

Sassa Hanover rolls to Jugette triumph

by Ken Weingartner, Harness Racing Communications

Delaware, OH --- Sassa Hanover and driver Matt Kakaley went to the lead and never looked back, winning Wednesday's (Sept. 23) \$252,250 Jugette for 3-year-old female pacers by two lengths over stablemate Southwind Roulette in 1:51.1 at the Delaware County Fairgrounds.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Sassa Hanover and Matt Kakaley crossed the finish line in 1:51.1 in the Jugette final.

Earlier in the day the Ron Burke-trained Sassa Hanover won her Jugette elimination in 1:50.4 --- just one-fifth of a second off Shelliscape's stakes and track record --- and her combined time of 3:42 established a two-heat world record for 3-year-old female pacers. I Luv The Nitelife held the prior mark of 3:42.2, set in 2013.

The victory gave Kakaley his first Jugette trophy after runner-up finishes each of the past two years and provided the Burke Stable with its third winner in the event. Ron Burke also won the Jugette in 2012 with Darena Hanover and his father Mickey won in 2007 with Western Graduate.

"You know how I feel about winning here in Delaware," said Ron Burke. "It is a special place for all of us and although we have won this race three times now it still feels the same as the first time. I love winning races period. Some do mean more than others but a win is definitely a win."

In the Jugette final, Sassa Hanover started from post No. 1 and took advantage to sprint to the front in a :26.4 opening quarter-mile. She received first-over pressure heading to the half-mile point from stablemate Bettor N Better, who also won her Jugette elimination earlier in the afternoon, but never relinquished her advantage.

Sassa Hanover hit the half in :56 and three-quarters in 1:23.3 before pulling away for an easy win. Southwind Roulette was second followed by Somewhere Sweet and Bedroomconfessions.

A daughter of Rock N Roll Heaven out of the mare Sayo Hanover, Sassa Hanover has won six of 15 races this year and 15 of 28 in her career. Her earnings from her victories in her \$50,450 Jugette elimination and \$151,350 final pushed her lifetime purses to \$794,811 for owners Burke Racing Stable, The Panhellenic Stable Corp., the partnership of Mark Weaver and Mike Brusceci, and Larry Karr.

Sassa Hanover's wins last year included the Matron Stakes and divisions of the Bluegrass and International Stallion stakes.

The 6-5 favorite in the Jugette final, Sassa Hanover paid \$4.40 to win.

"Yes that second trip was definitely a whole lot different than the first," said Kakaley. "She felt just as good if not better than in the first heat. I thought Corey (Callahan) might go ahead (with Southwind Roulette) but I really wanted to with her (Sassa Hanover) because she felt so strong.

"There was a concern about having the rail in front because speed at the top of the mile here at Delaware has not been holding up today. She was just too good, so rocking and rolling on the rail was no problem for her.

"It is always special to win a race like this here in Delaware. This one might not have as many zeros in the purse like some of the others do, but it still means very, very much."

Bettor N Better and Sassa Hanover win eliminations

Bettor N Better got the best of the field in the first of two \$50,450 eliminations for the Jugette for 3-year-old female pacers, using a first-over move following the halfway point to win in 1:51.1 at the Delaware County Fairgrounds.

Southwind Roulette was second, followed by Moremercy Bluechip and Wicked Little Minx to advance to the \$151,350 final.

Favorite Mosquito Blue Chip went off stride soon after the start as Triple V Hanover took the lead from post one in a :26.4 first quarter-mile. After reaching the half in :55, driver Yannick Gingras began his move from third place with Bettor N Better and Moremercy Bluechip followed their cover.

Triple V Hanover still was on top at three-quarters, in 1:22.4, but Bettor N Better would soon take the lead and pull away from her foes on the final turn.

It was the third win of the year in 12 starts for Bettor N Better (Bettor's Delight-Vanite Semalu). She is owned by Our Horse Cents Stables and Blue Chip Bloodstock and trained by Ron Burke.

"She is a very relaxed and handy filly," said Mickey Burke Jr. of the Burke Stable. "You can do anything you want with her. She will sit in the hole, come first over. It is whatever you ask her to do. I definitely think that helps her in a race like this where there are heats. You always want them to be nice and relaxed. The last thing you want is for them to fight you or not want to sit in a hole. She fits well here based on personality."



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Trainer Ron Burke holds the Jugette trophy.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Bettor N Better won the first elimination of the Jugette in 1:51.1.

Sassa Hanover came from the rear of the field to be first at the wire and claim the second of two \$50,450 eliminations for Wednesday's Jugette for 3-year-old female pacers at the Delaware County Fairgrounds, stopping the timer in 1:50.4.

Somewhere Sweet finished second, with Bedroomconfessions third and Serious Filly fourth to join Bettor N Better, Southwind Roulette, Moremercy Bluechip and Wicked Little Minx in the \$151,350 Jugette final.

Sassa Hanover's victory coupled with Bettor N Better's triumph in the opening division gave trainer Ron Burke a sweep of the eliminations.

Momas Got A Gun got the early lead in the second elimination and led the field to the first quarter in :26.3 and half in :55.1. Bedroomconfessions made a first-over move from fourth place to claim the lead heading up the backstretch and took the group to three-quarters in 1:22.4.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Sassa Hanover was in fourth place at that point, but powered to the front to post her fifth win in 14 races this year.

Matt Kakaley steered Sassa Hanover to a 1:50.4 score in the second elimination.

Matt Kakaley drove Sassa Hanover (Rock N Roll Heaven-Sayo Hanover) for Burke and owners Burke Racing Stable, The Panhellenic Stable Corp., the partnership of Mark Weaver and Mike Brusceci, and Larry Karr.

"I think I've only driven her twice," said Kakaley. "Once was on Hambo Day (in the Shady Daisy) when she was absolutely excellent and loaded with pace. But I got locked in and had nowhere to go.

"She felt awesome again today and I don't think the time will take anything out of her because Ron always has them ready to go. With this horse I don't think a half-mile or any other size track makes a difference because she is so good.

"I didn't want to abuse her if she did not want to get right on the gate. I just let her settle in there. It is tough to win from third over here at Delaware but when Timmy came over and then things broke down on the lead it was exactly what I was hoping for. It couldn't have worked out any better."

-- Kimberly French also contributed to this report