

**August 4, 2009**



## THE HAMBLETONIAN PRESS CONFERENCE

DAVE JOHNSON: Welcome to our Hambletonian celebration. The Hambletonian, this Saturday, will be the richest in history. 84th edition of this American classic and the 29th time it will be presented here at the Meadowlands. One lucky horse will be there after the Hambletonian, taking his place between those (indiscernible) from the last couple years. That's the trophy that they all want this Saturday afternoon.

We're speaking to you live from the Pegasus Room at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Welcome to our folks here at the Pegasus Room, but also to the Internet crowd and journalists joining us from around the world on the telephone.

Right now there are a lot of journalists and sports columnists writing about what's wrong with horse racing. But I think they really should come to New Jersey to find out what's right about horse racing, whether it's the wonderful night we had here at the Meadowlands Pace, last Saturday for the Elimination, or if they happen to have been down at Monmouth Park in the midst of a biblical type of a storm, but it was incredible to see the buzz and the reaction of the fans for horse racing here in New Jersey. As Rachel Alexander came into the pack down there, they were 20 deep, something I've never seen on the other side of the track. I've seen it on the track, but I've never seen it in the paddock like I did on that afternoon. What's right about horse racing is on view in New Jersey and will be here on Saturday afternoon.

Just a couple housekeeping details. Some facts and figures about what's going on. First of all

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NBC TV will be having a live broadcast from 3:30 to 4:30 eastern time. Of course you all know Ken Warkentin, Sam McKee. Sam will be calling his first Hambletonian, and Ken will be moving on camera in an analyst position. So a tremendous team for NBC Sports this Saturday afternoon.

Bill Finley and I will be doing a live one-hour show on Sirius and XM Satellite Radio, and WF AN. A lot of media coverage for the big day. Gates will open at 10:30, and advance full card wagering available for the Hambletonian starting Friday at noon.

\$100,000 guaranteed pick-4 Saturday afternoon races 7 through 10, and superfecta wagering, so powerful, fan-oriented, 10-cent superfecta on all of the races.

The card also includes, in addition to the Hambletonian, the Hambletonian Oaks, the rich three-quarters of a million dollars Hambletonian Oaks, then the (indiscernible) over 500 thousand, the \$500,000 Pete Haughton Memorial, the \$400,000 Mistletoe Shalee, the U.S. Pacing Championship worth 335 grand, the Nat Ray at 300 thousand, and 230 for the Oliver Wendell Holmes. What a tremendous card of harness action we have on the Saturday program.

Just a couple other things. We have on-track parade starting at 11 a.m., featuring the Willow Grove Clydesdales. A baseball cap giveaway for the adults, bucket hats for the kids. Free family fun, face painters, carnival games in Paddock Park. On a serious side, the Kings Hambletonian food drive. Free admission now through August 22nd with donations of canned goods or non-perishable food items. A tremendous afternoon coming up for all of us on Hambletonian day.

Right now we're going to be doing the Hambletonian Oaks draw and the Hambletonian draw. First, let me introduce the president and the

**Hambletonian Press Conference  
Transcripts**

chief executive officer of the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority, welcome up to the podium Dennis Robinson.

DENNIS ROBINSON: Thank you for that round of applause. I'll tell you, that was not quite as loud as the applause that Rachel Alexander received as she walked into the walking ring. This is an amazing day. Thank you for being here.

On behalf of the governor, our chairman and our board, I want to welcome you again to the Meadowlands and the 84th running of the Hambletonian. We are so proud to host the world's greatest harness racing event for the 29th time. It's the longest any track has had the pleasure to host this prestigious event. As far as I'm concerned, we'd like to do it forever.

As Dave said, this is the time of year in New Jersey where the entire state of New Jersey, the metropolitan area, turns their eyes towards horse racing. The momentum that we built into this year's Hambletonian with the race on Saturday, really historic race with Rachel Alexander, historic victory, arguably becoming one of the greatest fillies of all time, it was an amazing day with over 37,000 people braving the weather to get a glimpse of this marvelous athlete.

A lot of people putts with the numbers on attendance. That's something we don't do under my watch. That was a real number, 37,000 people showed up to really witness a wonderful, wonderful day. I have no doubt that this year's Hambletonian will be equally as exciting.

I'd like to take a moment to thank the Hambletonian Society chairman John Cashman, CEO and president Tom Charters, for all their great work. And for the wonderful partnership and personal relationships that we've forged over the years, it really, truly a pleasure to work with the Hambletonian Society. In fact, we're already working on next year's event to enhance the event to ensure that the Hambletonian remains a major national, international event for years to come, and hopefully remains indefinitely here at the Meadowlands.

We're also very excited to continue our great relationship with NBC, who has been our broadcast partner since 2007, who through their creativity and broadcast technology help bring this event live to millions of viewers from coast-to-coast where we have reached 99% of all U.S. households.

I also would be remiss if I didn't recognize the racing and sports media for their support and tremendous coverage of the world's most

prestigious event in harness racing. Your perspective, your story lines, human interest angles of your coverage cannot be underestimated in creating anticipation, fun and excitement for the millions who follow this great day of racing.

I'd also like to thank our numerous sponsors that are too numerous to mention actually, but I would like to recognize and thank a couple of them, the Paul Miller Auto Group, the New Jersey Department of Travel and Tourism, and King Supermarket. Thank you for your support to make this day possible.

Needless to say, the Hambletonian is all about world champions, world championship caliber racing, training, driving and ownership. We so much appreciate the support of the entire harness racing industry making this event what it is today.

In our 29 years of hosting this great event, we witnessed some of the greatest races in history, some of the greatest horses in history. This year it will be no different as we have an incredibly talented field, competitive field, led like Muscle Hill, looking for his 13th consecutive victory. Like any great championship event, you know what, anything goes, anything can happen.

So I'm looking forward to Saturday, as I know you are. We thank you all for being here and wish you all the best of luck.

I'd like to bring a couple of stats, because you know I'm a stats guy, I'm actually not, but Hollywood is. Hollywood says, You got to talk about this. I have to bring up what I thought were some fascinating statistics that Hollywood dug up in his spare time. I think he does that at night when he goes home.

Anyway, this year's Hambletonian will be the richest trotting race in history, which is amazing. It's going to be the richest race in 23 years. It's the 11th richest race ever. All of those 11 races were competed here at the Meadowlands. We're making history once again this year.

Again, I hope you all have great luck, hope you all have a wonderful time, and I'm looking forward to helping make the Hambletonian day one of the best ever. Thank you very much.

DAVE JOHNSON: It's a lot of fun. It's going to be fun out here and exciting. But the main reason that the people will be here is for racing. It's my pleasure to welcome, not the first time he's been to the Hambletonian press conference, but



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the first time up here at the podium, the senior vice president of racing for the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority, Lennon Register.

LENNON REGISTER: Good afternoon, everyone. In spite of today's record heat, August has been a special month because August is Hambletonian time at the Meadowlands. For the last 28 years, the partnership between the Hambletonian Society and the Meadowlands has blossomed. During that time, the Hambletonian has grown from a U.S. event with total handle of 3.3 million, to an internationally way engineered event in excess of 8.3 million. Over the last eight years, International Hambletonian has increased from 200,000 to 1.1 million. In 2007, it set a single race wagering record of 1.6 million. The Hambletonian has produced two Meadowlands track records, eight Horse of the Year award winners, 12 Trotters of the Year, and 18 divisional champions, a testament to the quality of its participants.

What can we expect in 2009? A day with total purses of 4.9 million, a significant increase in international wagering as a result of the increase in the number of races being sent overseas. We can expect a superstar field of horses with the best drivers and trainers in the business. A full day of entertainment which includes give-aways, an on-track parade, a live band, a drivers' autograph session and more. In summary, a great day of racing and a tremendous family value.

But then what else can you expect? It's August. It's the Hambletonian. It's at the Meadowlands. Make sure you get there early.

DAVE JOHNSON: Thank you. Let's get to the co-feature, the big one, three-quarters of a million dollars, the Hambletonian Oaks. To conduct the draw, here is Sam McKee.

SAM McKEE: Thank you very much. Welcome, everybody, to the Meadowlands. Thanks for joining us today. We're about ready to draw the postpositions for the three-year-old filly trot, the Hambletonian Oaks. I'd like to introduce a guy who has done a great job here at the Meadowlands in his first year, director of racing, Peter Koch, a guy I've gotten to be a good friends with, our presiding judge Mike McCarthy. We also have a couple of celebrities, Murray Brown of Hanover Shoe Farms who thought he was getting a free lunch today, but that's not case, and also a very special guest Cheryl Good, the manager of community relations and consumer affairs for King Supermarkets, one of our great sponsors. We certainly appreciate their support, not only for what

they do for us and the race, but for the community as well. Cheryl, come on up and join us here on the stage as we get ready for the post position draw.

I know for Kings, the Hambletonian Food Drive has really blossomed over the year and this year will be expanded to three weeks.

CHERYL GOOD: Kings certainly has been very pleased over the years to sponsor the food drive, especially over the last two years with the economy being what it is. There are so many folks in need of food. We're just delighted to be a part of this, and to partner with the Hambletonian in this way.

SAM McKEE: We're delighted to have you with us as well.

The Hambletonian Oaks, this year we had four eliminations, so the four winners get to pick their post. There was a draw conducted earlier. Peter Koch has those postposition selections. Who got to pick first and what post do they go in?

Elusive Desire will be Post 1, Raising Rachel Post 2, OK To Play Post 3, Broadway Schooner Post 4. So the elimination winner selects the inside post.

Let's check the drivers right now, if you have those cards, Pete. Elusive Desire will be driven by Paul MacDonell. Dan Dube sticks on OK To Play, and Brian Sears sticks on Broadway Schooner.

Now we'll conduct the rest of the draw for the final six positions for the Hambletonian Oaks, race nine on Saturday, over \$783,000. We are ready. We'll let Murray go first and Cheryl second.

Post 8 goes to I Wanted Wings. Dave Miller to drive I Wanted Wings. Post 8 for I Wanted Wings. Honorable Daughter, John Campbell will drive. Post 9 for Honorable Daughter. Certainly not the best starting spot. Next up, Timelesswinner Two, one of the fourth-place finishers with the second highest earnings, she made the final as well. Andy Miller will drive, Post 10 for Timelesswinner Two. Timelesswinner Two, who was third in her elimination, again, one of the two highest money winners draws Post 10 with Andy Miller. Moonlight Kronos, the Swedish filly, Tim Tetrack to drive. Post 5. Margarita Momma, Post 7 for Margarita Momma. Last, but certainly not least, Jersey AS, Tim Tetrack, Post 6 for Jersey AS.

Let's recap the field from the rail out. Elusive Desire is No. 1 for driver Paul MacDonell,



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Raising Rachel Post 2, OK To Play Post 3, Broadway Schooner Post 4, Moonlight Kronos Post 5, Jersey AS Post 6, Margarita Momma Post 7 for Ron Pierce, I Wanted Wings Post 8, Dave Miller driving her, Post 9 goes to Honorable Daughter, and Post 10, Timelesswinner Two with Andy Miller driving.

That's the field for the Hambletonian Oaks on Saturday, the ninth race on our card. Cheryl, Murray, thanks for your assistance.

We'll turn things back to our host Dave Johnson as we continue with our Hambletonian press conference. Best of luck to all of our entrants and contestants. Should be a great race. Post time 3:37, shown live also on NBC Sports.

DAVE JOHNSON: Thank you, Sam. Here is the Morning Line for the Hambletonian Oaks. Elusive Desire starts at the rail and is 5-2. No. 2 would be Raising Rachel at 7-2. The three horse, OK To Play, 8-1. No. 4, Broadway Schooner at 9-2. No. 5, Moonlight Kronos, 10-1. Jersey AS 20-1 from the six hole. Margarita Momma starts at 8-1. No. 8 will be I Wanted Wings 20-1. The nine horse, Honorable Daughter, starts at 6-1. And Timelesswinner Two completes the field at 20-1. That's Dave Brower's Morning Line.

Bob, are we going to do something with you right now? Let's go to Bob Hayden.

BOB HEYDEN: One of the elimination winners Symphonic Hanover. He just consulted with his driver. Driver made the final call.

DAVE JOHNSON: Let me mention the Hambletonian is in the wonderful hands and caring hands of the Hambletonian Society. It's my pleasure to bring up the president and CEO, Tom Charters.

TOM CHARTERS: Thank you very much. I appreciate those kind words.

On behalf of the directors of the Hambletonian Society, we'd like to express our thanks to the staff and management of the NJSEA, to Dennis, Carl, (indiscernible) especially. We appreciate their kind words, for their tremendous support, which I always stress here is year-round. As Dennis said, decisions are being made now for Hambletonians in the future. It just is indicative of their devotion.

Also I'd like to express our thanks to our sponsors, New Jersey Travel and Tourism, King Supermarkets, Paul Miller Porsche, Hanover Shoe Farms and Garden State Sales, especially, and, most of all, to the owners and horsemen in this 84th Hambletonian.

May I offer a special warm welcome to all our participants, the media and fans from across North America and Europe. Since 1926, the Hambletonian has had a worldwide impact. This year it has a special international zest to it. With the tremendous simulcast program that's been mentioned internationally, along with our resident Canadian, Australian and Scandinavian ex patriot trainer colony and drivers, we have some other notable international participants that I'd like to mention especially.

The Symphonic Hanover is owned by Jean Pierre Dubois, one of the world's finest horsemen and revolutionary breeder in France. Speaking personally, I'm a great admirer. Our friend Per Eriksson, the winning trainer in 1985, is back as an owner this time on Symphonic Hanover. You know, he doesn't look any older than that day when he became the youngest trainer to ever win the Hambletonian. In fact, it was a feat he proceeded to duplicate twice more in the next 10 years before he went back to Sweden to raise a family. We're very pleased to have him back.

I'd also like to single out (indiscernible), who may not be a familiar name to people, but brought a half dozen horses to America last week and will have three in on Hambletonian day, including what's probably the best filly in Scandinavia.

That isn't to say we take our Canadian colleagues for granted. There was a time when very few Hambletonian entrants were owned by Canadians, although they've always been a presence in (indiscernible) from Ben White to John Campbell. We would not be surprised to see another trophy go north, as it has in the last few years.

This is truly an international event, no matter how you measure it. We really love the enthusiasm of everybody for this annual classic celebration of the American trotter. No matter where you're from, Stockholm or Lexington, or Ontario or New Jersey, we thank all of you.

We also want to recognize NBC, our broadcast partner, and remind you that the Hambletonian remains the only harness event on a major nationwide network as it has been for almost four decades, something we're very proud of.

I also think it's important to put a plug in here for the Hambletonian golf tournament. If you bear with me, it's been moved back on the calendar to August 17th. There's still some



openings available. It will be at the Hackensack Golf Club. We hope everybody will participate. I think we've raised close to a million dollars for the charities over the past 20 years, which are Standardbred Retirement fund, Hall of Fame, and the trotter.

In closing, I'd like to say that the Hambletonian is very proud to partner with the Meadowlands for 29 years, as has been pointed out. I believe with the support of the state of New Jersey, the Hambletonian will remain here for many, many years to come. Good luck to all. Enjoy harness racing, on the sport's greatest day, and we hope we see you in the winner's circle.

DAVE JOHNSON: Thank you, Tom.

Couple quick notes for the journalists. Our media relations department, the outstanding folks in the media relations department, always on-call for you here. If you want to get website updates, please do at [www.meadowlandsracetrack.com](http://www.meadowlandsracetrack.com). Continuous updates on the big races for Saturday.

Now to the Hambletonian. Maybe the best way to look forward to Saturday is to look back. Would you please roll the tape.

(Video Shown.)

DAVE JOHNSON: The stage is set. That certainly sets the table. Let's start out of starting positions. I'll turn the mic over to Ken Warkentin.

KEN WARKENTIN: Thanks very much. Good afternoon, everybody. I love the excitement, the buildup for Hambletonian. Every year it just gets bigger and better. Let's call on Peter Koch, Mark McCarthy, our special guest, Kathy Miranowic of Pfizer Animal Health. Welcome, Kathy. Our first order of business is to draw the order of postposition selection for our three elimination winners, Explosive Matter, Symphonic Hanover, and Muscle Hill. So let's find out who picks first and in what order the elimination winners will select their postpositions.

Peter, go ahead. Mike, Kathy and Peter are going to pick the order the three elimination winners will select their post position. Put you to work there, Kathy. Pick out a number. Mike has the horse.

Symphonic Hanover, he'll pick third. Who is going to pick first here? Explosive Matter will be picking first. Impressive elimination winner, as well. Muscle Hill will pick second.

Sam McKee, which post position?

SAM McKEE: You get to pick the first postposition. I know you don't want the 10-hole. What are you going to go with, Noel, and why?

NOEL DALEY: We'll go to the two-hole. No particular reason. As long as I wasn't getting the seven, eight, nine or 10, I didn't care.

KEN WARKENTIN: All right. The connections for Muscle Hill. Bob Heyden summoning trainer Greg Peck, who has just done a terrific meticulous job managing this colt, certainly had him on his toes. He was excellent, as always, in his elimination. Just breezing to an easy victory. Go ahead, Bob.

BOB HEYDEN: Second pick. What have we done?

GREG PECK: Where I grew up, the shortest distance between two points was the rail, so we are going to pick number one.

KEN WARKENTIN: Symphonic Hanover, trainer Jonas Czernyson is with Sam McKee.

SAM McKEE: You put the pressure on Dave Miller to select the post. One and two are gone. What are you going to go with and why?

JONAS CZERNYSON: Guess we have to go with three.

SAM McKEE: Any reason for Post 3? It's better than four, right?

JONAS CZERNYSON: Better than four.

SAM McKEE: Congratulations. We'll talk to you again when we finish the draw.

KEN WARKENTIN: We continue to set the stage for the richest trotting event of all time, richest race since the 1986 Woodrow Wilson. Seventh richest of all times. We'll put the other seven numbers, postpositions, back in the drum here. We've taken out one, two and three. We can draw the remaining seven postpositions. Take it away, guys.

Mike and Kathy and Peter will mix up the names here. Draw slips. We'll go in. Reinsman Hanover, Post 7. Judge Joe for the Ackermans, Post 10. Hot Shot Blue Chip, Post 4. Mike LaChance, Hall of Famer, did a great job with this colt, getting him into the final. Federal Flex is looking to rebound. He was the fourth-place finisher with the highest money earnings. Post 9. He'll have to overcome some more adversity there for Jody Jamieson and trainer Jeff Gillis. Calchips Brute, Post 6. About mid pack there for that one. Triumphant Caviar, Post 5. As Dave Brower would say, a nice mid pack post. The Chancellor gets

Post 8, Andy and Julie Miller.

We thank you very much, Kathy.

Let's recap the field. Muscle Hill from the rail, Brian Sears, Greg Peck; Explosive Matter, Ron Pierce, Noel Daley; Symphonic Hanover, Dave Miller, Jonas Czernyson; Hot Shot Blue Chip, Mike LaChance, Jonas Czernyson; Post 5, Triumphant Caviar, Luc Ouellette; 6 is Calchips Brute, John Campbell, Trond Smedshammer; 7, Reinsman Hanover; 8, The Chancellor, Julie Miller; 9, Federal Flex; finally, Post 10, Judge Joe, DR Ackerman and his father Doug Ackerman.

Let's get some reaction here from the post position draw, how these horses are leading into the big event on Saturday.

Sam McKee, go first with Noel Daley there who I believe started with 3, but he got one in. He was the best one, I'm sure.

SAM McKEE: Very impressive elimination winner. Noel. Were you surprised that Greg selected Post 1 with Muscle Hill?

NOEL DALEY: Not really. That horse can leave the gate. I know they want to control the speed. I knew I was ending up with the two or three horse. I didn't want the rail with my horse. No matter how the pick was going to go out, I was going to be two or three.

SAM McKEE: One of the big stories before the elimination, late in the week, Explosive Matter was involved in a horse trailer accident coming back from swimming. The trailer tipped over into a ditch. How many more gray hairs did you have after that incident? What happened? How is the horse?

NOEL DALEY: We were pretty pleased once we got through the elimination. That's not the way you want to go into one. 12 clock the day before he ended up on the trailer floor with his brother. Couldn't get him out. Couldn't tranquilize him. Four of my people were sitting on their heads basically for an hour. Got out pretty unscathed considering.

I jogged him a little on Saturday morning. Seemed good. Probably as down as he's ever been. We're very lucky. We don't want to duplicate that this week. Very happy to get out of it the way we did.

SAM McKEE: You talked about the break that the track surface may have been a little loose. That was a huge recovery to get back into it. Long-term fitness-wise, that is a race that stretched him out, tightened him up. Do you have his shoeing set for Saturday?

NOEL DALEY: We never had any grab at all on him. I guess I had half rounds on him. Everybody else seemed to have some grab on their horses. Track changed the last couple of weeks. Didn't need to reinvent the wheel. He trotted his last three-quarters there, 1:22 and change. Real happy with the way he recovered. Real happy with the way he raced last week. I'm very confident going in. I hope all the better chances get a good trip there. Whoever wins it wins it. I'd like to win it regardless, but I don't want to be lucky. I don't want the other one to be unlucky. To get the win fair and square, that's all we're asking for.

SAM McKEE: Your driver Ron Pierce is standing to my right. After the elimination, you said the Muscle Hill people know we're here. You're very confident in Explosive Matter's abilities.

RON PIERCE: Raced him since he was two. He's always shown me (indiscernible).

SAM McKEE: Would you be rather chasing Muscle Hill in the stretch or be on the lead with him having to track you down?

RON PIERCE: Depends on how the race is going.

SAM McKEE: You won the Hambletonian a couple years ago with Donato Hanover. Are there any comparisons between the two horses?

RON PIERCE: They're both great colts. Donato Hanover just had a super season. He was just unbeatable. Explosive Matter, high-speed colt, too. He can go.

SAM McKEE: It's been a super summer for you. You've won two million-dollar races. Look pretty good in the bank when you made that deposit, wasn't it?

RON PIERCE: Yeah, it would.

SAM McKEE: Good luck on Saturday.

KEN WARKENTIN: Standing by with Bob Hayden, in terms of Calchips Brute, he commented somebody thought he was nuts to put him in. He's also got two horses that were kind of lurking on the sidelines. Here they are in the big dance.

BOB HEYDEN: The only man to win the Hambletonian and the Oaks is Trond Smedshammer. Trond, your reaction to the post position draw?

TROND SMEDSHAMMER: Since the three winners got the shoes, limit some position. 6 and 7, I guess is right in the mid pack from what was available. So I'm not disappointed with that.

BOB HEYDEN: Tell us a little bit about

Calchips Brute, you don't see normally see New York sire stakes horses racing eliminations. Is he good enough to get money here?

TROND SMEDSHAMMER: He's such an honest little horse. You got a horse that really tries. Those horses always make money. Obviously horses with more ability and are faster than him in the race, but I wouldn't be surprised if he got a check.

BOB HEYDEN: What about Reinsman Hanover?

TROND SMEDSHAMMER: He's been coming into this race good. He actually was sick that day. I think there's room for some improvements there for the final. He's a pretty decent horse.

BOB HEYDEN: Is this a year where it's Explosive Matter, Muscle Hill, and everybody else?

TROND SMEDSHAMMER: Well, yeah, I think obviously Muscle Hill has stamped himself as the best horse of the class. But, you know, anything can happen in these big races. I had two big favorites coming into the Hambletonian that got beat. A lot of things can happen.

BOB HEYDEN: You have won without the top three favorite. Trond Smedshammer has two shots at his second Hambletonian. Ken?

KEN WARKENTIN: And Jonas Czernyson had a couple in last year, a couple of long shots. Of course, he's been around before the assistant trainer to Per Eriksson for many years, won the 2005 Hambletonian Oaks. Symphonic Hanover about a month ago said that was probably his best colt. He's been almost a Houdini to get Hot Shot Blue Chip in. A lot of ability there. A very tough horse to stay flat, to keep racing.

SAM McKEE: Jonas Czyernyson, with Hot Shot Blue Chip. We did an article on him about a month ago. You said he has all the speed in the world, but mentally he's a yearling. He covered more ground than Lewis & Clark. He was out there three or four wide the whole mile. Mike LaChance kept him flat, though, he wasn't beat that badly. Was that by steering or?

JONAS CZERNYSON: I think Mike decided to stay out of harm's way, make sure we got in.

SAM McKEE: You're in. That's kind of a scary wild card horse because you know he can trot enough. Will you do some more tinkering with the rigging and that sort of thing, be more aggressive on Saturday.

JONAS CZERNYSON: We kind of leave him the same way he is, hope for the best, hope that he's on his best behavior for Saturday.

SAM McKEE: Symphonic Hanover, your elimination winner, Ken alluded to, kind of in and out a little bit this year. You mention in the press kit you've done a lot of work on him recently, addressing some issues and some weak points. What exactly have been some problems with Symphonic Hanover and what have you done to correct them?

JONAS CZERNYSON: We mostly have been working on a way to keep him happy. We had some chiropractic work done to him. Pretty much just keeping him happy, aiming him for the right spot.

SAM McKEE: This is a special year for you. You have two finalists in the Hambletonian. You're getting married in about a month in Lexington. Symphonic Hanover is co-owned by your mentor, a guy you worked for, for many years, true trotting Masters in our sport, Per Eriksson. This has to be something special to share the Hambletonian with him?

JONAS CZERNYSON: It's very nice. Very touching to have him here, have him here as an owner. So I'm very happy about that.

SAM McKEE: Will you put him to work this week at all? Does he have to jog horses, clean some stalls.

JONAS CZERNYSON: I wish I could get him to clean stalls. But he's definitely going to do some work.

SAM McKEE: Best of luck to you on Saturday.

JONAS CZERNYSON: Thank you very much.

KEN WARKENTIN: Bob Heyden with Mr. Hambletonian. He's won six of them. Driven in 25 of the last 26 editions.

BOB HEYDEN: Last driver to win it back to back. John Campbell is here. John, what is your initial reaction to the post and Calchips Brute?

JOHN CAMPBELL: Well, my initial thought is at least I've got one to drive in there. Didn't get any qualified. I was very happy just to get one in there. Once you're in it, anything can happen. As Trond has said, he's very honest, tries hard. That's all you can ask. Sometimes those horses surprise people.

BOB HEYDEN: Will you get a chance to train him before Saturday?

JOHN CAMPBELL: No, I don't think so. I'll just rely on what Trond tells me. We've worked together many times over the years. I know what he's telling me is going to be accurate. I'll just go from there.

BOB HEYDEN: Take us to the Hambletonian Oaks. Elusive Desire, Honorable Daughter. Was that a choice there or not?

JOHN CAMPBELL: Yeah, definitely a choice. I raced Honorable Daughter with a great deal of success last year. I just felt it was the right thing to do to stay with her. Elusive Desire was exceptional in her elimination race. Honorable Daughter had a problem we found out after the race. I expect her to rebound and race better than at the elimination.

BOB HEYDEN: Muscle Hill impressed you as one of those types of old-time trotters?

JOHN CAMPBELL: Certainly to this point. He has to finish out his three-year-old year. To this point he's done everything I've asked him, he's done it easily. He's certainly the real deal.

BOB HEYDEN: Is John Campbell driving as well as ever right now?

JOHN CAMPBELL: I hope so (laughter).

KEN WARKENTIN: I'll answer that, yes, absolutely. DR Ackerman told me a few weeks ago you certainly can't compare Judge Joe to Chocolatier. He's a sweet, easygoing horse, great attitude, gives you a tremendous performance every time out. Post 10, Sam.

SAM McKEE: Like most of his trotters, he's tough; races hard all the time. Even though he's probably not the most talented colt you and your father have ever had, I think he's one of your favorites.

D.R. ACKERMAN: He's home bred, very willing. He tries as hard as any. Always (indiscernible).

SAM McKEE: You race him mainly on the New York sire stakes on smaller half-mile ovals. Coming to a track like this, he moves up time-wise. This was his first start locally. Will he benefit from that trip over the track on Saturday by chance?

D.R. ACKERMAN: I hope so. He does his best. It will be what it is. But he'll come out of it doing his best. That's all.

SAM McKEE: The post gods not kind to you. You do have a lot of gate speed. Any strategy? You going to fire out there and see what happens or wait till the wings unfold?

D.R. ACKERMAN: I better wait till the wings unfold. I ain't got no speed to get there.

KEN WARKENTIN: Bob Heyden has the team behind the favorite Muscle Hill. Brian Sears looking to cap off his 10th straight driving title at the Meadowlands. Just seems like he's the man of destiny, the white knight in the Hambletonian. Trainer Greg Peck, a man who I've been so impressed by the fact that he's humble and he appreciates the horse and he appreciates the competition as well. He's with Bob Hayden.

BOB HEYDEN: Brian Sears and Greg Peck, Muscle Hill. Brian, was that victory that we saw in the elimination as easy as it looked on TV?

BRIAN SEARS: He's done everything pretty easy, everything we've asked all year. He's just waiting for me to call on him.

BOB HEYDEN: Four starts on the year, four wins. What kind of progress has he made from first to the fourth start?

BRIAN SEARS: He's been good all along. No complaints. We made a few small adjustments like I said before. He's been very good.

BOB HEYDEN: You got inside post here. Shouldn't be a lot of dispute as to what the strategy might be. What are you thinking right now about the race?

BRIAN SEARS: There's still some nice colts. It's not over till it's over. Still have to have some things go our way. See what happens.

BOB HEYDEN: You've had an amazing six-year run. Your résumé at this point doesn't carry a Hambletonian or a triple crown. Could this be the guy that gets those things on the bio?

BRIAN SEARS: He's definitely that type of horse. He's got tons of ability. He can win a triple crown.

BOB HEYDEN: We haven't seen his best yet, have we?

BRIAN SEARS: I hope not. We'll see.

BOB HEYDEN: Greg Peck, could you step in here and tell us what kind of training is going on this week with Muscle Hill?

GREG PECK: Very ordinary. He is a good athlete, so you don't have to do a whole lot with him. I gave him speed work every so often. He just goes around white (indiscernible), kind of like that kid that throws a touchdown pass, you say, how did you do that? He kind of looks at you, It's no big deal. That's kind of the way he is. This week will be an easy week.

BOB HEYDEN: You say speed work. Are you talking about interval training?

GREG PECK: No, I go one good mile. I



race him thoroughbred like. Every so often I have to incorporate a pretty quick work in there. He seems to take it well.

BOB HEYDEN: When was the moment starting from the yearling, when you started thinking Muscle Hill Hambletonian?

GREG PECK: Probably when they came back from the sale, about two days later. Sylvia Hobda, who works for me, takes care of Muscle Hill, has been just great with me, said you want to see this one trot. I remember going to the track with him and literally you'd feel he could go around twice to everyone's once. Knew he had the natural acumen to beat something, but you couldn't dream he'd be this good. How would you know that?

BOB HEYDEN: What about the next four days? Are you allowing yourself to dream or business as usual till the big day?

GREG PECK: I think it is business as usual. Because it is a horse race. I said it; I'll say it again to NBC Sports. You know in the movie, the guy is going to get the girl. In sports, you generally do not know. It still has to happen. As Ken said, we respect the competition. There are nine other horses in there with a chance. So things have to go our way and we know that. We do not take this lightly.

BOB HEYDEN: Good luck Saturday afternoon.

GREG PECK: Thank you.

KEN WARKENTIN: Sam McKee with Triumphant Caviar. Showed a lot of stamina and speed. He's been making breaks. They put the trotting hobbles on. There's a question of timing the gate from the trainer.

SAM McKEE: Chris Beaver of Delaware, Ohio, trains Triumphant Caviar. A couple years ago in the elims, he raced super. What was the difference?

CHRIS BEAVER: Luc handled him since last year. Just had to get used to him again. The horse can be a little trouble if it gets on the gate too quick. As long as he's not rushed there, he's all right.

SAM McKEE: One thing about it, you aren't going to fire the driver because Luc is also one of the co-owners. How did you end up partners up with the colt?

CHRIS BEAVER: I lived up in Canada for three years, was training horses up there. He has children the same age as mine. We got to be good friends. Wanted to buy and own some horses with me at the sales.

SAM McKEE: That has got to be the biggest thrill of your life, a horse in the Hambletonian. Tell us how you feel right now.

CHRIS BEAVER: Oh, it's very exciting.

SAM McKEE: Do you have a chance to beat the big boys? You raced pretty good in the elim. Do you have something for Explosive Matter and Muscle Hill?

CHRIS BEAVER: I'd be happy to get a good piece of it. I think it's going -- if the race sets up a certain way, there's always a chance.

SAM McKEE: You can't win if you aren't in. Chris Beaver, you are in.

KEN WARKENTIN: I have to admit, I didn't know who you had there. Couldn't have been state police, but he's dressed to the nines there. That's great.

Dave Miller, the buckeye, is driving Symphonic Hanover. He said that this horse, we haven't seen the best of this horse yet.

BOB HEYDEN: I think we got the redheaded stepchild here. No one is talking about Symphonic Hanover. Dave Miller, Symphonic Hanover, was an elimination win by virtue of a weaker field, was he really good? What was it?

DAVE MILLER: He caught a horse that should have been better. Thinking of Jody Jamieson's horse. He raced well. Strong through the stretch. I was pretty happy with him.

BOB HEYDEN: You've driven Jonas Czernyson. He seems to send his horses ready out on their toes, doesn't he?

DAVE MILLER: Usually as good of shape as he can get them. Symphonic Hanover seems to be coming around, hopefully right here at the right time.

BOB HEYDEN: You have Post 3. The big two have Post 1 and 2. What is Dave Miller envisioning this race going as?

DAVE MILLER: You really don't know that till the gate folds. With the three-hole, we should be able to sit well, following the two best horses. Going in right now, I think we're in good shape.

BOB HEYDEN: And he's improving each start?

DAVE MILLER: Yeah, you know, I guess we ran into a snag there a couple weeks ago with him, but I think we got him lined up. We're hoping for the best.

BOB HEYDEN: What about wings in the Hambletonian Oaks, what about her chances?

DAVE MILLER: I just got to watch a race.

Never sat behind her. Just happy to have one in the Hambletonian Oaks there. Have to see what happens.

BOB HEYDEN: Mr. Consistency Dave Miller is in both the Hambletonian and the Hambletonian Oaks finals.

KEN WARKENTIN: Thanks to all of our participants, those active in the commentary today. I believe we'll have Dave Brower's Morning Line coming up. Dave Johnson will have that. Have a great lunch and a great Hambletonian, everybody.

DAVE JOHNSON: Here is the Morning Line: Muscle Hill at the rail, 3-5; Explosive Matter from Post 2 5-1; Symphonic Hanover starts at 8-1; Hot Shot Blue Chip will start 10-1; 15 is the price on Triumphant Caviar from Post 5; Calchips Brute 30-1; Reinsman Hanover, 30-1; The Chancellor 30-1; Federal Flex Post 9 8-1; and Post 10 on the outside, Judge Joe starts at 15-1. So Muscle Hill, the 3-5 favorite.

Just to recap the facts and figures for Hambletonian day, NBC, 3:30 to 4:30; Sirius XM Satellite, both platforms, 4 to 5; WFAM, from 10 in the morning until 1. Then we have full advance simulcast, wagering, starting at noon on Friday. Post time on Saturday for the first race is 12:30. Gates open at 10:30. 10-cent superfecta wagering on all Saturday's races. Of course, the Hambletonian, but the Hambletonian Oaks, with a purse of over three-quarters of a million dollars. The Merrie Annabelle and Peter Haughton with purses of over a half million, Mistletoe Chalet at 400,000, the U.S. Pacing Championship, the Nat Ray and the Oliver Wendell Holmes all on the card Saturday afternoon. An on-track parade featuring the Willow Grove Clydesdales, which is always great fun. The Hambletonian baseball cap giveaway for adults and Hambletonian bucket cap for the kids, and the Nerds will be performing down in Paddock Park from noon until 4 on Saturday. Face painters, carnival games, free family fun in Paddock Park.

On a serious note, you know that the Kings Food Stores, the Kings annual Hambletonian Food Drive continues through August the 22nd with donations of canned goods or non-perishable items, free admission.

Today remember how much fun it was last year and how important the victory of Deweycheatumnhow, his 15th in a row, Muscle Hill goes for 15 in a row. With a field so rich in talent and so deep in experience, both human and equine, it just is going to be a Hambletonian for the ages.

Have a wonderful, safe Hambletonian day. We'll see you on Saturday. Enjoy lunch now. Thank you, everyone.

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