

Chasing

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

TVV Capital assumes sponsorship of rich Iroquois-Cheltenham Challenge

Nashville-based TVV Capital is the new title sponsor of the \$500,000 Iroquois-Cheltenham Challenge, an innovative bonus offer that attracted international attention to American Steeplechasing and its richest spring race, the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1).

To win the TVV Capital Iroquois-Cheltenham Challenge, a horse must win the Calvin Houghland Iroquois and the Sun Bets Stayers' Hurdle in the same 12-month period. Both races are three miles.

This year's challenge began with the Stayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham Race Course on Thursday, March 16. The Calvin Houghland Iroquois is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, at Percy Warner Park in Nashville.

To collect, a horse must either win this year's two races or take the Iroquois and next year's Stayers' Hurdle. A bonus sweep would pay approximately \$1-million in purses and bonus.

Irv Naylor's Eclipse Award champion Rawnaq won last year's Calvin Houghland Iroquois and had his sights on the Stayers' Hurdle, but a soft-tissue injury sidelined him in January.

The Iroquois-Cheltenham Challenge was launched last year with Brown Advisory as its title sponsor. Michael Hankin, a National Steeplechase Association board member and a prominent horse owner, is chief executive of the international investments firm.

Andrew Byrd, TVV Capital's founder and president, said the Challenge has elevated the sport across borders and continents in a way that truly connects Irish and UK racing with the best of American Steeplechasing.

"That historical connection is strong, as is our longstanding relationship with the Iroquois, and so we are very pleased to announce the TVV Capital Iroquois-Cheltenham Challenge," he said. "We wish to thank Mike Hankin and Brown Advisory, who first introduced us to the Cheltenham Festival and without whom the Challenge would have been impossible."

TVV Capital is a Nashville-based private equity firm that acquires and grows businesses in the manufacturing, distribution, and service industries across the Eastern United States. The hallmarks of TVV Capital companies are strong management teams, consistent profitability, a defensible market niche, and an identifiable growth path, either through organic, internal growth, or through acquisition.

Iroquois Chairman Dwight Hall, who also serves as the NSA's treasurer and chairman of the Stewards' Advisory Committee, sees the Challenge as an opportunity to showcase the best of jump racing in the United States.

"The Iroquois last year was a race for the ages, and we fully anticipate



Irv Naylor's Rawnaq, inside, prevails over Shaneshill in the 2016 edition of the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1).

WESTLIGHT STUDIO PHOTO

the top trainers in Europe entering their best horses again here in May," he said. "Our intent was to reignite that overseas rivalry, and I believe we succeeded in doing that. They've seen how our tracks run and they have experienced our hospitality, and we expect the word to spread."

The Iroquois Steeplechase is an iconic sporting event that has been Nashville's rite of spring since 1941, attracting more than 25,000 spectators to watch the best horses and riders in the world race over hurdles on a 1 1/2-mile turf course. Held the second Saturday of each May at Percy Warner Park, the Iroquois Steeplechase is Music City's annual celebration of time-honored traditions, Tennessee hospitality, and Southern fashions.



Go Jump Racing!





Tryon Block House, with new date and location, offers record purses

Tryon Riding & Hunt Club (TR&HC) and Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) announced in late February that they have formed a partnership to manage and produce the 71st running of the Tryon Block House Races, the historic steeplechase of Tryon Riding & Hunt Club.

Under the agreement, the Tryon Block House Races will be held on Saturday, April 15, and in the future on the third Saturday in April. This year's race will have a total purse of \$150,000, the highest in the history of the event, and will move from the race's most recent venue, the Foothills Nature Equestrian Center, to a new one-mile track on 115 acres of land managed by TIEC, located at 6881 N.C. Highway 9 in Columbus, N.C. The Block House meet is sanctioned by the National Steeplechase Association (NSA).

"This marks a new and exciting time for the Tryon Block House Steeplechase," said Andrew Brannon, president of Tryon Riding & Hunt Club, which has been promoting equestrian sport since 1925. "Through this partnership, beginning this year the Block House will offer a competitive purse structure that will attract more horses and will improve the overall experience of race day for everyone.

"Most importantly, this partnership allows TR&HC to preserve and protect the 70-year tradition of this race for our community and ensures its viability for future generations. TR&HC is proud to be part of the Block House's return to prominence among the spring NSA-sanctioned steeplechases."



Early action in the 2016 Block House, won by Bill Pape's Powerofone (far right).

CATHERINE FRENCH PHOTO

"We are thrilled to be able to partner with TR&HC to produce the Tryon Block House Steeplechase," said Mark Bellissimo, managing partner of Tryon Equestrian Partners, whose properties include Tryon International Equestrian Center. "This collaboration brings together the rich history of TR&HC with our vision for the future of equestrian sport in this area."

The Tryon Block House Steeplechase has evolved from its early days, when it was held on farmland surrounding a pre-Revolutionary War trading post and fort known as the Block House.

Carter Brown established the race meet in

1947 and made Tryon an important destination for distance horse racing in the region. As the event has expanded, so have the community's participation, the size of the crowds, and the importance of having both a competitive purse and A-rated course to attract the highest level of owner, rider, and trainer.

"We are committed to making this event a can't-miss attraction for everyone--from owners to riders and from casual spectators to steeplechase enthusiasts," said Sharon Decker, chief operating officer of the Tryon International Equestrian Center.

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