

Heather Vitale

Talks Family, Business and Fashion

BY STEPHANIE SULLIVAN

Delaware native, Heather Vitale, is without a doubt one of the most recognizable faces in the harness racing industry today. From Fox Sports to CBS Sports Net, she has been actively pursuing her lifelong dream by promoting the sport she so adamantly loves and one that has been prevalent in her family for generations. These days you can find Heather producing and hosting Delaware's award-winning weekly Post Time television show and covering numerous live national broadcasts on PA Harness Week.

Her admiration for the sport runs deep and can be explained best by Heather herself, who said in a recent interview, *"I love horse racing because I have an incredible amount of respect for equine athletes. They are the stars. They are majestic. They are breathtaking. We have a sport with the best professional athletes in the world. They work for carrots and apples, not dollars and supermodels. There are some wonderful people in this industry who I respect and admire, but it's important to never lose sight that the horse is the reason we have the opportunity to be a part of a business that we love."*

Vitale is a third generation in the harness racing business, which began in the 1950's after her grandparents, Elmer and Helen Looney, emptied their savings account and purchased Reggy Scott, a horse that would ultimately become an open pacer. The rest, as Heather says, is history. Her mother, Jo Ann Looney-King, was the first woman driver to win a race at The Meadowlands, and to this day she still trains a top stable in Delaware with Heather's step-father, Jim King, Jr. Her sister, Susan Looney, drove horses, and Heather's two children, sons Wyatt and Trey, are both getting into the sport.

But harness racing isn't the only thing Heather is passionate about. She is also a self-proclaimed fashion addict who enjoys watching streaming video from Milan on her phone's Fashion Week app and scouting a multitude of shops in search of the perfect ensemble to wear to an upcoming stakes race. As Heather says, *"Individual style is above and beyond more important than fashion. Why? Because style is self-expression and it's feeling great in what you are wearing. So, while updating your wardrobe is a must, you don't have to buy an entirely new closet full of clothes to keep up with the times. I'm far from the most fashionable person, but I take pride in having my own unique style that's true to my personality."*

Heather's own fashion style at the track is both varied and unique. She states, *"I've worn opera gloves to The Breeders Crown because it was a big night and that's what felt right to me at the moment. Overdressing is not an expression I'm familiar with, because I don't think there is such a thing. I believe you can be underdressed but you can never overdress. If I'm hanging out at the track on a cold day, I'll throw on a pair of jeans, but if it's warm out or I'm attending a big race, the odds on me wearing a dress are one in nine. Actually, that's a bet that would even be barred from wagering on."*

