

Donovan is sweet on pacing filly Youaremycandygirl

by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager



Ken Weingartner

Hightstown, NJ --- Bill Donovan has participated in harness racing at multiple levels, from working as a groom to owning a breeding farm, but he is perhaps best known because of his involvement in the sport as a horse owner. And Dan Patch Award winner Youaremycandygirl has become the most recent to provide Donovan with the sweet taste of success.

Youaremycandygirl was voted the sport's best 2-year-old female pacer in 2017 after winning nine of 11 races and earning \$895,615. She became the fastest 2-year-old female pacer in history thanks to her 1:50 victory in a division of the International Stallion Stakes at Lexington's Red Mile, a time that tied colt Hayden Hanover for the best of any 2-year-old pacer last season. She will be among the honorees at the U.S. Harness Writers Association's [Dan Patch Awards banquet](#) Feb. 25 in Orlando.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Youaremycandygirl was voted the sport's best 2-year-old female pacer in 2017 after winning nine of 11 races and earning \$895,615.

"She had a great year," Donovan said. "When I think of all the great fillies over the years, for her to come out of the year with the world record and the earnings that she had, you realize just how blessed you are."

Prior to last year, Donovan's best known horse was the Dan Patch Award-winning trotter Maven, who made \$1.75 million in her career and competed in Europe as well as North America. She retired in 2014.

"Maven will always be special," Donovan said. "Maven racing in the Elitlopp was a highlight for me. It's such a great race and there's such enthusiasm there from the Swedish fans. That was special."

Youaremycandygirl is proving capable of special moments too. Donovan bought the filly, by [American Ideal](#) out of Sweet Lady Jane, as a yearling for \$150,000 at the 2016 Standardbred Horse Sale. Her dam is a half-sister to standouts [Sweet Lou](#) and Bettor Sweet.

"I went to Harrisburg intent on purchasing a top pacing filly," Donovan said. "I had two that I was adamant I was going to buy one or the other. The first was Kissin In The Sand, and I was the underbidder on her. Candygirl sold the following day and I was going to take Candygirl home with me no matter what."

"She had everything going for her. I love the family. I was happy to get her because I think that's one of the hottest maternal families in the sport right now."

Youaremycandygirl's career got off to a rough start when she made an interference break in a division of the New York Sire Stakes at Vernon Downs. From there, though, she was nearly perfect as she captured the She's A Great Lady Stakes, Breeders Crown, Matron, and Three Diamonds in addition to her division of the International Stallion.

She finished the season on a seven-race win streak. Yannick Gingras drove her in six of those starts, with Louis Philippe-Roy at the lines in the She's A Great Lady.

"Her first start up at Vernon she got run into," Donovan said. "That's the way the sport is; you never know. She really only had one bad race, and that's when she tied up at Yonkers (and finished fifth). She wasn't at her best. But outside of those two races she was just outstanding.

"She really had a great year, there's no doubt about it. (Trainer Ron Burke) and his team did a great job in bringing her along. She can be a little headstrong. Yannick is the perfect driver for her. He gets along with horses like that better, I think, than some other drivers. He can rate her when he needs to, as much as he can.

"It was good the season ended when it did because she raced hard. She enjoyed the time off. She needs to mature a little mentally over the winter, hopefully. We're looking forward to next season."

Donovan was born and raised in Boston and developed his interest in harness racing by going to the races at the now defunct Foxboro Raceway. He worked as a groom during summers while in high school and college and was preparing to become a trainer before his father passed away and left Donovan needing to help with the family's Mayflower moving agency. He eventually took over the company and also started a number of businesses involving trucking and logistics management. He has since sold all of the businesses except one logistics company.

He also sold his breeding farm, which he started in 2010.

"I got out of the breeding business several years ago," Donovan said, adding with a laugh, "I found out I was a lot better bidder than I was a breeder."

Donovan currently owns 37 horses, with 21 being 2-year-olds.

"When you put your heart and soul, and pocketbook, into the business, you hope for success," Donovan said. "When you do achieve it, it's most satisfying. Just having horses that are able to compete at the top level is rewarding."