

**8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.**

**Life, Death & Resurrection**

- **Jay Hovdey, Featured Columnist, *Daily Racing Form***
- **Charles Leehrsen, Executive Editor, *Sports Illustrated***
- **Bill Nack, Senior Writer for *Sports Illustrated*, winner of 7 Eclipse Awards**
- **Jay Privman, National Racing Correspondent, *Daily Racing Form*, and Commentator, CBS Television**
- **Joe Sullivan, Sports Editor, *Boston Globe***
- **Gary West, Racing Columnist, *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram***
- **Moderators: Dave Johnson, ESPN and ABC Racing Commentator, and Stan Bergstein, HTA**

**Stan Bergstein:** The problem of diminishing coverage of racing of all breeds is every bit as serious as the medication issue, the offshore rebate issue, the Indian casino issue, and possibly more so. If it continues, it is going to be a threat to the entire profession, game, and sport, whatever you choose to call it. So to start off this morning, we have assembled a panel of some of the leading racing journalists in the world to discuss that issue and to moderate the panel, my old broadcast partner from WCR-TV in New York, now at ABC and ESPN, Dave Johnson.

**Dave Johnson:** Thank you, Stan. What a panel we have. Let's get right to it and some of the things that confront us today. I am just going to start by introducing you all out there to the wonderful panel we have up here with a quick question to each one of them. It might stir some controversy, but let's get through the entire panel and an answer from each. First of all, I believe Joe Sullivan is over there on the far left. Joe is with the *Boston Globe*. Here is a question to all of my panelists today. What are the best and worst of racing media right now? The best and the worst, Joe?

**Joe Sullivan:** I think the most interesting thing in all the media about racing are the ESPN telecasts. I think those are of high quality and very interesting. In terms of the worst, it is difficult to think that way, quite honestly, but speaking as the sports editor of a newspaper, dealing with the sort of daily preponderance of ordinary racing that seems to occur across the country and just where it fits in, in terms of coverage in a newspaper, is boring. Quite frankly, in a lot of situations it does not deserve a lot of coverage. I would say from a sports editor's point of view, what to do with that is perhaps what I think is the worst about racing.

**Dave Johnson:** Okay, Joe. Next is Charlie Lehrs. I knew Charlie more in harness racing than at *Sports Illustrated*, and I remember him so many times popping up on *Entertainment Tonight* commenting on what had happened at *People* magazine that day, but Charlie really knows what is going on. He gets it. Charlie, what are the best and the worst of racing right now? Your gut feeling?

**Charlie Lehrsens:** Well, Dave, I think that the best thing is that there is a latent interest out there to build on, and I base that on several things. I keep coming back to this idea of what happens at the Belmont Stakes every year when there is a Triple Crown potential, and how 105,000 or 110,000 people show up. These people know about it somehow. They get what is going on. They understand the story arch, and they are so moved by that, that 100,000 people will show up at one day at the racetrack. So there is something to build on there, some latent interest and appeal.

The worst thing, I think, as someone who works on a national level, is that amongst the individual people who put out magazines and maybe control television, there is a sense that this is an old man's game. That wrap weighs very heavily on the game. In an age where everyone is chasing a diminishing amount of advertising that is especially important because advertising is always thought to be driven by the coveted 18-34-year-old younger demographic, no one is going to try to go after that demographic with what they perceive to be an old man's game. I think there is a great irony in that because I think this is very much potentially a young man's game just like poker turned out to be.

**Dave Johnson:** So that is the best and the worst? That rips it up?

Jay Hovdey, from the *Daily Racing Form* is next, one of the greatest writers that we read all the time right now. Jay, I am interested to hear what you think is the best and the worst right now.

**Jay Hovdey:** I take a little bit of my cue from Charlie. The culture we live in is a big event-oriented culture, and that is why the best of horse racing coverage, thoroughbred racing specifically, every year is the Kentucky Derby. Simple as that. You can't be guaranteed every year of a horse going for a Triple Crown, so you are not going to get that overriding Belmont event every year, but you can be guaranteed of a Kentucky Derby, both the quantity of coverage, the nature of the people that it brings to the game in terms of journalistic variety, and also the quality, which can range from which end eats to some of the greatest commentary that we have on the sport. If racing had more big events, racing would be in better shape. Right now it only has one truly guaranteed national event each year. I am talking about thoroughbred racing, of

course. To a certain extent, the Breeders' Cup, if it can have that superstar horse, and then a Belmont Stakes if a Derby winner just happens to luck into the Preakness.

As far as the worst of coverage, I think any television broadcast where there are more than three people allowed to use the microphone, and certainly one of them should have to have either ridden a horse, trained a horse, or cleaned up after a horse. As a matter of fact, I have seen some television broadcasts on a variety of channels over the years that have actually had more commentators than horses in a field. I think Dave was even involved in one of those one time.

**Dave Johnson:** I agree with you though.

Bill Christine broke in from the also eligible list. He was at the *Los Angeles Times* for many years, and has just recently retired. Bill, what is the best and the worst in your excellent opinion?

**Bill Christine:** Thank you, Dave. At the expense of tooting my own horn, or my former horn, I think the best is the coverage at the *Los Angeles Times*. We had two full-time people for 24 years, myself and Bob Mieszerski (for much of the time), covering racing and doing nothing else. By my count, I think there are only five general newspaper reporters left in the country that still do nothing but horse racing. You have a lot of papers that cover horse racing, but the reporters do something else, and frequently cover horse racing on their lunch hour, and that might be an issue to be discussed later here today, but the *LA Times* has maintained this coverage, and they plan on continuing to do so after my departure. So I would say that is the best, and it is unfortunate that it is an isolated situation.

The worst, I believe, is the fact that of the major events in the thoroughbred side, the Triple Crown and the Breeders' Cup, they generally get pretty good coverage across the board and around the country, but there are a lot of gaps after that and it seems like many print media only get excited about the game, save the big events, when something unfortunate happens or when there is a scandal or a horse breaking down. Otherwise it is hard to find the sport on the pages of any paper around the country. I would say that is the worst situation.

**Dave Johnson:** Thanks, Bill. Jay Privman is a man for all seasons. He writes in the *Daily Racing Form*. You see him on ESPN and CBS. You hear him every Saturday morning on my show on Sirius satellite radio. Jay, what is the best and the worst?

**Jay Privman:** I think, Dave, the best thing that is going on with racing in the media now is, not to toot our own horn, but seeing people like Sirius or XM Radio get involved in horse racing and to see it expand into other venues like that and to see maybe some of the competition that has gone on for a property like the Breeders' Cup.

To me, the most distressing thing about media coverage is I think the people like Joe Sullivan, who understand racing, are, regrettably, among sports editors around the country, few and far between. I think far too often the assignment of a racing writer at a paper just goes to someone who professes to have an interest in racing, but in reality does not know the sport very well. Consequently, there is someone supervising who does not know the sport very well. For instance, I will pick on one paper specifically. A few years ago after the Kentucky Derby, I thought the *Miami Herald's* coverage of the supposed Q Ring incident with Jose Santos was one of the most egregious violations of journalistic principles I have ever seen, and yet the person who wrote that story is still working for the *Miami Herald*. On Sunday, the day after the Donn Handicap, I was down there this past weekend, there was a story about the horse Brass Hat, who had won the Donn, and it recounted the injuries the horse had before his magnificent comeback to win the Grade 1 race, and it referred to the fracture that he had suffered a year and a half ago, as not a condylar fracture, but in print it was a conjugal fracture. That made it into print. So that, to me, was the worst of racing.

**Dave Johnson:** Thank you, Jay. Bill Nack is an incredible writer and a wonderful friend of racing, a conscience of many of us in here. Bill, what is the best and the worst in your opinion?

**Bill Nack:** Well, I think the best is ESPN and *The Daily Racing Form*. I think the hero of the modern age of racing is going to be the Internet. I know a lot of people, including myself, have some difficulty reading things that you do not have in your hand. The Internet is going to save horse racing, I believe. I do not know what form it is going to be taking, but I think the greatest racing coverage is in companies such as Youbet.com, Xpressbet, Brisnet, and Win Ticket.

Andrew Beyer, who writes for the *Washington Post* and *The Daily Racing Form*, wrote a wonderful column recently called “Online betting is off to the races,” in which he quoted the vice president for Youbet.com as saying, “The fastest growing segment of our business is 21- to 28-year-olds, the youngest generation that has adopted technology.” If racing does not understand this, they are way behind the curve. The Internet is the place to go.

I think traditional media is no longer going to take much of an interest in horse racing. My own alma mater, *Sports Illustrated*, where I worked for 23 years, lost interest in horse racing generally five or ten years ago. It is going to be difficult to reignite interest. The only thing mass media seems to be interested in nowadays is football. Baseball, during the baseball season, but you couldn't get anything in the magazine ten years ago (anything of any length or of any interest) unless it had to do with football players. I could not get anything of any length, it did not matter how good the story was. It did not make any difference. I could come and say, “I have a great story in horse racing,” and they would start yawning. I could not get it in. It is kind of interesting because many years ago, Red Smith, Jimmy Cannon, all of the great sports writers in history, all regarded horse racing as the greatest beat to cover because it was filled with interesting Damon Runyon-esque people. It still is, but that is apparently not what sells newspapers or what sells magazines. In order to reignite interest, I think that racetracks and the racing people are going to have to go to the Internet.

The worst coverage is just about everybody but the *Racing Form* and the *LA Times*. *The New York Post* does some good coverage, but everybody else is covering football. The television networks are interested, but only during the times of the Triple Crown and during the Breeders' Cup. Other than that, you can't generate much interest.

**Dave Johnson:** Gary West of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* is next. Gary has an incredible amount of knowledge. He was president of the Turf Writers, and has been through some interesting wars. Gary, what is the best and the worst?

**Gary West:** Thank you, Dave. This anecdote addresses the subject we are discussing here. My typical day at the racetrack is to spend a couple of hours clocking horses.

I was up at Saratoga two years ago, and I was doing my usual routine, go to the backside at about 6, about 8 go to the front side, start clocking horses until the track closes at 10. I try to watch specifically for Todd Pletcher's horses because he has a lot of good horses. I was hoping to spot some future star, you know, catch him at the start of his career. One morning I saw a Todd Pletcher horse that was horrendous. I did not know he had a horse in his barn that was this bad. He worked a half in 48 and 2 or so, but he was staggering at the finish line, he was in a drive the whole half mile, he was staggering at the finish line, and when he pulled up a 16<sup>th</sup> of a mile later, he was blowing like a fat man going up six flights of stairs. This horse was horrible. I gave the workout a "XX." "XX," when I grade my workouts means, do not bet, do not pick, even in a walkover. This horse was terrible. A week later, I am leaving Saratoga. It is my last day there, I have not even looked at the card, and I stop in a restaurant on the way to the airport just to have some breakfast, and while I am there, there are two self-proclaimed experts giving a handicapping seminar in some back room. I can eavesdrop on them, and I am amused. It is the usual trivial nonsense that they are discussing as they are going through the Saratoga card. Then, my head hits the table under an avalanche of nonsense as they pick my "XX" horse, who is making his debut today at Saratoga. They went on and on about the usual generalities. He is by a stallion who produces 18 percent first time winners, and he comes from a barn that wins 25 percent first time, the usual generalities that are always trumped, by the way, by specifics, and then they went to the workout. "This horse had a great workout, 48 and 3, whew!" So, that day, I found out the horse went off the 8 to 5 favorite and he beat one or two horses, finished way off the track. It was horrible.

It occurred to me then how horrible the coverage has become in many places. These two self-proclaimed experts, by the way they are not members of the National Turf Writer's Association, I am happy to say, these guys did not know anything that somebody had not told them. Now, in this case, the *Racing Form* told them that this horse worked the half in 48 and change, and they jumped to a conclusion that was totally erroneous. They did not know anything that somebody had not told them, and they were self-proclaimed experts. They write for newspapers. That is a problem with coverage in this sport.

One time I was at Churchill Downs on the balcony there, the old press box, and some guy was asked to put together a trifecta ticket for the Derby by some green pea. He starts calculating how much this trifecta ticket is going to cost. The green pea asked him, and he did not know how

to calculate the cost of a trifecta ticket, which struck me as odd because this guy is going to go on television in a few hours as a gambling guru and tell America how to bet the Kentucky Derby.

There is a great problem in coverage of horse racing. One of the problems is that the racetracks encourage mediocrity. They accept mediocrity in coverage, and so do the readers and the public. So, I think, except for a few bright spots, like the *Troy Record*, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, and the trades, *Thoroughbred Times*, *Blood-Horse*, and the *Daily Racing Form* are all quite good, the Arkansas paper, *The Arkansas Gazette*, my own *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Except for a few bright spots, I think throughout America, racing coverage is embarrassing.

**Dave Johnson:** Not up here on the podium, but right there in the front row is a man who was so ahead of the curve. You heard about how the Internet is going to be the next frontier. Stan does not fit the 21 to 28-year-old demographic, and neither do I, but I want to tell you, he was ahead of the curve, and nobody listened to him. Now listen to him. Stan, would you please tell us what you think is the best and the worst right now.

**Stan Bergstein:** I think that Bill Nack put his finger on the entire problem for racing. We missed a whole generation of television, and we are paying for it now because all the sports editors and sports columnists now were raised on television and did not see racing. That is the reason the Red Smiths and Jimmy Cannons and John Carmichaels that were racing guys don't exist any longer. The sports editors today who claim that racing is not a sport do not know racing, by and large, with some exceptions.

Now we are in danger of missing another generation, which is the generation of the Internet, as Bill so lucidly pointed out. If racing does not adapt to the realities of the marketplace or what is happening with communication, and if racing does not take the Internet, we are not going to broaden coverage in print media.

Print media does not care about racing and is not interested in covering it. If you were a harness racing fan that lived in the NYC metropolitan area, you would not know the Meadowlands existed nine miles away from Times Square because the *NY Times* does not cover harness racing and does not consider it a racing sport, and does not give that much, incidentally, to thoroughbred racing either. I have been so frustrated over my lifetime by the *NY Times* coverage because of the fact, not just that it is the *NY Times*, but because the *NY Times* is a

pacesetter for every other newspaper and television station in America. If a story appears in the *NY Times*, whether it is or is not authentic or has any degree of authenticity, television will pick it up two or three days later, copy it and use it.

I would like to hear the panelists who have any thoughts on that, about an entire new generation being bypassed, and maybe Jay, you want to start, Jay Privman, because you represent television, and you represent print media as the national correspondent for the *Racing Form*. If you want to start it, I would like hear some of the views enlarged on that Bill expressed.

**Jay Privman:** Are you picking me, Stan, because I am the youngest person up here? I was sort of kidding.

This panel, I think, sort of embodies the point that is being made about how an entire generation is being missed. When I first came into the sport a little over 20 years ago, there were a number of people who were of similar age as me, who have now been doing this for 20 plus years. I look around the press box now, and I do not see that next wave of people coming in, and I think the point about missing a generation is valid.

The other thing that I think has hurt racing, in large part, is the way it has been promoted in the last ten years. It is almost as though racing is afraid to embrace the sporting aspect of it and has tried to make it more appealing as a gambling enterprise. While obviously gambling is what funds the sport and what makes it go, from a newspaper coverage or a media coverage standpoint, editors do not care that the carryover is a hundred thousand dollars, but they do care about stories. I think, in terms of promoting the sport, when you go down that slippery slope of ignoring the horses, and more importantly, the drivers or trainers in your respective breeds of coverage, I really think you have missed the boat there on promoting the personalities of the sport and engendering good will.

To me, the best example of that, as to where racing has missed out, but somebody else has capitalized on it is what has happened with NASCAR in the last ten years. NASCAR to me is unwatchable, but because of the way that the people at NASCAR have promoted the drivers and made them personalities, people tune in every week and watch it. The coverage that it gets now on television and in newspapers, to me, far exceeds what you could have ever expected it to get from ten years ago. When you compare that to how racing sells itself, it is night and day.

**Dave Johnson:** Look at what happened. Racing has to pay to get on television. Now they pay NASCAR for that unwatchable product. Charlie, you mentioned that it was an old man's game. Would you pick up on Stan's ideas and move that into the demographics of our game and the media coverage of it.

**Charlie Lehrsens:** I have to agree with Stan about missing the TV generation, but I do keep coming back to this idea. I should have mentioned the Hambletonian too, and the Meadowlands people, and how the attendance spikes, and the Belmont. The thing about the Belmont is if there is a Triple Crown impending is that it is more of a story.

The media operates on stories and there are basically two types of horse racing stories. There is one that is kind of the groom who went to MIT, or the trainer who is running for Congress, or that kind of human interest story. There is also that story that is even better for the industry, which is the story of the sport, of the strategy, of the tactics, of the setbacks that befall man and beast as they move towards the race. From a media standpoint, nobody has been telling us those stories.

I was talking to Ellen Harvey about the problems of publicity. I used to work for the USTA from the late 70's when Stan hired me to the early 80's when I left, and the problems sound exactly the same. Often, not always, because there are great exceptions like Carol Hodes, but the people who should be telling us stories, I do not know what they are doing. They are not doing that. They are misunderstanding the job, or that job has such a low status at the individual racetrack that it is not considered important. The industry seems to have given up, from my standpoint.

Whatever the case with TV being there or not, there is an interest that is sort of ready to be ignited, and willing to be ignited, willing to hop on a good story, willing to go out to the racetrack. Those guys at the racetrack at the Belmont, I mean I know because I have been thrown up on by a few of them, they are young guys. They have cases of beer. You don't have 110,000 senior citizens come out that day. These people are moved to come out. The average age of the crowd drops considerably when the crowd is bigger. They are out there waiting to be touched off by the right match, but the match has not been offered by the industry.

**Dave Johnson:** Let's quickly talk about the match in terms of what is in the paper. I had a discussion with Brad Thomas, who is a very bright journalist and gambler, who works at the Meadowlands and is a friend. We had a long discussion, and I want to thank him for opening up my eyes, but I asked him the best and the worst, and it fits right in here. He said that the worst thing that is happening right now is the hackneyed advance stories and the wrap-ups and the style of the fill-in-the-blanks kind of stories that appear in the paper. "A blank year old son of blank won the blank stakes yesterday in front of a crowd of blank."

Brad says that the best thing right now is opinion. Now, Charlie, that sort of goes along side. Opinion. That is what drives it. It is what drives us. On our politics, who we go out with, who we socialize with, who we vote for. If you are a horseman, what you claim. If you are a bettor, who you bet. It is all driven by opinion. The stories are great, and wait until NBC gets a hold of the Michael Matz story, which has been around for about 15 years or so. There is going to be an explosion. They have never heard of him, but they will because of what is written in the *Daily Racing Form* and is on our radio shows and so forth. But, what about the opinion versus the hackneyed style, Charlie or Joe?

**Joe Sullivan:** Dave, the aspect of what you are talking about is real, but I do not think it necessarily pertains to newspapers. I think newspapers do have more opinion than they used to, but we have remained traditional in a lot of ways. These instant opinions, the source of these are the Internet with blogs, and on TV it has become ubiquitous, especially ESPN, they seem to have fallen in love with it. It is not necessarily newspapers that are looking for that. I think, at least from the *Globe's* perspective, we are looking for well-reported and well thought out opinion, whereas what you might see elsewhere is sort of instant thoughts and opinions that are not necessarily supported by facts. You make a point. I guess there is a market for that out there because people are reading these things.

**Dave Johnson:** Gary, did you want to add something a little earlier?

**Gary West:** I think while we are disappointed in the coverage of racing right now, I think racing has a potential to be appealing. I am not sure that it is entirely bad that it is an old man's game, because there are a lot of old men out there at the moment. Newspapers are learning how

disastrous it is to ignore that market. They are trying to appeal to younger audiences, and in doing so they are alienating their core readership. I have seen it happen with paper after paper.

Anyway, I think horse racing has potential for popular appeal for a couple of reasons. One of those is the opinions you are talking about. As Mark Twain said, “A difference of opinion makes a horse race, so every horse race is worth a number of opinions.” The other and I think this is even more profound, is indeed that story aspect of horse racing. It lends itself to that. Have you ever wondered why people watch sporting events on television or go to sporting events? Why do they dedicate three hours to watching this football game? I think, in this city, of course, many people do so because they have an investment in the outcome, but I think most Americans actually watch sporting events because they are desperately eager to see virtue made vivid. They do not even realize that is the reason they are watching, but I think it is. They are lied to by their politicians, they are cheated by businessmen, they look at a world and see complexity and confusion, so they are looking for some place where the virtues that they respect and honor will be vivified and validated. That happens on a little stage of a football game or even a race. In a couple of minutes or a couple of hours, courage, perseverance, determination, even kindness can all become vivid. Where else can you look to see virtue win? I think that is why people watch sporting events, and what more vivid example or image of determination was there last year than Afleet Alex? I think horse racing is perfect for those kinds of stories, and if we have the people who can find the stories and the publicity departments who will pitch them rather than give you 20 quotes of trainers saying he is going to run good. I think horse racing has a chance to gain some popular opinion.

**Jay Hovdey:** The franchise owners are the racetracks. They don't think in terms of owners of horses being franchise owners, like some people in horse racing would like to put forward, and there is some merit to that, of course. But the franchise owners are the people that run the racetracks. The people that run the racetracks are the biggest whiners in sports today. They are always going hat in hand to legislatures begging for slot machines. If a sports editor is going to see that, that belongs on the business page that belongs on any other page but the sports page. As long as racetracks and racing are going to insist that their savior is going to be slot machines, they are not going to get the penetration in the sports pages, because that is not sports.

**Dave Johnson:** Is the demographic for horseplayers the same as the demographic for newspapers? Do the newspapers just think that it is a bunch of degenerate old guys out there betting their last two bucks? Do they realize that more people own horses now? That they are sitting in affluent offices and betting on computers and that they are optimistic about the game and their chances? What about the demographics of horse racing and newspapers and magazines? Anybody want to weigh in on it? Bill?

**Bill Christine:** There is a parallel, and I think the newspaper industry is doing much more than what the racing industry is doing to address this problem. I perceive it as a problem that the audiences are getting older. It relates to what Stan said early on about the Internet and the Web. The newspapers are beginning to embrace the Web and trying to solve their circulation problems by going in that direction. I am not particularly a fan of the Web, but it is here to stay, and there is not much that we are going to be able to do about it, except if you can't beat them, join them.

To give you a couple of examples of what is going on at the *Los Angeles Times*, I wrote a 26 inch story the Monday after the Breeders' Cup about the jockey Garrett Gomez, who had won two races on Breeders' Cup day. Not one line of that story appeared in my paper. It went straight to the Web, with a box on the second page of the sports section saying, "Please see latimes.com for this story." We are doing that every day on page two, listing stories that are on the Web that do not appear in the newspaper.

Last fall, unfortunately at Beulah Park that 16-year-old jockey was killed. Later on in that week, another jockey at Mountaineer, who had become a paraplegic and had been left in the lurch because the Jockey's Guild had not renewed the insurance. He sued the Jockey's Guild for ten million dollars, so those were two stories in a matter of four or five days that had national impact. They were really crossover stories that any person, not necessarily a racing person would be interested in. Only one paragraph got in my paper of those two stories combined. They went straight to the Internet. For a guy like me, who is used to picking up a newspaper and holding what I have written the previous day in my hands, it is kind of a tough pill to swallow, but it is here to stay, and this is what the racing industry is doing.

**Charles Lehrsens:** The complaint that publicists and marketing people and racetrack industry people used to hear was that there is no room in the paper. It just is shrinking and there is no

room. The Internet opens up all that room, and the people that are on the Internet don't care that it is not in the paper. The big problem with newspapers is that fewer people are reading the papers. So many more people are going to the Internet. So that excuse, or that boundary, is now knocked over. You know, space on the Internet is a whole other commodity.

**Bill Christine:** I think this is one of the reasons, Charlie, that it gives the racetracks more of a reason to be creative with potential stories.

The best example I use where a racetrack doesn't know a story when they have one is several years ago at Santa Anita, a group of nuns went to the racetrack, about a dozen nuns that taught at a grade school in Los Angeles. They hit the Pick Six for about \$150,000. This was a school that did not have a library. This is how poor the school was, and now you had the nuns hitting the Pick Six. That story did not surface, the thing happened on a Sunday, and it did not surface until like the Tuesday of the following week. The only reason my paper found out about it is somebody happened to be walking by the table where the nuns were while they whooping it up, holding this winning ticket. An anonymous person called the paper to tip us off. Why someone from Santa Anita was not shouting that story from the rooftops is beyond me. This is a Dan Rather story, this is not an *LA Times* story.

**Dave Johnson:** Bill told us about how the editor's yawned. Would they have yawned at you for that one, if you brought that in?

**Bill Nack:** They yawn at about everything. I do some work now for espn.com, and when I first wrote for them, I said, "How long do you want this?" And they said, "Well, as long as you want." I said, "What do you mean as long as I want?" You are supposed to be given boundaries when you are in journalism right? Well, it does not really matter because the space is infinite. So I turned one in that was 5,000 words, and they said, "You know, people don't like to read on the Internet over 1,000 words." So I said, "Well, what do you want? Do you want 1,000 or 5,000? I asked you the question." But that has become an axiom now on the Internet. Anything over 1,500 words is beyond the pail.

I wanted to mention something. One of my favorite stories is actually a gloomy story. It is one of the reasons we are here. For many years, New York was the center of horse racing, not

only harness racing, but thoroughbred racing. Roosevelt Raceway was the epicenter of harness racing for many years, and Belmont Park, Jamaica, Aqueduct, Saratoga that was really the heart and soul of horse racing in America for many, many years. It has begun to gravitate. Now there is a lot of good racing out in California, down in Florida, but for many years, New York really ran the show. In 1970, NYRA, which runs all those racetracks, had hired a very powerful lobbyist to fight off-track betting, which was being bandied about as an idea in the state assembly up in Albany. He hired this fellow, and he apparently did not do a very good job because one day they passed an off-track betting bill. And you know what they did? They passed a bill and did not know how to implement it, so they came to NYRA, which ran all these racetracks, and said to them, "We passed this bill, but we do not know how to run it. Would you guys run this for us?" And you know what NYRA's reply was? "We are not in the bookmaking business." So, off-track betting went off in this direction, the NYRA went off in this direction, and it began the long decline that we have been witnessing in New York racing and in national racing for the last 30 years, since 1970-71. They actually were given the opportunity to run the biggest bookmaking operation in the universe, and they turned it down. This is the same group of people who, when it was suggested that races should be televised back in the 1960's, said, "Well, if we televise the races, nobody will come to the track." So they lost that whole generation of viewers to television to the NBA, to the NFL, to the NHL, and to major league baseball. Those franchises all grabbed onto television. Racing turned its back on it, and then when the OTB law was passed and the NYRA turned its back on that, we entered the door leading back to the dark ages in American racing.

However, and I don't mean to repeat myself, but I am telling you the Internet is that hole in the roof where the sunlight is coming in, and you have to crawl through it. Every newspaper has a Website, and anybody in the PR business in horse racing who does not know the guy who runs the Website at the hometown newspaper is missing the ball. You have to find out who that person is. You have to feed them stories, because remember, as Charlie just pointed out, it is free. There is virtually no overhead. There is no paper to print on and the Internet's space is almost infinite, and that is the way to go.

The one thing that strikes me about horse racing also, and I think the one great advantage of it is that it is a game of numbers for the horseplayer and it lends itself to nerds sitting in front of computers and handicapping races, like my friend, Andy Beyer. Andy sits at home all day

long, and he has his computer on, and he has TVG on. Andy is a Harvard grad and very smart guy, he is the father of the Beyer speed figures, and I should not have called him a nerd, but he is a computer guy. He is a new age guy, and he is sort of the cutting edge. That is why I read part of his column. It is a very important column, and he sees the future. The future is with betting online.

Andy has a line in here that I utterly disagree with. He says there is no need to go to the racetrack anymore. That is what he said in his column. There is no need anymore. Now you can sit at home in front of the computer, do all of your gambling, watch TVG, do all your betting, etc. I absolutely disagree. I am of the old school of bettors. I like to be at the racetrack and smell the cigar smoke and stand by the paddock fence before I bet on a horse and find out if he has got front bandages on, if his ankles look a little suspicious. Andy has no interest in that whatsoever. So, his whole group doesn't have to do that. My group does, and I like to go to the racetrack anyway, because I like the people around it and I like to hang around those people, and I like to hang around the horses and see the grooms. To me, that is 90 percent of the fun of it. Anyway, that is the wave of the future is that Web. You have got to get into it; otherwise you are going to be left behind like we were left behind not going to television.

**Stan Bergstein:** I have a wireless microphone that I am going to go to right now and solicit comments and questions from the audience for interactive questioning and discussion. Before I do that, I would like to go back to your friend Brad's contention because part of the blame is on management of hackneyed stories. I do not know how many of the track management read the releases that are sent out from the tracks, but some of them, besides not being grammatically correct, spelled correctly, or neat, are releases on stories that are not news. They are not newsworthy stories and they do not deserve to be in the newspaper.

I liked Jay Hovdey's comments on this because no one writes better features in the world than Jay Hovdey. If I ran a racetrack, I think I would demand that the publicity department write only features on stories except on stakes days or major feature days, but not on overnight events because you can't get news out of overnight cards unless you dig the feature out behind them.

The other comment that I would like to hear the panel's views on is once upon a time, track photographers went to work in the morning at 9 and spent their time on the backstretch taking pictures, which got in the newspapers. Today, track photographers spend their time for

taking pictures at \$15 a crack or more of the winner's circle. Many of them, I do not think, even show up at the racetrack until 7 or 8 at night for nighttime racing or in the afternoon for the win circle pictures. While I get the microphone for comments from the audience, I would like perhaps Jay Hovdey to start with the feature aspect of whether people are barking up the wrong tree with the new stories instead of trying to write features.

**Jay Hovdey:** Certainly, Stan, and that goes without saying that the more interesting the story, whatever story is put out by the racetrack, it has got to have hooks, it has got to be more interesting. I mean we are talking about middle level publicists that work for racetracks, and those people are at a good starting point. That is where I started, and it is a good place to learn the game, but you are not going to get the world's best writers. They are going to move on. It is hard to demand a high level of feature writing quality from publicity departments. It would be great, but it is just not realistic. I think the best coverage is in those towns where there is a personal relationship between the racetrack, the publicist, director of marketing, the assistant director of media, whatever we want to call him, and the local sports editors, beat guys.

We have heard about what great coverage the *Los Angeles Times* has in terms of horse racing. Well, a lot of that is because Bill Dwyer is close friends with Bob Lewis, and they have had a close personal relationship for a lot of years. Someone of the stature of Bob Lewis in the industry, you know, you listen to what he says. If you are a Bill Dwyer, who holds the key to the column inches at a place like the *Los Angeles Times*, you are going to have that story in your head or that influence in your head. That is not an isolated incident, hopefully. Hopefully there are directors of publicity and marketing and media everywhere that are on a very close basis, and they put their key players, their most public friendly jockeys and trainers and owners in constant touch with the local media. That is how the stories get out. It is not with releases. I mean, I throw away 30 releases a week without reading them. You get your stories from people, and that is the key to getting the racing story out that you are talking about, Stan.

**Bill Christine:** One of these days, Bill Dwyer, like me, is going to move down the road. I think it would behoove all of the racetracks in southern California to ask Bill Dwyer when he does move down the road, who might be the next guy who is going to fill his shoes and start

entertaining that guy by inviting him to the races and showing him around the backstretch well ahead of the time when he is going to be the decision maker as Dwyer had done.

**Jay Privman:** I actually wanted to ask Joe Sullivan, when was the last time you were contacted by somebody from Suffolk Downs or a local harness track or even the NTRA regarding just pitching you personally a story?

**Joe Sullivan:** Well, Suffolk Downs has an uphill fight, but they have a good PR department. The young PR guy there does it often, I would say. He is looking to get story ideas out. I think, unfortunately for him, the quality of the racing is such that it is difficult to come up with something that is of enough quality that I would be interested, but they do a good job. The other places, we have two harness and two dog tracks, Lynne Snierson at Rockingham is also someone who is good at what she does. She tries to get story ideas. The other ones, I do not hear from. I would give good grades to Rockingham and Suffolk.

**Bill Christine:** Many of you in the room probably remember Joey Goldstein, who I always considered the PR guy's PR guy. I always wished Joey was on the thoroughbred side so I would have had the chance to work with him a little bit more than the occasional Standardbred story that I did over the years. One of the reasons Joey was so good is because not only did he know a good story, but he knew the writer that would fit that story. I am a Damon Runyon type guy. I go in for character stories, so if Joey had a character, he knew that I was the kind of guy that he would pitch that story to. If he had a gambling story, maybe an Andy Beyer might be more likely to embrace a story like that. He would pitch a story to a Beyer-type of writer. In addition to knowing your stories, it is also good to know the market and the writers that you are dealing with and who you are trying to sell.

**Joe Sullivan:** The last good harness story we had was pitched to me by one of our photographers who likes to bet on harness racing. He took photos and said, "You really should do this." So I had the photos and the idea before I assigned the writer, but it was a good story.

**Dave Johnson:** So, Stan, if we can...

**Stan Bergstein:** I now have the interactive weapon in my hand, so anybody who wants to comment or say anything about it, just raise your hand and I will bring it out to you, and you can have your say and ask any questions you might want of the panel.

**Dave Johnson:** Then we are going to try and solve a few of the problems. If you can come up with one thing that you could snap your fingers and make it happen to the racing media, what would it be?

**Stan Bergstein:** Did anyone ask Joe yet why the *Boston Globe* dropped results and entries?

**Joe Sullivan:** I do not recall being asked that yet. In November we dropped entries and results of all racing. As it turns out, Suffolk Downs was closing for the winter. In the spring, we will run Suffolk Downs entries and results.

If I can explain, I will do this as quickly as possible without boring everyone. I have been sports editor of the *Globe* a little over two years, and as we deal with shrinking sections, I have observed daily this half a page that was in the *Globe* of mostly dog racing entries and results, and I know the interest level in that is very small. I felt it was a real waste of what we could do with that space. We had a bunch of cuts when I was sports editor for just a few months. Admittedly, I thought about doing it, but I did not have the guts, so I cut other things from the edges, but then we were faced with a labor reduction with buyouts they had in November, and I realized we needed to reduce the section just for a workload situation. We could not keep doing the same amount of work with less people. Having been sports editor a little bit longer, I was getting little bit braver, I realized that if I had to pick something out of the section that had to go, that had the least amount of importance to my majority of readers. It was those entries and results.

That being said, we are still going to cover racing. We used to have a full-time racing writer. I know Bill talked about that, and we no longer do, but we are still going to cover racing. We are interested in the good feature story ideas that Jay Hovdey talked about. We want to do those stories, but I just felt this list of dogs and harness horses was not worthy any longer of taking up the amount of space it did. The reaction to that was negative, but it was minor. I would say the amount of emails I got was between 75 and 100, and the only two harness complaints I

got were from Stan and Lynne Snierson. There were some dog people who were involved. The ones that emailed me were the ones that actually owned and raced dogs. The biggest complaint I got was that I cut out the New York tracks. We ran NYRA's entries and results every day. The reason I got rid of those was that sometimes you have to go on a gut feeling, and I did not feel that if I was going to eliminate these tracks from Massachusetts that I would keep one from New York. It just did not have the right feel to me, but I got enough of a reaction from that that we will run Saratoga entries and results in the summer too. We will have Suffolk and we will have Saratoga.

**Bill Christine:** *The Los Angeles Times* last year dropped charts of the ongoing southern California track, whichever one it was. They did it for three weeks and the reaction was pretty strong. The complaints poured in, and they did not appear to be an industry driven, choreographed campaign. At least the paper interpreted it that way, and then they went back to the charts about three weeks later.

**A Voice:** You know, sports sections are not the only shrinking phenomenon. I understand the *Chicago Sun-Times* dropped the stock market listings on the grounds that they are a blue collar paper and none of their readers own stocks. There is all sorts of shrinking going on. If you look at various business sections, everything is getting smaller and smaller as the Internet takes over.

**Bill Christine:** *The Los Angeles Times* last year and this was a decision that came from our parent company, *The Chicago Tribune*, the sports section shrank by 700 pages. I am talking about 700 full pages of news for the year, so you do the math, this is in sports alone, and they lost more than two pages, close to three pages a day. Yet we still had about the same number of writers clamoring to get into those pages. That is another reason the racetracks need to work overtime and need to be super creative in trying to sell stories.

**Joe Sullivan:** I just wanted to add one thing about the elimination of racing, and this speaks of the Internet. We still run a daily summary on our scoreboard with a schedule of live racing, and we direct people to the Website for entries and results.

**A Voice:** It is easy to blame newspapers for the shrinkage, and I certainly have made quarrels with newspapers. Newspapers are probably, next to horse racing, the most misguided I know of, without the assistance of Frank Stronach, and it is easy to blame the newspapers for this as they seem to renege on their responsibilities to their communities.

Every piece of research I have seen indicates that the media do not form opinions, do not determine opinions, the media react to opinions. The media, in effect, are controlled by the audience, not the other way around; my point being that all newspapers are doing is reacting to lack of what they perceive as lack of interest. When racetracks discourage people from coming, which in some cases they are doing, when racetracks deemphasize the importance of their racing product, which, as Jay mentioned, many tracks are doing when they emphasize slot machines. When Gulfstream Park has a paddock that only holds a limited number of people and seems to be built with a determination to discourage attendance, when attendance is declining at racetracks, editors have to look at this and say, “Why cover horse racing?” While it is easy to blame newspapers, I think the real finger of blame should be pointed at the sport.

**Eugene Christiansen:** I have known Stan for many years, and listening this morning reminded me there is an article in the arts section of today’s *New York Times* that everyone in this audience should read. It is about classical music. Classical music is something that I spend a lot of time with and know a lot of its people. It has a lot in common with racing. Classical music record sales have been stuck at three percent of total record sales for a generation. There is a standard debate in the industry about an aging audience that cannot grow. Classical music will die because of this, etc. The burden of this article is that on music download sites, everything is different. The classical music percentage of music download sales at sites like itunes is not three percent. It is 12-14 percent. The buyers are new, and the buyers are young. I think this speaks directly to what the panel has been saying that the Internet is the future, that it is a way to rejuvenate the audience for the sport. I really think it would be a contribution, when you get back to your room, go the *New York Times* Website, download this article, and read it. You will get a lot out of it.

**Charles Leerhsen:** I think if we take anything away from this meeting in one little fortune cookie sized message, it is that the Internet is not the wave of the future. The Internet is here. It is

not the future. It is here now. There is no reason to be thinking just of newspapers as a place to get out your message and get out your news.

There is no reason even to be thinking of the Website that goes with the newspaper as the one and only alternative to that. There are fan Websites. There is a Website that has a chat room that I know of where guys who grew up in the 1960's and 1970's talk about Roosevelt and Yonkers and the drivers then and remember those days. There is a great way right there to pick off some low hanging fruit, and go in and you could be right in there with people who are expressing a serious interest in the sport.

With some creative thinking, there is no reason to be thinking of these old boundaries and old terms and have this meeting which could have been had 20 years ago talking about how to get in the newspapers. The newspapers are shrinking, and there are mediocre publicists. It still does come down to the people. Somebody has to spot the stories and be a good communicator, so that remains the truth, but we are here already, like it or not. There is no reason not to like it. I think there are a lot of reasons this is good news for the industry. There are so many more places to be now, with more control over getting into them.

**Gerry Connors:** It seems like I always have a question. This is a pretty simple one. We agree with you on pursuing features. Should they be of the two-legged or four-legged variety?

**Jay Privman:** Why do you have to pick one or the other? I think what drives interest, with the point I was making earlier about NASCAR and how they have been able to capture such a large segment of interest, is it is personality driven. I think racing has completely missed the boat in the last ten years by focusing so much on the gambling aspect of it, not the personalities of it. The question that the gentlemen asked, whether it is four-legged or two-legged, a good story will sell and be of interest to a writer no matter whether it is about a jockey or a trainer or a driver or a horse, as long as it is interesting. I do not think that you need to say it is one or the other. I think you can certainly embrace both as long as it is of interest.

**Bill Christine:** I think we are familiar with several of the major jockeys that have retired in recent weeks and years—the Jerry Baileys, the Pat Days, the Chris McCarrans, the Gary Stevens, etc. They all had one thing in common in addition to being brilliant riders. They all were great

spokesmen for the game and they were very articulate and very well-spoken. They are being replaced by a new breed of jockey, almost the way big league baseball players have come into prominence, they come from other countries and they do not necessarily speak English as a first language. I think it is important for the tracks, in order to develop these guys, to maybe supply an interpreter when a reporter comes out and wants to talk to one of these guys who might not be able to put a lot of words together in English, but perhaps has something very pointed to say in his own language. Make sure that the reporter has an interpreter and is able to communicate with the person he is interviewing rather than just pointing the reporter in the right direction and wishing him a lot of luck with the interview.

**Paul Bolinger:** Good morning. I completely agree that we are a culture of personality, but more importantly, we are a culture of celebrity now. If I had been czar of racing ten years ago, what I would have done to racing is gone to every country music star, and said, "I am going to give you a horse, and we are going to take care of it, but I want to see you show up at the racetrack." I go to Del Mar, and you love the glory days of Bing Crosby being there and Jimmy Dorante being there because you can't watch an NBA game without panning the crowd and showing every celebrity at that event. Has there ever been a concerted effort by anyone in the industry to try to get celebrities involved in the game so that we bring not only the sports page, but the celebrity page into it. Let's face it. The younger demographic follows those celebrities, and if you can make it hip, I think you tie into the Internet and bring it all together.

**Dave Johnson:** I am going to answer by telling you a missed opportunity in the first Breeders' Cup. I was with NBC for the first three Breeders' Cups, and we did not know what we were going to do for those 4-5 hours, and one of them was let's bring celebrities in. Fred Astaire was alive at the time. There were incredible celebrities back in the early 80's. Bring them in and have them be like a game show that they would be betting on the Breeders' Cup. It was completely dismissed and another missed opportunity. I agree with you. I think celebrities would be a great way to get in. Key players could be celebrities.

**Bill Christine:** Dave, along those lines, at the recent Eclipse Awards, now they had Jerry O'Connell as the host, and I suppose he qualifies as a hip guy, and the sponsoring groups are to

be commended for having somebody like that. It was the second time that Jerry had done this. He did it last year as well. But to my knowledge, the only other celebrities we had in the room that night was Merv Griffin, who was only there because his horse won an award, and Larry King. There was nobody else, and I wondered why racing did not make a little bit more of an effort that night to maybe have half a dozen presenters, you know, glamour pusses like O'Connell and King and Griffin up there on that stage.

**Dave Johnson:** Or sports stars from other sports to be alongside Jerry Bailey.

**Stan Bergstein:** *The Wilmington News-Journal* in Delaware this week had a story placed by Marv Bachrad from Dover Downs, that George Foreman now has bought five two-year-olds, and everyone is praying that one of them will get to the races. Foreman showed up the other night at Dover and posed for publicity shots and signed autographs. I think the point is very valid.

**Dick Feinberg:** Before I was at Pompano, I had the pleasure and privilege to be out in California for a long time, and work with Jay Privman, and of course for decades with Bill Christine. I think the important thing to realize, and we all know it, it is just not the same. Bill always had the luxury of time and space whenever we had a story, and it was both the harness and the quarter horse game at that time that I was involved in. If we had a good angle on a human or an equine athlete, he was interested. If it was worthwhile, it got in the paper. Those days are gone. Jay Privman mentioned that his "worst in racing" was the story in the *Miami Herald* and the reporter who broke that egregious and erroneous story about Jose Santos carrying a device in the Derby. About a week after the Derby, as Jay mentioned, that reporter continued to work for the *Herald* and continues to this day to be writing racing for them, but the story was all over south Florida. The *Herald* at that point was backpedaling off its original expose. The other paper, *The Sun Sentinel*, was gleefully bashing the *Herald*. It was front page, it was front page sports, and it was everywhere. Right around that time, he happened to call me in the morning to get a quote from me about something going on at Pompano or racing politics. I was in the shower and my wife picked up the phone, and I was just getting out, and she was walking into the bathroom, and she said, "Geez, can you hold on a minute. I don't want to hand him the phone. I am afraid I will

electrocute him.” Of course she did not realize at the time who she was talking to, but I thought it was wonderfully ironic that she had come up with that choice of words. Thank you.

**Bennett Liebman:** Brad Thomas is a long time friend of mine, but the notion that regular stories saying that there will be five in the allowance tonight just seem meaningless, that has been the essence of stories of horse racing for at least a century. You can’t go back and look at an old issue of the *Racing Form* or the *Morning Telegraph* without seeing that. That is hardly in any way any harm to racing. On the OTB issue that Bill Nack wrote about, isn’t there some time when NYRA deserves a statute of limitations on whatever it did or didn’t do? In 1970, while NYRA was popular, certainly Yonkers and Roosevelt were far more prosperous. I mean, the story that NYRA just rejected this after the legislation happened, you can’t find an article on that anywhere. What Gary West was complaining about in terms of handicappers just looking at a form, that sounds exactly like what Bill Nack is saying Andy Beyer does, so I do not see what the problem is with that. Finally, one point. The notion of a skipped generation, where racing lost a generation by not being on TV. Look what was actually on TV. In the 1950’s, you had bowling, boxing, roller derby, those were the TV sports. They are gone. I am a child of the ‘60’s. In the ‘60’s, you couldn’t watch the *Wide World of Sports* without seeing indoor track or skiing. There is no audience for that now. Look what is popular now—X Games, Poker, NASCAR. Why don’t we say they skipped a generation? I think we are missing the point there. I think the notion of a skipped generation is just totally wrong and a very simplistic way of looking at racing. I don’t think that is racing’s problem at all.

**Gary West:** To address something you said about 50 years ago stories were very much like “eight horses meet in today’s allowance race at the fifth race at Belmont Park.” No doubt, they were, but 50 years ago, that was proprietary information for that newspaper. Fifty years ago, people wanted to know that eight horses were going to meet in today’s allowance race at Belmont Park, and they wanted to find that out in whatever newspaper it was because that was the only place they could find it. Today, they can find it in a number of places, and newspapers have to emphasize more their proprietary information, that is, information they only have, or stories or opinions only they have, not that information that is just available out there everywhere. I think that is why you see a different focus. As for my citing the two handicappers,

perhaps I was unfair to them, but what I was lamenting was the lack of expertise I see, and also the self-proclaimed experts who are put out there very often by racetracks. As I said, racetracks are largely to blame for the problem. Go the Churchill Downs Website and you will see the “Pros” division of their annual contest. Pros! Mullarky! Some of these people don’t know a furlong from a fetlock. It is ridiculous, and yet racetracks are promoting this fraud on the public. It is detrimental to coverage of racing. There are any number of outstanding writers and handicappers and knowledgeable people, and let’s rely on those and not have these self-proclaimed morons babbling on television and filling up the newspapers with their drivel.

**Ed DeRosa:** Hello. I have a comment and then a question. My comment comes from someone who I think is the youngest person in the room. I agree with Bill Nack. I think in racing, the sense of community is what draws a lot of people in—hanging out at the paddock, handicapping a race with friends, going over the race afterward, bragging or lamenting a bad beat. Any generation that embraces the Internet really latches onto that community setting. Someone mentioned the chat rooms, people talking about the old time races, people chatting about handicapping, just a card on a Sunday, or the Kentucky Derby. Building that community off the track is a good way to get people to the track, so I just wanted to agree with Bill that everyone who is on the Internet, there is a real opportunity there to build a community base and then hopefully get them to the track, wager some money, buy some horses, get them involved in the game. My question, no one mentioned in thoroughbred racing the problem in recent years of horses going off to the breeding shed and how that might affect fan interest. Smarty Jones, Afleet Alex. We hear that people are always disappointed, but I was just curious how that affects coverage, especially, I guess from *Sports Illustrated*, they had Smarty Jones on the cover, and he did not race again after the Belmont. Do you see that as missed opportunities?

**Jay Privman:** I do think there is a problem in terms of the early retirements, but let’s not forget the most famous racehorse of the last century was retired after his three-year-old year as well, and nobody lamented, and that was Secretariat. In terms of early retirements of horses, I think the fragility of the breed certainly is a problem, but the point I think this comes back to is something I was trying to say earlier. In terms of establishing personalities and embracing, again, what NASCAR has done, to me, racehorses have a finite amount of time that they are on the

racetrack. While they are here, and the superstars definitely need to be promoted, but they are gone very, very quickly. But when you have people like Jerry Bailey, Chris McCarran, Gary Stevens, and Eddie DeLahouse, who are top-notch athletes for 20 years plus, and you do not do enough with them, like NASCAR has done with Dale Earnhardt or people like that, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Tony Stewart, and make them the celebrities that they are, racing has missed the boat with drivers, racing has missed the boat with trainers, racing has missed the boat with jockeys, and they are your constants that you can promote to media outlets as opposed to the flavor of the month in terms of each year's Triple Crown.

**Bill Nack:** I wanted to address two things that came up here that I wanted to talk about. One was the fragility of the breed and the fragmented nature of the industry. The two sports that have skyrocketed since the '60's and into the '70's and '80's are basketball and football, the NBA, and the NFL. They did so because they were run by one person who directed and ordered everything. Racing has not had that kind of a person. We can't even get together and have a championship racing series without it falling apart over disagreements. There is just no cohesion in the industry. The fragility of the breed, that is in part due to the advent of cortical steroids and the running of unsound horses who feel no pain. I think that is one of the causes of the fragility of the breed. Years ago when a horse was off, whether he had a chip or a strain, they would take him off the racetrack, because they could not even work him out because he was sore. Nowadays they have super medications that make horses all feel like yearlings again. Veterinarians are now Dr. Feel Good. So what you have are horses breaking down prematurely because they are being run on unsound limbs. I wrote a story once for *Sports Illustrated* called "The Breakdowns." It was in the middle of all those breakdowns in the early '90's. I think there was Prairie Bayou, Union City, For Wand. It was not too much after Ruffian broke down and Dr. Gregory Ferraro, who was a former racetrack vet, had left the racetrack because he had gotten disgusted with the use of drugs on it. I wanted to mention also that I think that the use of drugs on the racetrack and the fact that the public knows about this has done as much harm as anything to the image of horse racing and to people saying they just don't believe it. If drugs were dispensed in the Olympics or in the NFL or in baseball to the extent they are in horse racing, it would be a national scandal. It would be on the front page of every newspaper. In horse racing, I guess it is because they are mere beasts, they think it is no big deal. But people just don't believe outcomes.

Not only that, as good handicappers have told me, like Andy Beyer, it is very difficult to handicap races nowadays because you don't know who is using what juice. What it does is it skews past performances. You have horses leaping up, coming off of \$7,500 claiming races, and winning \$30,000 claiming races by ten. You can't run a business this way because the public is not going to believe it, and drugs are now associated with horse racing. It is a real shame, and I think it is one of the reasons Greg Ferraro got out of it. He is now running an agency up at the University of California Davis, looking for ways to improve the health of horses, kind of a counterbalance to what is going on backstretches nowadays. That opens up a whole new can of worms that I think racing has got to deal with, the use of drugs on racehorses and what it has done to the image of the industry.

**Dave Johnson:** We are running out of time. Let's just quickly take one minute each for those last two gentlemen, and then we have to wrap up here. So, Stan, who is next?

**Christian Hellmers:** I think the game is going to have to ask itself the question, when is it going to want to start to grow. If it wants to grow, it is going to have to attack a new fan base. There is a perfect vehicle, called the Internet, sitting there, right now, ready, as we have seen with Party Poker. My question is, to the panel, seeing that the game has the intellectual component, and seeing that is a major differentiator from other forms of gambling, do all of you think, and not just the people on the panel, but the other people in the room to talk about this afterwards, do you think that possibly promoting the ability to analyze the races in a very sophisticated manner where you might be able to actually make money, you treat the game more like the stock market. There are several players that make a full-time living at this, and yet they are never shown on the media, they are never given the opportunity to speak. There is no accountability for anybody that makes a pick on horses on multiple television networks. Do you all believe that there could be a way to attract new fans by integrating the sense of accountability and at the same time treating the game as a game, as a gambling game?

**Dave Johnson:** Christian, that is a wonderful question. Stan, could we have another hour please. Thank you, Christian from BetFair. Anyone want to quickly take this up.

**Gary West:** I would say yes. There is a great appeal. Horse racing will never be as popular as it was in the '50's and '60's simply because it is a pastoral sport and it reflects a pastoral society that America was in the '50's and the '60's. Baseball was the most popular sport, another pastoral sport. America has changed, and now we have technological games that emphasize time and specialization and they are all in tune with America. Horse racing isn't. It is very encouraging to see poker achieving such popularity on television. It is very encouraging to see the democratization of the media, and I think those two things give horse racing a big chance to appeal to an audience on that level. I think it is quite a possibility, yes.

**Dave Johnson:** Talk about driving, look at what happened. Because of television, we now have poker columns in the *Daily Racing Form* and newspapers across the country.

**A Voice:** I went to a NASCAR race. I used to cover a lot of racing, and I went to one, and I talked to about a dozen fans. I was just curious. I took a poll. I said, "Why are you here? What is the appeal here? Why aren't you at Churchill Downs or at Belmont Park or something?" You know what the answer was from virtually everybody? "I don't own a horse. I own a car, and I can relate to guys out there going hammer and tongs out there at 180 mph, and I cannot relate to horses." Again, that is a move from America that was horse backed until about the teens of this last century up until the twenties, and then everything was taken over by the automobile. Cultural tastes and cultural necessities, everything has shifted.

**Dave Johnson:** Let's finish it up on time. Thank you again, for such an interesting question, Christian, and I will start it off. The question is, if you could snap your fingers and change one thing, or give one quick suggestion, and I want to pick up one thing Bill Christine said. He talked about the relationship between Bill Dwyer at the *Los Angeles Times* and Bob Lewis, a major owner in sports. Here is what the interaction between two people change the coverage of newspaper in a major city in America. I would like to see a national body like the NTRA or HTA or individual tracks take the people out to lunch who control the newspapers, and instead of bringing a trainer of a jockey along, bring along a Bob Lewis type, or bring along a celebrity, or someone who owns five percent of a syndicate and sits in their office playing the Internet or has a BetFair account. I think that if we could change the demographics for the editors and the

television producers. If we could show them that it is not just some cigar-smoking low life that is spending his last two dollars at the track, that we could do a big change. If you could snap your fingers, Gary, and change it, what would it be?

**Gary West:** I think one thing that would be kind of practical, I did not know this was a magic wand question, but from a more practical point of view, I think one area of improvement would be if racetracks and horsemen all understood the media dynamic. There seems to be adversarial relationship there. The racetracks don't understand their relationship with the media. They really don't. Horsemen don't understand their relationship with the media, and they don't understand how dependent they are on the media. They don't understand that the media are the liaison with the public. Many horsemen don't understand, many horsemen, that the reason horses race is for those people in the grandstand or on the Internet, for the audience. They don't race so that certain jockeys have something to do with their afternoons or so some trainers can get off the farm and drive around in a Mercedes. They race for those people in the grandstand and the media is the liaison with those people, the only liaison they have, so stop trying to regard the media as the enemy.

**Bill Nack:** I think racetracks should open up Internet betting parlors.

**Jay Privman:** I just think, again, if you want the sport to grow, from a media standpoint, you need to embrace the personalities in the sport because good personalities are what are going to drive interest from the people that are making decisions in terms of coverage in TV, radio, or print. I think that is what racetracks need to focus on in terms of their interpersonal relationships with those people.

**Bill Christine:** Racetracks should not underestimate their PR people. Every one of them should hire a good one and give him or her free reign with their ideas.

**Jay Hovdey:** Take care of your live customers. They are the people that still read, by the way. They are committing themselves to an afternoon in your parks, your stadiums, your racetracks, and their comfort, their convenience should be the most important thing that management can do.

**Charles Leehrsen:** I would say to stop thinking in terms of getting a few inches in your local newspaper and start waking up to the realities that a new day is here and there is a lot to build on.

**Joe Sullivan:** I think the power of the Internet is undeniable, and I agree with most of the panel here that is really where the future lies for racing and gambling on racing.

**Stan Bergstein:** Just one quick anecdote regarding the question asked earlier about if a feature should be two-legged or four-legged. Many moons ago, when there were ten newspapers in LA, and every one of them had someone covering in the press box, I was a kid and I was working there. How far back it goes, harness horses were then racing at Santa Anita and Hollywood Park. I was assigned to the backstretch and told to stay there and to write features. There was one particular horse that I thought had a good feature attached to him, and I futilely tried to get something out of the trainer as to what peculiarity, oddity, or idiosyncrasy the horse might have, whether it was sneezing, had a pet goat, or something. The trainer kept telling me there was absolutely nothing about the horse that was newsworthy. I tried and tried and finally gave up. As I started away, and this is a true story, he said, “You really should talk to my grandmother.” I asked him, “What does your grandmother have to do with it?” He said, “She really trains the horse. She is 84-years-old and has one leg.”(Laughter) So, take your choice, two-legged or four-legged. I want to thank this outstanding panel of professionals for taking their time, sharing their views, and I want to thank you for being a great audience. We will move on to our next panel right now.