



- News, views and insights that matter to breeders, owners and racing industry professionals - February 2018 -

In This Issue

For Jersey-Breds,
a year to remember

Irish War Cry crowned
NJDA 2017 NJ-Bred
Thoroughbred of the Year

2018 Horse Management
Seminar

TBANJ Membership
Application

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For Jersey-Breds, a year to remember

By Bill Finley



Green Gratto delivered a shocker in the Grade 1 Carter Handicap at Aqueduct at 54-1.

It was way back in January, in the dead of the winter at Aqueduct, when the New Jersey-bred sprinter Green Gratto won the Grade 3 Toboggan. It was a nice win for the state's breeding program, but everyone knows the realities: the number of foals is way down and New Jersey is having a difficult time competing with jurisdictions whose breeding programs and purses for state-bred races are enhanced by casino revenue. Perhaps this win by the 7-year-old Green Gratto would turn out to be as good as it gets for Jersey-breds on the track 2017?

Little did anyone know.

And apparently, no one told the horses that Jersey-breds were supposed to struggle.

It was nothing less than a magical year for Jersey-breds on the racetrack as they not only

won many races, but won at the highest levels of the sport, putting a smile on the faces of all of those who have stuck by and pulled for the program.

Green Gratto was not done. On April 8, he became a Grade 1 winner, capturing the Carter Handicap at Aqueduct at a stunning 54-1 for trainer and co-owner Gaston Grant. That Grant is the ultimate small-time trainer (his "real" job is driving a UPS truck) only made the story that much sweeter.

But even with all he accomplished that April day, Green Gratto was not the brightest New Jersey-bred star on the card. While the Wood Memorial one race later may have been downgraded to a Grade 2, it remains a prestigious race and anyone who wins it is all



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Isabelle de Tomaso's homebreds, half-brothers Irish Strait (left) and Irish War Cry, were graded stakes winners in 2017.

but guaranteed a spot in the Kentucky Derby starting gate and the respect that comes with winning a major prep.

It was Wood winner Irish War Cry who gave the Jersey-bred program thrills it had not enjoyed in years. He could be erratic, but when on his game the son of Curlin was as good as any 3-year-old in the country in 2017. Remaining undefeated in the Marylander Stakes at Laurel for trainer Graham Motion on the final day of 2016, he exploded onto the Derby scene with a dominant win in the Grade 2 Holy Bull at Gulfstream in February. He didn't deliver as the even-money favorite in the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth, finishing seventh, but returned to form next out with his 3½-length score in the Wood.

He undoubtedly become the first New Jersey-bred to ever get his own billboard as the TBANJ paid for two billboards alongside major highways wishing him well in the Kentucky Derby. He finished 10th in the Derby, but was classic-placed next out when second, after leading the majority of the 1½ miles, in the Belmont Stakes-G1.

Bred and owned by Isabelle de Tomaso, the daughter of Amory L. Haskell, his quest for victory in the Haskell had everything in place to be the feel good story of Jersey racing for 2017. Unfortunately he finished fourth. But he didn't owe anybody anything. The thrills he gave the Jersey-bred program along the way will be hard to equal.

While Green Gratto and Irish War Cry, both of whom will continue racing in 2018, led the way for Team Jersey, there were several horses that made a splash.

Irish War Cry's "big brother" Irish Strait came into the Grade 3 Red Bank Stakes at Monmouth off a loss against lesser competition in the Henry S. Clark at Laurel Park. But the son of English Channel, seeking his first stakes win at the age of 5, picked a good time to run the race of his life as he led from gate-to-wire to win for Motion and De Tomaso. He gave his dam, Irish Sovereign, a rare accomplishment, having two offspring win graded stakes in the same year. She had a third winner in 2017, as the 4-year-old filly Irish Defence won two

allowance races, one of them an open company event at the Meadowlands.

In the turf sprint division, few horses were tougher or more consistent than New Jersey-bred Rainbow Heir. An eight-time stakes winner during his career, he raced exclusively in stakes in 2017, winning the Aqueduct Turf Sprint Championship, Wolf Hill Stakes and New Jersey Breeders Handicap. His 7-year-old season was the best of his career as he earned \$228,850 for trainer Jason Servis and his owner/breeder New Farm. He was expected to race once or twice more before retiring to Ocala Stud Farm in Florida for the start of the 2018 breeding season.

In 2016, Sunny Ridge was named New Jersey-bred Horse of the Year as a 3-year-old. In a normal year, he would have done enough in 2017 for back-to-back titles, but, again, it was not a normal year. He had an abbreviated campaign, only running four times, and has not raced since June 10. However, he did enough to deem the year a success. He started out winning the Jazil and Stymie Stakes at Aqueduct. After a sixth in the Charles Town Classic-G2, he concluded his season with a second in Belmont's historic Brooklyn-G2.

In any other year, Chubicious would be a cinch to be named New Jersey's champion sprinter, but he'll likely have to settle for second place behind Green Gratto. Chubicious beat Jersey-breds in the John J. Reilly Handicap in July, but he didn't seem the type who could win in open, graded company. By the state's top sire, Hey Chub, he did what so many Jersey-breds did in 2017—perform beyond expectations. Sent off as the longest shot on the board, he won the Grade 3 Frank J. De Francis Memorial Dash at Laurel in September. Afterwards, he was purchased privately by Brittlyn Stable and turned over to trainer Ron Faucheux. In his debut for his new connections, and final start of the year, he was second in the Thanksgiving Handicap at Fair Grounds.

Led by Irish War Cry, there will be plenty of quality New Jersey-bred racing in 2018. It could be another good year, but 2017 will be hard to top.



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Irish War Cry crowned NJDA 2017 NJ-Bred Thoroughbred of the Year

Isabelle de Tomaso's homebred Irish War Cry, a multiple graded stakes winner last year, has been named the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's New Jersey-bred Thoroughbred of the Year for 2017.

Irish War Cry started his championship campaign Feb. 4, winning the \$350,000 Holy Bull Stakes-G2 at Gulfstream Park by 3¼ lengths. The win put Irish War Cry in the discussion as one of the top 3-year-old colts in the country and a possible Kentucky Derby entrant.

Irish War Cry won his second race of the year April 8 in the \$750,000 Wood Memorial Stakes-G2 at Aqueduct. The dominating performance made the racing industry take notice of the improving son of Curlin and the New Jersey breeding program. While Irish War Cry did not fare as well as his connections had hoped in the Kentucky Derby, finishing



10th, he rebounded with a great effort to finish a valiant second in the \$1,500,000 Belmont Stakes-G1.

Mrs. de Tomaso and her sister Hope Haskell Jones are strong supporters of New Jersey breeding and racing. They have bred horses in the Garden State, together and separately, for some five decades, continuing a family avocation that their mother Annette began in the 1924. Their father, Amory L. Haskell, was one of the original founders of

Monmouth Park and served as President of the Monmouth Park Jockey Club from 1944 to 1966. Irish War Cry contested the Haskell and was forwardly placed early before fading to finish fourth.

Trained by H. Graham Motion, Irish War Cry finished 2017 with \$966,660 in earnings. In his career he has won four of nine career starts while earning \$1,049,460.

2018 Horse Management Seminar

The Rutgers Equine Science Center will hold its 2018 Horse Management Seminar on Sunday, Feb. 11 at the Cook Campus Center.

This year's focus will be Gastrointestinal Health and Management, and will feature presentations on fiber, Equine Gastric Ulcers Syndrome, the Equine Microbiome, and updates on current Rutgers research projects dealing with gastrointestinal health, and the microbiome and metabolism of horses on pasture.

A panel discussion by the day's presenters – Dr. Burt Staniar, Dr. Mary Durando, Dr. Amy Biddle, and Dr. Carey Williams, who will act as a moderator – will take place in the afternoon, and they'll take questions from the audience.

The day will close with Rutgers Equine Research Updates from both Dr. Williams, and doctoral student Jennifer Weinert.

To view the event flyer and register on line go the Equine Science Center's website. Price of admission includes continental breakfast, lunch, and presentation handouts.

Join the TBANJ

Visit www.njbreds.com and become a member of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of New Jersey.

There's a wealth of valuable information on the TBANJ website, including an easy-to-use membership application. Individual Membership is only \$65 per year. Spouses may join for an additional \$35. You have the ability to use the secure server on our website, www.njbreds.com, through PayPal to pay for your membership dues using your credit card or debit card. You do not need to have or create a PayPal account in order to pay for the membership.

If you need any further information, please contact the TBANJ office at 732-542-8880 or visit our website.



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THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

Membership Application

Member Information

NAME _____ SS#/FEDERAL I.D.# _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____ COUNTY _____
TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Membership Categories

- Breeder A breeder member shall be a person who owns the required interest in a broodmare or registered stallion domiciled in New Jersey; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. A breeder member shall have voting rights.
- Owner An owner member shall be a person who owns a registered New Jersey- bred; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. An owner member will not have voting rights.
- Associate An associate member is a person who is interested in owning, breeding, or racing horses in the State of New Jersey or in fostering economic activity through the breeding, ownership and/or racing of horses in the State of New Jersey. An associate member will not have voting rights.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Membership Dues

A check or money order for \$65.00 must accompany this form. Spouses are encouraged to join the **TBANJ** under joint membership status. This fee would total \$100.00 per couple. Each spouse must fill out a separate form to accompany the payment. Membership will be effective upon receipt and will be in force each calendar year and must be renewed annually.

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