

SEPTEMBER 2019

Chasing

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

Highlighted by Grand National, fall schedule offers \$2.6-million

Highlighted by the Far Hills Races and its \$850,000 in purses, the National Steeplechase Association's fall racing schedule will offer horse owners and trainers more than \$2.6-million in purses for a schedule that runs from mid-September through mid-November.

Joining the fall season is the Tyron Block House meet, which was transferred from the spring because of adverse turf conditions in early April. The meet will offer \$145,000 in purses on Oct. 5.

The fall season's big-money events will be concentrated in the second half of October. The 99th Far Hills meet in central New Jersey on Saturday, Oct. 19, will be headlined by the \$450,000 Grand National (Gr. 1).

The 2 5/8-mile Grand National attracts a strong cast of international participants each year and was won by Gordon Elliott-trained Jury Duty in 2018.

Also on the championship card are the \$100,000 Foxbrook Champion Hurdle for novices, the \$75,000 Peapack for fillies and mares, and the \$50,000 Gladstone for three-year-olds.

The stakes action moves the following Saturday to Virginia for the 36th annual International Gold Cup in The Plains, where purses will total \$395,000. On that program is the \$75,000 International Gold Cup, which frequently decides the year's timber championship.

Also on the International Gold Cup program is the \$75,000 David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2) over hurdles. Both Far Hills and the International Gold Cup offer pari-mutuel wagering.

September kicks off in Virginia with the closing-night program at Colonial Downs on

RACE COURSE

BELMONT PARK
 BELMONT PARK
 HIGH HOPE
 SHAWAN DOWNS
 FOXFIELD FALL
 TRYON BLOCK HOUSE
 GENESSEE VALLEY
 VIRGINIA FALL
 FAR HILLS
 AIKEN FALL
 INTERNATIONAL GOLD CUP
 MONTEPELIER
 PENNSYLVANIA HUNT CUP
 CALLAWAY
 CHARLESTON

LOCATION

Elmont, NY
 Elmont, NY
 Lexington, KY
 Hunt Valley, MD
 Charlottesville, VA
 Columbus, NC
 Geneseo, NY
 Middleburg, VA
 Far Hills, NJ
 Aiken, SC
 The Plains, VA
 Montpelier Station, VA
 Unionville, PA
 Pine Mountain, GA
 Hollywood, SC

DATE

Wednesday, Sept. 18
 Thursday, Sept. 19
 Sunday, Sept. 22
 Saturday, Sept. 28
 Sunday, Sept. 29
 Saturday, Oct. 5
 Saturday, Oct. 12
 Saturday, Oct. 12
 Saturday, Oct. 19
 Saturday, Oct. 26
 Saturday, Oct. 26
 Saturday, Nov. 2
 Sunday, Nov. 3
 Saturday, Nov. 9
 Sunday, Nov. 17

Sept. 7. The program will include the \$50,000 Randolph D. Rouse Handicap for fillies and mares and a \$30,000 Sport of Kings maiden hurdle. (For more details on Colonial Downs racing, please see Page 2.)

Next stop is spacious Belmont Park in Elmont, N.Y. The William Entenmann Novice Stakes will be run on Wednesday, Sept. 18, and the \$150,000 Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1) will be run the following afternoon. Last year's Lonesome Glory was won by Rosbrian Farm's and Meadow Run Farm's Zanjabeel, who was voted the year's Eclipse Award.

The September schedule wraps up with three meets. The first is High Hope, which will have its second fall meet on Sunday, Sept. 22. High Hope, held at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, will include the \$25,000 Oxmoor Steeplechase, a ratings handicap hurdle for

horses rated at 115 or lower.

Also on the High Hope schedule are two opportunities for amateur apprentices, a three-mile timber allowance and a training flat race at 1 1/2 miles.

The 19th annual Shawan Downs Races in Hunt Valley, Md., will go off on Saturday, Sept. 28. The meet's menu of races includes a \$30,000 ratings handicap hurdle for horses ranked at 120 or lower, a \$30,000 Sport of Kings maiden hurdle, and the \$25,000 Legacy Chase, a 3 1/8-mile timber race that serves as a preview for the fall's timber championship races.

The action shifts the following day to Charlottesville, Va., for the 42nd annual Foxfield Fall Races. On that card will be a \$30,000 Virginia Equine Alliance maiden hurdle and a \$20,000 maiden hurdle limited to fillies and mares.



Go Jump Racing!





Jump racing returns to Colonial Downs

After an absence of more than six years, pari-mutuel jump racing returned to Colonial Downs on Saturday, Aug. 10. Those two races culminated a long, long journey for Virginia horsemen and in particular for the commonwealth's steeplechasing horsemen and officials who kept the flame of Thoroughbred racing burning while Colonial was shut down.

Steeplechase races, although without betting, were the last Thoroughbred races to be run at Colonial. The Dogwood Classic race meet on April 5, 2014, offered five races, and the entry-level allowance hurdle was won by Edith Dixon's homebred Schoodic, who would become a Grade 2 winner in Virginia and, for a new owner, now is a rising timber horse.

Colonial's final pari-mutuel steeplechase race under its former ownership was run on June 8, 2013, when a novice trainer named Cyril Murphy pulled a 23.90-to-1 upset with Inti in the David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial, then a Grade 3 race. Since then, Murphy has become one of the sport's leading trainers.

Much has changed in Virginia, as well. The Virginia Equine Alliance was formed to carry the torch of Thoroughbred racing in one of its American birthplaces, and pari-mutuel racing was inaugurated at the International Gold Cup and the Virginia Gold Cup.

One constant has been the Virginia Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA) under the leadership of Executive Director Frank Petramalo Jr., a former National Steeplechase Association director.

The Virginia Equine Alliance and the Virginia HBPA worked to change attitudes toward racing in Richmond, the state's capital and a short drive from the track. Under its former ownership, the track encountered serious difficulties in building out its network of off-track wagering facilities.



Trainer Cyril Murphy (left) and owner Brook Smith had plenty of reason to smile after Inti upset the 2013 Zeke Ferguson, the final pari-mutuel steeplechase race at Colonial Downs before the current season.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

The reopening of Colonial on Aug. 8 for a 15-date inaugural season was made possible in part by legislative approval of historical racing—machine pari-mutuel wagering on long-ago races—that is now available at the track and its remote facilities.

Jeffrey Jacobs, who opened the track in 1997 and closed it in 2014, has been succeeded by the Colonial Downs Group. While Jacobs resisted advice from established racing executives, the new ownership has populated its executive ranks with industry veterans.

Colonial's vice president of racing operations

is Jill Byrne, whose father was successful Virginia steeplechase trainer Peter Howe. She was a pioneering broadcaster for TVG and held executive positions at Churchill Downs and Breeders' Cup Ltd.

The track's racing secretary, Allison DeLuca, brings decades of experience to her position and has been Tampa Bay Downs' racing secretary since 2006.

The track will operate on a Thursday-Friday-Saturday schedule through Sept. 7 and will have a 5 p.m. first post time for all programs. Purses will average \$500,000 per day.

National Steeplechase Association

400 Fair Hill Drive
Elkton, Md. 21921

Phone: (410) 392-0700
Fax: (410) 392-0706

Website: www.nationalsteeplechase.com
E-mail: info@nationalsteeplechase.com

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