

## Napolitano punches his ticket to first Breeders Crown final with NY-Bred Stella Jane

by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager

**Hightstown, NJ** --- George Napolitano Jr. has won more races than any driver in the history of The Downs at Mohegan Sun Pocono, but it was a second-place finish at his home oval that proved to be a winner in terms of punching Napolitano's ticket to his first Breeders Crown final.

Napolitano guided Stella Jane to a runner-up finish behind undefeated Woodside Charm in their Breeders Crown elimination last week to advance to Saturday's \$600,000 championship for 2-year-old filly trotters at Pocono. Napolitano, who has won 11 driving titles at Pocono, drove Stella Jane for owner Crawford Farms Racing and trainer John Butenschoen. Crawford Farms also bred the filly, a daughter of Crazy out of Naughty Nana.

The 52-year-old Napolitano, a New York native who splits his time between Pennsylvania and Florida, has won 9,360 races in his career, ranking 21st in North American harness racing history, and was the North American dash champion in 2010 when he won 748 times.

All 12 Breeders Crown championships, with \$6.4 million in total purses, will be raced Saturday at Pocono. Post time is 5:30 p.m. (EDT) for the first race.

"It's going to be exciting," Napolitano said. "I thought (Stella Jane's elimination) was amazing. I was totally satisfied. She's an awesome little horse to drive and she's got a great trainer and great owners."



*Lisa photo*

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Stella Jane has won two of 11 races and hit the board in eight of her most recent nine starts. Napolitano has driven the filly twice, winning a division of the Simpson Stakes on Sept. 27 at Harrah's Philadelphia.

"The Crawfords have had luck with the horses that they own with George," Butenschoen said. "He won with Stella Jane at (Philly) so I said let's put him up. It's his home track and maybe we can get some karma going. I guess it worked."

He has won more than 500 races in nine consecutive years, including this year. He is on his way to another driving title at Pocono, which would be his seventh in a row, and is battling with Tim Tetrack for his fifth consecutive title at Harrah's Philadelphia.

"I kind of stayed local," Napolitano said. "I made an agreement with myself years ago and I'm happy with doing it this way, with this place, (Philly) and Pompano. That's good enough for me.

"I think it's a pretty big accomplishment doing the two tracks, here and (Philly). It's a tough grind, but we're getting it done. It's a matter of having great people around you. Trainers that it would take forever to mention keep on consistently putting me back on horses. That

is the difference right there. I have a lot of great owners that love me and I love them. It's an awesome journey."

So will Napolitano have a home-track advantage in the Breeders Crown?

"I think you've got to have a good horse," he said with a smile. "That's the biggest advantage."

Following is the draw for the \$600,000 Breeders Crown final for 2-year-old filly trotters. Elimination winners drew for post one through five in an order determined by lot.

**PP-Horse-Driver-Trainer**

- 1-When Dovescry-Simon Allard-Rene Allard
- 2-Woodside Charm-Verlin Yoder-Verlin Yoder
- 3-Champagne Jane-Bob McClure-Luc Blais
- 4-Cloud Nine Fashion-Tim Tetrick-Jim Campbell
- 5-Special Honor-Andy Miller-Julie Miller
- 6-Whispering Oaks-Yannick Gingras-Jimmy Takter
- 7-Miss You Kelly-Tim Tetrick-Bruce Lauer
- 8-The Ice Dutchess-Yannick Gingras-Jimmy Takter
- 9-Stella Jane-George Napolitano Jr.-John Butenschoen