

The Meadowlands • August 2, 2003 • Purse \$1,210,000

Amigo Hall Gives Hall of Famer A Grand Slam

Amigo Hall's 27-1 upset in the Hambletonian was a fitting end to the 2003 Meadowlands meet for Hall of Fame driver Mike Lachance. In what might be the twilight of some careers, Lachance, at age 52, experienced a spectacular season that included victories in both of the Meadowlands' million-dollar events, the Hambletonian and the Meadowlands Pace.

Ironically, Lachance qualified neither Amigo Hall nor his Meadowlands Pace winner, Allamerican Theory, for their spots in their respective \$1 million finals. Both were opportunities that opened up when others opted off them for other drives.

Lachance received the call when John Campbell chose Power To Charm, who won the slowest of the Hambletonian eliminations, over Amigo Hall, who had finished third in his elimination.

When elimination winner Bebop broke stride at the start of the final, Lachance made a key decision to take Amigo Hall to the top. The quarter-mile was reached in 28.2 seconds, when the favorite, Power To Charm, went to the top and led the field to the half-mile in 55.4. They remained in command to the three-quarter marker, but it quickly became apparent the favorite was not going to be his best that day. It also appeared that Amigo Hall was going to be an also-ran as well, as he was sitting along the pylons in fourth without any room to maneuver.

Sugar Trader, the second choice, was brought into contention at the top of the stretch and appeared strongest as he assumed the lead, but inside the seven-eighths pole a narrow lane opened and

Lachance and Amigo Hall exploded through it.

The mile went in 1:54, well off the stakes, track, and world record of 1:51.3. Sugar Trader and Mac's Crown K were second and third, respectively. The victory margin was one length and a neck separated the place and show finishers. Amigo Hall returned \$57 to win, the longest price in a Hambletonian final.

"I knew [Power To Charm] had to work hard and my horse was feeling fresh," said Lachance. "It may have been good luck, but I got out and when it's your day, it's your day."

Power To Charm, who had won his last three starts, including the Stanley Dancer Trot, finished fifth.

It was Lachance's fourth Hambletonian win — and the first behind a horse not trained by Ron Gurfein. The colt's trainer, Blair Burgess, was making his Hambletonian debut. Although it was not his first million-dollar victory - he won the Meadowlands Pace in 1987 with Frugal Gourmet and 2001 with Real Desire, Burgess was a man not generally regarded as a top "trotting trainer."

"I'm not usually good with trotters," Burgess laughed. "But, he's been a lot of fun and has been a surprise. I don't like to talk about the problems of other horses, but when Bebop broke at the start Mike was able to use his gate speed and take him to the top. That helped us."

Amigo Hall was a \$32,000 yearling, but didn't bring his reserve at auction, missing by \$1,000, and his breeder, Alan Leavitt of Walnut Hall, Ltd., bought him back and later sold a one-half interest in the colt to Bob Burgess, the father of the trainer, and to the trainer's wife, Karin Olsson-Burgess.



- Amigo Hall is the longest priced Hambletonian winner in history, going postward at 27-1. He finished third in his elimination the previous week at 7-1. In 1984, Delvin G. Hanover won his elim heat at 62-1 and was second in the final at 5-2. Abundance (1995) won his elim at 51-1 then was second in the final at 13-1. The Ambassador (1942) was 33-1 when he won the second of three heats; he then won the final, the third heat, paying \$3.40 on the dollar. Since the requirement of winning two heats was dropped in 1992, the highest winning \$2.00 payoff in the final prior to 2003 have been Alf Palema (1992), \$8.40, and Chip Chip Hooray (2002), \$12.60.
- Since the eliminations were moved to the previous week in 1998, Amigo Hall is the first Hambletonian winner not to win his elimination. He was third, beaten four and a half lengths by Bebop and timed in 1:54.4. His mile in the final was a career best 1:54.
- Since the open draw for the final was inaugurated in 1992, Amigo Hall is only the second horse (Muscles Yankee, 1998) to win from post position six. Only Yankee Paco (2000) and Windsong's Legacy (2004) have won from farther out, post seven.
- The win was Hall of Fame driver Mike Lachance's fourth. His previous three victories were all behind Ron Gurfein-trained horses: Victory Dream (1994), Continentalvictory (1996) and Self Possessed (1999). He joined Ben White, Bill Haughton and Stanley Dancer, who all have four Hambletonian wins. The record for the most number of Hambletonian victories is held by John Campbell (six). In fact, Campbell qualified Amigo Hall for the final but was committed to drive eventual race favorite Power To Charm.
- Amigo Hall represented the first breeder's credit for Walnut Hall Ltd. which was founded in the 1990s, although historic Walnut Hall Farm, operated by Meg Leavitt's family, had eight: The Marchioness (1932), Lord Jim (1934), Peter Astra (1939), The Ambassador (1942), Volo Song (1943), Lusty Song (1950), Sharp Note (1952) and The Intruder (1956). Only Hanover Shoe Farm has more, nine.
- In addition to Victory Dream (1994), which Walnut Hall Ltd. syndicated prior to the Hambletonian, owner Alan Leavitt stood in the winner's circle as a partner on Speedy Somolli (1978). His Lana Lobell Farms of New Jersey also bred Mack Lobell (1987). Stallions

- standing at Leavitt's farms over the years have sired eight winners: Speedy Somolli (1978), Prakas (1985), Nuclear Kosmos (1986), Mack Lobell (1987), Park Avenue Joe (1989), Alf Palema (1992) and Self Possessed (1999).
- Amigo Hall had a definite Canadian connection: he was sired by an Ontario stallion, owned in part and trained by residents of that province and driven by a native of Quebec. He was Balanced Image's second winner in four years. Balanced Image remains the only Canadian sire to produce a Hambletonian winner. His first was Yankee Paco in 2000.
- Thirty-three winners, including Amigo Hall, trace their paternal line directly to Volomite, who finished second in the 1929 Hambletonian to Walter Dear. Volomite, considered one of the most influential sires in the sport, stood at Walnut Hall Farm for 20 years, and was a great-great great-grandson of Hambletonian 10.
- A record five horses made a break before the 1/8 pole in the 2003 final.
- The field included Malabar Millennium, who possessed an all-Hambletonian pedigree. He was by 1997 Hambletonian winner Malabar Man out of 1994 Hambletonian Oaks winner Gleam, and both were owned and driven by amateur driver Malvern Burroughs. No Hambletonian winner has ever sired a winner out of a mare that won the Hambletonian or the Oaks. However, Armbro Goal (1988) is by Speedy Crown (1971) out of Armbro Flight (second To Egyptian Candor in 1965) and Park Avenue Joe (1989) is by Speedy Somolli out of Delmonica Hanover (2nd To Super Bowl in 1972).
- Though winless in 10 lifetime starts prior to the Hambletonian elims, Malabar Millennium's elim victory made him the first maiden since Calumet Butler to win either a heat or an elimination in the Hambletonian.
- The inaugural Hambletonian Parade took place on the streets of Rutherford, New Jersey on the morning of the eliminations. Bagpipers, horse units, retired and racing standardbreds and Hambletonian himself led by William Rysdyck headlined the event.

Amigo Hall

AMIGO HALL, b c, by Balanced Image-Ali's Cat, by Meadow Road
 Driver: Mike Lachance Trainer: Blair Burgess
 Owner: Walnut Hall Limited, Robert Burgess, Karin Olsson-Burgess
 Groom: Stacy Wadden
 Sale History: \$32,000 yearling, Tattersalls Sale, Lexington, KY... x x 3 1

SUGAR TRADER, b c, by Trade Balance-Maple Frosting, by Valley Victory
 Driver: Luc Ouellette Trainer: John Brennan
 Owner: John Brennan, John Nordstrom, John Taddeo... 2 x x 2

MAC'S CROWN K, br c, by Bj's Mac-Angela Crown, by Speedy Crown
 Driver: Ron Pierce Trainer: Charlie Norris
 Owner: Robert J. Key... x x 2 3

INCREDIBLE HULK, b c, by Muscles Yankee-Gingerly, by Sierra Kosmos
 Driver: George Brennan Trainer: Charles Sylvester
 Owner: Perretti Racing Stable & John Rizzo... x 4 x 4

POWER TO CHARM, b c, by Malabar Man-Velvet Sauce, by Crowning Point
 Driver: John Campbell Trainer: Trond Smedshammer
 Owner: American Viking Racing, M. & M. Frank, T. Gewertz... x 1 x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:	1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE	
1st Elimination		:27 ⁴	:55 ³	1:24 ²	1:54
2nd Elimination		:28 ¹	:57 ²	1:27 ³	1:55 ²
3rd Elimination		:27 ³	:56	1:25 ³	1:54
Final		:28 ²	:55 ⁴	1:25	1:54

PAYOFFS

FIRST ELIMINATION

Malabar Millennium	22.80	6.20	4.80
Sugar Trader		3.20	2.60
Muscle King			4.40

SECOND ELIMINATION

Power To Charm	2.40	2.20	2.10
Penn Pronto		12.80	3.20
Smooth Glide			2.60

THIRD ELIMINATION

Bebop	5.80	3.80	2.60
Mac's Crown K		3.20	2.40
Amigo Hall			3.20

FINAL

Amigo Hall	57.00	20.20	10.40
Sugar Trader		6.40	4.80
Mac's Crown K			7.80

