

Three Cheers for Chip Chip Hooray!

Chip Chip Hooray, a pint-sized colt with a big engine, delivered \$1 million worth of Hambletonian cheer to a seasoned Hall of Famer and a young gun when he won the 2002 edition of trotting's most prestigious event.

It was the fourth Hambletonian victory for veteran trainer Chuck Sylvester and the first for driver Eric Ledford, who was making his debut in harness racing's most prestigious event.

The weeks leading up to the Hambletonian were frustrating for Sylvester as he made a series of equipment changes trying to get the colt just right before the eliminations. Bridles, boots, shoes and sulkies were switched, and Sylvester knew he had hit upon the right combination when the colt came first-up to win his Hambletonian elimination over Andover Hall in 1:54.1, the fastest he had been asked to trot to that point.

Benefiting from the luck of the draw, Chip Chip Hooray and Andover Hall started side by side in the final, the former from post two and the latter from the rail. But post one was the only relief Andover Hall got. The 3-5 Hambletonian favorite made a break after briefly colliding with Likely Lad around the first turn and pulled up before the finish with a cut on his hind leg.

Meanwhile, Chip Chip Hooray got away fourth and tipped to the outside behind ENS Snapshot past the half. After maneuvering past that one, he put away the pacesetter Taurus Dream at the top of the stretch.

He held off the late rally of Like A Prayer for a neck victory, trotting the mile in a career best 1:53.3.

"I really didn't give it a whole lot of thought before the race," said Eric Ledford, one of the youngest reinsmen ever to reach the Hambletonian Final. "Andover was the horse I wanted to follow but it didn't work out that way. I wound up fourth, but a distanced fourth. They were eating it up pretty good out front so we just bided our time back there and let them race it out, which they did, and we were fortunate enough to pick up the pieces. At the top of the stretch, I moved him three high. He exploded off cover. He showed true ability and true guts and the true champion that he is."

"People don't realize how much luck and coordination go into this one day," said Sylvester, who made it to the Hambletonian winner's circle despite battling a bad case of bursitis. "It takes so much luck to win this race. He just wasn't himself three weeks in-a-row. We changed his bridle to an open bridle and pulled his hind shoes. He trained super so I decided to go with that. I was surprised that they made Andover Hall such a favorite. I thought we went a big race last week."

The victory was especially sweet for Sylvester as he trained the colt's sire, Pine Chip, who finished second to American Winner in the 1993 Hambletonian.

Chip Chip Hooray concluded his sophomore season, and career, with 12 victories from 24 starts and earnings of \$1,095,001.



- Since the eliminations were moved to the previous week in 1998, Chip Chip Hooray is the fifth elimination winner in as many years to win the final. His 1:54.1 victory was the fastest elim of the day, and he defeated favored Andover Hall by a head. His mile in the final was a career best 1:53.3.
- Chip Chip Hooray represented Chuck Sylvester's 4th Hambletonian winner, as the Ohio native scored previous victories with Mack Lobell (1987), Park Avenue Joe (dh1989) and Muscles Yankee (1998). Only Billy Haughton, Stanley Dancer and Ben White have won more Hambletonian titles, as each won five times.
- It was Castleton Farm's sixth, and probably final, Hambletonian Breeders trophy. Chip Chip Hooray was offered in Castleton's last yearling consignment before the farm closed its doors in 2000.
- Chip Chip Hooray was owned in part by Ed and Nancy Iacobucci – and was their first standardbred purchase. Another partner, Mike Prakas, saw his namesake, Prakas, win the 1985 Hambletonian.
- Pine Chip also sired 2001 winner Scarlet Knight, making him the first stallion since the legendary Star's Pride to sire back-to-back winners (1968-1969).
- It was winning driver Eric Ledford's first start in the Hambletonian. The 30-year-old driver became the 17th (including Nat Ray who won the first edition) to win the race in his first try. Others are: Bill Leese, Dick McMahon, Will Caton, Lee Smith, Harrison Hoyt, Harry Harvey, Ned Bower, Flave Nipe, Howard Beissinger, John Simpson Jr., Ray Remmen, Ulf Thoresen, Bill Fahy, Jack Moiseyev and Trevor Ritchie.
- Chip Chip Hooray is the 29th winner whose paternal line traces directly to Scotland (third to Spencer in 1928). Scotland was a grandson of Peter The Great whose prodigy has won 64 of 77 Hambletonians, including both dead-heat winners in 1989. Peter The Great was a great-grandson of Hambletonian 10.
- Chip Chip Hooray was the 14th Hambletonian winner sold as a yearling by Tattersalls, the most by any sale company. Standardbred Horse Sale is runner-up for those honors with 13.
- Chip Chip Hooray, was the 33rd winner sired by a Kentucky stallion, a record for a state breeding program. The winners of the first 15 consecutive Hambletonians (1926 to 1940) were by Kentucky stallions. He was the 9th Hambletonian winner produced by a Castleton Farm stallion. His sire Pine Chip was exported to Sweden in 2000 when the Castleton holdings were dispersed.
- John Campbell drove in his 20th consecutive Hambletonian. Favored Andover Hall went offstride in the first turn, dashing the defending divisional champ's hopes of becoming just the third colt to take freshman honors and win the Hambletonian.
- The Hambletonian Day card also featured the world's fastest trotting mile of all time after Sweden's Victory Tilly, driven by Stig Johansson, won the Nat Ray in a time of 1:50.4. One of the owners proposed in the winner's circle to his fiancée. She accepted.
- The Hambletonian crowd numbered 28,969 - the largest since 2000 and the third largest since 1991. Those in attendance wagered \$3,344,540 on-track. The total North American handle of \$8,819,235 set a Meadowlands and harness racing industry record. The Meadowlands distributed a record \$4,387,500 in purse money for the 17-race card, which included the Sweetheart and Woodrow Wilson for two-year-old pacers, which had to be raced on the Hambletonian Day card when dangerous lightning and heavy rainstorms the night before necessitated their postponement after a lengthy delay.
- Eventual divisional champion and Trotter of the Year Kadabra was not eligible to the Hambletonian, which does not allow supplements.

Chip Chip Hooray

CHIP CHIP HOORAY, b c, by Pine Chip-Share A Victory, by Valley Victory
 Driver: Eric Ledford Trainer: Charles Sylvester
 Owner: C. Sylvester, M. Prakas, Wingedfoot Farms, N. Goldman
 Groom: Kelly Mockler
 Sale History: \$20,000 yearling, Tattersalls Sale, Lexington, KY... 1 x 1

LIKE A PRAYER, b c, by Lindy Lane-Meadowmiss Hanover, by Super Bowl
 Driver: Ron Pierce Trainer: Brett Pelling
 Owner: Perfect World Enterprises... 2 x 2

DUKE OF YORK, b c, by Balanced Image-Ambro Monarch, by Valley Victory
 Driver: Paul MacDonell Trainer: John Bax
 Owner: A. Libfeld, M. Katz, S. Goldband... 3 x 3

MALABAR MAPLE, b c, by Malabar Man-Promised Crown, by Speedy Crown
 Driver: Luc Ouellette Trainer: Jimmy Takter
 Owner: MCB Farm, I. Liverman, J. Fielding... 4 x 4

TAURUS DREAM, b c, by Sir Taurus-Uniformite JP, by On The Take
 Driver: Paul Macdonell Trainer: Bernard Grignola
 Owner: Dream With Me Stb & Wildenstein Stb... 1 x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:	1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE	
1st Elimination		:27 ²	:55 ³	1:24 ⁴	1:54 ¹
2nd Elimination		:28 ³	:57 ¹	1:26 ³	1:55 ⁴
3rd Elimination		:27 ⁴	:54 ⁴	1:25	1:55 ¹
Final		:28 ¹	:55 ²	1:23 ²	1:53 ³

PAYOFFS

FIRST ELIMINATION

Chip Chip Hooray	16.00	6.00	3.20
Andover Hall		3.20	2.20
Malabar Maple			2.40

SECOND ELIMINATION

ENS Snapshot	4.60	3.60	2.80
Like A Prayer		8.20	5.40
Really Suspicious			14.20

THIRD ELIMINATION

Taurus Dream	13.80	5.80	3.80
Duke Of York		9.80	5.00
Chipmate			5.00

FINAL

Chip Chip Hooray	12.60	9.00	8.40
Like A Prayer		17.40	11.20
Duke Of York			10.40

