

TONY ALAGNA

Born: 6/8/1972 – Birthplace: Champaign, IL – Resides: Howell, NJ

- **Hambletonian wins (1):** Ramona Hill, 2020.
- Won the 2020 Hambletonian with filly Ramona Hill, driven by Andy McCarthy. She became the fourth filly trotter to win the Hambletonian since it moved to The Meadowlands in 1981 and the 15th overall to capture the sport's premier event for 3-year-old trotters. She received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old filly trotter.
- In 2012, the Alagna-trained My MVP finished third in the Hambletonian, only a neck behind winner Market Share. Later that season, My MVP won the Kentucky Futurity, which is the third jewel in the Trotting Triple Crown (with the Hambletonian and Yonkers Trot).
- Alagna trained 2022 Hambletonian Oaks runner-up Pink Coco Chanel as well as 2016 Hambletonian Oaks runner-up Caprice Hill, who was an O'Brien Award winner in Canada at ages 2 and 3.
- Last year, Alagna-trained Heart On Fire won her Hambletonian Oaks elimination and finished ninth in the final.
- Ranked third among trainers in purses in 2023, with \$7.44 million.
- Has exceeded \$7 million each of the past three years, including a career-best \$9.28 million in 2022 that ranked second among all trainers. He also was second in 2021, with \$7.98 million.
- Has won more than 2,200 races lifetime.
- Ranks fifth among all trainers in purses, with \$75 million, since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.
- Among Alagna's past stars was Captaintreacherous, who was Pacer of the Year in 2012 and 2013. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2019.
- A native of Illinois, Alagna followed his mom, Donna Lee, into the sport. He had a pony at the age of 3, was reading up on pedigrees at 9, and solely responsible for his first horse at 10. Soon after graduating from high school, Alagna was assisting his mom with her stable. After working for several different stables, he went out on his own in 2009.

VERNON BEACHY

Born: 10/7/1987 – Birthplace: Dover, DE – Resides: Middlefield, OH

- Starting a horse in either the Hambletonian or Hambletonian Oaks for the first time.
- Raced on Hambletonian Day last year with Allegiant in the New Jersey Sire Stakes final, finishing fifth.
- Has won nearly 300 races in his career and \$2.7 million in purses.
- Set a career high with \$734,703 in purses in 2023.
- Top victory last year came with Allegiant in the early Kentucky Sire Stakes final for 2-year-old filly trotters at Oak Grove.
- Finished third with Allegiant in last year's Mohawk Million at Woodbine Mohawk Park.
- Grew up Amish and began working with racehorses around the age of 14.
- Started his own stable in 2011.

LUC BLAIS

Born: 2/21/1962 – Birthplace: Quebec – Resides: Campbellville, Ontario

- **Hambletonian wins (1):** Forbidden Trade, 2019.
- Won the 2019 Hambletonian with Forbidden Trade, who upset favorite Greenshoe at odds of 15-1. Forbidden Trade, driven by Bob McClure, was named Canada's Horse of the Year.
- Finished sixth in the 2020 Hambletonian final with Threefiftytwo.
- Has appeared in two Hambletonian Oaks finals, with a best finish of third in 2017 with Dream Together.
- Received the O'Brien Award of Horsemanship in Canada in 2021.
- Other past stars include O'Brien Award recipients Intimidate, Emoticon Hanover and Donna Soprano.
- Stable has surpassed \$1 million in purses each of the past eight years.
- Has won nearly 1,200 races and \$26 million in purses during his career.
- Got hooked on racing at an early age by watching his father, a salesman, race his own horses on the Quebec fair circuit.
- Spent time in banking and construction before getting involved full time in racing.
- Worked for several stables, including Canadian Hall of Famer Yves Filion's Bayama Farms, before going on his own.
- Now trains for information-technology mogul Serge Godin's Determination stable.

RON BURKE

Born: 10/16/1969 – Birthplace: Washington, PA – Resides: Canonsburg, PA

- **Hall of Fame:** Class of 2022.
- **Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year:** 2018, 2013, 2011.
- Seeking his first Hambletonian trophy after a string of near misses during a three-year span, 2015-2017.
- Finished second in 2015 with elimination-winning filly Mission Brief, who was beaten by three-quarters of a length by Pinkman in the final. He was second again in 2016 with Southwind Frank, who was beaten by a nose by eventual Trotting Triple Crown winner Marion Marauder. The following year, What The Hill crossed the finish line first but was disqualified for interference in the stretch.
- Mission Brief, Southwind Frank and What The Hill all were Dan Patch Award winners during their careers.
- Last year, Burke won both Hambletonian eliminations, with Celebrity Bambino and Point Of Perfect. They finished fourth and fifth, respectively, in the final.
- Has had five previous Hambletonian Oaks finalists, with a best finish of fourth in 2020 with Crucial.
- Railee Something finished fifth in last year's Hambletonian Oaks final after a second-place finish in her elimination.
- Burke is the sport's all-time leading trainer in wins, with more than 14,800, and purses, with \$331 million.
- Has led all trainers in wins and purses for 15 consecutive years since taking over the family's training stable from his father, Mickey, in late 2008.
- Mickey Burke, the 2006 Trainer of the Year, passed away in May at the age of 87.
- Last year, Burke broke his own record for wins in a season, with 1,156. It was the fifth time he exceeded 1,000 victories in a year. No other trainer has ever won more than 663 races in a season.
- Had his second-best year in purses in 2023, with \$27.5 million. He set the sport's record in 2014 with \$28.4 million. No other trainer has ever won more than \$13.4 million in purses in a year.

- Burke's career win total is more than 7,000 ahead of second-place Virgil Morgan Jr. since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991. His career purse total is more than \$200 million ahead of retired Hall of Famer Jimmy Takter in second.
- Past stars include 2017 Horse of the Year Hannelore Hanover, 2014 Pacer of the Year Sweet Lou, 2011 Pacer of the Year Foiled Again (who retired following the 2018 season as the richest harness racing horse in history with \$7.63 million in lifetime earnings) and multiple Dan Patch Award-winner Mission Brief.
- Hannelore Hanover was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2023. Sweet Lou was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2021 and Foiled Again was inducted in 2019. Mission Brief was inducted in July.

JOHN BUTENSCHOEN

Born: 4/16/1963 – Birthplace: Belvidere, IL – Resides: Wind Gap, PA

- Has appeared in two Hambletonian Oaks finals, finishing sixth with Fine Tuned Lady in 2017 and ninth with Nixie Volo from post 10 in 2018.
- Started three horses in the 2017 Hambletonian final: Bill's Man (fourth), Giveitgasandgo (sixth) and Dover Dan (seventh).
- Has won more than 1,900 races and \$34 million in purses in his career.
- Set career highs with 97 wins and \$3.55 million in purses in 2017.
- Stable has exceeded \$1 million in purses in 11 of the past 12 years and more than \$900,000 in 15 consecutive seasons.
- Top win so far this year came with R Melina in a division of the Del Miller Memorial on July 13 at The Meadowlands.
- Butenschoen was born in Illinois and out of high school went to work for Hall of Famer Delvin Miller. He met his wife, Jackie Kiger Butenschoen, while working for Miller. Her father was also a trainer and for a time was the farrier at Miller's Meadow Lands Farm. The Butenschoens work together in their stable, where they are joined by son Tyler.
- Enjoyed his first million-dollar season as a trainer in 2001 when the trotter Plesac (named in honor of then-major league pitcher Dan Plesac) was the star of his barn. Plesac raced from 1999 to 2003, earning \$2.5 million in his career.

NOEL DALEY

Born: 12/18/1961 – Birthplace: Mount Isa, Australia – Resides: Chesterfield, NJ

- **Hambletonian wins (1):** Broad Bahn, 2011.
- Won the 2011 Hambletonian with Broad Bahn at odds of 6-1 with driver George Brennan. Broad Bahn received the 2011 Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old male trotter.
- Daley finished second in the 2009 Hambletonian with Explosive Matter. The race was won by Muscle Hill.
- Appearing in his first Hambletonian final since 2012 (sixth with Gym Tan Laundry).
- Finished seventh in the 2017 Hambletonian Oaks final with Caviart Wonder.
- Has won more than 2,900 races in his career, ranking 18th among trainers since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.
- Ranks sixth in purses among trainers since 1991, with \$73 million.
- Top wins so far this year came with pacer Captain Albano in the Adios on July 27 at Hollywood Casino at The Meadows and trotter Sig Sauer in a division of the Stanley Dancer Memorial on July 13 at The Meadowlands.
- Past stars include multiple Dan Patch Award winners Mr Muscleman and My Little Dragon. Mr Muscleman, the 2005 Trotter of the Year, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2017. My Little Dragon was inducted into the Hall of Fame as a broodmare in 2023.

- Daley's stable hosted Bulldog Hanover for trainer Jack Darling for his monthlong stay in New Jersey in July 2022, which included his world-record 1:45.4 victory in the William R. Haughton Memorial at the Meadowlands.
- At the end of the 2018 season, Daley returned to Australia to train horses but decided the change of scenery wasn't for him and came back to the U.S. in the fall of 2019.
- Worked for an airline before making his name in harness racing.

MARK ETSSELL

Born: 5/3/1956 – Birthplace: Collingwood, ON – Resides: Rockwood, ON

- Starting a horse in either the Hambletonian or Hambletonian Oaks for the first time.
- Received the 2023 O'Brien Award of Horsemanship in Canada.
- Was runner-up to Ian Moore for Canada's 2023 Trainer of the Year Award.
- Set career high with 32 wins in 2023.
- Has won more than 900 races as a trainer and nearly \$10 million in purses. Also has more than 1,200 driving victories.
- Had his first million-dollar season in 2022 and reached seven figures again last year.
- Top win so far this year came with Highland Kismet in the Goodtimes Stakes on June 15 at Woodbine Mohawk Park.
- Trainer of two-time O'Brien Award-winning female trotter Adare Castle (2022-23).
- Showed no interest in harness racing as a youngster but would tag along with his dad on trips to the track because it involved stopping at a restaurant for a cheeseburger and fries.
- Was focused on motorsports as a teenager and was a member of the Canadian Motocross Association. Also participated in competitive snowmobile meets.
- Attended a horse auction with some work associates and ended up buying his first horse on a whim.
- Caught the racing bug because of his competitive nature.

MARCUS MELANDER

Born: 7/1/1992 – Birthplace: Sweden – Resides: New Egypt, NJ

- **Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year:** 2019.
- **Hambletonian Oaks wins (1):** Heaven Hanover, 2023.
- Won the 2023 Hambletonian Oaks with Heaven Hanover, who scored from post 10 with driver Tim Tetrick at odds of 28-1.
- Heaven Hanover was one of three Oaks finalist for Melander last year, with Secret Volo (fourth) and Kayleigh S (eighth).
- Prior to last year, Melander's best finish in the Oaks was second, which he accomplished twice, with Hypnotic AM in 2020 and Iteration in 2021.
- He is seeking his first Hambletonian trophy but has finished second on multiple occasions.
- Last year, he was second with Oh Well. In 2022, he was second with filly Joviality S, third with Temporal Hanover and fifth with Periculum. He also finished second, third and fifth in the 2019 final, with Greenshoe, Gimpanzee and Green Manalishi S. Greenshoe and Green Manalishi S were elimination winners. Greenshoe was the 2019 Trotter of the Year.
- His first Hambletonian was in 2017. He saw Enterprise win his elimination and finish fourth-placed-third in the final. In 2018, Melander-trained Evaluate finished fifth in the final. In 2021, Melander finished sixth with Sonofamistery.
- In 2019 at the age of 27, Melander became the youngest trainer ever voted Trainer of the Year by the U.S. Harness Writers Association. The recognition came one year after he was named the Rising Star Award winner by the same organization.
- Has won more than 500 races in his career and \$28 million in purses.

- Ranked in the Top 10 among trainers in purses each of the past five years.
- Set career highs with 86 wins and \$5.36 million in purses in 2019.
- A native of Sweden, Melander came to the U.S. and worked for four-time Hambletonian-winning trainer Jimmy Takter before starting his own stable in late 2014. He is based in New Egypt, N.J., at a farm that was home previously to each the legendary Stanley Dancer, a five-time Hambletonian winner, and Continental Farms stables.
- His uncle, Stefan, won the 2001 Hambletonian as trainer and driver of Scarlet Knight.

JULIE MILLER

Born: 11/20/1972 – Birthplace: Iowa City, IA – Resides: Millstone Township, NJ

- Has had a Hambletonian finalist in six of the past eight years.
- Finished eighth with French Wine in last year's Hambletonian final. French Wine later was second in the Kentucky Futurity and third in the Breeders Crown.
- From 2016 to 2018, Miller had three consecutive top-three finishes in the Hambletonian.
- In 2018, Met's Hall finished second to Atlanta. In 2017, Devious Man was third-placed-second in the final and a year earlier Sutton was a fast-closing third, beaten only a neck, in the race captured by eventual Trotting Triple Crown winner Marion Marauder.
- Best finish in the Hambletonian Oaks came in 2014, when Designed To Be was second and stablemate Take The Money was third.
- On Hambletonian Day in 2009, Miller-trained trotter Lucky Jim won the Nat Ray (now Cashman Memorial) in a then-world-record-equaling 1:50.1 with husband Andy Miller driving at The Meadowlands. Lucky Jim was a Dan Patch Award winner.
- Ranks 17th among trainers in purses, with \$54 million, since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.
- Finished in the top 25 among trainers in purses 14 of the past 15 years. She has finished in the top 10 six times.
- Has won more than 2,300 career races.
- In 2017, Miller was inducted into the Iowa Harness Racing Hall of Fame, where she joined her father, Owen Julius.
- Grew up in Iowa, where her family raced at the county fairs. Miller graduated from Southern Illinois University with a science degree but turned her attention to racing.
- After beginning her career in Illinois, Miller moved with her husband, Andy, to the East Coast and became a nationally recognized trainer at The Meadowlands and on the Grand Circuit. Her son, Tyler, also is a driver.

RICHARD "NIFTY" NORMAN

Born: 10/21/1960 – Birthplace: New Zealand – Resides: Allentown, NJ

- **Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year:** 2021.
- **Hambletonian Oaks wins (3):** Bella Bellini, 2021; Bee A Magician, 2013; Personal Style, 2012.
- Tied with Glen Garnsey for third among trainers for the most Hambletonian Oaks wins in history, with three. Jimmy Takter holds the record (eight) followed by Jan Johnson (six).
- Won in 2012 with Personal Style, driven by David Miller; 2013 with Bee A Magician, driven by Brian Sears; and 2021 with Bella Bellini, driven by Dexter Dunn.
- Bee A Magician was Horse of the Year in both the U.S. and Canada in 2013. She was 17-for-17 and earned \$1.54 million. Her earnings were a record for a 3-year-old filly trotter. She retired with multiple Dan Patch and O'Brien awards and her \$4 million in

career purses put her among the richest trotters in history. She was voted to the Hall of Fame in 2020.

- Bella Bellini was named the 2021 Dan Patch Award winner for best 3-year-old female trotter. She was winless in seven races at age 2 and became the first horse since Jalopy in 2005 to go without a victory as a 2-year-old and win the Oaks the following year.
- In 2020, Norman sent out his first Hambletonian finalist, Amigo Volo, who finished fourth from post 10. Amigo Volo went on to win the Kentucky Futurity and Breeders Crown and received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old male trotter.
- Has won more than 100 races and \$3 million in purses each of the past five years.
- Set career highs in 2021 with 142 wins and \$6.05 million in purses. He ranked No. 4 among trainers in North America in earnings.
- Named 2021 Trainer of the Year by the U.S. Harness Writers Association.
- Has won 1,800 races and earned \$54 million in purses in his career.
- Ranks 14th in purses since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.
- A native of New Zealand, where he worked with horses after leaving school, Norman came to California in 1985 to visit his friend, trainer Ross Croghan, and ended up staying to help with Croghan's stable. He later worked with Brett Pelling before starting his own stable.

ANNIE STOEBE

Born: 9/27/1987 – Birthplace: Great Falls, MT – Resides: New Egypt, NJ

- Made her Hambletonian Oaks debut last year and finished sixth with Instagram Model.
- Got started in harness racing by working for trainer Brett Bittle, who won the 2002 Hambletonian Oaks with Windylane Hanover.
- Started her own small stable in 2021.
- Top win last year came with Instagram Model in the New York Sire Stakes final.
- Reached the \$1 million mark in career purses in June.
- Has won 42 career races.
- Grew up on a farm in Montana and was active as a barrel racer. She got a rodeo scholarship to a college in Texas.
- After moving to New Jersey nine years ago, she was giving riding lessons when she heard about an opportunity to get into racing and decided to give it a try.
- She also has competed as an amateur driver, winning nine times.

AKE SVANSTEDT

Born: 11/18/1958 – Birthplace: Sweden – Resides: Wrightstown, NJ

- **Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year: 2023.**
- **Hambletonian wins (2):** Captain Corey, 2021; Perfect Spirit, 2017.
- Has won the Hambletonian twice, both times as the driver as well as trainer of his horses.
- In 2021, Svanstedt guided Captain Corey to victory. In 2017, it was Perfect Spirit, who was declared the winner when What The Hill was disqualified for interference in the stretch. It was the first disqualification of a winner in Hambletonian history.
- Had three of the top-four finishers in the 2021 Hambletonian: winner Captain Corey, third-place Ambassador Hanover, and fourth-place Delayed Hanover.
- Finished third in the 2023 Hambletonian with Up Your Deo.
- Up Your Deo earlier in the year won the MGM Yonkers Trot, the first jewel in the Trotting Triple Crown.
- Has had six Hambletonian Oaks finalists. His best finish came in 2023 when he finished second with Bond, who was beaten by a neck by Heaven Hanover.
- Finished third in the 2018 Hambletonian Oaks with Plunge Blue Chip.

- Was named 2023 Trainer of the Year by the U.S. Harness Writers Association.
- Ranked second in purses last year, with a career-best \$9.85 million. Only three trainers in history have enjoyed seasons with higher purse earnings: Ron Burke, Mickey Burke and Jimmy Takter.
- Has been in the top five in purses each of the past five years.
- Set a career high for training wins in 2023 with 162.
- Won four Breeders Crown finals at Harrah's Hoosier Park in 2023, the second-best single-year total ever for a trainer.
- Moved to the U.S. from Sweden in 2014.
- Was Sweden's Trainer of the Year five times and Driver of the Year on three occasions.
- Won 6,306 races as a driver in Sweden and 5,384 as a trainer.
- In 2017, Svanstedt was inducted in Sweden's Hall of Fame.
- Since arriving in the U.S., Svanstedt has won more than 1,100 races as a trainer and \$54 million in purses. Ranks 13th in purses since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.
- Has won more than 660 times as a driver and \$33 million in purses.
- Grew up with horses in Sweden. His father, who was in the timber business, used horses for work and raced cold-blooded trotters. Svanstedt began his professional career at the age of 24 and within several years was the champion at his home track in Bergsaker.

NANCY TAKTER

Born: 6/23/1981 – Birthplace: Malmo, Sweden – Resides: Allentown, NJ

- **Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year:** 2020.
- **Hambletonian wins (1):** Tactical Approach, 2023.
- **Hambletonian Oaks wins (1):** Sorella, 2020.
- Won the 2023 Hambletonian with Tactical Approach, driven by Scott Zeron. He won from post 10, the least advantageous starting spot at The Meadowlands, at 12-1.
- The most recent trainer to win the Hambletonian in consecutive years was Jimmy Takter, Nancy's father, in 2014 with Trixton and 2015 with Pinkman.
- Tactical Approach also won the Kentucky Futurity, giving him two of the three jewels in the Trotting Triple Crown, and a Breeders Crown. He was named 2023 Trotter of the Year.
- Finished second in the Hambletonian in 2021 with 55-1 longshot Spy Booth and in 2020 with Ready For Moni.
- In 2020, Takter continued something of a family tradition by winning the Hambletonian Oaks with Sorella. Her father Jimmy won the event a record eight times. Yannick Gingras drove Jimmy Takter's final five Oaks champs, which came consecutively from 2014 to 2018, and also drove Sorella.
- Sorella was Canada's 2020 O'Brien Award winner for best 3-year-old filly trotter.
- Takter was the caretaker of 2010 Hambletonian winner Muscle Massive, trained by her father. She made her Hambletonian final debut as a trainer in 2014 with Resolve, who finished fifth.
- Last year, Takter was No. 4 in purses among trainers in North America, with \$6.43 million.
- In addition to Tactical Approach, Takter's top horses included Karl, who received the Dan Patch Award for best 2-year-old male trotter. He won nine of 10 races, missing by a nose in his only loss, and earned \$1.04 million.
- In 2020, Takter was the unanimous selection for Trainer of the Year by the chapters of the U.S. Harness Writers Association. She trained 2020 Horse of the Year Tall Dark Stranger and set career highs with 127 wins and \$8.07 million in purses. Her earnings were second in North America to perennial category leader Ron Burke.

- For her career, Takter has won more than 750 races and \$38 million in purses.
- In 2013, Takter started her own training stable. In 2014, she guided 2-year-old female pacer JK She'salady to Horse of the Year honors. JK She'salady is the only 2-year-old filly pacer to be named Horse of the Year.
- Received the Rising Star Award from the U.S. Harness Writers Association in 2014.
- Was 1 when she moved with her family from Sweden to the U.S. Her father is Hall of Fame trainer Jimmy Takter, a four-time winner of the Hambletonian and record eight-time winner of the Hambletonian Oaks.