

JL Cruze wins Graduate in 1:49.4

by Ellen Harvey, Harness Racing Communications

East Rutherford, NJ---JL Cruze held off a fast-closing Shake It Cerry to win the \$250,000 Graduate Series final for 4-year-old trotters on Saturday night (July 11) at The Meadowlands by a nose in an all-age world record time of 1:49.4 for a mile track. It was the fastest trotting mile in the history of the Meadowlands.

First to the lead was Gural Hanover and Matt Kakaley as they tripped the quarter timer in :26.3. JL Cruze and driver John Campbell were quick to challenge for the lead just past the quarter and had the lead by the :54.2 half, with Gural Hanover behind him.



Lisa photo

JL Cruze and driver John Campbell pass before the Meadowlands teletimer, which has never shown a sub-1:50 mile for a trotter in the track's history.

[Father Patrick](#) and Yannick Gingras were then out to challenge for the lead and were on the outside trying to get past Gural Hanover around the final turn. None of them could give JL Cruze a serious challenge, but Shake It Cerry and Jimmy Takter emerged from behind [Father Patrick](#), gaining ground with every stride and falling just short at the wire. Resolve (Ake Svanstedt) was third.

JL Cruze, a gelding by [Crazed](#) and a \$50,000 supplement to the series, is trained by Eric Ell for owners Ken Wood, Bill Dittmar and Steven Iaquina.

"You go to the sale (The connections bought the horse for \$35,000 at the 2014 Harrisburg Mixed Sale) hoping you can find the rags to riches and it was us this year," said Ell. "He's unbelievable; he does everything you ask him. He's had two major injuries this year; he overcomes it all.

"He's unbelievable. It's a higher power; Kenny does so much for everybody; it's a higher power. (Wood had a long history of digging water wells in third-world countries). This goes out to Kenny and his wife, the whole Woods family. They're fighting some tribulations, so this goes out to them."

"We are along for the ride," said Dittmar. "Eric's done a great job, It's just a great ride. What else can you say? Next week he will be here for the Hambletonian Maturity and maybe the [John Cashman Jr. Memorial] down the road."