



By Leah Rostohar for New York Sire Stakes

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 8, 2020

### **American Courage Hoping to Bounce Back from Virus at NYSS Night of Champions**

Travis Alexander is not letting a recent setback stop American Courage from vying for the title of top 2-year-old pacing colt on the \$1.8 million New York Night of Champions on Saturday, Sept. 12. The trainer calls an equine virus that ran through his barn in mid-August a blessing in disguise as it may give his colt an edge in his \$225,000 Final.

The virus caused Alexander to scratch American Courage from the fifth preliminary leg for freshman pacing colts at Vernon Downs on Aug. 28.

“We could have raced and pressed for points as he was clean on race day but we weren’t taking any chances,” said Alexander. “We let him tell us how he was feeling, and we decided to scratch.”

Still, American Courage remains unbeaten in his career with a perfect seven-for-seven and with \$180,000 in total earnings accumulated already this year. This includes starts in the New York Sire Stakes and the Springfield (formerly the Sheppard) at Yonkers.

“You never know how they are going to be, he’s been a surprise,” said Alexander. “I always knew he had a large amount of ability, but things just have to go your way. All of these horses are fast and bred so well; they’re getting more Thoroughbred-like.”

Despite easing up on the colt’s training as he recovered, the Alexander is still confident pointing the colt into the largest purse start of his young career. He will leave from Post 5 in the fifth race on Saturday with driver Matt Kakaley.

“I haven’t even trained him a mile in August,” said Alexander. “I haven’t even tightened the screws. I just started him back up yesterday (Sept. 2), but he’ll be ready to go.”

Alexander isn’t just referring to the Night of Champions, but to three major stakes races ahead, including the Metro Stakes in Canada on Sept. 26. The scheduling proximity between the NYSS Finals and the Metro poses a challenge to trainers and any connections looking to cross the border. As of right now, any person coming from the United States must quarantine for two weeks in accordance with COVID-19 regulations.

Back-to-back races across the border means Alaina, Alexander’s wife, is already in Canada for the Metro Stakes while Travis focuses on the Night of Champions.

“Alaina is somewhat upset about not being here for the finals in person. She takes care of him and runs his barn. She’s basically the boss,” said Alexander. “She knows every wrinkle of American Courage so, being here alone, it puts a lot of pressure on me for sure.”

A lot of pressure, but also a belief that he has the right team in place to realize the pacer's brimming potential.

"Matt (Kakaley) has done an amazing job. It makes my job easier," said Alexander. "I have full confidence in American Courage."

The New York Sire Stakes Night of Champions takes place September 12 at Yonkers Raceway. Post time is 7:12 p.m.

###