

# Yonkers Free Press

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The biggest scandal in all of U.S. sports to come out in the past year, is bubbling under the Coronavirus headlines. Privately the Yonkers Raceway is the federal indictment of dozens of horse racing insiders involved in doping leading racehorses and cheating bettors.

## Horse Doping Scandal Will Hurt Yonkers Raceway More Than Any Virus

By BRIAN HARROD

The initial horse doping indictments came on March 9, other indictments trickled out even as the COVID-19 disaster commanded virtually the entire news cycle, everyday.

The stunning federal horse doping allegations are no less stunning because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The main indictments placed MGM's Yonkers Raceway and its harness racing leading lights in its target.

The Yonkers horse racing community already was reeling from the

deaths of three out of town horsemen from COVID-19.

Rene Allard, who at \$5.8 million in purse winnings was third in the industry in North America last year, has been charged in a conspiracy involving longtime veterinarian Louis Grasso, who was indicted on Feb. 26 for allegedly misbranding drugs in interstate commerce.

Last fall, according to the indictment, veterinarian Louis Grasso and another alleged co-conspirator, Ross Cohen, discussed on a wiretap the fact that a number of Rene Allard's horses had died.

There is a disturbing conversation where Ross Cohen, according to the indictment, asked veterinarian Louis Grasso, "What's going on with the Allard death camp?"

Grasso then said "two or maybe three" horses have died from "amino acids" that caused "high fever, kidneys shut down."

"One of them just died on the ta-

ble, they just cut him open and poof it died," Grasso is alleged to have said.

Cohen: "Holy f-ck f-ck did they do an autopsy."

Grasso: "Their heart rate was like triple they were breathing real heavy their membranes were going f-cking purple."

Rene Allard second in earnings at Yonkers so far this year also is alleged to have sent a text message to Grasso in October 2019 that read: "I will need 3 bottles of red acid to go to Canada Thursday."

Red Acid was referring to an anti-inflammatory drug.

One of the indictments says that a barn raid on March 9 in Middletown, N.Y. where Rene Allard stabled a number of horses led to the discovery of multiple syringes and numerous bottles of mislabeled drugs.

The legal documents include the deposition of FBI agent Bruce Turpin.

Agent Turpin states that Rene Allard stabled at a training center run by Richard Banca in Middletown, NY and that his barn was raided.

There, the FBI found multiple empty syringes, the drug Glycopyrrolate, epinephrine and vials labeled "Thymosine Beta" and "for research purposes only."

Also named is Donato Poliseo, owner of a veterinary supply business in Delaware who is alleged to have purchased and distributed PEDs from veterinarian Louis Grasso.

Trainers Thomas Guido III and Conor Flynn are alleged to have obtained the PEDs from veterinarian Louis Grasso as well.

Richard Banca, the leading trainer at Yonkers Raceway so far this year, was named in a separate indictment on similar charges and employed Flynn.

Richard Banca owns the Middletown, N.Y. facility that was raided, according to his indictment.

"Flynn has stated, in substance and in part, that Flynn administers horses owned, trained, or otherwise under Banca's control, with PEDs at Banca's direction," the indictment alleges.

Richard Banca first rose up to the top ranks at Yonkers in 2015, producing 174 winners more than double his previous best and another 200 in 2016 cheating hundreds of thousands of Yonkers Raceway bettors out of their hard earned cash over the years.

Rene Allard and Richard Banca were involved in a controversy at the Meadowlands Racetrack in 2017 and banned at that track, but allowed to race at the Yonkers Raceway.

Rene Allard had a horse racing at Woodbine test positive for codeine and morphine and was handed a one-year suspension and a \$5,000 fine, but again he was allowed to race at the Yonkers Raceway.

Among the PEDs involved aside from "red acid":

Erythropoietin, better known by brand name Epogen and nicknamed "epo" in the industry and designed to improve endurance.

A variety of "pain shots" or "joint blocks" designed to deaden a horse's nerves, which can result in leg fractures that require a racehorse to be euthanized.

Bronchodilators, or "Bronk," designed to increase a horse's oxygen intake.

The New York Equine Drug Testing Programs Director Dr. George Maylin has also confirmed the presence IOX-2 is both a blood and gene doping agent that is the type of emerging small molecule synthetic doping agent in two standardbred horses racing at Yonkers Raceway.

IOX-2 is an HIF stabilizer that can trigger EPO like effects.

Previously, the New York State Gaming Commission immediately and indefinitely suspended the occupational license of owner-trainer

Michael Temming.

Further, the ruling states, Michael Temming had purchased "a large quantity of iOX2."

The latest federal indictments, if proven, echo the callousness for the welfare of racehorses.

In a January, 19, 2020 press release written by the Standardbred Owners Association of New York, Rene Allard discussed why he had been so successful.

"I have approximately 30 horses who are going to qualify between now and the middle of February. I'm very happy with the start of the year so far. During the Yonkers break, we kept them fit and trained and as soon as they opened, we were ready to go," Rene Allard said.

But fortunately, the FBI stepped in protecting the horses and the hard earned cash of Yonkers Raceway bettors.

Harness trainer Rene Allard was not among the original list of 29 names of those who were indicted, by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

But Rene Allard, is second in the current trainer's standings at Yonkers Raceway, behind only Richard Banca, was arrested quietly out of town days later, causing some racing insiders to think he is cooperating with federal authorities.

The Yonkers Raceway insiders say that there are more indictments to come.