

In the KnOw in Ohio

cThom Pye

E-NEWS AND E-NOTES FOR SATURDAY JANUARY 31st, 2026

Snowbound...

It began as a low-pressure system in the Ohio Valley that moved east with vengeance. That weekend the temperature at Foxboro Park was a balmy 63 degrees as people jogged and trained and it foretold the coming of Spring.

By afternoon it was an overcast gloom that brought in a weather pattern that is still referred to as "The April Fools' Storm" as people dismissed it.

The joke was on us.

Ushering in by gale force winds of 80 to 90 mph it would dump an average of 3" an hour to become Boston's 2nd highest total ever and would turn into a horrific nor'easter. When the storm abated on Monday, the official total in Milford (21 miles northwest) was a staggering 30 inches. And it wasn't "light and fluffy." Foxboro's 28 inches kept many of the resident grooms living on the grounds such as Connie, Hank, Moose, Mikey V and others busy as they made sure all the animals had hay and water. They did not have to be asked to do it, they just did it.

The barn doors were blocked with drifts of over six feet as they were pried open and everyone had to climb over the piles to squeeze into a 2X2 foot opening. The snowfall stopped but the work had just begun as the parking lots were plowed and the horsemen would follow a path to their barns and horses. They would clear the entrances and Pete, one of "the New York Gang," would use the 4-wheel drive on his truck to deliver grain and supplies over and through the hip-high accumulation.

Congratulations to all the USHWA Award Winners

"Hell," he joked, "this is just a 'dustin' up in Buffalo." When all was done so wasn't his truck's transmission, yet he never complained.

Still the barn area and the track itself were buried under a 30" blanket.

No horses were able to get out.



I had a 3-horse stable that winter, including an 8-year-old stallion by Forrest Skipper who I acquired (very cheap) in the middle of January from the Meadowlands. He had been in training but had not raced for over 14 months as he had not come back from a broken hind sesamoid suffered in a race. They did the right thing with him but now it was more of a strained ligament issue. Using what I called a the "Churchill Maneuver" – named for Doctor Edwin Churchill and his natural remedies – and implementing Ohio Hall of Fame Blacksmith Dick Neville's theory of "keeping them comfortable" in their shoeing, I followed farriers Steve McAllister's counsel as Bobby Constantino did the mechanics.

I jogged him slowly and steady for a month with no training although I was itching to turn him.

Patience. It worked. He never took a lame step.

As I always said: we are only as good as our support systems and that includes those who feed in the morning to the ones who check on the water buckets at night.

He trained down perfectly (including an even-rated final prep mile in 2:05 to the bike) breaking sticks.

And I qualified him myself in March with a mile in 2:05 in the slop. He got two starts under his belt and raced well and I was really looking forward to his race on the upcoming Thursday.

Then that damn storm came.

I was only able to walk the three in the empty shedrow and I was going out of my mind at being not able to move the old horse. I mean he only had two starts in over 16 months and all sorts of scenarios were developing in my head. What if... will he... I can't race him like that...

I finally came to the realization that everyone else was in the same boat.

The track was in tremendous shape even with the snow melt as one of Foxboro's leading teamsters Ralph Andersen put him behind the gate.

He won in 1:57.3f... the 4th fastest mile in New England that winter.

Hello?

And he came out of the race perfect.

I was able to jog & train him for his next start but he was not as sharp and did not even get a check.

?What?

It took me a while to realize that less was best with the old horse.

And that he loved an off track.

Boy, did he love an off track... he would step up three classes.

That took me a while to figure that out also.

Ralph got along with him well and won numerous races for me including a mile in 1:56.2f the week before they put the padlocks on the doors at Foxboro forever. When we shipped to Scarborough (Ivan Davies) Saratoga (Rick Pugliese) and Yonkers (Billy Parker Jr.) visited the Winners Circle with him. He

wasn't a good shipper and the 400-mile weekly journey took its toll and he started to deteriorate.

Never a "strong" horse... he was more like a defensive back going up against the offensive line when he moved up in class but he was game.

He was "a natural" and I began to look into his breeding to stand him at stud at a small farm. I traced his bottom line surprisingly to Ohio. He was out of the lineage that resounded in **McKinley Kirk's** Washington Court House and was seven generations removed from his Hall of Fame broodmare **Belle Mahone**.

The same as **Cam Fella**.

No wonder he was a nice horse.

It took us having to be snowbound to find out what worked with the old fool.

No smarts, or "keys" or special potions.

Just mostly relying on some Divine Guidance.

Dan Patch Awards



Sunday night
February 19th 2026

Who... will be the 2025 Horse of the Year?

...I knew a man who danced for you, in worn out shoes.