

## Grant on Hambletonian Maturity contender Atlanta: ‘She actually continues to amaze’

July 10, 2019, by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager

**Hightstown, NJ** — Atlanta secured her place in harness racing history last August when she became the first filly in 22 years to defeat the boys in the Hambletonian Stakes. Over the past month, though, the mare has served notice that she is not finished making history.

On June 15, Atlanta won the Armbro Flight Stakes in 1:50.2 at Woodbine Mohawk Park, setting the record for the fastest trotting mile in Canadian history. Last weekend, she added to her legend by winning the Graduate Series championship in 1:49.1 at The Meadowlands to become the fastest female trotter of all time. The time also was the fastest in the 43-year history of the Big M.

“There is no doubt that every time she races, you think you’ve seen the best of her, and she shows you something else,” said Brad Grant, one of Atlanta’s owners. “She actually continues to amaze.”



**Atlanta won the Graduate Series championship in 1:49.1 at The Meadowlands to become the fastest female trotter of all time. Lisa photo.**

Atlanta’s next opportunity to dazzle is Saturday (July 13) in the \$450,000 Hambletonian Maturity at The Meadowlands. The Hambletonian Maturity was

created by the Hambletonian Society and The Meadowlands as a race solely for 4-year-olds previously eligible to the Hambletonian and Hambletonian Oaks.

This year’s event attracted a field of 11. The distance of the race is 1-1/8 miles rather than the traditional mile.

Atlanta, who is undefeated in six starts this year, will attempt to become the second Hambletonian winner to capture the modern version of the Hambletonian Maturity. Marion Marauder first accomplished the feat in 2017. She also will try to become the third mare in the past four years to win the race, joining Ariana G in 2018 and Hannelore Hanover in 2016.

Eight of Atlanta's rivals in the Maturity also competed in the Graduate final, which Atlanta won by a neck over Six Pack by rallying from fifth place with a quarter-mile to go. The others from the Graduate are Custom Cantab, Manchego, Crystal Fashion, Muscle M Up, Mission Accepted, Phaetosive, and Fiftydallarbill.

Atlanta will start the Maturity from post four with regular driver Yannick Gingras at the lines for trainer Ron Burke.

"It's mostly the same field of horses," Grant said. "I take nothing away from any of the horses in there, the slowest horse in the Graduate went a mile in (1):50.4 and five of them were under 1:50, so it's a great bunch of horses and they're all there to win. Nothing is going to come easily for anybody."

Atlanta won eight of 14 races last year and earned \$1.01 million on her way to being named Trotter of the Year at the Dan Patch Awards banquet. In all but one of her victories, she led at the half. This year, she has won three times when no better than fifth at the half.

"The last couple years, the safest spot to be was on the front," said Grant, who shares ownership of Atlanta with Crawford Farms Racing and Howard Taylor. "This year she is showing that she can come from off the pace, or in this case trot, and get up there and win. Ronnie and Yannick have done a great job racing her off a helmet and keeping her calm. She seems to be a very versatile mare. I like that."

So, what is Atlanta's full potential?

"I don't know that answer," Grant said. "I'm not even sure if you talk to Yannick or Ronnie whether they know that answer. Every night she surprises us. She just seems to find a way to win."

Saturday's 13-race card at The Meadowlands also includes the [Meadowlands Pace](#) for 3-year-old pacers, two divisions of the Stanley Dancer Memorial for 3-year-old male trotters, two divisions of the Delvin Miller Memorial for 3-year-old female trotters, Mistletoe Shalee for 3-year-old female pacers, William R. Haughton Memorial for older male pacers, Golden Girls for older female pacers, and a leg of the Miss Versatility Series for older female trotters.

Racing begins at 7:15 p.m. (EDT). For Saturday's complete entries, click [here](#).

