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Championship Weekend begins at Scarborough Downs

Scarborough, Maine (Oct. 17, 2009) – Maine’s second annual Sire Stakes Championship Weekend was met with rave reviews as the two-year-old Sire Stakes titles were decided before a packed house of harness racing fans on a crystal clear autumn afternoon at Scarborough Downs.

Current Chip completed her undefeated freshman campaign on Saturday as the daughter of Current Cast confidently secured her 8th consecutive victory with Wally Watson expertly handling the driving duties for Hall of Fame trainer Don Richards in the \$52,611 filly trotting final.

Once again perched in her customary front-end seat, the prolific winner was never in serious jeopardy as she drew away to a brand new lifetime speed record of 2:04.2 – just 2/5th of a second off Scarborough’s track record. Glory Hallelujah (Leigh Fitch) was second while the other part of the Richards entry, Current Bankruptcy (Gary Mosher) was third.

“She’s a fine filly and I’d like to thank Don Richards for the opportunity to drive her this season,” Watson remarked, “Thanks also to owners Tom Dillon and Walter Hight – it’s been a great opportunity.”

Dillon, whose top rated trotter Seaside has been installed as the 2-1 morning line favorite in a Breeders Crown elimination race at Woodbine on Saturday night chose to stay close to home rather than venture to the larger Canadian stage reasoning that, “Horse racing is horse racing but I raised these horses that are racing here at Scarborough today. It’s important that I be here rather than in Woodbine tonight.”

Pembroke Joe Dunn, one of ten William Varney owned horses to qualify for the Maine Stakes finals this weekend, carried the day for his Bangor-based connections by scoring a gate-to-wire victory engineered by catch-driver Greg Bowden. The victory in the \$52,628 two-year-old colt pacing final marked the 7th win this season for the son of Neutralize who has yet to finish worse than second in any of his ten career starts. The mile was timed in 2:01.1.

“I guess Heath got caught up in some traffic trouble,” Bowden commented regarding stable-mate Pembroke Nick and driver Heath Campbell. “But they are both very nice horses – both with a lot of ability. It was just my colt’s time today.”

Dragon Power (Wally Watson) was second while Pembroke Nick (Heath Campbell) secured the show spot.

The two-year-old colt trotting championship went to Roadshow Vic, with former Scarborough Downs track announcer Mike Cushing sulky-sitting for owner Neal Tranten. The son of Roadshow Hall drew away to an eight-length advantage in the \$52,528 final as Cushing coasted to the 2:08.2 clocking while the cheers of his large contingent of friends and family echoed across the sun-drenched raceway.

“I love calling a good race – it’s a lot of fun” an exuberant Cushing remarked. “But there’s nothing quite like the thrill of driving a good horse and actually winning a big race like this.”

“Neal and I have been close before – we’ve had a couple of seconds in the finals before but this is our first win. He was ready to leave the breeding business not too long ago but I talked him into breeding just one last mare. I’m sure glad he listened to my advice this time. The other 14 years, well, he probably would want to forget those.”

Carly will wear the two-year-old pacing filly crown this season as the daughter of Computer Scooter sprinted away to a brand new lifetime mark of 2:03.3 with Scarborough’s leading driver Drew Campbell catch-driving for owner Mike Graffam who elected to drive The Last Ruler (the other portion of his trainer entry) in the \$52,672 final.

“This is the first time that I’ve ever sat behind her but she’s a pleasure to drive,” Campbell said. “She does nothing wrong and was extremely responsive. She took full advantage of those soft middle fractions and threw in a huge last quarter when I asked her too. She deserves to be the champion.”

The Last Ruler (Mike Graffam) held on for second while Pembroke Playmate (Heath Campbell) was third.

Championship weekend continues on Sunday at Scarborough Downs as Maine’s three-year-old sire stakes divisions will be contested. All eyes will be focused on the much anticipated match-up between stable-mates Sign The Paige and the undefeated Neutral Court as they vie for top honors in the \$77, 669 colt pacing final.

Post time for Sunday is scheduled for 12:45 pm (EDT).

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