

Inside Track: NYRA's Silver Lining

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As the June 6 Belmont Stakes (gr. I) approaches, discussions often turn to the last Triple Crown winner, Affirmed in 1978, or to Secretariat's 31-length spectacle in 1973. Dan Silver, the new director of communications and media relations for the New York Racing Association, appreciates those historic races, even though he wasn't born when they occurred. Silver is only 29 years old.

But, in today's world of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, who better than someone whose first racing reference point is Strike the Gold to have such an important job in one of the media capitals of the world.

"People with fresh ideas is exactly what the industry needs," Silver said. "Though I'm only 29, I think I have real experience, and I think there are so many good things about this industry."

"I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't think the sport has a bright future."

Silver's parents were not racing fans, but the Philadelphia native was one of those kids fascinated by racing on television. The animal lover's first indelible memory of racing is Strike the Gold winning the 1991 Kentucky Derby (gr. I). He was all of 11.

Silver began making selections in races and then watching on television to see how his picks did. When he got older, he started dragging his friends to Delaware Park.

"I fell in love with the sport," he said.

After receiving a degree in English from Haverford College near Philly, Silver earned a master's degree in broadcast journalism from the Medill program at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Besides racing, Silver had become a big fan of another sport, hockey, which led to his first job after graduate school. Alerted to the opening by a college friend, Silver worked from 2003-06 for the Missouri River Otters doing public relations, handling group sales, and serving as broadcaster.

"I got the job the day before the season started," he recalled. "I showed up and called a game that night."

The River Otters were a United Hockey League team in existence in St. Charles, Mo., from 1999 to 2006, but Silver left before the team folded after being accepted as a member of the first master's degree class at the Race Track Industry Program at the University of Arizona. He graduated in December 2007.

During the summers while going through the RTIP, Silver had internships at The Jockey Club and Reynolds Bell Bloodstock.

Upon graduation, he took a position as communications manager in the marketing department at NYRA, where among other duties, he was the project manager for the launch of belmontstakes.com, a site to complement nyra.com, the main location of news about Aqueduct, Belmont Park, and Saratoga. Silver also helped develop a group sales Web site and NYRA's e-mail newsletter On The Lead.

Silver will now be in charge of NYRA's communications strategy, public affairs, and publicity for print, broadcast, and online. He will also serve as the organization's official spokesperson.

"Dan Silver has a unique portfolio that he brings to his new position here at NYRA as director of communications and media relations." NYRA president and chief executive officer Charlie Hayward said. "He is a graduate of the University of Arizona racetrack program, has a masters in journalism, and has a huge passion for Thoroughbred racing. Dan has led a number of NYRA initiatives in the cyber world with features and programs on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. It is essential that the Thoroughbred racing industry continue to attract and promote talented and motivated individuals such as Dan."

Silver hopes to reach out to even more potential racing fans through the various platforms available today.

"We have worked hard to improve our Web presence," Silver said. "The Internet is the future; nyragroupsales.com was something that was needed; belmontstakes.com was something that was needed. Sites like those, and sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, give us unique ways to reach people."

After all, though Silver didn't see Secretariat or Affirmed race, the videos are available on YouTube, Silver can discuss them on his Facebook page, and he can tweet about his racing experiences.