



NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY & MUSEUM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BEHIND THE STORY: KATIE BO LILLIS ON DEATH OF A RACEHORSE

at the National Sporting Library & Museum

MIDDLEBURG, Virginia – July 30, 2025 – On Thursday, August 14, the National Sporting Library & Museum (NSLM) will host a cocktail reception and moderated discussion on [*Death of a Racehorse*](#) with author Katie Bo Lillis of CNN, in conversation with Julie Banner of the NSLM. A book signing will follow the talk. [Tickets are available for purchase on the NSLM website.](#)

FROM THE PUBLISHER, SIMON & SCHUSTER

The inside story of the crisis within the country's most classic sport—horseracing—and why money is killing thoroughbreds at the top of their game

Every year, hundreds of horses die on the racetrack. Why?

In this deeply reported and propulsive narrative, CNN reporter Katie Bo Lillis shows how two high-profile cases lay bare the ills facing the sport: the abrupt, industry-rocking indictments of top trainers Jason Servis and Jorge Navarro, and the untold story of Bob Baffert, the most successful and recognizable horse trainer in modern history, and the allegations he faced after a string of mysterious horse deaths and the high-profile disqualification of his latest Kentucky Derby winner for a failed drug test.

Death of a Racehorse (Simon & Schuster, 2025) delves deep into the horse racing world, offering intimate access to dozens of top trainers, owners, breeders, veterinarians, lab specialists, and more. The mainstream perception has been that rampant drug use is forcing these horses to run past their natural ability, resulting in heart attacks and broken legs. But this doesn't paint the full picture.

That picture is driven by class tension between the affluent old stables and an ambitious new guard. This upstairs-downstairs drama shows blue-blooded families on a quest to restore horse racing to the good old days that never existed, versus those like Bob Baffert who are still viewed as outsiders—fantastically successful, but coming from less pedigreed backgrounds and experience. The privileged few, determined to save the sport, seem to hold a powerful suspicion that the sport's brash, pioneering working class could not possibly be doing so well on their own.

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Lillis shows how the breeding industry prioritizes making millions over breeding a sound, durable horse. A disjointed race schedule, created by racetrack operators that are trying to maximize betting opportunities, makes it impossible to manage a horse's athletic career safely. In this purely capitalistic industry, the brute force of winning and the money that follows has taken the place of a responsible husbandry of the animal that is its beating heart. *Death of a Racehorse* is a cutting, on-the-ground investigation into the morally ambiguous behavior at the industry's glamorous center, raising nuanced questions about the relationship between animal and human—and offering a hopeful path forward for one of America's oldest and most treasured sports.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katie Bo Lillis is a CNN senior reporter covering intelligence and national security. Prior to her role at CNN, she worked for Atlantic Media traveling the Middle East, covering America's wars. But she was raised in the saddle in rural Virginia, and her first love was thoroughbred horse racing. She now lives on a farmette with a small barn in northern Virginia with her husband and son.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

5–5:45 pm | Wine and cheese reception (Library Foyer)

5:45–6:30 pm | Discussion and Q&A (Founders' Room)

6:30–7 pm | Book Signing (Library Main Reading Room)

LOCATION

National Sporting Library & Museum (Library Building), 102 The Plains Road, Middleburg, VA, 20117

TICKETS

[Tickets are available for purchase:](https://www.nationalsporting.org/index.php/nsml/event_details/1514/) https://www.nationalsporting.org/index.php/nsml/event_details/1514/

\$20 for Members (\$49.99, includes *Death of a Racehorse*), \$30 for Non-Members (\$59.99, includes *Death of a Racehorse*)

National Sporting Library & Museum

The National Sporting Library & Museum is located in Middleburg, VA, the heart of beautiful horse country. Founded in 1954, the renowned research Library and fine art Museum highlight the rich heritage and tradition of country pursuits. Angling, horsemanship, shooting, steeplechasing, foxhunting, flat racing, polo, coaching, and wildlife are among the subjects one can explore in the organization's general stacks, rare book holdings, archives, and art collection. The NSLM offers a wide variety of educational programs, exhibitions, and family activities throughout the year, and is open to researchers and the public. There is no admission fee to the Library. The Museum charges \$10 for adults, \$8 for youths (age 13–18), and \$8 for seniors. NSLM members and children age 12 and under are admitted free of charge. Library & Museum hours are Thursday–Sunday 10 am to 5 pm.

