

Yonkers hosts NY Night of Champions for 3-year-olds

by Frank Drucker, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

Yonkers, NY --- It was a dark and stormy night, but undeterred, Yonkers Raceway forged ahead for the first of two New York Nights of Champions.

For the first time since its inception in 1990, the eight sire stakes finals were halved. Saturday (Sept. 12) night, the Empire's best 3-year-olds had the marquee, with four, \$225,000 sire stakes finals.

The NYSS events were each again sponsored by a prominent breeding farm.



Mike Lizzi photo

Jewels In Hock and driver Jeff Gregory took the 3-year-old Filly Trot 1:56.3.

with the triple returning \$27.60.

Majestic View Farms Filly Trot – Second choice Jewels In Hock (Jim Morrill Jr., \$6.20), leaving from post position four, needed every bit of her lead. She held sway against the relentless chase of last season's divisional champ, 3-5 favorite Barn Doll (Jeff Gregory). The final margin, after fractions of :28.1, :57, 1:26. and a sloppy 1:56.3, was a narrow nostril, with both drifting late (though not near one another). Lady Winona (Jason Bartlett) was a pocket third.

For Jewels In Hock, a daughter of Credit Winner trained by Linda Toscano for KJ Stables, it was her ninth win in 17 seasonal starts. The exacta paid \$12.20,

“The advantage we had (over Barn Doll) was this filly can leave the gate,” Toscano said. “She hasn't always been the easiest horse to work with and we've tinkered with the equipment, but she's shown she has the talent.”

After the race, it was revealed Barn Doll had been sold to William Weaver III for an undisclosed amount, with Gregory taking over the training.

Cameo Hill Farm Filly Pace – Props to Bartlett, who launched Band of Angels (\$21.60) from an eight-hole and went the distance. She looped defending champ (and 2-1 choice) Mosquito Blue Chip (Morrill Jr.), forcing that one into a seat and a second move.

Band of Angels was able to rate early (:28.2, :58, 1:26.1, 1:54), then whip pocket-protecting Devil Child (Jimmy Whittemore) by a wet nose. Mosquito Blue Chip was a credible third.

For sixth choice Band of Angels, a daughter of Rock N Roll Heaven owned by W J Donovan and trained by Ron Burke, she's now 6-for-13 this season. The exacta paid \$124.50, with the triple returning \$458.50.

“I was going to duck her inside Mosquito Blue Chip but she was so good leaving, I just went on with it,” Bartlett said. “The half was cheap, even with the sloppy track and she felt strong. We beat some nice fillies in here.”

Morrisville College Equine Institute Colt/Gelding Trot – In bingo, Habitat (Morrill Jr. \$2.70) would have been your proverbial free space. A Yonkers Trot champ last Saturday was a state-bred champ this Saturday. From post three, Habitat saw Wings of Royalty (Bartlett) grab the first lead, then did his thing (:29, :58.2, 1:28. 1:56.3).

The final margin was a never-threatened length-and-a-quarter over Wings of Royalty, with Mythology Bluechip (Andy Miller) third.

For Habitat, a Conway Hall colt co-owned by (trainer) Burke (as Burke Racing), Weaver Brusceci and Our Horse Cents Stable, it was his eighth win (fourth consecutive) in 15 tries this season. The exacta paid \$13.20, with the triple returning \$83.50.

“A training mile,” Morrill Jr. said.

Blue Chips Farms Colt/Gelding Pace – “He just shows up every start.” That’s what co-owner/trainer Tom Fanning appreciates about odds-on Betting Exchange (Bartlett, \$3.70) after that one’s solid win in the finale of the sire stakes quartet. Two-moving to the lead from post five, he controlled the conversation (:27.1; 56.4; 1:24.4; 1:52.4), dispatching a first-up Rockin’ In Heaven (Trevor Henry) en route to a handy, 3-1/4 length victory.

Rank outsider Americanprimetime (Eric Carlson) skimmed the cones for second at 41-1, with first leader National Seelster (Miller) lasting for third.

For Betting Exchange, a son of Bettor’s Delight also co-owned by Howard Taylor and Susan Kajfasz, he’s now 3-for-14 this season after beginning 0-for-7. The exacta paid \$77.50, with the triple returning \$393.50. Scheduled superfecta wagering was cancelled after a pair of scratches, including the winner’s entry mate.

“We closed up his bridle and that’s made him more aggressive,” Fanning said. “He’s not waiting on horses anymore.”

The Raceway hosts New York Night of Champions (Part II)—four, \$225,000 sire stakes finals for 2-year-olds—Saturday night. Sept. 26.