

NY-Breds at the Races in 2016: The Year in Review

By Bill Heller

J Stables, Head of Plains Partners and M. and C. Summers' three-year-old colt **Mind Your Biscuits**, bred by Jumping Jack Racing, put an exclamation mark on the 2016 season for New York-breds on December 26th at Santa Anita. Mind Your Biscuits, who had been a fast-finishing third (and later placed second following the disqualification of Masochistic) in the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Sprint on November 5th at Santa Anita, returned to California to win the Grade 1 Malibu Stakes in his final start as a three-year-old.

He capped another outstanding year for New York-breds in open graded stakes company. New York-breds won graded stakes from January 2nd through December 26th at Aqueduct, Arlington Park, Belmont Park, Gulfstream Park, Gulfstream Park West, Oaklawn Park, Saratoga, Turfway Park and, a long way from New York, at Tokyo Racecourse.

Most people thought Mind Your Biscuits' final race of 2016 was the Breeders' Cup Sprint. But trainer Robert Falcone, Jr., who has only been training for four years, called an audible.

"Initially, we were going to give a break after the Breeders' Cup," Falcone said January 3. "But he was showing us a lot of life when he got back to New York. He was tearing the barn down. He was jumping around the shed row."

So he gave Mind Your Biscuits another shot in a Grade 1, and he delivered. "He's a really nice horse, he really is," Falcone said. "We always had high expectations for him, hoping to become a solid New York-bred stakes horse. He just gets better. I don't think he's bottomed out yet."

Falcone's ultimate goal for 2017 is the Breeders' Cup Sprint, which will be back in California at Del Mar. "I think it says a lot about New York-breds," Falcone said. "There are New York-breds out there who can run."

Mind Your Biscuits had proven that earlier last year when he captured the Grade 2 Amsterdam Stakes at Saratoga on July 30th.

Mind Your Biscuits, a son of Posse out of Jazzmane by Tocet, sold for just \$47,000 as a yearling at Keeneland in 2014. In 2016, thanks to four victories, three seconds and one third in nine starts, Mind Your Biscuits earned \$740,400, second only to Effinex in New York-bred earnings.

Mind Your Biscuits was the third New York-bred Grade 1 stakes winner in 2016.

The first was Yukio Baba's **Moanin**. Bred by Empire Equines LLC, the son of Henny Hughes out of Giggly by Distorted Humor was originally purchased as a yearling for \$90,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Preferred New York-bred Sale. As a two-year-old, he was purchased for \$335,000 at Ocala.

Trained by Sei Ishizaki, Moanin set a seven-furlong track record at Tokyo Racecourse when he won the Japan Grade 3 Negishi Stakes in a final time of 1:22.

On February 22nd, he set a track record for one mile, winning the Japan Grade 1 February Stakes in 1:34.00.

Gary Barber and Sequel Racing's five-year-old mare **Haveyougoneaway**, a daughter of Congrats out of Our Wise Cowgirl by Wiseman's Ferry who was bred by Andy and Susan Beadnell, duplicated Moaning's feat by capturing the Grade 2 Honorable Miss Stakes at Saratoga on July 27th and, exactly one month later, the Grade 1 Ballerina Stakes at Saratoga. Trained by Tom Morley, Haveyougoneaway finished seventh in the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint. That gave her a record of five wins and two seconds from eight starts in 2016 with \$655,000 in earnings, third highest among New York-breds.

Year after year, we have graded stakes winners, trainer Rick Violette, President of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, said. It's not a fluke any longer when a New York-bred becomes a serious graded stakes horse.

He trained one New York-bred graded stakes winner in 2016, Ralph Evans and WinStar Farm's four-year-old colt **Upstart**, who captured the Grade 3 Razorback Handicap March 19th at Oaklawn Park. Bred by Mrs. Gerald Nielsen, Upstart is a son of Flatter out of Party Silks by Touch of Gold. He finished 2016 with a win and two thirds from four starts, for earnings of \$482,500.

Dr. Russell Cohen's Tri-Bone Stables' homebred **Effinex** also won a graded stakes at Oaklawn Park in 2016, taking the Grade 2 Oaklawn Handicap. He then took another Grade 2 stakes, the Suburban Handicap, at Belmont Park on July 9th. The son of Mineshaft out of What a Pear by E Dubai, trained by Jimmy Jerkens, finished last year with two victories, one second and one third from eight starts to lead all New York-breds in earnings with \$1.2 million.

The first New York-bred Grade 2 stakes winner in 2016 was Alpha Delta Stable's three-year-old filly **Ancient Secret**, who won the Lake George at Saratoga on July 22nd. Bred by Roy Lerman's Lambholm, Ancient Secret is a daughter of Kantharos out of Privacy by Notebook. Ancient Secret won three of five starts with one third in 2016, earning \$238,339.

Upstart was one of nine New York-breds who won a Grade 3 stakes in 2016. The first last year was Klaravich Stables and William Lawrence's three-year-old colt **Flexibility**, who won the Jerome at Aqueduct on January 2nd. WinStar Farm bred Flexibility, a son of Bluegrass Cat out of the Vindication mare Santa Vindi who is trained by Chad Brown. Flexibility originally sold for \$80,000 as a yearling before being purchased for \$185,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Florida Two-Year-Old Sale.

Paul Pompa, Jr.'s three-year-old colt **Converge**, who set a track record when he captured the Palm Beach Stakes at Gulfstream Park on February 27th, was the second New York-bred Grade 3 stakes winner last year. Trained by Chad Brown, Converge is a first-crop son of Sidney's Candy out of Atlantic Ocean by Stormy Atlantic who was bred by Tom Ryan's SF Racing and was the second-highest-priced yearling (\$240,000) at the 2014 Keeneland September Yearling Sale. Converge was the first stakes winner for Sidney's Candy.

Magdalena Racing and Chris Sterbenz's three-year-old filly **Wonderment** was the next state-bred Grade 3 stakes winner of 2016, taking the Bourbonette Oaks at Turfway Park on April 2nd. Bred by Michael Landers, Wonderment is a daughter of Cosmonaut out of A Wonder She Is by Three Wonders who is trained by Kenny McPeck. Wonderment sold for \$24,000 as a weanling.

Team Penney Racing, Wachtel Stable and Brous Stable's five-year-old mare **Flipcup**, bred by Team Penney Stable, joined the Grade 3 winners club by scoring in the Arlington Matron May

28th on synthetic at Arlington Park. Bill Mott trains the daughter of Milwaukee Brew out of Dream affair by Touch Gold.

Martin Racing Stables' three-year-old colt **Fish Trappe Road** hit the jackpot when he won the \$500,000 Grade 3 Dwyer Stakes at Belmont Park on July 9th, which was quite a day for New York-breds. After Fish Trappe Road won the Dwyer, Effinex and New York-bred **Samraat**, trained by Rick Violette, finished 1-2 in the Suburban Handicap, separated by only a neck.

Rhapsody Farm and Jon Davis bred Fish Trappe Road, a son of Trappe Shot out of Electric Shock by Cure the Blues. Fish Trappe Road was in utero when her dam was purchased for \$22,000. Fish Trappe Road finished 2016 with two wins, one second and one third in six starts, for earnings of \$465,920.

Drawing Away Stables' six-year-old gelding **Doctor J Dub**, who didn't make his debut until his four-year-old season and was claimed for \$16,000 in his six-year-old debut, proved a great investment when he took the Grade 3 Turf Monster Stakes at Parx on September 5th. Trained by Jena Antonucci, Doctor J Dub is a son of Sharp Humor out of Anotherbuside by Delineator.

If there was a feel-good story for New York-breds in 2016, it happened at Gulfstream Park West on November 26th, when Aliyuee Ben J Stables' homebred nine-year-old warrior **Lubash** finished second and was placed first in the Grade 3 Tropical Turf Handicap. It wasn't a tough call. The winner, Rose Brier, veered into Lubash's path in deep stretch. Trained and brilliantly managed by Christophe Clement, Lubash is a son of Freud out of Nasty Cure by Cure the Blues. Lubash has won 18 of his 51 career starts with nine seconds, five thirds and earnings of \$1,448,139.

Chester and Mary Broman's homebred three-year-old filly **Highway Star** was the final New York-bred Grade 3 stakes winner of 2016, taking the Go for Wand Handicap at Aqueduct on December 3rd. The daughter of Girolamo out of Stolen Star by Cat Thief is trained by Rodrigo Ubillo.

Jump Sucker Stable and Oak Bluff Stables' three-year-old colt **Governor Malibu**, bred by Oak Bluff Stable and Richard Lundy, performed well in four graded stakes without winning any of them. The son of Malibu Moon out of Akilina by Langfuhr who sold for \$150,000 as a two-year-old in 2015, finished second in the Grade 2 Peter Pan and the Grade 2 Jim Dandy, fourth in the Grade 1 Belmont Stakes and fifth in the Grade 1 Travers. Regardless, he won two of his other five starts and earned \$489,750, fifth highest among New York-breds in 2016.

"I think the past year was terrific for New York-breds," trainer Rick Schosberg said. "Horses are participating in Grade 1's. They are stamping themselves as more than competitive."

Trainer Linda Rice agreed. "I think the New York program is the best in the country. I see a lot of my owners are aware of it."

Showcase Days

Certainly, the New York Racing Association is aware of the quality of New York-breds. Showcase Day, offering several stakes on an all-New York-bred card, was originally a one-time deal each year. NYRA has since made it a three-time deal annually for New York-breds, with Belmont Park hosting two Showcase Days and Saratoga one.

The first Showcase Day was on May 30th at Belmont Park. The most anticipated stakes that afternoon was the \$125,000 Kingston Stakes, featuring a rematch on a yielding turf course of three New York-bred millionaires: nine-year-old Lubash, Gerald and Susan Kresas seven-year-old gelding **King Kreesa** and Paul Braverman and Timothy Pinch seven-year-old gelding **Kharafa**. But it was Whisper Hill Farms gray five-year-old gelding **Tapitation** who wound up in the winner's circle. Bred by Waterville Lake Stables and trained by Ralph Nicks, the son of Tapit out of the Cozzene mare Derriane won by a length and three-quarters. King Kreesa was second, Kharafa third and Lubash fourth.

Red and Black Stables six-year-old **Weekend Hideaway** dominated the \$196,000 Commentator Stakes, scoring by 3 ¾ lengths on the muddy main track. Flying Zee Stables bred the son of Speightstown out of Apocalyptical by Wiseman's Ferry who is trained by Phil Serpe. Weekend Hideaway finished 2016 with three victories, one second and one third in seven starts, for earnings of \$303,000.

Chester and Mary Bromans homebred four-year-old filly **Bar of Gold** remained undefeated on wet tracks when she won the \$200,000 Critical Eye Stakes by a length and a half over Haveyougoneaway on a sloppy track. The daughter of Medaglia d'oro out of Khancord Kid by Lemon Drop Kid is trained by John Kimmel.

Bing Cherry Racings former \$32,000 claimer **Bust Another** dominated the \$125,000 Mike Lee Stakes for three-year-olds, winning by 3 ¼ lengths. Casey Newick LLC bred the three-year-old gelding by Bustin Stones out of I Drink Alone by Intidab who is trained by Michael Pino. Bust Another had a fine year in 2016, winning four of 12 starts with three seconds, two thirds and earnings of \$252,201.

The \$125,000 Bouwerie Stakes for three-year-old fillies went to Everything's Cricket Racings **Flatterywillgetyou**, bred by First Class Thoroughbreds. Linda Rice trains the daughter of Flatter out of Tres Chaud by French Deputy who won four of 12 starts last year with three seconds, two thirds and earnings of \$252,201.

Kendel Standlee's six-year-old mare **The Tea Cups**, a daughter of Hard Spun out of Lunar Colony by A.P. Indy who was bred by William Parsons, Jr. and David Howe, captured the \$125,000 Mount Vernon Stakes on grass. She is trained by Jeremiah Englehart.

Trainer Todd Pletcher and his go-to jockey John Velazquez won three of the six stakes on the second Showcase Day at Saratoga on August 26th.

Eric Fein, Christopher McKenna, Harris Fein, Guri Singh and Jerry Wallia's two-year-old colt **Syndergaard**, named for New York Mets star pitcher Noah Syndergaard, was Pletcher and Velazquez's first winner of the day, taking the \$200,000 Funny Cide Stakes, named for the NY-bred winner of the 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness, by a whopping 10 ¼ lengths. Burlison Farms bred the son of Majestic Perfection out of Magic Belle by Gold Case who posted two wins and one second in four starts, earning \$323,800 for the year.

Barry Schwartz's homebred two-year-old filly **Iron Mizz** brought Pletcher and Velazquez back to the winner's circle when she took the \$200,000 Seeking the Ante Stakes by three-quarters of a length. The daughter of Mizzen Mast out of Iron Goddess by More Than Ready finished her first season with two victories, one second and three thirds from seven starts, for earnings of \$190,084.

Repole Stables' three-year-old filly **Super Surprise** was Pletcher and Velazquez's third Showcase Day winner, taking the \$200,000 Fleet Indian by four lengths. Allen Hallett bred the daughter of Giant Surprise out of Miz Lynne Kelly by Langfuhr who won two of four starts with one second, one third and earnings of \$197,500 for the year.

Michael Dubb, Bethlehem Stables and Gary Aisquith's four-year-old filly **Fourstar Crook** crafted a perfect four-for-four 2016 turf season, which included scores in the \$150,000 Yaddo Stakes on Saratoga Showcase Day and the \$125,000 John Hettinger Stakes a month later. Trained by Chad Brown, the son of Freud out of Avril a Portugal by De'Accord earned \$255,000 in 2016.

Former New York Giants Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells, who races under the name August Dawn Farm, is enjoying his retirement thanks to the accomplishments of two of his New York-breds. The first, his three-year-old colt **Hit It Once More**, won the \$150,000 Albany Stakes on Saratoga Showcase Day wire-to-wire by 3 ¾ lengths. JMJ Racing Stable bred the son of Hard Spun out of Sunday Geisha by Sunday Break who was purchased for \$50,000 in May 2015. Trained by Gary Sciacca, Hit It Once More won four of seven starts and earned \$348,190 in 2016, 10th best among New York-breds.

Parcells' other New York-bred heavy hitter is his undefeated **Bavaro**, named for the outstanding former Giants tight end Mark Bavaro. The equine Bavaro finished his two-year-old season two-for-two by winning the \$150,000 Great White Way Stakes at Aqueduct on December 17th.

In a thrilling edition of the \$150,000 West Point Handicap on a yielding turf course, King Kreesa gutted out a nose victory over Kharafa. Horse Partners bred the son of King Cugat out of Storm's Advance by Storm Creek who is trained by David Donk. King Kreesa won two of nine starts with one second and \$257,850 in earnings in 2016.

A horse can't win a graded stakes if he's not entered in one. Michael Dubb, Bethlehem Stables and Gary Aisquith chose a more conservative campaign for their five-year-old gelding **Royal Posse**, and he rewarded them and trainer Rudy Rodriguez with an amazing season: five victories and four seconds in nine starts with \$569,000 in earnings, fourth highest among state-breds last year.

Royal Posse's connections claimed him for \$20,000 in May 2015, and all he's done is post eight victories, all stakes, and six seconds. In fact, he has now finished first or second in 15 consecutive starts. How's that for consistency?

The son of Posse out of Struckbylightning by Cryptoclearance, bred by Richard Troncone and Richard Troncone, Jr., beat Governor Malibu by 3 ½ lengths in the 41st running of the mile-and-an-eighth \$300,000 Empire Classic on a sloppy track, the culmination of the New York Racing Association's third 2016 Showcase Day on October 22nd at Belmont Park. Then Royal Posse took to the road, capturing his second consecutive \$200,000 Claiming Crown Jewel at Gulfstream Park on December 3rd.

In the \$250,000 Empire Distaff, **Bar of Gold** ran the race of her life, improving her wet-track record to five-for-five with a stunning 18-length victory for the Bromans. Bar of Gold won two of eight starts last year with three thirds and earnings of \$361,500.

Earlier on Showcase Day, Marc Keller's four-year-old filly **Quezon** won the \$150,000 Iroquois by 5 ¼ lengths on a sloppy track as the 1-5 favorite. Apache Farm bred Quezon, a daughter of

Tiz Wonderful out of Kalookan Dancer by Olympio who is trained by Bobby Ribaud. Quezon finished 2016 with two seconds and three thirds from six starts, for earnings of \$224,000.

Breakin the Fever, a four-year-old gelding bred, trained and owned by Debra Breed, gave Breed her first stakes victory at a NYRA track by holding off odds-on Weekend Hideaway by a half-length in the \$150,000 Hudson on the sloppy main track. Breakin the Fever, who regularly races at Finger Lakes, finished his four-year-old season with six wins from seven starts and earnings of \$192,020. Breakin the Fever is a son of Roaring Fever out of Breakers West by Rodeo.

In the \$250,000 Maid of the Mist, Michael Dubb, Bethlehem Stables and Michael Imperio's two-year-old filly **Bonita Bianca** upped her record to two-for-two by taking the \$250,000 Maid of the Mist by 5 ¼ lengths. Bred by Dormellito Stud, the daughter of Curlin out of Friendly Michelle by Artax is trained by Rudy Rodriguez. Bonita Bianca had three wins and one third from four starts in 2016, good for earnings of \$276,000.

Unending rain caused the \$200,000 Mohawk Stakes to be switched to the sloppy main track, a move that was just fine with Donegal Racings's four-year-old colt **Brother O'Connell**, who won the race by a neck. Bred by the late Sarah Leigh, Brother O'Connell is a son of Giant's Causeway out of Shared Dreams by Seeking the Gold who is trained by Tom Morley. Brother O'Connell went four-for-eight in 2016, earning \$231,636.

Harold Lerner, AWC Stables and Nehoc Stables's two-year-old colt **Pat On the Back** won the \$250,000 Sleepy Hollow by a length and a half. Bred by Sugar Maple Farm, the son of Congrats out of Accomplished by Awesome Again is trained by Kenny McPeck. Pat On the Back went three-for-six with one third, earning \$310,020 in 2016.

The \$200,000 Ticonderoga, switched from the grass to the sloppy main track, went to Joseph Birnbaum's homebred five-year-old mare **Old Harbor**, who won by 6 ½ lengths but was pulled up after the wire with an injured tendon. Russell Cash trains the daughter of retired NY sire Raffie's Majesty out of Royal Mast by Roy. She won three of her seven starts last year and earned \$199,108.

Breeding

With all the success New York-breds are having on-track, it's not a surprise that it has affected breeding in New York State. "People are breeding better mares to better stallions," trainer Rick Violette said.

The numbers back him up.

No racing state is likely to surpass Kentucky for decades to come: of the 50 leading stallions in North American earnings in 2016, 38 stood in Kentucky. New York was second with three, one more than California and two more than both Florida and Pennsylvania. Of the other five sires in the top 50, two stood in Japan, two in Korea and one in Ireland.

Freud, who will stand at Sequel Stallions New York for \$10,000 in 2017, finished 36th with earnings of \$5,160,439. Freud had 185 runners, 95 winners and five stakes winners in 2016. His leading earner was Sharp Azteca (\$358,250).

Posse, who stood at Rockridge Stud in 2016 and finished 37th with \$5,034,064 in earnings, was sold last fall and will stand in the Southern Hemisphere. He had 161 runners, 91 winners and six stakes winners, including Mind Your Biscuits.

Bellamy Road, who will stand for \$7,500 at Dutchess Views Farm, ranked 47th in 2016 with earnings of \$4,646,650. He had 195 runners, 101 winners and five stakes winners, led by Land Over Sea, who earned \$598,500.

Big Brown, who will also stand for \$7,500 at Dutchess Views Farms, was 69th in earnings of \$3,522,575, led by Dortmund, who bankrolled \$270,000. Big Brown sired 144 runners with 67 winners and five stakes winners.

Hold Me Back, who will stand for \$5,000 at Irish Hill Century Farm, finished 95th with \$2,951,825 in earnings. He sired 112 runners, 64 winners and five stakes winners. His leading earner was Voluntario (\$179,140).

Among first-crop sires, **Mission Impazible**, who will stand for \$7,500 at Sequel Stallions New York, ranked 13th with \$653,108 in earnings. **Boys At Tosconova**, who will stand for \$2,500 at Questroyal North, was 39th with \$103,201 in earnings. **Soaring Empire**, who will stand for \$3,500 at Rockridge Stud, ranked 46th (\$80,854).

There were six New York stallions ranked in the top 80 among second-crop sires.

Dublin, who will stand for \$2,500 at Keane Stud, ranked 19th (\$1,487,713). **D'Funnybone**, who will stand for \$2,500 at Rockridge Stud, was 27th (\$939,388). **Giant Surprise**, whose 2017 stud fee at Rockridge is \$5,000, ranked 31st (\$781,334). **Here Comes Ben** was not far behind in 37th (\$498,129). He stood at McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds for \$7,500 in 2016. **Bank Heist** was 46th at \$287,958. His stud fee at Kaz Hill Farm is \$5,000. **Wicked Rich**, who will stand for \$2,500 at Buckridge Farm, was 79th (\$108,840).

Five New York stallions were in the top 100 in two-year-old earnings, led by **Frost Giant**, who was 54th (\$727,026) and will stand for \$5,000 at Keane Stud in 2017. Mission Impazible was 62nd (\$653,108). **Bustin Stones**, who will stand for \$5,000 at Waldorf Farm, was 85th (\$504,498). Freud was 96th (\$433,201) and Posse 97th (\$433,088).

Ten new New York sires will challenge the alumni in 2017. In addition to the aforementioned Wicked Rich, **Effinex** will stand for \$10,000 at Questroyal North, **Tencendur** will stand at Mill Creek Farm for \$2,500, **V.E. Day** will stand for \$6,500 at Waldorf Farm, **War Dancer's** stud fee at Rockridge Stud will be \$5,000, 2016 Jim Dandy Stakes winner **Laoban** will stand at Sequel Stallions New York for \$7,500, **Bethel** will stand for a private fee at owner Angel Montanez's farm in Manchester, NY, **Scatman** will stand at Foggy Bottom Farm for a private fee, **Superstrella** will stand at Irish Hill Century Farm for a private fee, and **Tapin Mojo** will stand at Clermont Farm for a stud fee of \$500.