



- News, views and insights that matter to breeders, owners and racing industry professionals - June 2017 -

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# For Jersey-Breds, a Day to Remember

By Bill Finley

It's no secret that these are not the best of times for the New Jersey breeding industry, but that doesn't mean that the people producing Thoroughbreds in the Garden State aren't capable of coming up with serious race horses.

Never was that more evident than on April 8 at Aqueduct where the New Jersey-bred breeding program enjoyed the best 37 minutes in its history. At 5:15 p.m., the field left the gate for the \$400,000 Carter Handicap-G1 and when it was over Jersey-bred Green Gratto had pulled off a shocking win in the 7-furlong stakes. It seemed unimaginable that the day could get any better, but it did. At 5:52, they began the \$750,000 Wood Memorial-G2 and when it concluded 1:50.91 later there was still another Jersey-bred crossing the wire first. Irish War Cry won the Wood by open lengths.

Irish War Cry had already proven that he was a top class horse. The son of Curlin who was bred by and is owned by Isabelle de Tomaso, the daughter of Amory L. Haskell, had won the Holy

Bull-G2 at Gulfstream in impressive fashion. But he followed that up with a dismal performance in the Fountain of Youth-G2, losing by 21¼ lengths. Trainer Graham Motion could never come up with an excuse for the race and decided to just draw a line through it and try again.

The Wood would pose new challenges for the chestnut. He drew the outside post in the field of eight and had several speed horses in front of him. He could either get involved in a speed duel or try to rate off the pace, something that had given him problems in the past. He was also going with a new rider in Rajiv Maragh, as Joel Rosario opted to ride Practical Joke for Chad Brown in the Blue Grass.

So he had numerous questions to answer, most notably whether or not the Fountain of Youth was a fluke. In the end, he left no doubt that it was. He won by 3½ lengths over the talented Todd Pletcher runner Battalion Runner.

Maragh got Irish War Cry to rate comfortably just off the pace. He inched closer to the leaders



On April 8 at Aqueduct, Green Gratto (left) captured the Grade 1 Carter Handicap and Irish War Cry followed in the very next race with a victory in the Grade 2 Wood Memorial.



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down the backstretch, drew even at the three-eighths pole and then drew off for what was an easy win.

"That was more like it; I'm speechless," Motion said. "I've never understood why he would not relax, this horse. He's very classy, he's very sensible." Said Maragh: "He was always in a smooth rhythm. He relaxed real easily. He did everything I wanted him to do without a lot of effort. He did it all in rhythm. He wasn't rank at all. He settled beautifully. By getting on him in the mornings, I didn't think I'd have a hard time getting him to settle because he goes so easy and comfortable. We ran good together today."

Had the Wood Memorial not been downgraded this year to a Grade 2 there would have been a New Jersey-bred, back-to-back Grade 1 double.

Though he was 7-2 and coming off a poor race, the win by Irish War Cry was hardly a shocker. He is a well-bred colt in the hands of a top trainer and he had already proven he was capable of winning at this level. Not too many people could have been surprised that he won.

The same cannot be said for Green Gratto.

This horse is not easy to figure out. In his first five starts, he was beaten a combined 121½ lengths. He seemed to have put it all together in 2015, winning two stakes races, but followed that with a dismal 1-for-13 record in 2016. Now 7, he started 2017 off the right way, winning the Grade 3 Toboggan, but followed that with an 11¼-length defeat in the Tom Fool-G3.

He was 54-1 in the Carter and for good reason. Which Green Gratto would show up, and even if the good one stepped into the Aqueduct starting gate would that be good enough?

He was the longest shot on the board and had some good fortune on his way to victory. Eventual third-place finisher Tommy Macho looked like he had the field measured in deep stretch, but jockey Luis Saez allowed him to nearly run over Green Gratto and runner-up Unified before steadying and altering course.

Trainer and co-owner Gaston Grant will take a win like this any way he can get it. "I wouldn't say I was surprised that he won because he was training good," said Grant, who owns the horse along with his brother, Anthony. "But when you see your horse cross the wire first in a race like that you kind of go, 'wow.' That was by far my biggest thrill in racing. I only started training horses on my own only about two years ago. To win a Grade 1 is a remarkable feat."

The only things Irish War Cry and Green Gratto have in common is that they are both Jersey-breds and are both talented. Irish War Cry is owned by the wealthy daughter of one of the most prominent individuals in New Jersey racing history and he is by one of the sport's premier sires in Curlin. Grant is such a small-time trainer and owner that he still drives a UPS truck to help make ends meet. The sire, Here's Zealous, is not a household name, and Green Gratto was literally given to the Grant brothers. All they had to do was agree to pay for the costs of his training and boarding while he was a yearling. It was Peter Chin who brokered the deal with breeder Peter Kazamias to give the horse to the Grants.

Green Gratto was trained by Chin up until Aug. 3, 2015, when Grant took out his trainer's license and took over. Green Gratto was the first horse he ever ran under his own name, recording a second-place finish in a Saratoga allowance in August 2015.

"I guess he's maturing. I don't know," Grant said. "I can't say I did anything special. It happens in the sport, where horses turn around. We always believed in him and as he got older he started to mature and take care of himself."

Grant wasn't sure where Green Gratto would race next. Irish War Cry made his way to Churchill Downs, looking to join Regret (in 1915) and Cavalcade (1934) as the only New Jersey-breds to have won the Kentucky Derby. It's been a great year so far for New Jersey-breds and it might just get a whole lot better.

## In Memorium: David A. Meirs II, VMD

David A. Meirs II, VMD, who received his Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University in 1950, passed away March 27 at the age of 87. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Meirs established the Walnridge Equine clinic in 1965.

The clinic is known worldwide and serves as a living legacy to 'Doc' Meirs, as does Walnridge Farm Inc., a 300-acre facility that has been in the Meirs/Waln family since 1830 and specializes in the breeding and raising of Standardbreds but also foals Thoroughbreds. Dr. Meirs was instrumental in helping build the equine program at Rutgers University's Cook College and in the development of the Rutgers Equine Science Center.

He later served as chair of the Rutgers University Board for Equine Advancement which began fundraising for the development of the Equine Science Center. Besides his commitment to Rutgers,

Dr. Meirs was actively involved in many other veterinary and horse racing associations. Dr. Meirs served as president of the NJ Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, founded the NJ Equine Practitioners Association, served as a director of the Society for Theriogenology, was appointed by Governor McGreevy to the NJ Sire Stakes board, and was a past president of the Veterinary Medical Alumni Association, University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture.

To make a memorial contribution in Dr. Meirs' name, the following organizations have been selected by the family: Rutgers University Equine Science Center, Attn: Dr. Karyn Malinowski, Administrative Services Building II, 57 US Hwy 1, New Brunswick, N.J. 08901; Standardbred Retirement Foundation, 353 Sweetmans Lane, Millstone Twp., N.J. 08535; Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association Trotpac, 64 Business Rt. 33, Manalapan, N.J. 07726.



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## Fair Winds opens the doors for 4th annual open house

To celebrate New Jersey's "Month of the Horse," Fair Winds Farm in Cream Ridge will open its doors to visitors on Sunday, June 25 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The fourth annual free open house will be held at the farm on 74 Red Valley Road, and will allow visitors to see the inner workings of this successful Standardbred breeding farm, where 2011 Hambletonian winner Broad Bahn was bred and raised.

Visitors will be able to tour Hogan Equine clinic, where top flight Standardbred and Thoroughbred athletes are treated by surgeon Dr. Patty Hogan, and get a tour of the farm via horse drawn wagon.

There will be demonstrations on the life of the Standardbred, featuring a young foal and his dam, along with half-million-dollar winning racehorse Mighty Young Joe and his trainer Stacy Chiodo. Other Standardbreds will show their talents off the track in under saddle disciplines, jumping, trail riding and more.

For those that just want a horse to pet, retired racehorses and goodwill ambassadors Independent Act (Indy) and his pal

Osborne's Shy Cam (Ozzy) will be on hand to say hello and pose for selfies. Farrier Tom Mulryne will demonstrate how to care for a horse's feet and have free lucky horseshoes for visitors to take home.

Horse centric exhibitors will also be on hand, including Rutgers Equine Science Center, Open Space Pace, Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of New Jersey, Standardbred Pleasure Horse Organization, New Jersey Equine Advisory Board, Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of New Jersey and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Other equine educational groups are expected to join and will be announced closer to the event. The Hearts and Horseshoes 4H Club will be back with their friendly rabbits.

The event will be held rain or shine. Refreshments will be available for purchase. There is ample parking available, but few paved surfaces, so visitors should wear sensible shoes and strollers may have a rough ride. Please leave dogs at home.

For more information, call 732-780-3700 or email [ellen.harvey@ustrotting.com](mailto:ellen.harvey@ustrotting.com).



**Redeemed colt born March 22 out of multiple stakes winner Cigno d' Oro (by Tour D' Or) was bred by G.J. Stables and foaled at Hunters Run Farm in Neptune.**



**Colt by Alpha out of Prime Jewel, by The Prime Minister, a half-brother to stakes winner P J's Superego, was bred by Jet ' M Stable and foaled at Hunters Run Farm on March 24.**

## Foal Gallery: 2017 New Jersey-Breds



**Commissioner colt, with his stakes-producing dam High Flying Flag, by Our Emblem, was born April 16, bred by Jon Brown and foaled at Hunters Run Farm.**



**Irish War Cry's half-sister is by Graydar was born April 24 Overbrook Farm in Colts Neck. Out of Irish Sovereign, by Polish Numbers, the filly was bred by Isabelle de Tomaso.**



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## 2017 New Jersey-Bred Racing Challenge

The Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of New Jersey is pleased to announce they will again offer the \$50,000 New Jersey-Bred Racing Challenge which will determine the top New Jersey-bred runner during the 2017 Monmouth Park meet.

"We are excited to offer the New Jersey-bred Racing Challenge again this year," said Mildred Fleming, president of the TBANJ. "The 2016 Challenge proved to be very successful and highlighted many of the top New Jersey-bred runners competing at Monmouth Park and we expect this year will be the same."

All registered New Jersey-bred horses are eligible to earn points in any race run at Monmouth Park. There will be two divisions, one for colts and geldings, and another for fillies and mares. The bonus will be distributed to the breeder, owner, and trainer of the top four New Jersey-bred horses in each division who have accumulated the highest point totals at the conclusion of the New Jersey-Bred Racing Challenge and have competed in at least three races at Monmouth Park between May 13 and Sept. 10.

The TBANJ website, [www.njbreds.com](http://www.njbreds.com), will have updated standings at the end of each racing day so fans and participants are able to follow the results.



**Bustin Out led the 2016 Fillies and Mares Division of the New Jersey-Bred Racing Challenge.**



**Chublicious led the 2016 Colts and Geldings Division of the New Jersey-Bred Racing Challenge.**

## June 2017 stakes at Monmouth Park

Run Date	Stakes Name		Purse	Division	Distance
6/3/17	Eatontown Stakes	G3	\$100,000	F&M, 3 and up	1 $\frac{1}{6}$ M (T)
6/10/17	Crank It Up Stakes		\$60,000	F, 3YO	5 F (T)
6/11/17	Decathlon Stakes		\$60,000	3 and up	6 F
6/17/17	Salvator Mile	G3	\$100,000	3 and up	1 M
6/18/17	betfair.com Pegasus Stakes	G3	\$100,000	3YO	1 $\frac{1}{6}$ M
6/24/17	Jersey Shore Stakes		\$60,000	3YO	6 F



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