

## **Business Rationale for 2018 Race Date Submission From Kawartha Downs**

As per the proposed 2018 race date calendar for Kawartha Downs included with this application, Kawartha Downs is seeking 40 race dates for the 2018 racing season. These would be every Saturday night from March 3 to December 1. Ideally, given that our track is the busiest in the summer months, the perfect schedule for us would be more condensed, with perhaps two race days through June, July, August and September, however, given the current horse supply that doesn't seem feasible in these conditions. The rationale behind this request is as follows:

### **ATTENDANCE & HANDLE**

Kawartha Downs' nightly handle and attendance is arguably the best of any Ontario B track. This season our average attendance is approximately 1,500 and our average on track handle is almost \$40,000. The fact that our handle is up from last year is very significant given that the numbers of races per night and starters per race have been reduced considerably.

While Kawartha Downs is fortunate to enjoy very loyal patrons, we also attract a great number of newcomers every race night thanks in part to aggressive marketing aimed at cottagers, local campgrounds and families. We introduced a Kids Club last year which has been extremely successful with more than 1,000 children registered to from just 16 race cards this year which averages to more than 60 kids per race program. We aim to make an evening at the races a fun, affordable family night out that is enjoyed by the kids as much as the parents.

We have also noticed a significant rise in the number of millennials attending the races and endeavour to make their stay at our facility entertaining and enjoyable. This, along with bringing families to the track, addresses the always present concern of our aging demographic and attracting new fans to harness racing.

To make the first time fans experience at the track more enjoyable, we have staff available to assist them and explain the betting process, how to read the program, etc. This year we hired Gord Brown, Kawartha's leading driver for many years who retired last season, to be our expert race analyst. Who better to advise fans than the man who won more races over our track than any other? In addition to writing a nightly tip sheet and conducting interviews, Gord and our announcer, Evan Loucks, host a pre race show giving their selections on that night's program which is aired on our simulcast feed so it assist those at track and those watching remotely.

### **MARKETING**

Kawartha Downs makes a very concerted effort to market our product not only within the harness racing sphere but in mainstream media as well. We work diligently to source stories that appeal to everyone, not just harness racing fans. A case in point is one from last week regarding a horse currently racing at Kawartha Downs named for Kawartha's veterinarian Dr. Kyle Goldie. Goldie Rocket was never expected to live let alone race and his story quickly became viral being shared on all forms of social media.

We are extremely active on social media, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to promote racing at Kawartha Downs and engage our current customers and potential ones. After each race night photos from the card of racing are displayed on Facebook. We try and have kids make our draws each night, in addition to the Kids' Club prize winner. We ensure their parents are fine with us posting their photos but what this does, through the parents liking and sharing the

photos, is engage others to bring their families to the track because their family members had such a positive experience.

We have many special nights during the racing season, our Celebration of the Horse, Family Night, Titans of Trot, Memorial Night, Appreciation Night, etc. But on race nights without an event we still make it special with our Kids' Club draw and activity centre, our second chance draws where patrons deposit their non winning tickets for a chance to win a prize, our draws for Gord's Guest, where Gord Brown gives a guided tour for the lucky winner of the backstretch area and our 50/50 draw which we introduced this season, the proceeds of which benefit the Ontario Standardbred Adoption Society.

## **HORSE PEOPLE**

Kawartha Downs is absolutely blessed to have some of the most talented trainers and drivers competing here every race card despite the fact that their racing season has been severely curtailed. We have celebrated veteran drivers including Reg Gassien, Tony Kerwood and Rick Webb along with young aspiring pilots like Nick Boyd, Jim Gillespie, Rob Doyle and Justin Turcotte who are game to promote racing in any way they are asked.

Our horse people have produced some of the most celebrated horses ever. Rod Hughes, who races at KD regularly, was the trainer of San Pail, one of the greatest trotters of all time. Mike Wade, who also regularly competes at our track, developed the outstanding trotters Billyjojimbob and Corn Cob Conch, who both had their starts at Kawartha. Murray Brethour, acknowledged throughout the industry as one of the top developers of young pacers and trotters, continues to race horses at Kawartha Downs every race night.

Kawartha Downs affords these talented horse people a venue to get their horses started, a farm team prior to the big leagues, in addition to providing a place to race for those horses not of the calibre of the WEG tracks.

## **OUR TRACK**

Kawartha Downs is one of only four five-eighths mile tracks in Ontario. This size oval is more conducive to starting a young horse as it's not as difficult for the horses to navigate as a half mile track whose turns are much tighter. Our track is maintained by track superintendent Doug Hie who has raced horses at Kawartha since its inception and is a member of one of the most respected families in harness racing.

## **CONFLICTS**

In a perfect world, Kawartha Downs would be the only racetrack in the area offering live race cards on the Saturdays we have requested so there isn't competition between tracks for horses of the same calibre thus ensuring fuller fields and 10 races each night which would lead to an increase in handle.

## **OUR POSITION**

Kawartha Downs is currently in a vulnerable position given that the Shorelines are building a new facility in Peterborough. Once the slots have departed from our facility it would be difficult to justify keeping it open for just a handful of race dates. We are encouraged by the support of Kawartha Downs by many local politicians including Peterborough MPP Jeff Leal and are cautiously optimistic about the future of racing at Kawartha Downs with additional race dates.