

Pinkman defeats Mission Brief to win the Hambletonian

by Ellen Harvey and Ken Weingartner, Harness Racing Communications

East Rutherford, NJ --- Pinkman and Brian Sears, who got the drive on the horse less than an hour before the race, took control of the \$1 million Hambletonian for 3-year-olds at the half and never gave it up as they cruised under the wire to be the 90th winners of the trotting classic in a world record time of 1:51 on Saturday (Aug. 8) at Meadowlands Racetrack.

Pinkman ([Explosive Matter](#)-Margie Seelster) is trained by Jimmy Takter and owned by Christina Takter, John and Jim Fielding, Joyce McClelland and Herb Liverman. His winning time was the fastest ever by a sophomore trotting gelding on a mile track.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Trainer Jimmy Takter holds the coveted Hambletonian trophy following Pinkman's victory.

The Bank was on the move just past the quarter-mile mark, with Pinkman behind him. By the time they reached the half-mile marker in :55.2, Pinkman had the lead on the outside and The Bank was second.

The filly Mission Brief, who Yannick Gingras chose to drive after her win in the second elimination, gave futile chase in deep stretch and made up ground, but not enough to win. Uncle Lasse, also trained by Takter, was third after adding trotting hobbles between the elimination and the final.

As the field trotted off the starting gate, it was Uncle Lasse (David Miller) who was first to the lead from post seven, hitting the quarter-mile mark in :27.2, with The Bank (Johnny Takter) outside and behind him and Pinkman in third.

Mission Brief, who had been fourth, a few lengths from the leaders most of the way to the half, hustled to join the crowd and bore down on the leader, Pinkman, around the final turn, getting to his wheel as the field turned for home.

She lost contact when they straightened out, but re-engaged under urging from Gingras as the wire drew closer. She got close, but not close enough, three-quarters of a length back. Uncle Lasse was third, The Bank fourth and Jacksons Minion got the final purse check.

Trainer Jimmy Takter won both the Hambletonian and the Hambletonian Oaks for the second straight year. He won last year with [Trixton](#) in the Hambo and Lifetime Pursuit in the Oaks.

"I was looking forward to try in the final with a couple that I did have (Habitat and Wings Of Royalty) and I managed to do that," said winning driver Brian Sears. "But opportunity knocked and it's just great that they gave me the call.

"I didn't hear much (about the chance to drive Pinkman if necessary). I heard a little bit from Herb (Liverman). I talked to Herb a little bit, but I'm very grateful for the opportunity. He (Pinkman) was pretty much push button and it was a pleasure."

"I tried to tell him (Gingras) you're making a great mistake," Takter said about Yannick Gingras opting to drive Mission Brief in the final. "Pinkman is just such a fighter. He's not impressive, but he gets it done every time."

Pinkman has now won eight times in nine season's starts, with earnings of \$1,170,965. Lifetime he has been a winner in 14 of 17, with \$1,737,925.

"It's very emotional and I just want to thank all the connections that were involved," said co-owner John Fielding. "Brian Sears stepped in and did a great job and of course, my friend and partner Jimmy Takter and Christina, have done again an amazing job. We've been at this for 30 years trying to win this trophy and I'll tell you, this is the greatest thrill you could ever want in this sport and I'm just blown away, very honored and happy to be in this situation. I've got a plane I've got to catch to go back to a party in Toronto tonight, but we're going to have to stop at the windows (to cash bets).

"We leave these decisions (about drivers) up to Jimmy and he always seems to make the right decisions. We've had Brian Sears, who everybody knows is a fantastic, great driver, one of the best there ever was when the money is on the line, so I wasn't worried at all, very confident in Jimmy."

Of the filly runner-up Mission Brief, trainer and co-owner Ron Burke said, "She raced really good and I think if things would have shook out a little differently the result would have been different. She was the only one still going forward at the wire. She really gave it her all and at the wire she was still coming. I would never change anything that I did and I don't regret anything about the conditioning. She's still a super horse, some day we will be back and we are not going to give up. We are going to win the Hambletonian."



Lisa photo

Pinkman and Brian Sears took control of the \$1 million Hambletonian for 3-year-olds at the half and never gave it up as they cruised under the wire to be the 90th winners of the trotting classic in a world record time of 1:51.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

It was a crowded winner's circle after Pinkman captured the Hambletonian.

Mission Brief's driver, Yannick Gingras, who picked her over the eventual race winner, said, "I'm still young and I'm blessed to have two great chances at the Hambo like I've had the last few years. I will have plenty more chances I hope. Everyone ignores Pinkman because he isn't flashy, they want to talk about Uncle Lasse and Canepa Hanover, but Pinkman beats them every week, he was just a flat out winner. You have to give the horse all the credit in the world."

"I'm not disappointed in her effort at all. She wasn't quite as strong as the first heat. She wasn't quite as good gaited as before, so I couldn't make the moves I wanted to with her. I knew I didn't have enough at the top of the stretch. You have to give it to

Pinkman. He's a great horse and he's a winner.

"I was happy with how the race went. Takter's horses were being used and if she went her A1 effort, she might have won. My son joked with me this week and said don't make a break (as with [Father Patrick](#) in 2014), Well, I got that accomplished at least and it's still been a great day. Pinkman is Brian's horse now, of course."

Pinkman and Mission Brief win Hambletonian eliminations

Pinkman (Yannick Gingras) won the first \$100,000 elimination race for the Hambletonian by a half-length over The Bank (Johnny Takter) in 1:51.2 (which equaled Vivid Photo's world record -- at the time -- for a 3-year-old trotting gelding on a mile track).

Donatomite (Trond Smedhammer) was third. The other two spots for the final went to Habitat (Brian Sears) and Jacksons Minion (Tom Jackson).



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Mission Brief set up the anticipated Hambletonian showdown against male rival Pinkman, winning her elimination over Aldebaran Eagle in 1:51.3.

final.

"I figured (Smedhammer) was going to try to get position and sit behind me," said winning driver Gingras. "His horse (Donatomite) has got good gate speed. He's not had much luck with his horse, but he's a nice horse too.

"It kind of worked out. I was hoping to cut it, but The Bank is a very good horse. If I was going to follow anybody, he was the horse to follow.

"(Winning) is exactly what he does. In this race I had to get after him pretty hard in the stretch, but that's Pinkman. All he does is win."

Trainer Ron Burke's filly Mission Brief set up the anticipated Hambletonian showdown against male rival Pinkman, winning her elimination by 4-3/4 lengths over Aldebaran Eagle in 1:51.3.

French Laundry, Uncle Lasse and Wings Of Royalty also advanced to the \$1 million Hambletonian final.

Gingras and Pinkman made it quite clear they wanted the lead from post ten as the two charged off the starting gate and went straight for the front, getting past the rail horse, Donatomite, to get to the lead just past the :26.2 first quarter.

The Bank was out and moving at the three-eighths to get the lead and held it to the :54.3 half with Pinkman tucked in behind him. Jacksons Minion was on the move for the top when the field passed the half, while the lead horses remained unchanged at the 1:23.2 three-quarters.

With the finish line in sight, Gingras went to work on Pinkman and they passed The Bank for the win and a chance to draw for posts one through five in the

Mission Brief was trying to become the first filly since Continental victory in 1996 to win the Hambletonian.

Uncle Lasse (David Miller) led to the quarter in :26.3, with Mission Brief in fifth place. Yannick Gingras then moved Mission Brief to the front, hitting the half in :54.2 and three-quarters in 1:23. She drew off in the stretch for the easy win in 1:51.3.

"In the first turn it got a little crowded, she wasn't anxious, I was," Gingras said. "There were a lot of horses around us and she's not used to that. But she acted very professionally. At the top of the stretch, I could hear Brett (Miller driving French Laundry) on my back and it sounded like he had some trot. I kicked the earplugs but she did it on her own."

Gingras added prior to making his decision, "It's going to be a tough one. It's two guys (Jimmy Takter and Ron Burke) that really helped my career, two horses that I started with from the beginning, so it's very tough."

Mission Brief, a daughter of [Muscle Hill](#)-Southwind Serena, is owned by Burke Racing, Our Horse Cents Stables, J&T Silva Stables, and the partnership of Mark Weaver and Mike Brusceci.

There were 21,968 in attendance for the card and the North American handle was \$6,701,866. The on-track handle of \$1,320,325 was a slight increase from the \$1,280,854 wagered on-track last year.