

ARTSTANDING: THE ENCORE

If you checked the entries the last few Monday nights at Woodbine, you might have noticed something unusual. Artstanding, a 6-year-old son of Artsplace, is racing in a non-winners of four conditioned race despite earning just over \$600,000. What makes it more unusual is that Artstanding has been away from the races for three years.

"You don't come across too many of those horses, do you?" laughs owner Jim Switlyk. "He last raced in the Cane Pace on Sept. 4 in 2006. He finished fourth to Total Truth, but tore a tendon in his left front. We tried everything. We gave him time off and brought him back again and he injured the same one in 2007. We tried again in November that year and he tore the right one."

Prior to the layoff, Artstanding had three wins in 20 career starts. Included among those wins was the \$175,000 New Jersey Sire Stakes championship as a 2 year old, a season where he also finished second in the \$593,000 Governor's Cup. As a 3 year old, Artstanding won his Cane Pace elim before the fourth-place finish in the final. He also finished second in the \$500,000 New Jersey Classic.

It was obvious to Switlyk that serious tendon injuries to both front legs meant the end of Artstanding's racing career. "He comes from such a good family—his half sister is Little Miss Dragon and she's won over \$700,000—that I decided to try him as a stallion. I moved him to Indiana to Silver Linden Farm (owned by John and Leroy Schmucker)."

Although Artstanding would get 35 mares in his first year and the foals would be well received, Switlyk still harbored thoughts of trying to race him again. "In June of 2008, I had a vet take x-rays of both legs. He told me there was only a slight chance that he could ever race again. He had a lot of scar tissue on both legs and the vet said he would hold up in 2:00, but not in 1:50."

But when another year passed and Artstanding bred the same number of mares despite a reduced stud fee, temptation whispered to Switlyk again.

"In July of 2009, I kept hearing how great he looked," said Switlyk. "So I went to see him myself. The Schmuckers are close with (trainer) Joe Seekman and he came too."

"The horse looked great physically, but also his legs looked like they had never been injured. They turned him out a lot. It's Amish country there and they said he would chase the horse and buggies up and down the roads. It kept him in shape, I think," he said.

After weighing his options, Switlyk decided to try his racing luck one more time. "We sometimes rush horses back to the races, but he was a lightly-raced horse who had three years off. I thought there might be a window of opportunity."

Artstanding needed no special treatment on his road back to the races, said Switlyk.

"Joe (Seekman) did nothing unusual with him, just brought him back like a regular horse and in his first start back at Woodbine (Nov. 9), he was third, right on the wire. He came out of the race great."

With Artstanding's comeback begun, Switlyk is hopeful. "I've decided to keep my fingers crossed and see how far this racing ride will take me."



Artstanding wins a Cane Pace elim in 2006.

BURKE, MACOMBER WIN INDY TITLES

The Burke Racing Stable has steadily raised its profile in Indiana over the last several years, and the North America leader reached the pinnacle at Indiana Downs this season. As has been typical at the Shelbyville oval, the battle for leading trainer honors came down to the final day of the 80-day meet. In the end, trainer Ron Burke edged Trent Stohler by a 41-39 margin to collect his first Indiana title.

"Every year it's gotten better. With Jamie (Rucker) here, it has allowed us to race a full stable. Numbers help a great deal," Burke said. "Winning the first time anywhere validates what you're trying to do. It's nice to finally get a title here."

Burke sent out 159 starters during the meet and led all trainers with \$793,300 in purse earnings. Stohler finished second in the standings in both wins and earnings, as his 165 starters earned \$367,089. Rucker managed the Indiana string for Burke, including Indiana Sire Stakes champions Go On BB and High Speed Life. The stable partnered with leading driver Ricky Macomber.

"Having a strong support group is what it all comes down to," Burke said. "Ricky drives all the horses so we have consistency."

With more than 700 wins and nearly \$14 million in earnings nationwide this season, Burke narrowly missed winning the Hoosier Park title, falling one win short.

Unlike the training title, Indiana Downs' leading driver award was decided in advance of Tuesday's finale. Macomber garnered his second career driving title, and his first at Indiana Downs, with 125 trips to the winner's circle from 787 starts. Trace Tetrick finished second with 108 victories. Macomber also topped all drivers in earnings, accumulating \$1.4 million throughout the meet.

"It's nice to add another title to my resume," the 39-year-old Macomber stated. "I've been fortunate to drive for some good stables this season."—By James Platz

INDIANA DOWNS FINAL STANDINGS

Driver	Wins	Earnings
1. Ricky Macomber Jr.	125	\$1,423,899
2. Trace Tetrick	108	1,166,001
3. Dan Shetler	93	1,313,562
4. Sam Widger	92	998,503
5. Peter Wrenn	85	1,359,566

Trainer	Wins	Earnings
1. Ron Burke	41	\$793,300
2. Trent Stohler	39	367,089
3. Charles Stewart	29	160,242
4. Jeff Brewer	28	227,797
5. Grant Wilfong	26	219,225