

Connections happy with Jug prep for NY-Bred Courtly Choice

by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager



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Hightstown, NJ --- Meadowlands Pace champion Courtly Choice prepped for next week's Little Brown Jug with a 1:52 win in a qualifier Tuesday morning at Harrah's Philadelphia with regular driver David Miller in the sulky. The colt set all the fractions, going :28 to the quarter, :55.4 to the half and 1:24.2 to three-quarters over a surface labeled "good."

"The rail wasn't that great, so Dave kept him two wide the whole way," trainer Blake MacIntosh said. "We just wanted to make sure everything was good. Dave couldn't be happier with him, so we're very happy. He was real good. We'll head to the Jug next week."

The 73rd Little Brown Jug for 3-year-old pacers is Sept. 20 at the Delaware County Fair in central Ohio and is the third jewel in the Pacing Triple Crown. Stay Hungry won the first two -- the Cane Pace and Messenger Stakes -- and will attempt to become the 11th pacer to complete the sweep. The most recent Pacing Triple Crown winner was No Pan Intended in 2003.



Lisa photo

Courtly Choice has won nine of 12 races this year and earned \$655,393.

The Little Brown Jug, which contests eliminations and final on the same day, is expected to feature three of North America's top-rated horses. Courtly Choice is ranked No. 5 in the current [Hambletonian Society/Breeders Crown poll](#) while North America Cup winner Lather Up is No. 8 and Stay Hungry is No. 10.

In the first [Little Brown Jug future pool](#), Lather Up was the 3-1 favorite followed by Courtly Choice at 9-2 and Stay Hungry at 6-1. The second pool opens Sunday.

The draw for the Little Brown Jug is Saturday.

Courtly Choice will enter the Jug with a three-race win streak while Stay Hungry and Lather Up both have won back-to-back starts and three of their last four.

"Those three horses are on top of their games right now," MacIntosh said. "It's going to be an exciting race. I hope the crowd shows up and everybody enjoys it."

Courtly Choice was not staked to the Little Brown Jug, but is eligible to supplement to the race thanks to his win in the Meadowlands Pace. The fee to supplement is \$45,000. The colt's owners have already spent nearly \$100,000 to supplement to the Meadowlands Pace and Cane Pace, where Courtly Choice finished fourth for his only loss in his past seven races.

"What's another \$45,000?" MacIntosh said with a laugh. "Everybody wants to win the Jug. There are three races that you always want to win: the Meadowlands Pace, the North America Cup, and the Jug. Hopefully we can get two out of three. We'll see what happens."

Courtly Choice has won nine of 12 races this year and earned \$655,393 for owners Hutt Racing Stable, Mac And Heim Stables, Daniel Plouffe, and Touch Stone Farms. For his career, the son of [Art Major](#) out of Lady Ashlee Ann has won 11 of 24 starts and \$708,744.

Miller is a four-time winner of the Little Brown Jug -- he got his first with No Pan Intended -- and will be attempting to equal the record for career driving victories in the event. Billy Haughton and Mike Lachance share the mark with five each.

MacIntosh will be making his first appearance in the Little Brown Jug.

"I know I'll be nervous," MacIntosh said. "It's going to be an exciting day."