

How Much Do The Experimental Championship Ratings And Past Performances Help In Handicapping The Little Brown Jug?

By Tom White
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Each February since 1965, Stan Bergstein has ranked the top three-year-old pacers in a preview of the season to come. The 2008 class includes the undefeated divisional champion Somebeachsomewhere, Breeders Crown champion and leading money winner Santanna Blue Chip, and the top filly A And G'sconfusion.

But, how accurate are the Experimental Ratings in determining a Jug winner. Not since Beach Towel in 1990, has the top ranked colt on the Experimental list gone on to win the Little Brown Jug. That's 18 years! The past three Jug winners, Tell All, Mr Feelgood and P Forty Seven, were not even among the top 25 Experimental leaders.

Each year since 1952, the U.S. Harness writers have selected a two-year-old colt pacing champion. There have been 14 divisional champions who won the Jug the following season, including the latest, Bettor's Delight, in 2001. Others from the modern era include Magical Mike (1994), Barberry Spur (1986), Nihilator (1985) and Niatross (1980).

Bettor's Delight has been the only Breeders Crown two-year-old champion who has won at Delaware, and that was seven years ago.

How about past performances in major three-year-old classics raced prior to the Little Brown jug?

The North American Cup, which is raced in mid June at Mohawk or Woodbine in Ontario, has produced four Jug winners including 2007 champion Tell All. The others were Bettor's Delight, Precious Bunny and Goalie Jeff.

There have been only five Jug winners who captured the Meadowlands Pace which is contested in mid July. Precious Bunny was the most recent Meadowlands Pace-Jug champion, in 1991. Others were Beach Towel, Nihilator, Ralph Hanover and Niatross.

The Cane Pace (18 Jug winners) and the Adios (13 Jug winners) could be used as tools in handicapping the Jug. Both are raced later in the season, and both have produced some recent Jug victors. Timesarechanging (2004), No Pan Intended (2003), Blissfull Hall (1999), Shady Character (1998) and Western Dreamer (1997) won the Cane Pace, the first leg of Pacing's Triple Crown, who also captured the Little Brown Jug.

Timesarechanging (2004), Million Dollar Cam (2002) Precious Bunny (1991) and Beach Towel (1990) used the Adios as a springboard to racing in the Little Brown Jug.

The 63rd Little Brown Jug will be raced Thursday afternoon, September 18, at the Delaware, Ohio County Fairgrounds.

Attached to this article is a list of the Experimental Ratings with the Jug winner's ranking.

2007 Tell All (Not Ranked)
2006 Mr Feelgood (NR)
2005 P Forty Seven (NR)
2004 Timesareachanging (16th)
2003 No Pan Intended (NR)
2002 Million Dollar Cam (14th)
2001 Bettor's Delight (2nd)
2000 Astreos (5th)
1999 Blissfull Hall (19th)
1998 Shady Character (17th)
1997 Western Dreamer (NR)
1996 Armbro Operative (NR)
1995 Nick's Fantasy (NR)
1994 Magical Mike (2nd)
1993 Life Sign (2nd)
1992 Fake Left (NR)
1991 Precious Bunny (NR)
1990 Beach Towel (1st)
1989 Goalie Jeff (20th)
1988 B J Scoot (NR)
1987 Jaguar Spur (NR)
1986 Barberry Spur (1st)
1985 Nihilator (1st)
1984 Colt Fortysix (NR)
1983 Ralph Hanover (2nd)
1982 Merger (4th)
1981 Fan Hanover (11th)
1980 Niatross (1st)
1979 Hot Hitter (7th)
1978 Happy Escort (NR)
1977 Governor Skipper (8th)
1976 Keystone Ore (4th)
1975 Seatrain (NR)
1974 Armbro Omaha (NR)
1973 Melvin's Woe (11th)
1972 Strike Out (2nd)
1971 Nansemond (5th)
1970 Most Happy Fella (8th)
1969 Lavern Hanover (1st)
1968 Rum Customer (7th)
1967 Best Of All (1st)
1966 Romeo Hanover (1st)
1965 Bret Hanover (1st)