

Winner

Toronto's Woodbine Racetrack operates year-round with a reputation for big purses, exciting races and world-class facilities.

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actually look down on three tracks: a central one made of hard dirt for Standardbred harness racing and wrapped by the synthetic Polytrack, then both are surrounded by what is likely the most expensive grass in Canada, the E.P. Taylor Turf Course.

The synthetic and natural courses are only for Thoroughbreds, and some really good ones have run here. Northern Dancer did, in 1964. This was just after he won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness and just before he became the most successful Thoroughbred sire of the 20th century. A statue of this great athlete welcomes visitors to the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame, on the Woodbine premises. Secretariat ran

here, too, in 1973. Considered the best racehorse of all time, the big, good-natured chestnut won the Woodbine's Canadian International on a cold October afternoon, beating the others handily.

E.P. Taylor and the Ontario Jockey Club started Woodbine in 1956 as they consolidated several older tracks and upgraded the provincial racing industry. Adding a Standardbred track in 1994 made it the only racing facility in North America that could stage Thoroughbred and Standardbred races on the same day. And in 2006, Woodbine's Thoroughbred dirt track was replaced with synthetic, all-weather Polytrack.

Superlatives define Woodbine, but people make it a champion.

"What convinces a person to get up at 4 or 5 in the morning, day after day, and work his tail off around racehorses, which can be dangerous and must be respected?" muses Steve Koch, Woodbine's vice president of Thoroughbred racing.

"We have 20-, 30- and even 40-year employees who eat, sleep and breathe Woodbine and horse racing. They fight to the bloody end to put on the absolute finest product that they can for us. You see it in the jocks' room, in the paddocks, around the horses, in the race office. You see it everywhere. They are passionate." >>

Average number of Thoroughbred races per year: **1,560**



Value of annual purses at Woodbine and sister track Mohawk: **\$75 million**

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19