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New York Heart and Soul: Linda Toscano Ahead of the Night of Champions

Linda Toscano is channeling her inner New Yorker as she prepares for the upcoming \$1.6 million New York Sire Stakes (NYSS) Night of Champions. Born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island, Toscano pours her heart and soul into the state's racing program – hoping the horses she trains can bring home a championship title this Friday, Sept. 10, at Yonkers Raceway when eight \$200,000 NYSS Finals go to post.

"The New York Sire Stakes program is very near and dear to me," said the Hall of Fame trainer. "My first good horses were New York-bred and I will always remember that."

Toscano has four Standardbreds competing in the Finals this week– one of which is 3-year-old pacing filly points leader Heart Of Mine.

"Heart Of Mine has been a pleasure. I will say that Test Of Faith (last season's NYSS Champion) is a better horse on paper, but Heart Of Mine has done everything she had to do and she's still doing it right."

Last season Heart Of Mine, a Roll With Joe filly, started in the Excelsior Series, the middle tier of the New York Sire Stakes program, before moving up to Sire Stakes competition where she was impressive. She set a new track record for two-year-old pacing fillies by winning one of her legs at Saratoga Raceway in 1:53.2. Later she finished second to the Brett Pelling-trained Test Of Faith in the Final on her way to \$ 131,415 in freshman earnings.

This year Heart Of Mine has already banked \$205,000 in winning eight of her 11 starts, including four legs of the NYSS. She drew post six in the seventh race Final on Friday with Test Of Faith right inside her at post five, setting up for an exciting battle.

Bay's Stable, Radio Racing Stable, Fred Wallace and Camelot Stable own the the filly bred by Brittany Farms.

In addition, Toscano sends out two trotting colts side-by-side in the final for 2-Year-Old Trotting males--Grand Spa from the rail and Molotov Cocktail in post two. The event goes off as race three on the 10-race card.

Grand Spa is owned by Bay Pond Racing Stable, whose principals also bred the EL Titan colt as Winbak Farm. He has raced exclusively in the NYSS this year and won his division at Vernon Downs back in July.

As for Molotov Cocktail, Richard Gutnick and Tom Pontone (as TLP Stable) bred the colt and now share ownership with partner Gary Cocco. He is a son of Chapter Seven, who Toscano also campaigned.

The last of Toscano's quartet of finalists is 2-year-old pacing filly Reenactment, who starts from post seven in the fifth race. He is part of the break-out first crop by Huntsville and is owned by Let It Ride Stable, Maurice Chodash and Barry Cohen.

Now, all Toscano can do is rely on her fellow New Yorkers – her horses – to do their best.

The New York Sire Stakes Night of Champions takes place Friday, Sept. 10, at Yonkers Raceway. Post time is 7:15 p.m.