

Chasing

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

Spring purses establish record

The National Steeplechase Association concluded its 2018 spring season with record purses of \$2,833,800, an increase of 7.2% and more than \$140,000 over the prior record set in 2017.

For the first time, the NSA season featured two Grade 1 races, the \$150,000 Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup at the Carolina Cup Races, and the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois at Nashville's Iroquois Steeplechase. Also for the first time, the NSA spring season had two Grade 2 races, with Middleburg Spring's Temple Gwathmey joining the David Semmes Memorial at the Virginia Gold Cup.

Zanjabeel, owned by Rosbrian Farm and Ben and Wendy Griswold, participated in three of those races and ended the spring season as the leading earner at \$160,500.

After a second-place finish to Stonelea Stable's Balance the Budget in the Colonial Cup and another second to Robert A. Kinsley's Lyonell in the Temple Gwathmey, the British-bred five-year-old scored a five-length victory in the Iroquois for trainer Ricky Hendriks and jockey Ross Geraghty.

Also collecting graded stakes victories in the spring were Magalen O. Bryant's Personal Start, winner of the David Semmes, and Wendy Hendriks' Surprising Soul, who won the National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3) at the Radnor Hunt Races.

The record spring purses were achieved despite the High Hope Steeplechase in Lexington, Ky., moving to the fall schedule. While a cold late winter and early spring hampered training schedules, the race meets were well supported. Even with High Hope missing from the schedule, the spring meets recorded 670 starters, only 11 fewer than the previous spring.

The record purses contributed to another spring-season record, average purse per race. At \$32,572, jump racing's average purse is approximately \$4,000 per race above the average



Zanjabeel jumped the last fence on his way to a victory in the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) and the top spot on the spring leader board with \$160,500 in purses.

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for all North American Thoroughbred races.

The season closed impressively with an unprecedented 94 starters at Fair Hill on May 26. A \$30,000 Sport of Kings maiden hurdle division was added to the lineup to accommodate heavy entries, and both races had long also-eligible lists. In all, well more than 100 horses were entered for

Fair Hill's nine races.

The Virginia Gold Cup, which offered a schedule of flat, hurdle, and timber races, had 65 starters pursuing its \$431,800 in purses, and the Iroquois Steeplechase offered a season-high \$516,000 in purses to 56 starters. The Middleburg Spring Steeplechase had 58 starters.



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Traffic jam at the top of standings for leading owner and trainer

When the National Steeplechase Association's spring season concluded at the Fair Hill Races on May 26, the leader boards disclosed tight contests for top owner and trainer as the sport headed into its summer races.

With a win by Osmoz in the last race of the spring stanza, Irvin S. Naylor assumed the top spot on the owner board with \$248,200 in purse earnings for the spring. Naylor's diverse stable had nine wins from 50 starts.

Less than \$2,000 behind him was George Mahoney Jr.'s Rosbrian Farm, which had \$246,400 in purses from five wins in 19 starts. Rosbrian is a partner with Ben and Wendy Griswold in Zanjabeel, who was the spring's leading earner with \$160,500 after winning the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) at the Iroquois Steeplechase.

Racing Hall of Fame member Jonathan Sheppard made a fast start in March, winning two races each at the Aiken Spring Steeplechase and the Carolina Cup Races. He maintained that lead through Fair Hill with 11 victories in the spring season. Among them was his Pram, winner of the Life's Illusion Stakes at the Carolina Cup.

Close behind Sheppard with 10 wins is Ricky Hendriks, Zanjabeel's trainer. The Pennsylvania-based horseman also won the \$50,000 National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3) with Wendy Hendriks' Surprising Soul. Hendriks led the money-won category with \$346,600 to \$324,550 for reigning champion Jack Fisher.

Jack Doyle opened a four-win bulge in the battle for the jockey championship with 13 victories to nine for 2017 wins champion Darren Nagle. Doyle also held a big advantage in the earnings category with \$434,150 to \$317,700 for



Racing Hall of Fame horseman Jonathan Sheppard swept the top two spots in the Life's Illusion Stakes with Pram and Stalled, respectively, at the Carolina Cup.

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Ross Geraghty, the regular jockey of Zanjabeel and Surprising Soul. Geraghty ranks third by wins with eight.

Skip Crawford's Senior Senator led the timber category after winning the Grand National and Maryland Hunt Cup in his two 2018 starts. He

earned \$90,000, only \$2,000 more than Sara E. Collette's homebred Zanclus, the Virginia Gold Cup and My Lady's Manor winner.

Amateur jockey Eric Poretz, Senior Senator's rider, accumulated five wins in the spring season and ranks fourth on the jockey leader board.

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