

IS PERSIST-ANCE GOING TO PAY IN SATURDAY'S 110G SHEPPARD PACE?
BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Thursday, July 13, 2017—Persist Blue Chip may have impressed his connections last week, but the gods of the open draw openly mocked him.

One of three winners of their respective \$25,000 elimination races, Persist Blue Chip was 'rewarded' with a trip behind Yonkers Raceway's eight-ball for Saturday night's (July 15th) \$110,500 final of the Lawrence B. Sheppard Pace.

Yonkers' premier open stakes event for 2-year-old pacing colts and colts goes as the sixth race (approx. post time 9 PM) during the dozen-race card. First post is the usual 7:10 PM.

The eight-hole getaway probably means a come-from-behind try from Persist Blue Chip, not a new experience. In his maiden-breaking (1:58.3) elim, he was last among the six-pack early before rallying up the cones to defeat Damian Diesel Hahn by a head.

The son of Roll with Joe, a \$57,000 Harrisburg purchase, goes out for co-owners (as Burke Racing)/trainer Ron Burke, Weaver Brusceci, James Martin and William Switala.

"I thought I could leave (in the elimination), but there was a lot of inside speed," driver George Brennan said. "He came home well, a good back half (sitting sixth, nine lengths from the lead) and that's what's going have to happen again in the final.

"Chris (Ryder, owner/trainer of Springsteen) and Rob's (Harmon, trainer of Kwik Talkin') horses are both very talented and raced very well (finished 1-2 in the fastest elim). You play hand you're dealt.

"He's a nice colt and Ronnie (Burke) said he's does everything right, so we just have to see how it develops."

...and continue Persist-ing.

The Sheppard, which began in 1964 (a split stake for any number of years and unraced from 2004-11), once again honors the founder of Hanover Show Farms. The field for the finale, with drivers and early odds... 1-Springsteen (Jason Bartlett, 3-1), 2-Trump Nation (Eric Goodell, 4-1) 3-Damion Diesel Hahn (Ray Schnittker, 20-1), 4-Phat Blue Chip (Brent Holland, 8-1), 5-Real Rayenbow (Chuck Connor Jr., 15-1) 6-Hora Star (Greg Merton, 12-1), 7-Kwik Talkin' (Jordan Stratton, 2-1), 8-Persist Blue Chip (George Brennan, 6-1).

Trump Nation (first-start 1:57.1) and Kwik Talkin' (life-best 1:54.4) were last week's other elimination winners.