

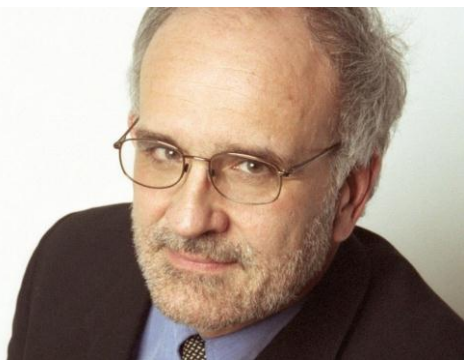
NEW YORK TIMES PIECE ON VETERINARIANS WINS STAN BERGSTEIN AWARD STORY EXAMINES VETS' ROLE IN USE OF DRUGS IN AMERICAN RACING TEAM VALOR DONATES \$25,000 TO MEDICATION AND TESTING CONSORTIUM

Team Valor International today honored a *New York Times* story on the role of veterinarians in the use of drugs in horse racing as the first winner of the Stan Bergstein Writing Award.



**The Stanley
Bergstein Award**

The September 21 piece “At the Track, Racing Economics Collide With Veterinarians’ Oath” by Walt Bogdanich, Joe Drape and Rebecca Ruiz received 2 first-place votes from the 4-judge panel of long-time *Los Angeles Times* Turf writer Bill Christine, *Sports Illustrated* senior writer and NPR commentator Frank Deford, Turf writer and 9-time Eclipse Award winner Bill Nack, and *Las Vegas Review-Journal* Turf writer Richard Eng.



Walt Bogdanich

The story ([link](#)) examines the wide-spread use of drugs for horses to race and win in the U.S, often with perilous results, in spite of the veterinarian’s oath to “protect animal health and welfare,” and was part of a series that scrutinized the prevalence of injury and lack of effective regulation in American racing.

Barry Irwin, CEO of Team Valor, instituted the Stan Bergstein Writing Award last November after Bergstein died at age 87. Bergstein was a major player in harness racing for 50 years as an executive, advocate, writer and announcer, and he wrote extensively in recent years on the common ills of Standardbred and Thoroughbred racing in a regular column for *Daily Racing Form*. Irwin named the \$25,000 writing award in Bergstein’s honor to encourage and reward substantive writing on racing’s issues.



Joe Drape

With Bergstein’s son, Al, in attendance this morning at a luncheon at the Thoroughbred Club of America in Lexington, Irwin saluted the *New York Times* piece as a worthy inaugural award winner.

“While I cannot say for certain that we were in any way responsible for a nominated piece being written, our hope is that by bringing them to a wider reading audience, we will encourage

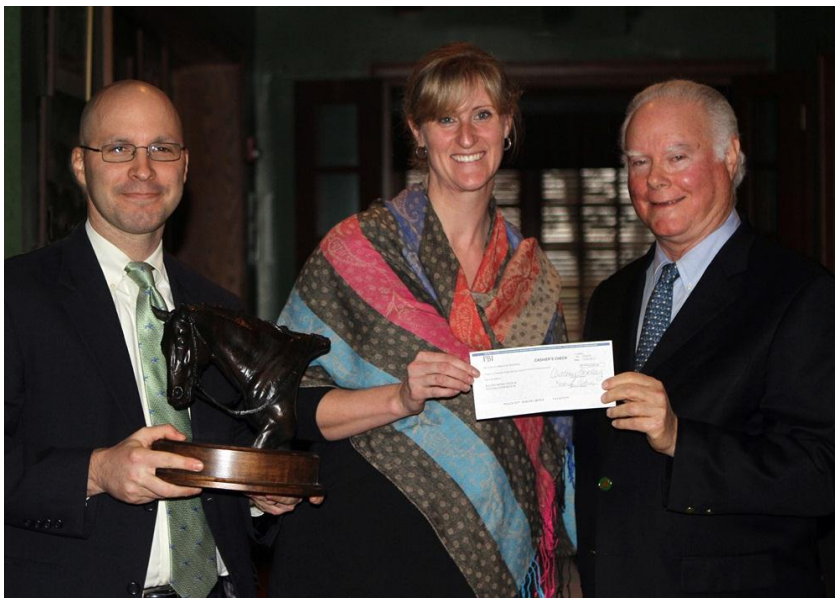
this type of writing to flourish anew in the sport of horse racing,” Irwin said. “The *New York Times* story was the third in a series. I think I am speaking for a large contingent of horse racing folk when I say that the first two pieces in the *Times* series presented a largely distorted view of racing that disappointed many of us badly. On the other hand, I am certain that a fair minded group of people would feel that the authors hit the nail squarely on the head in their award-winning third piece. They did a thoroughly professional job in presenting the conflicts with vets dispensing drugs to racehorses on a daily basis.”

According to Drape, a *New York Times* editorial policy prevents him and his colleagues from accepting the award, in the interest of neutrality.

Irwin selected the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium (RMTTC) to instead receive the \$25,000. Executive Director Dr. Dionne Benson accepted the check this morning for the Lexington-based non-profit organization, which lists supporting and furthering integrity in racing as its primary goal.

Benson noted that Bergstein was an RMTTC board member for a number of years and helped bring harness racetracks into the organization.

“The \$25,000 will go quite a long way to fulfilling the spirit of the award,” Benson said. “In listening to the speakers today, I felt I didn’t really need to say much because you said it all for us. We are in a challenging time, definitely one in which we have drugs at the forefront. The recent McKinsey report said that drugs can be very damaging to this sport if we continue to allow them to pervade the culture and be the front-page story about racing.”



Barry Irwin presents \$25,000 to Dr. Dionne Benson of the RMTTC, as Team Valor's Jeff Lowe displays the unclaimed Stan Bergstein Writing Award trophy. Photo by Z

Benson said the consortium has made recent strides in increasing withdrawal times for therapeutic drugs and will soon issue new rules for the use of corticosteroids.

“I think you’ll see that the goal with our regulations is to cause an overall shift in the way we do business with drugs in our industry,” she said.

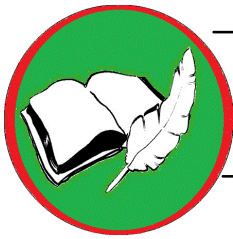
Barry Irwin and Team Valor’s Jeff Lowe selected 7 finalists for the award. The other first-place votes went to the *Paulick Report*’s Ray Paulick for a story on horse slaughter and to Bunny Hinzman for a blog entry on Lasix. Hinzman, a 16-year-old, also received two honorable mentions from the 4 judges.

Nack, the author of the definitive book about Secretariat, this morning described his long ties with Bergstein dating back to the 1950s, when as a teenager he cared for one of Bergstein’s Standardbreds at a layup facility in Illinois. Nack said Bergstein was one of his few supporters within racing in 1993 when he wrote a major piece on the use of raceday drugs for *Sports Illustrated*.

“It’s a kill the messenger mentality that continues to this day,” Nack said. “I’m glad to see support for this kind of important writing.”

Billy Reed, another *Sports Illustrated* alum and long-time columnist for the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and *Louisville Courier-Journal*, spoke at length this morning about the importance of writing about racing’s issues.

“In racing, pro-active is not part of the lexicon,” Reed said. “We have to wait until there is a scandal and then we go around trying to cover it up. That has to change. I think Stan Bergstein, if he were here today, would have felt the same way. Mr. Irwin, thank you so much for establishing this award to honor a great individual and hopefully to try to perpetuate change. I hope you get tons and tons of entries in the future, because that would mean that people are trying to do what they can to make racing the best that it can be.”



The Stanley Bergstein Award

FINALISTS

[At the Track, Racing Economics Collide With Veterinarians' Oath](#)

by Walt Bogdanich, Joe Drape and Rebecca Ruiz in the final story from a *New York Times* series on horse racing.

[New Testing by Louisiana State Racing Commission Results in 10 Drug Positives](#)

by Bob Fortus in one of his final stories for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*.

[A Reflection on the Dark Side](#)

by Bob Carson, writing in the online newsletter *Harness Racing Daily*.

[Kelsey Lefever: 'Every One of Them Is Dead'](#)

by Ray Paulick of the *Paulick Report* website.

[Mangled Horses, Maimed Jockeys; Death and Disarray at America's Racetracks](#)

by Walt Bogdanich, Joe Drape, Dara Miles and Griffin Palmer in the first part of a series in the *New York Times*.

[High Purses with Little Regulation Brings Problems](#)

by Jay Bergman writing in the *Daily Racing Form*.

[The Lasix Legacy](#)

by Bunny Hinzman, a 16-year-old blogger for the *America's Best Racing* website and her own site, *Bits 'n Bunny*.

A portion of The New York Times editorial policy, which also bars staff members from voting in competitions like the Eclipse Awards:

Entering Competitions and Contests

- Staff members may not enter local, national or international competitions sponsored by individuals or groups who have a direct interest in the tenor of our coverage. They may not act as judges for these competitions or accept their awards. Common examples are contests sponsored by commercial, political or professional associations to judge coverage of their own affairs. Senior newsroom managers may make exceptions for competitions underwritten by corporate sponsors if those are broad in scope and independently judged by journalists or disinterested public figures.
- Staff members may compete in competitions sponsored by groups whose members are all journalists or whose members demonstrably have no direct interest in the tenor of coverage of the field being judged. Staff members may act as judges for such competitions and accept their awards. For example, a staff member may enter a university-sponsored competition for coverage of foreign affairs but not accept an advocacy group's prize for environmental coverage.
- Each newsroom's management should maintain a current list of competitions it has approved. Staff members who would like to enter others should consult the responsible news executive. A critical factor in approving a competition, whatever the sponsorship, is a record of arm's-length decisions, including a willingness to honor unfavorable reporting. Staff members who win unsought awards from groups that do not meet the criteria established here should decline, politely explaining our policy.

From the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium website:

Goals & Accomplishments

RMTC Mission Statement: The mission of the Consortium shall be to develop, promote and coordinate, at the national level, policies, research and educational programs that seek to ensure the fairness and integrity of racing and the health and welfare of racehorses and participants, and to protect the interests of the racing public.

RMTC Goals:

- Develop and recommend uniform model policies, prohibited practices, disciplinary procedures and penalties regarding the use of medications and methods in connection with selling, training and racing horses, while respecting the autonomy and authority of individual state racing commissions and the work of national regulatory organizations.
- Develop a strong working relationship with individual state racing commissions, through their national regulatory organizations, by becoming a respected source of unbiased information on medication, testing and research.
- Stimulate, foster and seek proposals for new research into substances and methods being used to enhance or diminish athletic performance and devise appropriate analytical techniques for their detection.
- Define clearly the legitimate, therapeutic use of medications and/or methods and draw up reasonable guidelines for their use.
- Develop and recommend uniform laboratory technical standards and procedures with regard to analytical methods and equipment.
- Establish one or more working laboratories as "reference laboratories" for the purpose of overseeing the above-mentioned standards, validating new analytical techniques, developing reference samples, and ensuring quality control and good laboratory practice.
- Study the relationship of security issues to the control of drugs and medications in horses, develop and disseminate effective security measures that reduce or close off the opportunity for improper pre-race practices and work with state and federal regulatory agencies to prevent the purchase and/or sale of illegal or forbidden drugs.
- Develop and implement educational programs for those industry stakeholder groups responsible for maintaining the integrity of the sport.
- Disseminate accurate and timely information to all stakeholder groups and the racing press via multiple communication channels.
- Participate with other organizations, both nationally and internationally, to accomplish our mission.

History

The year 2000 saw several key events that laid the groundwork for the development of a national organization committed to tackling issues relating to the medication and post-race testing of racehorses. The National Thoroughbred Racing Association's Task Force on Racing Integrity and Drug Testing released the initial results of its Supertest project at The Jockey Club Roundtable meeting in August.

The report was a culmination of three years of research into the state of post-race testing in the United States, including results from over 1,000 cleared split samples that were put through an additional rigorous battery of tests. The report served to highlight some of the challenges the industry faced in order to improve the post-race detection of prohibited substances.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners hosted the "Racehorse Medication Summit" during the Annual Symposium on Racing in Tucson, Arizona. The Summit brought together individuals representing 23 industry stakeholder groups for a facilitated closed-door meeting in order to determine potential consensus points on the most basic elements of a uniform national medication policy for racehorses.

Those involved that day vowed to continue the effort beyond Tucson, leading to the formation of the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium.