



Race Track Industry Program

**34th ANNUAL  
SYMPOSIUM ON RACING & GAMING**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2007**

**Mark Kaufman Workshop – Keeping Racing Fun**

**Moderator:**

**Eric Wing;** Sr. Director of Media Relations, NTRA

**Speakers:**

**John Engelhardt,** Director of Publicity, River Downs

**Mark Klein,** Comedian and Horse Owner

**Randy Sampson,** President/GM, Canterbury Park

**MS. WENDY DAVIS:** Okay, I think it's about time, we'll get this panel session kicked off. This is always a wonderful session and every year we just love having the TPA back for the "Mark Kaufman Workshop."

There have been a lot of really serious items talked about in this forum in years past, so it's certainly a lot of fun and it will be a lot of fun today with the topic, "Keeping Racing Fun." And I have to ask, is that the jacket for when you have the Derby horse?

**MR KLEIN. :** This is the new official steward's jacket at Churchill Downs, they asked me to introduce it.

**MS. DAVIS:** Excellent, excellent. I am involved in the Steward Accreditation Program, so I'll be speaking with you after the panel.

But if we could borrow it, my husband always threatens that if we would ever have a Derby horse, which I do know what the odds are, that he's going to wear plaid, and I'm calling his bluff, but that would one up the plaid, so.

Thanks again, you guys, for having such a wonderful, fun panel this afternoon and I am looking forward to hearing it and at this point, I will turn it over to your master of ceremonies, Eric Wing. Thanks again.

**(Applause)**

**MR. ERIC WING:** Thank you, Wendy.

My name is Eric Wing, I am the senior director of media relations for the NTRA. For the past year and for the next year, I'm the president of the Turf Publicist of America, and on behalf of all our members, I would like to thank all of you for coming to this year's Mark Kaufman Workshop, which is called, "Keeping the Fun in Racing."

For those of you who don't know or never knew Mark, Mark was one of the industry's truly outstanding publicists. He called the northwestern region of the United States home, Washington State to be precise. He died much too early a death, back in 1995 during Kentucky Derby week. The TPA very wisely chose to use this forum as one way of keeping Mark's memory alive. So that's who Mark Kaufman is and we thank you for honoring his name and coming here today.

Before I introduce our distinguished panelists we have a, we have some TPA business we would like to conduct and report upon.

First of all I want to just, for those TPA members in the room today, just a reminder that there will be a general TPA membership meeting at 3:30 pm, about a half hour after this wraps up, down in the Desert Gardens Lounge, which is basically the bar area. So I know my panelists will probably all be there.

We do have a couple of news items to report. First of all the TPA honors each year a Big Sport of Turfdom, and this is to honor a person or a group of persons as the case may be, who did the most to promote horse racing in the past year. Somebody who went out of his or her way to work with the publicists, work with the turf writers, it's voted on by the entire membership, and I'm happy to announce that this year's winner is Carl Nafzger. Carl is the -- this is the 42<sup>nd</sup> year that we've honored, we've had a Big Sport of Turfdom Winner and Carl has now become only the second two-time winner in the award's history, he won it back in 1990, the year of Unbridled, of course. Only Laffit Pincay Jr. has been so honored twice. So I can tell you that Carl was thrilled when I called him with the news. He was speechless and very happy in that way that he has that is so sincere at all times. We will be honoring Carl at the annual Big Sport of Turfdom luncheon in Beverly Hills, California, the same day as the Eclipse Awards at Mastro's Steakhouse again. It's Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, Martin Luther King Day, and to keep everything on pace, we'll have lunch beginning at 12 at Mastro's and cocktails at eleven. So if you're in Beverly Hills for the Eclipse Awards, then please do come on out to the Big Sport of Turfdom luncheon, we'll be putting out information on how to do that.

Secondly, we had our annual officer's elections and now, I didn't have to run because I'm in the middle of a two-year term, our treasurer, Dave Zenner of Arlington Park, did not have to run, because treasurers get two-year gigs. But the vice presidents are voted upon each year, and, I don't know if this is a first, but I think that it might be, all four of our incumbent vice presidents were reelected for another year. So I would like to congratulate Julie Sarno, our vice president of the

western region, Joan Lawrence, our vice president at large, Bill Knauf, our vice president of the eastern region. Bill's in the crowd today, I know. And also, all the way to my left, he is distinguished despite what I said before, John Engelhardt, our vice president of the central region. Congratulations on your reelection.

**(Applause)**

**MR. WING:** Okay, on to the Mark Kaufman Workshop which, again, is, "Keeping the Fun in Racing." We have a distinguished group here, and I'll introduce all three of the folks now. Obviously, John Engelhardt of River Downs, Randy Sampson of Canterbury Park, and anybody who was at lunch today knows Mark Klein now, a horse owner and comedian, the CorpJester, as we like to call him.

And first I would like to introduce Randy Sampson. Randy is the president and general manager of Canterbury Park. Randy and his family essentially took over Canterbury while it was in its closed status. And he and his family opened it up and took it to new and greater levels. Randy, thanks for being with us on the panel and tell us a little bit about what you do at Canterbury, I imagine it's pretty wide ranging and I think you have a video of sorts also for us. Randy?

**MR. RANDY SAMPSON:** Yep, thank you Eric. I will make a few comments and tell our philosophy about how we approach having fun at the racetrack and then I did have our guys put together a video that can do a lot better job than I can, I'm showing a lot of the fun things that we do there and how some of it is worked.

Again, as a quick background, as Eric mentioned, we purchased what was closed Canterbury Downs Racetrack and reopened as Canterbury Park in '95 for live racing and we currently conduct 68 days of live thoroughbred and quarter horse racing at Canterbury Park in Shakopee, Minnesota. We also do year-round simulcasting, of course. And we have a card club where we conduct poker and blackjack and other games, which opened in 2000 and has been very helpful for us on our bottom line and enhancing our purses.

I am pleased to be on this panel. At Canterbury Park, our marketing slogan or tagline for years has been, fun and games like no place else. This is something that I think we do a good job with and I'm really pleased to be here today to share some of the things that we've been doing at Canterbury to keep racing fun and use that fun atmosphere to attract new fans and generate publicity.

I'm going to actually start talking about minor league baseball, one of the things that we were fortunate all along through in our market is that we have been able to observe, I've been able to observe and learn from a guy who is really the master of what we're talking about today in keeping it fun and doing crazy stuff to get publicity, you may have heard of him, hopefully you have, if not, he is a remarkable guy, but Mike Veeck, who is the owner and was the general manager of the St. Paul Saints minor league baseball team. He has been -- minor league baseball has really reinvented itself over the last 10 years, and Mike was kind of the innovator of just trying to do crazy stuff, keep people active, keep people

entertained, doing things. Baseball, like racing, there's a lot of down time and they have some kind of shtick going all the time over there and have been remarkably successful. They sell out their stadium, every game for 10 or 15 years, they've had sellouts. His motto there is fun is good and he really, everything that he does is about entertainment and having fun, and he's also been shameless in some of the promotions that he's come up with and been remarkable about getting publicity there. They are not always politically correct, but he does all kinds of crazy stuff to try and get publicity.

This year, I can't remember exactly how it worked, but he had the Michael Vick Day that had something to do with some dogs, I'm not sure exactly how it worked but he got, it was all over the news media that he was doing it.

So at Canterbury I've seen the success that he's had and I really look at what we do as very similar. We don't have graded stakes races and our racing quality is improving, but we're certainly not at the major league level like Kentucky and New York, California, places like that. So we need to be creative, we need to do everything that we can to try to attract new fans and make a day at the races a fun experience. The video will show a lot of the things that we're doing in that regard. I do want to say, though, that we don't take ourselves too seriously, I think that that's part of the key to having fun. With that said, we certainly do take the integrity of our live racing seriously, that's one that you can't compromise. You can do all kinds of fun stuff in between, but when it comes to the races, you can't lose your credibility. Racing should be fun, we believe with live racing we're in the entertainment business and we do lots of things, you'll see, like bands, boxing, pony rides, shooting t-shirts into the crowd, lots of things to create entertainment value that don't necessarily draw people, they're not coming to see the band that day, but when they get there, it enhances the entertainment experience and creates a more fun, lively party atmosphere that makes people want to come back. And the results of what we've been doing have been encouraging, as far as attendance, we've grown steadily year after year. This year, for our 68-day meet, we averaged over 5,500 people, which was a high point for us. In '95, our first year, we were at 3,500, so we've steadily grown that, obviously at a time where a lot of tracks have struggled to maintain attendance. I would say that we probably have the lowest per cap wagering in the country because of the young fans, but we still look at it as a positive that we've been that successful at attracting young people, new people, and certainly for the long-term future of racing at Canterbury Park it bodes well.

With that, I would like to show you our video here.

### **(Video Playing)**

**MR. WING:** That was a great video, Randy. Give Jeff Maday a raise, he did a good job on that. And, yeah, you know, it's been one of my unexpected, great pleasures to have the opportunity to go to Canterbury at least every year, when the Claiming Crown takes place there. It's everything that that video makes it out to be. It's really a fun place to go to play the horses or just hang out.

On Randy's left is John Engelhardt. Many of you may know him as the Regular Guy, he is the director of publicity at River Downs, pretty big year at River Downs. In addition to all his duties, he staged a race of his own there, a horse and Cincinnati Bengal's Chad Johnson. John, thanks for coming on the panel, tell us what life is like for a regular guy.

**MR. JOHN ENGELHARDT:** Well thanks, you know, years ago Drew Carey made a fatal mistake when he got his Lasik and stopped wearing his glasses and people didn't really recognize him, so I want to make sure that people out there don't make a mistake and they know that I am in fact the regular guy. ....**Other terms, concepts and keywords contained in the balance of this transcript are:** customer service, production, fan education, entertainment, family friendly, night racing, humor and laughs, simulcast identity, marketing to females, River Downs, John Engelhardt, Mark Klein. ....If you desire a full transcript contact [bprewitt@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:bprewitt@ag.arizona.edu)

