

# 'Chucky' and 'Heaven' win somewhere under the rainbow

By DERICK GIWNER

CHESTER, PA - Amidst torrential downpours and picturesque displays of lightning, Harrah's Chester presented their grandest day of racing. Over \$2.4 million was up for grabs with the spotlight on three-year-old trotters and pacers in the Colonial and Battle of the Brandywine.

The day began with rays of sunshine squeezing through the clouds while a strong undercard of events was presented. Then the skies opened up in a big way after the fifth race. You could barely see the tote board from the grandstand and sheets of rain poured from above. Following an inspection of the surface by the drivers, racing action resumed a bit over an hour later. The crowd slowly repopulated their seats and was around to witness some heavy-hitting stakes action.

The \$500,000 Colonial was basically a Hambletonian renewal, with all but the winner (resting a creaky back) signed on. Lucky Chucky, who was sent off at a miniscule .30 cents on the dollar, went directly to the front with regular pilot John Campbell. Cassis was pocketed in second and Temple Of Doom came away third.

The field remained in that alignment as Pilgrims Taj took a shot first over while the field passed the half in a pedestrian 57.3-seconds. But Lucky Chucky was having none of that today. He quickly dispersed of 'Taj' at the three-quarter pole as the rain made another appearance from off the far turn. While Chucky was opening up with every stride he appeared to be bringing the rain cloud down the stretch with him and fans began to flee for cover. When the mud settled, Chucky was an eight-plus length winner over a willing Temple Of Doom in 1:53.

"He was trotting comfortably and he was relaxed. When you get a breather like that with a horse like that, he is tough to run down," said Campbell after taking winner's circle pictures in a brief downpour.

While the fans were running for cover, Campbell was left to do his job.

"You could feel [rain] around the last turn. It started coming down in big drops; you definitely notice that during a race," said Campbell.

As wonderful as the performance by Chucky was, the attention getter was clearly a rainbow that formed from the far turn directly over the backstretch just after the race. Was it a sign from above?

"My son did that," said trainer Chuck Sylvester referring to his son Troy who passed away from injuries sustained in an ATV accident last August. "He passed away a year ago and we tried to have a memorial for him in Kentucky. It was perfect. When we went out to have the memorial it just poured down rain on us for 10 minutes. Here we go out there now and it pours down rain on us and quits as soon as the race is over. So, we blame that on Troy."



**Menacing clouds and a faint rainbow surround Rock N Roll Heaven and driver Dan Dube as they head to the track before the \$500,000 Battle of the Brandywine last Sunday at Harrah's Chester.**

Perhaps Campbell summed up the moment best.

"That's a Troy Sylvester rainbow."

As emotional and invigorating as the Colonial turned out, another half-million was still up for grabs in the Battle of the Brandywine. The one-two finishers from the Meadowlands Pace (One More Laugh & Rock N Roll Heaven) were back for a rematch against six others.

Though the favorites were on the inside, it was World Of Rocknroll from post six who stole the early show as driver George Brennan put the gas pedal down and motored through the opening half in 26.1- and 53.4-seconds. The chalk was in chase on the rim as Delmarvalous (4-1) was first to the outside followed closely by One More Laugh (7-5) and Rock N Roll Heaven (9-5).

One by one they cleared the tired leader. Delmarvalous held the lead into the stretch before One More Laugh took his turn. But Rock N Roll Heaven had dead aim on his rival from five weeks earlier and was loaded with pace in the stretch. The Bruce Saunders trainee exploded in the final stages to win by a widening 2 1/2 lengths in a sparkling 1:48.4 (stakes record) over a "good" track.

"I was following a good horse. I knew that one could carry me to the top of the stretch easily," said driver Dan Dube, who only recently returned to the bike after an accident sidelined him and robbed him of the drive behind Rock N Roll Heaven in the Meadowlands Pace.

"[Rock N Roll Heaven] was the reason I wanted to come back so quickly," remarked Dube. "I thank them for putting me back on."

"You don't win races like this every day. You want to cherish the moment and the memories," said Saunders.

Now that Lucky Chucky and Rock N Roll Heaven are back in the win column, their connections both have decisions to make for the rest of the year. 'Team Chucky' has the near future mapped out, while the path for Rock N Roll Heaven, like the skies above him, remains cloudy.

"Next week is the Zweig memorial at Tioga, then up to Canada (for the Canadian Trotting Classic)," said Sylvester.

"We'll probably go to Yonkers and school either this Friday or the following Friday; see how he is on a half-mile track," said Saunders. "The next thing that he has on his agenda is the Little Brown Jug. The issue with the Jug is that it is two heats nine days before the Breeders Crown. The Jug is in Ohio and the Breeders Crown is in Pennsylvania. And I still contend the Breeders Crown is a crucial race for Rock N Roll Heaven to win if he wants to be the three-year-old Colt of the Year. I wouldn't want to do anything with regard to the Little Brown Jug that would compromise his chances to win the Breeders Crown. After the Breeders Crown we'll go to Lexington for the Bluegrass, then we have the two events (Progress & Matron) down at Dover."

**'Show' continues on**

Just before the dynamic duo of \$500,000 events, the \$350,000 Valley Forge for three-year-old fillies was contested. The continued rivalry of Put On A Show and Dancin-withthstarz was renewed. The two have

been meeting since qualifying action back in May, with 'Starz' coming out ahead in their richest contest to date, the \$275,000 Mistletoe Shalee.

The pair came away third and fourth. 'Show' moved to the front first and 'Starz' followed, leading the talented ladies into the stretch by a bit more than a length. But it was time for a 'Show' in the stretch and when driver Tim Tetric called on his filly, Put On A Show responded with a strong surge to win by open lengths in 1:50.1 over a then listed sloppy surface.

"She was very, very good; strong all the way," said Tetric.

**Other notables**

The talented yet camera shy in big events Rockin Image came up short again with big money (\$200,000) on the line. He made an impressive move to the front past the half but tired badly to be a well beaten sixth.

Presidential Order, who was claimed for just \$15,000 in May, took home his eleventh consecutive win in a \$50,000 open event. The Lou Pena-trained gelding paid an amazing \$8.20 despite his recent success.

Considering the bad weather, Director of Racing Barry Brown was hopeful that handle would remain flat from the previous Super Stakes Sunday and remained optimistic despite spending much of his day in the rain.

"This is a great day. Every track should have a super day of racing like this," said Brown.