



An American Tour: 61



New York's *Belmont Park*

Belmont Park is a major thoroughbred horse-racing facility located in Elmont in the Town of Hempstead in Nassau County, New York, on Long Island adjoining New York City. It first opened on May 4, 1905. It is typically open for racing throughout May, June and into late July, and again from late September through late October. It is world famous as the home of the Belmont Stakes, known as the "Test of the Champion", the third leg of the Triple Crown.

Belmont is known as "The Championship Track" because almost every major champion in racing history since the early 20th century has competed on the racecourse — including each of the 11 Triple Crown winners. Belmont is considered one of the elite racetracks in the sport. The largest crowd was in 2004 when 120,139 witnessed the Belmont Stakes as Smarty Jones was seeking the Triple Crown but was upset by Birdstone. It's operated by the non-profit New York Racing Association, as are Aqueduct and Saratoga Race Course. The group was formed in 1955 as the Greater New York Association to assume the assets of the individual associations that ran Belmont, Aqueduct, Saratoga Race Course, and the now-defunct Jamaica Racetrack.

In May 2007, reports surfaced suggesting that then New York Governor Eliot Spitzer was considering closing Aqueduct Racetrack, which is ten miles west of Belmont in Ozone Park, New York, and turning Belmont into a nearly year 'round race track when the New York Racing Association lease for all three of New York State's tracks expired at the end of 2007. According to the plans being discussed, Belmont's stands would be heated, additional barns built for Aqueduct's 400 horses, and the track modified to accommodate winter racing. In addition, video lottery machines would be introduced. A new entity would operate Belmont from fall to spring while the New York Racing Association would operate Saratoga Race Course in the summer. Any plans the former governor might have had for the track alignment likely left office with him when he was forced to resign amid a prostitution scandal in March 2008. *[Did he used to be in the Secret Service?!]*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belmont_Park]

