



Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association

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It's A-OK in Oak Harbor

By Thom Pye

Oak Harbor, Ohio - While the 54th annual Ottawa County Fair is home to one of the newest fair racetracks of the 67 in Ohio that hosts harness racing, you would be pressed to find a more scenic, friendly, and fun place to visit.

Of the many fairs we've brought the Racing With The Stars fan exhibit to, Oak Harbor does its best to see that everyone has a good time.

On Monday (July 16th) Mark Headworth of nearby Oregon, Ohio made the trip from his usual driving duties at Northfield to take race number 1 in the \$4,650 Ohio Fair Racing Conference's 3-year-old pace as he posted the 1st of his driving three-for as he hopped behind owner/trainer Bob Brook's Connies Desire (by Woodstock) and bested Native Bell (Pierce Henry) in 2:03 while Believeincarrie (Greg Bateson) followed in third.

The 2nd OFRC division of the Jim Walter Memorial saw the Brian Brown trained and driven Grant Me This wing a mile in 1:59 - last quarter in 28.4 - as she held off a game Talkaboutaqueen with Jay Weller and Barb And Tena with Tyler Rush. The daughter of Pet Rock-Champale Blue Chip posted her first win of 2018 after a series of 2nds.

In the 1st \$5,130 OFRC 2-year-old filly division Michigan native Mike Sweeney unveiled Olive Another (by Three Olives) and Art Mc Ilmurray turned her loose as the slick-gaited gal ambled over the half-mile oval in 2:02.1 in her 2nd lifetime start. A determined Rosies Apples and Pierce Henry was second but neither she nor 3rd place finisher Sammi Sweetheart (Daniel Corfman) could catch the very impressive miss.

Mc Ilmurray posted his other win on the day with the 2nd OFRC division in 2:03 with the Becky Zubkoff-conditioned Pet Name (Pet Rock-Malinka0 winning by 5 over Gammy's Rock Star (Beau Brown) Beach Royalty (Pierce Henry) and the rest of the 7-filly field. The race was sponsored as Bill's Implement and was also the Racing With The Stars fan contest and 7 lucky fans donned their numbers for the race. Longtime harness racing devotee Judy Kendall of nearby Portage - "I just LOVE them" - was rewarded for her loyalty as she sported the number 4 and joined the smiling faces in the Winners Circle and received her generous Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association prize package.

The Ohio Ladies Pace Series proved another edge-of-your-seat thriller as Rhonda Patrick sent her 5-year-old mare Lyons Gingerninja to a half in :57.3, 3/4's in 1:27.3 as Mandy Jones attempted to collar the leader with her Casimer Oppee. Those two matched strides around the last turn before Jayne Weller with B R Shady Shark got them at the wire in 1:59 flat. A mere length separated them and veteran announcer Bill Peters called out "how's THAT for a 3-horse race!?" to the appreciative audience.

The fan activities after the race card was over kept Bill Peters in the announcer's booth as a multitude of participants joined in for both the Stick and Bouncy Ponies.

"It looks like a new record!" he laughingly called out as he overlooked the swarm of youngsters as they kept coming from the stands and each division had to be contested in heats.

When four sisters lined up for the final Bouncy Ponies of the night the quick-on-his-feet Peters called out that since they were "from the same stable, they'll be 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D... there will not be any wagering on the race." And it was a contest.

After 10-year-old Natalia Wagner had scooted in the stick ponies she wanted to hop aboard one of the Bouncy Ponies as well. "I think you might be too little for these," she was told but she insisted she wanted to try. And after the dust had settled the youngster from Oak Harbor had, through sheer grit and determination, emerged the victor. "I too little, huh?" she threw it back at her "advisor" as he stood slack-jawed. Those fillies are tough to beat when they've got heart.

More fun and pure harness racing excitement tonight at 5 p.m. as the 2018 racing season at Oak harbor concludes.