

TDN STORY ON SYNTHETIC RACETRACKS WINS STAN BERGSTEIN AWARD TEAM VALOR'S WINNING PRIZE OF \$25,000 GOES TO WRITER MARQUARDT PRESENTED FRIDAY IN LUNCHEON AT THOROUGHBRED CLUB OF AMERICA

Team Valor International today honored writer Lucas Marquardt with the third annual Stan Bergstein Writing Award for his story in the *Thoroughbred Daily News* magazine on the introduction and growing departure of synthetic racetracks in the United States.

At a luncheon at the Thoroughbred Club of America in Lexington, Team Valor founder and CEO Barry Irwin presented Marquardt with the \$25,000 winning prize, along with a bronze trophy from sculptor Nina Kaiser.

The 5 judges Team Valor entrusted with selecting the winner were NBC Sports' Tom Hammond, Turf writer and HRTV producer Karen Johnson, former *Baltimore Sun* Turf writer Tom Keyser, HorseRacingInsider.com Executive Editor John Pricci and *Daily Racing Form* bloodstock writer John Sparkman. Marquardt's story received four of their five votes.

In "Is This the Death of Synthetic Racing? And If So, Why?," Marquardt tackles the rise and continued fall of synthetic racetrack surfaces in America, challenging anecdotal conclusions with an array of statistics about the safety of those tracks compared to traditional dirt.

"Few would argue that racing has a problem keeping its stars healthy," Marquardt writes. "Do synthetics help or hurt the cause?" He provides quite a bit of evidence to ponder as the standalone story in the TDN's seasonal e-magazine, available [here](#).



Lucas Marquardt accepts the Stan Bergstein Writing Award, with Barry Irwin, right, and Jeff Lowe of Team Valor. Bri Mott photo

Stories published between November 2, 2013 and November 1, 2014 in North America were eligible for the award, which Irwin created shortly after Bergstein's death in 2011 to encourage and recognize hard-hitting journalism on the subject of horse racing. The judges chose from 11 finalists.

Barry Irwin said "This year the types of stories nominated spanned a wide territory of interest, from drugs to con men, from synthetic tracks to compounding labs, from jockeys plugging in horses to a trainer that just cannot seem to keep his horses on the proper level of drugs, from a scandal that rocked the sport to its very foundations to a story about labs that test medications for racing jurisdictions. The writers are doing their jobs. I am proud to sponsor an endeavor that honors such outstanding and courageous journalists.

"In his winning story, Lucas Marquardt pointed out that if horsemen and owners really care about the lives of racehorses, then they may have been misguided in their efforts. Those preferring dirt tracks may have won the battle, but they just as easily might lose the war to win the hearts and minds of a

public sick and tired of watching horses die on the track from catastrophic breakdowns, which statistically occur less frequently on all-weather surfaces and more frequently on dirt.”

Ned Bonnie, delivered the keynote speech, drawing on his more than 50 years in the Thoroughbred industry, as an equine attorney, owner and breeder and a member of the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission.

“We need to show respect for journalists willing to speak truth to power in spite of possible ramifications,” Bonnie said. “These are the journalists who write without fear of failure and communicate to the public because it is the right thing to do. When they see an injustice, a cheater, an abuser, they have to get it off their chests. When they write about it, they can help change it. These are the journalists that Stan Bergstein epitomized and which Barry Irwin supports and which I know are essential to effect positive change in the racing industry. They surely don’t do it for the money. They do it because they can’t help themselves.”

The other nominated stories were:

[Despite the Evidence, Trainers Deny a Doping Problem](#)

by Joe Drape, the *New York Times*

[Texas Compounder Draws Scrutiny](#)

by Frank Angst, the *Blood-Horse*

[Donnally: The Story of ‘Electric Jockeys’ And How To Rid Sport of Them](#)

by Rev. Eddie Donnally, the *Paulick Report*

[The horses are all right, right?](#)

by Joe Clancy, ThisIsHorseRacing.com

[Florida Sham: Florida ‘Racetrack’ A Mockery of the State and Sport](#)

by Ray Paulick, the *Paulick Report*

[Drugs = Fewer Starts = Less Money for the Owner](#)

by Bill Finley, the *Thoroughbred Daily News*

[He Lied Like Nobody’s Business: A Racing Con Man and His Trail of Deception](#)

by Ray Paulick, the *Paulick Report*

[Ruidoso: All American Futurity Last Straw for a Crackdown?](#)

By Ray Paulick, the *Paulick Report*

[Frustration Builds Over Drug Testing Delays at LGC Labs](#)

by Ray Paulick, the *Paulick Report*

[Insanity, Stupidity, Cowardice, Call it What You Want, CHRB’s O’Neill Ruling a Farce](#)

by Bill Finley, the *Thoroughbred Daily News*

