

Chasing

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

NSA offers record spring purses highlighted by \$200,000 Iroquois

The 2017 National Steeplechase Association season kicks off Saturday, March 25, with the 51st annual Aiken Spring Steeplechase, and jump racing is looking forward to record purses in an expanded spring season.

The 2017 schedule offers purses of nearly \$2.6-million, which would be a 6.7% increase over purses paid in 2016's record-breaking season.

"We are very excited about the upcoming season," said NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr. "With higher purses this spring, our race meets are contributing significantly to the growth of jump racing."

The Steeplechase of Charleston at Stono Ferry joins the spring schedule on Saturday, April 8, taking the spot formerly occupied by the Stonebrook Steeplechase. The Charleston races, managed by the Bruno Event Team of Birmingham, Ala., will offer purses of \$90,000. Bruno also will manage a fall meet at Charleston.

The Tryon Block House Races will move its location and date, to be run on April 15 at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Columbus, N.C. Projected purses are \$150,000, more than double the \$72,950 paid in 2016. Topping the schedule at the expansive new course is the \$40,000 Block House handicap hurdle.

The Iroquois Steeplechase on May 13 again will be the spring's richest race meet with record spring purses of \$525,000, a 15% increase over 2016. The Nashville meet features the spring's richest race, the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1).

The testing three-mile race drew international attention and competitors last year. Rawnaq prevailed in a heart-throbbing victory over



Randy Rouse conversed with his wife, Michele, after receiving the F. Ambrose Clark Award at the Race Chairmen's meeting in January. Rouse celebrated his 100th birthday in December.

DOUGLAS LEES PHOTO

two top-class Irish challengers, Shaneshill and Nichols Canyon.

Iroquois is increasing the value of its Marcellus Frost novice stakes to \$100,000, a 33% increase from 2016's \$75,000. Iroquois also offers the \$50,000 Margaret Currey Henley for fillies and mares.

In all, spring novice stakes will offer \$250,000 in purses. Also on the schedule is the \$75,000 Carolina Cup Steeplechase on April 1 and the \$75,000 Queen's Cup MPC Chase on April 29.

The Virginia Gold Cup, featured on the first Saturday in May, and the Maryland Hunt Cup a

week earlier again will offer the richest purses in timber racing at \$100,000. The Gold Cup meet on May 6 offers the season's second-highest purses at \$425,000. In addition to the four-mile timber classic, the Virginia Gold Cup features the \$75,000 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) over National Fences.

Other open hurdle stakes on the spring schedule are the \$50,000 Temple Gwathmey (Gr. 3) at the Middleburg Spring Races on April 22 and the \$50,000 National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3) at the Radnor Hunt Races on May 20. Radnor also offers the \$40,000 Radnor Hunt Cup over timber.



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Rawnaq tops Theoretical Handicap

Irv Naylor's Rawnaq, overwhelmingly voted the 2016 Eclipse Award after winning the \$350,000 Grand National (Gr. 1), \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1), and \$50,000 Temple Gwathmey (Gr. 3), topped the silver-anniversary National Steeplechase Association Theoretical Handicap with a rating of 160 pounds.

Ranked second and third were the two Irish invaders who finished closest to him in the Iroquois, Shaneshill (158) and Nichols Canyon (156). Scorpioncer, winner of the Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1), was fourth at 152 pounds.

Bob Le Beau, ill-fated winner of the A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1), and Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup (Gr. 1) victor Top Striker shared a 150-pound assignment.

NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr., who created the Theoretical in 1992, evaluated all 26 horses who placed in NSA open and novice stakes races in 2016.

Shortly before the Eclipse Awards were announced in January, Rawnaq went to the sidelines with a soft-tissue injury and will miss the 2017 racing season.



Tending to Rawnaq before his victory in the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) were caretakers Beth Supik, Ronnie Raymond, and Leonel Tinoco.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

2016 NSA Theoretical Handicap

Horse	Weight	Horse	Weight	Horse	Weight
Rawnaq (Ire).....	160	Able Deputy (GB)	144	Tempt Me Alex	138
Shaneshill (Ire)	158	Charminster (Ire)	142	All That Rules (GB)	136
Nichols Canyon (GB).....	156	Andi'amu (Fr).....	140	Balance the Budget.....	134
Scorpioncer (Ire).....	152	Jamarjo (Ire)	140	Ice It.....	134
Bob Le Beau (Ire).....	150	Maserati (Brz).....	140	Rudyard K	134
Top Striker	150	Portrade (Ire)	140	Miguel Grau.....	134
Days of Heaven (Fr).....	148	Schoodic	140	Class Cherokee	130
Sharp Rise (Ire).....	146	African Oil.....	138	Express Line (Fr).....	130
Special Skills	144	Hardrock Eleven.....	138		

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