

Heart On Fire (Father Patrick-Corazon Blue Chip-Muscle Hill)

Heart On Fire got away in fourth, was shuffled back to sixth in the third quarter, rallied on the pylons in the stretch, and got up to win the second Hambletonian Oaks elimination on July 29 at the Meadowlands in a life's-best 1:51.2 at odds of 36-1.

As a 2-year-old Heart On Fire captured the Kentuckiana Stallion Management event at Harrah's Hoosier Park and was second in the Kindergarten Series final at the Meadowlands. She hadn't won in 2023 before her upset victory in her elimination. Overall, she has a record of 5-3-2 from 18 starts and earnings of \$306,789.

Quotes

"I was just hoping that I could get a trip and sort of sneak through and maybe get a spot in the final. But the way the race shook out, it worked really good for us. This filly has been so good, Tony has had her really good. When she can get a trip like that, she never had to leave the pegs, it just suited her perfectly.

"I figured (the opening :25.4 quarter) was going to sort of bring us into it a little bit. I was pretty content with the two behind (Bond) that I was following as well. So, I figured fourth there was a good spot. Obviously, we were chasing in that quarter too to keep our spot and I was just hoping she was going to have enough to finish there. She certainly did.

"Leaving out of there, I wasn't sure it was going to be the right move. But she can leave pretty well and I figured if I could get out of there I might be able to get a handy spot. Sometimes, things just work out. It was one of those nights.

"To me, it seems like she's starting to get a little more comfortable. (In the elim) it was the happiest she's been out there. She's been a filly that's been a little bit temperamental, but she's always showed something for me, and I've always really liked her. It was just great she could show up (in the elim) and do that. Hopefully she's as good (in the final)." - **driver Todd McCarthy**

Breeding Notes

Heart On Fire would be the first Hambletonian winner for sire Father Patrick, who was the favorite in the 2014 Hambletonian but broke at the start and finished 11th. Heart On Fire's half-brother Fourth Dimension raced in the eliminations for the 2018 Hambletonian but made a break on the final turn while sitting in the pocket, finished in the seventh position, and didn't advance to the final.

Heart On Fire was bred by Spring Haven Farm (Jeff and Senena Esty) and Douglas Millard Holdings USA and would be the first Hambletonian Oaks champion for either of

them.

Driver Bio

TODD McCARTHY

Born: 2/24/1993 – Birthplace: Australia – Resides: Bordentown, NJ
Hambletonian wins (1): Cool Papa Bell, 2022.

Todd McCarthy made his Hambletonian debut in 2022 and drove Cool Papa Bell to the biggest upset in the history of the event, winning at odds of 52-1 for trainer Jim Campbell. Cool Papa Bell received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old male trotter.

The Hambletonian was one of two million-dollar races won by McCarthy last year. He also captured the North America Cup for 3-year-old pacers with Pebble Beach at Woodbine Mohawk Park. McCarthy later won his first Breeders Crown with Pebble Beach, who received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old male pacer.

McCarthy moved to the U.S. at the end of August 2020. Since arriving in the States, he has won more than 800 races and \$21 million in purses.

In 2022, he ranked sixth among all drivers in North America with \$9.44 million in purses. McCarthy received the 2021 Rising Star Award from the U.S. Harness Writers Association after finishing ninth in North America in purses with \$7.45 million. He was the driver of Dan Patch Award-winning older male pacer Allywag Hanover.

His accomplishments Down Under included winning the 2016 Australasian Young Drivers Championship and multiple New South Wales state and metropolitan premiership driving titles. He represented Australia at the 2019 World Driving Championship.

Trainer Bio

TONY ALAGNA

Born: 6/8/1972 – Birthplace: Champaign, IL – Resides: Howell, NJ
Hambletonian wins (1): Ramona Hill, 2020.

Tony Alagna won the 2020 Hambletonian with filly Ramona Hill, driven by Andy McCarthy. She became the fourth filly trotter to win the Hambletonian since it moved to the Meadowlands in 1981 and the 15th overall to capture the sport's premier event for 3-year-old trotters. She received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old filly trotter.

In 2012, the Alagna-trained My MVP finished third in the Hambletonian, only a neck behind winner Market Share. Later that season, My MVP won the Kentucky Futurity,

which is the third jewel in the Trotting Triple Crown (with the Hambletonian and Yonkers Trot).

Alagna trained 2022 Hambletonian Oaks runner-up Pink Coco Chanel as well as 2016 Hambletonian Oaks runner-up Caprice Hill, who was an O'Brien Award winner in Canada at ages 2 and 3.

Last year, Alagna had a career-best season in purses with \$9.28 million, good for No. 2 among trainers in North America. He equaled his career high for wins with 212, which he first set in 2021.

Alagna's stable has earned more than \$5 million in purses each of the past four years, finishing second in North America three times and third once.

For his career, Alagna has won more than 2,000 races and \$68 million in purses. He got his 2,000th victory on June 18 at Pocono Downs at Mohegan Pennsylvania. He ranks eighth in purses since the inception of official trainer stats in 1991.

Among Alagna's past stars was Captaintreacherous, who was Pacer of the Year in 2012 and 2013. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2019.

A native of Illinois, Alagna followed his mom, Donna Lee, into the sport. He had a pony at the age of 3, was reading up on pedigrees at 9, and solely responsible for his first horse at 10. Soon after graduating from high school, Alagna was assisting his mom with her stable. After working for several different stables, he went out on his own in 2009.

Owner Bio

Eric K. Good, Davidsonville, Maryland

She would be the first Hambletonian Oaks champion for Eric Good, who is best known as one of the owners of 2022 Little Brown Jug winner Bythemissal. Good is also part-owner of Hellabalou, who won this year's MGM Borgata Pacing Series final at MGM Yonkers Raceway.