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FERROZZO WINS NHC TOUR FIRST HALF, TOP FIVE MID-YEAR ALL-STARS EARN \$10,000 BCBC ENTRIES

LEXINGTON, Ky. (Friday, August 4, 2017) – Mike Ferrozzo, of Eagan, Minn., came from out of the clouds with big wins in National Horseplayers Championship (NHC) qualifiers hosted by **HorseTournaments.com** on the final two weekends of July to top the **NHC Tour First Half**, which ended Sunday. Ferrozzo's final tally of **12,791** points earned him a \$10,000 entry into November's Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge (BCBC).

The NHC Tour's top five First Half "All-Stars" – each of whom also received either a BCBC entry worth \$10,000 or the equivalent in cash – was completed by **Mike Yurczyk** (12,461 points), 2014 NHC Tour hero **Eric Moomey** (12,348), **David McCarty** (12,292), and NHC Tour rookie **Patrick Runyan** (12,056).

First Half totals are comprised of points earned in a player's top four finishes, at least one of which must have come in an on-site contest, through July 31. **The LUXAIR JETS First Half Leaderboard** became official Thursday after last weekend's results were received from host tracks and verified during a 24-hour audit period.

Ferrozzo, 59 (b. April 13, 1958), an IT projects manager specializing in healthcare, was a Final Table participant at NHC 16 in 2015. He amassed his First Half score with a March 25 win at Hawthorne (in a field of 149 entries) worth 3,508 points, followed up by a 13th-place finish the next day on HorseTournaments.com (239 entries) worth 1,477 points, plus the two July wins on HorsePlayers.com – July 21 (443 entries) for 3,750 points and Saturday (109 entries) for 2,556 points.

"I just had a couple of good weekends," Ferrozzo said Friday morning from Las Vegas, where he is competing in the annual Wynn Handicapping Challenge. "I definitely didn't expect to win."

Ferrozzo already holds a BCBC entry from his Hawthorne victory and will accept \$10,000 cash instead of taking a second entry, as he believes playing two entries tends not to work in his favor. "I end up playing horses I don't like," he said.

His strong finish to the First Half may or may not have been a coincidence, Ferrozzo said. He recently purchased two new 32-inch high-definition monitors to watch replays on. "I have 64 inches of TV screen now," he said. "I can see a lot more than I ever could on my laptop."

Last weekend Ferrozzo was studying the replay of a Southern California race when he spotted jockey Edwin Maldonado talking to the assistant starter as the gate was sprung. Maldonado's mount was left at the start but still managed to rally in the stretch and hit the board. Ferrozzo bet the horse back (with a different rider up) and it came in at 11-1. "He won going away, so that's an example of something I never would have seen before."

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NHC Tour First Half Recap
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The overall NHC Tour leaderboard incorporates a player's top six scores. First prize for the NHC Tour is \$100,000 and comes with a trophy and the chance to play for a \$2 million bonus should the NHC Tour winner go on to win NHC 19 in January. There is also a "\$3,000,000 NHC Tour Double" bonus for anyone that can complete a sweep of the BCBC and the NHC.

The top 150 NHC Tour finishers earn automatic berths to the world's richest and most prestigious handicapping contest, the NHC, set for Feb. 9-11, 2018, at Treasure Island Las Vegas, provided that each individual has not already won an NHC entry. The top 20 share in a record \$285,000 prize pool, from the \$100,000 (plus a trophy and an automatic berth to NHC 20) for the NHC Tour champion to \$2,000 for 20th. The top 40 get to play for a \$25,000 bonus that goes to the qualifier with the highest finish at NHC 2018.

Here's a little more of what we know about the rest of the top five "First Half" finishers:

Yurczyk, of Minneapolis, has won online contests on HorseTournaments.com and HorsePlayers.com this year.

Moomey, of Madison, S.D., is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force. In addition to winning the 2014 NHC Tour, he followed that up by leading the 2015 First Half. After being hospitalized for long stretches of 2016 with the digestive disease diverticulitis, Moomey reasserted his place as one of the NHC Tour's top minds by taking home more than \$67,000 for winning The Stronach Group's Ultimate Betting Challenge.

McCarty, of Del Mar, Calif., is a biotechnology executive. His biggest score of the year was a February win at Santa Anita. On the last day of the First Half he jumped into the top five with a win on HorseTournaments.com.

Runyan, of Navarre, Fla., has quickly established himself in his first year on the NHC Tour with a June win at Louisiana Downs, two runner-up efforts on HorseTournaments.com, and a fifth-place finish in a free online qualifier with nearly 2,000 players.

On the compact First Half leaderboard, nine players – including elite names like **Roger Cettina**, **Kevin Engelhard**, **Bill Shurman**, 2011 NHC Tour winner **Paul Shurman**, **Brett Wiener**, and **Sarah Wiener** – finished within 1,000 points of making the top five.

The complete final First Half standings with scores for all 3,192 NHC Tour members that earned points so far this year can be viewed online at <https://www.ntra.com/wp-content/uploads/First-Half-080217.pdf>.

The NHC Tour's Second Half officially kicked off Sunday, with a free online qualifier presented by the NTRA that awarded points to both First Half and Second Half totals. The top five on the NHC Tour leaderboard from Sunday through Jan. 1 will each be awarded a BCBC entry or \$10,000 cash if they've already qualified for the BCBC. This weekend's plethora of contest offerings include multiple qualifiers on HorsePlayers.com, the official qualifying site of the NHC and BCBC, as well as Friday and Saturday's \$200,000-guaranteed Handicapping Challenge at Wynn Las Vegas, a Saturday contest on HorseTournaments.com, and an on-track contest Sunday at Suffolk Downs.

For more information on the NHC and NHC Tour, visit www.ntra.com/nhc.

About the National Horseplayers Championship

In its 19th year, the NTRA National Horseplayers Championship (formerly known as the NTRA National Handicapping Championship) is presented by Racetrack Television Network, STATS Race Lens and Treasure Island Las Vegas. Equibase is the official data provider of the NHC and NHC Tour. The NHC is world's richest and most prestigious handicapping tournament of the year for horseplayers and is the culmination of a year-long series of NTRA-sanctioned local tournaments conducted by racetracks, casino race books, off-track betting facilities and horse racing and handicapping websites, each of which sends its top qualifiers to the national finals. Each year, the NHC winner joins other human and equine champions as an honoree at the Eclipse Awards. The most recent NHC offered record prize money and awards totaling more than \$2.9 million. NHC 19 will be held February 9-11, 2018, at Treasure Island Las Vegas.

About the NTRA

The NTRA, based in Lexington, Ky., is a broad-based coalition of more than 100 horse racing interests and thousands of individual stakeholders consisting of horseplayers, racetrack operators, owners, breeders, trainers and affiliated horse racing associations, charged with increasing the popularity, welfare and integrity of Thoroughbred racing through consensus-based leadership, legislative advocacy, safety and integrity initiatives, fan engagement and corporate partner development. The NTRA owns and manages the NTRA Safety and Integrity Alliance; NTRA.com; the Eclipse Awards; the National Handicapping Championship; NTRA Advantage, a corporate partner sales and sponsorship program; and Horse PAC®, a federal political action committee. NTRA press releases appear on NTRA.com, Twitter ([@ntra](https://twitter.com/ntra)) and Facebook (facebook.com/1NTRA).