

Hurdles ahead: Can a spiffed-up Suffolk Downs attract the horsey set?



players

tium of friends and corporations who put up \$9 million (he and principal partner John Hall have kicked in \$2.5 million) to buy up the Suffolk lease, then add trees, gardens, fountains, and restaurants to a racetrack that, stylistically, differed little from the parking lot it bordered.

Although Moseley has long experience as a breeder (his mare Drumtop once outran Paul Mellon's heavily favored Fort Marcy to win a \$100,000 Hialeah purse) and some as state racing commissioner, he has never owned or operated a racetrack. To do so, he had to gain the endorsement of a state government that had been so badly burned by Suffolk's weasely landlord, former Red Sox trainer Buddy LeRoux, it was eager to drop the track in the dumpster.

As a shrewd negotiating ploy to induce LeRoux to lease him the choice property, Moseley signed a purchase-and-sale agreement to buy 650 acres for a track of his own in the middle of the state—only to discover the land was infested with stinking skunk cabbage. LeRoux, happily, never got wind of the cabbage and provided the lease; Moseley got his price, and the state granted him racing dates. Add off-track betting and simulcasts (to raise purse sizes to attract the best horses), and Moseley stands a chance of actually making some money.

In the grand WASP manner, Moseley asserts that filthy lucre is not his primary aim. Rather, he is investing in an important regional industry that will enhance the tax base by producing 3,000 jobs at Suffolk Downs alone. Plus, he believes, a revived Suffolk would give a critical boost to the other two racetracks in New England, so that, together, the three could form a circuit and deliver world-class racing. The Kentucky Derby at Suffolk Downs? Maybe. But hold the mint juleps: It's a long way to the winner's circle.

—JOHN SEDGWICK

Noble Pursuit

Bred for polo, James Moseley opts to revive a tired track.

IDON'T BELIEVE IN MEDIOCRITY," says James Moseley, Harvard man, patrician, third-generation equestrian, and the mastermind of an audacious plan to restore Boston's dreary Suffolk Downs thoroughbred racetrack to a glory that, in truth, it never really had.

Sixtyish and graying, Moseley twiddles his spectacles as he sits in the corner room of his splendid estate on Massachusetts's tony North Shore, racing mementoes arrayed on the walls and a chocolate

Labrador named Winnie obediently slumbering at his feet. "Mediocrity doesn't get you a damn thing in life," he goes on. "Garbage produces garbage. Why do they make Rolls-Royces? Because people like nice things, and the nicer you can make them, the better you'll do."

Let's hope so, because Moseley is doing Suffolk Downs right. The track was always known more for its bus station aroma and clubhouse shootouts than for sleek racehorses and white-gloved ladies. But Moseley has assembled a small consor-