

Marion Marauder wins Kentucky Futurity

By Ray Cotolo, for The Red Mile

LEXINGTON, KY— In a stretch drive reminiscent of the Hambletonian, Marion Marauder lunged at Southwind Frank towards the center of the track to narrowly win the 124th running of the \$431,000 Kentucky Futurity in 1:52.3, becoming the ninth horse to complete the Trotting Triple Crown.

Marion Marauder was wide for the entirety of the mile, managing to get cover from Bar Hopping while Blenheim trotted to the lead in :28.1. Love Matters was flushed first over heading to the half, carrying Southwind Frank and Bar Hopping on his back through a :56.2 half.

Love Matters engaged with Blenheim around the far turn. Southwind Frank began to edge three wide from second over, while Bar Hopping fanned wider of him and Marion Marauder wider of Bar Hopping. Blenheim held a narrow lead as a wall of horses stampeded towards him through a 1:25.1 third-quarter.

Southwind Frank swung to the lead in the stretch. Bar Hopping was moving down the center of the track, with Marion Marauder alongside. Marion Marauder accelerated by Bar Hopping and was trying to outsprint Southwind Frank towards the inside. The two had their noses extended heading to the line, with Marion Marauder inching to victory.

Winning his 11th race in 26 starts this season, Marion Marauder, by Muscle Hill out of the Donerail mare Spellbound Hanover, has compiled \$1,755,268 for owners Devin Keeling and Marion Wellwood. Trained by Paula Wellwood and driven by Scott Zeron, he paid \$9.20 to win.

“I had to had to have no game plan going into that race,” Scott Zeron said. “I had no clue what was going to happen; earlier there was a twelve-horse field and the eleven and twelve got away eleventh and twelfth. I wasn’t too optimistic, but the way it unfolded and Bar Hopping really pushed to get away up close, I just glued my horse to his helmet. We were able to get [Southwind] Frank out and it was a perfect train.

“I just had my eyes on Yannick’s and Timmy’s horses. I didn’t want to make a move too quick because I knew we’d be sprinting really hard down the lane. I was confident down the lane when I moved him over; probably watching the race, you might not have been as confident, but he dropped his head about two feet and just dug right through the wire. I was very confident he got up, but nobody else was, so thank God he got up. He was amazing.”

“All I can say is that my grandma was with me, the co-owner,” Devin Keeling said. “I’m just thinking about her right now.”

Marion Marauder wasn’t eligible to race in the Kentucky Futurity. However, after finishing second in the \$522,120 Canadian Trotting Classic, his connections supplemented him for \$47,261.

“I was a little leery [of supplementing him],” Paula Wellwood said. “But he showed after the Canadian Trotting Classic that he wanted to race, so we brought him.”

“It was the only way to go after he showed us how sharp he was with a week off,” Mike Keeling, who also trains Marion Marauder, said. “It has just been a tremendous year with a tremendous group of horses. I think we gave the fans a lot of thrills.”

Marion Marauder is the first winner of the Trotting Triple Crown since Glidemaster in 2006. He won the Hambletonian by a nose, the Yonkers Trot by a head, and the Kentucky Futurity by a nose.

“They don’t write down on the check how much you beat them by,” Mike Keeling said.