

Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs Week in Review

May 7-13, 2010

The last two finals of the Spring Late Closer series took center stage this past week at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, providing us with our two weekly award winners. Let's take a look at the best of the best for the week that was at MSPD.

PACER OF THE WEEK: PIKE HANOVER

Some horses are good enough to win using the same style week after week, but most of the best have the versatility to adjust to what the race gives them. Case in point: Pike Hanover, who won the first two legs of the Mohegan Pace Late Closer series for 3-year-old colts and geldings on the pace in front-running fashion. In Saturday night's final though, he was faced with a tough outside post and settled in the absolute back of the pack as a hot pace raged in front of him.

No worries for driver Jim Morrill Jr., as he sent the colt from the Erv Miller barn to the outside on the back stretch and began calmly picking off horses. In the stretch, only Blueridge Fortune stood in the way, and Pike Hanover mowed him down to win by a neck in 1:53:1, completing the sweep of the series and earning the winner's share of the \$44,000 purse.

Other top pacers this week: Mr Rightnow (Mike Simons, Gail Wrubel), who scored his third straight sizzling victory on Saturday night, scorching a condition field in the week's fastest time of 1:51; Transcending (Matt Kakaley, Ron Burke), an ultra-consistent pacer who stepped up in class to tackle the Open pacers Saturday and came out a winner in 1:51:4; and Artifact K (George Napolitano Jr., Steve Salerno), who conquered a sloppy track and a field of \$30,000 claimers on Tuesday for a win in 1:53:3, his second straight.

TROTTER OF THE WEEK: GREATHALLOFCHINA

The \$32,000 final of the Scranton Trot for 3-year-old fillies proved to be the most exciting of the Late Closer finals, although for much of the race it looked like a romp. Odds-on favorite Spectacular Bay set some imposing fractions and jumped out to a lead of over ten lengths on the rest of the field on the back stretch, and it looked like she was home free.

Greathallofchina, trained by Donald Wiest, had other ideas. The filly with a nose for the finish line steadily made up the margin on Spectacular Bay. In the stretch, Anthony Napolitano guided Greathallofchina by the leader to complete the stunning comeback and win by 1 ¾ lengths in 1:54:4, just missing a track record for the age group. The filly remained perfect in 2010 with the win, 5 wins in 5 starts, all at Pocono.

Honorable mention on the trotting side goes to: Tactical Advantage (Jim Morrill Jr., Becky Zubkoff), winner of two straight claiming trots after a front-running win on Friday night in 1:57:2; Brighten Up (George Napolitano Jr., Jim Raymer), who won for the second straight race and third time in his last four

claiming trots with a victory on Saturday in 1:55:3; and P J Clark (Jim Morrill Jr., Laura Shock), who powered to a condition win on Tuesday night in the slop in 1:55:2.

LONG SHOT OF THE WEEK: TECHALONG

In a claiming trot on Friday night, Techalong (Tony Schadel, Brian Roland), made a three-wide turn for a come-from-behind win at 44-1, paying off \$90.60 on a \$2 win ticket.

DRIVER OF THE WEEK: MIKE SIMONS

Mike had by far his best week of the season to date, racking up 9 driving victories to soar into the top five in the standings. He added the exclamation point with a season-high 5 wins on Wednesday night.

TRAINER OF THE WEEK: KENT SHERMAN

No one had more than the four training wins Sherman picked up last week, which he achieved with training doubles on Friday and Wednesday. As a matter of fact, every starter he sent out on those two nights came home a winner.

BREEDERS CROWN WATCH: ROCK N ROLL HANOVER

We'll see many top of the country's top 3-year-olds in the next few weeks for the Max Hempt races, including a few who competed for the \$220,000 Berry's Creek title last Saturday at The Meadowlands. In that race, Rock N Roll Hanover, driven by Dan Dube for trainer Bruce Saunders, delivered an outstanding gate-to-wire winning performance in 1:52. The son of Rocknroll Hanover now has earned nearly three-quarters of a million dollars despite being not even halfway through his second season of racing.

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.