



# op/ed

by Dan Liebman

## PLEASE STAND UP

Stand up before you read this column.

If you think Scott Blasi is the only trainer in America who has ever bad-mouthed an owner, please sit down.

If you think Scott Blasi is the only trainer in America who has ever run a horse he didn't think was 100% healthy, please sit down.

If you think Scott Blasi is the only trainer in America who has ever been happy a horse in his barn was claimed, please sit down.

OK, so we are all still standing.

If you think Scott Blasi is representative of all trainers in America, please sit down.

Right, still standing.

If you think Scott Blasi should be ruled off all racetracks for life, please sit down.

Ah, some of you sat down.

So did I.

Yes, we all know PETA doesn't want reforms in Thoroughbred racing. PETA wants racing shut down. Immediately. Forever.

We also are all aware that PETA boiled down hours of video recordings taken by an undercover investigator to less than 10 minutes of released footage.

Neither of which matters; the rest of you can sit down now.

If PETA had recorded 100 hours of video and released the same amount of tape, the conclusions would be the same: Thoroughbred racing remains a sport in chaos that can only be fixed, as Arthur Hancock and others have been saying for years, with federal intervention and a central governing body much like a major sport's commissioner.

The strongly worded and well-written [op-ed](#) by *Thoroughbred Daily News* publisher Barry Weisbord's was spot on. It is time for the industry to get off its collective ass and make changes to how things are done. Changes that will reform horse racing; that will save horse racing.

Here are some of this writer's thoughts on the subject after 40 years of observation:

\* Blasi should be ruled off. The industry does not need people like Blasi caring for its athletes. Scapegoat: surely. Necessary: definitely.

\* Steve Asmussen should be handed a lengthy suspension--years, not months. Trainers are responsible for what happens in their barns. Period.

\* Do not allow the horses in Asmussen's stable to be transferred to one of his assistants. Insist they are moved to other trainers.

\* Come up with a list of medications that can be used. No others can be administered. No more of this mantra that if it is not illegal to use, it must be legal to use.

\* No race-day medication. None.

\* Stop allowing vets to rule the backsides. As Weisbord said, study the Hong Kong method and institute a similar model. The only drugs administered come from a pharmacy owned by the racing association. No other medications are permitted on the grounds. A state vet must be consulted before any treatment is allowed.

\* Quit the insanity of year-round racing.

\* Scott Blasi may not be a poster child for the industry, but he is not representative of it, either. The vast majority of trainers, assistant trainers, grooms and hotwalkers are decent, hard-working people who have the best interests of the horse at heart.

\* Racing is an expensive sport in which to participate. Most horses lose money; thus most owners lose money. There is pressure to race, to win. Owners must share responsibility, letting their trainers know it is OK to say a horse needs time off before racing again.

\* People must be willing to give up their fiefdoms of power. Yes, this refers to state racing commissions. The obvious difference between the NFL, NBA, MLB, etc., and Thoroughbred racing is those sports have a commissioner with power. Imagine if one state in baseball decided to shorten its base paths, one state in basketball decided its goals would be 11-feet high and one state in football said you get a first down for every nine yards. We would all think it outrageous. Yet we allow it in racing.

\* I never thought I would ever think PETA did the industry a service. But it has. We should have undercover agents in every barn on the backside to root out the Scott Blasi's of the world.

\* I also never thought I would hear Wayne Lukas and Gary Stevens talking about the use of buzzers like it was a common occurrence. Shameful.

We can keep on the same misguided path or we can champion change in the industry.

Do enough industry participants have the courage to fight for meaningful change, to make things right?

As this column began you were asked to stand up. Will you stand up for racing?

Let's ask a morning linemaker to set the odds on that.

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