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The Week That Was

06-08-18

1. Game On

Our Spin:

With only seven session days left, the Legislature can expect a full court press from professional sports leagues and related teams of lobbyists, pushing for legislation that would allow sports betting in New York. For weeks, discussions have taken place behind closed doors on the matter, but still no real *significant* action has taken place. With our neighbors in New Jersey moving forward this week with similar legislation allowing sports betting at casinos and racetracks, it will be interesting to see if maybe that gets the ball moving in New York. One thing is for certain... the ball better get moving quick because there is not much time left in the game.

The Story:

New Jersey's casinos and racetracks are waiting for the starter's gun to begin offering sports betting now that the state Legislature has approved a bill to legalize it. All eyes were on Governor Phil Murphy on Thursday, immediately after the state Assembly and Senate unanimously passed a bill to allow sports betting three weeks after winning a U.S. Supreme Court case that cleared the way for them and all other states to do so.

Casinos and racetracks itched to begin taking bets on baseball, basketball, soccer and other sports. But the Democratic governor would not signal whether he would sign the bill — or even when he might decide. "He said he wants to act quickly, but the legislation will be subject to the same thorough review that all legislation sent to him for signature is subject to," said his spokesman, Dan Bryan.

While some top lawmakers said they expected Monmouth Park, a racetrack near the Jersey shore in Oceanport, to begin taking bets Friday, others said they expected Murphy to consider the bill during the weekend before acting.

[U.S. News](#)

2. Rules are Rules

Our Spin:

Drama continued in the Senate on Tuesday with Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan and Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul disputing the rules and procedure of the house. The issue arose from Hochul giving time for state Senator Liz Krueger to speak on an issue even after the amendments had been accepted, which Flanagan argued was a violation of Senate rules. As a result, Republicans in an unannounced move pushed for an override of a veto backed by Cuomo for a bill that would expand full-day kindergarten programs statewide. Initially, Hochul tried to stall the veto push, but it was eventually approved unanimously.

The Story:

The state Senate went back into stalemate Tuesday as lawmakers engaged in an increasingly bitter dispute over abortion rights and contraceptive coverage. For the third time in less than a week, action in the Senate ground to a halt as the Senate's ruling GOP majority contested Democratic efforts to force a debate on measures intended

to strengthen New York's abortion laws and ensure that insurers provide coverage for contraception services.

The acrimony first erupted last week when Senate Democrats, backed by Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul's presence on the rostrum, sought to force a vote on the abortion and contraception bills by attaching them as hostile amendments to legislation already on the Senate's calendar.

With the Republicans handicapped by the absence of one of their members who is away on military duty and lacking the votes needed to block the Democrats, the Senate GOP set aside their agenda for the day. A day later, Senate Republicans attempted to selectively take up a handful of bills but lacked the votes to pass any of them and eventually adjourned their session for the week.

In an effort to break the stalemate, GOP leaders this week agreed to accept the abortion and contraception amendments. The truce did not last long, however, as Republicans on Tuesday became furious that Hochul was giving time for state Sen. Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) to speak on the issues.

Republicans then withdrew their acceptance of the amendments and called a halt to Senate proceedings. The Senate remained at ease for several hours before finally adjourning for the day.

[NY Daily News](#)

3. 150th Belmont Stakes

Our Spin:

Only 12 horses ever have won the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby, the 1 3/16-mile Preakness Stakes and the 1 1/2-mile Belmont Stakes in a row. The few thoroughbreds that have completed the Triple Crown sweep are of legendary status. Those that fail are largely forgotten over time. This year it is Justify, who is two thirds of the way home. Does he have enough gas left in the tank for the final stretch to elevate himself to legendary status? We'll find out tomorrow!

The Story:

No matter how Justify, the undefeated Triple Crown threat, fares in the 150th running of the Belmont Stakes on

Saturday at Belmont Park, past performances indicate that the big winners will be everyone else.

The New York Racing Association will benefit from significant increases in attendance and, more important, betting. NBC Sports Group, which holds the broadcast rights, is anticipating a boost of Olympic proportions. And, at least for one day, a sport that typically struggles for attention will draw even the most casual of fans.

"We've only had 12 Triple Crown winners," said Christopher Kay, the chief executive and president of NYRA. "It's not like any other sport where there is always an ordained champion at the end of the season or into the postseason."

Sir Barton was the first to be crowned, in 1919. American Pharoah, the most recent, in 2015. His tour de force ended a record 37-year drought between champions. He immediately followed an unsuccessful try by California Chrome, an especially popular California-bred horse with distinctive white markings known as chrome, in emerging as the 12th Triple Crown winner.

NYRA reported all-sources wagering totals of \$83,054,106 on the 2014 Belmont Stakes and \$75,036,432 on the 2015 Belmont. With no Triple Crown prospect, the total fell to \$52.2 million in 2016 and dropped again to \$47.2 million last June.

The difference in television viewership is profound. Jon Miller, NBC's president of programming, said audiences for the last three non-Triple Crown Belmont Stakes averaged 5.9 million viewers compared to a combined average of 19.6 million viewers in 2014 and 2015.

"To give you an idea of the scope of that, that would be the highest rating of the entire second quarter," Miller said. If there should be the same strong numbers for Justify, Miller said that would represent "the most watched Saturday on television since the Pyeongchang Olympics in February."

[The New York Times](#)

