



# **Super Bowl Champ Devin White Will Race Horses in Illinois**

*Plans to buy more Illinois horses next year*

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois – Super Bowl champion linebacker Devin White has an unlikely connection to Illinois since he recently purchased three standardbred horses with plans to race them in the Prairie State. The Buccaneers star linebacker, White, made headlines last week when he took a different standardbred horse for a victory lap around Raymond James Stadium while holding the Lombardi Trophy. White co-owns his three Illinois-bred horses with his friend Adam Hawthorne.

“Devin is really excited to get into the business,” said Hawthorne. “This is his first time getting involved in horse racing and we plan to buy more Illinois-bred horses next year. Illinois is my favorite state to race in, bar none.”

The names of the horses White and Hawthorne purchased are First and Goal, Timber Creek Molly, and Creations Dream MV. The owners plan to keep them stabled in Louisiana during the winter where trainer Herman Wheeler will work with them. This spring, Wheeler will move the horses to compete in Illinois.

“Illinois harness racing is on the verge of an incredible comeback,” said Illinois Harness Horseman’s Association President Clark Fairley. “Buying an Illinois-bred horse is a great investment right now. We can now say that anyone who gets into the business has an opportunity to be successful.”

If all goes well, White’s horses will compete on the Illinois’ county fair circuit in early summer as they prepare for bigger purses at Hawthorne Racecourse near Chicago later in the year. There are a variety of incentives for owners to buy and race Illinois-bred horses in the Land of Lincoln. Because of the recently passed “racino” bill, Illinois-bred horses will be racing for larger purses and better racing opportunities in the years to come.

Ed Teefey runs the Illini Classic Sales at the Springfield State Fairgrounds where White and Hawthorne purchased their horses. Teefey is optimistic about the future of harness racing.

“You have to be optimistic in this business,” said Teefey. “Illinois-bred horses are a great value right now. Illinois isn’t flooded with horses the way some other states are and there are lots of good racing opportunities. Combined with the new revenue from casino gaming, it’s a good time to buy a racehorse here.”

Teefey said that the number of foals born in 2020 was 354, up from 144 born in 2018. And while that’s a far cry from the peak of 2,535 horses born in 1984, it’s solid growth that can be built on.

Illinois was once the premier harness racing state in the nation hosting the prestigious Hambletonian at the DuQuoin racetrack. Years of disinvestment by the state led to the near collapse of an industry that at its peak employed nearly 40,000 people. That all changed when racetracks in Illinois were allowed to compete with land-based casinos by adding table games and slot machines to racetracks in 2019. Once those racinos are up and running, the money that they generate will be invested into purse winnings.

Horse breeding is labor intensive and it has taken decades to establish a program in Illinois. Illinois horse breeding farms create many agricultural jobs, and the economic ripples are felt throughout the state from grain and hay farmers, to blacksmiths, grooms, and equipment dealers.

“We’re looking forward to growing the sport again in Illinois,” said Fairley. “A new racetrack is expected to be built within the next few years which will allow us to race more days and purses should continue to increase as well. I’m hopeful.”

Mack Communications for the Illinois Harness Horsemen

