

Batavia Downs to remember two ladies of the sport

By Tim Bojarski for Batavia Downs

On Friday, October 17, Batavia Downs will look back and honor the careers of two longtime female trainers who plied their trade on the western New York circuit for many years. Mary Ann Sarama-Luce and Brenda Ohol will have races named in their honor and presentations made with their families in the winner's circle as the local horsemen pay their respects and remember their careers at Batavia Downs.

Mary Ann Sarama-Luce passed away in July of 2011 at 73 years of age after a long battle with leukemia. She was introduced to the business when she met Danny Sarama in the late 1960's and from that point on, the two formed the successful Mardan Stable. Their most memorable performer was the pacer You Devil You, who won 10 races in a row in 1976 while rising from a low claimer to the Open class. In the early 1980s, after separating from Danny, she continued on her own as both a trainer and a driver. Her best year as a driver came in 1983 when she won 21 races.

She ended her driving career in 1990 with 109 wins and \$201,435 in earnings. At that point she started training full time and continued to do so until her passing. As a conditioner she sent 107 horses to the winner's circle whose efforts earned \$334,835. Some of the top horses Sarama-Luce trained included Gold Bandit N, Top Dog Alex, Top Dog Nicholas, Easy L Bar and Guy Lee Debbie.

After her passing, her son Carl and husband Richard have carried on with her stable.

"Harness racing was her number one priority and passion" her daughter Lynette McGiveron said. "Her horses were the driving force behind her battle to recover. Even in her final days she worried more about her horses than herself."

McGiveron continued "A passion of Mary Ann's was to have her mares bred and to raise the foals to race. She named them after her kids and grandchildren and had planned on doing so until every child and grandchild was named. The last foal to be born on her farm was "Top Dog Morgan" named after her grandson. Unfortunately Mary Ann never got to see it in person. He was born the night she went into the hospital for her final stay."

Bruce Tubin, president of the Western New York Harness Horsemen's Association, described Mary Ann as "A fierce competitor both as a trainer and a driver."