

Batavia Downs kicks off its 70th season on Monday

by Tim Bojarski, for Batavia Downs

Batavia, NY --- A new era gets underway at America's oldest lighted harness track on Monday (July 25) when Batavia Downs raises the curtain on its 70th season of live harness racing action. Opening night features the \$100,000 New York Sires Stakes division for 2-year-old trotting fillies along with free racing programs and magnetic racing schedules for the fans on track. Post time is set for 6:15 p.m.

The 2016 season (that runs through Dec. 10) features 70 race dates and includes seven matinees and three twilight programs. Live racing will be presented on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights to begin the season with a new post time of 6:15 p.m. Sunday afternoon will replace Monday night beginning on July 31.

Holiday matinees include Labor Day (Sept. 5) and Columbus Day (Oct. 10). All matinee post times are 1:15 p.m. A special Breeders' Cup program on Saturday (Nov. 5) begins at 3:30 p.m.

The renaissance begins with the new Hotel at Batavia Downs, which is located trackside between the grandstand and the paddock. Racing fans can check into this fantastic 82-room facility and access the track and the gaming floor for the duration of their stay without ever having to leave the premises. Half of the rooms in the hotel overlook the home stretch of the track and members of bataviabets.com can watch and wager from their room. There are even four balcony suites facing the track. The hotel is slated to open in September.

Fans will see the best racing possible after the Downs invested \$125,000 in racetrack improvements under the guidance of new track superintendent, Peter Arrigenna.

Arrigenna designed and directed the re-banking of the turns, leveling of the straightaways and then topping it off with 5,000 tons of new surface material to provide the fastest and safest racing strip possible. Once the track sets up, the competition should produce record speeds all year.

"These are very exciting times for Batavia Downs," said Todd Haight, Director/GM of Live Racing. "There has been a lot of money invested in the racing side of this facility this year between the new hotel and track improvements and the entire management and staff cannot wait for our customers to come out and enjoy them."

More than \$1 million in purse money will be up for grabs in stakes races during the meet and that will draw some of the top horses and drivers in North America to the Genesee County oval.

Eight legs of the New York Sire Stakes, each going for an estimated \$100,000, will highlight the best youthful performers in the Empire State this year and that should provide competition for the fans that is both exciting to watch and profitable to wager on. NYSS legs by age, sex and gait will be at Batavia on Monday (July 25, opening night), Aug. 7, 13, 20 and 31, and Sept. 3, 10 and 14. And eight New York County Fair finals, each vying for \$10,000, will be contested on Wednesday (Sept. 7).

Batavia Downs' signature stake, the \$50,000 Robert J. Kane Memorial Pace, will be held on Saturday (Oct. 8) and will draw some of the top older Open pacers from the northeast. This race has become a highly anticipated event by the fans as it presents an opportunity to break the all-age track record each year.

During the 70 cards of racing there will be 25 major promotions scattered throughout the year. Highlights of these special events include Sunday Dollar Days in August, the very popular wiener dog races and Family Fun Day, the first ever Racing Under Saddle non-wagering exhibition at Batavia Downs (pending NYS Gaming approval), the Labor Day driver's bike race, a Columbus Day Chicken BBQ and another "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" promotion, when the racetrack will be giving away a pair of diamond earrings valued at \$4,000.

There are buffet specials in the clubhouse every racing night all year, and the chef will once again be serving up his famous prime rib, crab leg, and shrimp buffet every Saturday night for the entire meet. All clubhouse buffet specials include gaming free play offers.

"We have put together the most aggressive entertainment package possible and believe we offer something for every member of the family all year," Haight continued. "Between the caliber of horses that will compete over the new surface and the new amenities our customers will enjoy, we are looking for our 70th year of racing to be the most memorable one yet."

For more information and updates as they happen, log onto the track's website at www.bataviadownsgaming.com and click on "Live Racing" and follow us on Facebook as well.