

Gimpanzee is ready for season's debut in Empire Breeders Classic

May 23, 2019, by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager

Hightstown, NJ — Marcus Melander trains the top three horses in the first [Road to the Hambletonian](#) rankings released this week by Meadowlands Racetrack announcer/analyst Ken Warkentin, and No. 1 makes his first start of the season Monday (May 27) in the \$215,200 Empire Breeders Classic for 3-year-old male trotters at Vernon Downs.

Gimpanzee, who was 9-for-9 last year and took home the Dan Patch Award for best 2-year-old male trotter, will start from post five in the EBC for Melander and regular driver Brian Sears. Last year, Gimpanzee won seven times on the New York Sire Stakes circuit, including the \$225,000 final, before capturing his elimination and the final of the Breeders Crown.

"He's doing good," Melander said of Gimpanzee, the horse atop Warkentin's rankings, followed by stablemates Greenshoe and Green Manalishi S. "He's filled out nicely. He's not the biggest horse but we've been very happy with him all winter. He doesn't make any noise here at home, he just looks like a regular horse. He's nice and calm. I can't be more excited for his season to start."



Gimpanzee will start from post five in the EBC. USTA/Ken Weingartner photo.

Gimpanzee, who earned \$591,358 in purses last season for owners Courant Inc. and S R F Stable, heads to the Empire Breeders Classic off a second-place finish by a head to 2017 Horse of the Year Hannelore Hanover in a qualifier on May 18 at The Meadowlands. The time of the mile was 1:53. The colt also qualified on May 4, winning in 1:55, and on April 27, when he was fifth in 1:58.3.

"Hannelore Hanover just got him at the wire, but we were very happy with his last qualifier," Melander said. "The first qualifier we went with an open bridle and it was a windy day, so maybe that didn't look too impressive, but the last two qualifiers have been very good."

Of the eight remaining horses in the EBC, four are eligible to Hambletonian: Gettin Serious, Star Track Hanover, Mr Vicktor, and Cavill Hanover. Lightly raced Mr Vicktor is 3-for-3 this year for trainer Buzzy Sholty and has won four of five career starts.

Melander was uncertain of Gimpanzee's schedule beyond Monday. He would like his horses to have four or five starts heading to the \$1 million Hambletonian, which is harness racing's top event for 3-year-old trotters and will be held Aug. 3 at The Meadowlands.

"We'll see how he races on Monday and then we'll decide," Melander said. "He's fully staked so we can choose whatever we want to do."

Gimpanzee's start in the Empire Breeders Classic is expected at approximately 3:29 p.m. (EDT) Monday. The EBC for the male trotters is race nine and will be preceded by the Empire Breeders Classic for 3-year-old female trotters. For Monday's complete Vernon entries, click [here](#).