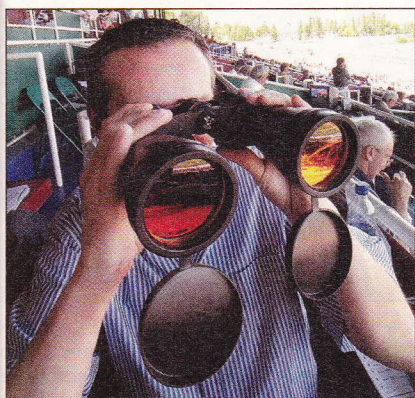
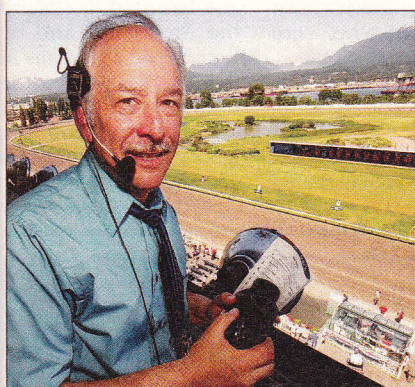


A day at the races



From his box seat, Rory Mandryk looks over the horses that are parading in the paddock for the next race.



Announcer Dan Jukich gets ready for a day at the races.



On the monitors are races from a number of other sites where Hastings Park fans can place bets.

Beginner's luck, a horseshoe up my ... call it what you want but horse racing is the "name" of the game.

Hats ... big, floppy hats. That was the extent of my horse racing knowledge. Oh, and mint juleps. Suffice to say, I knew very little about what goes on at the track, and even less about betting on it.

Luckily, on Hastings Racecourse's 117th birthday I'm escorted by *24 hours'* own equine expert, "You Bet" columnist, Jim Reynolds. Jim "ran away and joined the race track" when he was a teen and has groomed, owned, trained, and now writes about horses (and food, but that's another story). He greets me in the requisite hat, though I'm disappointed that few others in the crowd are keeping up the tradition. (No sign of any juleps, either.)

First stop on the tour is Work Visa, a retired thoroughbred who's earned \$200,000 in his racing lifetime. Part of the Discovery Paddock, he sticks out his nose for me to pat. I'm just starting to relax around the gentle giant, when he nips at the guy next to me, and then proceeds to unabashedly go about his "business."

To distract us from the horse's ill manners, a woman manning the stall launches into a spiel about how when thoroughbreds' racing days are over (usually in two to six years) they go onto greener pastures ... equestrian and polo use.

"In the old days they used to go to the glue factory," Jim half jokes. The woman's smile starts to fade, and we quickly move on.

At the real paddock, horses are being readied for the next race and I'm introduced to Russ Bennett, brother of former premier Bill Bennett, and the owner of number seven, High Rigger.

Searching for a clever question, I blurt out, "Do girl horses and boy horses race together," and immediately feel like I should go catch up with the rest of my kindergarten class. (The correct terms, I later learn, are colt, gelding, filly and mare.)

To his credit, Bennett patiently explains something about weight allowances, but I really only catch his last sentiment, "You get a damn good filly and she'll beat the boys." I second that.

Next the horses are trotted over to the jockey's quarters. The "jocks," are even slighter in person, and the pressure to stay that way is as bad, if not worse, as it is for runway models.



-Photos: Rob Kruyt, 24 hours

A pound can be the difference between first or third, says Jim. And with thousands of dollars in purses (cash, not Kate Spades) on the line, it's no wonder the vocation is ripe with eating disorders.

"A jockey eats half a peanut and a slice of lettuce, and then he purges," says Jim, again only partially in jest.

Hastings, he adds, however was one-of the first tracks to try and stop this by allowing jockeys to "step over the scales," or be two to three pounds over the 115-pound limit.

Once mounted the horses "Parade to the Post," which is race track-talk for 'strut their stuff so everyone can check them out.' Each horse is accompanied by what Jim calls a "pony girl." I prepare to scoff at what I assume is a lame attempt at eye candy, like the tarts in half tops who scrape ice at hockey games or babes in bikinis who hold numbers aloft at boxing matches. But in fact, pony "people" (guys also do the job) ride large steady horses alongside the thoroughbreds to keep them calm before the big race.

The "Call to the Post" bugle sounds and we line up at the white fence. Soon nine horses tear by at 30 to 40 miles, their hoof-beats thundering in my heart ... and I'm hooked. It's time to make a bet.

A quick scan of the program and my eyes settle on: Leo's County Kat. (What can I say, I'm a sucker for alliteration.) I plunk down a fiver at the window and say, "Five dollars on number three to show." ('Show' means the horse can place first, second or third and you still win. A "safe" bet, according to Jim, though the payout is less.)

We make our way to the announcer booth to get a bird's eye view of the race. (Speaking of views, Hastings, backdropped by the North Shore mountains, has one of

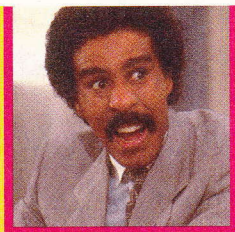


The dirt shows that being a thoroughbred jockey is not an easy job.



Groundhog Day, Tomorrow at 6pm

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the best in the world.)

The voice in the sky is Dan Jukich, who simultaneously holds binoculars, while consulting a program and calling out horse names auctioneer-like as they race around the track.

"And it's Leo's County Kat by a mile," he warbles ... or was it a nose? Actually I think it was photo finish. Doesn't matter, I'd just doubled my money.

I'm lamenting not betting to win, but Jim interjects with a Golden rule. "Any time you cash a ticket it's a win," he says. Another handy one he doles out later is, "When you go to the races, don't take the rent."

I quickly pass over Ohlund and One Special Hoss (ew!) for the poetic-sounding Above the Clouds. Bet to show again and come in a respectable second.

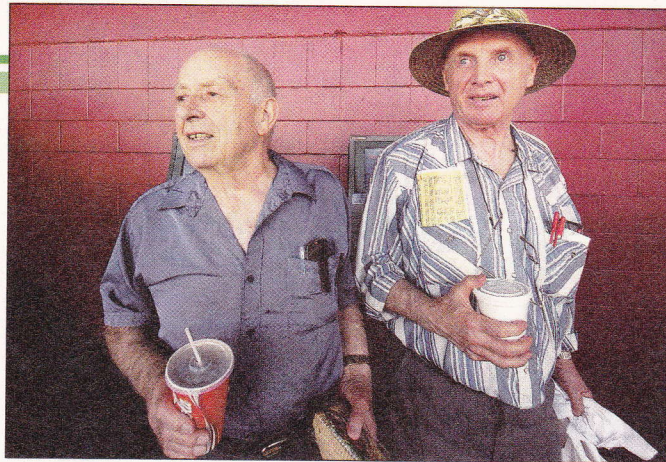
The third time's not a charm. Afternoon Express is well outside the winner's circle. But I redeem myself in race four with Pistachio (lovely nut, lovely colour, lovely name for a horse), who leads the pack across the finish line.

Determined to leave on a high note I choose Blackcomb Run and get a "two for one" (when horses in the same race are trained by the same trainer, they're required to couple and the bettor gets two for the price of one.) Blackcomb's a no show, but his buddy Rey Del Camino (a nice name nonetheless) comes from behind to place first.

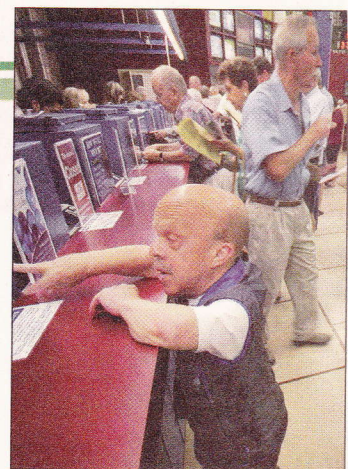
At the end of the day, I only pocket a couple of bucks - not bad for an entire afternoon's worth of entertainment. And while there are odds, number streaks, parade-to-post observations and trainer history, among other things to consider, admittedly Jim even says, "There's a method to coming to a conclusion that a horse is going to win ... but that doesn't necessarily mean he's going to."

Besides, if you ask me a horse by any other name just doesn't smell as sweet - sweet victory, that is.

-Carly Krug, 24 hours



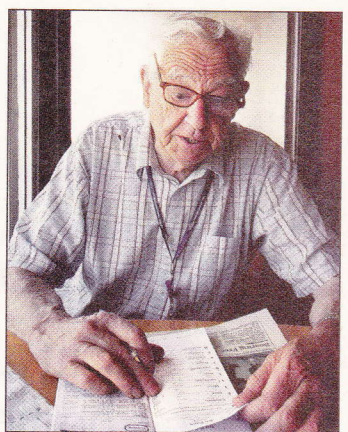
Charles Morgan, left, and Bob Cullen can think of few better places to spend their Sunday afternoon.



At the betting window the minimum is two dollars to win, place or show.

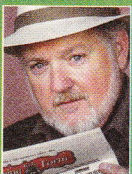


Armed with binoculars and a racing form, in a moment the crowd heres announcer Dan Jukich's "There they go!"



Part-time photographer and skilled handicapper Ralph Bower looked over a racing form and called it, "In the fourth race? Number three." He was right.

you bet



AT THE TRACK with Jim Reynolds

FRIDAY RACING

begins tonight and on a warm, summer evening Hastings is a great place to be. It has an atmosphere all its own. A live band on stage by the paddock provides entertainment between races. Last year such acts as Jim Burns kept racing fans, horsemen and jockeys entertained.

FEATURE RACE: The Timber Music Stakes.

This race is the first big step for promising two-year-olds and could showcase a future champion. To bet untried two-year-olds is a complicated thing. Look at the horse in the paddock, does it look fit and healthy? At the top of his chart look to its breeding and purchase price, if they paid a lot of coin then someone saw promise. And the horse's foal date - horse's official birthday is Jan. 1. If the horse is a May foal it is bound to be immature compared to horses foaled earlier.

TODAY'S BETS:

■ 2nd race: \$20 superfecta; Quantis, Free Training, Leo's Country Kat, Free Training (cost \$4.80)
3rd race: \$2 exactor box Pistachio and Ice Machine
6th race: \$2 exactor box Regal Request and Petrero Station

LONGSHOT OF THE DAY:

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