



E-NEWS AND E-NOTES FOR MONDAY APRIL 20th, 2026

## *March Madness & April Antics...*

I guess we can pass the ball now... Winter is over and the youngsters have put in enough foundation miles so that we can say "they're ready... almost."

The first Ohio matinees have been announced: Mercer County on May 9th then right back at 'cha with Greenville on the 16th. And both Associations put together a fine and entertaining card for the day.

I'd never refer to myself as "old school" but I was fortunate enough to get involved in harness racing when it was in its prime, albeit at the cusp of it. I was lucky as well because I got to work for and alongside the people who made the headlines when harness racing was "the fastest growing Sport in America."

And if you've ever put in a Winter down South working you know what I mean. From the time of the October sales and the line-driving to when the whole kit and caboodle shipped out from Stanley Dancer's Egyptian Acres in New Egypt, NJ and landed in Florida, school was in session. And then some.

Stanley had a system and a schedule and routine that produced more World Champions and Horses of the Year than most people have seen race which included 5 Hambletonian winners as well as 4 Little Brown Jug Champions. His methods were handed down from his long-time 2<sup>nd</sup> trainer Dick Baker (b1904) whose methods were gifted to him by Hanover Shoe Farm's Tom Berry (b1882) way back when he was young man in Pennsylvania..

I watched as the stable set up as the 2nd trainers measured each highly polished tack trunk 12 inches from the wall, 12 inches from the door. The harness bags hung symmetrically.



After a day of rest, it was time to roll. All jockers are hooked up by two people: one stands by the head while the other puts the jog cart on.

Then you wait until the "pilot" is in the seat as you walk the youngster off and check him up. Teach them manners as they walk to the track.

Their training would begin in earnest in January as the first slow foundation miles start. Always in sets of four as Stanley would take a different youngster to check them out. No speed brushes, just slow solid miles as they are taught manners.

Ironically the great basketball star Larry Bird, born just a stone's throw from Ohio over in Indiana, who would win three Most Valuable Player Awards during his fantastic career with the Boston Celtics from 1979-1992 was and is a lifetime proponent of practice, practice, practice.

Steve Currie of the Lakers is as well often shooting until he gets 100 baskets in a row.

And you cannot deny success...

But Larry Bird, in retrospect, admits he wished he'd followed fellow Celtic teammate and All-Star Center Robert Parish's regimentation of solid core training: build up the body.

"If I had," said the Champion Executive, "I would have lasted playing for probably another 3 years."

Just some food for thought.

So this greenie watched the training miles all winter. The youngsters, all pacers wearing a blind bridle and shadow roll while trotters didn't, were introduced to every piece of equipment for a day for the day that they might use in their racing career: a headpole, mud aprons etcetera as the bits were kept plain and simple. And you had your training bridle as well as a less rigid jog bridle. Keep them relaxed and easy to steer.

When April rolled around it was time to "open them up" (put on an open bridle) for the week and some of the antics began such as scooting sideways over hill and flora. But they got used to it (most of them did anyway) and, after a winter's worth of sets on the mile track, they'd train on the half-miler before the ship back North.

And one trotting filly who had been training well throughout the winter was really impressive as she dominated even the pacing colts in 2:15.

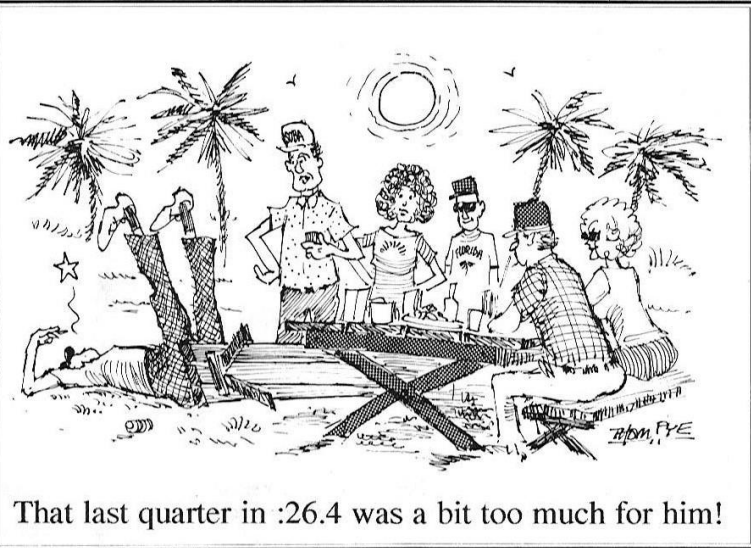
As Doctor Edwin Churchill gave the youngsters their exam, which was a monthly occurrence as well as bloodwork and meticulously kept records of every equipment change (hobble length, shoes) we had quite an audience watching him.

"I know," said Stanley as I held the filly by the head, "she's the best filly trotter I've ever had. She might," he continued as he turned to Mac Cuddy, David Johnston and Norman Woolworth and others, "be the best *trotter* I ever had."

It was time for *me* to clean up my April antics.

As we shipped North... to the Baby Races... and to that proverbial brick wall.

*The saga continues...*



That last quarter in :26.4 was a bit too much for him!

Originally published in the 1996 Florida Standardbred Breeders & Owners Association's calendar it proves that maybe our horses don't fly but time sure do.

*In memory of USHWA Hall-of-Famer Joe Hartman*

***On the 18th of April in Seventy-five...***

Paul Revere borrowed a horse - a Narraganset Pacer - from the Reverend Samuel Larkin's son to make his 10-mile midnight run from Boston to Lexington & the Patriots store of military supplies.

He alerted the countryside but was halted & detained but at one point 40 men were spreading the news that "the Regulars are coming out."

**What was the horse's name?**

- A) Lexington**
- B) Massasoit**
- C) Brown Beauty**



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