

Monday, May 29, 2023

Hohneck wins the Elitloppet for France

For the second year in a row, the French are celebrating a victory in Sweden's biggest race.

by Thomas Hedlund

EUROPEAN REPORT



with **THOMAS HEDLUND**

The French armada was strong at Solvalla for the second straight year, but it was **Hohneck**, not defending champ Etonnant, who surprised in Sunday's (May 28) Elitloppet.

Although Hohneck did not win his elimination, his connections felt he would be better in the final and that feeling proved to be correct

Etonnant was the best in the first Elitloppet elimination and that was kind of a surprise, even if Richard Westerink's trotter was the title defender in the race. Don Fanucci Zet, Önas Prince and Stoletheshow all three had better post positions and Don Fanucci Zet became the bettors' choice as the car left the field.

Don Fanucci Zet went off stride as the car accelerated, which led to an easy way to the front for Önas Prince. His driver Per Nordström was allowed to keep the pace at a low level with Etonnant on the outside. Etonnant's morale and strength resulted in an advantage at the top of the stretch and the only threat, Go On Boy, just secured the spot in the final.

Adam Ström ställt
Driver Gabriele Gelormini
celebrates Hohneck's
Elitloppet victory.



IN TODAY'S HRU

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- Hillexotic wins Maxie Lee at Philadelphia
- Max Contract cascades to Betsy Ross upset



Gerard Forni

Hohneck (Gabriele Gelormini) controlled the Elitloppet final after the first turn and could not be caught.

Etonnant won in 1:52 and behind him were Go On Boy and Önas Prince. Dexter Dunn's drive Stoleteshow claimed the last spot in the final.

There was no shortage of speed when heat 2 was rolling 25 minutes later. Unexpected leader Best Ofdream Trio and driver Kim Eriksson took a chance and kept the front position when outside trotter Hail Mary attacked in the first turn. The pace was high throughout the race. Hail Mary took over the lead on the backstretch when Best Ofdream Trio more or less gave up and Vivid Wise As connected on Hail Mary's outside. That was also unexpected. Vivid Wise As never found a spot to rest so Matthieu Abrivard continued three wide the entire race until he landed outside of Hail Mary just before the last turn.

Coming from behind, horses like Hohneck and favorite **San Moteur** could use their speed, respectively in the stretch. San Moteur won easily for Björn Goop in 1:51.1. Hohneck was second, Vivid Wise As third and the fourth horse for the final was Hail Mary.

The draw for the final made things interesting. San Moteur got number 2, Etonnant 3 which left the number 1 spot to Hohneck (Royal Dream), driven by Gabriele Gelormini and trained by Philippe Allaire.

Allaire is often mentioned in this column, especially during the winter meeting in Paris. The top French trainer must be considered as one of the best conditioners in Europe. Winning the Elitloppet was a special moment for him.

Hohneck controlled the final of the Elitloppet after the first turn, when Önas Prince's driver Nordström opted to let Hohneck take over the lead. Gelormini kept the pace low (for an Elitloppet final) level, which meant that the last half mile was expected to be a fast one. And so it was. Hohneck sprinted easily in front and the chasers, with San Moteur first over, could never reach Allaire's 6-year-old, who won in 1:50.4.

HARNESS RACING UPDATE

ABOUT HARNESS RACING UPDATE

Harness Racing Update is owned by HRU Publications of Millwood, NY and will publish Fridays and Sundays from fall through late spring. HRU will add Wednesday editions early summer through fall, publishing 3 days per week, and will add editions throughout the year as major news breaks.

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Adam Ström stalltz

**Hohneck is the second straight
Elitloppet winner from France.**



“This is a dream, maybe a once in a lifetime experience, and I’m so satisfied right now. The horse was just perfect and when we reached the lead, I felt very comfortable. I understood that we had our chance to win Elitloppet.”

~ Gabriele Gelormini

“This is a dream, maybe a once in a lifetime experience, and I’m so satisfied right now. The horse was just perfect and when we reached the lead, I felt very comfortable. I understood that we had our chance to win the Elitloppet,” said Gelormini in the winner’s circle after the \$930,000 victory.

“We left the shoes on for the elimination and I was pretty confident ahead of the final,” Allaire said after the big win. “This is a big moment for me. I’ve been here at Solvalla many times, seen many winners of these races, and now we’re standing here. It’s a big joy, I’m very happy.”

The fight for the medals behind the winner was tight. San Moteur held strongly as runner up and he had to share the silver with quick finisher Go On Boy in a dead heat.



Allaire’s joy at Solvalla on Sunday afternoon will forever be remembered and as breeder, owner and trainer of an Elitloppet winner, it’s easy to understand his euphoria.

France dominated the 2023 Elitloppet and it was a fresh horse, with a charismatic entourage surrounding him who won. Well-deserved and again, Vive la France!

Gerard Forni

**Last year’s Elitloppet champion
Etonnant winning this year’s first
heat.**

ITALIAN DOMINANCE IN BREEDERS COURSE FINALS

Two Breeders Course finals for 3-year-olds were held during Sunday's race card at Solvalla.

In the \$113,500 final for fillies, Dexter Dunn steered Kitty Hawk on the lead and it seemed like Dunn had stolen the race as the field turned for home, but far outside and on the leader's inside, horses attacked aggressively the last 100 meters. Kitty Hawk fought well, but couldn't hold quick finisher **Esmeralda Bez** (Maharajah) and Alessandro Gocciadoro behind her at the wire. The mile rate was 1:58 over 1.3 miles.

In the \$187,500 final for 3-year-olds, Reijo Liljendahl trained **Epsom As** (Muscle Mass), bred in Italy, took a pretty safe almost wire-to-wire win for Ulf Ohlsson. Epsom As had to give away

Adam Ström stalltz
**Hohneck and winning
trainer Philippe Allaire.**



the lead for a short while in the first turn, but Ulf Ohlsson was quick to take back command in the race. It was a strong mile rate of 1:57.2 over 1.3 miles for a 3-year-old in May and Epsom As will continue to win big races this summer.

IMPRESSIVE 4-YEAR-OLDS

Tomas Malmqvist had a great day at Solvalla on Saturday's card (May 27) and could laugh again when the \$56,000 Delicious race for 4-year-old mares was held on Sunday afternoon.

Jazzy Perrine (Django Riff), with great merits from the toughest possible races in France, came to Sweden and had to face superstar Joviality in her first race outside of France.

Goop sat behind Jazzy Perrine and from first over, outside of leader Don't Say Gar, she was just unstoppable and Malmqvist's trotter won in 1:51, leaving Joviality several lengths behind at the wire.

In the \$95,000 Fyraåringseliten for 4-year-olds, Örjan Kihlström had to solve starting from post 8 with American-bred Double Deceiver (Cantab Hall) and after a first turn three wide, Double Deceiver landed outside the leader with a kilometer to go. A tough trip for the talented trotter, but Double Deceiver showed great moral as he disarmed leader Gio Cash with 50 meters to go.

The winner's time was 1:52.3 and owner Daniel Redén got some money back after the \$500,000 purchase from Harrisburg in 2022.

Elitloppet Heat 1 replay [here](#).

Elitloppet Heat 2 replay [here](#).

Elitloppet final replay [here](#).

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Gerard Forni

San Moteur (Björn Goop) won the second Elitloppet heat.

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Ruthless Hanover breaks world record in Auger Memorial

George Napolitano Jr. floored the accelerator on **Ruthless Hanover** from the race's outset in the \$100,000 Joseph Auger Memorial Invitational Pace, held Sunday (May 28) at Harrah's Philadelphia, and the 6-year-old gelding responded with a 1:46.3 mile – the fastest ever on a five-eighths-mile track.

Ruthless Hanover, who now has won four of his five starts this season and 20 of his 45 career outings, erased the previous three-turn world record of 1:46.4, set by Allywag Hanover in November 2022 at Rosecroft Raceway.

After wiring his competition in his previous two wins over open company this season at Harrah's Philadelphia, the son of Somebeachsomewhere predictably employed familiar tactics, gunned to the fore by Napolitano to clear Hellabalou through a :25.2 first quarter before scorching middle splits of :53 and 1:19.2 and widening his uncontested lead to 2-1/2 lengths. And,

despite the fast fractions, Napolitano had no doubt his pacer was up to completing the task.

"He's that horse," Napolitano said. "It was definitely a speed track, and that's where he likes to be. I was just hoping he would keep pacing to the wire, and he did."

Ruthless Hanover continued to edge away from his seven rivals off the turn for home, using a :27.1 closing quarter to evade runner-up South Beach Star and driver David Miller by 3-3/4 lengths. Lochinvar Art A (Lauren Tritton) saved third over a tired Hellabalou.

"When I saw the three-quarter pole, I thought if he kept pacing like he has been, he'd [break the world record]," Napolitano said. "He was up on the bit going around the turn and hitting gears, and I knew it would be possible. He's an amazing animal to do that."

Tom Cancelliere, who trains Ruthless Hanover for his brother, owner John Cancelliere, indicated the pacer came back a more mature animal compared to his 5-year-old season.

"He came back a little bigger and a little stronger, and his mindset's different – he's calmer," Tom said. "He used to get more fired up. Now he's more focused; he knows what's going on. He's been kind of lightly raced, but hopefully he's in the right spot now."

And as far as the toll a 1:46.3 mile took on his star pacer?

"He came back super [immediately after the race]," Tom said. "He drank a lot of water; he's acting normal."

"I'm one of those people who wants to go as slow as I can go and get the money, but the world record is nice; it's the icing on the cake."

As the even-money favorite, Ruthless Hanover paid \$4.00 to win.

James Witherite / Hoof Beats

James Witherite / USTA
Ruthless Hanover
(George Napolitano Jr.) recorded the fastest mile ever on a five-eighths-mile when he won the \$100,000 Joseph Auger Memorial Invitational Pace in 1:46.3 mile on Sunday at Harrah's Philadelphia.



Hillexotic wins Maxie Lee at Philadelphia

Yannick Gingras hoped to have Hillexotic add a little extra spice to Sunday's (May 28) \$100,000 Maxie Lee Memorial Invitational for older trotters at Harrah's Philadelphia, but settled for a world-record win.

Six-year-old gelding Hillexotic captured the Maxie Lee Memorial in 1:50.2. Hillexotic, the 1-2 favorite, won by one length over Inaminate Hanover. Ahundreddollarbill finished third.

The previous world record of 1:50.3 was shared by three horses: Sevruga (2013), Homicide Hunter (2018), and Will Take Charge (2018).

In addition, Hillexotic's time Sunday equaled the fastest mile ever at Harrah's Philadelphia, which was set by Market Share in the 2014 Maxie Lee Memorial.

"I tried to smash it, honestly," Gingras said about the track record. "I tried to go (1):49. Around the last turn, I'm like, let's go. I had a shot at it. Try to make it a little exciting."

Hillexotic went to the front from post 4, briefly yielded the lead to Inaminate Hanover on the first turn, and then reclaimed the top spot just after reaching the opening quarter in :26.4. From there, the son of Muscle Hill—Exotic Destination hit the half in :54.4 and three-quarters in 1:22.3 on his way to his fourth victory in 10 starts this season for trainer Ron Burke.

"It kind of worked out the way we expected," Gingras said. "Ronnie and I talked a little bit before the race, and 99 per cent of the time it doesn't work out the way you think, but today it did."

Gingras said reaching the half-mile point in :54.4 "felt like I was walking."

"With the conditions the way the track is, I think (the :28 second quarter) was a pretty good breather," he said. "Usually, it's not. But today it is."

Hillexotic is owned by Burke Racing Stable, Weaver Brusceini LLC, and Phil Collura. He was bred by Hanover Shoe Farms. For his career, he has won 20 of 57 races and earned \$744,291.

He paid \$3.00 to win.

Ken Weingartner / USTA media relations manager

Max Contract cascades to Betsy Ross upset

Finding herself shuffled to a joint last with a quarter-mile to go in a stacked field, it was a surprise that **Max Contract** shook free and rallied to a 19-1 upset in Sunday's (May 28) Betsy Ross Mares Pace at Harrah's Philadelphia to most everyone.

Except for trainer Julie Miller.

"I had a lot of confidence in my mare," Miller said. "I'm glad [driver/husband] Andy [Miller] drove her how he did. You've got to have a lot of luck in these big races, and we had that today."

Andy was patient early with the 4-year-old daughter of Huntsville, electing to stalk from fourth while Racine Bell, Niki Hill and Amazing Dream N tussled through a torrid :25.4 first quarter. Todd McCarthy pushed to the fore with 9-5 favorite Niki Hill with just over a circuit to go, clearing Racine Bell and leaving Velocity Lady uncovered into a :53.1 half. Meanwhile, Max Contract was buried at the pegs in midfield and shuffled deeper off the pace as Niki Hill reached three-quarters in 1:21.

As Velocity Lady faded on the far turn — she gained to within a neck of second midway up the backstretch at the peak of her bid — Scott Zeron tipped Treacherous Dragon three-wide off cover, and Andy aimed Max Contract for an opening in the four-path off the corner for home. In the final eighth, the pace collapsed and Niki Hill gave way to Treacherous Dragon, but Max Contract cascaded down the grandstand side to nab Treacherous Dragon by a scant nose in a seasonal best 1:49 for her ninth career win. Dougs Babe A rallied to finish third, missing by just a neck. Niki Hill faded to finish seventh in the eight-horse field.

All told, Max Contract has amassed \$354,639 for Andy Miller Stable Inc. and Jean Goehlen. She paid \$40.80 to win.

Having made just three starts as a 4-year-old, Max Contract has maintained continued praise from her conditioner.

"She's built like a brick house," Julie said. "She's a strong, smart mare."

James Witherite / Hoof Beats

Voukefalas conquers in NJSS Final at Big M

Displaying his usual brilliance in a third straight start to begin his season, the marvelous **Voukefalas** toyed with seven overmatched foes during a 5-length romp Saturday night (May 27) at The Meadowlands while taking the \$240,000 New Jersey Sire Stakes final for 3-year-old colts and geldings on the pace.

"I was very nervous the whole way," said winning trainer Mike Russo with a laugh. "I was nervous all week but I was pretty confident coming in. He does all the work. He makes me look good."

Make that very good.

The son of Lazarus N—Inittowinafortune was, predictably, on the go early from post 6 and made the top while parked at the quarter in :27.1. Handlelikeaporsche, the 6-1 second choice, grabbed the top at the three-eighths, but driver Jordan Stratton wasn't settling for any two-hole trips on this night, going right back to the point with Voukefalas before hitting the half in :55.4.

"[Huge speed] was the big thing with his mother," Russo said. "You know, she had such tremendous early speed."

Voukefalas rolled up the score to three-quarters, upping his lead to 2¼ lengths in 1:23.2, before sprinting home in :26.2 to complete a lifetime-best 1:49.4 mile as Stratton sat as still as a stone in the sulky through the stretch. Vici was second with Lifes A Puzzle third.

As the 1-9 favorite, Voukefalas returned \$2.20 to win and has now won six-of-10 lifetime outings, good for earnings of \$391,088 for owner Michael Pagonas.

Races like the (June 17) North America Cup and (July 15) Meadowlands Pace won't necessarily be won on the front end, so can Voukefalas do it from off a helmet?

"He's proven in some qualifiers and some other races that he's fine off the pace," Russo said. "I prefer to race horses up front. I mean, that's where the money is at, but that's on Jordan and the horse."

'UCANDOIT' DOES IT: Scott Zeron gave **Uncandoit Blue Chip** a perfect steer and the daughter of Keystone Velocity—Molly Can Do It did the rest, scoring from the pocket while taking an inside route to the winner's circle in the \$240,000 NJSS final for 3-year-old pacing fillies.

Trainer Linda Toscano had a hunch as to why her horse wasn't racing quite as well of late, after finishing third in leg 2 of the NJSS 14 days after following a leg 1 score.

"I had a suspicion and the vets confirmed [that she was bleeding some]," Toscano said. "So, she was certified and used Lasix [for the first time]."

Uncandoit Blue Chip burst away from the gate from post 5 in the 10-horse field to lead at the quarter in :26.3. Two Pistol Annie, the 7-5 second choice who defeated 'Uncandoit' when they met in leg 2, rushed up to take the top at the half in :55.1, leaving the eventual winner in an ideal spot.

"That was a perfect trip," said Toscano. "That's just what we hoped for because she loves a helmet, and she knows what to do coming off a helmet."

Two Pistol Annie reached three-quarters in 1:23.4, but the trip proved too taxing for her after working hard to make the top at three-eighths and then taking pressure on the far turn from longshot Devilish Dreams.

In midstretch, Two Pistol Annie was shot, and began a steady veer to the outside as her weary legs could not maintain a straight line. That left the inside wide open for Uncandoit Blue Chip, who sprinted up the pylons to a 1¼-length win in 1:51.3. Get Answers rallied inside for second while Two Pistol Annie held off an airborne Lisa Lane to grab the show dough.

"That's her game," Toscano said of her prized pupil. "Follow cover and finish. The plan was to do that tonight and it worked out really well."

As the even-money public choice, Uncandoit Blue Chip returned \$4.20. She's now won six-of-10 lifetime starts and banked \$324,993 for owner Bill Elliott.



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A LITTLE MORE: **Confederate**, currently No. 6 in the Big M's weekly "Road to The Meadowlands Pace" Top 10 poll, displayed explosive late pace in winning his seasonal debut in 1:50.1. The son of Sweet Lou—Geothermal rallied three-wide at three-quarters before charging home in :25.4 to win by a neck as the 1-5 favorite for driver Tim Tetrick and trainer Brett Pelling. Tetrick led the driver colony with four winners while Ron Burke was the top trainer with three winner's circle visits. All-source handle totaled \$2,885,902 on the 13-race card. Racing resumes Friday (June 2) at 6:20 p.m.

Dave Little / Meadowlands media relations

Racing For Three and High Flyin' Filly repeat winners in Buckeye Stallion Series

Six divisions of the Buckeye Stallion Series (BSS) for 3-year-old pacing fillies highlighted the 15-race card Saturday night at MGM Northfield Park. **Racing For Three** and **High Flyin' Filly** followed up their first-leg victories with wins in the second leg. Five of the six winners set or tied lifetime marks. Each division carried a purse of \$20,000.

In the first division, Billy Davis Jr. took **Racing For Three** four wide down the backstretch to grab the lead and pull away to win by two lengths in 1:52.1 for trainer AJ Carlo and owners Carlo Racing and CRG Stables. It was the Western Terror filly's third win of the year in five starts. Honey Buzz was second with Bay City Babe third.

Angel Hill grabbed the lead around the final turn and drew away to win the second division by two lengths to earn her maiden victory in 1:52.1. Luke Ebersole trains, drives, and co-owns the daughter of Racing Hill with Cody Sipe. Calgary finished second with No Fear Intended third.

Onederfulbeach with Aaron Merriman went gate-to-wire to win the third division by two lengths in the best BSS time of the night, 1:51.2. Owned and trained by Chris Beaver, the Beachtree filly has hit the board in all six starts this year, winning two. Somwherunderheavn was second with Limestone Gem third.

In the fourth division, **Apple Martini** with Kurt Sugg took the pocket trip and rallied down the stretch to win by a head in 1:52.0. It was the first win in five starts for the daughter of Downbytheseaside. Miles Wollam trains and co-owns Apple Martini with Cool Cat Racing and Kara Bansberg. TK Dragonfly finished second with Yankee Nudge third.

The feature division saw five first-leg winners battle it out with High Flyin' Filly and Ronnie Wrenn Jr. getting up at the wire to win by a neck in 1:52. Trained by Ron Burke and owned by Burke

Racing Stable and Weaver Brusceci, the Domethatagain filly has hit the board in 12 of 13 races this year, winning six. She was the only winner not to set a new lifetime mark. Beautiful Seaside was second with Sectionline Seaside third.

In the final division of the night, Aaron Merriman picked up his second BSS win of the night as he drove **Santastic Cruiser** to victory in 1:54, tying the filly's lifetime mark. Brett Schwartz trains and co-owns the daughter of Yankee Cruiser with Racehorse Express and Steve Harrington. It was the first win in five starts this year for Santastic Cruiser. Touchin Base finished second with Caviart Leeloo third.

Buckeye Stallion Series action continued Sunday night (May 28) at Northfield Park with the second leg for 3-year-old trotting fillies. Post time for each live racing day at Scioto Downs is 3:15 p.m.

Frank Fraas / OHHA

