

Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs Week in Review

May 28-June 3, 2010

Considering we witnessed two track records, one of which was a world record and the other a North American mark, it shouldn't come as any surprise where the Weekly Awards will fall at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs. Let's take a look.

PACER OF THE WEEK: PILGRIMS TONER

Sometimes it takes a horse a while to hit his stride. While this gelding had put together a solid career coming into 2010, there was nothing on the ledger to suggest a leap of this magnitude in his 6-year-old campaign. But Pilgrims Toner has taken just such a leap for trainer Frank Catalfamo this season, beating the best-of-the-best pacers week in and week out at The Meadowlands.

On Saturday night he returned to Pocono to face off against our Open Handicap pacers from the outside #7 post. Brian Sears, who was in town for a few drives in the James M Lynch Memorial eliminations, took the reins and decided to let the 6-year-old show his stuff on the MSPD oval. With little urging throughout and Sears simply enjoying the ride in the stretch, Pilgrims Toner destroyed the finest pacers on the grounds by 7 lengths, crossing the line in a ridiculous 1:48:2.

That stupendous time matches the fastest mile ever paced at Pocono, a feat previously achieved by the great Shadow Play two years ago. In addition, the time matched a world record for aged geldings on a 5/8-mile oval. That makes 9 wins in 19 starts this year for Pilgrims Toner, while his career earnings now top \$363,000. Just think what he might have done had he been challenged.

Other pacers worthy of mention this week: Let's Roll Joe (Kevin Sizer, Chris Carrubba), who notched his second straight win against the \$30,000 claimers, our highest claiming group, on Tuesday night in 1:51:2; Twin B Passion (Matt Romano, Clarence Martin Jr.), who moved up in class on Wednesday to handle a group of \$15,000 claiming fillies and mares, her second straight victory, in 1:54; and Personal Ad (Jim Morrill Jr., Kent Sherman), winner of 3 out of 4 condition paces for fillies and mares after her win Wednesday night in 1:53:2.

TROTTER OF THE WEEK: BRIGHTEN UP

Sometimes a great performance just kind of sneaks up on you. On Saturday, while the faithful were awaiting the star fillies in the Lynch eliminations, Brighten Up stepped up to the plate in a claiming handicap trot and put together an incendiary mile.

Trained and driven by Joe Pavia Jr., the 5-year-old mare, who had been in the Pavia barn for just a few weeks after a claim, gunned right to the front end from the outside in a six-horse field. The fractions were blistering, and the lead just kept getting longer. But disaster nearly struck when Brighten Up broke stride near the finish line.

Pavia quickly pulled the horse up to slow down, and the lead was such that she still delivered the win while conforming to the breaking rule. Even with the slow-down at the end, the mare still tripped the line in 1:52:1. That's the best ever mile for a distaff trotter at Pocono, fastest ever in North America for an aged mare on a 5/8-mile track, and just a tick off the all-time track mark for trotters of 1:52. Had she stayed on stride, she likely would have owned that last mark, but that's nitpicking really. On a night when attention was directed elsewhere, Brighten Up earned the spotlight with her fantastic effort.

Trotting honorable mention goes to: You're Next (Joe Pavia Jr., Chris Carrubba), who won his second straight Open Handicap trot on Tuesday night, once again at double-digit odds, this time in a career-best 1:53:4; Lindy's Dynasty (Mike Simons, Tony Dinges), who picked up his second straight condition trotting win Saturday night in 1:57:4; and Shibboleth Hanover (Mike Simons, Clarence Martin Jr.), who came from behind to win a trot over a tough condition field on Tuesday in 1:54:3, a lifetime best.

LONG SHOT OF THE WEEK: TINA TIM

When the leader and favorite went off stride around the last turn in Wednesday's 11th race condition trot, Tina Tim (Jim Taggart Jr., J. Neal Ehrhart) was there to pick up the pieces at 80-1 for a win payout of \$168.80.

DRIVER OF THE WEEK: JOE PAVIA JR.

Big week for Joe, as he ripped off 11 wins, including at least two each night with a 5-victory explosion on Tuesday. He also continued his success with 3-year-old fillies, winning aboard Ruffle's Kiss, whom he also trains, in a Lynch elimination on Saturday.

TRAINER OF THE WEEK: CHRIS CARRUBBA

All of Carrubba's winners for the week came on one night, but what a night it was. He scored three winners on Tuesday, sweeping the featured pace and trot that evening.

That will do it for this week, but I'll see you at the track. Feel free to e-mail me at jbeviglia@mohegansunpocono.com.