



By Ray Cotolo (Deuce Photo)

FORTUNE STARLET (Trixtion—Fortune Dream—Daguet Rapide)

Breeder: Deo Volente Farms LLC, *Flemington, NJ*

Owners: William J. Donovan, *Monument Beach, MA*

Trainer: George Ducharme

Driver: Andrew McCarthy

Purchase: \$65,000 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale

Debuting at two in the New Jersey Sires Stakes, **Fortune Starlet** lost in her first start but followed with wins in the second preliminary and the \$200,000 final—the latter of which she won by five lengths in 1:54.3. However after that start, she had a chip in her knee and sat on the bench for the rest of the year.

“We quit with her, operated, gave her close to six months off before we brought her back,” trainer George Ducharme said. “The knees have held up good but she hasn’t quite performed the

way we were hoping she would. Last year, had she hadn't had that injury and I could've raced her, I think she would've been one of the better fillies all year. That handicapped us a little bit. Because if she had raced more we'd be that much ahead of the game right now instead of trying to play catch up against those fillies who have raced.

"She was ready to come up north the end of April, first week of May, but then obviously we lost that month or six weeks before we got going," Ducharme also said. "I don't know how much that affected her; if I could've gotten a few more starts in her earlier, she might be a little better by now. We'll just keep plugging away and hope she turns into the horse we thought she was going to be."

Fortune Starlet made her first start of her three-year-old season on June 19 in the New Jersey Sires Stakes. She finished fifth and fourth in the prelims before parking the mile from post 10 and finishing fourth in the \$160,000 final. She followed that race two weeks later with a sixth-place finish going first over in the \$42,700 Tompkins-Geers and got a final race in on July 31 with a second-place effort in an overnight event as the 4-5 favorite.

"I think part of it is [that] she's just green, where she was so lightly raced last year... she just hasn't put it all together mentally.

"I think she's kind of behind [the best]. Right now I'm hoping for Saturday we'll go for a check and go from there. I think as the year goes on I hope she progresses, but right at the moment she's just in the middle of the pack in that group of horses."

Trainer George Ducharme tries for his first win in the Hambletonian Oaks with his first starter. The Massachusetts native most notably won the 2013 Hambletonian with *Royalty For Life*, the first year that the Hambletonian reverted to the two-heat format.

Andrew McCarthy picks up the drive on **Fortune Starlet** as he tries for his first victory in the Oaks. McCarthy has previously started in the race three times, last year driving *Princess Deo* to a fifth-place finish. A native of Australia, McCarthy has raced regularly in North America since 2007. He has seen his purse earnings increase annually since the start of 2013, reaching a career-best \$7.6 million in 2019.