

Being cautious has paid off for Ken Jacobs with NY trotting colt Walner

by Ken Weingartner, Harness Racing Communications

Freehold, NJ --- It took a year for owner Ken Jacobs to find a hole with Walner -- and that was a hole in the wind.

Walner trotted a world-record 1:51.3 on Oct. 6 at Lexington's Red Mile, a mark that came one year to the day after Jacobs purchased the colt for \$90,000 at the Lexington Selected Sale. It was Walner's fourth win in five races this season and established the horse as one of the top Breeders Crown 2-year-old male trotting contenders.

"I look for holes in horses," Jacobs said about selecting Walner, a son of 2012



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Walner trotted a world-record 1:51.3 on Oct. 6 at Lexington's Red Mile.

Horse of the Year [Chapter Seven](#) out of the O'Brien Award-winning mare Random Destiny, at last fall's yearling auction. "When I can't find a hole, those are the ones I'm interested in. And I try very hard to find a hole. There were no holes in (Walner) at all."

On Saturday night, Walner will compete in the first of two Breeders Crown eliminations for 2-year-old male trotters at the Meadowlands Racetrack. He is the 3-1 morning line favorite, starting from post five in a 10-horse field with Tim Tetrick at the lines for trainer Linda Toscano.

Walner's elimination also includes Peter Haughton Memorial and New Jersey Sire Stakes champion What The Hill, New York Sire Stakes champion Devious Man, Pennsylvania Sire Stakes champion Giveitgasandgo, and stakes-winners Dover Dan, New Jersey Viking, Long Tom, and Southwind Cobra.

"Isn't that amazing?" Jacobs said. "It's the luck of the draw. What are you going to do? I didn't like the draw but it is what it is. We've got to beat them all anyway, so what's the difference."

Walner won two qualifiers at the Meadowlands before capturing his career debut in 1:55.4 in a division of the New York Sire Stakes at Vernon Downs. In his next start, at Saratoga, he went off stride in the first turn but stormed from more than 16 lengths back to win by 1-3/4.

He went off stride in his only loss, a division of the Kindergarten Series, but rebounded to win in the next round of the Kindergarten in 1:53.4 at the Meadowlands and then in 1:51.3 in a division of the International Stallion Stakes at Lexington. His 1:51.3 mile is the fastest in history for a 2-year-old male trotter and trails only filly Mission Brief's 1:50.3 in the record book.

"I've been very cautious with him because I knew he was a really nice horse," said Jacobs, who has received inquiries about selling the horse, but emphasized he is not for sale. "I'd like to have a horse in the Hambletonian next year, so I didn't want to over-race him at 2. He's a pretty awesome horse and we still don't know how fast he can go. But we know he's fast."

Jacobs, the leading owner on the New York Sire Stakes circuit, is known for his successes with a number of pacers, including 2012 Breeders Crown champion and Dan Patch Award-winner [Heston Blue Chip](#), but has bought more trotters in recent years. He won NYSS championships last year with trotters Jewels In Hock and Allerage Echo.

"I got into trotters a couple years ago," said Jacobs, who said he bought four trotters and four pacers last year and has a similar plan this year. "I love to see a trotter trot. It's different. I enjoy it. If I can get a horse in the Hambletonian, it will fulfill my goal. My bucket list, if you will. I've been lucky to reach so many of my other goals. This is a big goal for me."