

SEPTEMBER 2018

# Chasing

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

## Grand National, up to \$450,000, tops fall championship season

Far Hills Races' Grand National (Gr. 1), increased to \$450,000 for the New Jersey meet's 98th annual running, highlights a rich racing schedule for the National Steeplechase Association's fall championship season. In all, purses for the fall season total more than \$2.5-million.

The Grand National purse is a \$50,000 increase over last year when the race attracted international participation and a thrilling finish in which Mr. Hot Stuff, Modem, and All the Way Jose were noses apart in that order in the year's richest NSA race.

Far Hills' purses will total \$850,000, up \$50,000 from last year. Also on the Oct. 20 program are the \$125,000 Foxbrook Champion Hurdle for novices, the \$75,000 Peapack Stakes for fillies and mares, and the \$50,000 Gladstone for three-year-olds.

The season kicks off Thursday, Sept. 20, at Belmont Park with the \$175,000 Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1), the first of the fall season's two Grade 1 races.

Also on that program is the \$75,000 William Entenmann Memorial Novice Stakes. The novice program, for horses in their first seasons of racing over fences, also features the \$75,000 Aflac Supreme Hurdle at the Steeplechase at Callaway in Columbus, Ga., on Nov. 3.

Joining the fall schedule is the High Hope Steeplechase, long a spring fixture at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. Two of its races on Sunday, Sept. 23 will honor the memory of steeplechase horseman and equine attorney Edward S. "Ned" Bonnie, who died in March.

One of High Hope's featured races is the \$25,000 Oxmoor Steeplechase, a ratings



Mr. Hot Stuff, Modem, and All the Way Jose fight to the finish in 2017 Grand National.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

handicap. Bonnie, who lived and practiced law in the Louisville area, was the long-serving race secretary of the Oxmoor Steeplechase. The afternoon's training flat race will be the Ned Bonnie Challenge Cup.

The fall timber season kicks off on Saturday, Sept. 29, with the \$25,000 Legacy Chase at Shawan Downs in suburban Baltimore. In all, Shawan's purses will total \$135,000 for its 18th annual running.

Highlighting the fall timber stakes schedule will be the \$75,000 International Gold Cup at The Plains, Va., on Oct. 27. Also on the fall timber stakes schedule are the \$30,000 Genesee

Valley Hunt Cup and Virginia Fall's National Sporting Library and Museum Cup on Oct. 13, Far Hills' \$50,000 New Jersey Hunt Cup, and the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup on Nov. 4.

The International Gold Cup also will feature the \$75,000 David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2). The 84th annual Montpelier Hunt Races on Nov. 3 will feature the \$40,000 Noel Laing Handicap over the natural brush course.

Jump racing begins each season in South Carolina, and the fall season will conclude there. On the schedule for the Palmetto State are the Aiken Fall Steeplechase on Oct. 27 and the Steeplechase at Charleston on Sunday, Nov. 11.



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## Far Hills to inaugurate pari-mutuel wagering for its 98th annual meet

For the first time in its nearly century-long history, the Far Hills Race Meeting will offer pari-mutuel wagering on all of its races on Saturday, Oct. 20.

Pari-mutuel wagering also is conducted at the Virginia Gold Cup, Fair Hill Races, and International Gold Cup.

With the introduction of wagering, Far Hills Race Meeting delivers on a long-held promise, pairing betting with its world-class steeplechase races, including the \$450,000 Grand National (Gr. 1). In all, the 98th edition of the Far Hills Race Meeting will offer purses totaling \$850,000, a record for a National Steeplechase Association race meet.

“Far Hills is pleased to offer our loyal patrons this prized amenity: A chance to bet on our races,” said Far Hills Chairman Guy J. Torsilieri. “The wagering experience is yet another way for our fans to enjoy and be intimately involved in our races, which every year draw top horses from the United States and overseas.”

Under New Jersey law, Far Hills will conduct its one day of wagering under Monmouth Park’s pari-mutuel license. All races will be under the supervision of the New Jersey Racing Commission.

“After years of working closely with the Far Hills Race Meeting team, we’re so pleased the partnership is finally official,” said Dennis Drazin, president and CEO of Darby Development LLC, which operates Monmouth Park.

With strong support from Central New Jersey legislators and near-unanimous votes in the New Jersey Assembly and Senate, legislation authorizing pari-mutuel wagering at Far Hills passed in August 2016, with the law taking



Bettors line up to put their money down on their choices at the Virginia Gold Cup.

DOUGLAS LEES PHOTO

effect the following month. Far Hills officials had worked to prepare for pari-mutuel wagering last year, but logistical issues at its Moorland Farm race course delayed the launch until the 2018 meet.

“We have resolved the logistical issues, and we’re now ready to provide a top-quality wagering experience,” Torsilieri said.

While pari-mutuel wagering will primarily serve Far Hills’ patrons, bettors around the world will also have an opportunity to wager on Far Hills’ races. Far Hills will continue to provide high-definition video streaming of its races, as it has done for the past two years.

“We feel that Far Hills offers a premier steeplechase experience, and we welcome the

opportunity to share our races with all of America and jump-racing fans around the world,” said Torsilieri, who also is the National Steeplechase Association’s president. “We hope that this combination of top-level competition, a superior video experience, and a wagering opportunity will attract new fans to steeplechase racing.”

Over the years, Far Hills Race Meeting has provided more than \$18-million to fund local health-care initiatives, including the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset (named in honor of the Far Hills Race Meeting), Cancer Support Community of Central New Jersey, Bonnie Brae, the ARC of Somerset County, LifeCamp, and Community in Crisis.

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