

**YONKERS' PASSING LANE IS PAST TENSE**  
**BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway**

YONKERS, NY, Sunday, January 7, 2018—Today's tome is entitled 'Passing Thoughts About No Passing Lane.'

Yonkers Raceway began its 2018 season Sunday (Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>) by closing down the open stretch. A nippy, see-their-breath, late-morning pacing opener served as the guinea pig for the new layout.

Precursor to the seven 'French' trots, it was a tight-photo win by a first-up Union Man Hanover (Matt Kakaley, \$14.20) in 1:57.3.

Thus, Kakaley became the perfect initial candidate to discuss the new layout.

"I probably would have waited a bit longer (moving from third) with the passing lane," he said. "I wanted to make sure I was out there. I think first-over is going to be more advantageous now, but it was just one race."

Kakaley ended up with four winners during the 12-race card.

One obvious observation was the pocket-sitting Scarlet Chaser (Jordan Stratton) extricating himself from the cones, slipping out to race second-over early in the final turn.

"(Scarlet Chaser) won in the passing lane his last start, but that wasn't an option here," Stratton said. "I was able to move him outside and he raced well. The new rules are in place, and we'll figure it out.

"It is what it is."

"There are going to be some strategy changes, that's for sure," Brent Holland said.

"Sitting the two-hole may not always be a good spot," he said after getting shuffled out when the leader tired in day's trotting feature. "It didn't work out for me."

The last word for the first day went to six-time local driving champ Jason Bartlett.

"It certainly makes things different," Bartlett said. "It's hard to say how much, because you have to see how each race unfolds. We just have to try to put the horse in the best position."

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(photos-Mike Lizzi-accompany)

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