

The Meadowlands • August 4, 2007 • Purse \$1,710,000

Donato Hanover's Victory Leads to Horse of the Year Honors

The dynasty that Hanover Shoe Farms visionary Lawrence Baker Sheppard seeded in 1922 remains the pinnacle of standardbred breeding and racing some 85 years later. Though the Hanover surname dominates harness racing record books, perhaps no stat is as impressive as the legendary "Shoe" Farms' record as the breeder of 10 Hambletonian winners.

Never was there more at stake for the world-renowned farm and its syndication partners than when Donato Hanover went to the gate in the 82nd edition of the Hambletonian at The Meadowlands. The decision to syndicate the precocious two-year-old in 2006 was the first time in the history of Hanover Shoe Farm that the farm management was directly involved with a Hambletonian champion prior to the horse actually contesting the race.

The 120 shares in the \$6 million syndication agreement, sold out quickly to 22 of the sports most prominent individuals and breeding farms as Donato Hanover ended his two-year-old campaign with a Breeders Crown victory and year-end honors.

"Syndicating a two-year-old is a very dangerous business decision," Hanover Shoe Farm President Jim Simpson said. "He had to have been a very special horse for us and the others to invest. Time will only tell if this was a solid investment. But he held up his end of the bargain as a true champion."

The syndicate leased Donato Hanover back to the original owners, David Scharf, Paul Bordogna and Steve Arnold, with the agreement that Donato Hanover would return to the Pennsylvania nursery for stallion duties at a fee of \$20,000 at the conclusion of his sophomore campaign.

The dominant Donato was trained by Steve Elliott, and drew unavoidable comparisons to another Elliott trainee, Valley Victory. The great Valley Victory recorded a career remarkably parallel to that of Donato Hanover — until the week of the 1989 Hambletonian when the heralded trotter nearly died from an illness that prevented him from racing in the Hambletonian or ever again.

Eighteen years later Elliott was back on the Hambletonian trail. He kept Donato Hanover on familiar ground in the lead-up to the \$1.7 million Hambletonian, easily annexing the Historic Dickerson Cup and the Stanley Dancer Memorial elimination and final.

Another eerie coincidence to the 1989 Hambletonian emerged. That year's event was billed as a battle of the sexes — Valley Victory vs. the great filly Peace Corps. When Valley Victory wasn't entered and Peace Corps [who carried a 17-race win streak into the race] failed to fire and finished fifth and second in the preliminary heats, the result was an epic stretch battle between Park Avenue Joe and Probe that ended in the one and only dead-heat in Hambletonian history.

A battle of the sexes circa 2007 evolved after Bob and David Anderson entered their brilliant filly Pampered Princess against the boys instead of in the \$850,000 Hambletonian Oaks. Both Donato and she played their parts to perfection, each winning their respective Hambletonian eliminations. The stage was set for a classic confrontation between the two defending divisional champions, with the element of foreign intrigue added from the third elimination winner, Swedish import Adrian Chip.

Connections of the three contenders chose their post positions by lot, a privilege awarded elimination winners. They lined up with Donato Hanover as post two, Adrian post three and Pampered Princess post four, prompting the morning line odds-maker to deem Donato Hanover an even money favorite.

Under sunny skies on a breezy afternoon that kept the crowd comfortable despite the 88-degree temperature, Donato Hanover got a drive worthy of a champion from Hall of Fame pilot Ron Pierce.

Pierce let others bid for the early lead and kept the eventual winner along the rail in third on the way to a 28.2 first quarter. He moved Donato Hanover off the rail just before the quarter pole and quickly stepped to the lead, but slowed the tempo and sealed the outcome of the race as Donato Hanover led to the half-mile in a soft 58.2.

The second choice, Pampered Princess and driver Tim Tetrick, joined the chase on the backstretch, and trotting fans around the globe got the contest they wanted as the pair raced side-by-side for an eighth of a mile.

At the start of the turn the filly actually had a brief lead, but Donato Hanover surged up on the inside, was able to reclaim the advantage and trotted off to win by an unthreatened 1-1/4 lengths. Adrian Chip, who raced in the pocket, trailing the dueling favorites by about three lengths on the final turn, gave his best effort to catch Donato Hanover in the stretch but finished second.

The 82nd Hambletonian, trotted in 1:53.2, was now a career defining victory and furthered Donato Hanover's status among the greatest trotters of this era.

Pampered Princess faded to seventh, before being placed up to sixth, when fifth place finisher Too Salty was disqualified and placed back to seventh for violation of the breaking rule.

"I honestly believed Pampered Princess had the ability to win the Hambletonian," trainer Jimmy Taktar said. "If Donato had been forced to take the trip my filly had to go in that race, I honestly believe the roles might very well have been reversed."

Donato Hanover's convincing victory, the lucky 13th in a row in his career gave the sophomore son of Andover Hall — D Train an insurmountable lead on Horse of the Year honors.

Following the win, trainer Elliott, who would be named the winner of the Glen Garnsey Award as Trainer of the Year for the second time in his career, echoed the thoughts of his rival and friend Taktar.

"It makes you feel good to see them walk to the half and it's your race to win or lose," Elliott said. "If we would have been on the outside and had to come after the filly we might have been standing here and watching her in the winner's circle."

Though Donato Hanover faltered in the Breeders Crown, finishing third to Arch Madness, he cleaned up in the year-end honors, garnering 189 votes from the members of the United States Harness Writers Association while no other horse was received more than four ballots.

At the end of the season, Donato Hanover went back home to his birthplace, Hanover Shoe Farm, with the single season's earnings record of \$2,336,190, completing a career that included 19 wins, a second and two third place finishes in 22 starts and life earnings just short of \$3 million.



- In his Hambletonian elimination, Donato Hanover moved for the lead off the gate and dominated throughout the mile to capture his 12th straight victory by a length in a career best time of 1:53.1.
- At two, Donato Hanover won the \$55,875 Harriman Cup and \$456,000 Peter Haughton Final at the Meadowlands, a \$82,800 division of the Bluegrass, and \$79,500 division of the International Stallion Stakes at the Red Mile and his elimination and \$600,000 Breeders Crown Final at Woodbine. He was voted the Dan Patch Award as the 2006 Two-Year-Old Trotting Colt of the Year.
- Steve Elliott is a Detroit native and veteran of New Jersey racing. He got his start with cousin Dave Elliott, and was stable assistant when Dave set a training record of 100 wins at the Meadowlands in 1983. Steve gained his own recognition when he won the 1987 Woodrow Wilson with Even Odds and then became one of very few trainers to campaign three divisional champions in the same year

- in 1988. He was voted Trainer of the Year for that accomplishment.
- It was the first Hambletonian win for Elliott, at age 54. The Elliott stable was well decorated at years-end. Besides Donato Hanover who took Three-Year-Old Trotting Colt, Trotter of the Year and Horse of the Year honors, Elliott also conditioned sophomore pacing filly Dan Patch winner Southwind Tempo and was himself voted Trainer of the Year and the W.R. Haughton Good Guy award by the Harness Writers.
- The Elliott stable hit an all-time high benchmark of \$4.8 million with Donato Hanover, Breeders Crown winner Artistic Fella [\$674,640] and Southwind Tempo [\$849,554].
- Elliott became one of an elite group of trainers who won both the Meadowlands Pace and the Hambletonian in their careers. The others are Blair Burgess and W. R. Haughton [who've won each event twice], Ray Remmen and Chuck Sylvester.

Donato Hanover

DONATO HANOVER, br c, by Andover Hall-D Train, by Donerail
 Driver: Ron Pierce Trainer: Steve Elliot
 Owners: (Lessees) Steve Arnold, David Scharf & Golden Touch Stables[Paul Bordogna] , NY, NJ
 Breeder: Hanover Shoe Farms Inc. of Hanover, Pennsylvania
 Groom: Ann Christin Johnsen
 Sale History: \$95,000 Standardbred Horse Sale, Harrisburg, PA . . . x 1 x 1

ADRIAN CHIP, b c, by Andover Hall-My Favorite Chip, by Pine Chip
 Driver: Robert Bergh Trainer: Robert Bergh
 Owners: Stall Tre Puckar [Three Pucks Stable], Balsta, Sweden. (Peter & Kent Forsberg; Ulla & Lennart Gustavsson and Lars Sellstromis)
 Breeder: Junior Yutzky, Western Union, OH . . . x 1 x 2

LADDIE, b c, by Angus Hall-Victory Dreamer, by Valley Victory
 Driver: Paul MacDonell Trainer: Paula Wellwood
 Owners: Wellwood Stables Inc., Cambridge, ON
 Breeder: Valley High Stable (William Weaver III), Freehold, NJ . . . 4 x x 3

PLEASE POPPY, b c, by Self Possessed-Meme's Sugar, by Donerail
 Driver: Brian Sears Trainer: Per Henriksen
 Owners: Bjorn Liverod Skabo & Ragnar Hagen, Norway
 Breeder: Kentuckiana Farms, Lexington, KY . . . 3 x x 4

GREAT SUCCESS, b c, by Self Possessed-Victory Please, by Mr Vic
 Driver: Mike Lachance Trainer: Ron Gurfein
 Owners: Ron Gurfein & Rosalie & Jerry Silva, FL, NY
 Breeder: Brittany Farms, Versailles, KY . . . x 3 x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:	1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE	
1st Elimination		:27	:55 ²	1:24 ²	1:53
2nd Elimination		:27 ⁴	:55 ³	1:24 ³	1:53 ¹
3rd Elimination	:28 ⁴	:57 ³	1:26 ¹	1:54 ²	
Final		:28 ²	:58 ²	1:26	1:53 ²

PAYOFFS											
FIRST ELIMINATION			SECOND ELIMINATION			THIRD ELIMINATION			FINAL		
Pampered Princess	3.40	2.40	2.10	Donato Hanover	2.40	2.10	2.10	Adrian Chip	3.40	3.00	2.40
Xactly Hanover		4.00	2.40	Flirtin Man		2.10	2.10	Too Salty		4.00	3.80
Please Poppy			2.80	Great Success			2.10	Don't Blink Twice			5.80
				FINAL							
				Donato Hanover	4.00	3.00	3.00				
				Adrian Chip			5.00				
				Laddie			8.80				

- It was the second Hambletonian victory for David Scharf of New York. He was part of the partnership that owned 1999 Hambletonian winner, Self Possessed.
- It was the Hambletonian debut for owner Paul Bordogna's Golden Touch Stable.
- It was also the first Hambletonian appearance for owner Steve Arnold. His father-in-law, Morton Finder, was part of the syndicate that owned 1980 Meadowlands Pace winner Niatross. Arnold's cousin is Triple Crown winning trainer Jerry Silverman.
- It was the second Hambletonian driving victory for Ron Pierce in his 10th appearance. He won the 1993 Hambletonian with American Winner, and finished second with Like a Prayer in 2002 and Classic Photo in 2005.
- Pierce was inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in 2005. Pierce was the Driver of the Year in 2004 when he won a career-high 395 races and led North America with \$12.3 million in purses.
- Donato Hanover retired the fastest 3-year-old trotter ever (1:50.1) and tied seven-year-old trotting mare Giant Diablo for the fastest trotter ever regardless of age.
- No horse had come closer than one length to Donato Hanover at the finish of his 2007 races until his Crown elim. Than Arch Madness was only able to get a neck up on him.
- Donato Hanover broke a 26-year jinx in winning both the Peter Haughton for 2-year-olds and the Hambletonian for 3-year-olds.
- Donato Hanover was the second foal from the Donerail mare D Train, who Scharf also owned. Her first foal was the world champion and multiple stakes winner Here Comes Herbie [by Credit Winner], sold for \$47,000 and earned \$365,541, finishing sixth in the 2006 Hambletonian. Donato Hanover was hammered down for \$95,000 by David Scharf at the Harrisburg Standardbred Yearling Sale.
- Her foal of 2005, a filly named Decimal Hanover [by SJ's Caviar], was a \$260,000 yearling purchase last year. Her 2006 daughter D Liferful Hanover [by Revenue S] sold for \$325,000 to Scharf and Steve Jones and she delivered a Windsong's Legacy colt last year.
- Great Success, a \$7,000 purchase, was the least expensive in the

field. He finished sixth but was placed fifth, earning \$75,000. Don't Blink twice at \$100,000 was the most expensive yearling.

- All three elimination winners [Adrian Chip, Donato Hanover and Pampered Princess] and Danae, the Hambletonian Oaks winner were offspring of first-crop sire Andover Hall. The star-crossed Andover Hall broke stride as the favorite in the first turn of the 2002 Hambletonian but his sons and daughters have rewritten that legacy for him, earning more than \$13 million in two crops.
- Yankee Glide [Glidemaster and Passionate Glide, 2006], Speedy Somolli [Alf Palema and Worldly Woman, 1992] and Super Bowl [Giant Victory and Jean Bi, 1991] are the other sires to score a Hambletonian-Oaks double on the day.
- 2007 marked the 27th edition of the Hambletonian at the Meadowlands, now the longest host to the classic event.

