

2014

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89th Hambletonian An Unexpected Takter Triumph

Filed by Horseman & Fair World

In the midst of the winner's circle celebration following Trixton's upset victory in the 89th Hambletonian on Saturday afternoon, Aug. 2, at the Meadowlands, co-owner Christina Takter mentioned the shock she felt when the 2-5 favorite Father Patrick—who she also co-owns—made a break at the start of the \$1,006,125 race and lost all chance.

"When Father Patrick made a break I almost fell down on my knees," said Takter, who has stood in winner's circles over the years but never before as the owner of a Hambletonian champion. "Then I tried to sort it out and see what happens."

What happened was that Takter watched as her husband, Jimmy, drove second-choice Trixton to a career-best 1:50.3 victory, edging stablemate and third favorite Nuncio by a half length. It was a distant 10 3/4 lengths back to third-place finisher Harper Blue Chip.

Early forecasts for steady daylong rain never came to fruition as the showers subsided by the time the track gates opened at 10 a.m. Instead, the program was raced mostly under overcast skies, although by the time the Hambletonian went off at 5:15 p.m., the sun had broken through the clouds.

In the single-heat, 11-horse Hambletonian, Nuncio, with six-time Hambletonian winner John Campbell driving, left fastest from post five and secured the lead with no trouble. Takter floated out of the gate from post seven and looked for position, which he found on the outside behind Royal Ice and driver Ron Pierce, who were caught first-over when no hole opened up on the inside.

When Royal Ice began to tire in the final turn, Takter moved Trixton wide and charged toward Nuncio. In deep stretch Trixton edged clear for the victory.

While Takter has won two Hambletonians—Malabar Man and Muscle Massive—they both came as trainer. This was his first win as a driver, although he came close in 2012 when he steered Guccio to a second-place finish, just a neck behind Market Share.

"This is my moment," Takter said when he returned to the jubilant winner's circle. "I don't drive that much and normally when I have a top contender I put the best possible driver on to have a shot. I thought that this was my shot and if I was going to do it, I'd do it today, otherwise it wouldn't happen."

Takter said he came into the race confident in his three horses, but understood the pressure on Yannick Gingras with overwhelming favorite Father Patrick.

"Horses win and lose, and hey, I know how it is," said Takter. "Yannick had a lot of pressure on him and that's the way it is. Me, what kind of pressure on me? I have the three best horses in the field. If I finished third, everybody is happy. If I win, it's great."

For the first time ever, the Hambletonian was raced without heats or eliminations. Without elims and the conditions that provide the winners pick their posts for the final, all 11 entries went into an open draw. While the prohibitive favorite was going to be Father Patrick, who was five-for-five this year and riding a 15-race win streak dating back to last year, he drew the outside post 10.

Father Patrick became the shortest-priced horse to not capture the trotting classic when he went offstride for the first time in his 17-start career. Gingras said comments he made immediately afterward that gave the impression he hit Father Patrick with the whip to rev him up were misinterpreted.

"People took it the wrong way and that I was blasting him to a :24 quarter, and that's not what I was trying to do," Gingras said two days afterward, with disappointment still in his voice. "I literally just laid the whip on his tail. I didn't hit him, I just laid the tip on his tail. The gate had just opened and I had a good hold on him. It scared him and it

was an unfortunate mistake at the worst time ever. I was in shock."

Although Father Patrick's break at the start led to a loud gasp heard through the Meadowlands grandstand, Takter said he was unaware of what transpired.

"I started looking behind me at the half and I didn't see him, so I knew something must have happened," said Takter. "I thought Patrick would have come up behind me and been right there."

Takter won with Trixton despite being parked every step of the mile. He said he was fortunate he found live cover in Royal Ice and Ron Pierce.

"I said I had to follow Ronnie, because I know Ronnie would try to get something really hard," Takter said of Pierce, who has won three Hambletonians, including Muscle Massive. "When I saw Ronnie had left and I got behind him, I was very fortunate Ronnie didn't get in as he really tried to get in the hole behind Nuncio. That would have changed things."

"I thought in the middle of the last turn my horse felt really strong. I knew Ronnie would come back to me. I figured Nuncio had to be a little bit taken by the pace and I thought I might have a shot at it."

While Takter was poised to make history if his trio of horses would have finished one-two-three in the Hambletonian, he had to settle for a share of the record books with his one-two finish, duplicating his effort in 1997 when he finished first and second respectively with Malabar Man (driven by Mal Burroughs) and Take Chances (Wally Hennessey).

Takter said he would have been happy no matter the finish order of his horses.

"If Nuncio had won, I didn't care," he said. "But of course I wanted to win it. I'm 53 years old and you see how the sport is today, with all these great drivers. "Nuncio is not the easiest horse. He raced his heart out. He raced a heck of a race and he was tough to get by. John (Campbell) wanted this race so bad. He congratulated me after the race but I saw (the disappointment)."

Takter said he wasn't bothered by not sweeping the trifecta.

"I finished first and second in the Hambletonian, how sweet is that?" said Takter, who was inducted into the sport's Hall of Fame in 2012. "I know that if Patrick had stayed flat he would have come up behind me and he would have blown by both of us in the stretch. And we would have been first, second and third. But things don't always work out the way you hope for. Don't take me wrong, I'm on cloud nine right now."

Jimmy Takter said he believes nothing should be read into Father Patrick's miscue. "It's not like this was his last race. It's horse racing," he said.

Gingras agreed. "I was very happy for Jimmy as I knew how much it meant to him to win," said Gingras. "But I still think Patrick is the best horse and he'll prove it the rest of the year."



Trixton

TRIXTON, bay colt, 3, by Muscle Hill-Emilie Cas El, by Garland Lobell
 Driver: Jimmy Takter
 Trainer: Jimmy Takter
 Owners: Brixton Medical AB [Bengt Agerup] & Christina Takter

NUNCIO, bay colt, 3, by Andover Hall-Nicole Isabel, by Lindy Lane
 Driver: John Campbell
 Trainer: Jimmy Takter
 Owners: Stall TZ Inc [Stefan Melander]
 Breeder: Russell Williams

HARPER BLUE CHIP, bay colt, 3, by Majestic Son-Winning Jonlin, by Muscles Yankee
 Driver: Brian Sears
 Trainer: Mark Steacy
 Owners: Landmark 6 Racing Stb [Howard Pearce], David K Reid, David MacDonald & George Judson
 Breeder: Blue Chip Bloodstock [Thomas Grossman, Michael Kimelman & Ryamond Schnittker]

| TIME BY QUARTERS | ¼ | ½ | ¾ | MILE |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| FINAL | 26.3 | :54.0 | 1:23.0 | 1:50.3 |

FINAL PAYOFFS

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|------|------|-------|
| TRIXTON | 1 | 0.60 | 5.00 | 7.60 |
| NUNCIO | | | 4.20 | 7.20 |
| HARPER BLUE CHIP | | | | 37.60 |



- Trixton is owned by Christina Takter and Bengt Agerup. Agerup also shared ownership in Hambletonian winner Muscle Massive in 2010. His 2014 appearance with the distinctive Revere bowl was an entirely different journey for the native Swede who now resides in Geneva, Switzerland.

- Agerup was one of a four part ownership group on Muscle Massive, who trainer Jimmy Takter and his yearling consultant, Perry Soderberg, had selected and purchased as a yearling. With Trixton, Agerup liked the horse's pedigree. Takter and Soderberg saw the colt (at the time named Monarch Kemp) a few weeks before the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale. Since the colt had a slightly boggy hock at the time, he didn't make the cut for their "A" list of yearlings.

- "If it wouldn't have been for me, we would not have bought this horse," said Agerup.

- Agerup has a large racing and breeding operation in Sweden and his young trainer there, Daniel Reden, also was key in selecting Monarch Kemp.

- Trixton was a \$360,000 yearling purchase from the Hunterton Farms consignment at the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale.

- Agerup, a scientist who discovered uses for non-animal stabilized hyaluronic acid and later sold his company to the dermatology giant Galderma SA, funded a university study to see if there is a gene that determines if a horse will trot. The study found that the gene is in 100 percent of American trotting bloodlines but not in French trotting bloodlines. So it's no surprise that Agerup keenly studies a trotter's gait. He believed he saw improvement in Trixton's gait with each race until the Reynolds Memorial Trot, when Takter tried racing the colt without shoes.

- Takter became only the second trainer to win the Hambletonian and the Oaks in one year, joining Jan Johnson who sweep both in 1988. In both instances, Takter won with his "other" horse. Father Pat-

rick, the 2-5 favorite, had won 15 straight for Takter, and looked like a lock heading into the Hambletonian. That blew up early when Father Patrick a break. Fortunately for Takter, he still had two solid chances, and finished one-two with Trixton and Nuncio. .

- Takter took the companion event for 3-year-old trotting fillies, the \$500,000 Hambletonian Oaks with Lifetime Pursuit, but his Del Miller Memorial winner Shake It Cerry was the favorite in the event. Instead, Lifetime Pursuit that delivered a 10-1 upset, beating Designed To Be by 2 1-2 lengths in a world record 1:50 4/5 performance. She had a little help from a friend. Shake It Cerry, starting in the second tier, worked her way to front to give Lifetime Pursuit an ideal pocket trip.

- Lifetime Pursuit is owned and bred by Brittany Farms. She is their third Oaks-owned champion and the fourth produced by the Lexington, Ky, nursery.

- Trixton earned \$503,062.50 for owners Brixton Medical A B and Christina Takter.

Trixton trotted the mile in 1:50 3/5, paying \$10.60 to win.

- The attendance was 20,764 for the first Hambletonian raced before the new, streamlined grandstand on an overcast afternoon following a rainy morning. They were treated to an extraordinary afternoon of racing that saw the meet leaders enjoy huge days.

- Yannick Gingras drove five winners, including four major stakes. He would be voted Driver of the Year.

- Father Patrick earned Dan Patch year-end honors for his division for the second year-He ended the year with a slate of 17-12-3-0 and \$1,693,081 in purse money, trotting in 1:50.2f for a season's mark. Father Patrick's connections planned on racing and breeding him in 2015.

- Shake It Cerry's year-end totals of 17- 15-0-1 and \$1,230,411 not only got her voted divisional Dan Patch honors but also Trotter of the