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ISSUE #220 - JANUARY 23, 2026



Fast as Flight wins The Modesty (G3) at Churchill Downs on Kentucky Oaks Day for former ASD leading trainer Martin Drexler.

From Filling Water Buckets to 900 Wins: Martin Drexler's Journey from Assiniboia Downs to Gulfstream Park

Former Assiniboia Downs leading trainer Martin Drexler has come a long way from his days carrying water buckets and mucking stalls in 1989.

The Slovakia-born horseman saddled his 900th career winner on January 16 at Gulfstream Park when Palace View rallied from just off the pace under Javier Castellano to win a \$20,000 claiming race at 12-to-1.

We caught up with him at his home in Florida, and here's what he had to say.

[Full story here.](#)



Groom School graduate and former Groom of the Year Skyla Blanchard loves her job. (George Williams)

Explore a Career as a Racehorse Groom!

Looking for a hands-on way to get involved in the horse racing industry?

The HBPA of Manitoba Inc. is offering a 4-week paid Racehorse Groom Training Program, a chance to learn the ropes of daily barn life while working directly with racehorses.

Applications are open now! For details and to apply, visit hbpamanitoba.ca or email hbpamanitoba@mymts.net.

[Full story here.](#)



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🎰 Free Spin to Win draws — Friday, Saturday and Sunday starting at 6 p.m.

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Click [here](#) to see our recent jackpots.



Travers Cummings

NFL Picks by TravyFootball Conference Championships

We're down to the final four, and things are getting messy fast. Sunday comes with a massive QB injury twist that could swing the entire AFC title game, and Sunday night is Rams vs Seahawks — a matchup I hate because somebody has to win. I went 2-1 last week and I've got my picks locked in... but you'll have to click [here](#) to see who I'm backing.



Road to the Kentucky Derby

- Jan. 31 - Withers (Aqu) - 20 points
 - Jan. 31 - Holy Bull (GP) - 20 points
 - Jan. 31 - Southwest (OP) - 20 points
-



All-time leading trainer at ASD, Gary Danelson (left), joins 2025's leading trainer Steve Keplin, Jr. in the winner's circle after the latter's victory in the seventh race on May 14 with Corredor, owned by Keplin's Drop'en Racing and ridden by Damario Bynoe. Click image for full size. (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 😊



A Snapshot in Time by Bob Gates

This will wrap-up our holiday greeting-themed photos. Here we have Sam Lima's 1969 Manitoba Derby winner Fire N' Desire.

Sam passed a few years back, but his daughter, Joanne Madden sent holiday wishes on behalf of herself and her Mom, who turned 97 years young on Boxing Day.

Happy Birthday Mrs. Lima! (Gerry Hart Photo).

Click photo to enlarge



- \$13.95 Daily Lunch Special
- Happy Hour (3 to 5pm & 9pm to close)
- Daily Evening Specials
- Details at ASDowns.com





Defending Pegasus World Cup Invitational champ White Abarrio has been listed at 4-1 for Saturday's renewal of the race at Gulfstream Park. Irad Ortiz, Jr. who rode him last year, will be in the saddle again. (Angelo Lieto/Coglianese Photo)

[Pegasus World Cup Cheat Sheet](#)

The 10th annual Pegasus World Cup Invitational Stakes (G1) is the diamond among eight stakes races to be run at Gulfstream Park on Saturday.

The Pegasus has been won by some of the very best dirt horses of the past decade, including inaugural winner Arrogate, Gun Runner (2018), Knicks Go (2021), and Life Is Good (2022).

Last year's winner White Abarrio is back to defend his title, but he's been knocked off the favourite's perch by the undefeated 5-for-5 Disco Time, who has been listed at 8/5.

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

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- [Off-Track Betting Locations](#)



MANDATORY PAYOUT: Gulfstream will have a mandatory payout of the Jackpot Pick 6 on Saturday, January 24. The current carryover is \$245,292.

PEGASUS WORLD CUP TURF		
Post	Horse	Favorite
1	Disco Time	8-5
2	White Abarrio	4-1
3	Knicks Go	7-1
4	Gun Runner	10-1
5	Life Is Good	14-1
6	Arrogate	16-1
7	Gun Runner	20-1
8	Knicks Go	20-1
9	Life Is Good	20-1
10	Arrogate	20-1
11	Gun Runner	20-1
12	Knicks Go	20-1
13	Life Is Good	20-1
14	Arrogate	20-1
15	Gun Runner	20-1
16	Knicks Go	20-1
17	Life Is Good	20-1
18	Arrogate	20-1
19	Gun Runner	20-1
20	Knicks Go	20-1
21	Life Is Good	20-1
22	Arrogate	20-1
23	Gun Runner	20-1
24	Knicks Go	20-1
25	Life Is Good	20-1
26	Arrogate	20-1
27	Gun Runner	20-1
28	Knicks Go	20-1
29	Life Is Good	20-1
30	Arrogate	20-1

[Pegasus World Cup Turf Turf fair odds: Panning for 'Gold' and other long shots](#)

Handicapper Ed DeRosa at Horse Racing Nation says he generally subscribes to the "Grade 1 horses win Grade 1 races" cliché, but he's willing to buck that saying if the price is right, and that's just what he'll be doing in Saturday's Pegasus World Cup Turf Invitational (G1) at Gulfstream Park.

-- [Horse Racing Nation](#)

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)

Horse Racing Nation's Ed DeRosa has determined his fair odds for the Pegasus World Cup Turf Invitational on Saturday, and he likes a longshot.



[2026 Kentucky Derby Rankings - Week 1](#)

Hall of Fame scribe Steve Haskin says that this may be the most challenging Week 1 of Kentucky Derby rankings he's ever done.

What makes his opening group so difficult to figure, with the exception of Ted Noffey, who appears to have zero flaws, is that many of the proven stakes horses still have question marks, and the later developing colts have yet to prove themselves in stakes company.

Kentucky Derby Rankings by Steve Haskin are a regular feature at

-- Secretariat.com

CLICK FOR FULL STORY



Track Historian Bob Gates

The Best of Bob

Bob thought it was time for a story on some out-of-townners. You know, the people who travel from other parts of Canada and the US to race in Winnipeg. The subject of this week's blog is a trio of men from Alberta who raced at both Polo Park and the Downs.

There's even a special treat this week, Bob was able to find a personal connection to one of the men. Not bad when you consider that the horseman last raced at the Downs 60 years ago and won the Canadian Derby 71 years ago.

Who's the connection, who's the horseman, who's the trio? Click [here](#) to find out. (From Sept. 3, 2020)

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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Fast as Flight wins the Modesty Stakes (G3) at Churchill Downs on Kentucky Oaks Day for former ASD leading trainer Martin Drexler.

Former Assiniboia Downs leading trainer Martin Drexler has come a long way from his days carrying water buckets and mucking stalls in 1989. The Slovakia-born horseman saddled his 900th career winner on January 16 at Gulfstream Park when Palace View rallied from

just off the pace under Javier Castellano to win a \$20,000 claiming race at 12-to-1.

We caught up with him at his home in Florida, and here's what he had to say.

"We've got the usual 25-30 horses down here and just claiming away," said Drexler. "When you win races down here, you get noticed, because everybody is watching this meeting."

The 55-year-old has finished second in the Woodbine trainer standings three consecutive years (2023-2025) with 86-82-81 wins respectively, trailing only Mark Casse. His 2025 season also turned heads when he won six stakes with six different horses, including five former claimers.

"Only Kevin Attard and Casse won more stakes," Drexler said. "For a claiming barn, we did it with six different horses and five of those horses we claimed. Not many people can do that because most of the guys that are winning stakes are winning it with horses that they have."

Three were claimed for \$25,000, one for \$32,000, hard-knocking horses that worked their way up the ladder through patient training. It's the kind of horsemanship that traces back to those early Assiniboia Downs days.

Drexler's racing introduction came through his father Jaroslav, a family doctor who spent some time working as the track physician for jockeys at Assiniboia Downs. Young Martin, who moved to Winnipeg from Slovakia in 1983 when he was 12, started hanging around with his dad. "I just loved it," he told *The Game* magazine in 2006.

"I just got to know a lot of people, I enjoyed the races, and I started following the races," he told *Horse Racing Nation* in 2023. By 17 he was working in the mutuels department, while also networking with trainers. Soon he was working for trainer Bill Beamer. From filling water buckets to cleaning stalls, "I did whatever was needed to be done," Drexler told *The Game*. "It was the most tiring year of my life, but I liked it."

His father dismissed it as a phase. "My dad said, 'You wait until a horse bites you, you'll be out of there,'" said Drexler. But he was already certain: "I wanted to train horses. At the time it was just a dream, like some boys say they want to play in the NHL. Everybody laughed at me."

The laughing stopped after he learned under Cam Ziprick and Brian Palaniuk and took out his trainers license in 2002. He won his first race with Magic Strike on August 10, 2002, and began a slow but

sure climb in the standings to win the Downs training title in 2007 with 43 wins. After finishing third in the standings in 2008, Drexler moved to Woodbine for the 2009 season and won 16 races, proving that he belonged.



*Former ASD leading trainer Martin Drexler at Gulfstream Park.
(Ryan Thompson)*

The claiming game has been his foundation, but lately Drexler has been getting better stock. “My quality of horses is going up and up,” he said. “I’ve got some horses for C2 Racing Stable in the barn now, those are the guys that own White Abarrio.”

Training quality horses is actually easier, he’s discovered. “Training a good horse is easier than training an ordinary horse,” he said. “Those horses can take the training. If you truly have a good horse and you have them ready, they rarely run a bad race. A good horse will do anything.”

Drexler has won numerous graded stakes at Woodbine, but his big US breakthrough came on May 3, 2024, when [he won the Modesty Stakes \(G3\) at Churchill Downs](#) on Kentucky Oaks Day with 18-to-1 shot Fast As Flight.

“We bought the filly for \$100,000 about a month before,” said Drexler. “Jose Ortiz gave her this incredible trip, just covered her up, and it was a really well-timed ride and she got up by a length. Everybody was there. That was a pretty incredible feeling.”

And that’s the level that opens doors. “You start winning these races and put yourself out there in graded stakes in the U.S., that’s when you really start creating the buzz needed for getting those good

horses,” said Drexler, who continues to turn heads at Gulfstream Park in January.

Along with his 900th winner Palace View (\$27.00) he has also won with Jim’s Hope (\$30.60) and Westside Tide (\$39.60). Those three winners improved Drexler’s lifetime record to 900-747-630 from 4,506 starts for purse earnings of \$25,065,523. And he was quick to distribute the credit.

“I have great grooms, and I have great riders,” said Drexler, who can now send out horses in sets of five. “These people have been with me for years. I have two assistants that have been with me for over 10 years now. As we got bigger we got more and better help. People that you can really rely on, that have your back no matter what, and they understand what needs to be done. You get to train horses differently once you establish yourself a little bit.”

Or a lot.

Well done Mr. Drexler!

Explore a Career as a Racehorse Groom!

Jan 21, 2026 | The Inside Track



Groom School graduate and former Groom of the Year Skylia Blanchard loves her job. (George Williams)

Looking for a hands-on way to get involved in the horse racing industry? The HBPA of Manitoba Inc. is offering a 4-week paid Racehorse Groom Training Program, a chance to learn the ropes of daily barn life while working directly with racehorses.

Participants will gain experience in feeding, stall care, grooming, and basic horse health, all while staying active and engaged in an ever-changing barn environment.

Past participants highlighted the program as both rewarding and educational, giving them skills and confidence for future opportunities in the industry. Funded by the Government of

Manitoba, the program is open to ages 16–29 and requires no previous horse experience.

Applications are open now! For details and to apply, visit hbpamanitoba.ca or email hbpamanitoba@mymts.net.

Help spread the word! Share this unique opportunity with anyone ready to start their journey with racehorses!

TravyFootball Conference Championships

Jan 21, 2026 | The Inside Track



By Travers Cummings

Patriots over Broncos (Sunday afternoon): Well, this COULD have been a decent game. It still might be, but things took a really weird turn for Denver after the game ended. At the post-game press conference, Coach Sean Payton announced that quarterback Bo Nix broke his ankle on the second-to-last play of the game. A pretty

freak injury that couldn't have come at a worse time. With him now being out for the rest of the playoffs, backup (and former Patriot) Jarrett Stidham will be tasked with leading the Broncos' offense with a trip to the Super Bowl on the line. Stidham hasn't thrown a regular season pass since 2023, so it might be a little rough. But as expected, he has the full support of the team and coaches behind him. Me? Not so much.

The Patriots struggled early on against the Texans' defense and the weather, but when you're gifted four interceptions (in one half) by CJ Stroud, eventually things will start to shift in your favour. Even though Drake Maye had a case of the fumbles, Houston was unable to capitalize on that—hence why they're at home now and the Pats are off to yet another AFC Championship, a game they haven't played in since some guy named Tom Brady was around. It will be another test for Maye going up against another elite defense, but I think he has enough tools to get it done, and I just think the Broncos' offense won't be able to score much without Bo Nix.

Rams over Seahawks (Sunday night): Unfortunately, both teams can't lose this game (these were the last two teams to beat San Fran), so I begrudgingly have to pick a winner and sulk about one of them going to the Super Bowl. The Seahawks beat the snot out of the 49ers, so no need to talk about that, but the Rams certainly played the more interesting game. The Chicago Bears' magic (or as I refer to it, "The Script") struck again at the end of the 4th quarter as Caleb Williams threw up a prayer into the end zone, and it was caught by Cole Kmet to force overtime. But for every good thing Caleb might do, there are also the bad things that come with it—like the interception he threw that essentially sent the Rams to the NFC Championship.

Now we get Sam Darnold looking to shake the stigma of not being very good come playoff time vs. Matt Stafford, who is looking to make his second Super Bowl appearance. Again, my bias is I couldn't care less who wins, but I trust Stafford and Coach McVay more than I trust Darnold because they've been in this spot before. As long as the Rams' offensive line can keep Stafford upright, he should be able to pick apart the Seahawks' defense, although it will not be easy.

Last week: 2-1

Playoffs overall: 3-3