse.com so I'm sure that's the best way also for the fans to interact. Do you interact with the fans? Are you able to talk to them, answer their questions?

**Steve:** Well, yeah, every story I put on there whether it'd be a recap or a column or a blog, they're all open to comments so people comment and I always try and get back to as many people as possible. I mean like during the Zenyatta craze, my columns on her were getting between 300 to 500 comments so it takes awhile to keep up with all that but when people comment like that it's great and I do try to get back to as many people as possible.

**Greg:** Who says the horse racing industry is down, right, Steve?

**Steve:** Well, listen, you couldn't tell it from the Zenyatta. I know from that we need horses to come around once in awhile to capture the public's imagination. And let's try and get a horse win the Derby and Preakness and try for the Belmont. That's more important to me than sweeping the Triple Crown. It's the interest leading up to the Belmont. That's more important. That brings mainstream America into racing because you know what everybody wants a Triple Crown winner. Once you get a Triple Crown winner it's not going to be as big a deal anymore and mainstream America is going to say it back again and they're going to say you know what, it's not that big a deal anymore so let's just keep having horses thrive for it and hopefully one year one of the great horses we'll get.

**Greg:** That's right. Alright, Steve, thanks a lot. We look forward to talking you later on down the road.

**Steve:** My pleasure. Take care.

**Greg:** That's Steve Haskin and again that's Hangin' with Haskin blog at BloodHorse.com and he is an award-winning senior correspondent for *Blood-Horse* so it's a great opportunity for us to get Steve on here on the very first show.

**Ron:** Absolutely. Again, Steve's blog is one of the so many ways in which we interact with fans these days. Steve is very much in demand and well-respected and he's certainly an authority on what he speaks. I mean he is Mr. Kentucky Derby and Mr. Triple Crown.

**Greg:** By the way, do you doing the Triple Crown races yourself, Ron? Do you handicap races or give your picks and things like that?

**Ron:** No. We've got a pretty good core of handicappers here.

**Greg:** You leave it out to them.

**Ron:** Jason Shandler for one and Tom LaMarra. They do a lot of it. They have weekly handicapping videos on BloodHorse.com and certainly they handle that end of the business. I'm more of the news guy, the business guy and I run the website and that certainly takes pretty much all of my time. I keep up with the handicapping part of it but I'm not a handicapper per se and believe me I don't think anybody would really want my selections.

**Greg:** Well, before we get Jerry Jamgotchian on, he's our next guest, we'll get him on here in the next minute or two, why don't you kind of preview again as best you can this whole background story of this claiming rule?

**Ron:** Well, once again, horse racing has a tier of stepping stone races. Obviously, the best races are called stakes races. If you're not good enough to compete at that level then you run in what are called allowance races and then it trickles down into what are called claiming races. Now, if you have to be at the competitive level of claiming races, this means you enter your horse for a price. They have a price on their head and that means that some other owner or trainer can put in a bid to take your horse for that price in that race and that's called claiming the horse. When you claim a horse that means you get it and right now Kentucky and California and some other states have tried to put restrictions on what you can do with those horses once you claim them. What they want to try to do is keep the horses in the state and they're doing this through the regulatory process because the more horses you keep in the state then certainly the better the horse racing is in that state because there are more horses running in races.

Mr. Jamgotchian has challenged the Kentucky rule as he wanted to race his horse in Pennsylvania after he claimed it and the Kentucky rule, it's a lot of specifics of this rule, but it said that he could not run his horse out of the state. He has challenged that and Pennsylvania at the racetrack where he wanted to run, they said they would not honor what Kentucky is trying to do and allowed him to enter his horse.

**Greg:** Well, let's go straight to the horse's mouth and welcome in horse racing owner, Jerry Jamgotchian. Jerry, good to have you on Talkin' Horses.

**Jerry:** Thank you for the invitation on your inaugural show.

**Greg:** It's great to have you on, Jerry. By the way, Jerry, Jammer, what do you prefer?

**Jerry:** It's Jerry Jamgotchian. Jerry is fine.

**Greg:** Jamgotchian, okay. Say? I want to make sure I got that right. Where'd you get the nickname Jammer by the way?

**Jerry:** You know, I don't really know. It just kind of stuck with me and I have an email address jammer999 so maybe that's kind of how it got there.

**Greg:** That's cool. Well, how are you? I mean I'm reading the story on BloodHorse.com about the claiming rule and at the bottom of the article and again Ron actually the one who wrote this article, the bottom of it, it mentions when you threatened legal action against the KHRC. You



also had a situation here previously a couple years ago where you challenged the California rule and you filed suit against the California Horse Racing Board that later suspended and amended its rules regarding entry of claimed horses. So you've been down this road before, it looks like you may have to go down this road again. Why do you always have to be thrust in to the spotlight here on these issues?

**Jerry:** Well, it's kind of an interesting question. Ron Mitchell's article of June 17<sup>th</sup> really outlined the story. When I claimed this horse at Churchill, she's a Pennsylvania bred so my intention was to race her in Pennsylvania. I kind of determined a couple years ago after we received the Attorney General's opinion in California that the California claiming rule was in violation of the U.S. Constitution, the Commerce Clause specifically, and so when I claimed this horse in Kentucky I figured that the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission and Churchill Downs would certainly take the same position as the California Horse Racing Board and terminate what clearly is an illegal rule. I don't think there is any doubt about that it violates the Commerce Clause.

It turned out that when I was getting ready to enter the horse in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Racing Secretary got a call from Churchill Downs Racing Secretary Ben Huffman who basically said, "Hey, that horse can't run." At which point I then called Huffman and I said, "Why can't the horse run," and he said the horse is "in jail" and that the restriction to race the horse goes with the horse anywhere in the world. I'm saying to myself "well, I'm sitting here with the ruling from the Attorney General's Office in California citing many cases with regards to extraterritorial restrictions and how they clearly violate the Commerce Clause." And so I asked them, "Are you sure you want to take this position," and needless to say his position was that the horse couldn't run. I then contacted that Kentucky Racing Commission and their position is the horse couldn't run so I then put everybody on notice that the horse was going to run or that there would be litigation commenced. Then low and behold I entered the horse in Pennsylvania and the Attorney General of Pennsylvania reviewed a case that I had tendered them as well as the Attorney General's California opinion and they said the horse can run in Pennsylvania and that angered the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission. So what we've done now is we've sent a letter to the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission as well as the Attorney General's Office and we requested a ruling in the letter that was sent out on June 17<sup>th</sup>, requested a ruling by the Kentucky Attorney General regarding the validity or the constitutionality of this rule. We expect a ruling any day now to see what the Kentucky AG's opinion is and if necessary we'll file litigation against the State of Kentucky. But I don't believe that's going to be the case because I think that they're going to call their own rule unconstitutional.

**Greg:** Well, maybe we got a whole new saying here, speak softly and carry a big whip because I actually expected that you're going to be this guy that was going to be ranting and raving and you know of course just reading what you've had to go through. Jail? Did you just say that your horse was put in jail?

**Jerry:** Well, it's a term. We call it jail time and basically what it does is precludes you from racing your horse anywhere in the world other than Kentucky. And that is clearly in violation of the Commerce Clause because one state's law cannot go to another state and preclude somebody from another state from doing something. When my horse left Kentucky to go to Pennsylvania,

the Pennsylvania racing secretary doesn't have an obligation to follow Kentucky law because he's in Pennsylvania, not Kentucky. I mean there's not even a rational sense to export a Kentucky law to Pennsylvania or any other state. In fact the California Horse Racing Board, courtesy of my action a couple years ago, welcomes any horse from any state to race in California, claimed, not claimed, whatever because they know from their own Attorney General's position as well as the Pennsylvania Attorney General as well as the Attorney General in Kentucky, they know that the claiming rule violates the U.S. Constitution Commerce Clause. I mean everybody knows it. It's just that the racing commissions and Churchill Downs and some of the racetracks believe that they can take the owner's horse and basically hold it hostage at their racetrack and force it to race there and have the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission and other agencies basically punitively enforce the rules against owners. It's just clearly improper and that's what I'm trying to correct.

**Ron:** Jerry, the people who wrote it and put it on the books believe in it and believe that they are on good constitutional grounds but sometimes you never know until someone like yourself who obviously has all the time and the money to challenge it. You never know until it gets challenged and it looks like you're the guy that's out there on behalf of owners' rights.

**Jerry:** Well, that's really the only reason because I have about 60 horses in training now. It's awfully expensive to keep horses in training and you need to have these horses moving to racetracks for additional spots. I mean if I have 15 maidens (horses that not won their first race), I can't sit there and wait for races at Churchill Downs. I've got to get these horses moving to other racetracks and that's why my trainer and I have moved a lot of horses to race in other states, Pennsylvania, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Florida, I mean wherever, West Virginia. I mean we need the spots and one of the things. Somebody asked the question earlier (I was in and out of the radio show when you were talking to Steve Haskin) on how can horse racing be improved. Well, the key to horse racing is so simple. I jotted down a few ideas.

Bringing people back to the racetrack. It's an incredible experience for anybody that attends a racetrack. Especially if you're an owner, you go on the winner circle, there's no better feeling than that. The second thing to do is to lower the takeout and make it advantageous and beneficial for people to come to the racetrack by charging them less, even reduce the takeout, for somebody that comes to the racetrack. We've talked about this in California but the California Horse Racing Board doesn't listen to its customer. Certainly the third thing that's critically important is that the racing associations as well as the racetracks themselves, as well as the racing commissions need to listen to the customer. I mean it is just crazy ignoring the customer.

**Ron:** We've been talking about that for a long time now. It looks like they would be getting the message.

**Jerry:** You know, they just don't want to listen to the customer. It's just a wild position to take that you refuse to listen to your customer. I mean NASCAR does, wrestling does, everybody wants to know about the customer. What does a customer want? The people that operate horse racing, they just don't care and that's something that really disturbs me. Owners like me, who invest hundreds of thousands of dollars a month to keep a string of horses moving and racing to the benefit of the racing association, they should be picking me up and doing whatever I ask

them to do with regards to all the handle that I'm bringing in the racetracks. It's a sad commentary that the racetracks want to, in this particular case, punitively enforce illegal regulations against owners, the lifeblood of their business and more importantly not listening to their customers, not reducing take out, not being more effective, not bringing better technology into play at the racetracks. It's criminal and from my perspective as an owner, if somebody could figure out the opportunities that horse racing has to be a successful and vibrant sport, they're there. It's legal gambling, number one. Most industries like NASCAR and wrestling, they don't have gambling. The ADW providers who are essentially taking money off track are killing the on track experience because people aren't going to the track but are betting out of their houses. That money now is being diverted to the bottom line of the corporations and being taken away from the purse accounts, which reduces the owners' purses, which reduces the horses, which reduces the experience and profit of the business.

I don't know. We were talking about claiming. I guess I'm off the subject a little bit but...

**Ron:** We thought that that might happen to you Jerry.

**Jerry:** Yeah. The issue on the claiming though I believe is that when and if the Kentucky Attorney General comes out with his ruling stating that this Kentucky rule's unconstitutional, that will pretty much end it in Kentucky. If they don't do that, we'll sue the State of Kentucky and then we'll move forward.

Interestingly enough, if you want to get back to the rules of Kentucky, the Thoroughbred rules, there are three sets of rules for this claiming rule. The one rule relates to Thoroughbred and it says that essentially you can't race the horse anywhere else, allegedly which is really anywhere else in Kentucky, as the way it's written but the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission thinks their rule says anywhere in the world 30 days after the meet end. But if you look at the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission rules on harness racing, the horse is released after 30 days, period so there's a totally different claiming jail period for harness and Thoroughbred and then when you look at it it's nearly the same as harness. In two of the three horse racing elements under the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission, the claiming rules are the most restrictive on Thoroughbreds which to me is just another big problem they have if they want to litigate the case.

**Greg:** Before we let you go, Jerry, I'm going to make you happy here and put you to the test too at the same time. Let's say you are commissioner of horse racing for the day, what would be the very first thing that you would do?

**Jerry:** Well, I would immediately reduce the takeout, I would force a better split with the ADW providers and more importantly I would give people who come to the racetrack an even lower takeout to stimulate on track attendance because the more people that get introduced to horse racing on track... For some odd reason, the first time you go to the racetrack you always win, right?

**Greg:** Yeah, beginner's luck.

**Jerry:** There's nothing better than that experience and so we've got to make it... and of course listen to the customer that's always been ignored. But those elements of bringing people back to the racetrack, lowering the cost to the consumer, allowing them to wager more rather than take their money quicker. I mean it's like a slot machine. They basically want to drain you little by little by little. They just don't take it all and say get out and wait for the next guy. In this particular case, horse racing has got to listen to the customer and they've got to lower the takeout and they've got to make a significant financial inducement to get people back to the racetrack.

**Greg:** Well, I mean you hit it right on the head with getting them there. That's how I was hooked on NASCAR. Most of my other friends that have never really cared for NASCAR, the whole theory about 'oh, why would I care about NASCAR, all they're doing is riding around in circles and all that kind of stuff.' Then I went to the race in Daytona and actually got a great opportunity because of a sponsor to sit up in the suite. They were passing around raffle tickets and it was a contest where you picked a driver and whoever won, if you got the right driver that won the race you won some prizes. Well, I wound up finishing second but it was so exciting for me because I get to follow the driver. Of course Daytona is like one of the most exciting racetracks, if not the most exciting racetrack, in NASCAR so I instantaneously became interested in wanting to know more and that feeling I never would have gotten if I didn't attend the race in the manner in which I did and it wasn't even like gambling. It was just having fun getting involved and that's something as you said is very important more than anything if you're going to attract more fans.

**Jerry:** Hey, Greg, when you bring up NASCAR it's very interesting because the technology that's developed with NASCAR is incredible. You're like in the car almost, right?

**Greg:** Yup.

**Jerry:** Secondly, that you can go to the pits and look at the car. But there's one major thing that horse racing has over every sport that NASCAR doesn't have, wrestling doesn't have. Horse racing can get the people back into the pits or the stable but you can't wager on NASCAR like you can horse racing. And that's the big separator that if the people that run horse racing understand that they have something that nobody else has which is the ability to wager. Just think if you could wager on NASCAR.

**Greg:** Yeah, you can wager on NASCAR in a sports book or something like that but you can't go to the racetrack.

**Jerry:** I'm talking at the racetrack.

**Greg:** Exactly. You can't go there and that it would be a huge...

**Jerry:** It'd be beyond imagination. I mean there's the NFL. Obviously, wagering is not legal at a football game and wagering is basically driven the NFL, right?

**Greg:** Absolutely.

**Jerry:** That's illegal but horse racing is legal. As I said, I just shake my head with regards to the mismanagement of this sport at every level and the claiming issue that we talked about is clear mismanagement. We have one state's attorney general saying it's illegal. And if the Kentucky attorney general says that's illegal, well, there's three AG opinions that it's illegal. I don't know how much longer the horse racing establishment wants to maintain a clearly unconstitutional rule. But we'll see if somebody will be able to claim a horse and hopefully by my hard work and money will be able to race it anywhere. That's my goal because owners' rights need to be enforced in the United States because we need owners to race horses. Until the tracks realize that you know, what can I say? I just shake my head.

**Greg:** Just keep doing what you're doing. Don't give up and slowly I believe the worm will turn and fans will get what they want. It may take a while but we'll get there.

**Jerry:** Well, the worm will turn on the claiming rule. I assure you, Greg.

**Greg:** Alright. Well, we'll be on top of it and we definitely look forward to having you back again, Jerry. We really appreciate your time.

**Jerry:** It's my pleasure being on your inaugural show and I thank you for the invitation.

**Greg:** Thanks Jerry.

**Ron:** Thanks, Jerry.

**Greg:** Again, we have had for our first show a very educational time here with our two guests, Steve Haskin and Jammer.

**Greg:** Anyway, what we're going to do every show too just to let everybody know is we're going to use this time. After our final guest we're going to use up the next 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 10 minutes to open up the phone lines, you can give us a call, toll free: 877-244-0585. Again, the toll free number will be and I'm sure of course it'll be promoted at BloodHorse.com as well as on the top homepage of Prime Sports Network, 877-244-0585 and so as we kind of wrap up every show, if you want to give us a call, phone will ring, I will answer it and if it sounds like a good question we will get you on the air. Unfortunately we won't have enough time to get you on the air to talk to our special guests but that's what all the emails are about and that's why again we had a few hundred there for Steve so first show, how'd you think it went, Ron?

**Ron:** Absolutely. I really liked it. I thought it was entertaining. I thought it was a good flow. Actually, went longer than I thought it might but that's okay. Certainly, more is better. I also want to take the opportunity to go ahead and remind you that the third Tuesday of July we will be having Donna Barton Brothers on, a TV commentator and a former jockey and she certainly would have a lot to lend to your listeners and our listeners.

**Greg:** Yeah. Donna Barton Brothers is a former jockey, a well-known national racing commentator, familiar to racing fans as the broadcaster who conducts the post racing interviews

on horseback at major North American races. Barton is also the author of “Inside Track: Insider’s Guide to Horse Racing” and that was recently released.

**Ron:** No, that will be out in August. Not there yet.

**Greg:** Okay. That’ll be out in August.

**Ron:** That’s coming up.

**Greg:** That’s a couple months away. This is actually the best time anyway to have her on then is because we’ll have her on in July which means that several weeks after we have her on I guess the book will be released so that’s perfect timing.

**Ron:** Absolutely.

**Greg:** I always thought that was a really good idea that they came up with to interview the jockeys right after a big race like that. I’m not sure when they started that. Do you remember?

**Ron:** No. I can’t tell you that either. Certainly, also some prerace, she does some prerace interviews. As a matter of fact, there was one prior to last year’s Breeders’ Cup Ladies Classic which is run on Friday before the big Breeders’ Cup races, it was somewhat controversial in the sense that there was a horseback interview with jockey John Velazquez prior to that race and his horse in that race, a really top horse, the favorite, named Life At Ten, he said, “You know this horse really doesn’t seem to be doing right,” and as it turns out the horse ran anyway, finished very, very poorly and later they realized that she did have a medical problem and that has become somewhat controversial. There’s been an investigation by the Kentucky Racing Commission into the circumstances behind that and it even has been suggested that perhaps those racetrack horseback interviews both pre and post race probably should not be permitted so we’ll stay tune for that.

**Greg:** Should not really, should not be permitted.

**Ron:** Right. Again, probably primarily the pre-race comment.

**Greg:** Yeah. I agree with that a little I guess.

**Ron:** Yeah. I doubt if anything is ever going to happen to the post race because certainly you would not be talking about the same issues you did here where the jockey says my horse doesn’t look right but yet the stewards allowed the horse to run. He did not convey that information to the stewards who are usually the people with primary responsibility for scratching a horse out of a race but millions of people watching on television knew what he was saying but the stewards did not.

**Greg:** Now, is there a particular analyst whether it’s NBC or ESPN that you like, you prefer?

**Ron:** There quite a few. You've got Gary Stevens who's a retired jockey and is very, very good on all aspects of horse racing and Randy Moss. Both those guys, not meaning to slight anybody else, but those are the two names that come to mind and they really are excellent, very insightful and know their stuff, not shallow comments when you're listening to those guys.

**Greg:** Between this show and our next show which again is July 19<sup>th</sup>, anything going on in between shows as far as races, anything that we should be tuning into?

**Ron:** Well, definitely you got July 4<sup>th</sup> coming up. There always a slew of big races over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. I mean racetracks, the one thing they do get right is they realize when people have time off work and really want to go to racetrack some holidays. Holidays have always been very big for racetracks. Offhand I cannot tell you exactly which horses will be running in those races but certainly on July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, watch for that. Go to our website and see. We preview every major race and also do an immediate recap including videos of all the big races so that's the next thing to look forward to. Yeah, pretty that's it. Saratoga and Del Mar, two of the most prestigious race meets begin in late July so we'll be able to talk about that on our next segment too.

**Greg:** Sounds good. Before I let you go and I'm sure every show I'm going to learn a little bit more about you, of course you're the top analyst here, I'm more of the host, do you have one specific memory growing up that you consider one of your favorite when it comes to horse racing?

**Ron:** Actually, Greg, I did not grow up in a horse racing environment and I can honestly say I did not become fan till I started working in the industry. I was a journalism guy who always loves newspapers and I got into this via the journalism route.

**Greg:** Why did you choose it?

**Ron:** Well, to be honest, I had a fledgling college career at the University of Kentucky.

**Greg:** Looking for a job.

**Ron:** Exactly. I walked into the – there was a publication published here many decades ago called *The Thoroughbred Record* and just on one day I got an appointment with the editor and walked in and told him I wanted to write and he said 'well, you don't know anything about horse.' And I said right but I know how to write and so he gave me a job as a researcher and I did that for three or four years before they ever let me write one word. I have been at it ever since that, which was in '77.

**Greg:** Wow. Well, that's still while ago so since that time, do you have any memories that you...?

**Ron:** Oh absolutely. I mean some of those things that Steve talked about, the rivalry between Affirmed and Alydar, anybody who lives through that period can never forget that. I mean those are some of the most tremendous, most exciting races we've ever seen. Certainly, I mean they

were two very, very good horses going at it and if they had not lived and not competed in the same era, the both would have been either bigger than they ended up being. Affirmed ended up being the Triple Crown winner obviously but Alydar was always right there and if Alydar had come let's say 10 years later, he certainly would be much more of a standout than he was in a firm shadow.

**Greg:** Yeah, I didn't grow up in Thoroughbred racing either. I grew up basically more of a harness fan because we lived close to the Meadowlands so we used to go over. My dad used to take me over to the Meadowlands a lot and it's still. I can't think there are many other nicer places to go watch racing than the Meadowlands with the restaurant and everything they have there. I don't know. Have you ever been to Meadowlands?

**Ron:** Yes I have and I must say absolutely it's a standout when it comes to any kind of racing but it is more geared to harness racing. In recent years they've had a Thoroughbred meet but that's probably going to change now and it's going to go back to being strictly harness but that's at the top. That's absolutely at the top of harness racing right there. It doesn't get any better than that.

**Greg:** Yeah and I remember some of my greatest memories we're watching Nero and Nihilator. I was there the day that Nihilator had raised the track record. I forget what the time was. I think it was sub 1:50 if that makes any sense because I can't even remember. It's been so long. It was one of the things where I was small enough that my dad used to be able to take me around the finish line and kind of lift me up and put me over towards where you could actually stand along the fence and so I could actually right there at the finish line. I mean the place was mobbed watching one of the greatest harness horses of all time and it's been awhile, I know that they still cover from that mistake in the, what is it, the Hambletonian and was it the Marlborough? What was the other at the Marlborough Cup?

**Ron:** They have the Hambletonian and Little Brown Jug.

**Greg:** The Little Brown Jug.

**Ron:** Yup.

**Greg:** Do they still do that?

**Ron:** Oh yes, absolutely and again it's not my area of expertise but I would say Nihilator, that name stands out. That was probably Harness racing Secretariat.

**Greg:** That's right. That's why I always remember that. It's been fun, it's one show in the books and we're going to look to improve the show every time out and so if you've got any questions, comments, anything like that you like pass along, what you'd like us talk more about, talk less about, anything at all that can help us help you inform and entertain you every time you tune in here to Talkin' Horses, just please let us know and we will do our best.



**Ron:** Definitely. Don't forget our sponsor, Horse racingFanShop.com. You go there and I assure you you will not be disappointed. You can find something there that you want, something you can get for yourself or something you can get for someone else.

**Greg:** Is this also where you'll be able to get Donna Barton Brothers' book in August?

**Ron:** I would think certainly. It's being published by our own publishing company here, a division of Blood Horse called Eclipse Press, but certainly we're in partnerships with a lot of other outlets so I would think that could be done also.

**Greg:** Well, that's again going to be our next guest coming up on Tuesday July 19<sup>th</sup> at noon so again we want to thank Steve Haskin and Jammer for joining us here on our maiden voyage of Talkin' Horses with the Blood-Horse brought to you by Horse racingFanShop.com. Ron, thanks a lot. Well, talk to you next time.

**Ron:** Great. It's really been enjoyable. I appreciate it and look forward to a good working relationship.

**Greg:** Likewise. For Ron Mitchell and Greg dePalma, we'll see you next time right here on the Prime Sports Radio Network.