



Ohio State Racing Commission

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Best of Ohio program features \$750,000 for Ohio-breds

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by Kimberly Rinker for the Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund

The biggest day in Ohio Thoroughbred racing culminates Saturday, Oct. 7 as the Buckeye State's most outstanding runners vie in five \$150,000 stakes at Belterra Park. Fifty-nine contestants spar in these Best Of Ohio races at varying distances, ages and genders. First race post time is 1:20 pm, featuring:

- John W. Galbreath Memorial Stakes, one & 1/16 miles, 2-year-old fillies (*Race 5, Post 3:35 pm*)
- Juvenile Stakes, one & 1/16 miles, 2-year-olds (*Race 6, Post 4:06 pm*)
- Best of Ohio Sprint, 6 furlongs, 3-year-olds & up (*Race 7, Post 4:42 pm*)
- Best of Ohio Distaff, one & 1/8 miles, 3-year-olds & up, fillies and mares (*Race 8, Post 5:16 pm*)
- Best of Ohio Endurance, one & 1/4 miles, 3-year-olds & up (*Race 9, Post 5:55 pm*)

These Best of Ohio speed contests are also paramount in determining Horse of the Year and other Ohio-bred divisional honors. Racing fans who follow the Ohio racing circuit will witness reliable favorites mixed in with tangible surprises and possibly, a few upsets.

Eleven 2-year-old fillies are set to break from the gate in the \$150,000 John W. Galbreath Stakes, which features seasonal standout **Tango Run**, a winner of all of three of her starts thus far in 2017. Trained by William Cowans for Michael Foster, the daughter by Run Away and Hide won a 5½ furlong maiden special weight on June 26 at Thistledown, and promptly followed that up with a 2¾ length winning score on July 22 at that same Cleveland oval in the \$75,000 Miss Ohio Stakes. A month later she captured the \$75,000 Tah Dah Stakes at Belterra, this time besting her rivals by two lengths. Tango Run was bred by Harold Fishman and has \$109,500 in her bank account.

The \$150,000 Juvenile Stakes features a strong field of 14 youngsters, including \$75,000 Hoover Stakes winner **Candy Exchange**; \$75,000 Cleveland Kindergarten stakes victor **Awaken**; and \$75,000 Loyalty Stakes winner **Midnight Mikey**. All freshman in this event carry 120 pounds. Awaken could be the strongest of this trio, coming into the Juvenile off a strong, third place finish in the \$82,000 Sapling Stakes at Monmouth Park on Sept. 2. A winner of \$85,500, the Tim Hamm-trainee won his debut on June 24 at Thistledown, then was second in the \$75,000 Hoover Stakes at Belterra before winning the Cleveland Kindergarten on Aug. 5 at Thistledown, where he bested stablemate Candy Exchange. He was bred and is owned by WinStar Farm and Blazing Meadow Farm.

Rivers Run Deep is the clear standout in the \$150,000 Best of Ohio Sprint, having won this six furlong stake for the past three seasons. The winner of \$1,040,064 lifetime will be looking to wear the “Sprint Crown” for the fourth consecutive year as he battles eight other Ohio-registered 3-year-olds and up, carrying the silks of owners James T. and Ywachetta Driver postward. Trained by Chris Hartman, the 6-year-old son of Ready’s Image-Music Miss, by Prospector’s Music has been nearly unstoppable at six furlongs throughout his career, which includes 19 wins, eight seconds and four thirds in 37 starts. Rivers Run Deep is a multiple stakes winner, with triumphs this year in the \$75,000 Honey Jay Stakes and the \$75,000 Babst-Palacios Memorial. This speedster seems to enjoy the Belterra dirt, as he’s won six races and finished second once at the Cincinnati oval in seven starts, amassing \$300,000.

Blazing Meadows Farm’s **Leona’s Reward** headlines the \$150,000 Best of Ohio Distaff, battling nine rivals, including \$379,990 winner **School Board Prez** and this season’s \$75,000 Vivacious Stakes winner **Mayas Queen Neetee**. Trained by Tim Hamm, Leona’s Reward is a 4-year-old chestnut daughter by Parent’s Reward-Prime Time Dancer, by Montbrook who took the \$75,000 Catlaunch Stakes on Sept. 16 and the \$75,000 George Lewis Memorial Stakes on June 24—both at Thistledown, in easy fashion. This speedy mare has eight wins, five seconds and a pair of third-place finishes to her credit from 25 lifetime starts. John Royer’s School Board Prez is a multiple stakes winning daughter by Courageous Cat, who has seven wins in 18 starts for trainer Doug Matthews, including a triumph in the \$150,000 John W. Galbreath Stakes on Best of Ohio at Thistledown in 2015.

The 27th running of the \$150,000 Best of Ohio Endurance features 15 tough campaigners, including the multiple stakes-winning 2016 Ohio Horse of the Year **Mo Dont Know**, who has banked \$561,255 lifetime and who captured this same stake in 2016. Trained by Jeff Radosevich for the Looch Racing Stable, this 4-year-old son of Uncle Mo-Lilah, by Defrere, has 13 career wins and four second-place finishes in 19 starts. His major triumphs in 2017 include the \$75,000 Governor’s Buckeye Cup Stakes as well as multiple allowance victories this season. He also won the 2016 editions of: the \$200,000 Steel Valley Sprint; the \$75,000 Governor’s Buckeye Stakes; and the \$75,000 Daniel Sterns Cleveland Gold Cup Stakes. Bred by the Beechwood Racing Stables, Mo Dont No comes into the Best of Ohio Endurance Stakes riding a four-race win streak.

Other tough campaigners in this field include: **Cake Pop**, a chestnut 3-year-old son of Notional with career earnings of \$213,290 who hails from the Michael Lauer barn. He captured the \$75,000 Cleveland Gold Cup on July 1 at Thistledown and the \$75,000 Tall Stack Stakes on May 6 at Belterra for owner/breeder Penny Lauer.

The veteran **Silver Tongued**, a 7-year-old Flatter gelding with career earnings of \$332,182, comes close but rarely visits the winner’s circle these days. He’s won seven of 52 starts for Greenhill Racing Stables.

Poe Racing Stable’s **Gone Too Soon**, a 5-year-old altered son of Belong to Me won the \$75,000 Gendelman Memorial Stakes on June 10 at Belterra for trainer Robert Guciardo and sports a lifetime bankroll of \$261,700 from eight wins in 30 career starts.

Eighththehardway is a 5-year-old Parent's Reward gelding who hasn't found the winner's circle yet this season but is past winner of the \$75,000 Ruff-Kirchberg Stakes and the \$75,000 Catlaunch Stakes for trainer Richard Vickers and owner Paul Groves. He's won seven races, with seven seconds and eight thirds in 35 starts for earnings of \$207,118.

Coincidentally is a 3-year-old Super Saver gelding conditioned by Tim Hamm for WinStar Farm and Blazing Meadows Farm who captured the \$75,000 Noonan Stakes by six lengths earlier this season at Mahoning Valley. He owns a fat wallet of \$138,675 from five wins and two seconds in 11 tries.

Maccabee Farm's **Strike Your Light** won the \$75,000 Green Carpet Stakes at Belterra on May 28 this year by five lengths. Trained by Thomas Drury, Jr., the 3-year-old Majestic Winner colt has amassed \$123,235 from three wins, one second and two thirds in nine trips postward.

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Photo cutline: The 2016 Ohio Horse of the Year Mo Dont No will try for his second straight victory in the \$150,000 Best of Ohio Endurance Stake on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 7 at Belterra Park. **Photo by Brad Conrad**