

Europeans arrive for Yonkers International Trot

by John Cirillo, for Yonkers Raceway

Yonkers, NY --- Six world-class European trotters touched down Wednesday morning (Oct. 5) at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, ready to compete in Yonkers Raceway's \$1 million Yonkers International Trot.

The million-dollar event, set for Saturday afternoon (Oct. 15), features 10 invitees racing at the 1-1/4 mile distance. First post that day is 1:10 p.m., with the Trot scheduled for 3:20 p.m.

The arriving group represents five of the seven countries vying for the purse, equaling last season's as the highest in New York harness history.



Bryan Smith photo

Explosive de Vie and BBS Sugarlight were among the horses that arrived in New York on Wednesday.

Elite trotters from Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway and two from Sweden were on board, joining a trio from the United States and one from Canada in the global trotting classic.

The race was revived in 2015 after a 20-year hiatus by Raceway and Empire City Casino president and CEO Timothy J. Rooney.

The field, alphabetically, is: BBS Sugarlight–Norway; Explosive de Vie–Sweden; Flanagan Memory–Canada; Hannelore Hanover–USA (mare); Jonesy–Finland; Oasis Bi–Italy; Obrigado–USA; On Track Piraten–Sweden; Resolve–USA; Tano Bork–Denmark.

The European invaders departed from Liège Airport in eastern Belgium (close to the German city of Düsseldorf), landing at approximately 7 a.m. after a nearly nine hour transcontinental flight of just over 3,700 miles (5,960 kilometers or 3,703.4 miles).

The elite trotting sextet was vanned to Stewart Airport (Newburgh, N.Y.) for a two-day quarantine, departing for Yonkers Raceway sometime Friday morning (Oct. 7).

Three of the entrants -- BBS Sugarlight (fourth), Oasis Bi (fifth) and On Track Piraten (seventh) -- competed in the 2015 event, while the winner, Norway's Papagayo E, is injured and unable to defend his title. Italy's Ringostarr Treb had accepted an invitation to participate this year but had some blood issues and did not make the trip.

The USA has a triple threat of million dollar earners. The only mare in the field, Hannelore Hanover (driver Yannick Gingras), was a \$32,000 bargain purchase who has won 24 of 38 career races. Resolve (driver Ake Svanstedt) has 14 career victories and was able to defeat Hannelore Hanover in the final of the Maple Leaf Trot last month. Obrigado (driver Mark MacDonald), a modestly-bred Maine gelding, has become, at the age of 6, one of North America's best trotters, with a series of Grand Circuit victories.