The Fair Hill Bugle

Fair Hill Foundation Newsletter

Winter 2022

Fair Hill Races Plans "Soft Opening" on Memorial Day, Racing on Labor Day Weekend

Tod Marks photo

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID and reconstruction of the new turf course to ensure the highest safety standards for horses, organizers of the 86th Fair Hill Races are planning a "soft opening" on Saturday, May 28, 2022 and a second meet on Labor Day weekend, 2022.

"Nothing is set in stone right now," Fair Hill Foundation President Charles C. Fenwick, Jr. noted, "but we are convinced there is a real need to have racing return to Fair Hill. We are grateful for the support this project has received from the Hogan administration and we are working hard to make certain the track will be safe. Depending on a number of factors, we hope to have a 'soft opening' on Memorial Day Weekend and a bigger event on Labor Day Weekend."

The new turf track has been realigned to feature a sophisticated irrigation and guard rail system. Following Fair Hill founder William du Pont, Jr.'s lead, the turf has been given time to mature on the advice of experts brought in to consult on the project. Providing banked, wider turns for safety, the track also features three new state-of-the-art arenas for show jumping and dressage in the infield where the inaugural Maryland 5 Star Three-Day Eventing competition was held in October.

The 2022 Fair Hill Races will continue a grand tradition dating from 1934. William du Pont, Jr., seeking to give American horses the experience they needed to compete in the English Grand National at Aintree – considered the international pinnacle of steeplechasing – created the signature Foxcatcher National Cup in August of that year as part of the inaugural Fair Hill Races.

"A mare named Swansea, owned by John Bosley, Jr., of Monkton, Maryland, won the opening event – two miles over brush – by twenty, while others came to grief," writes Dorothy Ours, author of *Man o' War* and *Battleship: A Daring Heiress*, *A Teenage Jockey*, and *America's Horse*. William du Pont himself owned and rode the winner of the long-distance flat race, and one entry of his sister, Mrs. Thomas H. Somerville (later known as Marian du Pont Scott), won the flat sprint.

An intimidating three-mile course over brush, the Foxcatcher National Cup course, branded "the Aintree of America", included 19 fences; 12 towered at 5'10" with a maximum height of 6 ft. on the landing side of the fence. But unlike Aintree at the time, the top several inches were deliberately flexible so horses could slide through, jumping closer to five feet than six.

"He cared about safety," Ours said. "Of course he had an eye toward Aintree and what it would take to be successful there as the ultimate steeplechase. He wasn't trying to go, 'Oh, let's see how many fall down.' He wanted to encourage the ones who were very skillful to come out and do this but also designed the courses in a way that would help you – that should help the horse to have a good sight line, to have a good chance."

With nine entries and only four starters, the inaugural Foxcatcher Cup was won by Melita owned by Frederick Alfred Upsher Smith of Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota, who was born in Manchester England 40 miles from Aintree, defeating Mrs. Somerville's British-bred mare, Liverton Lodge, in a fierce duel.

Quickly becoming a popular among horse people and the general public, the Fair Hill meet drew increasingly broader publicity, larger fields, and greater seating capacity in the Aintree Grandstand constructed to give 2,000 people a view of the entire course. By 1938, an airfield was added to accommodate increased visitors by plane.

"Simultaneously, William du Pont, Jr. gained stature as an authority on racetrack design and Fair Hill's was one of approximately 25 internationally with his signature. He even wrote handbooks on the matter, but he omitted his name and forwent copyright," Laura Lemon reported in *Fair Hill: A Horseman's Oasis*, in the October 4-11, 2021, issue of the *Chronicle of the Horse*.

However, by 1958 the massive Aintree-style feature race was canceled due to lack of horses that could complete a track of that nature," Lemon continued.

William du Pont, Jr. lived long enough to see Fair Hill continue to be a touchstone for American 'chasers with Aintree ambitions. Marion du Pont Scott's Battleship, winner

Tod Marks photo

of the 1938 Grand National at Aintree, paraded there in 1938 and in 1965 Jay Trump – the first American winner since Battleship, and the first ever with an American rider – did the same.

Mr. du Pont passed away on the final day of 1965. In 1966, J. H. Tyler McConnell, the son-in-law of Mr. du Pont and husband of his daughter, Jean Ellen du Pont McConnell, was elected President of the Cecil County Breeders Fair and served until 1975. One of the first actions McConnell took was to engage Stephen P. Groat as Director of Racing at Fair Hill. During his tenure, Groat established the Breeders Cup Steeplechase race and later became a senior steward of the National Steeplechase Association, from whom he received the prestigious F. Ambrose Clark award for his contributions to the sport. Groat served as Director of Racing at Fair Hill until his death in December, 2012.

"Traces of Mr. du Pont's intentions survived, even after the State of Maryland bought the property in 1975," Ours reported. "During the spring of 1976, Ben Nevis won the 3 ½ mile Foxcatcher Hounds Timber Steeplechase at Fair Hill. In 1980, he became the first Fair Hill winner to also win the Grand National at Aintree. Several weeks later, Ben Nevis and his dauntless rider, Charlie Fenwick, galloped between races for a Fair Hill crowd," Ours said.

"'He was pleased with himself, I could definitely feel it," Fenwick told *The Baltimore Sun*. "We jogged past the stands the first time and carried his head high and pricked his ears. Then I turned him around and galloped him through the stretch. He wanted to run flat out, to show the crowd how fast he could go.'"

Since Ben Nevis' appearance that day, Fair Hill's history has been marked by many landmarks. The Fair Hill Training Center opened in 1982, the inaugural Breeders' Cup Steeplechase ran in 1986 and for three consecutive years, and Kentucky Derby winners, Barbaro and Animal Kingdom, trained there with Michael Matz and Graham Motion, respectively.

"All of this potential – and fulfillment – reaches back to 1934," Ours concludes. Next May, 2022, new landmarks at Fair Hill will come to life.

Fair Hill's Lizzie Merryman Debuts at the Breeder's Cup

Caravel on a morning gallop. Maggie Kimmitt Photography

It's a long way from Fair Hill to the prestigious international 2021 Breeders' Cup at Del Mar Thoroughbred Club in California, and breeder Lizzie Merryman is proud of her filly Caravel's debut on the international stage. Named after the 16th century sailing ships Christopher Columbus piloted on his way to discovering America, Caravel is by Kentucky stallion Mizzen Mast and out of Zeezee Zoomzoom, a mare given to Lizzie by a friend.

Co-owner of a barn at the Fair Hill Training Center with her brother, Edwin, Lizzie trained the striking gray filly to win seven out of nine races – five of them stakes races – before selling three quarters of her to celebrity chef, Bobby Flay. After her ninth start, she was transferred to fellow Fair Hill trainer Graham Motion. At the Breeders' Cup she competed for Flay in the Breeders Cup Turf Sprint, and while she did not finish in the money, she ran a game race.

Bred on Merryman's Londonderry Farm in Coatesville, PA, in 2017, the Pennsylvania Bred Horse of the Year for 2020 began her career at Penn National in 2020 with a last to first victory. She followed that up with another win in allowance competition at Penn before scoring in open stakes competition in The Lady Erie at Presque Isle Downs. She wrapped up 2020 with a win in the Malvern Rose after suffering her only defeat while finishing 3rd in The Hill Top Stakes. As a four-year-old she won three stakes races in a row, including a narrow victory in the Very One Stakes on Black Eyed Susan Day before the Preakness. She topped that win with successive victories in The Goldwood Stakes at Monmouth Park and then the Grade 3 Caress Stakes at Saratoga.

Lizzie has been breeding and training Thoroughbreds for more than 25 years and Caravel is her first Breeders' Cup horse. She is excited about what the future holds and the changes that are taking place at Fair Hill, commenting, "Fair Hill is great for the Thoroughbred industry as a whole. Horses can race here and then go on to be steeplechase horses and then event horses and it's all showcased in a state-of-the-art facility right here in the heart of horse country.

"Turf racing is probably the most exciting flat racing world-wide and for Fair Hill to have such a state-of-the-art turf course will propel it to nationwide prominence and will hopefully attract international attention, just as the 5 Star has done for Eventing. The Mid-Atlantic region is a mecca of horse racing and to have this facility so centrally located is a real boon to the horse racing industry," she noted.

McLane and Liza Hendriks and Lizzie Merryman (right) in the paddock before The Very One.

Proud Past*Infinite Future:
The People of Fair Hill

In the coming months, the *Fair Hill Bugle* will feature profiles about the leaders who are building on Mr. du Pont's proud past and taking Fair Hill into its future of infinite possibilities.

Michael Matz with Barbaro

Michael R. Matz

Multiple graded stakes winning trainer, three-time U.S. Olympic show jumping equestrian team member and inductee into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame, Michael Matz saddled the 2006 Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro and the 2012 Belmont Stakes winner Union Rags. He was also named "Person of the Week" by ABC News in 1989 for his heroism in saving four children from the crash of United Airlines Flight 232, on which he was a passenger.

Matz turned to training racehorses after an exceptional career in show jumping on the national and international stage. Competing on the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team in 1976, 1992, and 1996, he also won a team silver medal in 1996 where he received the honor of carrying the American flag into the Centennial Olympic Stadium in Atlanta.

He competed in three World Championships, winning two bronze medals in 1978 for individual and team show jumping, and in 1986, he won a team gold medal. At the Pan-American Games, he won eight medals, including team gold and individual bronze in 1975, team and individual gold in 1979, team gold and individual bronze in 1983 and individual gold and team bronze in 1995.

Six times he won the U.S. National Show Jumping Championship and for 20 years, he won at least one major competition each year. He retired as the leading money-winning U.S. show jumper in history with more than $1.7 million and he was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 2005.

He was chosen to carry the flag in the 1996 Olympics because of his stellar equestrian career and the role he played on July 19, 1989. That day, he and his future wife, D.D. Alexander, were returning from judging a horse show in Hawaii when they missed their connection from Denver to Philadelphia. Given the choice of two flights 20 minutes apart, they decided to take United Flight 232. The plane crashed in Sioux City, Iowa, after the engines failed, killing 112 passengers. Michael and Alexander survived the crash. Michael led three siblings to safety from the wreckage and re-entered the burning plane to find an 11-month-old girl and bring her to safety. He has kept in touch with the siblings, who were in attendance at Churchill Downs for Barbaro's Derby victory.

D.D. Matz is the daughter of noted horsewoman Helen Kleberg Groves and granddaughter of Robert Kleberg, who owned King Ranch and Triple Crown winner Assault.

Year-End Gifts Can Benefit You and Fair Hill's Infinite Future

With December 31, 2021 fast approaching, year-end charitable gifts can provide significant benefits to you and the Fair Hill Foundation, a 501©3 nonprofit organization dedicated to building a world-class venue for equestrian competition on the 5,700-acre steeplechasing and foxhunting paradise created by William du Pont, Jr. nearly a century ago.

For those who itemize, the CARES Act extension through December 31, 2021 enables you to deduct cash gifts up to 100 percent of your adjusted gross income in 2021 – an increase from 60 percent (not available for gifts of securities or other assets). Your gifts will help create an international equestrian mecca for a wide variety of sports ranging from flat turf racing to steeplechase racing to three-day eventing to roping and reining. At the same time, your support will encourage rural conservation and strengthen employment opportunities for diverse workforce populations throughout the region.

With smart planning, you can make a meaningful gift that will give you significant tax and other financial benefits while helping to ensure Fair Hill continues to retain valuable farm and forest land for productive use by present and future generations.

The Fair Hill Foundation invites gifts in many forms and encourages you to consult your financial advisor about the best way to make your gift. Gifts of cash by check or wire transfer are fully tax-deductible. Gift of stocks, bonds, mutual funds or other appreciated assets help you avoid capital gains tax and maximize tax savings. And if you are 70 1/2 years of age or older, you may rollover up to $100,000 from your IRA to the Fair Hill Foundation, providing significant savings and counting toward your annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

The Fair Hill Foundation also encourages gifts of real estate. By gifting property you have owned for more than one year, you will qualify for a federal income tax charitable deduction equal to the property's full fair market value. If you transfer real estate through your will or living trust, you will have the flexibility to change your mind and the potential to support our work with a larger gift than you could make during your lifetime.

Donors of $250,000 or more, either individuals or in groups, will be recognized as members of the Foxcatcher Society, named in honor of William du Pont's famous Foxcatcher Hounds and Foxcatcher National Cup, debuted in 1934. Foxcatcher Society donors' names will be prominently displayed on the grounds.

For more information about making gifts and pledges, visit **fairhillfoundation.org/donate** or call or email Polly Binns, Acting Executive Director at 443-350-5781 or **fairhillfoundation@gmail.com**.

Proud Past • Infinite Future

The Campaign for Fair Hill

Eclipse Sportswire photo

A Message from Charlie Fenwick

With the memory of the spectacularly successful inaugural Maryland 5 Star Three-Day Event still fresh, the Board of Directors of the Fair Hill Foundation is turning its attention to the 86th Fair Hill Races. Dormant for two years due to the COVID pandemic and construction of the new turf track, we are planning a "soft opening" on Saturday, May 28, 2022 and a bigger day of racing on Labor Day Weekend, 2022.

To make these events happen, we have much work ahead. Both the detention barn built by William du Pont, Jr. and the iconic paddock need to be refreshed.

We are grateful to all who have brought us to this moment. Buoyed by confidence from more than $5 million in gifts and pledges raised, we have the energy to meet the challenges ahead. We ask you to consider joining us.

Charlie Fenwick in the Fair Hill paddock in the 1970s

To make a gift or pledge, visit our website at **fairhillfoundation.org/donate/** or call or email Acting Executive Director, Polly Binns, at **fairhillfoundation@gmail.com** or 443-350-5781. In the meantime, we send every good wish for a joyous holiday season and the happiest of New Years.

Charles C. Fenwick, Jr.

President
Fair Hill Foundation

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