

STATEBREDS GIMPANZEE, AMERICAN MERCURY
WIN 65TH YONKERS TROT, 64TH MESSENGER
BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Saturday, August 31, 2019—It there was a better advertisement for New York-breds than the one Yonkers Raceway displayed Saturday night (Aug. 31st), one would be hard-pressed to find it.

Odds-on favorite Gimpanzee (Brian Sears, \$2.60) gave nothing else a chance in the 65th Yonkers Trot, dusting his seven foes in a track-record performance.

From post position No. 4 in the \$500,000 foray, Gimpanzee took the lead from 127-1 number Sheena's Boy before a 28-second opening quarter-mile.

The early portion of the race included a pair of jumpers in Osterc (George Brennan) and Livinonthedash (Marcus Miller). While those two miscreants were leaving the course, Hambletonian winner Forbidden Trade (Bob McClure) was easing into a four-hole.

That four-hole became a three-hole after Soul Strong (Dexter Dunn) broke. Meanwhile, Gimpanzee was all by his lonesome at the :56.4 half. Then, for good measure, he threw down a :56.4 back half, the result a 1:53.3, 4¼-length win in the second jewel of the Trotting Triple Crown.

The mile was a track record for 3-year-old cots and the fastest Trot held here (Windsong's Legacy won the 2004 edition at Hawthorne in a stakes-record 1:53.1).

Forbidden Trade, though no threat to the winner, was a credible, two-move second (in horse's and driver's first local appearance). A recovering Soul Strong was third, with 199-1 rank outsider No Drama Please (Jason Bartlett) and HL Revadon (Jim Marohn Jr.) moved up to fourth and fifth, respectively, after Sheena's Boy broke in a tiring pocket, disqualified from fourth to sixth.

Osterc and Livinonthedash rounded out the order.

For newly-minted millionaire Gimpanzee, a statebred son of Chapter Seven co-owned by Courant Inc. and S R F Stable, it was his fifth win in seven seasonal starts (career 14-for-26, \$1,145,996) The exacta paid \$8.50, the triple returned \$18 and the superfecta paid \$269.

Gimpanzee has won all five of his Westchester starts, while Sears won his fourth Yonkers Trot.

“All the credit to Marcus (Melander) and his outfit,” Sears said. “He's been a total pro from the first time I sat behind him, just so mature and he was ready tonight. It's just a pleasure to be a part of it.”

“When the draw came out, I knew it was his race to lose,” Melander said of the defending statebred and overall divisional champion. He’s been great on a half (-mile track). “He lays down in the turns over like a motorcycle.

“This is an amazing race to win and I don’t think there is a better 3-year-old on a half-mile track and I think he showed it tonight.”

A race later, the half-million-dollar 64th Messenger Stakes found American Mercury (Tyler Buter, \$16.20) finding room inside and picking off 1-20 favorite Bettor’s Wish (Dexter Dunn) in 1:51.3.

Pole-sitting Bettor’s Wish, as expected, left the gate, while American Mercury—from post No. 3—stepped around Branquinho (Ray Schnittker) and into an early pocket. They weren’t going that much (:27., :55.3), not even when U S Captain (Bartlett) moved from fourth.

That one did draw alongside Bettor’s Wish, however, in a modest 28-second (1:23.3) third quarter. That left Buter with a decision...swing off the cones or hope to find room inside.

Bettor’s Wish—the lone \$30,000 supplemental entrant into the race—owned a length lead into the lane, gradually disposing of U S Captain. A patient American Mercury was loaded, though, needing a path to ply his craft. He was obliged when Bettor’s Wish bore out and the pursuer took down the prohibitive fave, winning the second jewel of the Pacing Triple Crown by a head.

U S Captain was third, with Branquinho and Escapetothebeach (Corey Callahan) grabbing the minors. Waterway (Joe Bongiorno), Aflame Hanover (Sears) and Reigning Deo (George Brennan) brought up the rear.

It was the first Triple Crown win of Buter’s career.

For second choice American Mercury, a soph Empire-bred American Ideal gelding co-owned by Crawford Racing, Northfork Racing, Chuck Pompey & Scott Bice and trained by Chris Oakes, it was his seventh win in 10 ’19 tries. The exacta paid \$22, the triple returned \$57.50 and the superfecta paid \$308.50.

“He was super-sharp coming into the race,” Buter said. “First and foremost, I owe [trainer] Chris [Oakes] a big thank you for giving me a shot on this horse. It’s been a fun ride all summer, driving him and traveling New York. He definitely came through tonight and showed everybody what he can do.

“I came off Dexter (Dunn)’s helmet there and he kicked on the gas. I think that might have been the winning move, because if I stayed there, Dexter was probably going to back into me as much as he could. So then, as soon as I was off his helmet, Dexter stepped on the gas, and I was able to get back down the inside and find a little room late, and it worked out”

Asked when the 'switch went on' for American Mercury, Oakes offered, "When I gelded him. He was kind of a big, growthy 2-year-old. He had a lot of ability; we loved him training down, and quite honestly wasn't quite as good as I thought he would be at 2, even though he raced some pretty good miles.

Bringing him back at three, he was training good, but I just thought he'd probably be more focused, mentally, for racing, as a gelding. We made that decision and I honestly believe it helped him a lot.

"He means business now."

-30-

(FFI...Frank Drucker, Yonkers Raceway Publicity Director, 914-968-4200)