

Hand Over the Money to Andover Hall

They said it couldn't be done, but he's done it – Andover Hall yearlings have actually increased in value after his first crop has raced.

Last year, when Andover Hall's yearlings lit up the bid boards at Standardbred sales across America, people shook their heads in wonder over the feeding frenzy for his foals. "If the Andover's win the Peter Haughton, Breeders Crown and everything else in sight in 2006, his yearlings won't average as much as they did this year," the pundits said. It was seen as yet another case of irrational exuberance for a first-crop sire. The Pundits were wrong. The Andover Halls haven't won everything in sight, but they haven't missed it by much.

In late October, he stood with a commanding lead over all other sires of 2-year-old trotters in North America, as his sons and daughters had earned \$2,671,743. It was a big drop to the next stallions, who happen to be his brothers Conway Hall (\$1,847,031) and Angus Hall (\$1,709,850).

(By the way, won't it be interesting in future years when the blood of these brothers gets intermixed in pedigrees, as it surely will? Couldn't you see a daughter or granddaughter of Andover Hall being bred to a son or grandson of Conway Hall?)

When the Andover Hall yearlings sold in Lexington this fall, they averaged \$91,900 and for the first few sessions they were averaging well over \$100,000. Everyone who wanted to win the major trotting stakes, it seems, felt that he had to have an Andover Hall.

Andover Hall's story is interesting because he was a \$482,000 yearling in 2000, and we all know that many of those costly babies don't offer much return on investment. He was entrusted to Bob Stewart, the genial Kentuckian who had developed his older brothers Conway Hall and Angus Hall. I spoke to Stewart just after the sale, and he said he liked Andover Hall immensely, although I recall he commented the colt could have had a prettier head.

Stewart continued to like Andover Hall as a 2-year-old when he won his first eight starts. I've always admired the way Bob brings along his babies so patiently. Andover Hall wasn't thrust into the Peter Haughton Memorial melee, but instead was qualified a couple times at Lexington with the careful Mike Zeller at the lines. Then he won at Hoosier Park for Don Irvine and at Balmoral for Dave Magee. He was paired with John Campbell for the first time at the Indiana State Fair, and Andover Hall's winning ways continued.

Andover Hall was a much different type than his older brothers. He was the proverbial long, tall Texan. He was

dark brown in colour and carried his head high on the track, giving him a majestic aura.

His freshman season ended badly, as he got tangled up behind the gate in the Breeders Crown and never really got into the race. Perhaps that was a harbinger of his sophomore season as he was vitiated by early-summer sickness, but rebounded in time to be a fast-finishing second in his Hambo elim. When he drew the rail in the Hambo, bettors deemed it no contest and made Andover Hall the odds-on favourite. He lost all chances in a first-turn mishap; he broke stride and did not finish.

He was nothing short of magnificent in winning a three-heat World Trotting Derby, matching the 1:51.3 record for the fastest trotting race ever. But those were his final wins, and his season ended on the eve of the Breeders Crown when he jumped a fence in Ontario and cavorted down a busy superhighway. He was withdrawn from the Breeders Crown final, and owner Erkki Laakkonen struck a deal to stand him at Hanover Shoe Farms.

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Hanover is just the landlord with Andover Hall, however, as Laakkonen still owns every hair on the stallion's body. That explains why Hanover pounced on Andover Hall's precocious son Donato Hanover, winner of this year's Peter Haughton Memorial and Breeders Crown. Regardless of what happens to Donato Hanover in the future, Hanover will give him a shot at its resplendent broodmare band.

There is no guarantee that the second crop by Andover Hall will live up to the accomplishments of his first crop; we've seen many sires that make an initial splash in the stud and then drift downstream thereafter. Still things promise to get better for Andover Hall when the slots at Pennsylvania tracks are fully operational.

Some breeders grouched when Andover Hall's stud fee went to \$20,000 this year before his foals ever raced, but I suspect they won't be grouching now – just hoping that they can secure a booking at Andover Hall at \$25,000. I don't think he'll lack for mares.

Andover Hall's story is a remarkable one, and we're only into the first few chapters.

Making Amends

Andover Hall's greatest success comes through offspring like Donato Hanover.

Donato Hanover is the leading representative of one of the most exciting advances in the history of the trotting bloodline. Let's take a look at the pedigree of the 2007 Hambletonian winner.

First-crop phenomenon

Donato Hanover's sire, Andover Hall, won his first eight races at 2, including the Campbellville, Champlain, Bluegrass, Horseman and Breeders Crown elimination. But in the final of the Breeders Crown – his last and richest stake of the year – he broke stride as the overwhelming favourite.

Although he still earned divisional honours in 2001, Andover Hall's poor sense of timing in rich events would haunt him in his sophomore year.

At 3, he raced just three times before the Hambletonian Final for Trainer Bob Stewart, finishing second twice –including his elimination– and winning a 3-year-old open in 1:57. As the favourite in the Hambletonian final, however, he made a break just off the gate and galloped frantically for most of the mile before being pulled up by driver John Campbell.

The Colt somewhat redeemed himself later in the year by winning the World Trotting Derby race-off against Like A Prayer (after making an interference break in the first heat), and finished second to Like A Prayer in the second heat of the Kentucky Futurity. After a break in the Canadian Trotting Classic final, he was third behind Kadabra in his Breeders Crown elim. Although he earned over \$400,000 his miscues cost him dearly.

Andover Hall's scariest incident occurred just prior to the Breeders Crown final, when he escaped his Mohawk paddock and was discovered trotting down the 401, Canada's biggest freeway. While his life was spared through prompt and heroic interventions by motorists, the colt had injured himself enough to warrant his scratch from the Breeders Crown and retirement to the stallion ranks.

Owner Erkki Laakkonen, who had paid \$482,000 for Andover Hall as a yearling, negotiated with Hanover Shoe Farms to stand the trotter in Pennsylvania, where he was introduced at a stud fee of \$10,000 for 2003 and 2004. In subsequent years, his fee was raised to \$15,000, then \$20,000 and last year to \$25,000 –the highest in the industry.

In the stud barn, however, the trotter's true potential finally showed through.

Andover Hall's first crop of 2-year-olds –which hit the races in 2006 – included six \$100,000 plus winners and 19 in 2:00 from 119 foals. They were led, of course, by Donato Hanover, but other standouts included divisional champion filly Pampered Princess, international sensation Adrian Chip, and Hambletonian Oaks winner Danae.

He was the runaway leader on the list of sires of freshman money-winning trotters in 2006, and edged out Self Possessed in terms of average earnings per foal. This year, Andover Hall is again leading all sires of 3-year-old money winners by a larger margin.

Andover Hall's primary competition among trotting stallions are his full brothers– Conway Hall and Angus Hall. Both join Andover Hall in the top five on the stallion lists, and each is the highest priced stallion in his respective jurisdiction.

Standing in New York, Conway Hall has sired Trotting Triple Crown winner Windsong's Legacy3, 1:53 (\$1,744,644)

and 58 other \$100,000 winners. Angus Hall is the sire of superstars Peaceful Way 4, 1:51.4 (\$2,746,240) and Majestic Son 3, 1:52.2s (\$1,752,233).

There were four performers by Andover Hall in the final of the Hambletonian, and two by Angus Hall. The top three finishers were Donato Hanover (Andover Hall), Adrian Chip (Andover Hall) and Laddie (Angus Hall). The Hambletonian Oaks winner was Danae (Andover Hall), while Sing Me To Sleep (Conway Hall) finished third.

Who could have predicted 20 years ago that the trotting sport would become dominated by three great-grandsons of Noble Victory, out of a Magna Force mare? So far, two of them, Conway Hall and Andover Hall, have achieved as sires a feat they could not accomplish on the racetrack-winning the Hambletonian.

Maternal amends

D Train sold as Airy Hanover for \$35,000 at the 1999 Standardbred Horse Sale Company's Harrisburg sale, and Steve Elliott trained the filly for owner David Scharf. D Train made two qualifying starts as a freshman (the fastest in 2:03.2) before being turned out after suffering a hairline fracture of her knee. At 3, she trotted a last quarter of 28.3 in her first qualifier, but could not stay on the trot thereafter and was retired in July 2001. Scharf, a long-time Hanover Shoe Farms client made arrangements for the Donerail mare to return to the Pennsylvania nursery.

D Train's first foal sold in the 2004 Harrisburg Sale for \$47,000 as Dag Hanover. Renamed Here Comes Herbie, the son of Credit Winner set a world record on the five-eighths-mile oval when he romped in the Reynolds Stake at Pocono Downs in 1:56f, winning by nearly 16 lengths. The speedy colt caught the eye of Ontario's Peter Heffering, who put together a group to buy Here Comes Herbie shortly thereafter.

Last year, Here Comes Herbie won his Hambletonian elimination, the Goodtimes consolation and his Stanley Dancer elimination. He was second in a Breeders Crown elimination, and Matron elimination and final; and third in finals of the Breeders Crown and the Stanley Dancer. Initial plans had called for Here Comes Herbie to race in 2007, but following the tragic loss of Strong Yankee, Here Comes Herbie was retired to the stallion ranks at Heffering's Tara Hills Stud Farm.

D Train hails from the maternal family of Nervolo Belle (1906), the dam of Peter Volo. The huge family tree also boasts Rosalind, Scott Frost and Worthy Boy. More recent performers include Yankee Glide, Windsong's Legacy, Supergrit, Monte Hall, Jujitsu Hanover and Gironde Hanover. D Train's dam, Aldyth Hanover, is a half-sister to Emantee 3, 1:55.3 (\$465,159), a multiple stakes-winning filly who finished second last year to Passionate Glide in the Hambletonian Oaks.

Returning the investment

Shortly before the Breeders Crown last fall, Hanover Shoe Farms purchased a percentage of Donato Hanover, thereby securing his career as a stallion, as well as guaranteeing strong broodmare support. Subsequently, 60 shares in the horse were quickly snapped up by breeders throughout the sport at \$50,000 each.

Donato Hanover has already returned a significant amount of the investment to his shareholders, as they divide half of his earnings between them. And all things being equal, there is much more racing to be done before he is retired.

In the end, he will be one of those special entities that was good for everyone he touched.

How's that for making amends!