



PRESS RELEASE

Hawkin the Straw and Helen Vanek Take Ontario Bred Derby



***Erik and Joyce Lehtinen's 3-year-old gelding Hawkin the Straw won the \$56,880 Ontario Bred Derby by a neck on Wednesday, July 3
New Image Media photo***

AJAX DOWNS, JULY 3, 2024 - Erik and Joyce Lehtinen's **HAWKIN THE STRAW** broke like a bullet from the gate in the **\$56,880 Ontario Bred Derby at Ajax Downs** on Wednesday and held off all rivals to win the 300-yard dash by a head in front of a large, boisterous crowd. The copper-coloured 3-year-old, trained by Jason Pascoe and ridden by Helen Vanek edged Howard Walton's Chasing Butterflies, a 17 to 1 chance, by a neck with Stominn Norman, owned by the Picov Cattle Company, a closing third.

Hawkin the Straw sped the 300 yards in 15.541 for a 92 speed index, a career best. It was the fourth win in eight races for the son of Bf Farm Boss - Silken Memories who won the prestigious Alex Picov Futurity last fall as a 2-year-old. Hawkin the Straw came into the Ontario Bred Derby final off a fast-closing third place finish in one of two Trials on June 12. In the final, Hawkin the Straw was in front throughout.

"All I did was give a little yell and he was quickly in front by two lengths," said Vanek, who picked up the mount on Hawkin the Straw when jockey JB Botello had travel woes and was stranded in Alberta. "The Lehtinens and I have had a lot of stakes winners together over the years."

Owners of JEM Farms in Uxbridge, ON, the Lehtinens have been racing and breeding Quarter Horses in Ontario for 30 years.

"We were pleased with his Trial and while I thought he could win this race, I knew it was a tough field," said Erik Lehtinen. "Our trainer Jason Pascoe has done a great job with him."

The next major goal for Hawkin the Straw will be the Norman Picov Derby on September 11.

*Last year's leading rider **BRIAN BELL** had a big day at the office with three wins, two seconds, and a third from his six mounts. From Lindsay, ON, Bell rode two winners for owner and trainer Rick Kennedy including the first-time starter **MAGIC IN WONDERLAND**, who won the day's opener.

Magic in Wonderland, a 2-year-old by Ontario stallion Maryland Magic, was bred by **Kassidy Brown** of Prince Edward County. In race two, Bell won on the exciting 3-year-old filly **IVY LEAGUE SUGARBABY**, bred by Brown's aunt **Kyla Traviss**. Brown, Kyla, and Kim Traviss (Brown's mother) have only recently started breeding racehorses and they now have two winners from four starters.

*Racing resumes at Ajax Downs on **Wednesday July 10** with the Trials for the \$55,000 Ontario Bred Futurity. First race post time is 1:30 p.m.

Do you have a group or company event? Call ahead to reserve the trackside VIP room to enjoy food, drink, and mutuels. Parking and admission are always free at Ajax Downs. You can watch and wager on the races trackside or from the expansive simulcast room. Wagering is also available through www.HPIBET.com. Want to get

involved in **Quarter Horse ownership?** Contact the QROOI at 905 - 426-7050 for details.

Follow Ajax Downs on social media @AjaxDowns and visit our website, www.AjaxDowns.com for news, track programs, and more information.

***Photo below - Summer is for Quarter Horse racing at Ajax Downs!
Here is Ivy League Sugarbaby winning race 2, one of three winners for jockey
Brian Bell***

