



Papagayo E (2, inside) held off the late rush of Timoko (racing without shoes), while the pacesetter American Creatine (1) faded to third and Bee A Magician (5) ended sixth.

International Sizzle

With Norwegians Cheering Him On, Papagayo E Wins; Creatine Third

By Steve Kallas

Yonkers, N.Y.—On a beautiful, sunny 65-degree Saturday afternoon at Yonkers Raceway, just eight miles north of New York City, Yonkers presented the revival of the highly-acclaimed and historic International Trot. Inaugurated in 1959 at Roosevelt Raceway, the International was last held at Yonkers in 1995, when Sweden's His Majesty, driven by Stefan Melander, won.

Revived by Empire City at Yonkers Raceway, which in conjunction with the Standardbred Owners Association of New York, has worked to increase its simulcast handle in Europe, the International Trot returned with a purse of \$1 million. With trotters representing the United States, Canada, France, Italy, Norway and Sweden, it truly was an international affair.

At the track, there was a crowded, festive atmosphere. About an hour before the International, Tom Andersen and Claes Sjolín, co-owners of Papagayo E, were standing on the apron, along with a contingent of 25 ardent supporters for their horse. Wearing Papagayo E t-shirts, the Norwegians also took turns carrying a Norwegian flag at the end of a 25-foot pole, with the flag eventually being waved in the winner's circle.

Andersen was both thankful and confident before the race. "We came in on Sunday and received the warmest welcome possible from

the people here," he said. "It feels great to be here because this is where the 10 best trotters in the world are for this fantastic race. We have had a wonderful time in New York and I think Papagayo will win the race."

Meanwhile, Yonkers had pulled out all the stops to make the local crowd happy as well. There were tents throughout the apron, offering, among other things, a free hat giveaway, a "Winning Country" trip contest (where fans could win a trip, as it turned out, to Norway), and a celebration of Oktoberfest with German beers, food and a live band.

On the apron stood Barry Charles of New Rochelle, N.Y., a Yonkers Raceway

fan who has been coming to the track for 45 years. Charles, also a horse owner, was impressed with the crowd.

"I've been to many of the Sunday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon cards where Yonkers has put on many trot races for the European crowd for simulcasting. There are many more people here today, on a Saturday afternoon, then I can remember in recent memory, certainly since the track re-opened."

Indeed, the wagering lines were long, the food lines were long and it was crowded on the apron. Upstairs at the Empire Terrace Dining Room, there were many more patrons than usual eating a



Mike Luzzi Photos

sit-down meal with an excellent view of the finish line. Flags of all the participating countries were flying, many languages were being spoken, and there was a general feeling of a crowd happy to make some noise.

Bob Galterio, general manager of Empire City at Yonkers Raceway, put the entire day in perspective with a look towards the future.

"We are very excited to bring the International Trot back to Yonkers Raceway. The coverage has been tremendous, as there were articles in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal about the revival. Local television stations are here to cover the event and, of course, The Horseman and Fair World as well. We felt that the excitement both here and in Europe grew as we got closer and closer to this day.



From left to right, driver Ulf Ohlsson, co-owners Tom Andersen and Claes Sjolín, Joe Faraldo of the Standardbred Owners Association of New York, and Yonkers Raceway president Tim Rooney.

"We will definitely have the International Trot here next year," continued Galterio. "We know that the momentum leading up to this year's race has been tremendous and we believe that it will grow even more both here and abroad for next year's race. At that point, we will evaluate on a two-year basis, see how it's progressed, see how the Europeans have accepted it both here and in Europe, and go from there."

After the race, and after about 30 minutes in the winner's circle, winning co-owner Tom Andersen was naturally happy.

"This is fantastic beyond belief. Papagayo had a good trip, got a great drive from Ulf (Ohlsson) and beat the best trotters in the world. This was the biggest race with the biggest purse with the best horses and we won it. I think Papagayo is the best trotter now," he said.

HOW THE RACE WAS WON

Norway's Papagayo E, who started from post two, and Ulf Ohlsson snuck up the rail to overtake Creatine in the final strides and win in a time of 2:26 for the 1 1/4-mile race (1:57.2 for the mile).

With a 10-horse field on a half-mile track, Papagayo E's trip might have been one of the luckiest in trotting history. He won by one-half length over Timoko, who endured a trip on the outside the entire race but was only beaten one-half length, while Creatine held on for third.

The Norwegian flags were flying and a robust contingent of Norwegian fans cheered the victory by Papagayo E, driver Ulf Ohlsson and trainer Jan Waaler.

Timoko was representing France and driven by Bjorn Goop. Creatine was one of two representatives of the United States even though he was driven by Swede Johnny Takter. Fourth-place finisher Oasis Bi of Sweden was driven by Orjan Kihlstrom, who won at the Meadowlands on Hambletonian day with D'One.

Creatine had the rail position and with no serious challengers Takter protected his position and Creatine stayed there, with Papagayo E in the pocket. Meanwhile, Bee A Magician, who started from post five, was quickly stuck racing third-over as Mosaique Face and Timoko, starting from posts eight and four, respectively, shot out in front of the Brian Sears-driven mare.

Although Timoko had not raced since June 27, in his pre-race warm-ups he was buzzed through the homestretch. Perhaps no one should have been surprised as prior to the race trainer-owner Richard Westerink told the press that he didn't come to New York to just visit Manhattan with his family!

On Track Piraten and Erik Adielsson made a three-wide bid for the lead at about the :58.4 half and briefly got a nose in front of Creatine, but couldn't sustain and Creatine held the lead at the 1:28.1 three-quarters. Sears tipped Bee A Magician four wide at about the one-mile mark, before heading into the final turn, and while the mare rushed up and had a clear shot, she flattened out coming off the turn.

Creatine led the field into the homestretch, then when he weakened, Papagayo E used the passing lane and sprinted forward.

"He came with great power," said driver Ohlsson of his horse, Papagayo E. "I saw Timoko on the outside coming with power, but I knew that I had more. My only concern was Creatine going long enough that we would be able to get through on the rail. If he didn't last, we might have had a problem, but he lasted. I felt really good the whole way, the tempo in the race was perfect. The horse was feeling good and once we came down the stretch, I could really feel his power."

Sears, who was the even-money favorite with Bee A Magician, the Canadian representative, was hoping for a stronger finish.

"She just didn't have enough trot at the end," said Sears about the mare's sixth-place finish. "In the last turn, I felt that she was running out of gas at that point, so at that point I just wanted to finish for a check."

Herb Liverman, who shares ownership of Bee A Magician with fellow Canadian Mel Hartman and American Dave McDuffee, watched the International at The Red Mile, where trotting fans, including Europeans, watched on TV monitors and the large infield screen.

"I really hoped she would show more. It was a bit sad for me," said Liverman. "But then Wild Honey unexpectedly wins (the Filly Futurity), so that was a nice surprise." (Liverman also co-owns Kentucky Futurity champion Pinkman.)

The owners of Creatine, Adam Bowden of Diamond Creek Racing and Bob and Lynda Stewart, also watched from The Red Mile, as did Creatine's trainer, Jimmy Takter. After the race Takter learned from his brother, Johnny, that Creatine had tied up late in the race.

Natural Herbie, the second American representative, finished last in the field of 10, prompting his owner-trainer-driver, Verlin Yoder, to post on Facebook: "The traffic was bad I need a GPS to get around and I forgot to take it with me."