

HARNESS RACING'S GURAL URGES THOROUGHBRED TRACKS TO STEP UP PUMPED \$120M INTO MEADOWLANDS, PAYS OUT OF POCKET FOR TESTING SHARES BLUNT ASSESSMENTS AS GUEST SPEAKER AT BERGSTEIN AWARD

Pointing to an apparent lack of will and dwindling budgets from state RACING commissions, harness track owner Jeff Gural called on his peers on the Thoroughbred side of American horse racing to take the initiative to combat the use of illicit drugs as he has done.

Gural, who rebuilt the Meadowlands two years ago, is a member of the Water Hay Oats Alliance, the grassroots organization of mostly Thoroughbred interests who have pushed for a federal bill that would put the United States Anti-Doping Agency in charge of policing drugs in U.S. racing. Gural said he thinks USADA would be effective, but the simplest solution would be vigilant enforcement from the tracks themselves. He repeatedly referred to drugs in racing as a moral issue.



"We have a real dilemma," he said "The only solution in my mind is real simple, which is for the track owners to step up to the plate and say 'Enough is enough, we have a moral obligation to our customers and to these animals that when they step foot on our racetracks that they are racing without any illegal medication.' It's as simple as that. When I took over the Meadowlands, we invested \$120-million. The facility is brand new, it's gorgeous, it's cool, it's state of the art. So if there is a future for racing, this is the racetrack of the future. The first thing I said to myself is that I didn't spend \$120-million to create a place for dishonest people to make a living. Why would you?"

Gural hired a former state trooper to head up an in-house integrity program, including drug testing, that centers on a racetrack's private property powers. Based on those efforts, he has excluded numerous "drug trainers" from participating at the Meadowlands and his two other tracks. He said unannounced out-of-competition testing is the key, and he called on the operators of Churchill Downs, Keeneland, Gulfstream Park, Santa Anita and Saratoga to make a similar game-changing impact in Thoroughbred racing.

"I haven't solved the entire problem but I can tell you that by and large, there are no known drug trainers at the three tracks I own," Gural said. "There may be people using drugs that we don't know about, but we keep trying, we keep testing, we send the samples, we've tried using hair samples, we've done surveillance and I guarantee if the five track owners got together and hired a couple of retired FBI guys and a couple of DEA guys and found a reliable lab, we would not be talking about this anymore. It would be over. Without out of competition testing, you are not testing at all. I guarantee you that anyone in the drug testing of humans would tell you that, without showing up unannounced and asking someone to pee in a cup, or

in our case showing up unannounced and asking the trainer to have his veterinarian to draw blood and give it to us and send it off.



"If the track owners don't do something about it, the fact of the matter is that they simply don't care. They can say what they want. I lose \$3-million a year. If I can afford to spend \$150,000 a year to try to

keep the drug guys out, I would think Keeneland does very well. NYRA, Churchill, and Mr. Stronach--he loves horses, he knows what I am talking about--I am sure that these people can afford to do it and that would be it. We are done, we will worry about Lasix the next time. There is no way that anyone should tolerate that these horses are being given illegal medication knowingly and that we are going to rely on the various states that are all struggling budget wise to spend the money. To give you an idea, New York bought the equipment to test for cobalt but they don't do it, because the lab doesn't get enough from New York to cover the costs for testing for cobalt. In New Jersey, they don't test for cobalt. That's a drug we know is performance enhancing."



Announcer, writer and track executive Stan Bergstein died 4 years ago.

In the heart of America's Thoroughbred industry, Gural was part of an event with a heavy influence from harness racing. The late Bergstein was a major Standardbred figure for decades as a writer, broadcaster and track executive, and the award in his honor was presented to Chris Wittstruck, a harness racing columnist and owner. Wittstruck's winning story also focused on drug enforcement, but his call was for more reliance on existing laws as a deterrent.

Gural said "I am really glad that Barry has chosen to honor Stan Bergstein with this award. Stan was a good friend of mine and someone who really fought hard on the integrity issue. It's interesting that someone in the Thoroughbred game would honor him. He is certainly someone who should be honored. I commend Barry and thank him for inviting me and I hope the message gets through to these

track owners that this is absolutely a moral issue. The same thing happened in football. When the pressure mounted, they decided they would randomly test the players. Now they don't use drugs, and the same thing in baseball. The owners stepped up. Not the federal government. Not the states. The owners stepped up and the same thing is true in racing. The owners have got to step up and clean up the sport."