

EXPLOSIVE FLOWER, TIAMOGONEDANCEN SHINE AT MEADVILLE

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MEADVILLE PA – The two female winners of their 2020 freshman Fair Championships both got home first during the 2-day Sire Stakes event held at the Crawford County Fairgrounds in this northwestern Pennsylvania town, with sophomores finishing the meet Friday after the freshmen had opened it the previous day, and both Championship misses flirted with the Meadville record book in winning.

Perhaps the slightly-more-unexpected victory was the 2:03 mile turned in by the Explosive Matter trotting filly Explosive Flower, just 2/5 behind the local divisional standard of Monroe County in 2013. Explosive Flower has had 11 in-the-money finishes in 17 starts this year for trainer Rick Beinhauer, co-owner with Regina Beinhauer, but this race was the first time she had broken into the victory column this season, winning by two lengths over Frankkiss, the division's top point winner.

And talking of the unexpected, a mention must be made of the two drivers of these horses. In the sulky behind Explosive Power was the veteran Bill Popp, who had not won a race since November of 2007 in extremely limited action, and had not competed at a PA fair since 1999! And all this gave him an experience "edge" over Frankkiss's driver, Hunter Myers, who was 18 months old when Popp last drove on the local fair circuit, and despite extensive fair experience had never driven at a PA fair before!

The other Championship winner who may be coming to hand at just the right time is the A Rocknroll Dance pacing filly Tiamogonedancen, who started this fair campaign torridly, posting the fastest mile of the year at 1:55.2 early at Bedford, went into a bit of a slump, but has now come back to win her last three, and with those successes assure herself the point blanket.

Her 2:01 mile here, fastest of the meet and only a tick behind the Meadville sectional record set by Unbeamlikeable in 2016 and equaled by Camera Lady a year afterwards, was part of trainer Mitchell York's three wins at the meet to tie him on top with Bob Rougeaux III; York also co-owns the filly with driver David Brickell.

The leading driver at the meet was Aaron Johnston, who had three wins in the freshman ranks and two among the sophomores. Johnston's three wins with the two-year-olds were by an aggregate 42¾ lengths, despite the fact that two of them were offstride before an 1/8 of a mile.

A word must be said about the driver who finished only one win behind Johnston, Eric Neal. Among Neal's four winners, a trio of them went an aggregate time for their three miles of 7:43.3 – but if those races were all walkovers, why did Neal need to go any faster? It was probably the easiest \$385 drivers check for his 5% driving share that he's ever had!

The Pennsylvania fair circuit comes back east for its last two stops of 2021, with the Sunday and Monday cards at Gratz starting at 1 p.m. and a draw for Bloomsburg on Wednesday for Friday and Saturday racing starting at 11 a.m. (you may have read something different earlier, but the Bloomsburg action will start at 11).