The 2010 Hambletonian went to post a wide-open affair, with three different elim winners vying for the role of favorite. At the wire, Muscle Massive, beaten a half-length in his $70,000 Hambletonian elim by Pilgrims Taj, turned that same half length measure to his favor, prevailing over Lucky Chucky in the second fastest clocking in Hambo history. Trainer Jimmy Takter scored his second Hambletonian victory with the blue-blooded colt sired by 1998 Hambletonian winner Muscles Yankee, “This is a race everyone dreams of winning,” said a jubilant Takter post-race, “I always had faith he could win it.”

Drive Ron Pierce shared that same faith, turning in a sharp steer as he guided Muscle Massive through a perfect tour of the one mile Meadowlands oval. “I knew when he warmed up nobody could beat him,” said Pierce. “He was so good scoring down I knew it was up to me to get the job done driving.”

Pierce got the job done in textbook fashion, zipping out of the gate at the start to drop in the two hole, then letting the race unfold as elim winner Cassis and Tim Tetrick cut fractions of :27.1 and 54.3. When race favorite Lucky Chucky and John Campbell went on the attack approaching the last turn, Pierce had Muscle Massive perfectly poised to pursue them. Lucky Chucky seized the lead from Cassis with the three-quarter pole time unwinding in 1:22.2 and Pierce slipped out from behind the fading Cassis, drafting behind Lucky Chucky as Campbell geared him up to sprint away in the stretch. It was at that point that Pierce made his move, counting on Muscle Massive to run down Lucky Chucky in the straightaway. Pierce took dead aim on Lucky Chucky’s two length lead and let his colt roll, wearing down Lucky Chucky till Muscle Massive surged to the front a mere 50 feet from the wire.

The time of 1:51, 4/5ths of a second off the 1:50 stake and world record set by Muscle Hill in 2009, Muscle Massive was fourth choice in the field of ten at odds of 7-1. The race favorite was Lucky Chucky. Muscle Massive became just the fourth horse to win the final who did not win his elim since eliminations were moved to the week before the race in 1997. The other three were Gildemaster (2006-2nd in elim), Wreathing’s Legacy (2004-3rd in elim) and Amigo Hall (2003-3rd in elim) Since Muscle Massive did not win an elim, he was put in the open draw and drew post six. Both Vivid Photo (2005) and Amigo Hall (2004) started from post six. Five and six are the winningest post positions at the Meadowlands. The half-length margin of victory was the shortest since 2002, when Chip Chip Hooray got a neck in front of Like A Prayer. Ironically, trainer Chuck Sylvester was on the winning end of that neck margin.

Jimmy Takter conditioned two other horses in this race, besides the winning winner. Hard Livin finished seventh and On The Tab was ninth. On The Tab went on to win the second leg of the Trotting Triple Crown, the Yonkers Trot. Muscle Massive did not enter that leg, but was 2nd in the first heat and 4th in the final heat of the Kentucky Futurity, the third leg. It marked the second time Takter won two jewels in the Trotting Triple Crown with two different horses, it has happened only one other time since 1991.

Muscle Massive was the highest priced yearling of 2008, commanding $425,000 at the Standardbred Horse Sale, Harrisburg, Pa. Muscle Massive entered the Hambletonian having hit the board in six of his seven starts, with wins in a leg of the NJ Sire Stakes and a division of the Stanley Dancer Memorial, the final prep for the Hambo.

Much of the divisional attention centered around Lucky Chucky, defending Dan Patch divisional champ, and 2009 Peter Haughton winner Holiday Road. Ray Schnittker, who won the 2008 Hambletonian with Deweycheatumsnowhew, also had a top contender in Cassis and won the fastest Hambletonian elim.

Cassis was the 39th Hambletonian starter raced by the Gerry family’s Arden Homestead Stable of Goshen, N.Y., beginning with a two-horse entry in the Hambletonian Stake No. 1 in 1926. Their winners include Deweycheatumsnowhew (08), Firth (1973) and Titon Hanover (1945).

What a difference a year makes. Trainer Greg Peck made his first appearance in the Hambletonian a winning one with Muscle Hill in 2009. His contender, Holiday Road, won his elim but was 10th in the final.

Though Muscle Massive was perfect on Hambletonian day, he only won one more race, the $122,829 Simcoe in Ontario, before ending his campaign in October. The divisional lead continued to change hands, as Muscle Massive finished third behind Lucky Chucky and Break The Bank K in the $1 million Canadian Trotting Classic. Next came the Breeders Crown at Pocono Downs, which featured the first four finishers in the Hambletonian, but that race was won by Break The Bank K. Wishing Stone won the last few races of the season – the Kentucky Futurity and the Matron.

Muscle Massive was retired to stud after finishing second and fourth in the Futurity, with earnings of $1,239,138 and his Hambletonian record of 1.51. He was syndicated by Hanover Shoe Farm of Pennsylvania to stand for a fee of $10,000.

Lucky Chucky was named Dan Patch divisional champion among his peers. He received 108 votes, Muscle Massive garnered 16 votes, Kentucky Futurity winner Wishing Stone got five votes and Breeders Crown winner Break The Bank K received two votes.

Takter was recognized as the sport’s top trainer with the Glen Garnsey Award from the U.S. Harness Writers’ Association. It was a record third title for him, having won in the honor in 2000 (co-winner with Mark Ford) and 1996. Takter also trained 1997 Hambletonian winner and Horse of the Year Malabar Man. Takter set personal records in 2010 of 119 wins, and earnings of $7.8 million. This ranked him second in the standings, behind Ron Burke’s mammoth operation, which started 3,700 horses compared to Takter’s 540 starts.

For Takter, Hambletonian day was the apex of an extraordinary year. The green and black colors of the Takter stable were constantly seen on the track as his nine starters in harness racing’s richest day warmed up, post paraded and went to the gate. Three of those starters made a trip to the winners circle – and unbelievably a fourth also won but was disqualified.

The 85th outcome of the trotting classic was truly a family affair – both human and equine. Trainer Jimmy Takter and his wife Christina, barely out of their teens, emigrated to the U.S. from Sweden for good in 1982, with year-old daughter Nancy. 28 years later the trio met in the Hambo winners circle, with a few additions: Nancy’s siblings Jenny, Tiffany, and Jimmy Jr., her husband Marcus Johansson and their children Ella and Anthony.

Graceful Touch was named Trotting Broodmare of the Year by the U.S. Harness Writers for her stellar production record in 2010. Perretti Farms, who bred both the winner, Muscle Massive and the runner-up, Lucky Chucky, was voted NJ Breeder of the Year by the Standardbred

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The Meadowlands • August 7, 2010 • Purse $1,710,000

“Massive” Muscles His Way to Victory
**2010**

**Muscle Massive**

_MUSCLE MASSIVE_, bay colt, 3, by Muscles Yankee-Graceful Touch, by Pine Chip

**Driver:** Ron Pierce
**Trainer:** Jimmy Takter

**Owners:** Brixton Medical Ab [Bengt Agerup], Order By Stable [Stefan Balazsi], Louie Camara, Marvin Katz, Al Libfeld & Sam Goldband

**Breeder:** Perretti Farms . . . X-X-3-3
**Caretaker:** Nancy Johansson

**Sale History:** Purchased for $425,000 Standardbred Horse Sale, Harrisburg, Pa 2-X-X-1

LUCKY CHUCKY, bay colt 3, by Windsong’s Legacy-Aerobics, by Muscles Yankee

**Driver:** John Campbell
**Trainer:** Chuck Sylvester

**Owners:** SGS Partners [Chuck Sylvester, Neal Goldman, Amy Stoltzfus], Perretti Racing Stable [William J. Perretti], & Lindy Racing Stable [Frank Antonacci & Gerald Antonacci]

**Breeder:** Perretti Farms . . . X-1-X-2
**Caretaker:**  Nancy Johansson
**Breeder:** Perretti Farms

LUCKY CHUCKY, brown colt, 3 by Conway Hall – Meadowbranch Magic, by Valley Victory

**Driver:** George Brennan
**Trainer:** Jimmy Takter

**Owners:** Brixton Medical Ab [Bengt Agerup], Order By Stable [Stefan Balazsi], Louie Camara, Marvin Katz, Al Libfeld & Sam Goldband

**Breeder:** Perretti Farms

**Payoffs**

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Muscle Massive was the highest priced yearling of 2008, commanding $425,000 at the Standardbred Horse Sale, Harrisburg, Pa. That’s the fifth highest sale price ever offered for a yearling trotting colt, with the highest the $650,000 given for Experience Victory in 1999. The high price given for Muscle Massive in a year that saw the national economy go in the tank was easily justified by his gaudy pedigree. Muscle Massive was bedecked with trotting bluebloods on both his paternal and maternal side.

The $750,000 Hambletonian Oaks was won by Bar Slide, a daughter of Yankee Glide-Marla Bar, by Malabar Man, owned by Fredericka Caldwell and Bluestone Farm. Caldwell is the daughter of Frances Dodge Van Lennep, founder of Castleton Farms, one of the most storied racing and breeding concerns in the sport. Castleton bred the very first Hambletonian Oaks winner Gay Blossom in 1971, and Caldwell was in attendance. They are the only mother-daughter combo to have won the Hambletonian Oaks, Caldwell bred and owned 1988 winner Nan’s Catch and her daughter 1996 winner Moni Maker.

Both the Hambletonian (Perretti Farms) and the Oaks winner (Fair Winds Farms) were bred and sired in New Jersey.

Bar Slide was driven by Joe Holloway, making his first appearance in the Oaks winner circle. Tim Tetrick has now won two of the last four Oaks. Bar Slide’s dam, Marla Bar, was eighth in the 2002 version of the Oaks.

Bar Slide, by with the strength of an Oaks win and a consistent seasonal score of 14-5-2-1, 1:52.4 ($568,529) got Dan Patch divisional honors with 69 of 131 votes with the rest split among several other fillies.

The Hambletonian is the only event in harness racing to carry a $1 million purse for 28 straight years.

Record European wagering helped produce the third highest harness handle in history. Total all-source wagering on the 15-race card was $8,391,600, trailing only the $8.8 million wagered in 2002 and $9 million wagered in 2005.

A crowd of 26,712 turned out to watch Muscle Massive edge Lucky Chucky in the $1.5 million Hambletonian. The attendance was an increase of nearly 4 percent over the previous year and the highest since 2006.