

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

June 4, 2026

New York State Gaming Commission
1 Broadway Center
Schenectady, NY 12305

Mr. David ORourke
President & Chief Executive Officer
New York Racing Association
110-00 Rockaway Blvd, Jamaica, NY 11417

Re: Request for Close Monitoring of Jockey Paco Lopez for Whip Rule Compliance

Dear Commissioners and Mr. O'Rourke,

I am writing to urge the New York State Gaming Commission and the New York Racing Association to monitor jockey Paco Lopez closely during his scheduled mounts this coming weekend.

Mr. Lopez has a well-documented history of violating riding crop regulations, including the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) rule 2280 (c)(1): "A Jockey shall not: ... raise the crop with the Jockey's wrist above the Jockey's helmet when using the crop." Mr. Lopez has repeatedly violated this rule, sometimes multiple times in a single race. He has racked up at least six suspensions in 2025 and at least 22 whip violations since 2022, including one for whipping two-year-old National Law in the head *after* a race in 2024. This reflects a troubling pattern rather than a one-off lapse in judgment.

In Saratoga's August 23, 2025, \$500,000 Grade 1 Forego Stakes (see still below), Mr. Lopez, in flagrant violation of the HISA whip rule, lifted his arm high, raising his wrist above his helmet, before landing hard blows four separate times on Book'em Danno—yet still walked away with the winning prize money. It was after this violation and many others that HISA suspended him for six months. Please see PETA's complaint to HISA [here](#). He is slated to ride Book'em Danno again this Saturday in the True North Stakes, and NYRA has [promoted](#) his return.

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- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)



Mr. Lopez engaged in this prohibited motion during the 2026 Preakness Stakes. Maryland stewards declined to take action and chose instead to try to persuade the public that our eyes deceived us and that what the race footage and stills from the video show—three instances in which his wrist was raised well above helmet—was something else entirely. See stills below. We have asked the Maryland Racing Commission to launch an inquiry into this ruling, and we hope that New York officials will enforce the rule as written and intended.

Given this history, and the six races in which he's slated to ride this weekend, there is a heightened risk of continued noncompliance absent rigorous oversight.

We respectfully request that NYRA, Commission stewards, and regulatory officials carefully review Mr. Lopez's rides in real time and post-race for adherence to HISA crop rules and take appropriate action should any violations be observed.

Ensuring strict compliance with whip rules is essential for protecting the horses, fairness in competition, and for maintaining public confidence in the integrity of horse racing. Consistent enforcement—particularly in cases involving repeat violations—is critical.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

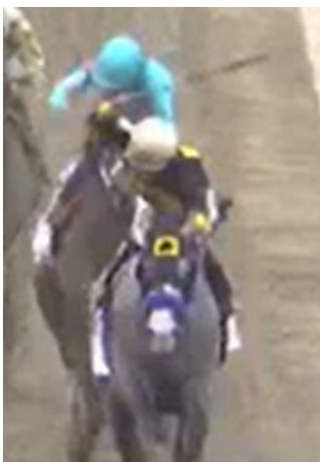
Kathy Guillermo

Kathy Guillermo
Senior Vice President
Equine Matters Department

Jockey Paco Lopez in the Preakness Stakes, May 16, 2026

First strike in the stretch (wide-screen and close-up):

MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB		RACE 14	MINS 10	7:33 PM
PREPAREDNESS AT LAUREL PARK		FAST / FIRM		
ODDS	EX 10& EX &10			
1	7	519	367	
2	15	743	781	
3	7	566	491	
4	4	403	344	
5	23	696	702	
6	2	372	217	
7	14	768	810	
8	9-2	461	296	
9	8	455	314	
10	19	--	--	



Second strike in the stretch (wide-screen and close-up):

MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB		RACE 14	MINS 10	7:33 PM
PREPAREDNESS AT LAUREL PARK		FAST / FIRM		
ODDS	EX 10& EX &10			
1	7	519	367	
2	15	743	781	
3	7	566	491	
4	4	403	344	
5	23	696	702	
6	2	372	217	
7	14	768	810	
8	9-2	461	296	
9	8	455	314	
10	19	--	--	



Third strike in the stretch (wide-screen and close-up):

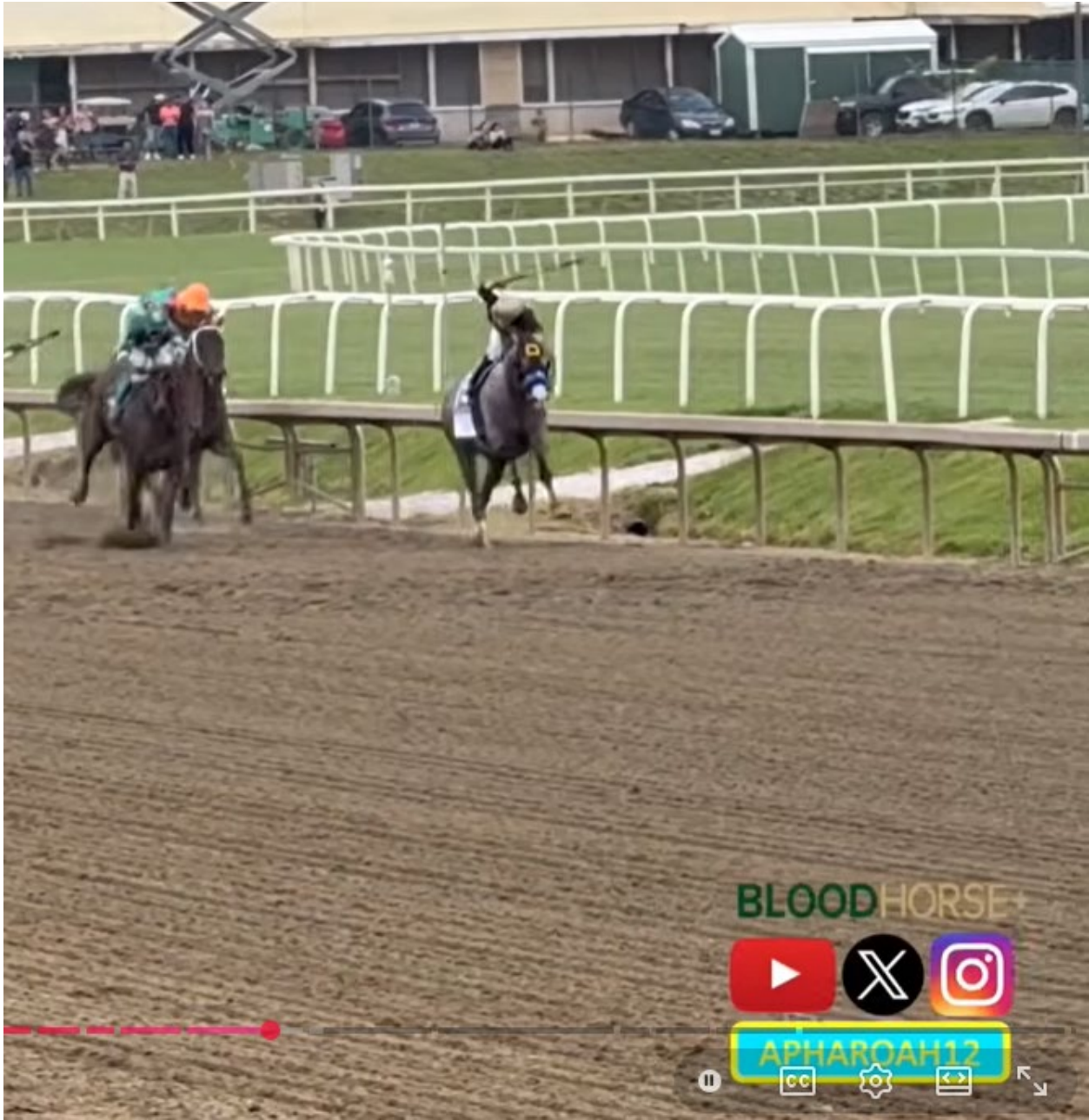
MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB PREAKNESS AT LAUREL PARK			RACE	14	MINS	10	7:33 PM FAST / FIRM
ODDS							
1	7	152.20					
2	15	1237.00					
3	7	191.80					
4	4	92.20					
5	23	801.00					
6	2	38.60					
7	14	383.40					
8	9-2	119.20					
9	8	184.60					
10	19	658.40					



Video posted by APharoah12 and BloodHorse:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHCfrehBHb8>

This screen shot is at timecode 32:59 of the video.



BLOODHORSE+



APHAROAH12

