

Courtly Choice wins 73rd Little Brown Jug

by Ken Weingartner, USTA Media Relations Manager

Delaware, OH --- Prior to Thursday's \$436,560 Little Brown Jug final, driver David Miller was asked what he expected from his horse, Courtly Choice, in the race. Just an hour earlier, Courtly Choice had been the favorite in his elimination, but went off stride behind the starting gate and needed to rally furiously to advance to the final.

Miller, known for his reserved demeanor, responded firmly: "He's going to win."

A little less than an hour later, Courtly Choice delivered Miller to the winner's circle.

Courtly Choice won the 73rd Little Brown Jug for 3-year-old pacers at the Delaware County Fair to cap a day harness racing fans — the 46,126 in attendance as well as those watching elsewhere — will talk about for years to come. The colt earned the trophy with a sustained first-over grind covering nearly five-eighths of a mile, passing pacesetting favorite Lather Up in the stretch and then holding off Dorsoduro Hanover by a neck in 1:49.4.

Lather Up, who earlier in the day won his elimination in gate-to-wire fashion, finished third and Hayden Hanover was fourth. The top four finishers were separated by three-quarters of a length.



Courtly Choice and David Miller rallied late to collar Dorsoduro Hanover and capture the 73rd Little Brown Jug.

"The first heat, he raced great but I felt horrible," an emotional Miller said following Courtly Choice's victory. "The only way he was going to make it better was if he won. He puts up a big fight, he's pretty game, and I give him a lot of credit. I have him all over the track a lot of times and he just keeps pushing forward.

"The last 20 yards I saw he was getting up and I couldn't have been happier. I was pushing on him pretty hard and he was still digging. I was pretty excited when we hit the wire."

Courtly Choice's elimination, the second of the day's two \$102,720 first heats, will be remembered for its twists and turns. Courtly Choice, starting from post one at odds of 1-2, went off stride before the race began and was last in the six-horse field for the first half of the race. He fought back, racing three-wide at one point, to finish third behind Stay Hungry and Dorsoduro Hanover, beaten by only a length.

But the story of that elimination did not end there. The inquiry light came on and Stay Hungry, who was bidding to become the sport's 11th Pacing Triple Crown winner, was disqualified and placed fourth for interfering with Hayden Hanover entering the second turn. Dorsoduro Hanover was elevated to first place, Courtly Choice to second, and Hayden Hanover to third. All four advanced to the final, but Stay Hungry was later scratched.

"He was very revved up and that's usually not his characteristic," Miller said about Courtly Choice's miscue at the start of the elimination. "I got him into the gate just a little too quick. Usually I'm chasing him to keep up with the gate. He just kind of got balled up in there and bent around to the outside and rolled off. He made a huge recovery."

Courtly Choice was not staked to the Little Brown Jug but was eligible as the winner of the Meadowlands Pace to enter for a \$45,000 payment.

"He's deserved it, he's earned it, and he proved today what a champ he is," said trainer Blake MacIntosh, who is part of the horse's ownership group made up of Hutt Racing Stable, Mac And Heim Stables, Daniel Plouffe, and Touch Stone Farms.

The win was Miller's fifth in the Little Brown Jug, moving him into a tie with Billy Haughton and Mike Lachance for the most in history.

Courtly Choice is a son of [Art Major](#) out of Lady Ashlee Ann and was bred by Winbak Farm. He has won 10 of 14 races this year and earned \$899,353. For his career, the colt has won 12 of 26 starts and \$952,704.

Sent off as the 8-5 second choice in the Little Brown Jug final, Courtly Choice paid \$5.40 to win.