

What A Knockout (Donato Hanover-Southwind Sofia-Chocolatier)



What A Knockout was fourth in the Hambletonian Oaks elimination won by Manchego. She trotted on the inside in the three-hole throughout the mile and closed in 27.3 at the cones to finish 5 3/4 lengths behind the winner.

Sporting a record of three wins, no seconds, and four thirds from 16 trips behind the gate, What A Knockout has banked \$57,128. She took her mark of 1:52.4 earlier this year at the Meadowlands in an overnight race and was victorious in Pennsylvania Sire Stakes competition on May 12 at The Meadows.

“It’s been a mixed year for her,” said trainer Marcus Melander. “She started out good, won a sire stakes, and then she made some breaks at Pocono, and then she won here again over some pretty nice colts. She didn’t race that bad last time (a seventh-place finish to Phaetosive in a Del Miller division at the Meadowlands). Phaetosive came home in like :26.4, or so. She’s all right.

“When she broke the last time she was like five wide in the turn, so that was not really her fault. The other one was at Pocono and she’s a big horse and couldn’t handle the track as good as she can here. She should be fine. Otherwise she’s been doing all right.

“She’s a big filly. She has a lot of gate speed. She’s a nice horse. She can be a little grabby sometimes, that’s no good, but in the race she’s all right. She trained good all winter. She’s not as good as Manchego

and Plunge Blue Chip and Phaetosive --- those three I think are better than all of the other fillies. But every horse can make a break, so you never know.”

Breeding Notes

What A Knockout is by Donato Hanover, who won his elimination and the final of the 2007 Hambletonian. Her dam, the unraced Chocolatier mare Southwind Sofia, is a half-sister to Southwind Serena, the dam of millionaire Mission Brief, who was the winner of her elimination and second in the final of the 2015 Hambletonian. Southwind Serena is also the dam of Tactical Landing, who is likely to start in this year’s Hambletonian.

Sold for \$140,000 at the 2016 Lexington Selected Yearling Sale, What A Knockout was bred by Frederick W. Hertrich. What A Knockout would be his first Hambletonian Oaks winner.

Driver – David Miller

Born: 12/10/1964 – Birthplace: Columbus, OH – Resides: Cream Ridge, NJ

David Miller, 53, won the 2012 Hambletonian Oaks with Personal Style.

The Hall of Fame driver ranks No. 2 all time in purses, with \$226 million, and has finished among the top five in earnings 18 of the past 19 years. He holds the record for most \$10-million seasons, with 15.

Miller is No. 5 all-time in wins, with more than 12,400.

He was the U.S. Harness Writers Association’s Driver of the Year in 2016, 2015 and 2003.

In 2003, Miller led the sport in purses and drove No Pan Intended to the Pacing Triple Crown and Horse of the Year honors. In 2016, Miller was the driver of Horse of the Year Award winner Always B Miki, who paced the fastest mile in harness racing history when he won in 1:46 at Lexington’s Red Mile.

In 2015, Miller set a record with five Breeders Crown wins in a single year.

Miller, who received the 1993 Rising Star Award from the U.S. Harness Writers Association, was already a standout in his native Ohio when he headed to the East Coast in the late 1990s. He captured multiple driving titles at the Meadowlands Racetrack in the early 2000s and has been a force on the Grand Circuit ever since he made the move.

He was inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in Goshen, N.Y., in 2014.

Trainer – Marcus Melander

Born: 1/7/1992 – Birthplace: Sweden – Resides: New Egypt, NJ

Marcus Melander, 26, will be making his Hambletonian Oaks debut.

Melander came to the U.S. from Sweden less than five years ago and worked for four-time Hambletonian-winning trainer Jimmy Takter before starting his own stable in late 2014. He is based in

New Egypt, N.J., at a farm that was home previously to each the legendary Stanley Dancer, a five-time Hambletonian winner, and Continental Farms stables.

Last year, Melander's horses won 38 races and \$1.31 million in purses, nearly tripling his earnings from the previous season. His victories in 2017 included the Valley Victory Stakes with Fourth Dimension, a division of the Stanley Dancer Memorial with Long Tom, and the aforementioned elimination of the Hambletonian.

Melander's uncle, Stefan Melander, won the 2001 Hambletonian as trainer and driver with Scarlet Knight.

Growing up in Sweden, Melander stayed up all hours of the night following the results of U.S. harness racing. He was making a name for himself as a driver in Europe, but was always fascinated by racing in the States. At age 19, Melander won Sweden's equivalent to the U.S. Harness Writers Association's Rising Star Award. He had just more than 100 wins when the Melanders moved to America.

Melander has a stable of approximately 40 horses.

Owners – Our Horse Cents Stables and Deo Volente Farms LLC.

What A Knockout would be the first Oaks champion for either Our Horse Cents Stables or Deo Volente Farms LLC. Our Horse Cents Stables is the nom de course of Richard H. Taylor et al., and Deo Volente Farms LLC. is the stable of Michael J. Gulotta.