

Anton Newspaper

Celebrates the

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BELMONT

Belmont Park, Long Island's "Hidden" Treasure

By Daniel J. McCue

There was a distinct rhythm evident at Belmont Park in Elmont last Friday, the third day of its summer racing season.

Out by the paddock, a series of horse stalls adjacent to a semi-circular track, bettors and horse enthusiasts carefully eyed the field for the next race, with those inclined to wager the ponies making notations in their racing forms.

With only 20 minutes between races on any given weekday, these are critical moments, and as the horses are led through a broad corridor onto one of Belmont Park's three tracks, a third or more of those who handicapped the race are off to the betting windows.

Moments after that, as the horses — in the case of the race in question, a field of six — are walked into the starting gate by their handlers, the crowd at trackside swells with attentive fans.

Two minutes later, the whole affair starts over again as the prospects for the next race are brought forth to walk the promenade.

Such moments are commonplace at the venerable 92-year-old track, named for August Belmont II, a financier and horse enthusiast at the turn of the century, but history in the making is also no stranger to the park and sports complex.

It was here that Calumet Farm's Armed faced King Ranch's Assault in the first \$100,000 winner-take-all match race in histo-

ry. That race, won by Armed by six lengths, was attended by more than 51,000 people.

It was here too, in 1973, that Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes by an amazing 31 lengths — one of the greatest feats in horse racing history.

Four years later, the legendary Seattle Slew followed Secretariat to the Triple Crown and just a year after that, in 1978, race fans at Belmont watched as one of the last great rivalries in racing, that between Alydar and Affirmed played out in the final mile.

(Affirmed, by the way, won that race by a head, becoming the last horse to secure the vaunted title of Triple Crown Winner.)

On Saturday, June 6, history in the making will once again pay a visit to Belmont in the guise of the 130th running of the Belmont Stakes.

The Stakes, the third jewel of the triple crown, is actually the oldest of the Triple Crown events, having first been run in 1867 predating the Preakness by six years, and the Kentucky Derby by eight.

The longest and most grueling of the three meets, the race has often been the heartbreaker in the quest of steed, jockey, trainer and owner, for a bit of trackside immortality.

Only 11 horses since 1919 have won the elusive prize, and none since Affirmed almost 20 years ago.

Though the spotlight will, of course, be on the horses over the next several days, the park will also continue its tradition of presenting family-friendly entertainment and activities — a tradition that dates back to Oct. 20, 1910, when more than 150,000 attended an international aerial

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Just some of the greenery that makes Belmont one of Nassau's finest parks.

Photo by Beth Vallianos



There's nothing in all of sports that matches that last split second before the thoroughbreds pass under the wire at the finish line.

Photo by Daniel J. McCue

On The Cover:

Citation, with jockey Eddie Arcaro aboard, is led to destiny by trainer Jimmy Jones. Photo courtesy of the New York Racing Association.

Belmont Stakes Spurs Local Economy

Though the partially overcast sky didn't hold a silver lining for Silver Charm, the first colt to have had a chance at winning horse racing's Triple Crown since 1989, his run for the prize last year proved quite beneficial to Nassau County and, indeed, all of the New York Metropolitan area.

Estimates released by the office of New York Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani shortly before last year's Belmont Stakes, held Saturday, June 7, 1997, put the economic impact of a potential Triple Crown run at \$13 million for New York City and surrounding Metropolitan area.

Typically the metropolitan area nets about \$7.7 million as a result of the Belmont Stakes, mostly from tourist spending, including entertainment and transportation, and the "ripple effect" associated with such expenditures throughout the economy.

That ripple effect was very much in evidence on Stakes day itself, when Belmont Park opened its gates early for families and race fans — almost all of whom came armed with food, drink and assorted other items purchased from local stores — and the annual Belmont Stakes Festival.

It was evident too at various other Stakes-related events held across Long Island in the days and weeks before the big race, including the "Belmont Eve Blast" promotion held at restaurants and night spots throughout the Metropolitan area June 6, a major horse show held at Bethpage State Park, and several road races for the entire family held in Floral Park, Bohemia and other locations.

(Amazingly, Nassau County, in which the race is actually run, didn't join New York City in making projections on anticipated revenue generated by the race, and officials were unable to come up with any



New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani (shown leaving the paddock before last year's Belmont Stakes) believes the Metropolitan area, including Manhattan, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties experience a significant economic boom thanks to the race.

Photo by Daniel J. McCue

figures subsequent to the race regarding its economic impact. Neither could the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, which sponsored several Stakes-related events.)

According to New York Mayor Giuliani, the popularity of the stakes and its beneficial impact on surrounding communities is of little surprise, as Long Island has a grand equine tradition, ranking first in horses-per-capita in New York State, and third in horses-per-capita nationwide.

While the City's numbers are heartening, it should be noted that ultimately revenues may far surpass even the Giuliani

administration's estimates. The mayor's office based its figures on an anticipated attendance of around 63,000 spectators. The actual attendance figure was 70,682.

"Not only has the City proven itself as the 'Capitol of the World' for business and entertainment, but we are now on the map as the place to come for spectacular sporting events," Mayor Giuliani said. "The excitement and economic impact produced by these sporting extravaganzas benefit all New Yorkers."

"The attention Belmont and the Triple Crown has drawn this year not only increased the area's prestige in the sporting

world, but also generated tremendous revenue," said Charles Milliard, President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

In addition to the revenues already mentioned, it is estimated that \$5.1 million in wagers were placed through Off-Track-Betting facilities the day of the race, \$1.75 million of those bets being placed on the Belmont Stakes race alone. (In 1996 without a Triple Crown in contention, \$4.6 million was spent at Off-Track Betting on Belmont Stakes Day, including \$1.58 million bet on the race.)

"I think Belmont Park is very, very important to Nassau County," said John Tudisco, President of the Elmont Chamber of Commerce. "Think about it, it's an existing facility located on 430 acres, and hosts the crown jewel of horse racing. While it might be difficult to attract the traditional gambler back to Belmont, given the plethora of gambling options today, I feel it could be made a very important tourist attraction to Long Island."

"It is now," Mr. Tudisco added, "but attendance based just on tourism alone could be doubled or tripled."

The chamber of commerce president said the last year's Belmont Stakes should serve as a wake-up call for local officials, "not only because of the great cash influx we experienced, but because it proved that there's a great local interest in horse racing."

Equally as significant, Mr. Tudisco said, is the facility's proximity to major access roads, such as the Cross Island Parkway, and the Long Island Rail Road.

"I mean, my business is located just two miles down the road from Belmont, they

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Hidden Treasure *(continued from page 2)*

tournament personally supervised by the Wright Brothers themselves.

Through June 6, racing's "super horse," Secretariat, will live again at a special Secretariat kiosk, where memorabilia from the red colt's unforgettable two-year run — at one point he was featured simultaneously on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated* — will be displayed. Also, thanks to archival film footage, race fans visiting the kiosk will be able to relive Secretariat's stunning 31-length victory in the 1973 Belmont Stakes.

But celebrating the Triple Crown is only part of what will transpire at Belmont Park this spring.

As always, the track will feature its popular Breakfast at Belmont program.

Other events at the track this spring include a "Meet the Pros" session on June 5, where leading jockeys and trainers will discuss the outcome of this year's Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes and discuss this year's Belmont field; and a dressage demonstration by Special Olympians during the Special Olympics Silks and Stars Luncheon.

Throughout the spring and early sum-

mer, Belmont Park will also feature what's being billed as "Family Fun Day Special Events."

Built around specific storybook themes — ranging from Peter Pan to the three bears — every Sunday through July 26, between 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., will be a time of joy and wonder for the little ones.

General admission is \$2 and clubhouse admission, \$4. Children ages 12 and under are admitted free when accompanied by an adult. Admission gates open at 11 a.m.; 9:30 a.m. on Memorial Day, May 25; Belmont Stakes Day, June 6; Father's Day, June 21 and Saturday, July 4.

Racing is conducted Wednesdays through Sundays with one exception. There is racing on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25, and no racing on Wednesday, May 27.

The start of the first race is 1 p.m. every racing day; 12:30 p.m. on Belmont Stakes Day, June 6.

Belmont Park is accessible off exit 26-D of the Cross Island Parkway, and there are entrances to the track along Hempstead Turnpike.

Spurs Local Economy *(continued from page 3)*

had over 70,000 people there, and yet we weren't adversely affected by traffic," he explained.

Among the biggest single local benefactors from the Stakes were local hotels. For instance Bob and Beverly Lewis, owners of Triple Crown contender Silver Charm, rented 100 rooms for friends and associates at the Garden City Hotel for the three days leading up to the race.

The Floral Park Motor Lodge, located

on Jericho Turnpike just a mile from the track also saw a big jump in business.

"Oh definitely," said Deneen Bellman, the lodge's general manager. "We always experience a bump in occupancy when there's racing at Belmont, but this year, with the Triple Crown in contention, the bump was that much greater."

"In fact," she continued. "We have two wings to the motor lodge and this year we could have used four — for the entire week"

A Trio Remembered As Champions

Citation, Secretariat and Affirmed Celebrated For Milestone Anniversaries This Year

By Daniel J. McCue

They are brothers in the most exclusive fraternity in all of sports.

Only eleven colts have captured the vaunted Triple Crown of thoroughbred horse racing. Forty-two others have come close, as Silver Charm did last year, only to fall short, one win shy of the honor.

Though each of the individual races involved — the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont Stakes — date back to the 19th century, no single horse had captured victories in all three in a single year until a chestnut colt named Sir Barton accomplished the feat in 1919.

It would be almost a dozen years before a similar triumph would be witnessed again, and it was then, in 1930, that popular sportswriter Charles Hatton, of the *Daily Racing Form*, coined the phrase "Triple Crown" in writing about Gallant Fox's consecutive wins in all three races.

What makes winning the Triple Crown so difficult?

To begin with, there's the short time frame in which the races are held. While most horses raced today run once every 21 days, those vying for the Triple Crown must appear in three highly competitive situations over the course of only five weeks.

Then, too, there are the distances involved in the individual races, distances that none of the competitors has run to this point in their careers, beginning with the mile-and-a-quarter Derby, continuing with the mile-and-three-sixteenths Preakness, and culminating with the gargantuan, mile-and-a-half Belmont.

"By the Belmont, you're lucky if your horse is still in one piece," said Jimmy Jones, the 91-year-old former trainer for Calumet Farms, which in its heyday



Jockey Ron Turcotte turns to see what happened to the rest of the field as Secretariat roars to an astounding 31-length victory in the 1973 Belmont Stakes. The win made him the first winner of the Triple Crown in 25 years. Photo courtesy the New York Racing Association.

later, his trainer, Jimmy Jones, boasts, "He could beat anything with hair on it."

His name was Citation. And his three-year-old season — 20 starts, 19 wins, and one second — was the greatest single season run by an American thoroughbred this century.

Which is not to say that winning was, by then, a new experience for the bay son of Bull Lea owned by the fast-becoming legendary Calumet Farms.

From almost the moment he began his racing career, at age two, the horse many now consider as great as the legendary

with relative ease, but won at nine different tracks that year, at all distances and in all kinds of weather conditions.

"I don't exactly know what it was about Citation," Jones said. "He could just do everything better than any other horse — and if it was muddy, he could do it even better."

"He could run any distance, you could place him anywhere, and he'd give you two or three runs any time you wanted it. He really responded to the jockey. He enjoyed what he was doing."

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down to Albert, to see what he had to say about what had happened.

"I asked Albert what he thought and he said, 'After a quarter mile, he was just playin' with them.' To which I said, 'My God, what kind of horse do we have here?'"

It was one of the last conversations Snider and Jones would ever have. After two more victories, in the Everglades by one length and the Flamingo by six — Snider was swept out to sea on a fishing trip, never to be found.

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"By the Belmont, you're lucky if your horse is still in one piece," said Jimmy Jones, the 91-year-old former trainer for Calumet Farms, which in its heyday owned two Triple Crown winners and a stable of several contenders.

If the races themselves are demanding, so too is the weight of history. For three generations now, horse men and women have dreamed about etching their charge's name alongside the likes of Omaha and Assault and the others who have taken the big three.

Such is the glamour and allure of the Triple Crown that high profile trainers such as Garden City residents D. Wayne Lukas and Nick Zito, not to mention Californian Bob Baffert, who has now won two Kentucky Derbys and two Preakness Stakes in a row, now organize their entire operations around producing horses for the series.

What they are seeking is to capture immortality in a bottle; destiny in two thousand pounds of horse flesh flying ahead of the rest of the field and slipping gracefully under the thin metal wire.

Since Gallant Fox's time, nine others have galloped their names into the history books. Contemporary race fans, no doubt, remember 1977 as the year Seattle Slew became the first unbeaten colt to sweep the Triple Crown. For those with longer memories, the names Whirlaway, War Admiral, and Count Fleet have their own special resonance.

But perhaps no three-year-old champions are recalled as often, or as vividly, as Citation, Secretariat, or Affirmed, whose victory anniversaries are being celebrated this year.

Citation Sets A New Standard

Without question, he was gifted.

So gifted, in fact, that even all these years

Jockey Ron Turcotte turns to see what happened to the rest of the field as Secretariat tears to an astounding 1:59.4 for the Kentucky Derby. Secretariat won the 1973 Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes. The win made him the first winner of the Triple Crown in 25 years. Photo courtesy the New York Racing Association.

later, his trainer, Jimmy Jones, boasts, "He could beat anything with hair on it."

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Which is not to say that winning was, by then, a new experience for the bay son of Bull Lea owned by the fast-becoming legendary Calumet Farms.

From almost the moment he began his racing career, at age two, the horse many now consider as great as the legendary Man O' War, proved to have an adept way of showing he was no slouch. He defeated almost every field put up against him.

Citation got off to a winning start in his very first race, at the Harve de Grace race course in Maryland, on April 22, 1947, and eventually ended the year with an 8-1-0 in nine starts.

His lone second place finish during the '47 campaign came at Washington Park Futurity that August, by which time he not only had five consecutive victories under his belt, but also a track record at Arlington Park.

He went into the race, however, facing two stablemates, Bewitch, a star filly that year with seven straight wins to her credit, and Free American, a colt boasting three wins.

"We were feeling pretty confident about that race — having three outstanding horses entered, but the one certainty going into it was that two of the horses would come away with a loss," Jones recalled recently.

"That being the case, I couldn't see being too hard on them. So I told the jockeys, 'Listen, don't beat on them. Don't bang them up. Just leave them wherever you find them during the course of the race.'

"After all, they were all just two-year-olds, and my philosophy at that stage of their lives was to just let them grow and develop on their own.

"So that's how Citation wound up getting beat at two," Jones continued. "Being a filly, and therefore reaching maturity a bit earlier than her male counterparts, Bewitch just ran faster than our other two horses in that race."

Unbowed, Citation won the rest of his races that year and then continued to defeat all comers at age three, in 1948. Not only did he sweep the Triple Crown races

with relative ease, but won at nine different tracks that year, at all distances and in all kinds of weather conditions.

"I don't exactly know what it was about Citation," Jones said. "He could just do everything better than any other horse — and if it was muddy, he could do it even better.

"He could run any distance, you could place him anywhere, and he'd give you two or three runs any time you wanted it. He really responded to the jockey. He enjoyed what he was doing."

Despite the hundreds of horses he and his Hall of Fame trainer father Ben Jones became acquainted with during their 25 years with Calumet Farms, it quickly became clear during a lengthy interview, that when he thinks of the farm's famed devil red and blue silks, he thinks of Citation wearing them.

"It's interesting, the connection you make with the horses you work with," he said. "They meant a lot to us. Even more than that, we felt close to them.

"We sort of basked in the sunlight when they were successful and felt bad when they got beat."

Citation opened his three-year-old season with a one-length victory in an allowance race at Hialeah Park in Florida in early February, 1948, and his trainer brought him back nine days later to take on a field of older horses in the seven-furlong Seminole Handicap.

"Warren Wright, the owner of Calumet, wanted badly to beat a horse named Relic," Jones said.

"He was one of the good horses at the time, and had looked really good in winning another recent race down in Florida, and his owners began to tease Mr. Wright, saying that he could beat Citation.

"Mr. Wright didn't like that much, and came to me and said simply, 'Beat Relic.' So we put Citation in the race.

"Now, in the paddock, I told our jockey, Albert Snider, not to beat on him, just to win the race. I said, 'If we get beat in this thing, then I'll take all the blame.'

"Anyway, Citation came out of the gate fast. He was right in there with two other horses in the lead, and then he pulled away... it was almost unbelievable how good he looked that day.

"So immediately after the race I rushed

down to Albert, to see what he had to say about what had happened.

"I asked Albert what he thought and he said, 'After a quarter mile, he was just playin' with them.' To which I said, 'My God, what kind of horse do we have here?'"

It was one of the last conversations Snider and Jones would ever have. After two more victories, in the Everglades by one length and the Flamingo by six — Snider was swept out to sea on a fishing trip, never to be found.

As a result of the tragedy, a call went out to Eddie Arcaro to ride Citation in the Chesapeake Trial at Harve de Grace.

But the bad karma that suddenly surrounded the colt would stick around for his next race. On a rain-slicked track, Citation would lose by one length to a horse named Saggy, after another jockey herded him on the turn and he didn't shake free until it was too late to run the leader down.

Arcaro accepted the blame, saying he didn't know Citation at the time and was afraid of "beating him up in the mud." He later said he could have won if he had only known what he had under him.

"It was a terrible day," Jones said, still smarting after half a century. "Normally, I would have scratched him, but Eddie had flown all the way from California. He misjudged the pace a bit, then some old bushwack rider carried him wide on the turn.

"He was pushed out to the fence. By the time he shook loose, Saggy had got away to a six- or eight-length lead. He came running, but he got still beat in the end."

Citation came back five days later to win the Chesapeake Stakes by 4 1/2 lengths, and ten days later won the Derby trial at Churchill Downs by 3 1/2 lengths, just five days before the 74th Kentucky Derby.

"When you train horses to compete at this level, you have to change your techniques with each horse, and what their particular requirements are," Jones said, when asked about the demanding race schedule.

"That said, I always believed, and my father did too, in racing them consistently so long as it was within their ability to take it.

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"A lot of racing is just being fitter than the other guy, and to our minds, racing did more to improve the general fitness of our horses than anything else we could have devised.

"In fact, we had several horses over the years who had eight or nine races under their belts as two-year-olds, and two or three before the Derby came around.

"In the case of Citation, he had seven races before the Derby and was good and fit and ready — and won handily."

By then, Arcaro, a sixteen-year veteran of the track and known to his admirers as "The Master," had settled in as Citation's permanent jockey.

Despite their first, less-than-satisfying experience together, the combination of Arcaro and Citation would prove to be a master stroke; the colt's fiery machismo more than complemented by the 5' 3" jockey renowned for his "race smarts," his grace, and his competitive intensity.

"[Arcaro] had all the things necessary to be a good racer," said Pat Lynch, a retired turf writer who covered the thoroughbreds for the *New York Journal American*.

"He was brave. He was an extraordinarily good judge of pace. He was a good finisher. And on top of all that, he had an uncanny ability to anticipate trouble.

"You rarely saw him shut off or taken aback on a horse," Lynch continued.

"The other thing about Arcaro, was that watching him ride a horse like Citation, you always felt like you were watching a picture in a book. To look at him in motion you'd think you were looking at an equestrian statue chiseled by Michaelangelo. He was that graceful.

"Ironically, Arcaro was a contemporary of Joe DiMaggio's, and I think they both shared a number of attributes. They both had extraordinary talent and grace. They made everything they did look easy and without strain. Like, DiMaggio, Eddie never made any awkward moves."

Envisioning Arcaro aboard Citation and a host of other famous mounts, Lynch said the thing that stays with him still is the

whether he was on "the right horse," and the trainer would consistently tell him, "Yes, you're on the right horse."

But when the gate opened at the start of the Derby, and the field of six exploded down the track, Coaltown went flying far up front on a sloppy track and was still ahead by five lengths heading into the far turn.

Citation drew up shortly after the turn home, then powered away, winning by 3 1/2 lengths.

"I was sitting on Citation watching Coaltown get smaller and smaller in front of us," Arcaro later remembered. "and I thought, 'I have got the wrong horse!' But when I asked Citation to run, he shot past Coaltown and everybody else with ease, and I knew then that I had the right horse after all."

The win gave Arcaro the fourth of his eventual five Kentucky Derby victories.

The Preakness proved an easier victory, with Coaltown staying away, and only three other horses entering the race. Citation coasted to a 5 1/2 length victory. Arcaro called the ride "a picnic."

Then came a controversial, if fateful, decision by Jones. Back in 1948, there were four weeks between the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes. Not content to see Citation idle during this period, Jones decided the best way to keep his Triple Crown contender sharp, would be to run him in another race — the 1 1/4 mile Jersey Derby at Garden State Park. He polished off that race by 11 lengths. Then came the Belmont.

"When I ran him between the Preakness and the Belmont, a lot of people had a lot to say about it," Jones laughed when asked why he'd done what he'd done. "A lot of people thought I wasn't training him right. But I'll tell you why I did it.

"When you consider the amount of time between the Preakness and the Belmont, you know you are going to have to put a solid workout in there to be ready for the final race of the Triple Crown.

"The thing is, to my mind, there's a difference between boxing and shadow boxing, and I wanted our horse mentally ready to box, not shadowbox.



Citation, already a superstar, shown immediately following his victory in the 1948 Kentucky Derby.
Photo courtesy Churchill Downs.

next races, training them as fast and as hard as their body and mind will stand."

The rest of Citation's story is comprised of equal measures of triumph and adversity.

For the remainder of his three-year-old season, Citation was mesmerizing, with victories in the Stars and Stripes Handicap in Arlington, the American Derby in Washington Park, Belmont's two-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup, and the Pimlico Special, where he faced no challengers in a winner-take-all -race.

He concluded his season with two victories in December, 1948 at Tanforan Park, near San Francisco, but came out of those races with a tender ankle that would plague him for the remainder of his career.

"He never was the same again," Jones said.

After sitting out his entire four-year-old season, Calumet's Wright brought him back to competition because he wanted Citation to become the first horse to earn \$1 million.

True to form, Citation won his first start

the course of a minute-and-a-half, two minutes, and do whatever the rider thought was necessary to win. That's one horse who never should have been beaten."

Secretariat Leaves Own Hoofprint on History

Without question, 1973 was a year when almost anywhere you'd look, you could find people in need of a hero.

The Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr. were gone. The Vietnam War was nearing an ignoble end. And at precisely the same time that the President of the United States was becoming mired in a scandal called Watergate, a British Rock group was promising that "We [Wouldn't] Get Fooled Again."

Yes, 1973 needed a hero, the humbler his or her origins the better.

In that respect, Secretariat arrived right on cue and not a moment too soon.

Racing's "super horse" was born at Meadow Stud, the Virginia Farm founded by Christopher T. Chenery, and would

picture in a book. To look at him in motion you'd think you were looking at an equestrian statue chiseled by Michaelangelo. He was that graceful.

"Ironically, Arcaro was a contemporary of Joe DiMaggio's, and I think they both shared a number of attributes. They both had extraordinary talent and grace. They made everything they did look easy and without strain. Like, DiMaggio, Eddie never made any awkward moves."

Envisioning Arcaro aboard Citation and a host of other famous mounts, Lynch said the thing that stays with him still is the way Arcaro utilized the whip.

"He wasn't like a lot of the riders you see today. What made him different, I believe, was the fact that he always whipped in the rhythm of the horse, when their feet were in the air.

"I don't know if he thought that out or if it came naturally, but it always seemed to result in a little extra push when the horse's feet hit the ground."

Though Jimmy Jones was Citation's only trainer, it was decided shortly before the 1948 Derby that the colt would be entered with Ben Jones listed as his trainer.

The reason?

Jimmy's father wanted to tie trainer "Derby" Dick Thompson's record of four Kentucky Derby victories.

(Ben Jones would go on to win a total of six; while Jimmy would get credit for two, Iron Liege in 1957, and Tim Tam in 1958.)

Calumet Farm had a powerful, two-horse entry in the Derby in 1948, with Coaltown riding a four-race winning streak, joining Citation. The double entry was considered so formidable that only four others dared to show up.

It was the smallest Derby field since 1906 and no other field has since been smaller than eight. Some people — including some, perhaps, who should have known better — even thought Coaltown might best Citation. Among them, Eddie Arcaro.

Still relatively new to the horse, having become Citation's rider only two races before the Derby, Arcaro wondered, right up to the start of the storied race, whether, in fact, he'd made the right choice.

In fact, in the days and hours leading right up to post time, the jockey had an inkling that he should have chosen to ride Coaltown.

Repeatedly, he asked Jimmy Jones

and the Belmont, a lot of people had a lot to say about it," Jones laughed when asked why he'd done what he'd done. "A lot of people thought I wasn't training him right. But I'll tell you why I did it.

"When you consider the amount of time between the Preakness and the Belmont, you know you are going to have to put a solid workout in there to be ready for the final race of the Triple Crown.

"The thing is, to my mind, there's a difference between boxing and shadow boxing, and I wanted our horse mentally ready to box, not shadowbox.

"You also have to understand that it often seems that horses are more apt to get hurt in training than in racing. I don't know why that is, but it seems to be true.

"At the same time, we, my Dad and I, prided ourselves on keeping the stable on a paying basis. We carried the farm, paid our bills and so forth, off our winnings.

"It was always in the back of our minds... keeping the bills paid. Then, also contributing to my decision, was the fact that I had a lot of friends in Jersey and thought I could do them a favor helping to get the Jersey Derby established.

"So, we went down there, won handily, took home a purse of \$50,000 — and our pre-Belmont workout was done. Very simple, I thought."

A total of seven horses showed up to try and spoil Citation's Triple Crown bid, and for a millisecond, it looked like they might have gotten their chance, as the mighty colt stumbled out of the starting gate.

Citation recovered quickly, however, and was in front after a half mile. He won by eight lengths.

"I just let him run a little, then I had to take a hold of him," Arcaro said. "He ran so fast, it scared me."

It was Calumet's second Triple Crown. There wouldn't be another captured until Secretariat won it 25 years later.

"The Belmont is a different [kind of] race," Jimmy Jones said. "And it's one I always felt should be run in the fall. Now, I realize that it might not be good showmanship to do it that way, but the [Triple Crown] is a pretty tough series of races on the horses.

"It goes back to the way you prepare them," he continued. "You train hard for the Derby, run hard, get them seasoned for it, and then you move them along to the

winner-take-all -race.

He concluded his season with two victories in December, 1948 at Tanforan Park, near San Francisco, but came out of those races with a tender ankle that would plague him for the remainder of his career.

"He never was the same again," Jones said.

After sitting out his entire four-year-old season, Calumet's Wright brought him back to competition because he wanted Citation to become the first horse to earn \$1 million.

True to form, Citation won his first start at 5, giving him 16 straight victories — a record only recently broken by Cigar — then came a series of second place finishes, five in a row and seven out of eight.

Suddenly there were whispers around the country that Citation should be retired. Preventing that, however, was Wright, who died in 1950, but had left instructions in his will that his intentions should be carried out to the letter.

Citation opened his six-year-old season by finishing third twice. Then he was fifth in the Hollywood Premiere, the only time in 45 career starts that he ever finished out of the money.

After that came another second, before he finally returned to his championship form and won three in a row, capped by a four-length victory in the \$100,000 Hollywood Gold Cup.

That win finally pushed him over the \$1 million mark and he was retired two weeks later, his swan song a one-horse post parade before a wildly cheering crowd at Arlington Park.

With that, Citation returned to Calumet Farms, where he died on August 8, 1970 at age 25. He's now buried on the farm near his sire Bull Lea, and his dam, Hydroplane II.

"I didn't know Citation was going to be a horse for the ages, but I did determine pretty quickly that he was going to be something special," Jones said.

"What made him special? He could outrun anybody, could do more things, was more pliable, than any other horse I've ever seen.

"In addition, Citation had several moves in a race, which is an odd thing because the vast majority of horses have one move in a race and that's it.

"Citation could move several times over

The Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr. were gone. The Vietnam War was nearing an ignoble end. And at precisely the same time that the President of the United States was becoming mired in a scandal called Watergate, a British Rock group was promising that "We [Wouldn't] Get Fooled Again."

Yes, 1973 needed a hero, the humbler his or her origins the better.

In that respect, Secretariat arrived right on cue and not a moment too soon.

Racing's "super horse" was born at Meadow Stud, the Virginia Farm founded by Christopher T. Chenery, and would wear the family's blue and white silks for 21 starts, amassing 16 wins and garnering a total of \$1,316,808 in purses.

Fortunately for the Chenery's, the lucky streak Secretariat brought to the family began even before he was born.

So great was demand for his sire, Bold Ruler, who was owned by Old Westbury's Phipps family, that more than money was needed to secure his services.

The standard practice was essentially payment in horse flesh. In the case of the deal struck between Chenery and Ogden Phipps, that meant that every year, Meadow Stud would send two broodmares to Bold Ruler, and every other year, the two men would meet to determine by a coin toss who would have first choice of the offspring.

"My father had begun breeding horses shortly after establishing our family farm in the late 1930s," Christopher's daughter, Penny Chenery said recently.

"He was a good horseman — his Hill Prince had won the Preakness in 1950 — but the agreement with Mr. Phipps wasn't a situation that had proved lucky for my father over the years," she continued.

However, even after Penny took over the farm in the mid-1960s due to her father's failing health, the agreement remained firm.

"A deal's a deal, after all," she said.

And so it was Penny Chenery who chose to send mares Somethingroyal and Hasty Matelda to Bold Ruler in the spring of 1967.

Two years later, she met Phipps at Belmont Park for what many a track veteran recalls as the most fateful coin toss in history.

Somethingroyal had given birth to a filly and was again in foal. Hasty Matelda

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had foaled a colt, but would be barren the next year. The winner of the coin toss would have first choice but no horse the second year.

The coin flip went to Phipps, who chose Somethingroyal's daughter. She was named The Bride and never finished a race in the money.

A year later, Somethingroyal gave birth to a chestnut colt. That colt was named Secretariat.

Though fate would soon smile on the Chenery family, Penny Chenery remembers the late 60's and early 70's as a time of mixed emotions.

Just a year before her father died, at the age of 86, the stable's Riva Ridge won the Kentucky Derby with jockey Ron Turcotte aboard.

Despite the high profile win, the victory was tempered by Meadow Stud's being immersed in considerable cash flow and

tax problems.

"When my father died in January, 1973, Riva Ridge having won the Derby the year before, I think there really was a little bit of a feeling like, 'Okay, he accomplished his life's goal; perhaps we should move on.' The only thing was, there was this two-year-old in the barn..." Chenery said.

And what a two-year-old. Secretariat had finished fourth in his debut, at Aqueduct, on July 4, 1972, but would not lose again that year, posting eight victories over the next five months.

If there was a blemish on that campaign, it was the colt's disqualification for interference in the Champagne Stakes, a decision that remains controversial to this day.

Despite that minor setback, late in the racing season, Secretariat was named Horse of the Year a few months later, the first two-year-old to be so honored.

"Unlike Citation, Secretariat would be beaten a few times over the course of his ca-

reer, though I feel that there was always some reason for it, other than the competition he faced," said retired turf writer Pat Lynch.

"For instance, on one occasion when he lost I felt that he probably wasn't feeling too well. When he passed the post, he appeared to have a runny nose, like he had a virus.

"That said, when Secretariat was on his game, he was an unbelievably good horse," Lynch continued. "He had everything that a horse should have, plus he had one outstanding attribute — he was extraordinary on the turn.

"Where most riders wait for the turn to be over before they make their move and try to gain position in the stretch, Secretariat could run right by the field in the turn."

In order to get a handle on the farm's finances, Chenery syndicated Secretariat — sold shares in the colt's ownership — for a record price of \$6 million, making him, in February, 1973, the most valuable horse on the face of the planet.

"While that was the right thing to do financially, it really put a lot of pressure on him when he started to race again at age three," Chenery said. "People began talking about the '\$6 million horse.' 'The champion at two who could turn out to be a bust at three.'"

"And then, of course, there were the rumors about his health and fitness and conjecture that he had bad knees. All the kinds of things that circulate whenever you are the favorite."

Secretariat made his three-year-old debut in the Bay Shore Stakes at Aqueduct on St. Patrick's Day, 1973.

Many who were there that day still remark on how much he'd matured over the intervening months. Now taller and more muscular, characterized by big shoulders and a barrel chest, he simply overpowered all comers his first time out.

He then went on to win the Gotham Stakes in an equally convincing matter, but the Wood Memorial at Aqueduct left a siz-

able — if temporary — chink in his armor.

On a crisp late spring afternoon, a crowd of 43,316 — not to mention Secretariat's connections — were left dumbstruck after he was beaten by a considerably less talented horse named Angle Light.

No one could offer an explanation for what had happened. The colt's trainer, Lucien Laurin, stood in the paddock as Angle Light proceeded to the winner's circle, with a dazed look on his face.

Having to now turn their attention to preparing for the Kentucky Derby and Churchill Downs, Chenery, Laurin and Turcotte were now championing a horse that no longer looked unbeatable.

"Losing the Wood really brought us up short," Chenery remembered. "It made us all stop and think. 'What went wrong?' 'Were we over-confident?'"

"Going into the Derby, we had to make sure we were doing everything we needed to to win. Lucien, I remember, trained Secretariat quite hard between the Wood and the Derby. The funny thing is, Secretariat was a big eater, so as long as he ate, Lucien put the work to him.

"At the same time, Eddie Sweat, Secretariat's groom, was even more watchful than usual, to make sure the horse was feeling upbeat. A lot of winning is attitude, so we just had to make sure that we were all thinking about every possibility and concentrating on winning."

The Tuesday before the Derby, Secretariat ran his last major workout at Churchill Downs, galloping a fast five furlongs.

While most of "team Secretariat" had a job to do, Chenery recalls her role as mostly waiting for the outcome of the race and dealing with the media.

"Lucien's task was to make sure the horse was ready for the race, that he was fit enough. Ronny [Turcotte] had to think

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out his strategy, had to determine who of all the competitors was going to be where.

"Me? As the owner, I didn't get to do anything pertaining directly to the horse, but then I had other things to contend with.

"When you are a big winner and get beat, the media just descends on you. It's easy to get distracted. It takes a lot of maturity and determination to deal with it. You want to accommodate the media, but we had to concentrate on our horse too. It was tough."

The morning of the Derby — by which time all the humans involved in the race had done everything they could to influence the outcome — Chenery remembers thinking, "Oh God, let this day get through."

"We took our time getting to the track, had a late lunch, but still ended up getting there at 3 p.m. — which left us three hours to sit and wait.

"Now, mind you, I was feeling pretty confident. Secretariat had run well in training. He really was in great shape. But you still need a good trip, you still need a bit of racing luck, and you still have to actually run the race."

When Secretariat made his first official public appearance at the track, moments before going to the post, the crowd let out a tremendous roar.

"Now, that would unnerve a lot of thoroughbreds, but Secretariat was different," Chenery said. "He always seemed to carry himself in a way that suggested that he knew that these were his fans. He walked in such a way that said, 'I am a champion.'

"At the same time, since Ron Turcotte had won the Derby the year before, he took that reaction in stride. He wasn't freaked out by it."

Because of pre-Derby speculation inspired by the Wood Memorial, many in attendance at Churchill Downs that day believed Secretariat might not be a horse

suited to run well over the mile-and-a-quarter distance.

In line with that widespread belief, the early Derby favorite among the bettors was a horse named Sham.

As the Derby got under way, Secretariat was the last at the break from the starting gate, but quickly regained his poise and began accelerating... and accelerating... and accelerating... moving past horses like they were standing still.

As they rounded the final turn into the stretch, Sham and Secretariat were side by side, but the red colt's furious pace proved too much for the favorite.

Thanks to his heroic effort, Secretariat crossed under the wire in 1:59 2/5, shattering the Derby record and establishing a new one that remains unchallenged to this day.

Afterward, Turcotte could not help but taunt those who doubted Secretariat's stamina.

"He ran pretty good for a crippled horse," he said.

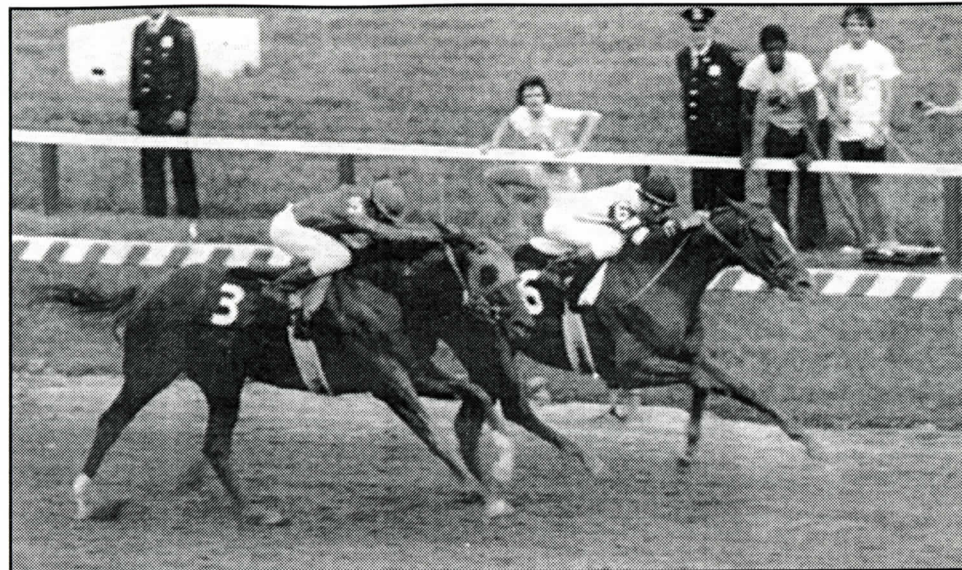
Famished, Secretariat returned to his barn and finished off three-day's worth of feed in 90 minutes.

"After the Derby, you have a couple of days to celebrate, but then you have to start training all over again for the Preakness," Chenery said, who shortly thereafter would move to 315 Wheatley Road in Old Westbury.

(Secretariat's other connections also had Nassau County roots, trainer Laurin living in Malverne, and jockey Turcotte, in Oyster Bay Cove.)

Two weeks after the Derby, Secretariat found himself competing against only five challengers in the Preakness, though one of them was again Sham, who had also broken the Derby record in pursuit of his eventual second place finish.

Before a crowd of 61,657 — a crowd that included actor Jim Nabors, who sang the National Anthem, and football star Johnny Unitas — Secretariat again got off



Affirmed (along the rail) battles nemesis Alydar through the stretch, capturing the Preakness by just a neck.

Pimlico Race Course photo.

to a slow start.

This time, however, Turcotte decided on a memorable change in strategy. Though he started slow, the jockey pushed Secretariat to go after the field in the first turn — an unusual move in horse racing.

Roaring from last to first, he made a semi-circle around the competition in the turn, coming out ahead. Chenery was surprised.

"He broke last and then, just when you'd least expect it, he began passing horses," she said. "Sham challenged him, but by the time he reached the three-quarter pole, Secretariat was clearly in the lead.

"What I couldn't figure out was why he didn't pull away more from the pack. Later, I asked Ronny what happened and he said he had actually tried to slow him down a bit, saying, 'Hey boy, you've still got another race to run, don't waste it all here.'"

Immediately after the Preakness Ron Turcotte said, "If I'd gotten beat, I might as well have hung up my tack. But I had a

V-12 under me, so why not let him go?"

"There were times when Secretariat ran that I thought he would wind up in the sky, like a bird," said Lucien Laurin.

The final official time of the race produced the second controversy of Secretariat's career. Despite a malfunction of the electronic timer, Pimlico officials put the colt's winning time at 1:54 2/5.

Frank Robinson and Gene Schwartz of the *Daily Racing Form*, however, insisted that the actual time was 1:53 2/5, which would have been a track record.

"We should probably have gotten that record too," Chenery said.

Belmont Stakes day dawned hot, hazy and humid, the mercury reaching a near-fevered pitch at just about the same time the massive crowd was.

The hype before the race had been incredible. Secretariat was simultaneously

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on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Bumperstickers touted him for president.

Surprisingly, jockey Turcotte had begun to have his doubts about this being a triumphant afternoon.

"He seemed a little sluggish to me before the race," Turcotte said. "His reactions were slow, but then the gate opened, and the bell rang, and he was all horse."

"I have to admit, I was kind of nervous before the race," Chenery said. "I mean, you have a ton of confidence, but at the same time you start to think about all the other horses that had been in the same position

and failed. It had been 25 years, after all, since anyone had won the Triple Crown."

Again altering his strategy, Turcotte immediately sent Secretariat to the lead.

A mile into the race, he was 20 lengths ahead of his closest challenger, Twice a Prince, and just continued to widen his lead. He reached the quarter pole in 1:59 — a full second faster than the Belmont record for 10 furlongs. His lead then was 24 lengths.

"By this point, I'm just going crazy in the stands," Chenery remembered. "On the one hand, I'm terribly relieved. There had just been so much pressure going into the race, and so many people had wanted us to do it.

"And then I began to realize how we were

doing it. How far ahead we were and how fast Secretariat was going. 'Oh, he's going too fast,' I said. 'He won't be able to finish.' 'For God's sake, Ronny, don't fall off.'

"The thing about it though was, Secretariat always ran the same way. He never seemed to push. The rhythm of his stride never changed. Despite it being a very warm day, he just kept coming."

From the track itself, Secretariat seemed to be doubling and redoubling his speed.

"By the time my horse got to where Secretariat had been, the dust had already settled," said Braulio Baeza, who rode second in the Belmont aboard Twice a Prince.

At the top of the stretch, Secretariat began to accelerate even faster, his lead expanding to 31 lengths.

"Every time I looked up, Secretariat looked smaller and smaller, which is what happens when a horse gets tired — he looks scrunched up," said Angel Cordero Jr., who rode My Gallant that day. "So I'd yell over to Baeza, 'We're getting close — look how little he is.'"

At the sixteenth pole Baeza shouted back, "Forget it, he just finished the race."

Secretariat reached the wire in 2:24, yet another track record. It has not been threatened since, and stands as the best performance by a thoroughbred in history. Sham, his rival, finished 43 lengths back and never raced again.

Secretariat's own career would end just six months later, as per the agreement of his syndication.

"He went to Kentucky, to Claiborne Farms, and never left," Chenery said.

"All kinds of people wanted him to make personal appearances, but he was just too valuable as a breeding horse to chance it."

Still, America went wild for the red colt swathed in blue and white silks.

Sonny and Cher wooed him for their variety show. *Sports Illustrated* named

him Man of the Year. A Las Vegas hotel offered his owners \$15,000 just for Secretariat to trot onstage.

"Had he been able to talk, he probably would have been endorsing McDonald's" said William Nack, the champion's biographer.

"Thousand of people came to the farm to see him and he just loved the attention," Chenery said.

"He loved to get his picture taken, and that's another reason I believe he became a cult hero, he was accessible. He liked to play the role.

"I think he was a tremendously unusual horse, in terms of his accomplishment," she continued. "Yes, he was fallible on occasion, but the ones he won he won with so much style that it just captivated people — even those who weren't race fans per se."

"What we remember Secretariat for most is his three-year-old career," Pat Lynch said. "His Belmont... well, I firmly believe that his Belmont performance is the best individual race I ever saw a horse run.

"The crowd was frenzied, and the more he opened up, the crazier they got. It might just be the best race ever run in America."

Apart from that race, there's one other snapshot from Secretariat's career that still lingers in Lynch's mind.

"It was during his retirement ceremony at Aqueduct," Lynch recalled. "We had had this award made up for him, featuring his three magazine covers, and I was holding it as he paraded around the track for the last time.

"Now, he gets to me and he just stops. He looks at me. I look at him. And I think, 'My God, he's thinking.' I never had that thought about a horse before, but he just had this innate intelligence."

In his later years, his visitors at the Claiborne farm ranged from the average working stiff on summer vacation to the likes of Queen Elizabeth and movie star John Wayne.

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Affirmed, jockey Steve Cauthen in the saddle, walks the paddock ring at Belmont Park en route to completing his Triple Crown sweep.

Photo courtesy the New York Racing Association.

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"Oh lord, he was the horse," said John Soshly, Claiborne's assistant farm manager. "Secretariat wasn't the most expensive, the top winner, or the best sire here. But he was the most famous.

"Others achieved more, but he is etched in our minds — and the legend lives on."

Affirmed Provides White Knuckled Excitement

Unlike Citation and Secretariat, Affirmed never made anything look easy.

But of the three, Affirmed was the only one to be a champion at ages two, three and four, and Horse of the Year two years running.

Though their Triple Crown runs would be the stuff of commanding legend, Affirmed would win not just the Triple Crown, but also the Hopeful, Futurity, Santa Anita Derby, Hollywood Derby, Santa Anita handicap, Hollywood Gold Cup, Woodward and Jockey Club Gold Cup.

And though he would lose five straight in 1978 and '79 — due to a variety of circumstances ranging from a saddle slipping off to his jockey being mired in a 110-race losing streak — his reputation has dulled little over the years.

Mention Affirmed, and what immediately comes to mind is his desperate battles down the stretch with the great Alydar.

Affirmed wasn't just a horse, then, he was a four-legged allegory about courage.

A son of Exclusive Native, bred by the Harbor View Farm operation owned and operated by Louis E. and Patrice Wolfson, Affirmed ran off an eye-catching string of eight consecutive victories during his three-year-old campaign and amassed more prize money in a single season, \$901,541, than any race horse in history up to that time.

Not that this surprised anyone. You see, Affirmed entered the championship fray

at three, having already been the country's champion two-year-old, with a record of seven wins and 2 seconds in nine starts.

And yet, there was this other horse who made Affirmed something less than the undisputed world champion.

At the end of his own two-year-old season, Calumet Farm's Alydar was nearly twice as big as Affirmed, and the only thing that he seemed to be missing as a race horse was a maturity that would surely come with time.

In short order, Alydar was dominating races like the Florida Derby, the Flamingo, the Blue Grass Stakes, and the Whitney. Had Affirmed not stood in his way, many believe, he would surely have been the Triple Crown champion.

Backing Affirmed were experienced hands. Owner-breeder Louis E. Wolfson had raced outstanding horses for more than a decade, including 1965 horse of the year Roman Brother.

His wife, the former Patrice Jacobs, was daughter of the late hall of fame horseman Hirsch Jacobs, and brought her own expertise to bear on their stable.

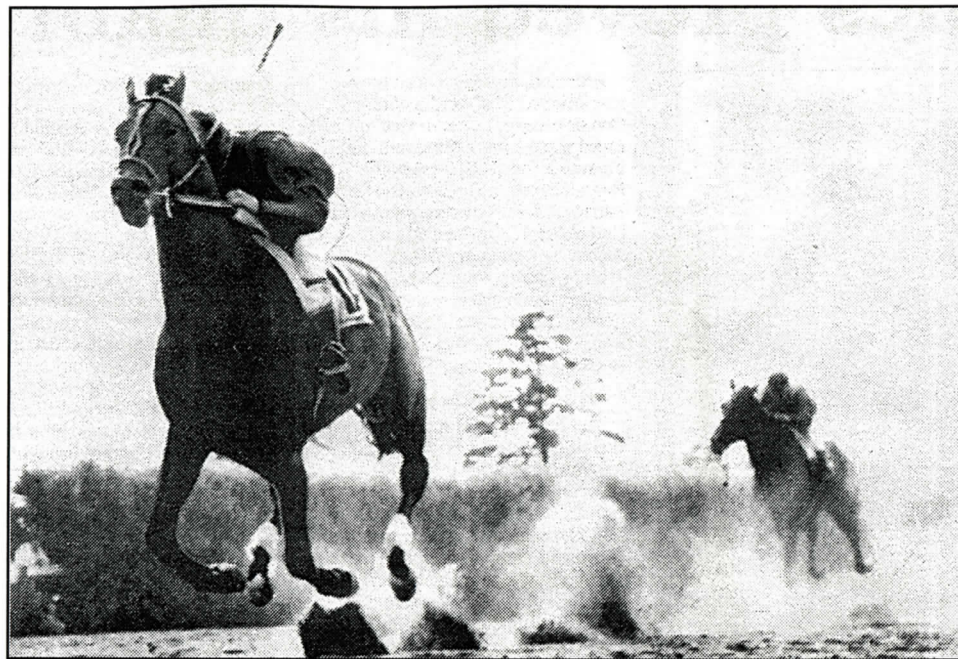
Then there was trainer Lazaro Sosa Barrera, who saddled Bold Forbes, winner, in 1976, of both the Kentucky Derby and the Belmont Stakes.

And finally, there was Kentucky wunderkind Steve Cauthen, who became a teenaged sensation riding in New York, and would be just 18 when Affirmed began his assault on the Triple Crown.

All through the early spring of 1978, both Alydar and Affirmed trained steadily.

From the moment he made his three-year-old debut, at Haileah in Florida, Alydar looked to be in championship form. Just three weeks later, he won the Flamingo Stakes, beginning the buzz that would carry him into the Derby.

Affirmed debuted a week later, winning an allowance race, followed by a victory in the San Felipe Handicap.



Citation thunders down the stretch in the Belmont Stakes.

Photo courtesy of the New York Racing Association.

In April, Alydar won the Florida Derby. A day later, Affirmed scored an eight-length triumph in the Santa Anita Derby.

By now, the public's loyalty may have been divided, but a consensus had also emerged, 1978 would be dominated by not one champion but two — and they were on a collision course that would meet up at Churchill Downs in early May.

Affirmed next won the Hollywood Derby by two lengths on April 16, while Alydar came back and won the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland in Kentucky on April 27 by 13 lengths.

"What really stands out in my mind looking back now is how absolutely superb Alydar was in those races before the Derby," Patrice Wolfson said recently.

"When we flew to Kentucky, we knew we were facing a monster. We knew we

had a battle on our hands. And yet two members of our party never seemed affected by it: Affirmed, who was an incredibly quiet horse, and Cauthen, who was 'The Kentucky Kid,' 'the speed star,' enormously popular, but also very, very calm in the way he did things."

Adding to the strangeness of the Derby was the fact that Alydar's bloodlines could also be traced back to the Harbor View Farm, by way of his sire, Raise A Native.

"If it hadn't been for Affirmed, we would have been going out of our minds for him," Wolfson said of Alydar. "He was just a tremendous race horse. Without Affirmed there, I'm sure he would have won practically everything."

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As it had for Secretariat, Derby day arrived bright and sunny, and a crowd of 128,000 was on hand to see which of the two titans was the better thoroughbred.

Alydar was the favorite, Affirmed the second choice.

Affirmed was also second out of the gate to Raymond Earl. Alydar meanwhile, was a distant ninth.

From the half-mile to the pole, the character of the race began to change dramatically. Affirmed was out front on the turn, when Believe It suddenly began to accelerate, and Alydar came up along the outside.

Affirmed and Believe It continued to battle around the turn, until Alydar caught them in the stretch. Affirmed won by a length and a half, but the dye was definitely cast.

Battle they were expected to do and battle they did.

For the Preakness, which was held on May 20 that year, Affirmed was the favorite, Alydar second.

With 81,261 looking on, Steve Cauthen moved Affirmed to the lead after a half-mile. Alydar was still far back but, as he had in the Derby, he started to pick up horses quickly. Even before they reached the quarter pole, Alydar and Affirmed were literally neck and neck.

From there, the battle only got fiercer.

Alydar pushed Affirmed every step of the way, but the latter horse maintained a slight advantage to the end, his victory greeted with spontaneous applause.

"Affirmed was a battler, a gutsy horse. But then again, Alydar was gutsy too," said Cauthen. "Any horse that kept beating you, you'd have thought he'd have given up. But he didn't. He kept coming back and fighting. I think they knew each other and respected each other. Affirmed was like, 'Here's this [darned horse] again' and Alydar was probably thinking the same thing."

So dominant were the two champions down the stretch that the third horse in the race, Believe It, was a full seven and a half lengths behind them as they crossed under the wire.

"By this point, you certainly do start thinking about possibly winning the whole thing, but you know you never have the other horse measured. Alydar was just too talented to take for granted," Patrice Wolfson said.

"After the Derby, of course, we were just thrilled, You're just so delighted to have one any of the legs of the Triple Crown. Then, you know, you win the Preakness, and it's like this incredible bonus.

"You do start to think about winning the Belmont, but, given the history, no matter how confident you are you just can't bring yourself to believe that it is possible.

"I mean, racing waited 25 years for Secretariat. Then Seattle Slew won the Triple Crown the year before... so there's a part of you that says, it can't happen again. It just doesn't happen that frequently.

"Still, we had a tremendous amount of confidence in Affirmed," she continued. "He just had no bad habits. He was kind of like a dog you had in your house. He did everything we ever wanted him to, and, if anything, he was almost too quiet."

Despite the two wins in the Triple Crown series, some remained convinced that Alydar could still pull out a victory in the mile-and-a-half Belmont.

"There was no greater pressure than the last couple of weeks leading up to the Belmont," Cauthen said. "The whole world was looking in on me and the horse... but at the same time, I thought, 'Yeah, I know if Affirmed gets beat, I'll get blamed, but so what? Let's just go for it.'"

In the meantime, Alydar's trainer, John Veitch, still confident in his horse, decided to change tactics, and not concede the early lead to Affirmed.

Despite the rigors of the grueling Triple



Just a portion of the momentos associated with Secretariat's glorious career displayed at Triple Crown race tracks this year.
Photo by Daniel J. McCue

Crown series, both horses seemed to be thriving. A great Belmont was in the offing.

As he had in the two previous races, Cauthen had Affirmed away alertly at the start. By the time the field straightened into the backstretch, Alydar was challenging Affirmed and coming on strong.

After roughly six furlongs, the two horses were just a half-length apart. By the time they passed the three-eighth pole, they were dead even.

As they entered the stretch, again in the throes of a pitched battle, the crowd in the grandstand at Belmont Park exploded.

Sensing the need for special measures, Cauthen did something highly unusual, he switched the whip from his right hand to his left and gave the horse a quick smack.

Startled, Affirmed surged forward.

Near the finish, Alydar stretched his neck out, but just missed catching the

leader. Affirmed won by a head.

"You couldn't write a better script for what happened on the track that day," Patrice Wolfson said. "What it came down to was guts."

As the horses matched stride for stride approaching the finish line, Wolfson said, "My binoculars were shaking, I just couldn't stand still.

"The funny thing about it is, my husband, Cauthen and the horse were all the same. They were just the picture of quiet determination. They were all just doing what had to be done. There was nothing showy about them.

"Laz and myself were the excitable ones. We were going crazy. So it was great. It will live with us forever and ever and ever.

"That finish, I don't think we'll ever see anything like it again," she continued.