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NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE ASSOCIATION | 400 FAIR HILL DRIVE, ELKTON, MD 21921

NSA continues safety initiatives

With the 2018 season's final race meet, the National Steeplechase Association's Safety Committee concluded the sixth year of its continual efforts to maximize the safety of jump racing's horses and riders.

"The safety of our competitors has always—always—been the first priority of the National Steeplechase Association and its Board of Directors," said NSA President Guy J. Torsilieri. "When the Board of Directors authorized formation of the Safety Committee in 2012, our intention was to state explicitly and emphatically that safety is the defining value in everything that we do and in every decision that we make."

The Board of Directors mandated that the Safety Committee would look at every aspect of the sport and evaluate it scientifically and statistically to determine how to implement improvements that enhanced horse and rider safety.

"We had the right person to lead this effort, Reynolds Cowles, a distinguished veterinarian and steeplechase horseman who is a past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners," Torsilieri said. "With his diligent and thoughtful leadership, the Safety Committee has suggested dozens of improvements for jump racing, and the NSA board has adopted them."

Cowles assembled a highly diverse committee of all stakeholders, including jockeys and former jockeys, trainers, veterinarians, stewards, NSA officials, and race-meet officials. Also, the Safety Committee has worked with jump-racing authorities in other countries to benefit from their experiences and research. Each year, the Safety Committee has recommended improvements to the sport that were adopted by the Board of Directors.

"Like any sport, steeplechase racing entails risks to its participants. Our job is to reduce those risks for the well-being of the horses, jockeys, and



The NSA Safety Committee has endorsed improvements to the time-tested National Fence, shown in use at the Far Hills Races in October 2018

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steeplechasing," Torsilieri said. "While the Safety Committee has suggested many improvements and updates, its singular contribution has been to place safety at the forefront of every aspect of steeplechase racing. Reynolds Cowles' leadership has made it possible for these improvements to be implemented without significant dissent."

Here are some of the efforts that were either initiated by the Safety Committee or endorsed by it over the past six years.

Standardized prerace tests for horses. Consistency is important for both horses and for trainers. The Safety Committee has proposed, and the NSA has adopted, standardized prerace testing for all horses at race meets. To assist meet veterinarians, a video that outlines the required examinations is available.

The consistent prerace testing informs trainers

of the disabilities that would lead to a horse being scratched for veterinary reasons.

Also, both veterinarians and stewards are directed to scrutinize all horses' past performances for issues that might arise in the prerace tests or during the race.

Safety testing for jockeys. In 2018, the Safety Committee developed an industry-leading protocol for handling head injuries in racing. Jockeys undergo concussion testing to establish a baseline prior to racing. When an incident—a fall or lost rider—occurs, the jockey must pass both physical and cognitive tests before being permitted to resume riding.

Course improvements. The Safety Committee works with race meets to assess the safety of

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Go Jump Racing!





2019 racing schedule announced

The condition book for the 2019 spring season has been distributed, and the March-through-May schedule offers another exciting lineup of jump racing.

The condition book was prepared by National Steeplechase Association Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr. and Racing Operations Manager Courtney Reid in consultation with a panel of Trainers and the Steeplechase Owners and Trainers Association.

The 16-meet spring season begins in the South with popular South Carolina meets at Aiken and Camden in March before working its way north through April and May, concluding with the Fair Hill Races in Maryland on Saturday, May 25, the kickoff of Memorial Day weekend.

The schedule makes one thrust into the Midwest, for the Iroquois Steeplechase in Nashville on Saturday, May 11.

Notable purse increases are the Queen's Cup MPC 'Chase for novices, which will increase by a third to \$100,000. It will be run on April 27 in memory of Jim and Midge Price. The My Lady's Manor on April 13 will increase to \$50,000.

RACE MEET

- AIKEN SPRING STEEPLECHASE
- CAROLINA CUP
- GEORGIA STEEPLECHASE
- TRYON BLOCK HOUSE RACES
- MY LADY'S MANOR
- GRAND NATIONAL
- MIDDLEBURG SPRING RACES
- FOXFIELD SPRING RACES
- MARYLAND HUNT CUP
- QUEEN'S CUP STEEPLECHASE
- VIRGINIA GOLD CUP
- WINTERTHUR RACES
- IROQUOIS STEEPLECHASE
- WILLOWDALE STEEPLECHASE
- RADNOR HUNT RACES
- FAIR HILL RACES

LOCATION

- Aiken, SC
- Camden, SC
- Kingston, GA
- Columbus, NC
- Monkton, MD
- Butler, MD
- Middleburg, VA
- Charlottesville, VA
- Glyndon, MD
- Mineral Springs, NC
- The Plains, VA
- Winterthur, DE
- Nashville, TN
- Kennett Square, PA
- Malvern, PA
- Fair Hill, MD

DATE

- Saturday, March 23
- Saturday, March 30
- Saturday, April 6
- Saturday, April 13
- Saturday, April 13
- Saturday, April 20
- Saturday, April 20
- Saturday, April 27
- Saturday, April 27
- Saturday, April 27
- Saturday, May 4
- Sunday, May 5
- Saturday, May 11
- Sunday, May 12
- Saturday, May 18
- Saturday, May 25

NSA Safety Committee continues initiatives

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courses and suggest improvements to enhance safety. These enhancements may include altering the course of a turn or adding a running rail to keep horses on a defined path around a turn.

On-course response procedures. The Safety Committee has developed, and the NSA has endorsed, standardized procedures for both horses and jockeys when an incident occurs. Race meets are required to have specific equipment available in case of an incident, and the procedures mandate actions to evaluate and care for both the horse and rider.

Apprentice opportunities. Apprentice jockeys are still learning the sport, and the Safety Committee developed recommendations that avoid having inexperienced riders aboard inexperienced horses, specifically in maiden hurdle races. Also, the Safety Committee endorsed the NSA decision to limit racetrack racing to experienced journeyman jockeys.

Racetrack changes. At the suggestion of Dr. Scott Palmer, the New York Gaming Commission's equine medical director, the NSA removed the final homestretch fence for hurdle races run at racetracks as a strategy to reduce

late-stage incidents. The change was effective in 2016 at New York Racing Association tracks and subsequently was extended to all flat tracks.

Fences. The National Fence has stood the test of time, and Saftfence has proved to be a safe alternative. The Safety Committee has suggested, and the NSA board has approved, enhancements such as ground and takeoff lines on the cushions. Also, firmer foam has been mandated when the cushions are being replaced. The Safety Committee also examines potential successors to the National Fence, which has been in use for more than 40 years.

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