

Holloway's NY-Bred duo prepare for 4-year-old debuts

by Ken Weingartner, Harness Racing Communications

Freehold, NJ --- Divine Caroline and Bettor Be Steppin were two of harness racing's top female pacers last year and trainer Joe Holloway is hopeful the dynamic duo can return to similar form this season.

Both horses, now 4-year-olds, will be in action in Friday's qualifiers at the Meadowlands. It will be the first trip to the track this year for Divine Caroline, who received the 2015 Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old filly pacer. Bettor Be Steppin, a multiple-stakes-winner herself last season, qualified in 1:55.4 last week at Freehold Raceway.

Last year, Divine Caroline and Bettor Be Steppin combined to win \$1.13 million in purses, led by Divine Caroline's division-best \$667,266. Bettor Be Steppin's \$468,504 in earnings was third among 3-year-old filly pacers, trailing only her stablemate and Sassa Hanover.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Divine Caroline won the Breeders Crown on her way to a Dan Patch Award.

Bettor Be Steppin won five of her first 11 races last year, including the Lynch Memorial and Valley Forge Stakes, before going winless in her final seven races. When Bettor Be Steppin slumped, Divine Caroline stepped up, winning six of her final 10 starts, including the Breeders Crown and Tarport Hap. Divine Caroline hit the board a total of 19 times in 22 races.

"Bettor Be Steppin started off stronger and I think she got a little tired toward the end of the year," Holloway said. "For a while I thought maybe she had a good shot at being 3-year-old filly (of the year). Then she just kind of leveled off a little bit. But that's the advantage of having two of them, because that does happen.

"Divine Caroline was consistent. I think she was the most consistent of the fillies. In the beginning of the year she was always close, she just couldn't put it away. By the end of the year, I do think she learned how to win a little bit easier. She probably did mature. She's always been fast."

Divine Caroline is a daughter of [Rock N Roll Heaven](#) out of the mare Loving Caroline. She is owned by Val D'Or Farms, Ted Gewertz, Rojan Stables, and Michael Ouriel. For her career, she has won nine of 33 races and earned \$808,692. She has hit the board a total of 26 times.



USTA/Ken Weingartner photo

Bettor Be Steppin has won nine of 30 career races and earned \$767,147.

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Bettor Be Steppin is a daughter of [Bettor's Delight](#) out of the mare Two Steppin' Sally. She is a half-sister to stakes-winner Major Dancer and is owned by Val D'Or Farms, Rojan Stables, and Ted Gewertz. She has won nine of 30 career races and earned \$767,147.

“They had a good year (in 2015) and I think they can have a good year this year,” Holloway said. “I know it’s going against older horses, but those horses are getting older too. They still race well, but they have to lose a step

Holloway is uncertain where Divine Caroline and Bettor Be Steppin will make their seasonal debuts. Bettor Be Steppin is eligible to the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series, which is underway at Yonkers. Divine Caroline is eligible to the Miami Valley Distaff, which is May 8.

“I want to get them qualified (now) because you never know what the weather will bring,” Holloway said. “Something usually goes wrong someplace, so you have to have time built in. It’s really not that early. You want to get two qualifiers and at least one, if not two, starts before you go traveling.

“Also, I’m at Gaitway (training center) now and that’s a learning experience after being at Showplace for so long. That’s another reason I’m going this week; maybe they’ll need more training. But they both look good.”