

## Self Possessed Sets the Tone for the New Millennium

The final Hambletonian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century set new standards for the sport as two industry records were shattered on an electric August afternoon.

In a blistering performance, Self Possessed posted the fastest trotting mile in harness history in the \$1 million final, and the total handle of \$7,132,583 set the mark as the highest in the sport.

The charismatic colt commanded the lead at the half and drew off to an effortless five and a half-length victory in 1:51.3, a stakes, track and world record.

Self Possessed gave the team of driver Mike Lachance and trainer Ron Gurfein their third Hambletonian in six years. Lachance and Gurfein won in 1994 with Self Possessed's sire, Victory Dream, and in 1996 with the filly Continentalvictory.

"I can't take credit for it," Lachance said. "He did it on his own, and it was very easy for him. It's a very special day for me."

Though the end-result was a dream come true, Gurfein admitted the race did not start out as he imagined while drifting off to sleep the night before.

"I was picturing Secretariat," Gurfein said. "Watching Secretariat in the Belmont Stakes, well that's a dream race for a trainer. I pictured Self Possessed going right to the top and just drawing off. Mike had a lot of decisions to make from the start to the quarter-pole. That was one of the greatest drives for \$1 million you'll ever see in your life."

Self Possessed became the first son of a Hambletonian winner to win the Hambletonian at the Meadowlands. His victory solidified Victory Dream's status as a top stakes producer and added another laurel to the Valley Victory lineage.

As a member of the Self Possessed Stable, George Segal's Brittany Farms earned its first owner's credit, and its second breeder's, in the Hambletonian. Brittany, which also bred Continentalvictory, sold Self Possessed at auction as a yearling for \$100,000, but later joined the ownership team through a private purchase.



- All of Self Possessed's three-year-old starts prior to the race (five for a purse and two qualifiers) were at the Meadowlands. Three of the last five winners (Victory Dream, 1994; Tagliabue, 1995; and Malabar Man, 1997) used the same course to the winner's circle.
- Self Possessed's five and a half length margin of victory in the Hambletonian was surpassed only by Mack Lobell's six and a quarter record margin (1987) and possibly Peter Astra's "half a dozen lengths" (1939) in the days before the photo finish. It equaled Nevele Pride's margin of victory (1968).
- Self Possessed also won the Kentucky Futurity, but did not start in the Yonkers Trot.
- Self Possessed was the 33rd Hambletonian winner to be honored as a USHWA/USTA divisional champion since 1952.
- John Sokul, the Gurfein Stable's assistant trainer, was also the caretaker for Victory Dream, the sire of Self Possessed.
- It was Jerry & Rosalie Silva's second trip to the Hambletonian winner's circle, as they were also partners on Continentalvictory (1996). Nineteen Hambletonian winners, including Victory Dream, are owned wholly or in part by New York connections, the most of any state. Seventeen winning owners come from New Jersey; 14 from Pennsylvania. Owners David Scharf and the Silvas are both from New York.
- Self Possessed is one of only eight Hambletonian winners produced in their sire's initial crop. The seven others: Hoot Mon (Helicopter, 1953); Speedster (Speedy Scot, 1963); Ayres (Timothy T, 1970); Green Speed (Duenna, 1983); Mystic Park (Mack Lobell, 1987); Crowning Point (Harmonious, 1990); and Valley Victory (Victory Dream, 1995).
- Victory Dream is the tenth winner that subsequently sired a Hambletonian winner: Titan Hanover (1945); Hoot Mon (1947); Speedy Scot (1963); Ayres (1964); Nevele Pride (1968); Speedy Crown (1971); Super Bowl (1972); Green Speed (1977); Speedy Somolli (1978) and Victory Dream (1994).
- Carl Allen, 69, was the only trainer/driver programmed in the final. CR Commando was the 2-year-old Breeders Crown and divisional champion the previous fall.
- John Campbell, who is the winning driver of a record five Hambletonians, won his first Oaks with Oolong.

## Self Possessed

**SELF POSSESSED**, b c, by Victory Dream—Feeling Great, by Mystic Park  
 Driver: Mike Lachance Trainer: Ron Gurfein  
 Owner: Self Possessed Stable (Scharf, Silva, Domiano, Segal)  
 Groom: Emma Petterson  
 Sale History: Purchased as \$100,000 yearling at the Kentucky Standardbred Sale in Lexington, Ky., the consignor Brittany Farms then bought back 50% of the yearling... x 1 1

**ANGUS HALL**, b c, by Garland Lobell—Amour Angus, by Magna Force  
 Driver: John Campbell Trainer: Robert Stewart  
 Owner: Angus Hall . . . x 2

**ENJOY LAVEC**, b c, by Pine Chip — Margit Lobell, by Speedy Crown  
 Driver: Luc Ouellette Trainer: Jimmy Takter  
 Owner: AB Lavec. . . x 3 2

Also competed: Comets Tail , x-4-6; Davanti, x-5-7; Pearsall Hanover, 4-x-8; CR Renegade, x-2-9; CR Commando, 5-x-10; Keepitinthefamily, 6-x-ro; Solid Oak, 7-x-ro; Supershade, 8-x-ro; Starchip Entrprise, 9-x-ro; Fortuna Winner, x-6-ro; Americanese, x-7-ro; Caramba Kosmos, 8-x-ro; Big Z Crown, x-9-ro.

**RAFFAELLO AMBROSIO**, b c, by Victory Dream-Tishes Wish, by Arndon  
 Driver: Jack Moiseyev Trainer: Ron Gurfein  
 Owner: Ambrosio Racing Stable . . . 3 x 4

**CHERRY HILLS**, b c, by Sierra Kosmos - Melt My Heart, by Royal Prestige  
 Driver: Dave Palone Trainer: William Gallagher  
 Owner: Josphe P. Chnapko . . . 2 x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:	1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE
1st Elimination		:29 <sup>1</sup>	:56 <sup>1</sup>	1:25 <sup>2</sup> 1:54 <sup>3</sup>
2nd Elimination		:28 <sup>3</sup>	:55 <sup>3</sup>	1:23 <sup>4</sup> 1:53
Final		:27 <sup>2</sup>	:55 <sup>3</sup>	1:23 <sup>3</sup> 1:51 <sup>3</sup>

### PAYOFFS

#### FIRST ELIMINATION

Angus Hall	4.80	4.00	2.40
Cherry Hills		15.60	7.40
Raffaello Ambrosio			3.40

#### SECOND ELIMINATION

Self Possessed	3.00	2.60	2.10
CR Renegade		3.00	2.10
Enjoy Lavec			2.10

#### FINAL

Self Possessed	2.80	2.40	2.10
Angus Hall		--	--
Enjoy Lavec			2.10

