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

ISSUE #190 - JUNE 27, 2025



Leading trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. (holding trophy on right) won three of the four stakes carded this week at Assiniboia Downs. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Steve Keplin, Jr., Prayven Badrie, Win Three of Four Stakes

Trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. and jockey Prayven Badrie won three of the four stakes this week and opened up in the standings, while five-time leading trainer Jerry Gourneau returned to the fray with an exclamation point, winning the Golden Boy Stakes.

Wagering continued to be strong, bolstered by increasingly larger on-track crowds enjoying the beautiful summer weather. Aren't we all!

CLICK HERE to read more.



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

Live racing continues every Tuesday and Wednesday evening along with select Mondays (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



Canada Day at Assiniboia Downs

Join us on Canada Day, Tuesday, July 1st at Assiniboia Downs for an unforgettable evening! Live racing kicks off at 7:30 p.m., with free family fun activities, followed by a spectacular fireworks display presented by CanFire Pyrotechnics.

Stick Around After the Fireworks!

Once the fireworks show wraps up, there's no need to rush—concessions and bars will remain open! Enjoy the music and keep the fun going while traffic clears from the parking lot. Sit back, relax, and make the most of your night at Assiniboia Downs!

Admission is free but please note there will be a \$10 parking charge after 8 p.m.



ASD Player Portal

- Free ASD Live Racing Programs
- Race Night Selections
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ASDowns/player-portal



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 Parker Walleto leads Ginna Serenade into the winner's circle after her victory in the Chantilly Stakes on Wednesday for trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. and owner Arnason Farms. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo). Click photo to enlarge.

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



A Snapshot in Time by Bob Gates



Click photo to enlarge

The Downs has conducted thoroughbred horse racing across eight different decades. The opening of Jack Hardy's Downs marked the beginning of a new era in Manitoba racing. When the Portage Avenue track held its inaugural card on June 10, 1958, Winnipeg had been without horse racing since Polo Park Racetrack closed its gates on July 4, 1956. From Jack Hardy to Jim Wright, and now under the leadership of the Manitoba Jockey Club, the Downs has survived receivership, fire, and a global pandemic—proving its resilience as it looks to the future. (Bob Gates)



- \$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



2025 Stephen Foster Stakes Cheat Sheet

One of the summer's biggest races is set for Saturday under the Twin Spires at Churchill Downs, where a high-quality field will compete in the Stephen Foster Stakes for a purse of \$1 million and a guaranteed spot in the Breeders' Cup Classic.

A star-studded lineup is on hand for the 2025 Stephen Foster Stakes, including last year's Breeders' Cup

2024 Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan has been listed at 3-1 for Saturday's Stephen Foster Stakes at Churchill Downs. (Coady Media)

Classic winner (Sierra Leone) and Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan. Should be a great race!

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

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- [Off-Track Betting Locations](#)



MANDATORY PAYOUT ALERT: Gulfstream Park will have a mandatory payout of the Jackpot Pick 6 on Sunday, June 29. The current carryover as of Friday, June 27 is \$68,871.



[**Hall of Fame Trainer D. Wayne Lukas Hospitalized**](#)

Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas, one of the most prolific trainers and influences in horse racing history, has been hospitalized in Louisville, Ky. and will not return to training, according to Lukas family members. According to the family, Lukas, 89, has battled a severe infection that has worsened his condition.

-- [*Canadian Thoroughbred*](#)

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)

Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas.
(Churchill Downs Media)



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[**VIDEO: Why Does Trainer Roger Attfield Hang Teddy Bears Outside His Stalls?**](#)

It's not hard to spot the Roger Attfield shedrow at Woodbine, or anywhere else the dual Hall of Fame trainer might be stabled: Just look for the teddy bears.

The stuffed animals have become a staple of his operation, but why does he do it, and where does he get so many of them?

-- [*Paulick Report*](#)

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)

Teddy bears can be found in abundance in Hall of Fame trainer Roger Attfield's barn at Woodbine.



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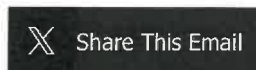
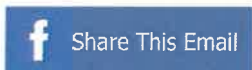
Bob's Blog **A Day at the Races**

Another special anniversary? The history guy got all caught up when he 'found' a program from a day at the races 75 years ago. A gift from A.E. "Bert" Blake, the patriarch of Assiniboia Downs, provides the foundation for this week's blog. What did Bob discover in the June 26, 1950 program from Polo Park racetrack? Click [here](#) to uncover what he found from 75 years ago.

Feedback & Inside Track Archives

We would love to hear from you! Email your comments and/or suggestions to theinsidetrack@ASDowns.com.

Did you know that past issues of The Inside Track are available on our website? Click [here](#) to read them now.



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Steve Keplin, Jr., Prayven Badrie Win Three of Four Stakes, Open Up in Standings

Jun 26, 2025 | The Inside Track



Leading trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. (right holding trophy) was all smiles after winning the Chantilly Stakes with Ginas Serenade on Wednesday. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

By G.S. Thompson

Trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. won three of the four stakes and opened up a big lead in the trainer standings this week, while five-time leading trainer Jerry Gourneau returned to the fray with an exclamation point, winning the Golden Boy Stakes.

The \$50,000 Golden Boy turned out to be a doozy of a race on Tuesday when Medicine Dog and Prayven Badrie took on Just

Trust Me and Antonio Whitehall as soon as the bell rang and dueled all the way to the wire. Medicine Dog (\$3.10) prevailed inside by a neck for trainer Jerry Gourneau, who recently returned from Texas, and owner Henry S. Witt, Jr. Both horses were very game and traded leads more than once in the stretch before the photo was snapped. Just Trust Me, conditioned by Dewey Williams for himself and ownership partner Eugene Burns, can also hold their heads high after this one.



Trainer Jerry Gourneau looked serious after winning the Golden Boy Stakes on Tuesday with Medicine Dog. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Next up on Tuesday was the \$50,000 Free Press Stakes, and it turned out to be a fabulous race too, with Judo (\$7.20) and jockey Prayven Badrie rallying widest outside Exxel in a searing late stretch battle to prevail by a head for trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. and owner James Parisien. Once again, there were no losers in this race, and trainer Rick Wise, the trainer of Exxel, can be proud of the huge effort put forth by his horse.



Judo (outside) and Prayven Badrie nip Exxel at the wire in the Free Press Stakes on Tuesday. (Jason Haldstead / Assiniboia Photo)

The Keplin stakes train continued to roll on Wednesday in both the \$50,000 Chantilly Stakes and the \$50,000 La Verendrye Stakes. In the former, Arnason Farms' Ginás Serenade and Prayven Badrie won a three-horse duel, shook off a game Welcometohollywood after brushing with that one in early stretch, and survived a claim of foul to remain in the winner's circle.



Keplin and crew were back in the winner's circle again in the next race, the La Verendrye Stakes, when Sophia's Storm (\$3.40) and jockey Sven Balroop took the measure of multiple champion Burrow Down to win by a diminishing half a length over that rival for ownership partners Arnason Farms, Parker Wallette and James Keplin.

Burrow Down, trained by Murray Duncan for owner Gerald Babchishin, took a run at the winner on the turn under jockey Ronald Ali, and appeared to be put away, but she came back with a vengeance late to make it close at the wire. The winner also had to survive multiple foul claims, but none really had a serious chance of being upheld.



Sophias Storm and jockey Sven Balroop hold off Burrow Down and jockey Ronald Ali to win the La Verendrye Stakes. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Keplin's three stakes wins gave him a total of 17 wins on the season and vaulted him into a nine-win lead in the trainer standings over Mike Nault and Lise Pruitt with eight wins apiece, followed by Jared Brown, Wendy Anderson and Tom Gardipy, Jr., each with seven victories. Keplin is winning at an amazing 41% clip, and jockey Prayven Badrie is right there with him.

Badrie won six races including three stakes on the week to open up in the standings with 20 wins, three more than Sven Balroop, who won five races, and Damario Bynoe, who won two races on the week. Antonio Whitehall and Rachaad Knights round out the top five in the jockey standings with 12 and 10 wins respectively.

Wagering continued to be strong with Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday's handles coming in at 1.3 million, 1.4 million and close to 1.6 million respectively, bolstered by increasingly larger crowds enjoying the beautiful summer weather.

Aren't we all!



Look at that Winner's Circle! Trainer Devon Gittens and Assiniboia Racing Club after winning the first race on Tuesday with Gallant Oak. Congratulations! (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

A Day at the Races

Jun 26, 2025 | The Inside Track



Jockey Ray Stewart, a native of Gladstone, Manitoba, seen here in Calgary, 1950 (Ray Stewart family)

By Track Historian Bob Gates

A funny thing happened on the way to this week's tale of the turf—the original idea was set aside, thanks to a chance discovery. The title of our story gives little away about where our horse racing time tunnel is taking us. Rest assured, the Marx Brothers' 1937 film *A Day at the Races* isn't relevant, nor will Queen's 1976 studio album of the same name be of any help.

The inspiration lies buried in a monster pile of loosely gathered newspaper articles, handwritten notes, photographs, and assorted other research materials waiting to be sorted. Near the top of this unorganized mess was an old program from Polo Park, dated June 26, 1950.

That nearly 75-year-old program proved too tempting to ignore. There's something special about milestone anniversaries—25, 50, 75, or 100 years.

So you flip through the pages, hoping to find names that still resonate—hoping “generational amnesia” hasn't erased our horse racing memories. It's an interesting term, almost self-explanatory. A quick search reveals:

“Each generation gets passed to it some fractional amount of prior knowledge by the most immediate and alive generations, plus a bit more via the no longer existent generations that have, by design or happenstance, left their presence in other recorded means. This is like doing one of those fire drills where you hand a bucket of water from one person to the next, each time slopping some of the water out of the bucket. When the bucket gets to the end of the line, there might only be a fraction remaining.”



Who knew? Polo Park's General Manager, R. James Speers, had pledged: "All profits of this 14-day meeting will be given to the

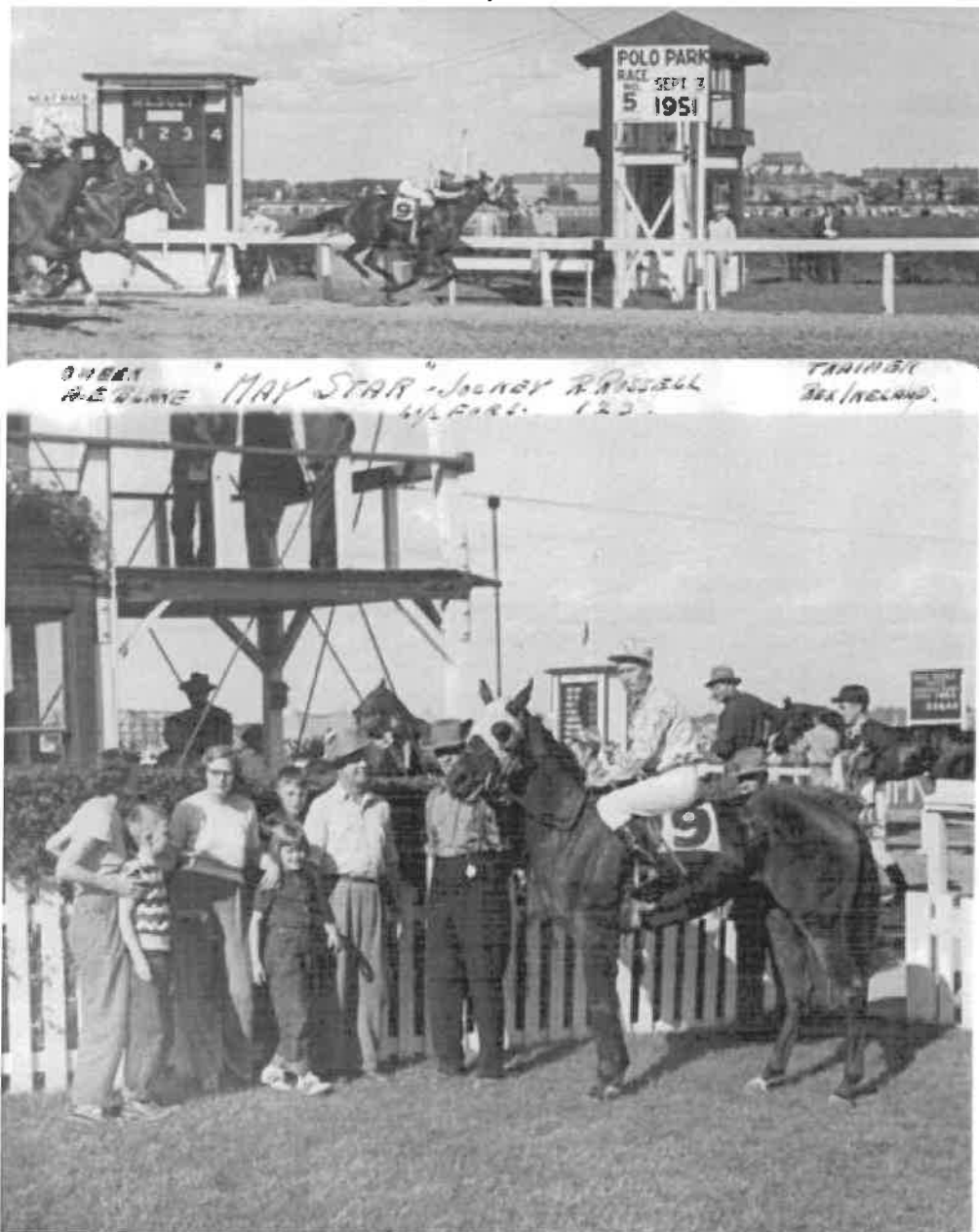
Manitoba Flood Relief Fund."

Most of the officials listed on the program's front page were no surprise, but one name stood out. Dr. E. N. Anderson was the Veterinary Surgeon. Dr. Norm Anderson, father of former jockey Jimmy Anderson, was a pioneer in veterinary medicine in Manitoba and served as the Downs' track vet for many years. "Doc" passed away in 1991.



L to R Lou Davies, Jim Speers and Dr. Norm Anderson at the 1st Horsemen's Ball circa 1951 (HBPA)

To be honest, few of the thoroughbred entries from that day looked familiar. Bert Blake saddled May Star in the third race, but she could only manage a fourth-place finish. The day's winners included: Mataco, Long Dann, Scapa Blow, Just Rusty, Stoney Way, Major Slam, and Dark Colores.



Bert Blake's May Star, September 3, 1951 (Blake family)

As for the owners, a few names were easier to recall: Les Lear (Calgary), Neil Campbell (Calgary), Whittier Park Stock Farm (Jim Speers, Winnipeg), Bill Yates (Calgary), Jimmy Charlesworth (Edmonton), and Meadowbrook Stables (Max Freed, Winnipeg). Trainers included Joe Wynant, Dick Carey, Lorne Dupont, Bob Watt, Duke Campbell, Charlie Smith, and Billy Trevenen. Jockeys included Roy Johnson, Ray Stewart, Cliff Potts, and Anthony Licata.

Who knew? Anthony Licata was the father of Frank Licata, who rode at the Downs in the 1980s and '90s.

Also, all ten of the leading riders on the Prairie Circuit rode that day: Emil Roy, Wayne Stevens, Richard Chew, Stan Connell, Roy

Russell, Don Miller, George Godley, Jimmy Schmied, Rex Leavitt, and Jimmy Sivewright.

There were only two exotic wagers at the time: the Daily Double on races one and two, and a Quinella in race seven. But the rules for the Daily Double were a bit different in 1950:

“Ask ONLY for the post position number of the horse that you have elected to win the FIRST half of the Daily Double – SEE THAT YOUR TICKET BEARS THE RIGHT NUMBER.

IF THE HORSE YOU HAVE SELECTED DOES NOT WIN RACE NO. 1 – FIRST HALF OF THE DAILY DOUBLE – YOU ARE KNOCKED OUT OF THE POOL.

Should there be no tickets sold on the winner of the first half, those holding tickets on the horse finishing nearest the winner shall exchange tickets for their choice in the second half. Winning tickets from the first half must be exchanged by five minutes before the post time of the second half race.”

The seven-race card offered a total of \$7,200 in purses—six races at \$1,000 each and one at \$1,200. It wasn’t unusual to see a field of \$1,000 claimers racing for a \$1,000 purse.

The Monday twilight card had a 5:00 p.m. post time. The track was rated “Heavy” after heavy weekend rains. The six-and-a-half furlong opener clocked in at 1:34—almost 15 seconds off the track record!

Race seven went to post at 8:09 p.m., with plenty of good old prairie daylight saving sunshine still in the sky. That six-and-a-half furlong race was run in a “sharp” 1:30 4/5—only 11 seconds off the record. The 2–3 quinella paid a tidy \$64.35 on a \$2 ticket.

All in all, a good day at the races—one that might have pleased Groucho and his brothers... and maybe even Freddie and his bandmates.



Mr. and Mrs. Blake (Blake family)

One final thought: thank you, Mr. Blake, for the program from June 26, 1950 . . .

A day at the races—75 years ago!