

Muscle Hill is King of the Hill

Trainer Greg Peck's Operation: Hambletonian was complete as Muscle Hill etched his name in the record books with a stunning 1:50.1 victory. Starting from rail position, Muscle Hill and driver Brian Sears coasted untested through splits of :27.1, :55 and 1:23 and drew off to a six-length victory.

The colt equaled the all-age record on a mile track and eclipsed the stakes record by one full second. Sears, who also steered Broadway Schooner to a narrow win in the Hambletonian Oaks, became the first driver in history to capture both the Hambletonian and its companion event in the same year. Sears and Peck also captured the Peter Haughton Memorial for 2-year-old trotting colts with Holiday Road that afternoon.

"It's very humbling to win such prestigious races on a day like today," Sears said. "I knew I had the horse this year to get it done and I never had any doubts."

"Midway around the last turn, I could see Ronny [Pierce] tapping Explosive Matter and I knew what that meant," Peck said. "I know what

Muscle Hill is like and when Brian [Sears] steps on the gas he's like a sports car that just goes into overdrive and does it easily."

Muscle Hill became the third freshman Dan Patch champion in as many years to win the Hambletonian, following Donato Hanover [2007] and Deweycheatumnhowe [2008] into the spotlight. He would go on to be named Horse of the Year for a flawless, 12-race campaign and single-season earnings record of \$2.45 million.

The eyes of the world were focused on harness racing at the Meadowlands on Hambletonian Day as total wagering surpassed \$8.3 million. The \$8,343,405 total was the third highest handle in harness racing history, trailing only the \$8.8 million wagered on the 2002 Hambletonian and \$9 million wagered in 2005. European wagering was up 72 percent over the previous year, with a record total of \$1,968,994 bet on races simulcast to Scandinavia and France. For the first time, the Hambletonian Day card featured the top 2-year-old trotting stakes, the Merrie Annabelle and Peter Haughton, in addition to the Hambletonian and Hambletonian Oaks for 3-year-olds.



- Muscle Hill's time of 1:50.1 was the fastest Hambletonian ever, lowering Glidemaster's standard of 1:51.1 set in 2006. The time equaled the all-age trotting record.
- The six-length winning margin was the largest since Mack Lobell's 1987 record of six and one-quarter length victory. It matched that of Peter Astra in 1939.
- The total purse of \$1,730,333 [three \$70,000 eliminations] and the final purse of \$1,520,333 were the richest purses ever offered for trotters in North America.
- Trainer Greg Peck made his first appearance in the Hambletonian a winning one. A native of Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, and a third-generation horseman, Peck is not just a successful trainer, but also the president of a media training company, Fine Line Inc.
- Peck purchased Muscle Hill in the fall of 2007 at the Standardbred Horse Sale yearling venue in Harrisburg, PA. The son of 1998 Hambletonian winner Muscles Yankee had an appealing video presentation, and Peck dog-eared the catalog page for potential owners TLP Stable. TLP, the father-son team of Lou and Tom Pontone, knocked Hip No. 199, Muscle Hill down for \$55,000 from the Winbak Farm consignment. Shortly after they sold an interest in the colt to Jerry Silva, a co-owner on 2008 Hambo winner Deweycheatumnhowe.
- Muscle Hill's sterling freshman year ended with a Breeders Crown and divisional championship, and resulted in Allen and Connie Skolnick's NJ breeding operation, Southwind Farm, offering \$3 million for a 50% interest and stallion syndication rights. The multiple syndicate partners then made up the Muscle Hill Racing LLC.
- Muscle Hill Racing LLC included many of the sport's top breeders and owners: Flintlock Farm Inc; Ross Stables LLC; Patricia Bolte; Margaret Dey; Curtis Larrimore; William Mulligan; Michael Dean Robinson; Jerry Silva; Robert Stewart; Steve Stewart; William Weaver III; Brittany Farms; Celebrity Farms; D'Elegance Stable IX; Joie De Vie Farm LLC; Little E LLC; Odds On Nourrir and Spring Haven Farm.
- Jerry Silva added a record-tying fourth Hambletonian trophy to his collection. He was also part of the ownership group on prior Hambletonian winners Continentalvictory (1996), Self Possessed (1999), Deweycheatumnhowe (2008). He joins Lindy Racing, Frank, Gerald and Guy Antonacci as four-time ownership winners.
- Muscle Hill lost his debut race as a two-year-old by a neck to Homer Jay on July 3, 2008 at The Meadowlands. It would be the only defeat of his racing career. He went on to win 20 races in a row and \$3.2 million in purses. He was always the odds-on favorite and never really threatened in his racing career by the proximity of another horse.
- The total margin of victory for Muscle Hill in his 20 wins was 79 1/4 lengths – an average of 4 lengths per triumph. No horse has been nearer than a length at the finish of any of his wins.
- Victories at three included the \$200,000 New Jersey Sire Stakes final, \$180,000 division of the Stanley Dancer Memorial, \$1.7 million Hambletonian, \$1 million Canadian Trotting Classic, \$540,000 World Trotting Derby, \$200,000 American-National Stakes, \$600,000 Kentucky

Futurity, and \$600,000 Breeders Crown.

- The connections of Muscle Hill briefly entertained racing the stupendous colt against older trotters in the Breeders Crown at the Meadowlands, two weeks after the Hambletonian. Ultimately they opted for the far easier task of the American-National, for 3-year-olds.
- There was no attempt at the Triple Crown as Muscle Hill skipped the second leg, the Yonkers Trot, which was won by Judge Joe. He did take the third leg, the Kentucky Futurity making him one of 18 horses to win two legs of the Trotting Triple Crown.
- Muscle Hill's \$2.45 million in earnings in 2009 set the seasonal record for a harness horse of any age, any gait.
- He was one of only three sophomore colt trotters to successfully win the Breeders Crown at age two and three. The others were Hambletonian winners Mack Lobell [1986-87] and Malabar Man [1996-97]
- Muscle Hill was also a Dan Patch Award winner in 2008 as harness racing's top 2-year-old.
- He received all 173 votes from the US Harness Writers in the Dan Patch year end championship voting for his division, 166 votes to sweep Trotter of the Year and 164 votes for Horse of the Year over older trotter Lucky Jim and 3-year-old pacer Well Said. Never in the history of harness racing's Horse of the Year voting, which began in 1947, has a trotter won the honor with an undefeated season.
- Muscle Hill was an easy choice as New Jersey's Standardbred Horse of the Year and dominated voting as the O'Brien sophomore trot colt winner in Canada.
- Peck was recognized as the sport's top trainer with the Glen Gamsey Award from the U.S. Harness Writers' Association. He also trained one of the winter book favorites for the 2010 Hambletonian, Holiday Road.
- Brian Sears was voted USHWA Driver of the Year.
- Muscle Hill's dam, Yankee Blondie, was named Trotting Broodmare of the Year
- Winbak Farm was harness racing's 2009 Breeder of the Year.
- Oaks winner Broadway Schooner took the Dan Patch 3-year-old filly award.
- Oaks winning owners Arlene and Jules Siegel were voted Owners of the Year.
- The Hambletonian victory also swept voting in the inaugural Railbird Recognition Awards sponsored by the US Harness Writers as Racing Moment of the Year.
- No driver in Meadowlands history has soared as high, as quickly as Brian Sears. Though Sears has placed among the top 20 dash-winning drivers in North America every year since 1994, he first joined the Meadowlands colony in 2003. Two years later, Sears became the first driver in harness history to top \$15 million in a single season. The Secaucus, NJ resident won five straight January-August driving titles [2005-2009].
- This success did not immediately follow Sears in his Hambletonian appearances. Though he drove in the classic event each year since

2009

Muscle Hill

MUSCLE HILL, bay colt, 3, by Muscles Yankee-Yankee Blondie, by American Winner
 Driver: Brian Sears
 Trainer: Greg Peck

Owners: TLP Stables [Tom and Lou Pontone], Jerry Silva, Southwind Farm, [Alan and Connie Skolnick]; Muscle Hill Racing LLC [Flintlock Farm Inc; Ross Stables LLC; Patricia Bolte; Margaret Dey; Curtis Larrimore; William Mulligan; Michael Dean Robinson; Jerry Silva; Robert Stewart; Steve Stewart; William Weaver III; Brittany Farms; Celebrity Farms; D'Elegance Stable IX; Joie De Vie Farm LLC; Little E LLC; Odds On Nourir and Spring Haven Farm].

Breeder: Winbak Farm [Joe and Joann Thomson], Chesapeake City, Md.

Caretaker: Sylvia Hovde

Sale History: \$55,000 Standardbred Horse Sale, Harrisburg, Pa. . . . x x 1 1

EXPLOSIVE MATTER, bay colt, 3, by Cantab Hall-Fireworks Hanover, by Muscles Yankee

Driver: Ron Pierce

Trainer: Noel Daley

Owner/Breeder[s]: Adam Victor & Son Stable . . . 1 x x 2

CALCHIP'S BRUTE, bay colt, 3 by Credit Winner-Petite Serenade-Sierra Kosmos

Driver: John Campbell

Trainer: Trond Smedshammer

Owner/Breeder: Diane Giuliano . . . 3 x x 3

THE CHANCELLOR, bay colt, 3 by Yankee Glide-Prime Mistress-Super Bowl

Driver: Andy Miller

Trainer: Julie Miller

Owners: Andy Miller Stable and Arden Homestead Stable

Breeder: Brittany Farms . . . x x 3 4

SYMPHONIC HANOVER, bay colt, 3 by Cantab Hall-Sounds Swell-Super Bowl

Driver: David Miller

Trainer: Jonas Czernyson

Owners: Symphonic Hanover Stable Inc. [Karl-Erik Bender, Jonas Czernyson, Per Eriksson, Per Rodert & Rune Schonborg]

Breeder: Hanover Shoe Farms . . . 1 x x 5

TIME BY QUARTERS:	1/4	1/2	3/4	MILE	
1st Elimination		:27 ³	:56	1:24 ¹	1:52 ³
2nd Elimination		:28 ¹	:56 ²	1:25 ³	1:54 ¹
3rd Elimination		:27 ²	:55 ¹	1:23 ⁴	1:52 ³
Final		:27 ¹	:55	1:23	1:50 ¹

PAYOFFS

FIRST ELIMINATION

Explosive Matter	2.60	2.20	2.10
Hot Shot Blue Chip		7.80	4.80
Reinsman Hanover			2.80

SECOND ELIMINATION

Symphonic Hanover	33.40	13.40	22.60
Judge Joe		7.60	15.20
Calchips Brute			31.60

THIRD ELIMINATION (no show wagering)

Muscle Hill	2.20	2.10	-
Triumphant Caviar		9.60	-
The Chancellor			-

FINAL

Muscle Hill	2.60	2.10	2.10
Explosive Matter		3.20	2.40
Calchips Brute			6.60

2003, his best finish was a 4placed3 with Strong Yankee in 2005. That drought ended in a big way in 2009 when Sears became the first driver to win both the Hambletonian and Hambletonian Oaks [Broadway Schooner] on the same card. In addition he won the Peter Haughton Memorial [Holiday Road] and two other races on the star-studded card, bringing home a total of \$1,520,333 in purses. As drivers earn 5% of the purse, it was a red-letter \$77,783 day for the "White Knight."

- In addition, Sears joined a select group – John Campbell, Ron Pierce, Mike Lachance, Bill O'Donnell, and Stanley Dancer – to be the regular driver of both a trotter and a pacer to earn Horse of the Year.
- The father-son team of Doug and D. R. Ackerman finished second in their elim and seventh in the final with their homebred Judge Joe. It marked the Ackerman stable's sixth starter in the race since 1974, a notable 35-year span. Their best finish was second in 2006 with Chocolatier
- Joe and Joann Thompson' Winbak Farm of Maryland bred their second Hambletonian champion in five years [Vivid Photo 2005] and their Horse of the Year along with Rainbow Blue [2004] and No Pan Intended [2003] in seven years.
- Winbak Farm produced more winners than any other breeding farm in 2009 and Winbak-breds earned over \$22 million.

- The dam of Muscle Hill, Yankee Blondie, had a top-notch pedigree but needed nearly a decade of faith in her bloodlines before producing what many call the best trotter the sport has ever seen in Muscle Hill. She was a daughter of 1993 Hambletonian winner American Winner and the important Yankeeland foundation mare Yankee Bambi. That made her a half-sister to TV Yankee, 2,1:56 (\$571,224), who was fourth in summary in the 1983 Hambletonian. Yankee Bambi's foals commanded close to half a million dollars at auction and earned more than \$1.3 million at the races.

- Yankee Blondie was \$36,000 purchase as two-year-old for Winbak in 1998, but her racing career earnings of \$8,434 hastened her entrance to the breeding shed. Her first foal, Met's Rival, never raced, was retained by Winbak, and has produced two \$100,000 winners. Next came the Muscles Yankee colt Diesel Don [\$247,117] who was dubbed a Hambletonian contender by Hall of Famer Chuck Sylvester, and exported to Finland when the Hambo hopes evaporated.

2009

Muscle Hill

- Yankee Blondie's third and fourth foals Uptown Yankee 3, 1:56.2 (\$40,528) and Manfromnantucket 3, 1:57.3s (\$85,779) and their minor confirmation flaws put her at risk to be culled from the Winbak broodmare band. Thomson insisted she had yet to fulfill her maternal potential, and he was proved right with her fifth foal, Muscle Hill, born in 2006.
- The sire of Muscle Hill, Muscles Yankee, stands at Perretti Farms in Cream Ridge, N.J. for a fee of \$20,000. He claimed back-to-back winners in Deweycheaturnhowe and Muscle Hill. Only five other stallions have done so: Guy Axworthy [1926-27] Mr. McElwyn [1937-38], Volomite [1943-44], Star's Pride [1958-59, 1968-69]
- Muscle Hill will begin his breeding career in 2010 at Southwind Farm in Pennington, N.J.
- Broadway Schooner won the \$923,042 Hambletonian Oaks, the richest to date. There were four eliminations worth \$35,000 and a final purse of \$783,042.
- There were 32 fillies entered – the most since the race began in 1971.
- It was the closest Oaks finish in memory, with a photo print needed to separate Broadway Schooner and Raising Rachel. The print showed Broadway Schooner by a nostril.
- Trainer Jim Campbell and owners Arlene and Jules Siegel's Fashion Farm now have a matched pair of trophies as they won the 1995 Hambletonian with Tagliabue.
- The Siegel's bred three Hambletonian Oaks entrants: Broadway Schooner, Timelesswinnertoo, and Broadway Paige, who did not advance to the final.
- Young Diana Murtaugh, whose great-grandfather, A.C. Peterson, bred and owned the 1962 Hambletonian winner A.C.'s Viking, was among the crowd who stopped to admire the gleaming Hambletonian trophy.
- 1991 Hambletonian winner Giant Victory led the Hambletonian on-track parade and was greeted in the winner circle by his former trainer Per Eriksson, a three-time Hambletonian winner and one of his former owners, Ted Gewertz. The 21-year-old has been retired to Hanover Shoe Farm in Pennsylvania after a successful stud career, fathering the winners of \$9.9 million.

