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Admirals Express

The bloodines of a great grey

Admirals Express was probably the most visible pacer in the sport in 2005 – both by virtue of his grey (almost white) colour, and his on-track exploits. A fan favourite in Canada for many years, in 2005 Admirals Express won 17 Free-For-All and stake events and nearly \$500,000 while racing solely in Ontario. He also lowered his own standard as ‘the fastest grey in history’ when he circled Woodbine in 1:48.2 last summer – as a nine-year-old! These accomplishments led to O’Brien Awards as Older Pacer – and as Canada’s Horse of the Year for 2005.

Much has been written about ‘The Grey Gladiator’ (so-dubbed in 2002 by former WEG announcer Frank Salive) and his success on the racetrack. In this month’s column, we will summarize those accomplishments. But then we’ll turn our attention to the pedigree of Admirals Express, a bloodline that is nearly as remarkable as the old grey himself.

From Humble Beginnings

Ed and Cheryl Sayfie, and Gary and Laurel Gust had owned a num-

ber of claimers together before deciding to try their luck at the yearling sales in 1997. Laurel Gust stated her preference for a grey horse, a relatively easy request to fill given the popularity of Admirals Galley (a son of Laag) among Michigan breeders.

Sayfie had owned two previous offspring of Platinum Card (the filies Albada and Ms Clairol) at some point in their careers, and liked the rugged looks of the grey yearling out of that mare. His trainer (Keith Hogue) had also short-listed the colt – and when the hammer dropped, the Sayfies and Gusts were in business.

Admirals Express sold for \$3,700.

Admirals Express qualified early (May 30, 1998) as a two-year-old, finishing third in 2:06.1h at Jackson Raceway. He won his first two starts and five races in total over the Michigan Fair stake circuit. “The Grey” (as he was nicknamed by his connections) returned in 1999 to tally seven more wins at the State Fairs, while raising his lifetime tally to over \$80,000.

Sayfie had regularly brought his Michigan stake horses to Ontario trainer Mike Hales at the end of their three-year-old seasons, an approach that had reaped benefits

with horses such as The Rengo Kid p,4,1:51.4 (\$359,519), Wouldifcould p,1:57.1h (\$66,437) and others.

But in the case of Admirals Express, the owners would watch in disbelief as their charge would lower his race record six times in the next six consecutive years – while at the same time earning more than \$100,000 annually, and over \$250,000 in each of his past four seasons.

Along the way, Admirals Express has defeated many other gladiators in the sport. As a four-year-old he shocked the experts, defeating Artistic and Dragon Again in a leg of the Toronto Pacing Series at 77-1. In 2002, he finished a closing second to Real Desire in 1:48.3 – beat just a quarter length by the future Horse of the Year.

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ADMIRALS EXPRESS LIFETIME SUMMARY

Year	Mark	Summary	Earnings
1998	2:01.3h	14-5-3-1	\$ 16,108
1999	q1:56.3	19-7-4-3	\$ 66,818
2000	1:53f	33-8-6-2	\$ 140,054
2001	1:52.2	29-4-2-9	\$ 114,450
2002	1:50.4	44-6-6-9	\$ 277,990
2003	1:49.1	33-11-5-3	\$ 316,900
2004	1:48.4	41-10-9-3	\$ 397,480
2005	1:48.2	40-17-7-5	\$ 491,850
TOTAL	1:48.2	253-68-42-35	\$1,821,650

The list of others cut down by the Grey Gladiator includes – but is far from limited to – Gallo Blue Chip, Royalflush Hanover, Cammibest, Goliath Bayama, Sir Luck, Rair Earth, Royal Mattjesty, Luckyisasluckydoes, Escape The Wind, Whosurboy, Boulder Creek, Timesarechanging, Holborn Hanover, Canyon Wind, Ponder and Georgia Pacific. Not a bad card of 'stricken gladiators'.

Let's take a look at the pedigree of Admirals Express.

The Sireline – Grey Highlights

I'm sure that those of you who watched Laag race will concur that he was an absolutely stunning individual. The contrast of the red equipment against his light grey coat still paints a vivid portrait in my mind. Although he was sired by Abercrombie – a bay sire of bay horses – Laag's dam Tinsel was grey, as was her mother (Kathleen Grattan) and grandmother (Alice Grattan).

Laag p,2,1:54; 3,1:51.2 (\$642,995) dazzled harness fans across the continent in 1986-1987, winning such stakes as the Tattersalls, Jug Preview and eliminations of the Prix D'Ete and Meadowlands Pace. Laag had a mind of his own that often undermined his incredible speed, as he

exhibited during the final of the Prix D'Ete, when he caused an accident that took out half the field. Laag had acquired a double dose of 'attitude' – from his paternal grandfather Silent Majority and his mother Tinsel, a tough, moody mare with a double shot of Grattan blood in her lineage.

As a sire, Laag's first crop was a very successful group that included the 1992 3YO Pacing Filly of the Year So Fresh p,2,1:54.2; 3,1:52.2f (\$803,794); Berry's Creek winner Bilateral p,4,1:50.2 (\$1,051,876) and the good filly Ghostly p,2,1:55; 3,1:53 (\$414,600).

Admirals Galley p,2,1:54.2 (\$324,259) was the fastest Laag colt from that first offering. Like his father, Admirals Galley was a striking grey colt – with speed aplenty. As a two-year-old he won the Garden State Stake and a NJSS, and was second in the Presidential elimination and final. At three, he won the Burlington Stake and was second in the Miller Memorial.

Admirals Galley is a son of the Escort mare Massachus Lucy, thus making him a 3x3 cross to Meadow Skipper (as both the sire of Escort and of Tinsel). In addition, he carries a 4x4 cross to Henry T Adios (as both the sire of Silent Majority and Baby Sitter, the dam of Escort). In particular, the Escort connection will figure prominently as we widen our scope to the pedigree of 'The Grey Gladiator' himself.

Following his three-year-old campaign, Admiral's Galley was retired to Pebble Creek Farm for the 1993 breeding season. Again following in the footsteps of his father, Admirals Galley sired some prominent performers early in his career. In particular, the 1994 foal Tulane p,4,1:49.2 (\$452,343) brought attention to the first crop of the grey son of Laag, with his exploits at the Meadowlands.

From his third crop in 1996, Admirals Galley produced the crack filly Blizzard Babe p,1:54.1f (\$557,184), a multiple Grand Circuit-winning performer that raced against the likes of Eternal Camnation, Galleria, French Panicle and Odies Fame. From that third crop, he also produced Admirals Express, by far his

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richest and fastest performer.

As a sire in Michigan, Admirals Galley has had limited opportunity, producing just 291 foals from his first 10 crops of racing age (youngest: two-year-olds in 2005). His statistics are quite enviable, with 243 starters (83.5%); 130 winners in 2:00 or faster (44.7%) and 37 in 1:55 or better (12.7%).

Among the more exciting of the Admirals Galley two-year-olds in 2005 were two promising fillies. Preference p,2,1:54.4 (\$51,261) is the full sister to Admirals Express; and Silveresque p,2,1:57.2h (\$43,608) is the full sister to Blizzard Babe.

These two filly performers were the fastest and richest of the Admirals Galley freshmen in 2005, furthering a 'pattern' exhibited since his first crop. Five of the top-seven money-earners by Admirals Galley are females, as are 12 of his 22 \$100,000 winners – despite the fact that he has actually sired slightly more colts than fillies.

Platinum in the Maternal Pedigree

You may recall from the December 2003 column, when we studied the bloodlines of Classic Wish (dam of Bettors

Delight and No Pan Intended), that the introduction of Albatross blood into the maternal lineage was cited as a primary factor in the success of Classic Wish.

In the pedigree of Admirals Express, we see Albatross as the sire of the second dam, Alba Hanover. This infusion of Albatross blood into this maternal line has been responsible for virtually all of the successful performers hailing from the maternal family.

Albatross was simply the greatest pacing broodmare sire of all time. Time and again, daughters by Albatross out of poorly producing mares have produced champions. Or, as in the case of Admirals Express, they have provided the road to success through their own daughters.

Alba Hanover p,2,T2:00.3 (\$806) was a failure as a racehorse. But as a broodmare she produced the winners of over \$1.2M, and daughters who also produced top performers. For instance, her Nansemond daughter Sunray Fantasy p,4,2:02.4f (\$6,961) produced Buddys Girl p,1:52.3 (\$326,434) to the cover of Troublemaker, and Budz Victory p,4,1:53.2f (\$294,457) to the cover of Tavern Lobell. A Seahawk Hanover daughter of Alba Hanover, Finkels Filly p,2:04.1f (\$5,830), produced the In The Pocket colt Bundle Of Money p,4,1:52 (\$260,447).

ADMIRALS EXPRESS p,1:48.2 (\$1,821,650)				
Admirals Galley	Laag	Abercrombie	Silent Majority	Henry T Adios
			Bergdorf	Duane Hanover
		Tinsel	Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost
			Kathleen Grattan	Task Force
	Massachus Lucy	Escort	Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost
			Baby Sitter	Henry T Adios
		Supple Trick	Overtrick	Solicitor
			Supple Yankee	Adios Don
Platinum Card	Armbro Aussie	Most Happy Fella	Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost
			Laughing Girl	Good Time
		Armbro Indigo	Tar Heel	Billy Direct
			Rosemary Frost	Adios
	Alba Hanover	Albatross	Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost
			Voodoo Hanover	Dancer Hanover
		All The Best	Best Of All	Good Time
			Byword	Tar Heel

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By far, the most significant racehorse produced by Alba Hanover was the top colt Money Lender p,3,1:53.2 (\$773,255). This son of Armbro Aussie was a multiple stake winner of more than \$550,000 at two and three, while racing against a crop that included Camtastic, Matts Scooter, Albert Albert and many more.

It isn't much wonder that the breeding of Armbro Aussie to an Albatross mare would produce a horse of the calibre of Money Lender. Over the past 20 years, many of the sport's top performers were sired by Most Happy Fella-line stallions, out of Albatross mares – Gallo Blue Chip, Western Hanover, Die Laughing, Dexter Nukes, Camtastic, Goalie Jeff, Invitro, Immortality, Carlsbad Cam and Nadia Lobell are the top examples of this 'cross'.

Armbro Aussie p,3,1:51.4 (\$545,037) electrified the standardbred industry in 1982, when he took his lifetime mark in his elimination of the Tattersalls Pace. Driven and trained by the late Glen Garnsey, the son of Most Happy Fella set a world

record with that 1:51.4 effort, which was also the second fastest race mile in the history of the sport at that time.

As a sire, Armbro Aussie produced Sam Francisco Ben p,1:53 (\$733,178) the upset winner of the 1989 Woodrow Wilson, LV Whiskers p,4,1:49.3 (\$419,883) and the sharp filly Junes Baby p,4,1:51.4 (\$751,412). But his richest performer was the colt out of Alba Hanover, Money Lender.

Alba Hanover was bred to Armbro Aussie four times, resulting in three colts that took sub-1:59 marks – the aforementioned Money Lender; Brightwater p,1:56.3h (\$138,605) and Wingelt p,3,1:59h (\$94,441). The last foal from these matings was the 1988 filly named Platinum Card.

Platinum Card has produced six foals by Admirals Galley, five of which have taken sub-1:57 marks. There is something remarkable about the pedigree of these foals – a sibling connection that we'll highlight.

We have commented numerous times in

the past about the significance of sibling crosses in the pedigree of many of our top performers. In the case of Admirals Express, the sibling connection is a 3x3 cross to the three-quarter brothers Escort and Most Happy Fella.

On Three-quarter Siblings

You may be asking "What the heck is a three-quarter brother?"

If you look at the pedigrees of both Escort and Most Happy Fella, you will see that they are both sons of Meadow Skipper. They are also out of mares that are half sisters to each other (both being daughters of Maxines Dream). So, if you go back to the second generation in the pedigrees, the individuals from the top down are Dale Frost-Countess Vivian-Henry T Adios-Maxines Dream (for Escort) and Dale Frost-Countess Vivian-Good Time-Maxines Dream (for Most Happy Fella).



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Thus, three of the four individuals in the second generation are the same – and they both hail from the same maternal grandmother – hence, they are referred to as “three-quarter brothers”.

Now, let’s imagine if Maxines Dream was bred to Good Time (or Henry T Adios) and produced a full sister to Laughing Girl (or Baby Sitter). If those daughters were bred to Meadow Skipper, the resulting foals would be full-siblings-in-blood to Most Happy Fella and Escort

respectively. Although they would be out of a different mare – the second generation would be the exact same individuals (hence ‘in blood’).

Returning to Admirals Express, suffice it to say that his pedigree cross is 3x3 to the three-quarter brothers Escort and Most Happy Fella. But probably more importantly, he is the son of the full sister to the best performer ever produced by Armbró Aussie – a mare named Platinum Card that has produced six \$100,000 winners by five

ESCORT - three-quarter brother to Most Happy Fella

Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost	Hal Dale	Abbedale
			Margaret Hal
		Galloway	Raider
			Bethel
	Countess Vivian	Kings Counsel	Volomite
			Margaret Spangler
		Filly Direct	Billy Direct
			Calumet Edna
Baby Sitter	Henry T Adios	Adios	Hal Dale
			Adioo Volo
		Greer Hanover	Nibble Hanover
			Veda Hanover
	Maxines Dream	Knight Dream	Nibble Hanover
			Lydia Knight
		Maxines Abbe	Abbedale
			Maxine Direct

MOST HAPPY FELLA - three-quarter to Escort

Meadow Skipper	Dale Frost	Hal Dale	Abbedale
			Margaret Hal
		Galloway	Raider
			Bethel
	Countess Vivian	Kings Counsel	Volomite
			Margaret Spangler
		Filly Direct	Billy Direct
			Calumet Edna
Laughing Girl	Good Time	Hal Dale	Abbedale
			Margaret Hal
		On Time	Volomite
			Needa Guy
	Maxines Dream	Knight Dream	Nibble Hanover
			Lydia Knight
		Maxines Abbe	Abbedale
			Maxine Direct

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OFFSPRING FOR PLATINUM CARD

Year	Foal	Sex	Record	Earnings	Sire	Yearling Price
1992	Albada	M	1:54.2	\$ 148,949	Allie Kell	\$4,900
1994	Ms Clairol	M	1:51.4	\$ 253,967	Armbro Cadet	\$8,600
1995	Slightly Gray	G	4,1:57	\$ 10,070	Admirals Galley	\$5,350
1996	Admirals Express	G	1:48.2	\$1,821,650	Admirals Galley	\$3,700
1997	One Card Short	H	1:53.2	\$ 121,032	Keystone	N/R
1998	Camtankerous	H	1:51.3	\$ 240,492	Cams Catch	\$8,700
1999	Captiva Cam	M			Cams Catch	\$5,200
2000	Meal Ticket	H	1:52.4f	\$ 191,938	Admirals Galley	\$15,250
2001	Metallic	H	3,1:55.4f	\$ 48,678	Admirals Galley	\$32,000
2002	Carte Blanche	M	3,2:06h	\$ 3,640	Admirals Galley	N/R
2003	Preference	M	2,1:54.4	\$ 51,261	Admirals Galley	N/R

different sires.

Platinum Card earned a paltry \$125 in her illustrious racing career. But we've said it here before, and we will again. Many, many sisters to top performers will produce champions – even if they couldn't beat the proverbial 'fat man' in a two-horse race. It's a matter of genetic endowment. And Platinum Card is evidently endowed in spades.

On the accompanying chart, you will see that Platinum Card has produced six \$100,000+ winners by five different sires – and the winners of over \$2.9M in total. From her 11 foals of racing age, she has nine in 1:57; seven in 1:55 and four in 1:53 or faster. These statistics place her among the elite of the sport's broodmares. Unfortunately for the breeders, the yearlings were not viewed by the buying pub-

lic as 'fashionable' – until Admirals Express began making his headlines in 2001.

One last item before we go. Just as the sister of Money Lender produced a champion performer in the form of Admirals Express, we can expect to see a future champion or two from the sisters to "The Grey Gladiator". The full sisters to Admirals Express are only three and four-years-old as I write this, so we will be waiting a while before seeing their offspring.

Albada has never produced a foal. And despite being a little 'long in the tooth', Ms Clairol produced her first foal by Browning Blue Chip in 2004. Captiva Cam has produced three foals – a Jet Laag filly (CF Cam) in 2003; and Admirals Galley colts (Tropical Grey and Admirals Choice) in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Admirals Choice is listed as a bay. But CF Cam and Tropical Grey are ... horses of a different colour.



ADMIRAL'S EXPRESS