Seven Iron Looks To Go Back-To-Back In Lexington

Five divisions of the $283,000 International Stallion Stake for 2-year-old male trotters are featured on the Thursday afternoon card at The Red Mile, and trainer Linda Toscano is hoping for a little déjà vu.

It was in an International Stallion division last year that the Toscano-trained Walner scored a 1:51.3 victory, the fastest mile ever trotted by a 2-year-old colt. While Seven Iron, Toscano’s lone entry in this year’s International, likely won’t approach equaling Walner’s mark, he has a great chance to go back-to-back in Grand Circuit action after a 1:55.4 victory in a Bluegrass division last Thursday.

Seven Iron starts from post 1 in the first International Stallion division (Race 4) with Tim Tetrick driving. In the Bluegrass, the 12-1 longshot Seven Iron rallied three wide from fifth around the final turn to get up by a nose over favorite Patent Leather, who starts from post 6 in the same International Stallion division.

“He was a little bit crooked in the stretch but we added a head pole this week so hopefully that will go away.”

–Linda Toscano

Seven Iron is a son of Toscano’s star trotter Chapter Seven, out of the Cantab Hall mare Beyond Blue. Seven Iron’s maternal family includes 2004 Hambletonian Oaks champ Silver Springs. Toscano said her visits to Concord Stud Farm led her to purchase the trotter for $100,000 on behalf of Jacobs.

“I’m in and out of Concord a lot because my owners have homebreds there,” explained Toscano, “so I saw the colt a couple of times when I was there and he was always a happy colt that trotted really nice and moved well in the field. We were obviously looking for some Chapter Sevens and he caught my eye.”

After finishing second by a neck in his debut, Seven Iron broke his maiden in his second start with a 1:56.2 effort in a Kindergarten division at the Meadowlands. The trotter has yet to miss a check, notching a second, two thirds and a fourth in New York Sires Stakes, as well as a third in a Reynolds division.

“That’s pretty much right,” Toscano answered when asked if it’s been a learning process for Seven Iron. “He was really not one of the best ones training down. He always showed he had ability and showed he had the desire, but he didn’t always hold his gait. When we got him close I decided that we were going to teach him. He’s gotten better and better.” — By Gordon Waterstone
Walner Being Syndicated, To Stand At Southwind In NJ

Although trainer Linda Toscano had hoped to bring the 2016 Two-Year-Old Colt Trotter of the Year Walner to The Red Mile as she continued training following the colt’s recovery from a suspensory injury, it won’t be happening.

On Wednesday morning, while at her stable on The Red Mile backstretch, Toscano and Walner’s owner, Ken Jacobs, confirmed the colt is officially retired from racing and that there was a deal “in principle” for Walner to stand at stud at Southwind Farm in New Jersey next year.

“The horse is being syndicated and it is being led by Brit- tany Farms and Lindy Farms,” said Toscano. “There was a great deal of interest in the horse, especially from Europe, but Ken wanted him to stay here.”

Jacobs said he is proud that Walner, the sport’s fastest 2-year-old colt trotter of all time, will be residing in the same stud barn occupied by trotting greats Valley Victory and now Muscle Hill.

Toscano said Walner has been test bred.

“This past month he spent a week at Select Breeders and he was just given the green light with his fertility tests,” she revealed.

Jacobs said he is retaining a 25 percent interest in Walner, but presently owns no broodmares and has no plans to become a breeder.

“I’d rather go to the auction than breed,” he said. “And I’ll still be doing that because I want to win the Hambletonian!”

It was on Oct. 6, 2016, that Walner trotted his world-record 1:51.3 mile at The Red Mile. Wrapping up his freshman season with wins in the Breeders Crown and Kindergarten finals, the son of Chapter Seven was an overwhelming Dan Patch Award winner.

Walner returned to the races this year with a 1:51.1 win in a conditioned trot on July 8 at the Meadowlands, and after a 1:50.2 win one week later in a $159,000 Stanley Dancer Memorial division at the Big M, it appeared Walner was headed for a Hambletonian victory.

However, a few days before the entry box closed for the Hambletonian, Toscano announced Walner had suffered an injury and would not be entered. She recently disclosed Walner was dealing with a soft-tissue injury. She disputed published reports last week that said Walner suffered the injury while stepping in a hole.

“I read last week where somebody wrote he stepped in a hole. If there was a hole I would have avoided it,” she said with a laugh. “It was one misstep somewhere but I couldn’t tell you where. Something went awry somewhere.”

Toscano didn’t hesitate when asked her emotions about Walner’s abbreviated two-race sophomore season.

“It was heartbreaking for me,” said Toscano. “I think he is the best a lot of people have ever seen, and not just me. He’s a generational horse, just like Muscle Hill.” — By Kathy Parker & Gordon Waterstone
Look For Hey Blondie
Late In ISS Split

When Hey Blondie was purchased as a yearling (as Whovian Hanover from Hanover Shoe Farms) for $125,000, the connections were hoping for big things from a filly whose dam is a full sister to the 2009 Horse of the Year Muscle Hill. After eight starts for the 2-year-old filly trotter it’s so far so good, according to trainer Chuck Sylvester.

Hey Blondie has yet to miss a check in her burgeoning career. While her three wins include a career-best 1:56.3 in a Kindergarten split (over a “sloppy” track) and a 1:57.2 effort in a Pennsylvania Sires Stakes (PASS) division, her biggest check came via a second-place finish in the $252,000 PASS final behind the undefeated Manchego. Overall, Hey Blondie has $139,848 in earnings for owners Steve Jones, Mary Kinsey Arnold, Paul Bordogna and David McDuffee.

Hey Blondie will start from post 7 in the first of five divisions of the $289,000 International Stallion Stake on Friday afternoon at The Red Mile. Regular driver Andy McCarthy will again be in the sulky behind the filly who is coming off a third-place finish in the $240,000 Kentuckiana Stallion Management on Sept. 22 at Hoosier Park. In that race, Hey Blondie used a last quarter in :26.4 to close from 10 ¾ lengths back in ninth at the three-quarters to finish third by just two lengths.

“It didn’t look like she was going to get a check and then here she comes,” said Sylvester.

Sylvester said seeing Hey Blondie rallying late in most of her efforts comes as no surprise.

“She’s always been one that was just a little lazy,” said Sylvester. “Every time we trained her she would sit in and then pass somebody finishing. I think she learned from that. “She’s been a nice filly all year. She’s always been one of our better ones, and she can finish. If you look at her last quarters in her last few races every one of them has been in :26 and a piece. She gets home.”

Because of Hey Blondie’s late-closing kick, Sylvester isn’t concerned about the filly starting from the outside post in her $57,000 ISS division (Race 2).

“No, because she’s going to get away close to last anyhow,” he said. “If she’s within reach at the head of the stretch she’ll go by them.”

Sylvester added he plans on making an equipment change on Hey Blondie this week: “I am probably going to pull some shoes this week.” — By Gordon Waterstone
Red Mile Grand Circuit—week 1

Leading Drivers By Wins

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<th>Starts</th>
<th>Wins (Average)</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
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<td>Tim Tetrick</td>
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Leading Trainers By Wins

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<td>Nancy Johansson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Ryder</td>
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For mail sent via U.S. Postal Service, either P.O. Box 8480, Lexington, KY 40533, or 1910 Harrodsburg Rd., Suite 200, Lexington, KY 40503. (859) 276-4026

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Lex Selected Going Strong Through Two Sessions

Because the 2016 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale generated double-digit increases in averages for all gaitsexes of yearlings, the majority of consignors, and certainly sale company managers, did not expect similar gains for 2017. Nevertheless, they expected a very solid sale, and through two sessions that’s what they have seen.

After a first session average of $114,344 and a second-session average of $76,489, the sale was down just one-half of one percent in average price, from the $92,717 figure generated in 2016 to $92,205. Through two sessions, a total of 90 yearlings had been sold for prices of $100,000 or more, with 18 selling for $200,000 or more. There were 36 yearlings sold for six-figure prices in the second session, which is up from 29 in that price sector in the 2016 second session.

While the sale topper is generally sold in the opening night session, this year that yearling was likely Hip 239, a filly sold just 20 horses before the conclusion of session two. Hip 239, a Muscle Hill filly, topped the sale when she sold for $480,000. Consigned by Bob Boni’s Northwood Bloodstock Agency as agent for breeders Jeff Gural and Moon Goddess LLC, the filly was purchased by Robert Lindstrom, acting as agent for Lennart Agren, who won this year’s Hambletonian with Perfect Spirit.

Named Beautiful Sin, the sale-topping filly is the first foal of Sina, a daughter of Cantab Hall. The Muscle Hill-Cantab
Hall cross has been magical, producing top stakes winners such as Southwind Frank, Ariana G and her full sister All The Time, both winners of the Hambletonian Oaks, and this year’s top 2-year-old filly Manchego.

The bidding on Beautiful Sin opened slowly, picked up a bit of steam when it hit $90,000, and then took off. Finally just two bidders were left, both in the back ring at the Fasig-Tipton Sales Pavilion—Lindstrom and Jimmy Takter.

Boni said he had remarked to someone earlier in the evening that he thought the filly would sell for around $250,000.

“I didn’t predict this,” said Boni, “but this is a beautiful filly who is absolutely correct.”

During her racing career Sina took a 3-year-old mark of 1:55.1f and won in 1:54.3 at age four for veteran trainer Bob Bencal, whose wife, Monica, is partners in the filly as Moon Goddess LLC. Although Gural is the majority owner, his wife, Paula, is also Monica’s partner and the two women followed Sina together on the racetrack and were at the sale, watching in amazement and with pride as the mare’s foal sold.

Selling the sale topper put Northwood Bloodstock at the top of the list for Consignor Averages. Through two sessions Northwood had sold 12 yearlings for an average price of $147,917, with just one yearling left to sell.

Although Takter didn’t get the Muscle Hill-Sina colt for his stable, he had still purchased eight yearlings for a total of $1,057,000. Last year he spent slightly more than $2 million on 11 yearlings in the first two sessions. Burke Racing Stable is the second leading buyer through two sessions, purchasing 12 yearlings for $925,000. Last year Burke Racing had bought 11 yearlings on the first two nights of the sale, spending $827,000.

Burke Racing had bought three yearlings from the first crop of pacing sire Sweet Lou, who they campaigned on the track, for a total of $255,000.

The top price for a pacing-bred yearling was $330,000, attained when Diamond Creek Racing had the final bid on Hip 130, a colt by A Rocknroll Dance out of the Dan Patch Award winner Somwherovrarainbow. Diamond Creek also bred the colt—the first foal of the mare—in partnership with Ted Gewertz, and purchased the yearling to buy out Gewertz. In addition, Gewertz has also sold its interest in the mare to Diamond Creek.—By Kathy Parker

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