

The Classics

A MONTHLY SALUTE TO A STANDARD-BRED GREAT | by Dean A. Hoffman

TOP TROTTER: SJ's Caviar, trained and driven by Bob Blanton, won 20 of 30 starts and \$1,288,466 in purses in his career.



Rich Tastes

SJ's Caviar was lightly staked, yet heavily successful

Earlier this year, two of the most respected people in the Standardbred world commented on how overlooked and under appreciated SJ's Caviar was as a stallion. One commented that if SJ's Caviar got the same quality of mares that some of the marquee stallions get, he would rank much higher in the esteem of trainers.

Plenty of trainers like the offspring of SJ's Caviar and breeders value him because he's a great stallion for stopping a recalcitrant mare.

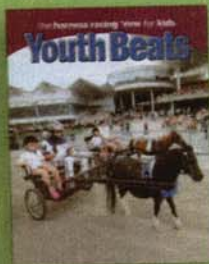
Certainly his pedigree hampered his welcome when he went to stud. At that time, his sire, S J's Photo, was also under appreciated and it didn't help matters that SJ's Caviar was out of a mare by T V

Yankee, a horse whose influence as a stallion never spread far beyond the borders of Maryland.

One thing that SJ's Caviar had going for him as a stallion is that his fourth dam is Lady Ann Reed, a mare that came from the fairs of Missouri and Illinois to electrify the sport in the 1950s. Her pedigree truly traced from the "tall and uncut"

GET INTO THE RACE!

With a **FREE** subscription to *Youth Beats*, the quarterly magazine for and about kids in harness racing.



To begin your subscription just mail your name, age and address to 750 Michigan Ave., Columbus, OH 43215, or e-mail editor Jason Turner at: jason.turner@ustrotting.com



SUCCESSFUL DAUGHTER: Bold And Fresh made her daddy proud by winning the 2011 Hambletonian Oaks in 1:53.1.



grasses of the prairie. Her sixth dam was totally unknown. Lady Ann Reed established her own maternal family despite her humble heritage.

SJ's Caviar was bred by the top Maryland horseman David Wade and was included in a sale at Rosecroft Raceway in 1999.

Maryland owner Eli Solomon and his friend Don Bartling both worked at Northrup Grumman in the Washington, D.C. area. Solomon said that Bartling had never been a fan of trotters, but agreed to take a part of SJ's Caviar.

Solomon said SJ's Caviar "represented himself with pride" at the sale.

"He thought he was the cat's meow," he said.

SJ's Caviar was hammered down to the partnership of Solomon and Bartling for \$12,000 and Bob Blanton took him into training.

That February at Ocean Downs, SJ's Caviar got ill as sickness swept the stable.

"When you went into a stable, most of the horses had their heads out over the stall door. Not SJ's Caviar. He was always resting."

—Eli Solomon

A filly in the Blanton Stable died.

"SJ's Caviar never stopped eating," said Solomon. "He did stop training, however, and he began to develop bumps all over his body. Maybe that was a reaction to the antibiotics. Maybe it was a fungus."

This severe setback occurred when owners are expected to pony up stakes payments. And those checks are not chump change. With questions about SJ's Caviar's health, some payments, including the Hambletonian, were skipped.

When the son of S J's Photo got to the races, he was entered in a stakes at the Meadowlands and broke stride at the start.

"It was his first time under the lights," said Bartling. "He finished back, but Eli clocked him faster than the winner's time."

The colt was particularly tough in Pennsylvania races and Bartling recalls seeing him kick into high gear one night in winning at Pocono Downs.

"You know what, Eli, we might really have something here," said Bartling.

Bartling discovered in 2001 just how prescient his words were. SJ's Caviar won 15 of his 20 starts and was voted champion of his class.

Early in the season, the owners turned him over to Mike Palone to condition for races at The Meadows since Blanton was otherwise occupied with a large stable.

Palone notified them that SJ's Caviar had popped a gravel but he thought everything was under control. The colt won his first start impressively in 1:56.2 for the Palone team, then went to Freehold for the Dexter Cup.

Trainer Bob Blanton took the reins in the Dexter Cup elim and SJ's Caviar was second. He was second to none in the Dexter Cup final, whipping around the turns at Freehold to win by 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ lengths in 1:56.1—and shaving almost two seconds off the stakes record.

That endeavor sparked a 10-race winning streak that included the Currier and Ives, Canadian Trotting Classic and the Beacon Course.

The primary threat to SJ's Caviar in the Beacon Course figured to come from Chasing Tail, an ace from the powerful combo of trainer Chuck Sylvester and driver John Campbell.

"Chuck Sylvester had said that if Chasing Tail is close enough to SJ's Caviar, he would overhaul him in the home-stretch," said Solomon.

Chasing Tail had won his Beacon Course elim in 1:55 with a swift final quarter.

SJ's Caviar was trotting to the lead entering the final quarter with Chasing Tail hot on his heels, but soon the pursuer jumped it off and SJ's Caviar cruised to a 1:54.1 win.

Solomon recalled that before the race he'd filled on old wine bottle with some water. In the winner's circle, he let SJ's Caviar drink from the bottle and then fed him some chocolate sprinkles from a spoon. The track announcer said, "And there is champagne and caviar in the winner's circle."

"We did send some real champagne to the press box after the race," Solomon added.

The unsung Blanton did a superb job training and driving the colt and gets all the credit for developing him into a champion.

"One thing I always noticed was that when you went into a stable, most of the horses had their heads out over the stall door," said Solomon. "Not SJ's Caviar. He was always resting."

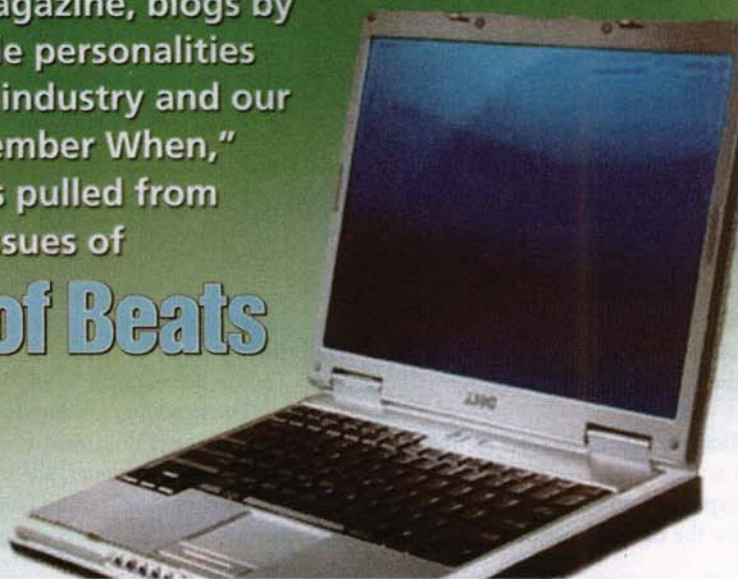
Immediately after the Hambletonian, SJ's Caviar went to Pocono Downs and equaled Mack Lobell's world record with a 1:54.1 mile with his pursuers 11 lengths in arrears. In his next start, at The Meadows, he won again in 1:54.1 over a track rated "sloppy."

Then things hit a snag. At odds of 1-9, he made a break and finished sixth in a Yonkers Trot elimination. Solomon said

Visit us online at
www.hoofbeatsmagazine.com

for the stories behind the stories featured in our OnTrack newsletter, yearling, stallion and stakes ads, found in the most recent edition of the magazine, blogs by notable personalities in the industry and our "Remember When," stories pulled from past issues of

Hoof Beats



**RAISED TO RACE
RECYCLED TO RIDE**



**NEW VOCATIONS
WWW.HORSEADOPTION.COM**

that the colt had blood coming out of his feet that night from quarter cracks.

"I've always thought it might have been that gravel that was in there festering all the time," Bartling said.

He recovered to win his next two starts at Pocono, then shipped to the Bluegrass for the Kentucky Futurity.

He came up a little sick before the race and his connections were also a little sick when SJ's Caviar drew post 7 in the eight-horse, first-heat elimination field.

In the first heat, he was the odds-on favorite, but went into the first turn extremely wide and was used hard to get to the lead. He faded in the stretch. In the second heat, he was never a factor.

"He probably shouldn't have started in the second heat," said Bartling.

He rebounded to win the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Championship and his Breeders Crown elim, but drew post 9 in the final and finished fourth.

That was it. It was off to Hanover Shoe Farms for SJ's Caviar. Jim Simpson had expressed an interest in getting the horse for the orange-and-blue team, expressing

admiration, Bartling said, for the colt's gait.

SJ's Caviar retired with earnings of \$1,288,466, and bred 328 mares in his first two seasons at Hanover.

From his first crop came Mr Pine Chip, a colt who was first or second in nine of his 13 starts as a freshman, with earnings of \$290,508. He went to Trond Smedshammer's stable as a sophomore and into the 2006 Hambletonian eliminations unbeaten. He was the 2-5 favorite in his Hambo elimination and he won easily over Glidemaster. He broke stride in the final won by Glidemaster, who won the Trotting Triple Crown that year.

The best colt from the second crop by SJ's Caviar was Mythical Lindy, developed and campaigned by Jim Arledge Jr.

The richest performer by SJ's Caviar is Likeabatoutahell, a winner of \$800,968, giving him an edge over Triumphant Caviar, a winner of \$796,794.

The headliner among the daughters of SJ's Caviar is Bold And Fresh, last year's Hambo Oaks winner. She was developed by the superb horseman Doug Miller and he peaked her at exactly the right time to

win the \$750,000 event at the Meadowlands. She was timed in 1:53.1 and ended the season as the richest and fastest sophomore filly trotter of the season.

And who owned Bold And Fresh during her racing days? None other than Don Bartling, former partner on SJ's Caviar. Bold And Fresh was later sold to Norwegian interests.

Interestingly, even though SJ's Caviar has few daughters in production yet, he has sired the dam of Costa Rica, a winner of \$1,394,757 in purses.

Owned by a syndicate, the 14-year-old SJ's Caviar bred 96 mares this year, the first time he's bred fewer than a hundred mares since entering the stud a decade ago.

DEAN A. HOFFMAN is a member of the Communicators Corner, located at the Hall of Fame, and a former editor of *Hoof Beats*.

The views contained in this story are that of the author alone, and do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of the United States Trotting Association. To comment on this story, e-mail us at readerforum@ustrotting.com.

DELAWARE STANDARDBRED BREEDERS' FUND

2320 S DuPont Hwy, Dover, DE 19901



STALLION NOMINATIONS DUE FOR 2013

\$500-December 1, 2012

Late payment of \$1,000 by January 1, 2013

Forms available on the website.

2% bonus for all foals conceived within the state of DE.
Continuing in 2013! Four (4) year old bonus program on purses
earned at Dover Downs and Harrington Raceway.

2320 S DuPont Hwy, Dover, DE 19901

(302) 698-4610

E-mail: Judy.Davis-Wilson@state.de.us

www.desbf.com