

Campell on JL Cruze and Roland N Rock

by Ken Weingartner, Harness Racing Communications

Freehold, NJ --- Driver John Campbell has seen trotter JL Cruze raise his game to a new level and now he will see if pacer Roland N Rock can do the same.

JL Cruze and Roland N Rock both race Saturday at Meadowlands Racetrack. JL Cruze, who went from being unknown heading into this season to the [No. 3-ranked horse](#) in harness racing, faces eight rivals in the \$250,000 Graduate Series final for 4-year-old trotters while Iowa invader Roland N Rock puts his perfect 18-for-18 career record on the line in the second of two eliminations for the Crawford Farms Meadowlands Pace.

The Meadowlands Pace elims and Graduate final are part of a [Saturday card](#) that also includes a single elimination for the Mistletoe Shalee for 3-year-old female pacers and Reynolds Stakes divisions for 3-year-old male and female trotters.

First race post time is 5:30 p.m. Saturday.



Geri Schwarz photo

John Campbell drove Roland N Rock to his 18th win in 18 lifetime starts in the Landmark Stakes at Historic Track.

will drive Roland N Rock for owners Duane and Connie Roland. Duane Roland is the trainer.

[Roland N Rock](#) enters his Meadowlands Pace elim having dominated the Iowa fair circuit as well as posting stakes wins at Springfield, Ill., Balmoral Park, and Goshen Historic Track. Campbell drove Roland N Rock at Historic Track, where last weekend the gelding posted a 10-1/4 length win in 1:56.2 in the Landmark Stakes for 3-year-old male pacers.

Campbell will be behind Roland N Rock again in his Meadowlands Pace elimination, which also includes North America Cup winner Wakizashi Hanover and Hempt Memorial winner Wiggle It Jiggleit. The top five finishers from the seven-horse division will advance to the final.

"It's impossible to tell if he can go with those horses, but if he can't, he's not far off," said Campbell, who

"They did bring a really good horse out East."

Wakizashi Hanover and Wiggle It Jiggleit will be racing for the fifth consecutive week when they hit the track for their Meadowlands Pace elimination, but that is unlikely to provide Roland N Rock with an advantage.

"I don't think that matters," Campbell said. "It's just a question of whether he's going to be able to make that leap up against the competition."

"I used him two or three times (in the Landmark) and he still won handily, even though it's nowhere near where he's going to have to go this week. But he's great gaited, he's a really good sized horse, and he's got really good manners. He's a really nice horse."



Curtis Salonick photo

JL Cruze nipped Sebastian K at the wire to win the Sun Invitational.

Of course, Campbell has already seen an unheralded horse make the leap up against the competition in JL Cruze. In his three most recent starts, JL Cruze has defeated Dan Patch Award winner [Father Patrick](#) twice in the Graduate Series and Dan Patch Award winner Sebastian K [in the Sun Invitational](#).

JL Cruze brings a ten-race win streak to the Graduate Series final. For the year, he has won 14 of 16 races and earned \$271,138 for owners Ken Wood, Bill Dittmar and Stephen Iaquina. The group purchased JL Cruze for \$37,000 at November's Standardbred Horse Sale Mixed Sale.

The Graduate Series final includes [Father Patrick](#) and stablemate Shake It Cerry, who was the 2014 Dan Patch Award Trotter of the Year.

"You don't expect to race for that kind of money and have it easy," Campbell said. "The only thing I expect out of (JL Cruze) is that he'll race well. He's never disappointed me with any of his races and I expect him to race good again this weekend. He's just been a very consistent hard-trying horse."

Following is the field for the Graduate Series final for 4-year-old trotters:

HN-PP-Horse-Driver-Trainer

- 1-1-Rompaway Galaxy-Jim Marohn Jr.-Krista Harmon
- 2-2-Opulent Yankee-Andy Miller-Julie Miller
- 3-3-Resolve-Ake Svanstedt-Ake Svanstedt
- 4-4-Shake It Cerry-Jimmy Takter-Jimmy Takter
- 5-5-Gural Hanover-Matt Kakaley-Ron Burke
- 6-6-JL Cruze-John Campbell-Eric Ell
- 7-7-[Father Patrick](#)-Yannick Gingras-Jimmy Takter
- 8-8-Sumatra-David Miller-Tom Fanning
- 9-9-Madewell Hanover-Chris Ryder-Chris Ryder