

Board Members Appointed To Maryland's New Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority

Horse Racing News

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Maryland horse racing took another significant yet hopeful step in the right direction recently.

In an effort to try and stabilize the racing industry within the state, the newly formed **Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority (TROA)** continued to take significant steps towards its formal recommendations on what needs to be done to help Mid-Atlantic racing for the long run.

That big next step? **Maryland Gov. Wes Moore** appointed members to the new TROA on June 9, 2023.

That board will be composed of **13 people** who will be at least partly responsible for putting the best foot forward for **Maryland horse racing**, and making it work for many years to come.

“My administration is committed to working with all stakeholders to not only move us forward but to ensure a solid, successful, and sustainable future for Maryland racing,” said Moore recently.
“The Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority will help us reach that goal.”

The Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority's chairman is **Greg Cross**, an attorney and commercial real estate expert and structured finance litigator.

Cross has worked with horse breeding operations since the 1990s and has been a powerful and helpful resource when it comes to navigating the horse racing industry — and its troubles — within the state of Maryland. That includes representing the state throughout the bankruptcy of the former owner of the Preakness States, **Magna Entertainment**, as well as other significant efforts to ensure the second jewel of the **Triple Crown** stays where it belongs, in the Old Line State.

"I care deeply about the future of Maryland racing and I appreciate Governor Moore's confidence in me to lead this new authority," Cross said in a statement. "In partnership with my fellow appointees, we will get to work quickly to explore and define possibilities for the future of Maryland's horse racing industry."

In addition to Cross, the other members of the 13-member TROA for its introductory four-year term are:

- Mary Tydings
- Jeff Hargrave
- Alan Foreman
- Thomas Rooney
- Joe Franco
- Nicole Earle
- Gavin Stokes
- Unnamed appointee of Senate President Bill Ferguson
- Unnamed appointee of House Speaker Adrienne Jones
- Unnamed representative of the Maryland Stadium Authority
- Unnamed representative of the Maryland Economic Development Corp.
- Unnamed representative of the Maryland Racing Commission

Mary Tydings is the niece of longtime **Laurel Park** racetrack owner John Schapiro and a recent retiree from an international executive search and leadership advisory firm.

Jeff Hargrave is a philanthropist as well as the founder and president of a commercial construction firm in the Maryland area.

Thomas Rooney is a **former congressman** in Florida and the current **president** and **CEO** of the **National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA)**.

Joe Franco is a board member representing Laurel Park.

Nicole Earle is a board member representing **Pimlico Race Course**.

Gavin Stokes is a board member representing the **Bowie Race Course Training Center**.

The remaining, unnamed board members representing the Maryland Stadium Authority, Maryland Economic Development Corporation, and the Maryland Racing Commission will be named in the near future.

What's next for Maryland Racing and the TROA

After a hopeful and seemingly exciting plan that positioned Maryland racing for a revival to the tune of nearly **\$400 million** in improvements to state racetracks, that **plan now seems unlikely**.

The 2020 plan that was developed then approved by lawmakers seems like a distant memory thanks to the **COVID-19 pandemic** and a number of growing economic obstacles.

And, with a **deadline of Dec. 1, 2023**, for the creation and communication of a viable and realistic plan to help position Maryland racing for long-term success, the Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority is officially on the clock.

On June 6, the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, and the Maryland Jockey Club reached a deal — the third of its kind this year — to **extend the racing agreement** among the groups through the end of the 2023 calendar year.

If an agreement wasn't reached to extend the current partnership, the Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority would have assumed operation of Maryland racetracks, including Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course, as well as the Bowie Race Course Training Center.

Now, as the work really starts to get done to arrive at the ultimate solution, the newly composed Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority needs to not only decide if there is any realistic long-term solution for Maryland racing, but also what it is and how it can get done.

So, there is plenty to do still.

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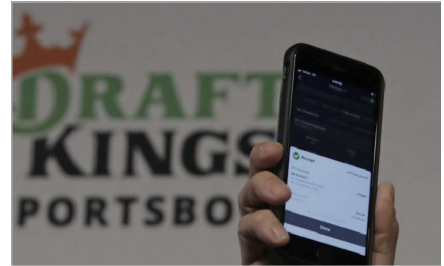
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Sam is a native New Yorker with a long history of sports betting as well as watching, wagering, and owning racehorses, and, of course, casino-frequenting. He enjoys visiting sporting venues — anything from the U.S. Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center to any baseball game regardless of the level of play or length of the drive to get there, and any horse racing venue. Sam is a marketing executive, father and dog owner with a zest for life and love for exploring.

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