

## Vivid Photo: From State Fairs to Hambletonian Glory

"From the Pennsylvania fairgrounds to the Hambletonian winner's circle"....so cried announcer Ken Warkentin as Roger Hammer swept under the wire with whip waving triumphantly. It was indeed a "photo" finish though the margin was three lengths. Vivid Photo and race time favorite Classic Photo finished one-two in the Hambletonian, stamping their sire, SJ's Photo as a force, and Vivid Photo as a horse to be reckoned with for the rest of the year, though he had barely been spoken about in the months leading up to the Hambletonian.

The name many expected announcer Ken Warkentin to be calling was, ironically, his own. The focus among the sophomore colt trotting group was rightfully directed on 2004 divisional Dan Patch champion the eponymous colt Ken Warkentin, who was the winter book and media favorite for the division's richest race. Yet the path for the Jimmy Takter-trained youngster contained several forks in the road. His 2005 debut was a successful one, but an ill-timed bout of sickness caused him to be scratched from the key prep race for the Hambletonian, the Stanley Dancer Trot. Instead, Classic Photo added the Dancer to his list of wins and stamped himself as the one to beat going into the Hambletonian.

Meanwhile, eventual Hambletonian winner Vivid Photo and trainer-driver Roger Hammer were on a much-less traveled path to the eliminations.

Hammer, known as the "King of the County Fairs" for his domination of the Pennsylvania fair circuit, and his long-time friend and fellow horseman Todd Schadel bought Vivid Photo as a yearling for \$30,000. Hammer figured they could earn at least the purchase price back on Vivid Photo since he was eligible to both Pennsylvania and Maryland sire stakes.

Hammer thought Vivid Photo was a very talented two-year-old, though he had just six starts at the county fair level and ended the year with a minor stress fracture. The colt's rambunctious attitude in the stall, which Hammer was sure caused the leg injury, made the decision to

geld him a proper one. Hammer also did something he rarely does and made three-year-old stake payments on a trotter.

A sophomore campaign that started with a March qualifier, followed by two scratches and a seventh-place finish in a non-winners of two conditioned event did not seem likely to launch horse and driver to the Hambletonian winner's circle. When Vivid Photo arrived at the Meadowlands for the Hambletonian eliminations he had a 1:54.4 world record for geldings at Pocono Downs and won six other races, ranging from a \$3,100 event to a \$22,000 division of the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes. He drew post three in the Hambletonian elimination that also featured Ken Warkentin as the heavy favorite.

It was no surprise that Vivid Photo and Hammer left hard at the start, as their past performances indicated. The surprise came when Ken Warkentin made his move at the three-quarter pole and instead of engaging Vivid Photo in the stretch, broke into a gallop with an eighth of a mile to go. Vivid Photo went on to win by a neck in 1:53.2, while Classic Photo was flawless in the other elim, coasting to a three-length victory in 1:53.3 and declaring himself the one to beat.

Classic Photo and Hall of Famer Ron Pierce drew post five in the final and were accorded the favorite's role at 6-5. Vivid Photo drew post six and would have to leave hard to get around Classic Photo to the lead, where he was most comfortable. In fact, Vivid Photo had been on top at the half-mile pole in 10 of his 11 races that year, but Hammer had other plans for the Hambletonian.

Hammer instead eased Vivid Photo off the gate, while Strong Yankee bulled his way to the top up the backstretch and led the field into the stretch. Northern Ensign elected to battle him first up, which set up perfect cover for Classic Photo to follow in a second-over trip. Tight on Classic Photo's tail lurked Vivid Photo, drafting all the way. When the trotters turned for home, Hammer floated out and easily overhauled the favorite in the stretch in a lifetime best of 1:52.3. Though their county fair origins may have been considered humble, Hammer outright the best the Meadowlands had to offer.



- Vivid Photo won the first Hambletonian to go for \$1.5 million under the terms of a new contract with the Meadowlands. Prior to the Hambletonian elimination, Vivid Photo never raced for more than \$22,077.
- The \$750,000 winners share of the Hambletonian purse gave Hammer and Schadel some supplemental money to flesh out their gelding's skimpy stakes schedule. They paid the \$25,000 supplement to race in the World Trotting Derby and the Kentucky Futurity and a \$62,500 fee to supplement to the Breeders Crown.
- Vivid Photo closed out the year as the richest trotter of 2005 with \$1,376,829 and divisional honors.
- Vivid Photo was the fourth winner in the last five years to make his Meadowlands debut in the Hambo elims. Others to follow the same course were Yankee Paco in 2000, Scarlet Knight in 2001 and Amigo Hall in 2003.
- Vivid Photo is just the fourth gelding to win. The others were Greyhound in 1935, Flirth in 1973, and Shiaway St. Pat in 1981.
- Sire SJ's Photo, who stands at Lindwood Farm in Greensburg, PA, was ineligible to the 1993 Hambletonian. Trained and driven by David Wade, he did earn more than \$1.3 million racing through his five-year-old year before retiring to a prolific international stud career.
- SJ's Photo produced 46 trotting colts in 2003 ; nine were kept eligible to the Hambletonian and three made the final. His sons Vivid Photo and Classic Photo finished 1-2 in the Hambletonian.
- Both SJ's Photo and 1998 Hambletonian winner Muscles Yankee were represented by three offspring in the final. Muscles Yankee sired the most expensive yearling, Muscle Bound (\$175,000), and the least expensive, Muscle Memory (\$17,000).
- Hammer's last appearance at the Meadowlands prior to the 2005 Hambletonian elims was 11 years prior, when he finished fifth in the Hambletonian Oaks with Keystone Colorful.
- Vivid Photo gave Hammer his biggest career win at age 59. Prior to 2005, his best year was 1994, when he tallied \$1.3 million topped by multiple stakes winner pacing colt Keystone Luther.
- Hammer was voted the 2005 W. R. Houghton Memorial Good Guy Award by members of the U.S. Harness Writers Association. Hammer exemplified that role to the hilt in 2005, parading Vivid Photo before the crowd at the Little Brown Jug, and many other venues.
- First-time Hambletonian winning breeder credits go to Joe and Joanne Thomson's Winbak Farm of Pennsylvania. They bred, raised and sold the 2003 and 2004 Horse of the Year honorees, No Pan Intended and Rainbow Blue, in addition to divisional and Hambletonian champion Vivid Photo.
- The dam of Vivid Photo is Miss Garland 5, 2:00f (\$91,356). She had produced a hard-knocking daughter by Giant Hit that annexed \$154,000 as her blackest type until Vivid Photo came along. His accomplishments won her Dan Patch honors as Trotting Broodmare of the Year. The 2001 breeding to SJ's Photo awakened a blue-blooded pedigree that lay dormant for 50 years – in Vivid Photo's sixth dam, Selka Song, a sister to the dam of Triple Crown winner Speedy Scot.
- The crowd of 31,245 at the Meadowlands was the highest since 1990 and marked the fifth straight year that the attendance increased on Hambletonian Day. On-track handle was \$3,398,009, the best since 1994. The total Hambletonian Day handle of \$9,015,019 was the highest ever at the Meadowlands and set a North American harness racing record.

## Vivid Photo

**VIVID PHOTO**, br g, by SJ's Photo-Miss Garland, by Garland Lobell  
 Driver: Roger Hammer      Trainer: Roger Hammer  
 Owner: Roger Hammer & Todd Schadel  
 Groom: Vicki Fair  
 Sale History: \$30,000 yearling, Harrisburg Sale, Harrisburg, PA... 1 x 1

**CLASSIC PHOTO**, b c, by SJ's Photo-Classic Winner, by American Winner  
 Driver: Ron Pierce      Trainer: Erv Miller  
 Owner: H. Wright, Mystical Marker Farms, J. & P. Hood . . . x 1 2

**MUSCLE MEMORY**, b c, by Muscles Yankee-Peace Be With You, by Pine Chip  
 Driver: Cat Manzi      Trainer: Jimmy Takter  
 Owner: Ed & Diane Smith, Christina Takter, Paul Nojaim . . . x 4 3

**STRONG YANKEE**, b c, by Muscles Yankee-So So Chic, by Sir Taurus  
 Driver: Brian Sears      Trainer: Trond Smedshammer  
 Owner: Strong Yankee Stable . . . 4p13 x 4

**SELF PROFESSED**, br g, by Self Possessed-Scentof A Woman, by Worthy Bowl  
 Driver: Eric Ledford      Trainer: Don Swick  
 Owner: Royal Wire Products Inc... 3p12 x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:		1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE
1st Elimination			:28	:55 <sup>2</sup>	1:23 <sup>3</sup>
2nd Elimination			:27 <sup>1</sup>	:55 <sup>1</sup>	1:24 <sup>3</sup>
Final			:27	:55	1:24

PAYOFFS											
<b>FIRST ELIMINATION</b>			<b>SECOND ELIMINATION</b>				<b>FINAL</b>				
Vivid Photo	19.80	7.60	7.00	Classic Photo	3.60	2.60	2.60	Vivid Photo	16.40	4.00	3.40
Self Professed		19.60	11.60	Northern Ensign		11.00	6.00	Classic Photo		2.40	2.20
Strong Yankee			6.00	Muscle Bound			5.80	Muscle Memory			4.60

