

THE ROAD AHEAD

NEWSLETTER

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JULY'S CROWN JEWEL



Every summer, the racing world turns its eyes to Oceanport, New Jersey for one of the most exciting events on the calendar, the Haskell Stakes. Run at the historic Monmouth Park and set this year for July 19, this Grade I race features the top three-year-old Thoroughbreds in North America and is known for its speed, drama, and star power.

The race was born in 1968 as the Monmouth Invitational Handicap but was renamed in 1981 to honor Amory L. Haskell, a former president of the racetrack who helped shape Monmouth Park into a national racing destination. In 1973, the Haskell earned Grade I status, immediately placing it among the sport's elite races.

Over the decades, the Haskell Stakes has become more than just a steppingstone; it is a proving ground. Some of the most famous names in racing have thundered down its stretch. In 2002, the purse was bumped to \$1.5 million to attract War Emblem, fresh off his Kentucky Derby and Preakness victories. Thirteen years later, the pot swelled again to \$1.75 million for the arrival of American Pharoah, the first Triple Crown winner in 37 years, who electrified a record crowd of 60,983 fans with a dazzling victory.

Other memorable winners include Rachel Alexandra, who in 2009 became the first filly to take the Haskell title, breaking barriers and leaving no doubts about her dominance. In 2020, Authentic captured the Haskell and went on to win the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic, earning Horse of the Year honors. And then there's Maximum Security, who rebounded in 2019 with a win at Monmouth after a controversial disqualification in the Kentucky Derby.

In 2020, the race dropped the word "Invitational" from its name, simply becoming the Haskell Stakes, but its prestige has only grown. Over the years, eleven of its winners have gone on to claim Eclipse Awards, the highest honors in American horse racing, for best three-year-old colt or filly.

Today, the Haskell stands as both a tradition and a launching pad for greatness. Whether you are a seasoned fan or just getting into the sport, the Haskell Stakes is where legends begin to take shape.



THE WHITNEY STAKES

NO CERTAINTY, ONLY LEGENDS

Every summer at Saratoga Racecourse, a race unfolds that is as rich in tradition as it is in drama, the Whitney Stakes, held this year on August 2. Considered one of the most prestigious events in American horse racing, the Whitney is a Grade I race for older horses and often plays a pivotal role on the road to the Breeders' Cup Classic.

The race was first run in 1928 and is named in honor of the Whitney family, who played a huge role in shaping American horse racing. William Collins Whitney, one of the family's most influential figures, even helped found The Jockey Club, a cornerstone of the sport's governance.

But the Whitney is more than history; it is where legends are tested. In 1973, racing's ultimate icon Secretariat suffered a stunning upset when he was defeated by Onion, a moment that sent shockwaves through the sport. It served as a powerful reminder of the race's unpredictability and intensity.

Over the decades, many greats have left their mark. The legendary Kelso won the Whitney three times, wrapping up his final victory at the age of eight in 1965. In 1988, Personal Ensign, a brilliant and unbeaten filly, beat the boys to keep her perfect record intact. And in more recent years, horses like Awesome Again and Blame used their Whitney triumphs as steppingstones to win the Breeders' Cup Classic, racing's grand finale.

The Whitney Stakes may only last a couple of minutes, but its impact stretches far beyond the finish line. With its rich past and its power to shape future champions, the Whitney remains a highlight of the summer season, a race where greatness does not just appear; it is proven.



ENDURANCE AND ELEGANCE

THE LEGACY OF THE SWORD DANCER

Each August, Saratoga Racecourse hosts one of the most respected turf showdowns in American horse racing, the Sword Dancer Stakes, set this year for August 9. With a \$1 million purse and a guaranteed spot in the Breeders' Cup Turf on the line, this Grade I race attracts top talent from across the country and beyond.

The race is named in honor of Sword Dancer, a two-time Horse of the Year and one of the most beloved geldings in racing history. In 1959, he delivered a legendary season, winning the Belmont Stakes, Travers Stakes, and the Jockey Club Gold Cup. His name lives on in this race, which celebrates horses with both speed and staying power.

The Sword Dancer was not always a turf classic. When it was first run in 1975, it was a short six-furlong dirt sprint at Aqueduct Racetrack. By 1977, it had moved to Belmont Park, and in 1992, it found its permanent home on the lush turf of Saratoga, evolving into one of the top long-distance turf races in the United States.

Now a highlight of Saratoga's elite summer meet, the Sword Dancer is a true test of endurance and strategy. It challenges older horses to dig deep, navigate tight turns, and power through the stretch, all while fans look on from the historic grandstands, hoping to witness the next champion make his move.

The Sword Dancer is more than just a race, it is a bridge between history and ambition, linking past champions like Sword Dancer himself to the new generation of turf stars chasing glory.

THE TRAVERS STAKES

AMERICA ' S MIDSUMMER DERBY

Every August, the spotlight of American horse racing turns to Saratoga Springs, New York, where history, speed, and tradition collide in the Travers Stakes. Known as the “Midsummer Derby,” this prestigious Grade I race is the oldest stakes race for three-year-olds in the United States, dating all the way back to 1864. It is a race that does not just crown a winner; it helps define the best of a generation.

Held at the legendary Saratoga Racecourse, the Travers is more than just a milestone on the calendar. It is a place where reputations are made and sometimes broken, earning the track its haunting nickname: “The Graveyard of Champions.” One of the most unforgettable examples came in 2015, when Keen Ice stunned the racing world by defeating Triple Crown winner American Pharoah in a dramatic upset that reminded everyone, at Saratoga, nothing is guaranteed.

Named after William R. Travers, the race's first president and owner of its inaugural winner, Kentucky, the Travers Stakes is a blend of deep-rooted tradition and high-stakes competition. Even during the turbulence of World War II, the race lived on, temporarily relocating to Belmont Park between 1943 and 1945.

The winner of the Travers does not just walk away with glory.

They are awarded the Man o' War Cup, a stunning trophy designed by Tiffany & Co., named after one of the sport's greatest legends, Man o' War, who captured the Travers in 1920. On top of that, the victor is crowned with a blanket of red and white carnations, echoing the iconic colors of Saratoga.

With a history that includes spectacular performances like Arrogate's record-breaking time of 1:59.36 in 2016, and with the 2025 edition set for Saturday, August 23, the Travers continues to be a key race in shaping the competition for Champion Three-Year-Old Male of the year.

From its rich traditions to its shocking surprises, the Travers Stakes is not just a race, it is a moment in time, where every stride writes another chapter in horse racing history.

WHERE CHAMPIONS MEET THE TURF



A TRADITION OF POWER AND PRESTIGE

Every summer, Del Mar Racetrack in California becomes the epicenter of West Coast racing excitement with the Pacific Classic Stakes, a powerful showdown for some of the best three-year-old and older Thoroughbreds in the game. This year's edition is set for Saturday, August 30, and if history is any guide, the action will be unforgettable.

The race made its debut on August 10, 1991, with a whopping \$1 million purse, instantly becoming the crown jewel of Del Mar's racing season. Just two years later, in 1993, it was officially recognized as a Grade I race, placing it among the most elite contests in North America, a status it has proudly held ever since.

What sets the Pacific Classic apart is its flair for drama and historic moments. In 2015, racing fans watched in awe as Beholder, a brilliant mare, did not just beat the boys, she crushed them by 8¼ lengths, making her the first female horse to ever win the race. Just a year later, California Chrome, one of the most beloved Kentucky Derby champions of recent times, galloped home in style to become the first Derby winner to conquer Del Mar's main stage.

Some legends have even managed to win it more than once. Richard's Kid pulled off a rare back-to-back triumph in 2009 and 2010, cementing his name in Pacific Classic lore. And then there's Accelerate, who in 2018 delivered the most dominant performance in the race's history, winning by an incredible 12½ lengths, a record margin that left jaws dropping trackside.

Winning the Pacific Classic is not just about glory and headlines. It comes with a big bonus: an automatic berth into the Breeders' Cup Classic, one of the world's biggest races. That high-stakes incentive attracts the best of the best, ensuring a competitive field and heart-pounding action.

With its mix of top-tier talent, historic performances, and high-stakes rewards, the Pacific Classic is more than just a race; it is a stage where champions are made, and legacies are written. Whether you are a longtime racing fan or just getting into the sport, this is one race worth watching.



THE JOCKEY CLUB GOLD CUP

A CENTURY OF CHAMPIONS

Every summer, as Saratoga's racing season nears its end, the spotlight shifts to one of the biggest and boldest tests in American Thoroughbred racing, the Jockey Club Gold Cup, scheduled this year for August 31.

First run in 1919 at Belmont Park, the Gold Cup has long stood as a defining challenge for older horses, testing their strength, stamina, and readiness for the biggest stage of all, the Breeders' Cup Classic, which often comes just a few months later. In fact, winning the Gold Cup earns a horse an automatic berth in that prestigious race.

Over the decades, the Gold Cup has delivered some unforgettable stories. In 1978, the legendary Seattle Slew, already a Triple Crown winner, became the first horse to also capture the Gold Cup, proving his power beyond the classic three-year-old season. And in 2017, fans experienced the unpredictable side of racing when Arrogate, one of the most dominant horses in the world at the time, unexpectedly finished dead last. It was a stunning reminder that anything can happen at the track.

Since 2021, the race has been held at Saratoga Racecourse, adding a new chapter to its historic legacy. With top trainers, jockeys, and horses vying for victory, the Jockey Club Gold Cup continues to shape champions and surprise fans, year after year.

This is not just a race; it is a battle for greatness, and a place where reputations are either sealed or shattered in the final stretch.

BEFORE THE CROWN, THERE'S THE HOPEFUL

Each summer at Saratoga Racecourse, a race unfolds that represents more than just a win; it marks the beginning of a dream.

The Hopeful Stakes is one of the most important races for two-year-old Thoroughbreds in North America, and in 2025, it will be held on September 1. But while the date changes from year to year, the significance never does. This Grade I race, the first run in 1903, has long served as a launching pad for future champions and a key prep for the Breeders' Cup Juvenile.

Fittingly named, the Hopeful is all about potential. Many of the colts who compete here are racing's rising stars, full of untapped promise and aiming to make their mark. Sometimes, they even go on chasing the Triple Crown. Secretariat's five-length triumph in 1972 was one of the first signs of the legend he had become. Affirmed, who would win the Triple Crown in 1978, made his Saratoga statement by capturing the Hopeful the year before. More recently, Forte used his 2022 Hopeful win as the first step on a path to stardom.

The race is also the grand finale of Saratoga's unofficial juvenile triple, alongside the Sanford Stakes and Saratoga Special. Only a select few horses, including Regret in 1914 and City Zip in 2000, have ever swept all three.

Even in its storied history, the Hopeful Stakes has faced moments of uncertainty. It was not held in 1911 or 1912 due to a ban on parimutuel betting in New York. But its return only strengthened its place as one of the sport's most anticipated and meaningful events.

Whether it is a future Hall of Famer or a breakout star making their debut, the Hopeful Stakes is where the story begins. Because before champions are crowned, they are hopefuls.



SPEED AND STARDOM

THE LEGACY OF THE DEL MAR DEBUTANTE STAKES

Sunlight, surf, and star power set the stage each year at Del Mar Racetrack, home to one of the most prestigious races for two-year-old fillies in the United States, the Del Mar Debutante Stakes, which in 2025 is set for September 6. This Grade I event has been defining the future of Thoroughbred racing since its debut in 1951, and it continues to be the West Coast's most important juvenile filly race.

Originally contested at six furlongs, the race was lengthened to seven furlongs in 1993, adding a tougher stamina test to the equation. Since then, the Debutante has crowned dozens of rising stars, many of whom went on to compete in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies, or became highly valuable broodmares, passing on speed and brilliance to the next generation.



Few names have dominated the race quite like Bob Baffert, who holds the record with 10 victories, including an extraordinary three-year streak from 2019 to 2021. Among jockeys, legends Gary Stevens and Bill Shoemaker each rode their way to five Debutante wins, guiding young fillies through one of the most pressure-filled tests of their early careers.

The Del Mar Debutante is not just a racing milestone;

It is a marketplace of potential. A victory can launch a filly into stardom and boost her value in the breeding shed. In many ways, the Debutante does not just shape champions; it builds bloodlines.

All of this unfolds at Del Mar, where “the turf meets the surf” and the racing calendar fuses Hollywood charm with world-class competition. The Debutante captures everything that makes Del Mar magical: speed, style, and the sense that you are watching the very beginning of something great.

TURF ROYALTY IN A SINGLE TURN

Every September, one of the most electrifying turf races in North America takes center stage at Woodbine Racetrack in Toronto, the Woodbine Mile. Set for September 13, 2025, this Grade I race draws top-class milers from around the world with a generous C\$1 million purse and a golden ticket on the line: a guaranteed spot in the Breeders' Cup Mile.

The race began in 1988 as the Molson Export Challenge, but it took on new life in 1997 when it shifted to a 1-mile turf format. That change brought the race in line with international turf racing standards and elevated its global reputation.

One name still echoes through Woodbine Mile history: Wise Dan. He did not just win back-to-back editions in 2012 and 2013; he set a blistering track record of 1:31.75 in his second victory, a time that still stands today. And when it comes to riding brilliance, John Velazquez sits at the top with five wins, the most by any jockey in the race's history.

The Woodbine Mile is not just about money or records. It is a race defined by speed, elegance, and the strategy that comes with turf competition. For many horses, it is a defining moment. For trainers and owners, it is a launching pad for world-class prestige.

Whether you are a racing fanatic or a newcomer to the sport, the Woodbine Mile is where class meets competition, and where the road to international stardom begins.



THE COTILLION STAKES

CROWNING QUEENS AT PARX

Each fall, Parx Racing in Pennsylvania becomes the center of the Thoroughbred world when the Cotillion Stakes takes the spotlight. This year's running is set for September 20, and it brings with it high stakes, high speed, and sky-high potential. Reserved for three-year-old fillies, the Cotillion is a Grade I event that not only highlights the stars of today but often helps shape the destiny of future champions.

With a \$1 million purse, it stands as one of the richest races in the division, attracting elite fillies from coast to coast.

But it is not just about money. The Cotillion is also a major prep for the Breeders' Cup Distaff, and performances here frequently influence year-end Eclipse Award honors for Champion 3-Year-Old Filly.

One of the race's most famous moments came in 2014, when Untapable captured the Cotillion before going on to win the Breeders' Cup Distaff and take home the Eclipse Award, cementing her place in racing history.

The Cotillion began in 1969 at Liberty Bell Park, later relocating to what is now known as Parx Racing, a track that continues to grow in stature. Over the years, legends have left their mark: Mike Smith leads all jockeys with four wins, while Steve Asmussen, a Hall of Fame trainer, has captured the race five times.

In a sport driven by performance, pedigree, and heart, the Cotillion Stakes is where rising fillies prove they belong among the greats. And for fans and connections alike, it is a day when everything is on the line, and greatness often breaks through.

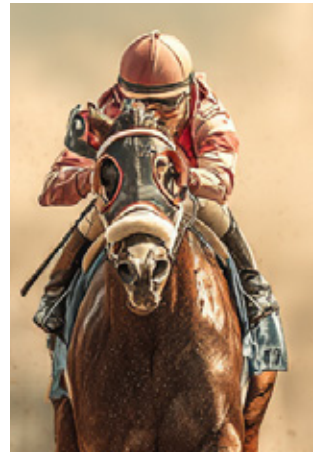
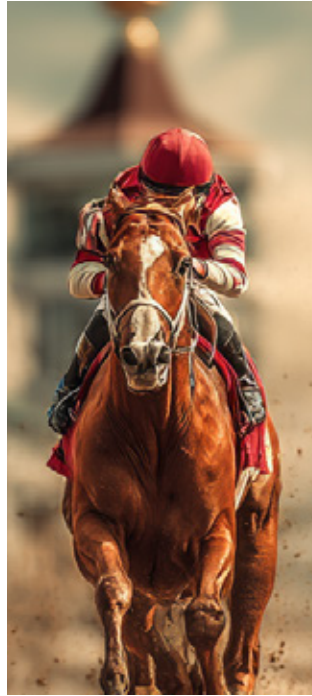
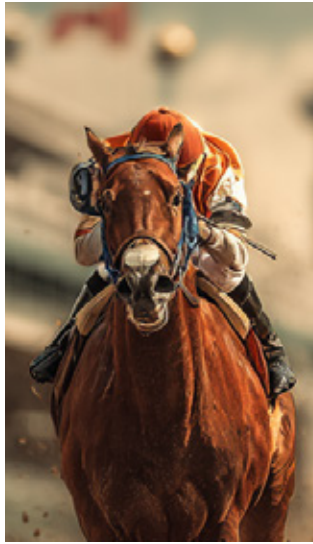
THREE RACES, ONE DREAM

CONQUERING CANADA'S TRIPLE CROWN

The Canadian Triple Crown is a unique and storied series that celebrates the versatility and resilience of Canada's best three-year-old Thoroughbreds. Unlike other Triple Crown series around the world, this one is run over three different track surfaces, tapeta, dirt, and turf, making it one of the toughest tests in horse racing. Since its establishment in 1959, only a handful of horses have been able to conquer all three races, with Wando in 2003 being the most recent champion.

The journey begins on August 16 with the King's Plate, held at Woodbine Racetrack in Toronto. The first run was in 1860, and it is the oldest continuously run horse race in North America. Originally known as the Queen's Plate, it was renamed in 2022 to reflect King Charles III's reign. The race covers 1¼ miles on tapeta, a synthetic surface known for its consistency and safety. This event blends fierce competition with a deep sense of history and has hosted royal visits such as Queen Elizabeth II's attendance in 1973. Despite being called a "Plate," the winner receives a golden cup, adding to the regal flair of the occasion.

Next up is the Prince of Wales Stakes, set for September 9 at Fort Erie Racetrack. Introduced in 1929, this race is now Canada's top dirt event for three-year-olds. Added to the Triple Crown in 1959, it offers a more intense and fast-paced challenge on traditional dirt. Over the decades, it has produced landmark moments, Dance Smartly became the first filly to win the Triple Crown in 1991, and Barbara J. Minshall became the first female trainer to capture a Triple Crown race in 1995. This year marks the 90th edition of the race.



The final test arrives on September 28 with the Breeders' Stakes, also held at Woodbine. First run in 1889, this is the longest of the three races and is contested on the E.P. Taylor Turf Course, known for its demanding layout. As the premier turf race in the series, it rewards strategy, patience, and stamina. Highlights include Laurie Gulas becoming the first female jockey to win a leg of the Crown in 1999, and Miami Deco's shocking upset in 2010, delivering a payout of over \$130 on a two-dollar bet. The 2025 edition will be the 135th running of this historic race.

Each leg of the Canadian Triple Crown brings its own challenge, personality, and tradition. The King's Plate calls for stamina and class, the Prince of Wales Stakes tests power and grit on dirt, and the Breeders' Stakes pushes horses to their limits on turf. Together, these races represent a crown that is incredibly hard to claim but unforgettable for those who do.

ILLUSIONS OF INFLUENCE

WHY SUPERSTITIONS THRIVE IN ONLINE BETTING

In the world of online betting, logic may drive the design, but human psychology still steers the experience. Even with apps delivering real-time data, live odds, and sleek interfaces, many bettors hold tight to their rituals: tapping the screen a certain way, betting on specific numbers, or only placing wagers at particular times of day. The reason? Betting is unpredictable, and the brain does not like unpredictability.

So, it builds a sense of structure, an illusion of control. Rituals, whether it is always using the same betting app or placing bets after a lucky song, help people feel like they are part of the outcome. The action might be meaningless to the odds, but psychologically, it soothes the uncertainty.

And once a superstition leads to a win, confirmation bias kicks in. Our brains are wired to notice patterns, even when they do not exist. So, if a bettor wins while using a certain routine, say, wearing a red hoodie while betting on horse #7, they are more likely to remember that “success” than all the other times it did not work. Confirmation bias filters reality, highlighting moments that support our beliefs and quietly ignoring the rest.

That is why rituals stick. It is not just about memory; it is about meaning. People believe what feels true, not always what is statistically sound. If a filly with a lucky-sounding name wins, that starts to feel like a trend, and suddenly bettors are backing horses based on color, name, or dream omens instead of form. Even digitally, bettors cling to old-school superstitions. Number 13 is still avoided. Some dream of horses and take it as a sign. And the “hot hand fallacy”, believing a winning streak will naturally continue, is just as alive online as it ever was at the track.

None of it changes the odds, but all of it changes the experience. Rituals provide emotional comfort, make decisions feel more personal, and wrap a layer of hope around every wager. Behind the swipes and stats, there is still a human instinct to seek patterns, make meaning, and chase luck, one bet at a time.



UNCOUPLING THE FINISH LINE

THE FUTURE OF HORSE RACING AND GAMING

Across the landscape of horse racing and gaming, one policy shift is drawing intense attention: decoupling. It may sound like dry legal jargon, but the impact could reshape how live racing fits into the modern gambling economy.

Decoupling refers to removing the legal requirement that racetracks must conduct live horse racing to operate slot machines, cardrooms, or other gaming activities. This setup was originally designed to support horse racing by tying it to the more profitable side of the business, gambling. But times have changed. As mobile betting expands and casino profits surge, some operators want to run gaming facilities without the logistical and financial burden of hosting races.

Nowhere is this shift more visible than in Florida. After previously decoupling greyhound, harness, and jai alai venues, the state is now considering whether to extend that freedom to thoroughbred racing. Proposals such as House Bill 105, Senate Bill 408, and the recently passed House Bill 1467 would allow tracks like Gulfstream Park and Tampa Bay Downs to keep their gaming licenses while discontinuing live racing, though not before 2027, due to a mandatory waiting period.

Supporters say it is time. Running live races is costly, and viewership is shrinking. With digital betting platforms dominating the market, many argue that tying gaming to racing is no longer necessary. They frame decoupling as a modernization; giving venues more freedom to operate efficiently in a changing economy.

But opponents warn the move could hollow out a fragile ecosystem.

Florida's thoroughbred industry supports over 33,000 jobs and helps sustain farms, training centers, transport companies, and veterinary businesses. In areas like Ocala and Marion County, where horses are central to the local identity, decoupling could lead to land sales, overdevelopment, and a loss of cultural heritage.

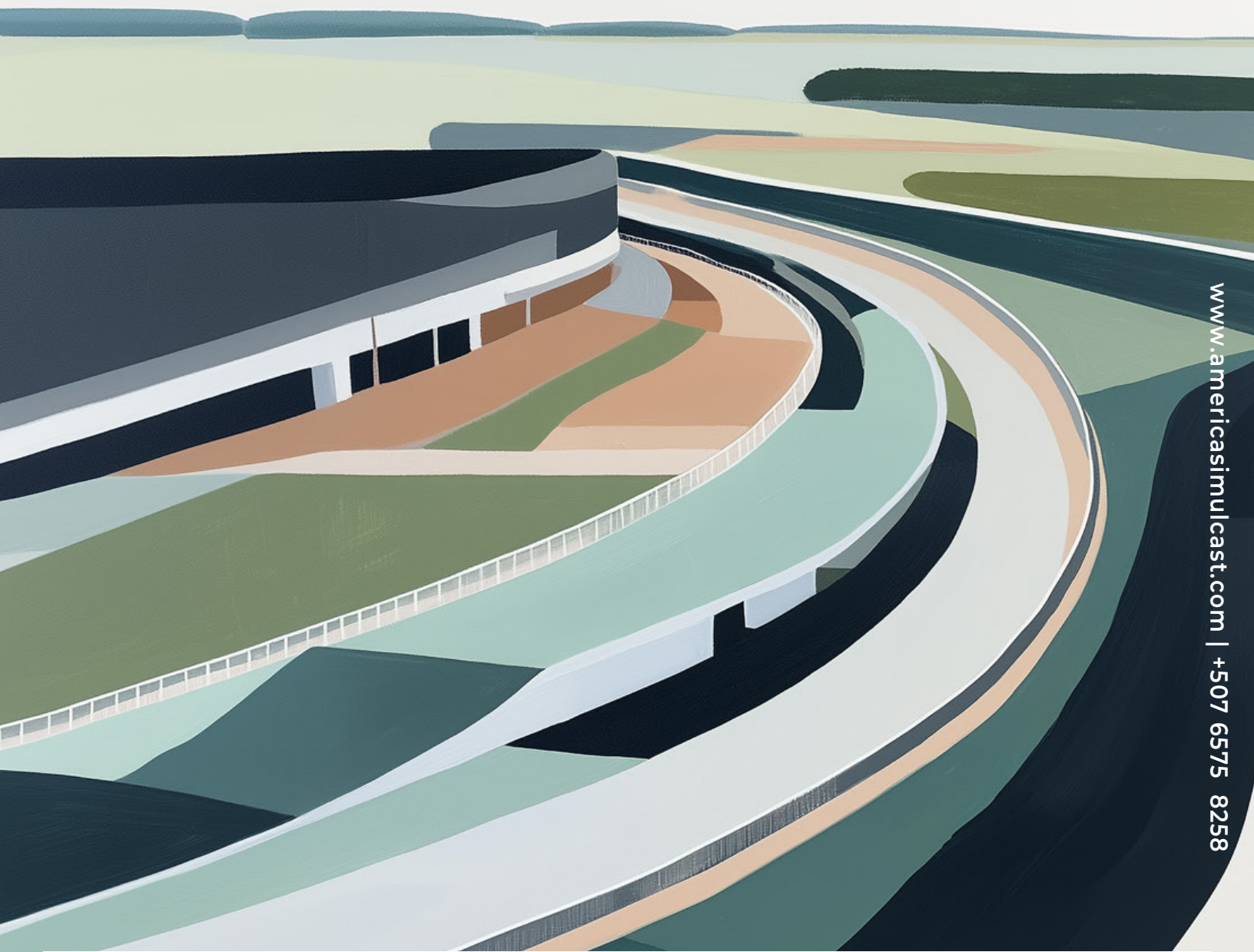
Beyond economics, it is about tradition. For many communities, horse racing is not just a sport; it is a legacy passed through generations. Removing its financial scaffolding could reduce the sport to a niche spectacle at a handful of elite tracks.

What happens in Florida will not stay in Florida. Other jurisdictions such as Arkansas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Oklahoma, and West Virginia are closely monitoring what happens. If Florida successfully walks away from live racing, others may follow. That could unravel the very partnership between racing and gaming that helped legalize casinos in the first place.

Ultimately, the debate over decoupling is not just about gambling licenses or purse money. It is a question of what industries societies choose to protect, and which ones they are willing to let fade. For horse racing, the answer may define the next chapter of its long and storied ride.



Thank you for reading; we have more to share and discover in this field. Stay tuned, you do not want to miss it!



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Review the most important future races in our calendar here
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