

**PP1- Celebrity Bambino (Muscle Hill-Celebrity Ruth-Archangel)**

Off the 7-5 favorite in last year's Breeders Crown 2-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot, Celebrity Bambino will look to amend his runner-up finish when starting in this year's 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot following a 1:53.1 front-stepping victory by 1-1/2 lengths in his elimination.

Celebrity Bambino's career trajectory has been anything but straight. From the start the colt exhibited promise for his connections in spite of a third-place finish in the \$240,000 New Jersey Sires Stakes final as a 2-year-old. He entered the Peter Haughton Memorial elimination as one of the favorites, but scratched from the final due to sickness. He made his return in September, finishing third in a Kindergarten prelim as the even-money favorite and then finished second in the \$275,000 New Jersey Classic two weeks later. He returned to the winner's circle a month later in an overnight race at Pocono Downs before moving north and winning his Breeders Crown elimination at Woodbine Mohawk Park. Despite losing in the final, he wrapped the 2022 season with wins in the \$80,000 Garden State Trot at The Meadowlands and in his elimination for the Valley Victory, where in the final he made an uncharacteristic break and finished last at 9/5.

In his sophomore campaign Celebrity Bambino exhibited a similar steady approach. He made three starts before winning his first race of the year in a \$34,900 Reynolds Memorial division at The Meadowlands in July. Two weeks later he finished fourth in a \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial division before going coast to coast in his Hambletonian elimination, becoming the favorite for the final off a 1:50.4 effort. But again in his career, he was foiled as the favorite when fading to fourth in the \$1,000,000 Hambletonian final (behind **TACTICAL APPROACH**). He then finished fourth in the \$300,000 Earl Beal Jr. Memorial (to **UP YOUR DEO**) and fourth in the \$275,000 New Jersey Classic (to **AIR POWER**) before claiming the prize in the \$488,400 Canadian Trotting Classic on Sept. 23 at Woodbine Mohawk Park – a race that has produced eight Breeders Crown winners in this division: Giant Victory (1991), Kadabra (2002), Mr Muscleman (2003), Majestic Son (2006), Muscle Hill (2009), Father Patrick (2014), Bar Hopping (2016) and What The Hill (2017); What The Hill pulled off the double for Celebrity Bambino's trainer Ron Burke. Celebrity Bambino's last race before the Breeders Crown was in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity, where he overcame a shuffle to last and stormed home to finish third (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**).

Trainer Ron Burke tries for his second victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot, winning his first in 2017 with What The Hill. Burke sent World At War Deo in the 2022 edition of the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot, finishing eighth to King Of The North.

Driver Yannick Gingras tries for his second victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot, having won his only trophy in this event with Father Patrick (2014) for trainer Jimmy Takter. Gingras drove Branded By Lindy, the 2-1 favorite, for trainer Domenico Cecere in last year's 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot to a sixth-place finish after parking the mile.

Celebrity Bambino was bred by White Birch Farm. He races for owners Burke Racing Stable, J&T Silva Stables, Knox Services and Phil Collura.

**Driver Yannick Gingras (after winning the elimination):** I wanted to play it by ear and see how the gate would unfold, behind the gate. I thought Dougie (McNair with Osceola) would move, but he didn't and I was looking to follow somebody, put I had to pull. It just worked out that way and he went on to the wire.

**Trainer Ron Burke:** He was good. Didn't really want to cut the mile, but just how the races worked out tonight, if you're not up close, it's tough.



**PP2- Ari Ferrari J (Walner-Dream Child-Muscle Hill)**

Ari Ferrari J focused on state-bred programs through most of 2-year-old season. He debuted in the New Jersey Sires Stakes in July but struggled to stay flat and ultimately finished seventh in the \$240,000 final. He found a new lease on life when shipping to The Red Mile for the Kentucky Sires Stakes, grabbing two second-place finishes in preliminaries and then finishing second by less than a length in the \$400,000 final (to **FRENCH WINE**). He scored a Grand Circuit win in a \$110,000 Bluegrass division in late September and ended the year in the Corbin Sires Stakes at The Red Mile, where he finished fourth after tiring on the lead in the \$70,000 final.

With no Hambletonian prospects on the horizon, Ari Ferrari J eased into his sophomore campaign starting in late April 2023 with a pair of runner-up finishes in overnight events at The Meadowlands. His first stakes try of the year was in the \$240,000 New Jersey Sires Stakes final, where he finished sixth (to **AIR POWER**). He then romped the week following in an overnight race before heading to the Yonkers Trot, in which he sat a pocket trip and finished third in the \$300,000 final. He racked back-to-back wins in his next starts to take the \$350,000 Zweig Memorial in 1:51 at Vernon Downs and then a \$44,250 Tompkins-Geers division in 1:51 at The Meadowlands before heading back to Kentucky. While he didn't win in any prelim of the Kentucky Sires Stakes, Ari Ferrari J forged to the lead through a shuffle and held a head in front to snag the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final on Sept. 17 before racing in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity, where he finished fifth (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**). He enters the Breeders Crown final off a second-place finish as the 4-5 favorite in his elimination (to **HELPFIRSTEDITION**).

Trainer Tony Alagna tries for his first win in the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot. He started two in the 2022 edition of this event: Slay, who finished third; and Fast As The Wind, who finished seventh.

Driver Dexter Dunn looks for his second win in the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot, having won in 2020 with Amigo Volo. Dunn teamed with Alagna last year to drive Fast As The Wind in the 3-Year-Old Colt and Gelding Trot.

Ari Ferrari J was bred by M. Biasuzzi Stable Inc. He races for owner Kenneth Jacobs.

**Trainer Tony Alagna:** I thought he was maybe not quite as sharp as he has been, so we're going to scope him to make sure everything looks good for next week. He was out a long way, but so was the winner. He should have had a little more pop than that. But Dex was most impressed with how hard he fought to be second. He said he was tired, but he fought all the way to the wire. We'll get him tuned up and ready for the final.

He's had a great season. He's been really good at the right times. He had some misfortune in the Kentucky Futurity, he got locked in from the word go, got shuffled out the back, and came flying to be fifth. I thought he had a good shot that day if things would have worked out, but it just didn't work out. Hopefully, he gets a shot to get it back in the Breeders Crown final.



**PP3- Up Your Deo (Walner-Grand Stand-Cantab Hall)**

This Ake Svanstedt trainee did not see the winner's circle as a freshman. He had an adventurous freshman campaign which included a disqualification from second place in the \$240,000 New Jersey Sires Stakes final due to a pylon violation, which placed him ninth, as well as some late season sickness before the Kindergarten Classic. In the \$268,180 Kindergarten Classic final, he finished sixth, and then wrapped the 2022 season with a fourth-place effort in the \$416,200 Valley Victory at The Meadowlands.

Up Your Deo began his sophomore campaign in the New Jersey Sires Stakes, where he pulled a 43-1 upset off a pocket ride against Oh Well in a preliminary before finishing third in the \$240,000 final (to **AIR POWER**). He then won the \$300,000 Yonkers Trot after recovering from a break in stride past the start to win his elimination the week prior. The Yonkers Trot is a race that has produced six Breeders Crown winners in this event: Baltic Speed (1984), Mack Lobell (1987), Muscles Yankee (1998), CR Renegade (1999), Strong Yankee (2005) and Gimpanzee (2019). After finishing third in the \$1,000,000 Hambletonian final (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**), Up Your Deo won the \$300,000 Earl Beal Jr. Memorial, a race that has only produced one Breeders Crown winner in this division with Father Patrick (2014). Up Your Deo came into the Breeders Crown eliminations off a month layoff, his last start being a fourth-place finish in the \$488,400 Canadian Trotting Classic (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**). He sat a pylon trip in his Breeders Crown elimination and darted up the open stretch to win in 1:53.1.

Trainer Ake Svanstedt tries for his first victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. He last appeared in this event in 2021 when he finished second to supplemental entry Jujubee with Fly Light at The Meadowlands.

Svanstedt also looks for his first driving win in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. He would be just the third trainer-driver to win in this event, the other two being Mark O'Mara (Firm Tribute, 1988) and Dick Stillings (Esquire Spur, 1989). His last drive in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot was at Harrah's Hoosier Park when he steered his trainee Back Of The Neck to an eighth-place finish in the final won by Amigo Volo.

Up Your Deo was bred by Deo Volente Farms LLC. He races for owners Ake Svanstedt, Suleyman Yuksel Stables, Deo Volente Farms and Van Camp Trotting Corp.

**Trainer Sarah Svanstedt:** It's actually been a little up and down (his year) but now he is finding himself again. He did great today.



**PP4- Kilmister (Chapter Seven-Treviso-Muscle Massive)**

Kilmister's career success came with a 1:53.3 victory in the \$337,000 Peter Haughton Memorial last year at The Meadowlands, and from there the colt has worked to recover that form. The Haughton itself has not been a productive race for the Breeders Crown 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot – Muscle Hill was the first horse in history to win the Peter Haughton at 2 and then the Breeders Crown at 3. Only three other horses have also pulled this double: Father Patrick (2013-2014), What The Hill (2016-2017) and King Of The North (2021-2022).

Trouble arose soon for Kilmister after he won a Kentucky Sires Stakes preliminary in 1:52.3. He broke stride in the following preliminary, but stayed flat in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final to finish third (to **FRENCH WINE**) before battling sickness in the first week of the Grand Circuit at The Red Mile. He broke stride in a \$96,800 International Stallion Stakes division the following week but ended the campaign on a pair of third-place finishes, one in the \$600,000 Breeders Crown final and the other in the \$416,200 Valley Victory.

Returning as a sophomore in May, Kilmister made two starts before returning to the winner's circle in a \$95,771 Empire Breeders Classic division at Vernon Downs with a 1:52.4 effort. He then finished fifth in the \$350,000 Zweig Memorial at Vernon Downs (to **ARI FERRARI J**) and then second in a \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial division before failing to make the Hambletonian final with an eighth-place finish in his elimination while encumbered with post 10. Though Kilmister stayed near the spotlight through the middle of the year, finishing second in the \$300,000 Earl Beal Jr. Memorial (to **UP YOUR DEO**) and later second in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final (to **ARI FERRARI J**) before finding the winner's circle with a 1:50.3 effort in a \$78,000 Bluegrass division at The Red Mile. He then finished fourth at odds of 46-1 in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**) before heading to Harrah's Hoosier Park for the Breeders Crown eliminations, in which he finished third (to **UP YOUR DEO**).

Trainer Marcus Melander tries for his second victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, the event which gave him his first Breeders Crown trophy when he won in 2019 at Pocono Downs with Gimpanzee. Melander was last in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot final in 2021 when he finished 10<sup>th</sup> with Dancinginthedark M. Last year he sent Temporal Hanover and Periculum in the eliminations with both failing to qualify for the final. Melander also sends finalists **AIR POWER** and **DIRE STRAITS**.

Driver Brian Sears holds the record for most victories in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot at six: Yankee Slide (2004), Strong Yankee (2005), Arch Madness (2007), Muscle Hill (2009), Break The Bank K (2010) and Tactical Landing (2018). Sears' last drive in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot was for Marcus Melander in the 2021 edition with Dancinginthedark M.

Kilmister was bred by Moni Market Breeders. He races for owner Courant Inc. They won in this event in 2019 with Gimpanzee.

**Trainer Marcus Melander:** I thought he raced great. He's always right there. He's not winning every week, but he's always racing good. With a good draw, he can get a good piece of it. He's right there making money. You have to be happy with him.



**PP5- Helpfirstedition (Helpisontheway-She Knows Swagger-Justice Hall)**

Only one horse supplemented into the 2023 Breeders Crown and his name is Helpfirstedition. At the signing of a \$72,000 check to enter, Helpfirstedition found himself a spot in the final off a 1:53.1 performance of force in his elimination. With his entry, he was the 120<sup>th</sup> horse in the history of the Breeders Crown to supplement. He will try to become the 24<sup>th</sup> to win in the Breeders Crown after supplementing. The 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot has seen six horses supplement and win: Liberty Balance (2001), Kadabra (2002), Mr Muscleman (2003), Arch Madness (2007), Intimidate (2012) and Jujubee (2021).

Helpfirstedition comes into the Breeders Crown as the pride of Indiana. He went unraced as a 2-year-old following a single qualifier in 2:01 to develop and grow. He qualified as a 3-year-old in March and debuted on March 25 as a 3-5 favorite, finishing fourth after recovering from an interference break in an overnight event. He then plowed through a late-closing series in April to win the \$18,000 in April with a 1:55.3 mile. He tried the Indiana Sires Stakes but didn't win in the first three preliminaries. He won only one leg of the whole series on July 20 with a 1:53 mile and then later scored a 1:51.3 victory in late September in the \$110,000 Phil Langley Memorial as the 5-2 favorite. The convincing victory for his connections to try the Breeders Crown was on Oct. 13 in the \$250,000 Indiana Sires Stakes Super Final, where he powered first over and pushed to a 3-1/2-length victory in 1:53.3.

He'll try to become the eighth gelding to win in this event, joining Liberty Balance (2001), Mr Muscleman (2003), Arch Madness (2007), In Focus (2008), Intimidate (2012), Spider Blue Chip (2013) and Amigo Volo (2020).

Melissa Essig makes her first appearance in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot and tries for her first win in the event as well as her first Breeders Crown win. Essig currently sits fourth in wins on the trainer standings at Harrah's Hoosier Park but sits second in purses.

Driver John DeLong makes his first appearance in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. His only Breeders Crown appearances have come locally when the event first came to Harrah's Hoosier Park in 2017 when he had three drives, none of which hit the board.

Helpfirstedition was bred by Martin Wickey. He races for owners Ervin Wickey, John Graber, Running Wild Stables and John Schmucker.

**(after winning the elimination)**

**Abrn Wickey:** He was late coming along at 2 so we decided to put him away and bring him back at 3.

**Lester Schmucker:** We had a barnfire and we brought him down to Jody (a member of their team) and got him qualified. But we were all pretty high at him at that time. Then we brought him back and he was in Arbn's barn. He had a lot of rehab but he answered a lot of questions.

(On the decision to supplement the horse) My wife said it was stupid but she knows everything. We just thought that if raced good in the final we would give a shot because he deserved to be in one of these positions.

**Abrn Wickey:** (On the cheering of the crowd on the apron and how he won) I thought it would be tougher than that but in the final (Indiana Super Final) he raced so tremendously. It's, it's I don't know what to say.

**Lester Schmucker:** I had a sense of relief when he hit the stretch. I kind of thought he was home free. It was the first time he has ever been on the front and I just want to give thanks to the team.



**PP6- Air Power (Muscle Hill-Beyond Blue-Cantab Hall)**

Early in 2023, Air Power emerged as the springtime favorite for the Hambletonian off a freshman campaign where he went winless from three starts with a second-place finish in the \$100,000 New Jersey Classic “B” division in September at The Meadowlands before hitting the bench.

Air Power made his 3-year-old debut on May 5 with a 1:52.1 effort in an overnight event at The Meadowlands before winning the \$240,000 New Jersey Sires Stakes final in 1:50.4. He continued to demonstrate sharp late speed with a second-place finish when kicking home in :25.3 in a \$35,400 Reynolds Memorial division before things went awry. Air Power went off the 1-5 favorite in his \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial division but threw a shoe rounding the final turn, causing him to break stride and finish eighth. Assistant trainer Mattias Melander later conjectured this incident likely impacted him for his Hambletonian elimination, where he again broke stride and finished 10<sup>th</sup> as the 9-5 favorite before going on a layoff.

With just about a month off the track, Air Power made his pari-mutuel return in a New Jersey Classic elimination before winning the \$275,000 final with ease in 1:51. He then shipped to The Red Mile and finished third from off the speed in a \$78,000 Bluegrass division (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**) and finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**) after taking a bad step when first over and breaking stride around the final turn. Air Power rebounded from that miscue in the Breeders Crown elimination, trotting a final quarter in :26.1 to finish fourth in his elimination (to **UP YOUR DEO**).

Trainer Marcus Melander tries for his second victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, the event which gave him his first Breeders Crown trophy when he won in 2019 at Pocono Downs with Gimpanzee. Melander was last in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot final in 2021 when he finished 10<sup>th</sup> with Dancinginthedark M. Last year he sent Temporal Hanover and Periculum in the eliminations with both failing to qualify for the final. Melander also sends finalists **KILMISTER** and **DIRE STRAITS**.

Driver Mattias Melander tries for his first Breeders Crown win. He makes his first appearance in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot after missing the final last year with a sixth-place finish by Temporal Hanover in the elimination. Melander’s best performance came in the 2019 2-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot against Amigo Volo when storming home to finish second at odds of 36-1.

Air Power was bred by Order By Stable AB. He competes for owners AMG Stable Inc., Rick Wahlstedt, Kenneth Kjellgren and Heights Stable.

**Trainer Marcus Melander:** He raced good. He needed a race. He got far back and sprinted home good [in :26.1]. He finished fourth; we were a little lucky there with the earnings. But we know he’s fast enough. It felt like some of my horses needed the race. On [Kentucky] Futurity Day, they were sick, so they needed these races. I think they will be a lot sharper next week. [On making break in Futurity] He stepped on himself a little bit. He didn’t lose a shoe or anything, but he almost fell down. It was unfortunate.



**PP7- Osceola (Muscle Mass-Armbro Exquisite-Conway Hall)**

This Canadian invader has exhibited as much talent as he has quirks through his 2- and 3-year-old seasons. He debuted in July 2022 with a sixth-place finish in an Ontario Sires Stakes Gold division when breaking stride around the first turn, but immediately followed that with a 5-3/4-length victory in another Gold preliminary in 1:56. Such became the tale of Osceola; speed when flat, but flat on occasion. He won two more Gold events as a 2-year-old, missed the William Wellwood Memorial final after breaking stride in the elimination and then broke stride in the \$162,000 Ontario Sires Stakes Super Final to finish seventh as the 4-5 favorite. But he qualified after that race for the Breeders Crown final with a third-place finish in his elimination. He then broke stride and finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the final.

Quirks carried into Osceola's 3-year-old season, which began with a sweep of the \$107,152 Ontario SBOA Stakes in May at Woodbine Mohawk Park. He then finished second in a Gold preliminary before the Goodtimes eliminations, in which he broke stride and finished eighth. He took a month off and returned to break stride again in a Gold preliminary, but nonetheless came south to tackle the Hambletonian. He flourished from off the speed in his elimination at odds of 51-1 to just miss victory from traffic troubles and finish third. Then in the \$1,000,000 Hambletonian final, he broke stride and finished 10<sup>th</sup>. After the Hambletonian, his gait antics stopped with the addition of hobbles. He has since won a Gold preliminary, finished third in a \$131,202 Simcoe Stakes division, seventh in the \$488,400 Canadian Trotting Classic (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) and fourth in the \$219,000 Ontario Sires Stakes Super Final. He sat a pocket trip in his Breeders Crown elimination and held onto a third-place finish (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**).

Trainer Gregg McNair tries for his first win in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot and his first Breeders Crown win. He sent one to the eliminations for the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot last season with Thewinnertakeitall, who finished seventh and missed the final. McNair came closest to a Breeders Crown victory in the 2000 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Pace when finishing second with Geroge Scooter (to Gallo Blue Chip).

Driver Doug McNair tries for his first victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. McNair last appeared in this event with Seven And Seven for trainer Thomas Durand, who finished seventh (to Fiftydollarbill). McNair's only other appearance in this division came all the way back in 2009, his Breeders Crown debut, when finishing fourth with Striking Lindsey (to Muscle Hill) for trainer and his father Gregg McNair.

Osceola was bred by Willow Oak Ranch. He races for owners Gregg McNair, Willow Oak Ranch and Paul Hawman.

**Trainer Gregg McNair:** He raced good. He was a little bit tired on the end of it, but he didn't race too bad. We put the trotting hobbles on him after the Hambletonian. It's taken away a little of his trot, but he's been staying at it. I think we'll just leave him like he is for next week. There were some pretty good horses that finished behind him. I felt that was a pretty strong division. It was a pretty tough race. I was happy enough to get in.

Next year, I hope he gets a little smarter and we can maybe take [the trotting hobbles] off again. To train him, you have no problem, but that's a lot different than racing. If you have to take ahold of him, he usually gets a little mad. With the trip he had, he should have been second, but he's in. That's the most important thing.



**PP8- French Wine (Bar Hopping-Creamy Mimi-Conway Hall)**

Out of 2008 Hambletonian Oaks winner Creamy Mimi, who finished fifth in the 2008 Breeders Crown 3-Year-Old Filly Trot (to Kadaelia), French Wine looks for his first Grand Circuit win while having quietly marched closer and closer to millionaire's status.

Most of French Wine's big bucks have come from state-bred programs. As a 2-year-old, his crowning victory was a 1:53 mile in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final. On the Grand Circuit, he finished fifth in the \$512,050 William Wellwood Memorial at Woodbine Mohawk Park, fourth in a \$109,000 Bluegrass division at The Red Mile and third in a \$96,800 International Stallion Stakes division at The Red Mile.

As a 3-year-old, French Wine is still in search of a Grand Circuit win. He has tangoed in the top events, finishing fourth in the \$350,000 Zweig Memorial (to **ARI FERRARI J**) at Vernon Downs, third in a \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial division, second in his \$100,000 Hambletonian elimination (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) and eighth in the \$1,000,000 Hambletonian final (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**). He found the winner's circle in the \$252,000 Pennsylvania Sires Stakes Championship on Sept. 3 but has remained a tough-luck type since. He finished third in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes Final (to **ARI FERRARI J**), second in a \$78,000 Bluegrass division (to **TACTICAL APPROACH**) and appeared home free in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity final until **TACTICAL APPROACH** shook free from a shuffle and nabbed victory in the closing strides of a 1:52 mile. Off the 3-2 favorite in his Breeders Crown elimination, French Wine came from off the speed with a .26.1 final quarter to finish second (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) in a 1:53.2 mile.

Trainer Julie Miller tries for his first victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. She came closest to winning in this division in her most recent appearance in the 2018 renewal at Pocono Downs with Met's Hall, who finished second (to Tactical Landing).

Driver Andy Miller looks for his first victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. Miller's last appearance in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot was when he came closest to winning in 2018 with Met's Hall.

French Wine was bred by Marvin Katz and Al Libfeld. He races for owners Andy Miller Stable, Daniel & Jean Plouffe and One Legend Stable Inc.

**Trainer Julie Miller:** I was really happy. When I saw a half in :57.1 and he was sitting last in a short field, you get a little anxious. But I had a lot of confidence that Andy and French Wine would at least get us into the final, which they did. He had some nice late closing kick. That was a really nice mile for him.

I feel like he's gotten sharper. I think when we brought him back to Pennsylvania for that [sire stakes] final, it really bravened him up. His races in Lexington were super. That [1]:50 mile, you couldn't ask for anything better than that. I was really happy and proud of him. He's a consistent horse. He's normally in the top three, and consistency like that is hard to come by for two years.





**PP9- Dire Straits (Muscle Hill-Southwind Cocoa-Chocolatier)**

Out of the mare Southwind Cocoa, who finished third in the 2013 3-Year-Old Filly Trot (to Bee A Magician), Dire Straits makes his Breeders Crown return after finishing fourth in last year's 2-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot.

Dire Straits began his career in the New Jersey Sires Stakes, where he finished fifth in the \$240,000 final. He remained an under-the-radar horse through his freshman season with a fourth-place finish in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final before wrapping his campaign in the Breeders Crown.

As a 3-year-old, Dire Straits has only found the winner's circle once from 12 tries – that win coming in a Kentucky Commonwealth preliminary in 1:51.4 in September at The Red Mile. He began his sophomore campaign in the New Jersey Sires Stakes, finishing ninth in the \$240,000 final (to **AIR POWER**). He hit the bench and returned in July with a fourth-place finish in a \$34,900 Reynolds Memorial division at The Meadowlands (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) and made one last start before shipping to Kentucky in the \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial, finishing ninth from post 10.

Aside from his lone win in Kentucky, Dire Straits moved from the Commonwealth Series to the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final, finishing fifth (to **ARI FERRARI J**). He then finished sixth in a \$78,000 Bluegrass division in his first start for trainer Marcus Melander after being trained his whole campaign by his brother Mattias Melander. Dire Straits stayed off the track until his Breeders Crown elimination, adding Lasix and then securing a spot in the final at odds of 44-1 with a third-place finish (to **HELPFIRSTEDITION**).

Trainer Marcus Melander tries for his second victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, the event which gave him his first Breeders Crown trophy when he won in 2019 at Pocono Downs with Gimpanzee. Melander was last in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot final in 2021 when he finished 10<sup>th</sup> with Dancinginthedark M. Last year he sent Temporal Hanover and Periculum in the eliminations with both failing to qualify for the final. Melander also sends finalists **KILMISTER** and **AIR POWER**.

Driver David Miller tries for his fifth win in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, having won with Kadabra (2002), The Bank (2015), What The Hill (2017) and with trainer Marcus Melander with Gimpanzee (2019). Miller finished second in last year's edition with Double Deceiver for trainer Carter Pinske.

Dire Straits was bred by Richard Gutnick. Gutnick co-owns the colt with Thomas Pontone and Gary Cocco.

**Trainer Marcus Melander:** He was a surprise [at 44-1] but he raced good. You can't fault him. It was his first time on Lasix, that surely helped him. He's a longshot in the final.



**PP10- Tactical Approach (Tactical Landing-Sarcy-Donato Hanover)**

Tactical Approach has won two American classics, each being a miracle mile. The seas opened after his post-10 start kept him to the pylons in the \$1,000,000 Hambletonian and he scurried through to a 1:50.3 victory. He found himself mired at the pylons then in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity and fired through an open lane at the pylons to win the final leg of Trotting's Triple Crown in 1:52. He'll try to become the sixth horse in history to win in the Hambletonian and the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, joining the ranks of Prakas (1985), Mack Lobell (1987), Giant Victory (1991), Malabar Man (1997), Muscles Yankee (1998) and Muscle Hill (2009). He'll also try to become the seventh horse to win the Kentucky Futurity and the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot the same year, joining Pine Chip (1993), Mr Muscleman (2003), Strong Yankee (2005), Muscle Hill (2009), Amigo Volo (2020) and Jujubee (2021).

As a 2-year-old Tactical Approach raced five times, all in Kentucky. He finished fifth in the \$100,000 Kentucky Commonwealth final and then qualified in 1:58.4 in late October before hitting the bench.

Off the short campaign, Tactical Approach started his sophomore season in late April with a 1:52.3 victory in an overnight at The Meadowlands before attacking the New Jersey Sires Stakes, where he finished fourth in the \$240,000 final (to **AIR POWER**). He then finished third in a \$34,900 Reynolds Memorial division (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) after cutting the fractions and again set the speed in a \$138,500 Stanley Dancer Memorial division before fading to third. Tactical Approach reverted to off-the-speed tactics in his Hambletonian elimination to finish third (to **CELEBRITY BAMBINO**) and stormed home in the \$1,000,000 final. He continued racing from off the speed until traffic troubles resulted in a fourth-place finish in the \$400,000 Kentucky Sires Stakes final (to **ARI FERRARI J**). He rebounded from the loss with a front-stepping 1:50.1 victory in a \$78,000 Bluegrass division and exhibited similar speed in the \$450,000 Kentucky Futurity, which placed him in a shuffle he overcame to win in 1:52. He raced from off the speed in his Breeders Crown elimination but had too much ground to recoup despite a :26.3 final quarter, finishing second (to **UP YOUR DEO**).

Trainer Nancy Takter tries for her first win in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot, an event in which her father Jimmy Takter holds the record for most wins with seven. Nancy competed in the 2022 edition with Keg Stand, who broke stride after the start and finished 10<sup>th</sup> (to King Of The North). Takter's best finish in this event was at Harrah's Hoosier Park in 2020 when Ready For Moni finished fifth to Amigo Volo.

Driver Scott Zeron tries for his first victory in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot. Zeron last appeared in the 3-Year-Old Colt & Gelding Trot when the Breeders Crown first came to Harrah's Hoosier Park in 2017 with International Moni, who finished third to Fiftydallarbill. Zeron won his first Breeders Crown in 2016 in the 3-Year-Old Filly Pace with Call Me Queen Be for trainer Ross Croghan.

Tactical Approach was bred by Steve Stewart and Oakwood Farms. He races for owners Robert LeBlanc, John Fielding, Joe Sbrocco and JAF Racing.

**Trainer Nancy Takter:** He beat all the horses he could see. He didn't see [Up Your Deo] on the inside, so he raced good.

