

New York State to host one of the world's biggest days of harness racing

Monday, February 27, 2017 - by Lee Park, director of communications, New York State Gaming Commission

Schenectady, NY --- The New York State Gaming Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Markets today announced that Yonkers Raceway will host one of the world's single biggest harness racing events this October. For the first time, both the New York Sire Stakes Night of Champions and the International Trot will be held together. The event features horses from around the globe and New York's best Standardbred horses that compete for more than \$3 million in purses.

The Agriculture and New York State Horse Breeding Development Fund and Yonkers Raceway will host this premier day of racing on Oct. 14. The Fund -- administered by the Gaming Commission, Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Standardbred breeders -- runs the Sire Stakes racing program across the state. The New York Sire Stakes was the first program of its kind and has become the model for state-bred racing programs in North America.

The Sire Stakes Night of Champions consists of eight races featuring the best New York-bred Standardbreds. They will compete for combined purses of \$1.8 million.

The \$1 million International Trot is an annual world-class harness racing event held in the New York City area. The race was first held at Roosevelt Raceway in Westbury from 1959 to 1988, later moving to Yonkers Raceway until 1995. It returned in 2015 following a 20-year hiatus.

Two \$250,000 invitational races have also been added to the card, bringing the total purses for the day to \$3.3 million.

"This single event elevates New York horse racing's international presence at an even higher level," said Commission Executive Director Robert Williams. "We look forward to hosting these horses in October and seeing the best compete against the best."

"The equine industry significantly benefits agriculture in New York State and this event proves the State is committed to strengthening that connection," said State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball. "New York's horse population is the envy of the world and we are honored to show off these incredible animals that are bred and raised on New York farms on an international stage."

"Yonkers is honored to host what is sure to be an exciting day of quality horse racing," said Timothy Rooney Sr., President of Yonkers Raceway. "Thanks to our partners in New York State Government, we have an excellent and sustainable racing product of which to be proud."

"We are thrilled that Yonkers will be the center of the harness racing world this October," said Mike Kimelman, Fund Trustee and prominent Standardbred breeder. "Our work with the Sire Stakes puts the best horses competing in the best races for substantial prizes, ultimately showcasing why New York's racing has a storied legacy and a bright future."

Established in 1965, the Fund's primary mission is to promote and preserve agriculture through the promotion of horse breeding and equine research in New York State. The Fund

directs the state's premier harness racing program designed to stimulate the breeding, buying and racing of Standardbred horses in New York. Because of the State's unparalleled breeding industry, there is strong international demand for New York-bred Standardbred horses.

The Fund receives money from the mutuel handle at the licensed tracks across the state to provide purse money for the New York Sire Stakes in these major areas:

- Sire Stakes Races: The most talented New York-bred 2- and 3-year olds vie for enhanced purses at the State's pari-mutuel tracks. Each year, the top performers compete in eight races, traditionally known as the Night of Champions.
- Excelsior/State Fair Series: 2- and 3-year-old New York-bred trotters and pacers compete in these races, including the annual State Fair races held at Goshen Historic Track.
- County Fair Racing: The best "earn as you learn" program in Sire Stakes racing is non-betting racing that takes place at 20 agricultural fairs throughout the State, culminating in championship races for each age and gait at the end of summer.
- Agriculture and Equine Research: The Fund provides assistance to county agricultural societies to maintain and repair racing facilities and also contributes to both the 4-H program and the Dr. Harry M. Zweig Fund for Equine Research at Cornell University.