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Harness: Madison Global speaks out on Big Ranger, Gillespie & the future

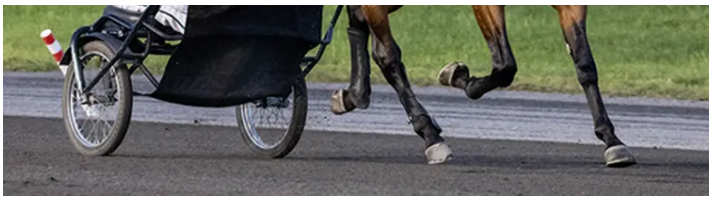
Derick Giwner | Aug 20, 2026

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There is a reason that more than 40 percent of marriages end in divorce. Relationships require communication, trust and certainly the willingness to compromise. When those pillars break down the relationship erodes, and from the standpoint of Madison Global,



Walter Wlodarczyk

Big Ranger has the Ohio Sires Stakes Championship in his crosshairs before a return to Grand Circuit competition

that is what led to Big Ranger moving on from trainer Ronnie Gillespie to Anette Lorentzon.

Before jumping into the fire of controversy that developed from the breakup, it is important to know when the connection started. According to co-owner Anthony Miller, he was the first of the group to be involved in harness racing. The 37-year-old had horses on and off dating back to 2016 with trainer Herman Hagerman, a relationship that still exists. Miller became involved with Gillespie in 2024 and the Madison Global group, which also includes Wes Beachy, Reuben Hershberger and Benjamin Shrock, in 2025.

"Wes and I kind of became friends through different business dealings, and we had the discussion to form the group and to try to buy some more horses," said Miller.

As with any marriage, and certainly in the case of Madison Global and Gillespie, there was certainly a honeymoon period. They started in 2025 with five horses under the care of Gillespie and hit the jackpot with one - Big Ranger, a then 2-year-old trotting colt by In Range. He went seven-for-seven, won $370,610 and the Ohio Triple Crown in his first year on the track, all with Gillespie as trainer and driver.

Everything was perfect - until it wasn't. Big Ranger broke in his 2026 debut and then missed the $500,000 Oak Grove Trotting Derby final when he was just fourth after setting the pace in his elimination. He was able to rebound to capture the $75,000 consolation and went on to set a Scioto Downs track record (1:51 2/5) in his May 25 start, but there was a splintered vision for the best path forward to maximizing the potential of Big Ranger the asset.

"We're definitely grateful for everything Ronnie did," said co-owner Beachy. "We all got together and it was just an escalating situation that we kind of felt needed to be addressed. What it all boiled down to was the catch driver. We really thought that for any Grand Circuit races we'd really like to see a catch driver on him. We did want to see Ronnie as the trainer, but that was clearly not an option."

Despite an appreciation for the past good times and success, Madison Global made the decision to pull Big Ranger from Gillespie well ahead of the most important race on the calendar for his division, the $1,000,000 Grade 1 Hambletonian.

"He did not have knowledge that it was going to happen," admitted Beachy, who said they were fielding a number of sizable offers to sell the horse and wanted to wait until a final decision was made prior to calling Gillespie. "We were going to let Ronnie know the morning of, and we got no response after multiple texts and phone calls. Obviously, the truck arrived before we got the opportunity to talk to him. The intent was never to pull the horse or try and sneak him away or do anything like that."

"When Ronnie finally called me back I told him we were moving the horse and he hung up on me without giving me the chance to explain," said Miller. "A week later I was finally able to reach

him and have an hour-long conversation about why."

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Beachy said the situation escalated rather quickly and led to the transfer of their other three horses - Center Field Lady, High On The Range and Aiming To Please - from Gillespie to trainer Virgil Morgan Jr.

"We just grew apart. It wasn't that Ronnie was being mean to us. It was just a lack of communication," said Beachy, who talked about the fun being removed from the experience. "95% of the time an owner that is involved in harness racing or investing in the sport is there to have a good time, right? We don't want the day-to-day. We don't want the phone calls. We don't want the staking. We're simply there to have a good time. Any trainer that makes the mistake of taking the good time away from the owner, it doesn't matter if this is Ronnie or anybody else out there, you take the good time away from the owner, they will probably leave the industry or at least move their horses.

"Most owners are going to be involved in other industries and have another stream of income outside of horses, and this is the good-time thing where you pull up videos in the evenings, you watch races with your family or you take them to the races and you're there, you know, just to smile. That's the level of participation you want and to create memories with family and friends, and that's why we started out in the first place."

The positive vibe for Madison Global took hold when Lorentzon began training Big Ranger. The seemingly random choice of Lorentzon stemmed from the group's relationship with Kevin Greenfield - stallion manager of In Range and President of Hickory Lane Farm - along with his connection to Lorentzon.

"We wanted somebody that has exposure on the East Coast, and we also wanted to give somebody the opportunity that did not have a Hambletonian horse," said Beachy.

The new combination of Lorentzon and Hall of Fame driver Tim Tetrick continued the work of Gillespie, winning three straight races, including a new 1:50 3/5 Scioto Downs track record and an explosive 1:50 Hambletonian elimination stakes record by four lengths. Tetrick was also

teaching the colt to be a bit more patient early in the mile after a string of races where he was on the lead by the opening quarter.

"[Gillespie] picked the horse, developed the horse, did a phenomenal job, and I think Anette has done an amazing job with progression of what Ronnie started," said Beachy.

Big Ranger was the morning-line favorite to win the Hambletonian, and the fun was back until an article by Hal McCoy was published on Pressprosmagazine.com and reprinted in Harness Racing Update. It painted Madison Global as the clear villain, and the public sentiment on social media showered the group with negative comments and hopes that the horse would fail in his Hambletonian quest.

The article took Madison Global by surprise in that it contained a number of accusations that they strongly refute. It listed a horse named Peppermint Man being taken from Gillespie by the

group. They never owned the horse. It said Gillespie was never given a reason why the horse was moved. They insist he knew it was the catch driver issue. It says they offered him no future compensation. They said a conversation occurred about the topic. It says the group was with Gillespie for five years when Madison Global only existed for two.

"We were conversing and I said, 'listen, the reason that we don't have a percentage or a set amount is because we didn't know what the season was going to look like,'" said Beachy on the topic of providing Gillespie extra compensation. "I told him that everybody is committed to doing something as the season progresses. We had a great conversation.

"We told him multiple times, even after Big Ranger had left, 'Ronnie, we'd love for you to be our 2-year-old Ohio trainer every year'. And it just didn't work. There was no willingness to, and I get it, his feelings were hurt, too.

"Unfortunately, the opportunity for him to receive any financial compensation from Madison Global definitely died with the publication of that article," concluded Beachy, who added that the group was just as disappointed that the reporter didn't reach out to hear their side of the story.

Big Ranger assuredly had no clue that a tidal wave of people on social media was rooting against him as he went behind the gate for the Hambletonian on August 8 at the Meadowlands. He displayed some early speed and settled in the pocket behind the previous season's 2-year-old Dan Patch division winner Apex. The fractions were honest - 26 4/5, 54 3/5 and 1:22 4/5 - as Tetrick made his move with Big Ranger just prior to the third call. They closed the margin of deficit inch by inch in one of the most thrilling stretch duels in the race's history. In the end they were an inch short in by far the fastest (1:49 2/5) Hambletonian in history.

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Despite the defeat, the performance boosted the stock of Big Ranger as not just an upper-echelon 3-year-old trotter but as a potential stallion prospect. While Madison Global is taking it start by start with a focus on the Ohio Sire Stakes Championship (September 12 at Scioto Downs), Kentucky Futurity (October 3 at The Red Mile) and Breeders Crown final (October 24 at Scioto Downs), they are very cognizant of the decisions ahead.

"I think we would strongly consider the stallion route if these races go well," said Beachy when asked whether a 4-year-old campaign was in their minds or whether this could be Big Ranger's last year of racing. "I think it would be great for an Ohio trotting stallion to be able to stand and potentially attract people from the East Coast."

"All of us have a few mares. We've all raised horses and raised babies already," said Miller. "So, all of the partners kind of have an interest in the stallion route, and that's something that keys our interest in racing."

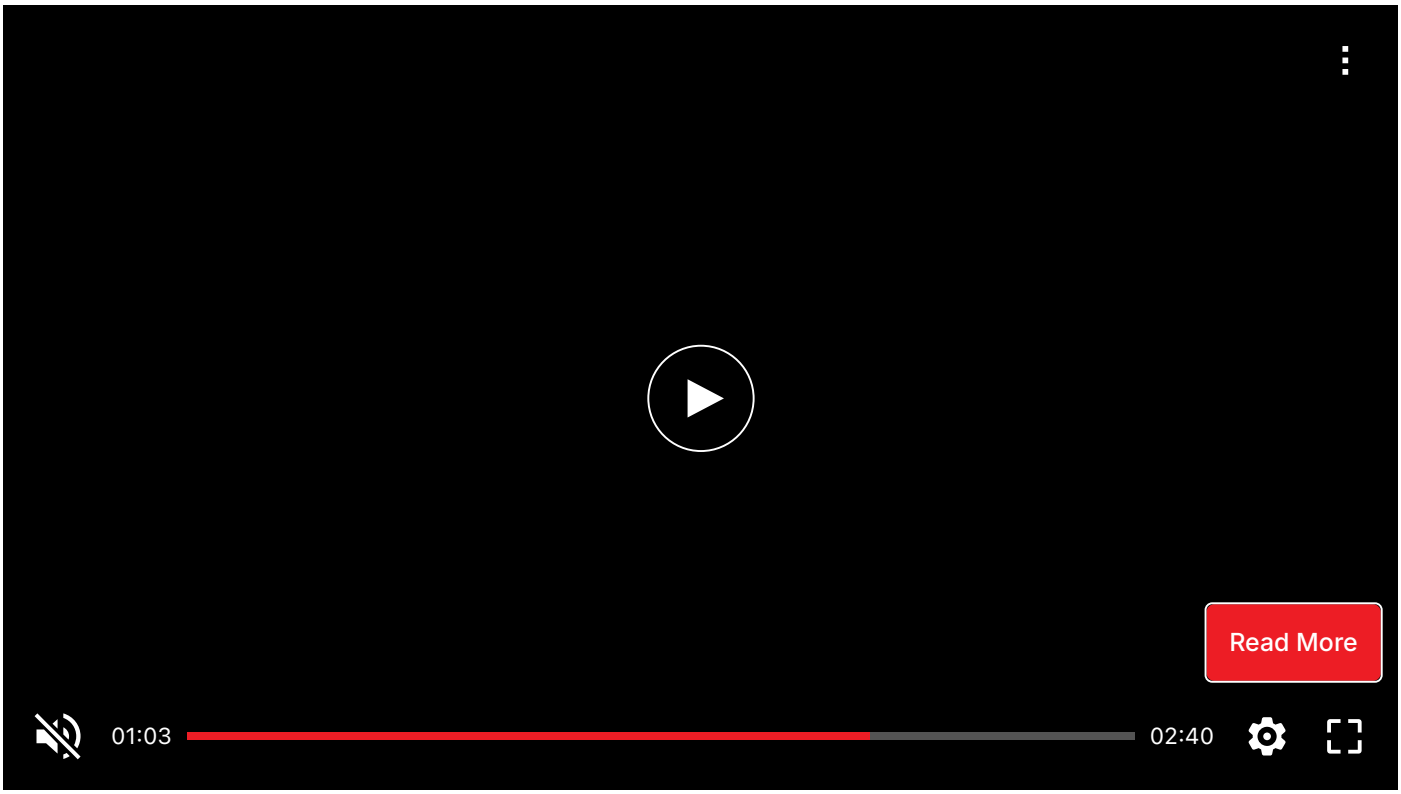
The immediate goals for Madison Global, which currently has five horses in training, is seeing Big Ranger get a sub 1:50 lifetime mark, reach millionaire status (he's at $772,947) and compete against Apex again.

"Apex is a hell of a horse and he's got great connections. We're looking forward to that matchup

again," said Beachy.

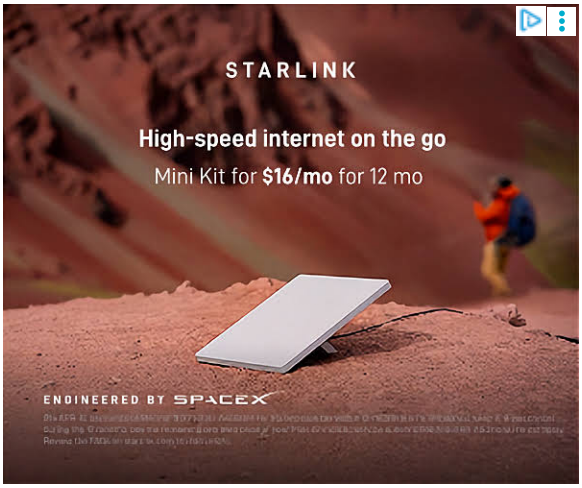
The Apex/Big Ranger rematch is on hold likely until the Kentucky Futurity and for now the four Amish-raised owners, two of which - Hershberger and Shrock - are still devout in that lifestyle, are living life and waiting for the next thrill delivered by their star horse. If history is any guide, it will likely come on September 12 at Scioto with $300,000 on the line in his Ohio Sire Stakes final. A victory would push him less than $80,000 from the million mark and set up the opportunity to accomplish most of Madison Global's on-track goals for Big Ranger in one race. Then on to the Breeders Crown for a potential fairytale ending at their home track. Wouldn't that be sweet!

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