

## Freshman pacers debut in Sire Stakes Thursday at Yonkers

By Brandon Valvo, for the SOA of NY

**Yonkers, NY** — Twenty-nine 2-year-old pacing colts and geldings will make their pari-mutuel debuts in four divisions of the New York Sire Stakes Thursday night (June 20) at Yonkers Raceway. Among the roster of freshman is Oreo Dream Extreme, an American Ideal-Spotlight On son bred by Michelle and Al Crawford.

Seeing the 2-year-olds finally hit the track is thrilling, Michelle said.

“It’s exhilarating. You have a checklist,” she said. “They sold, they sold well — check. They got into the right hands and are going to have a real shot — check. They made it all the way to qualifiers — check — and they made the races. You want the owners and the trainers to have a good experience so they come back to the well.”

The Crawfords have invested heavily into the breeding side of the game in recent years; they bred 47 mares last year, 65 this year, and have 71 back in foal for 2020. It is a calculated move to fill a void in the spot.

“When you look at the business as a whole, you really have a shortage of good horses. We felt that we would step up and be one of those breeders that would provide the market with quality horses that would go to the sales,” Crawford said. “The numbers have been historically down; however, when you have the mares that we have acquired at this point, it’s very, very exciting to see them go to the market.”

Oreo Dream Xtreme’s dam is Spotlight On, a Western Terror daughter out of Southwind Laurel. After winning seven races and earning \$83,967 on the track for John Butenschoen and John MacDonald, Spotlight On joined the growing broodmare band at Crawford Farms. The Crawfords were attracted to her family, which produced one of the sport’s recent stars.

Spotlight On is a half-sister to The Art Museum, the dam of 2014 Dan Patch Award winning 2-year-old pacing colt Artspeak.

“Somebody tipped me off on that breeding,” Crawford said. “I thought she could have thrown anything.”

The Crawfords matched Spotlight On with American Ideal, the sire who produced one of their most successful New York bred to date, Funknwaffles. Crawford loved the match and as a result, had a penchant for Oreo Dream Xtreme from the beginning. Crawford even let her son Max name the colt after his favorite ice cream flavor.

"I liked him because I am a huge fan of American Ideal. I have an affection for American Ideal," Crawford said. "(Oreo Dream Xtreme) just really had a good personality all the way around. Nothing was crazy or different about him, he was just one that I really wanted to see. He wasn't huge and I don't like huge for New York. Funknwaffles, by American Ideal, is lightly-built. He's not necessarily the same build, but he's a medium-sized horse."

The Crawfords offered Oreo Dream Xtreme at the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale and were thrilled when the colt was hammered down for \$60,000 to John Butenschoen. The trainer put an ownership group together, which included offering a piece back to Crawford Farms Racing. The partnership also includes James Crawford IV, Happy Hour Racing, and Rich Preziotti.

"John is great. John supports our farm quite a bit. He really, really liked this colt; we loved the colt and we've always said we would support a trainer who supports us by taking a piece of the horses that go through the sale," Crawford said. "I think it's good business. They take the time to look at our horses and bid on our horses. We really believe in what we take to the market, so we're always happy to stay in on them.

"It was exciting because I really hate to see my babies go," she continued.

"Sometimes, I get 'no, you can't stay in' and that's tough, but it's just the way it goes."

About nine months after the sale, Oreo Dream Xtreme will make his debut in a \$38,650 division of the New York Sire Stakes Thursday night. The colt drew post two and is a 9-2 morning line chance with Corey Callahan programmed to drive.

Oreo Dream Xtreme enters off a pair of third place finishes in qualifiers at The Downs at Mohegan Sun Pocono and Harrah's Philadelphia in which he paced 2:01 and 1:56.3, respectively. Oreo Dream Xtreme posted a final quarter of :27.4 in both trials.

"He seems to be doing everything right, and that's all you can ask for. You start to hear more and more and he's promising; he's a nice little colt," Crawford said. "I don't think

anyone can tell you what their bottom is until they hit the track. And you have to hope that the horse is going to get around a half. He did well on a five-eighths when he qualified, but at the end of the day, you don't really know what their bottom is until they're out there competing.

"I think in the first few Sire Stakes you start to figure out who is going to stand out, if they're going to stay in the Sire Stakes, what the competition is like," she continued. "You just hope that based on the qualifying miles they've put in already that they're going to be competitive. So, fingers crossed."

First post time is 6:50 p.m. Yonkers Raceway features live harness racing Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. For entries for Thursday's card, [click here](#).