

= Rosecroft Raceway =

Rosecroft Raceway , nicknamed the " Raceway by the Beltway " for being close to Interstate 495 , is a harness racing track in Fort Washington , Maryland . It first opened in 1949 and was owned by William E. Miller , a horse trainer and breeder . Rosecroft quickly became Prince George 's County 's political and social center , drawing thousands of people there each racing day . In the early 1950s , average attendance was more than 7 @, @ 000 per day . After Miller died in 1954 , his son John owned Rosecroft until his death in 1969 . Rosecroft hosted memorial stake races annually for both William and John until 1995 . Following the death of John Miller , Earle Brown controlled operations until he moved to a different position in 1980 ; William E. Miller II took over following Brown .

Rosecroft was sold to Mark Vogel in 1987 . Vogel made several mistakes that hurt the horse racing industry in Maryland . Three years later , he was arrested for possession of cocaine , and his company went into bankruptcy . Rosecroft was sold to Weisman 's Colt Enterprises in 1991 . In that same year , the grandstand caught fire and was reconstructed in 1993 for \$ 3 @. @ 6 million . In 1995 , after losing millions , the relatives of Weisman sold Rosecroft to Cloverleaf Enterprises . In the 2000s , Cloverleaf attempted to sell Rosecroft multiple times , but due to lawsuits and politics , all the potential buyers became uninterested . Nearby states legalized casinos to help their racetracks . Money generated from the casinos was used to increase the purses and handle ( daily betting turnover ) , and Rosecroft was unable to produce the same amount of money . After filing for bankruptcy once again , Rosecroft Raceway closed down in 2010 . The next year , Penn National Gaming purchased the racetrack with the hope to make it a racino , and Rosecroft reopened in 2011 .

Throughout Rosecroft 's history , it has featured notable races . From 1984 to 1988 , it hosted segments of the Breeders Crown . Starting in 1990 and ending in 1995 , the racetrack hosted the Messenger Stakes , the second leg of the Triple Crown of Harness Racing for Pacers . Rosecroft hosted the Potomac Stakes , Maryland most successful harness race , from 1990 to 1992 . Rosecroft features the Maryland Sire Stakes , which showcases the best standardbred horses in Maryland . Besides the races , Rosecroft has had famous people and horses work and race at the track . John Wager , Maryland 's all @-@ time most winning driver , has been working at Rosecroft since 1974 . Several famous people ? Lyndon B. Johnson , Elizabeth Taylor , and Nancy Pelosi , among others ? have visited Rosecroft . Cam 's Card Shark raced at Rosecroft in 1994 and challenged the single @-@ season record for most money won in a season by winning over \$ 2 million , and Robust Hanover set a track record while winning the Breeders Crown in 1985 .

= = History = =

= = = Miller family : 1947 ? 1987 = = =

In September 1947 , a meeting was held about bringing a harness racetrack to Maryland , specifically Prince George 's County , and Rosecroft was chosen to be the site . William E. Miller ? a future harness racing Immortal and horse breeder ? founded Rosecroft Raceway in 1949 . It was the first raceway to be owned by horse owners , horse trainers , and jockeys . Rosecroft was originally the WE Miller Stables and was located next to the Rosecroft Stock Farm , where horses were bred . The racetrack cost \$ 800 @, @ 000 to construct and was " first class in every respect " . The Washington Post estimated a crowd of 12 @, @ 000 on its opening day of May 26 , 1949 , but rain cancelled the races . Rosecroft 's first night of racing was May 27 , 1949 when 6 @, @ 000 people showed up and \$ 164 @, @ 501 was wagered . The handle was the second @-@ highest ever recorded for a night trotting track on an opening night .

For years , Rosecroft Raceway held an annual sale of yearling Standardbred horses . It hosted the annual Maryland Sire Stake Races to promote the best of Maryland @-@ bred horses . When Rosecroft opened , it became the political and social center for Prince George 's County , Maryland .

Each year during the Miller era , several thousand people traveled from across the country to wager on and watch the horses . In 1953 , Rosecroft 's attendance of 192 @, @ 585 was the highest among all harness tracks in Maryland . Owners , trainers , and drivers from across the United States moved their farms to Maryland in the 1950s following the opening of Rosecroft , hoping to compete with the best horses .

In 1954 , William E. Miller died from a heart attack while driving a horse at Harrington Raceway . After Miller 's death , Rosecroft hosted the William E. Miller Memorial race . Over the years , this race attracted several notable horses , including Cam 's Card Shark , the 1994 Horse of the Year . John W. Miller , William 's son , owned Rosecroft until his death in 1969 . In 1961 , the owners of Rosecroft resurfaced and regraded the track . Following John , Earle Brown owned the racetrack . John Wager , Maryland 's all @-@ time most winning driver , started to work at Rosecroft in 1974 . Earle Brown moved to a different position at the racetrack in 1980 and William E. Miller II , William E. Miller 's grandson , took over operations .

In 1984 , the Hambletonian Society created the Breeders Crown , a traveling series of races to showcase the best 2 @-@ year @-@ old and 3 @-@ year @-@ old horses throughout North American and Canada . In the inaugural year , Rosecroft was awarded with a race . Rosecroft hosted the 2 @-@ Year @-@ Old Pace of the 1985 Breeders Crown , where Robust Hanover won .

= = = Mark Vogel : 1987 ? 1990 = = =

Mark Vogel , a Maryland real estate agent , purchased both Rosecroft and Ocean Downs Racetrack in 1987 for \$ 6 million in cash plus \$ 5 @. @ 5 million in debt . Rosecroft was awarded another Breeders Crown race in 1988 , making it their fifth straight ? but final ? year of hosting them . Vogel had three main goals when he became owner : to construct a \$ 10 million grandstand , simulcast Rosecroft races at other racetracks throughout Maryland to attract a larger market , and have more racing days . In 1989 , Vogel purchased Freestate Raceway . Freestate was sold to a development firm the next year , and Rosecroft was awarded more racing days .

According to The Washington Times writer Rick Snyder , Vogel did not know the horse racing business and made mistakes that negatively affected the industry in Maryland . The year @-@ round racing Rosecroft was awarded lowered the excitement for the locals . Rosecroft was not capable of attracting a new market , and attendance figures declined . He never focused on marketing or daily operations of Rosecroft . Instead , Vogel focused more on his real estate business . As a result , the attendance dropped . Vogel took out money from the betting pools to help his real estate business . Lower betting pools mean smaller payouts for the bettors and less profit for the racetrack owners . Vogel never formed political ties to help pass legislation used to help harness racing , more specially to allow off @-@ track betting and to lower the state tax on betting pools .

Starting in 1990 , Rosecroft Raceway hosted the Messenger Stakes , one of the races for the Triple Crown of Harness Racing for Pacers . Rosecroft attracted the Potomac Stakes , Maryland 's most successful race , starting in that year . The Potomac Stakes was previously held at Freestate Raceway and generated one @-@ million @-@ dollar @-@ plus handles on several occasions . On a September 1990 night , \$ 1 @, @ 195 @, @ 681 was wagered by bettors , becoming the then @-@ largest handle in Rosecroft 's history . This record was broken on May 3 , 2003 when \$ 1 @, @ 564 @, @ 150 was wagered . Vogel was arrested in September 1990 for possession of cocaine , and his company filed for bankruptcy protection .

= = = Weisman 's Colt Enterprises : 1991 ? 1995 = = =

In 1991 , two people were interested in buying the track : Fred Weisman , a California businessman , and former National Football League player Mark May . Weisman out @-@ bid May and purchased Rosecroft out of bankruptcy for \$ 18 @. @ 2 million . On November 23 of the same year , the grandstand caught fire a few hours before live racing began . In Weisman 's first full season of operations , Rosecroft experienced a 10 @. @ 5 percent increase in handle and an 8 @. @ 3 percent

increase in attendance . In 1992 , Western Hanover , the richest horse of that year , won two of the three Triple Crown races , including the Messenger Stakes at Rosecroft . Rosecroft Raceway went into the record books on October 10 , 1992 , when a three @-@ horse dead heat occurred in the seventh race . It was the 17th time in harness @-@ racing history and the first time in Maryland history .

The new grandstand was completed for \$ 3 @. @ 6 million in 1993 . Since Rosecroft had expanded its simulcasting rights , the new grandstand incorporated large @-@ screen televisions and betting windows . For the 1993 season , Rosecroft 's officials decided to stop hosting the five stake races ? The Potomac , the Lady Baltimore , The Terrapan , The Turtle Dove , and The North American ? inherited when Freestate Raceway closed . The handle was decreasing , and the officials could not afford the purses for the races . To help increase the handle , Maryland racetrack officials voted to allow inter @-@ track simulcasting between all Maryland tracks and authorized off @-@ track betting parlors throughout the state .

In September 1994 , Weisman died from pancreatic cancer in Los Angeles , California , and his relatives took over the racetrack . Although attendance and handle were increasing , the owners were losing money . Reports by independent auditors stated Rosecroft and Ocean Downs combined to lose \$ 1 @. @ 1 million in fiscal year ( FY ) 1992 , \$ 1 @. @ 4 million in FY 1993 , and \$ 6 @. @ 2 million in FY 1994 . According to Rosecroft 's racing official Allan Levey , Weisman 's relatives did not want to operate the track and their only goal was to sell it . For the 1995 season , Rosecroft could not afford the payment to host five stake races ? including the Messenger Stakes ? and dropped them from the racing schedule .

= = = Cloverleaf Enterprises : 1995 ? 2010 = = =

Throughout 1995 , Rosecroft was forced to cut costs . Its owners lowered the amount of purse money , eliminated stake races , and reduced the number of racing days . They decided to sell both Rosecroft and Ocean Downs to Cloverleaf Enterprises , a horseman 's organization , in mid @-@ 1995 for \$ 11 million . Weisman 's Colt Enterprises reported that if the racetrack could not be sold , the company would have to file for bankruptcy . Cloverleaf accepted a \$ 10 @. @ 6 million loan from Bally Entertainment in hopes that a casino would be allowed at Rosecroft .

In 1994 , the Delaware General Assembly approved slot machines for the state 's three racetracks , and the first racino opened in December 1995 . This helped the horse racing industry in Delaware , as approximately 10 percent of all gross revenue is used to increase the purses . This drew competition away from Maryland . Rosecroft could not fill up a 12 @-@ race card for its opening night during the 1996 season . An estimated \$ 80 million in wagering was lost in 1996 from the effect of Delaware 's casinos . Throughout the years , various politicians tried to bring slot machines or table games to Rosecroft , but all were unsuccessful .

In the 2000s , Cloverleaf tried to sell Rosecroft multiple times . In mid @-@ 2002 , several buyers became interested in the track , but Cloverleaf was involved in lawsuits , so the track could not be sold . One bidder was Peter Angelos , the owner of the Baltimore Orioles , but he withdrew in 2005 . All the lawsuits were resolved in 2006 , and only one remaining bidder was left ? Penn National Gaming . Maryland passed a casino bill in 2007 , but Rosecroft was not one of the locations sanctioned for expanded gambling by the law . As a result , Penn National lost its interest in Rosecroft and decided not to purchase the track . From the gambling revenue , 7 percent goes to the horse @-@ racing industry .

Cloverleaf announced Rosecroft would close on July 1 , 2010 . Live racing ended in 2009 , and the track only had simulcasts as revenue from off @-@ track betting . After several of the surrounding states legalized casinos , Rosecroft was unable to continue as a successful business . Cloverleaf Enterprises filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in June 2009 . Mark Vogel loaned the track \$ 350 @, @ 000 and offered to buy the track , but a bankruptcy court judge refused to approve the plan . Rosecroft officials had hoped that the Maryland General Assembly would approve legislation allowing casino @-@ style gambling at Rosecroft , but that did not occur . In early June 2010 , Cloverleaf filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy .

== Penn National Gaming : 2011 ? 2016 ==

In January 2011 , Penn National Gaming bought Rosecroft for \$ 10 @. @ 25 million . Penn National said it planned to return live racing and simulcast wagering to the track as well as pushing for changes in Maryland gaming laws allowing slots and table games . Penn National said it was hoping to convince the state to allow slot machines at the track , even though voters did not approve Prince George 's County as a gambling location . On July 28 , 2011 , the Maryland Racing Commission agreed to allow Penn National Gaming to secure a \$ 1 @. @ 4 million line of credit to cover operating losses at Rosecroft for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 . Penn National said it was likely to incur \$ 2 @. @ 3 million in losses through 2013 .

Penn National wanted Rosecroft to begin simulcasting races in late August 2011 . Disputes between tracks and simulcasters about revenues , however , led to a delay in reaching new agreements on broadcast rights . In the 2011 , the Maryland legislature passed a bill that required all parties to enter into mediation . If mediation was not successful by October 1 , 2011 , then an arbitrator was required to help . To resolve a conflict of interest , Penn National sold its financial stake in the Maryland Jockey Club 's in July 2011 . In August 2011 , Rosecroft made public its plans for adding a casino at Rosecroft . It planned to destroy the grandstand and build a casino with approximately 4 @, @ 700 slot machines alongside the track .

An agreement on simulcasting of harness and quarter horse races was reached in August allowing Rosecroft to reopen on August 25 , 2011 . Rosecroft owed \$ 1 @. @ 24 million in unpaid disbursements under its previous simulcast license , and the parties were negotiating about how much of this debt Penn National would pay . Rosecroft drew 400 to 500 patrons on its opening day . Penn National also announced its intent to spend \$ 1 million in the coming year to renovate the property , which would include razing old horse barns , putting a new roof on the betting parlors , and upgrading the HVAC system .

A bill was introduced into the Maryland General Assembly in 2012 which would allow a casino in Prince George 's County . The two likely spots were National Harbor or Rosecroft . The bill passed the Senate , but the House did not vote on it . The bill was passed and signed by the Governor in August 2012 to allow a casino in Prince George 's County , which was passed via referendum in November 2012 . After one season of live racing , Penn National and Cloverleaf reached an agreement to extend live racing at Rosecroft for the next two years . The only exception is if National Harbor becomes the location for the Prince George 's County casino .

== Stronach Group : 2016 @-@ present ==

In May 2016 , the Stronach Group purchased Rosecroft Raceway for an undisclosed sum . The purchase was scheduled to close in mid @-@ summer , pending approval by the Maryland Racing Commission . Stronach Group said it would make some cosmetic improvements to the racing facilities , and then begin an evaluation to see what long @-@ term improvements it might make .

== Non @-@ horse racing activities ==

Besides horse racing , Rosecroft has allowed other activities . The Old School Boxing Gym is located there , and the track has hosted amateur boxing matches for several years . The gym served as a refuge to children in the area . Before his heavyweight championship tenure , George Foreman beat Sylvester Dullaire at Rosecroft on July 14 , 1969 . Then @-@ undefeated boxer Seth Mitchell also fought at Rosecroft in 2009 . Rosecroft made news when it decided to host an all @-@ female night of boxing in 2009 . In 1974 , Rosecroft Raceway hosted professional motorcycle races . In 2012 , Rosecroft hosted the 46th Annual Cherry Blossom Rugby Tournament . The area also serves large banquets . Other community activities include an annual Senior Citizen Day , hosting flea markets , fundraising for politicians , and hosting Governor 's Day .

= = Construction = =

Rosecroft was built in 1949 on 125 acres ( 51 ha ) . There are 2 @, @ 500 parking spaces including main parking by the main entrance . It is nicknamed the " Raceway by the Beltway " for being close to Interstate 495 . The track is 5 / 8 @-@ mile long and has a 700 @-@ foot home stretch . The current grandstand has been there since 1993 . It is 53 @, @ 000 square feet and is beside the 96 @, @ 000 square foot , 3 @-@ story club house . Inside the club house is the terrace dining room , which holds up to 1 @, @ 100 people . Each table in the dining room has its own television , which can be used to watch horse racing ? either from Rosecroft or other tracks around the world .

= = Prominent visitors = =

Thomas D 'Alesandro , former United States House of Representatives

Zsa Zsa Gabor , Hungarian actress

George Foreman , retired champion boxer

Parris Glendening , former Governor of Maryland

Lyndon B. Johnson , former president of the United States

Nancy Pelosi , former Speaker of the US House of Representatives , current House Minority Leader

Jennings Randolph , former United States Senator

Elizabeth Taylor , British actress

= = Track records = =