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DID YOU HEAR THE LATEST?

Stay up-to-date with the latest news from Assiniboia Downs.

ISSUE #187 - JUNE 6, 2025



Co-owner Eugene Burns and jockey Antonio Whitehall were all smiles after their victory in the Fancy As Overnight Stakes on Tuesday night with Just Trust Me.
(Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Steve Keplin, Jr., Antonio Whitehall, Stars of Stakes-Filled Week at ASD

There was a feast of overnight stakes this week at ASD and wagering continued to go through the roof including huge Pick 4 Pools.

Trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. and jockey Antonio Whitehall were the stars of the show, while new training arrival Dewey Williams upped his record to a perfect 3-for-3 including a win in the Fancy As Overnight Stakes on Tuesday evening with Just Trust Me.

Keplin won two stakes to take the lead in the trainer standings and Whitehall won five races to move into a tie for top spot among jockeys.

CLICK HERE to see all the stakes stars.



Live Racing this Tuesday & Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Live racing is in full stride every Tuesday and Wednesday evening, with special Monday night cards on June 23, July 14, August 4, August 25, and September 15. Post time is 7:30 p.m.—and as always, admission and parking are free! New to racing or need a refresher on how to bet? Visit Shannon and Brad at the Fan Education Centre on the main level—they're happy to help and answer all your questions.

CLICK HERE for schedule



**Come hungry! Come thirsty!
Come celebrate 67 years of
racing and entertainment ASD!**

Happy 67th Birthday ASD!

Join us on Wednesday, June 11 for a celebration packed with fun, and incredible \$5 birthday deals! Racing starts at 7:30 p.m.

- **\$5 Main Level Concession Specials**
Chili Cheese Dog, Nachos & Cheese, Large Popcorn, Large Ice Cream, Mini Donuts
- **\$5 Third Level Concession Specials**
Cheese Dog, Nachos & Cheese, Large Popcorn
- **\$5 Main Level & Third Level Bar Specials** Domestic Beer and House Spirits



ASD Player Portal

- Free ASD Live Racing Programs
- Race Night Selections
- Links to Player Podcasts & more



Live Racing Prime Rib Buffet

Get ready to indulge in the ultimate dining experience at the track. Savour melt-in-your-mouth Certified Angus Prime Rib carved to perfection, plus a delicious variety of chicken and seafood dishes, rotating entrée selections, and so much more! Adults: \$59.95, Seniors (65+): \$54.95, Kids (6–12): \$34.95, Kids (5 & under): \$22.95. **Call 204-885-3330 to reserve your table .**



Groom Hannah Kraychuk gives Sawasdee a pat after winning the S S Pee Wee Stakes Tuesday night for trainer Jared Brown and owners Kane Kachur and Sharyn Houle. Click photo to enlarge. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Looking for a Special Photo?

Track Photographer Jason Halstead may have just what you're looking for

Looking for that extra-special photo of your big horse, one you might not find in your win pictures?

Track photographer Jason Halstead takes numerous photos during the races, and not all of them can make it into the win photos. If you're looking for something frameable from your big race, or of your special horse, email Jason at jjhphoto@gmail.com.

Prices are excellent! Almost as good as his photos 😊



- #1 Spot in Winnipeg for VLT Jackpots!
- Free \$500 Cash Draw after every live race night
- Free \$200 Cash Draw plus draws to Spin the Lucky Cash Wheel every Friday, Saturday & Sunday starting at 6 pm



Click photo to enlarge

A Snapshot in Time by Bob Gates

How about we take a look at some photos of old racetracks? This particular image was originally believed to be of old Chinook Park outside of Calgary—at least, that's what was written on the back of the photo. However, further review suggests it is actually an undated photo of Agua Caliente Racetrack in Mexico. The photo was likely taken sometime in the 1930s, when the track hosted the prestigious Agua Caliente \$100,000 Handicap. Notable winners of the race include Phar Lap in 1932 and Seabiscuit in 1938. As you can see, the photo has plenty of 'character.' (Bennett family photo.)



- \$13.95 Daily Lunch Special
- Happy Hour (3 to 5pm & 9pm to close)
- Crazy Hour after Live Racing! Beer, Shots & Wine \$5 plus 25% off all appetizers





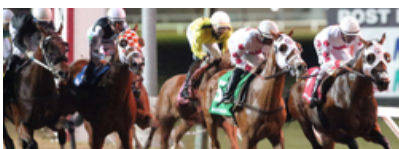
Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty will face seven talented rivals in the Belmont Stakes on Saturday. (Churchill Downs press photo)

Preakness winner Journalism meets Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty in 157th Belmont Stakes

Journalism, winner of the Grade 1 Preakness Stakes, will look to avenge his runner-up effort to Sovereignty in the Grade 1 Kentucky Derby when the foes rematch in Saturday's Grade 1, \$2 million Belmont Stakes presented by NYRA Bets, at Saratoga Race Course. The two classic winners will have to deal with six additional rivals in the 157th Belmont, including Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Baeza and Grade 2 Wood Memorial winner Rodriguez, who will likely try to steal the race.

-- [Canadian Thoroughbred](#)

CLICK FOR FULL STORY



- Wager on Top Tracks
- Simulcast Schedule
- Off-Track Betting Locations



Saffie Osborne will be aboard longshot Heart of Honor in the Belmont Stakes on Saturday. (Dubai Racing Club/Liesl King)

Meet the 2025 Belmont Stakes Jockeys

The group of jockeys assembled to ride in this year's Belmont Stakes Presented by NYRA Bets is a mix of accomplished veterans (nine Belmont wins among them) and rising talent (two riders will be making their Belmont debuts).

Five of the eight jockeys assigned mounts in the Belmont annually spend their summers competing for the Saratoga riding title, but not 23-year-old British jockey Saffie Osborne, who recently rode in the Preakness Stakes.

-- [America's Best Racing](#)

CLICK FOR FULL STORY



Bob Baffert: Rodriguez 'Needs To Be Out There Running' In Belmont Stakes

Rodriguez isn't the lone speed in the third leg of the Triple Crown, but his Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert told the Daily Racing Form that there are no plans to rate him in this Saturday's Grade 1 Belmont Stakes.

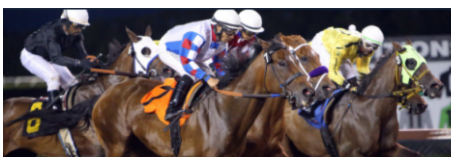
"He needs to be out there running," Baffert told DRF. "We've tried rating him, he just doesn't like it. He wanted no part of it."

Wood Memorial winner Rodriguez is one of two predicted speed horses in Saturday's Belmont Stakes. (Susie Raisher/Coglianese/NYRA Photo)

-- [Paulick Report](#)

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)

WATCH: Andrew Beyer, Steven Crist, and Brad Free share their 2025 Belmont Stakes picks and analysis



- Earn Points for Wagering
- Wagering Bonuses
- HPIbet.com Wagering Promotions



Bob's Blog Polo Park Celebrates Centenary

June 12, 2025, is a very special date in local horse racing history—it marks 100 years since Polo Park Racetrack first opened its doors to the public. ASD historian Bob Gates has all the historic details from Polo Park's 31-year run, including the tragedies, the swans, the death of R. J. Speers, and the final day of racing, when thoroughbred horse racing in Winnipeg was shuttered for nearly two years. [Click here](#) for everything you've ever wanted to know about the old Polo Park Racetrack.

Steve Keplin, Jr., Antonio Whitehall, Stars of Stakes-Filled Week at ASD

Jun 5, 2025 | The Inside Track



Groom Hannah Kraychuk leads Sawasdee and jockey Ronald Ali into the winner's circle after his victory in the S S Pee Wee Stakes on Tuesday evening. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

By G.S.Thompson

There was a feast of overnight stakes this week at ASD and wagering continued to go through the roof including huge Pick 4 Pools. Trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. and jockey Antonio Whitehall were the stars of the show, while new training arrival Dewey Williams upped his record to a perfect 3-for-3 including a win in the Fancy As Overnight Stakes on Tuesday evening with Just Trust Me.

The Fancy As Overnight Stakes was the first of the big features to run as the second race on Tuesday and 3-year-old colt Just Trust Me (\$2.10) ran to his odds under jockey Antonio Whitehall, pressing the pace from the outside and drawing off to win as he pleased by five lengths for ownership partners Dewey Williams and Eugene Burns. If all goes according to plan, this talented colt is headed to the Manitoba Derby.



Co-owner Eugene Burns and jockey Antonio Whitehall were all smiles after their victory in the Fancy As Overnight Stakes on

Tuesday night with Just Trust Me. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

The Fancy As victory was Whitehall's fourth win on the week following a hat trick on Monday, and he added another in the third race on Tuesday aboard Big Ticket for trainer Will Tourangeau. Whitehall's five victories moved the three-time ASD riding champion into a tie at the top of the standings with Damario Bynoe, who also won three races on the week. Bynoe and Whitehall now have nine wins apiece followed by Sven Balroop (8), Rachaad Knights (7) and Prayven Badrie (6).

The S S Peewee Overnight Stakes was also run on Tuesday evening and 7-year-old gelding Sawasdee(\$12.30) made some of the fastest horses on the grounds look slow early, opening a three-length lead early under jockey Ronald Ali and coasting home to win by 2 ¼-lengths for trainer Jared Brown and ownership partners Kane Kachur and Sharyn Houle. Sawasdee was probably the overlay of the week at 5-1 based on his back class and he certainly didn't disappoint his backers.

Trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. put on his own stakes show on Wednesday night, with victories in both the Red Berry Overnight Stakes and the Honorable Lady Overnight Stakes.



Sophia's Storm wins the Red Berry Overnight Stakes on Wednesday evening. Sven Balroop up. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

In the Red Berry, 6-year-old mare Sophia's Storm (\$2.80) took advantage of a perfect trip under jockey Sven Balroop, stalking a three-horse duel, advancing wide to take over in late turn and romping away in the stretch to win by 2 ¾-lengths for her

ownership team of Arnason Farms, Parker Walleette and James Keplin.

Two races later Keplin saddled 3-year-old filly Gina's Serenade (\$2.90) to win the Honorable Lady Overnight Stakes, who dueled outside and inside before drawing off to win by two lengths under Prayven Badrie for Arnason Farms. Last year's Winnipeg Futurity winner Welcometohollywood came flying late to finish second after checking inside into the turn and was immediately added to everyone's "Horses to Watch" list.



Gina's Serenade gives trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. his second stakes win of the week in the Honorable Lady Overnight Stakes on Wednesday. Prayven Badrie up. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Keplin's double stakes-winning performance vaulted him to the top of the trainer standings with eight victories on the season, followed by Tom Gardipy, Jr. and Lise Pruitt with five wins a piece, while Jared Brown, Wendy Anderson, Mike Nault, and Will Tourangeau formed a logjam in third spot with four wins each.

The wagering continued to be strong highlighted by huge Pick 4 pools on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of \$138,708, \$154,131, and \$137,635 respectively, following Assiniboia Downs' Owner/Trainer/Breeder Appreciation Dinner held the previous Thursday, the Downs presented cheques for \$13,000 each to the Winners Foundation, which focuses on fostering a healthy environment at the track, and Final Furlong, which finds new homes for retired racehorses. The donations were made possible by proceeds from the 50/50 draws held throughout the 2024 live racing season.

The karma naturally followed.

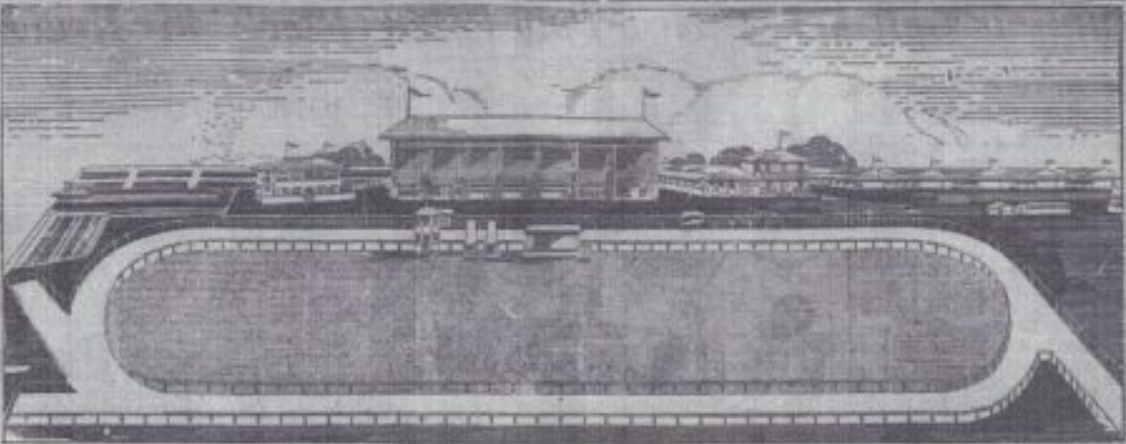


Assiniboia Downs CEO Darren Dunn (center) presents cheques for \$13,000 to Brian Billeck of the Winners Foundation and April Keedian of Final Furlong at the Owner/Trainer/Breeder Appreciation Dinner last Thursday.

Polo Park Celebrates Centenary


Jun 5, 2025 | The Inside Track

THE WINNERS' EVENING THURSDAY, THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 1925



COME TO THE
OPENING TOMORROW!
America's Finest Racing Plant

POLO PARK



JUNE 12 TO JUNE 19
SEVEN RACES EVERY DAY AT 2.30
RAIN OR SHINE

Everything New! *Fast Track!!*
400—HORSES—400
40—SPLENDID JOCKEYS—40

Come With The Crowd
TOMORROW!!
Admission \$1.50, Includes Grand Stand and Tax

\$1,000 **OPENING DAY FEATURE RACE** **\$1,000**
PURSE "Inaugural Handicap" — Mile and One Eighth **PURSE**

PARI-MUTUEL SYSTEM

Polo Park opening day full page ad (Winnipeg Tribune, June 11, 1925)

By Track Historian Bob Gates

This coming June 12 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of Polo Park Racetrack. It was the beginning of a run that lasted 31 years and 22 days. Billed as “America’s Finest Racing Plant,” Polo Park would go dark forever on July 4, 1956.

In total, Polo Park hosted 642 days of racing, and its grand opening created quite a stir. A.G. Creelman was the successful bidder for the construction of the track—the same man who had built Whittier Park Racetrack the year prior—so all knew Polo Park was in good hands.

Winnipeg’s new racetrack earned more than its fair share of coverage—not just in the sports pages, but also in the society pages of local newspapers. Going to the races was an “event.” Here’s an excerpt from the June 13, 1925 Winnipeg Tribune that highlights the fashionable crowd in attendance on opening day:

“Friday marked the official opening of Polo Park, when throngs of enthusiastic spectators filled the grandstand and transformed the promenade into a veritable fashion row, Chic chapeaux in colorful variety, smart turtle-necked sweaters and kick-pleated skirts, kaleidoscopic printed frocks half hidden by flannel and silk coats, many of which made their initial appearance, formed a moving mass of brilliant colour which cheered the winners, backed favourites and forgot the muddiness of the ground and its relation to new shoes in the whole-hearted excitement of the races.”

SOCIETY AT POLO PARK



Society meets at Polo Park (Winnipeg Tribune, June 15, 1925)

When was the last time you read anything like that—especially about a horse racing crowd? The 1920s were a different time: prohibition was in full swing, the “Roaring Twenties” were in full force, and the Great Depression loomed on the horizon.

While Robert James Speers is often credited with building Polo Park, he was not the original driving force behind its creation. Rather, he came to the rescue of a group that had planned the West End track, and ensured Polo Park was completed in time for the 1925 racing season.

Polo Park was opened under the auspices of the Winnipeg Jockey Club and the St. Vital Agricultural Society. The opening ceremonies were conducted by the Mayor of Winnipeg, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Webb, who described the new facility as “a credit to Winnipeg.” Other dignitaries on hand included Jockey Club President John W. (Jack) Sifton and most of the track’s racing officials.



Opening day crowd at Polo Park (Free Press Evening Bulletin, June 15, 1925)

The grandstand was a majestic sight, with seating for 4,500 patrons, while the lawn in front could accommodate another 15,000. The track was known for its gleaming white buildings with maroon roofs and large "Polo Park" lettering painted atop the grandstand.

The inaugural race card took place on Friday, June 12, 1925. The first race was a five-furlong sprint for a \$500 purse, won by W.P. Montgomery, ridden by jockey Geargin.

Polo Park was no stranger to tragedy. In its 31-year history, two jockeys lost their lives due to racing accidents: Earl "Sandy" Graham on September 10, 1927, and Rex Young on June 27, 1941.

SATURDAY

SIXTH DAY

SEPT. 10th

POLO PARK

WINNIPEG JOCKEY CLUB

AUTUMN MEETING, SEPT. 5th to SEPT. 12th, 1927



Honorary Stewards: D. W. Dingwall, J. C. Gags, H. D. B. Ketchen, S. E. Richards, D. J. McDonald

Presiding Judge: George W. Schilling

Steward representing The Prairie Thoroughbred Breeders and Racing Association... E. D. Adams

Placing Judges: H. D. Monroe, Wm. McRae, E. D. Adams

Racing Secretary and Clerk of the Scales... H. D. Monroe

Starter..... Jas. Donovan

Patrol Judges..... J. C. McRae

Paddock Judge..... J. C. McRae

Timer..... J. J. Murphy

Honorary Surgeons... Col. A. E. Snell, M.D., C.M.G.

Dr. Chas. A. Mackenzie

Veterinary Surgeons..... Dr. W. J. Hinman

Superintendent of Jockeys' Room... E. Hayes

General Manager: R. JAMES SPEERS.

Assistant Manager: CHAS. F. ROE

PRICE FIFTEEN CENTS

FIRST RACE EACH DAY AT 2.30 P.M. SHARP

Official program from September 10, 1927, the day Sandy Graham was fatally injured (Bob Gates photo)

The track also suffered two major fires. The first, in November 1934, destroyed the grandstand but thankfully caused no loss of human or equine life. The second, in August 1946, destroyed "B" Barn and resulted in the death of two racehorses.

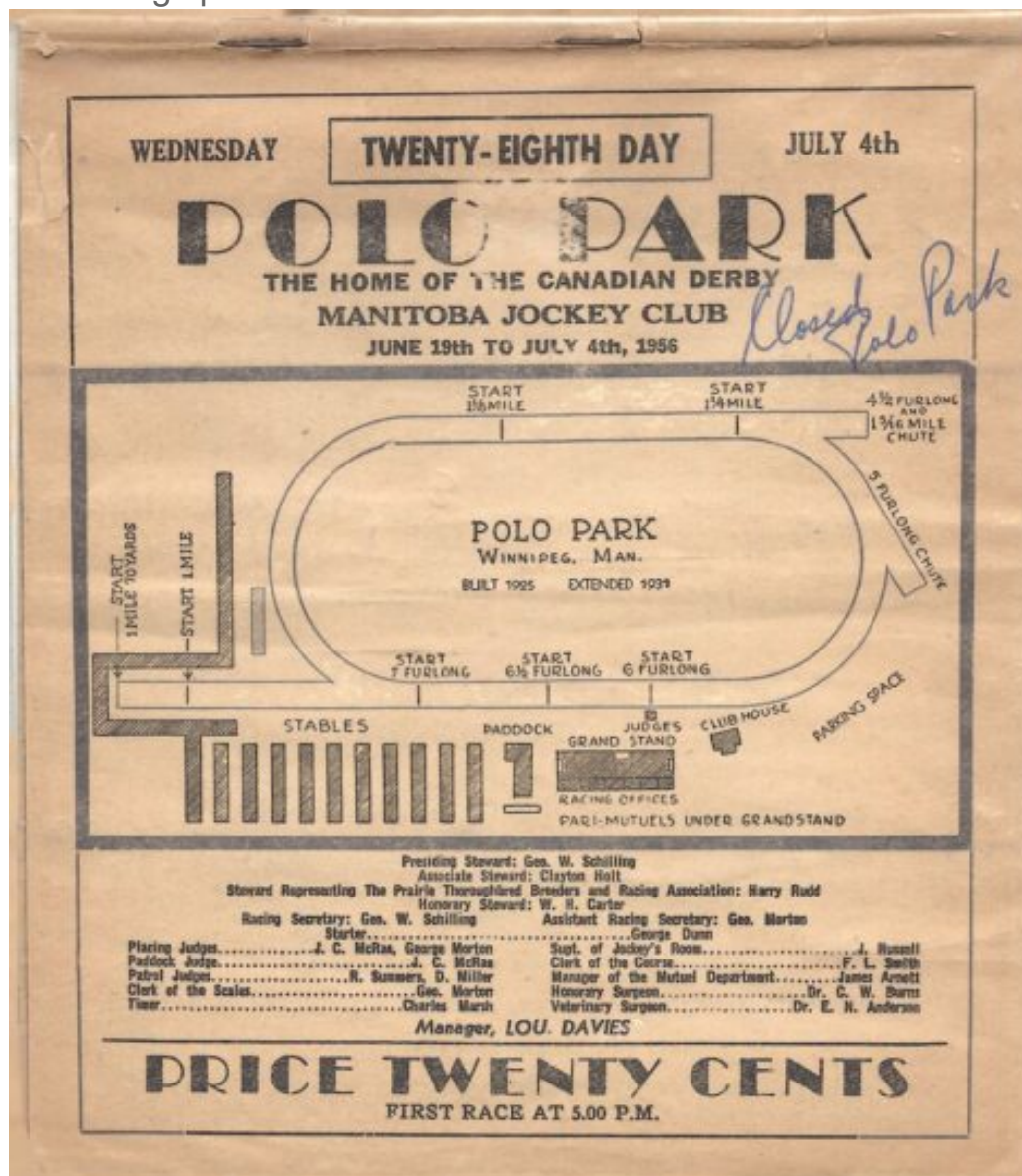
In 1943, Polo Park adopted twilight racing—a popular format first introduced at Whittier Park. Weekday post times were set at 5:00 p.m., with racing concluding by 7:30 p.m. That same year, Polo Park became the only active racetrack in the Winnipeg area. With Whittier Park closed, the Manitoba Jockey Club held its meet at Polo Park from May 28 to June 12, followed by the Winnipeg Jockey Club's meet from June 19 to July 5. Saturday races started at 2:30 p.m.

Did you know Polo Park once featured majestic swans? In the summer of 1950, swans were brought in on loan from a park in Portage la Prairie. Polo Park's manager, James Speers, later purchased swans for the infield lake. When the track closed in

1956, a pair were gifted to E.P. Taylor for the newly built Woodbine Racetrack.

The future of racing in Winnipeg was dealt a severe blow with the death of Robert James Speers in 1955. A year later, Polo Park's time came to an end. The land had become too valuable to be used solely for horse racing. Also lost was Winnipeg's claim to the Canadian Derby, which moved to Edmonton in 1957 and never returned to Manitoba.

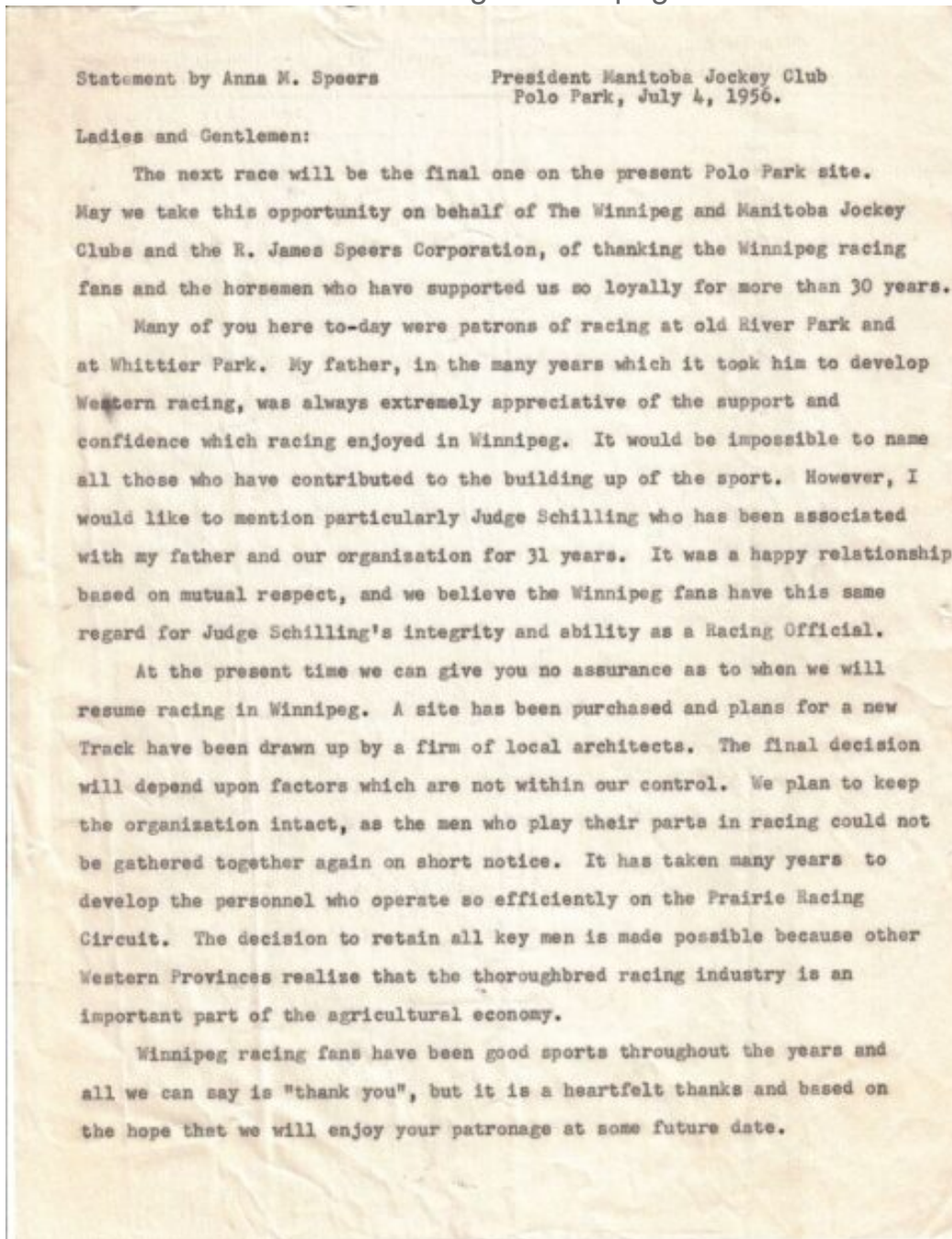
The end came at 6:53 p.m. on Wednesday, July 4, 1956. After the final race, the band played Auld Lang Syne, and the 8,000-strong crowd left with a heavy heart, knowing the city had lost something special.



Official program from closing day at Polo Park, July 4, 1956 (Bob Gates photo)

Miss Anna M. Speers, daughter of R.J. Speers and president of the Manitoba Jockey Club, announced that land had been purchased and plans drawn for a new racetrack. However, she

admitted that "at the present time, we can give you no assurance as to when we will resume racing in Winnipeg."



In October 1956, the grandstand was torn down and the lumber sold as salvage. The clubhouse was offered for \$3,000. The final demolition came in 1957, when Polo Park's signature white gates were removed.

The last remaining link between Polo Park and horse racing ended on March 31, 1975. While Assiniboia Downs had replaced Polo Park as Winnipeg's racetrack in 1958, its administrative offices remained in the Polo Park Shopping Centre until 1975, when they were moved to the Downs property—ending a 50-year connection to Polo Park.

For some, the name "Polo Park" still conjures memories of the racetrack. For others, it's simply a shopping centre. But if you're lucky, you might find someone who remembers the old Polo Park

and has their own stories to tell—about Winnipeg’s “first” West End racetrack.