

## CHRIS WITTSTRUCK OF USTA WEBSITE WINS BERGSTEIN WRITING AWARD COLUMNIST CALLS FOR MORE SURVEILLANCE TO DETER DRUG CHEATS ATTORNEY, RACEHORSE OWNER HONORED THURSDAY AT FASIG-TIPTON

Chris Wittstruck, a columnist for the United States Trotting Association website, won Team Valor International's Stan Bergstein Writing Award on Thursday night in a presentation at the Fasig-Tipton sales pavilion in Lexington.



*Chris Wittstruck receives the Stan Bergstein Writing Award from Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin, left, and media director Jeff Lowe.*

A panel of five independent judges selected Wittstruck's piece "Watching the Cheaters Cheat" for the fourth annual award boasting a \$25,000 prize from Barry Irwin's Team Valor. Wittstruck, an attorney and director of the Standardbred Owners Association of New York, asserted that catching drug cheats in the act can be racing's most effective means of deterrence.

"Catching a drug perpetrator in the act red handed is more significant than finding a bad substance in a sample," Wittstruck wrote in the column dated November 3, 2014. "We don't convict test tubes; we convict people. A positive sample occasions a rule violation. Tying administration to the affirmative act of a specific person via eyewitness observation could lead to a criminal conviction. Soliciting

tips, developing leads, conducting professional surveillance, obtaining warrants -- hard, old fashioned legwork -- is what's needed."

Barry Irwin said "What I liked about the winning story was that the writer cited a problem, suggested a solution and wrote it in an entertaining and thought-provoking manner. I thought it was just brilliant."

The judges noted that the quality of the eight nominated stories was exceptional, and their voting reflected that sentiment, as the result was very close. Other finalists were Ray Paulick of the Paulick with three stories, Frank Angst of the Blood-Horse with two stories and single pieces from Doug McCoy and Frank Vespe of the Racing Biz and Natalie Voss of the Paulick Report.

Wittstruck was presented with a bronze trophy from equine sculptor Nina Kaiser to conclude a program that featured speeches from Jeff Gural, the harness track operator who has been vigilant in combating illicit drugs, and Ben Nichols, an official from the World Anti-Doping Agency and spokesman this week in the release of a WADA report alleging that Russia engaged in state-sponsored doping of Olympic athletes.

Irwin said "After getting our land legs for the first three years of this award and testing out venues, we felt confident enough this year to expand the entire program and invite different college groups, including equine studies students, journalism majors and racing clubs. We also had a big representation from many of the major racing groups in U.S. racing. We wanted to make the event more of a platform to address the state of journalism in racing. For that, we brought in Mr. Nichols from the internationally respected sporting group WADA, and also Mr. Gural, who is a trend-setting racing entrepreneur who has taken matters into his own hands to change racing for the better. They

presented important perspectives."

Instead of accepting the prize money, Wittstruck requested that Team Valor donate it to the Harness Horse Youth Foundation, a 501(c)3 charity that provides educational clinics, materials and scholarships with the stated goal of "fostering the next generation of participants and fans." Wittstruck pointed out that the late Stan Bergstein, a seminal figure in harness racing as well as a regular columnist for Daily Racing Form, was the recipient of the Harness Horse Youth Foundation's inaugural Service to Youth Award in 1979.

"I am especially happy to win an award named in honor of Stan Bergstein," said Wittstruck, whose law practice is based in New Hyde Park, New York.

The winning column, judged by Steve Haskin of the Blood-Horse, Randy Moss of NBC Sports, racing publicist and Turf writer Lynne Snierson, esteemed owner-breeder George Strawbridge and Jon White of Santa Anita, is posted [here](#).