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### **Back-to-back at Historic Track**

**By Debbie Little, for the New York Sire Stakes**

One trainer, one horse and one spectacular event came up big for a second consecutive season at Goshen Historic Track (GHT)

On Sunday, September 5, the New York County Fair Finals (NYCFF) returned to Orange County, NY, for only the second time in its history, but that's not where the repeating ended. Trainer Claude Huckabone III won his second straight NYCFF title with his student Brave Element by scoring in the 3-year-old colt and gelding pace after winning the 2020 event for 2-year-old male pacers.

County fair races for 2021 were contested at 21 different tracks throughout New York State prior to the finals. To qualify for the finals at "The Cradle of the Trotter", the 22<sup>nd</sup> track of the season, all competitors needed to have at least five starts.

The eight NYCFF races each sported a purse of \$10,000, for 2- and 3-year-olds of both gaits and sex.

Huckabone III had a commanding lead in the standings coming into the finals, and although David Dewhurst won three times on the card, it wasn't enough.

Huckabone raced a total of 12 horses on the day and found the winner's circle with Brave Element (Bolt The Duer-Necessary Element), owned by Go Where The Money Is Stable and driven by Jordan Stratton, in a lifetime mark of 1:57.2.

"He's like my son," said Huckabone III of Stratton. "He worked for me when he came here from Ohio. He's family and he's a great role model for my son."

Harness racing is a family business for Huckabone III, 47, whose dad Claude Huckabone Jr., 68, previously won the NYCFF training title in 2019. His son Dylan Huckabone-Miller, 20, finished second to Kyle Cummings this year in the driver standings in his first season racing full-time at the fairs.

“Kyle Cummings beat my son [for the driving title] and it was nip and tuck [to the end],” said Huckabone III. “Kyle did a great job today. He did a fantastic job. He drove some good horses and he put them in position when he needed to. I couldn’t be happier for the guy. Leon [Bailey] and I did the same thing last year and he beat me out.”

Cummings went into the finals with a slim lead in earnings over Huckabone-Miller, but by virtue of his two NYCFF victories, Cummings locked up the title.

Cummings made his first ever drive at GHT a winning one as he guided Blazin Chally (Conway Hall-Great Quantity) to a lifetime best 2:04 in the first race of the day. The 2-year-old filly trotter is trained by Douglas Ackley, who co-owns with his wife Tyra.

“I was really happy to win with Blazin Chally,” said Cummings. “Great people. A family horse. It was awesome to win for them and they were ecstatic to be there.”

His second victory was with Twin B Kini (Art Major-Twin B Bikini) in 1:58.2. The 3-year-old filly pacer is trained by Judith Blaun, who co-owns with John Sixt.

“It was awesome to win for Judy,” said Cummings. “I’ve helped Judy with that filly since she was a 2-year-old. I helped her to train her down and it was nice to get that win. She’s just a really good filly.”

One big difference from last year was the return of fans in the stands. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, attendance for the NYCFF was limited to owners with advanced reservations who had to remain in designated areas.

This year the fans made up for that time away by braving a day with intermittent showers to cheer on their favorites.

“I couldn’t believe the amount of noise when I was in the post parade [for the first race],” said Cummings. “And when I came back to the winner’s circle after Blazin Chally won, they were just roaring. It’s a great atmosphere.”

Trainer David Dewhurst, who finished second to Huckabone for the training title, had a total of three wins on the card.

The aforementioned Bailey won with Dewhurst trainee Me Three (Chapter Seven-Lindy’s Fireworks) in 2:00.4. The 3-year-old filly trotter is owned by Chris Lawton, Dale Lawton and Dewhurst.

Dewhurst also co-owns 2-year-old colt and gelding trot champ Makadushin N Cheez (Conway Hall-Tawesome More), who won in 2:03.4 for Joseph D’Agostino, Molly D’Agostino and Philip Kadushin, as well as 3-year-old colt and gelding trot winner Just For Luck (Lucky Chucky-Arenal), who scored in 2:01 and is co-owned by Dewhurst and Philip Hale. Both champs were driven to victory by Jim Devaux.

Instant Expert (Huntsville-Pedigree Snob), driven by Greg Merton, won the 2-year-old colt and gelding pace for co-owner/trainer Jim Graham and partners Paul Tandlmayer, Lee Winters and Edward Peron in 1:58.4, and in the process, lowered his previous lifetime best by seven-and-one-fifth seconds.

The 2-year-old filly pace was won by Center Attraction (American Ideal-Art Center) in a lifetime-best 1:59.2. She is owned by Robert Anderson and Pamela Schieber, trained by Anderson and was driven by Denny Bucceri.

Amidst the eight NYCFF races was a two-horse Racing Under Saddle event that was won by Armbro Hall, who was ridden by Cathy Gearwar. Railroad Lane and rider Michelle Miller were second.

Following the fourth race, track announcer Dave Little recognized Major Lindsay Jacobson, who was in the grandstand with her family.

Major Jacobson is a graduate of Goshen High School and is a C-17 pilot with the 105<sup>th</sup> Air Lift Wing out of Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh.

She recently returned home from Afghanistan, where she was part of Operation Allies Refuge, helping in the evacuation effort.

She received a standing ovation from the crowd at Historic Track.

For anyone who couldn't make it to Goshen or would just like to see the races again, the Agriculture & New York State Horse Breeding Development Fund sponsored a livestream of the races hosted by Kelly Young and Mark Shero, which can be viewed for a year through a link at [www.nysirestakes.com](http://www.nysirestakes.com).