

STAY HUNGRY WINS 63RD MESSENGER STAKES
FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Saturday, September 1, 2018—It didn't start out as a match race, but it quickly became one.

A wide-early Stay Hungry (Doug McNair, \$7.60) outgamed an out-a-long-way Jimmy Freight (Louis-Philippe Roy) Saturday night (Sept. 1st), winning Yonkers Raceway's Messenger Stakes No. 63.

The half-million-dollar second jewel of the Pacing Triple Crown offered a handful of leavers, including 66-1 rank outsider Winston (Corey Callahan), Babes Dig Me (George Brennan) and the 'match-race twins.'

Cane Pace winner Stay Hungry, from post position No. 6, was caught deep in the early going, eventually getting the lead after a :27.1 opening quarter-mile. Eight-holer Jimmy Freight, the lone \$30,000 supplemental entrant here, was actually able to get underneath Stay Hungry and found a brief seat fourth.

However 'Jimmy,' who scorched a 1:50.3 effort in last week's second elim, was out and moving again. He was destined to become Stay Hungry's synchronized shadow, starting with a :55.3 half. The tandem were not quite in lock step at the 1:23 three-quarters, but close enough.

Meanwhile, the remaining half-dozen—including a second-over, second-choice Springsteen (Brian Sears)—were being outrun.

Stay Hungry actually opened a length-and-a-quarter in and out of the final turn, but Jimmy Freight was relentless. He fought the good fight, but Stay Hungry lasted by a persevered neck in 1:52.1. Third went to a third-over Topville Olympian (Jim Morrill Jr.), with Babes Dig Me—last week's other elim winner—and Nutcracker Sweet (Jordan Stratton) rounding out the payees.

JK Wildlife (Jason Bartlett), Winston and an all-over-the-track Springsteen completed the order.

For second choice Stay Hungry, a \$150,000 (Lexington) son of 2008 Messenger winner Somebeachsomewhere co-owned by Brad Grant & Irwin Samelman Estate and trained by Tony Alagna, it was his fourth win in 10 '18 tries (career 10-for-19, earnings now \$1,154,072) The exacta paid \$18.40, the triple paid \$86.50 and the superfecta paid \$267.50.

The Triple Crown Daily Double (Six Pack/Stay Hungry) paid \$8.20. Total pool was \$4,991.

It was McNair's first Messenger start, while Alagna has three stakes wins (Revenge Shark-2015, Racing Hill-2016) in the past four seasons.

“I actually had (Stay Hungry) too much up on his toes,” McNair said. “I probably could have taken my time a little bit more (going for the lead), I just thought Jimmy (Freight) would get over there a little quicker than he did, but it all worked out.

“They both got pretty tired there the last sixteenth. We got lucky to hold on.

“Tony does a great job (with Stay Hungry). He’s just a pleasure to drive. Every week he gives you a hundred percent. The front end usually isn’t his forte, but he showed tonight that he could do it.”

“When we’re doing the staking, I have in mind horses that I think will suit the racetrack, suit this style of racing,” Alagna said. “This horse has always been very good in the turns, even though maybe it’s not the run-and-gun, but I thought he was a horse that could get around here. After the horse won the Cane, it was a no-brainer.

“We had to go for the Triple Crown, so that’s why we brought him here tonight. We’ve been very blessed in this race. It’s a great race for us.”

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(photo-Mike Lizzi-accompanies)

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