

**‘PAPRIKE’ AND THE ‘HITMAN’ STAR IN THURSDAY’S  
157G NYSS CRAWFORD PACE**

**BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway**

YONKERS, NY, Thursday, September 21, 2017—Paprike Blue Chip (Jim Morrill Jr., \$7) and Hitman Hill (catch-driver Eric Goodell, \$2.20) were the Empire’s elite Thursday night (Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>), highlighting Yonkers Raceway’s \$157,600 New York Sire Stakes Jim Crawford Pace for 2-year-old colts and geldings.

A pair of \$78,800 divisions comprised the event.

The opening group saw Paprike Blue Chip put in play from post position No. 5 (in one notch after a scratch). Grabbing the first lead, he relented to 3-10 choice Casual Cool (Jason Bartlett). The odds-on number took over just after a :27.2 opening quarter-mile, then rated a 57-second intermission and 1:26 three-quarters.

Silver Arrow (Mark MacDonald) was loitering first-up while Casual Cool maintained a not-so-casually contested lead into the lane. The people’s choice took Paprike Blue Chip to the passing lane, and pass he did.

The second choice whipped the fave by a length-and-three-quarters in 1:55, with Silver Arrow photoing American Vision (Jordan Stratton) for third.

For ‘Paprike,’ a Roll with Joe gelding, trained by John Butenschoen for co-owners Harmony Oaks & Crawford Racing and VIP Internet Stable, it was his fifth win in 10 seasonal starts. The exacta paid \$9.80, with the triple returning \$22.

“It’s not hard to get along with him,” Morrill Jr.—who has won three times with Paprike Blue Chip—said. “There’s some class there.”

Thursday’s second sire stakes event saw undefeated, pole-sitting Hitman Hill break in a new chauffeur after Brett Miller was unable to get here (from Delaware, OH) in time.

As for Goodell’s post-mortem, ”He was rank and wild leaving the gate. Very talented, but he needs to control it.”

There were few stop signs early as My Delight (Brent Holland) made the first lead passing the :26.3 first subsection. Hitman Hill wanted no place in the pocket, making the lead and throwing it down (:55.2, 1:23.4).

He owned a ‘iffy’ length-and-and-a-half lead into the lane, appearing there for the taking.

However, in a slow (:29:3) final quarter, no one took it. Hitman Hill held off Topville Olympian (Morrill Jr.) by a head in 1:53.2, with Keystone Tenacious (Jim Marohn Jr.) third.

For Hitman Hill, an American Ideal gelding co-owned by Tom Hill & North Fork Racing and trained by Chris Oakes, he's won all six of his career tries. The exacta (two wagering choices) paid \$5.30, with the triple returning \$26.40.

Special Thursday props to Marohn Jr., whose four victories were a personal local best. No props, at least not this night, for MacDonald, who remains at 5,999 career wins after going 0-for-9. MacDonald ventures to Vernon Downs Friday night (Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>) for statebred frosh trotting fillies.

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(FFI...Frank Drucker, Yonkers Raceway Publicity Director, 914-968-4200)