

A Toast to Perrault

Jay Hovdey describes the scene at Arlington Park in Chicago on August 29th where six of the first seven finishers in the Budweiser Million were either bred or raced in the British Isles

They should have served the Budweiser warm. Such a radical departure from the necessary chill put to American beer would have been a clear warning to the fans descending upon Arlington Park near Chicago for the August 29 Budweiser Million: Ignore the British horses at your financial peril.

In only its second year of existence, the million-dollar event (now sponsored by the Anheuser-Busch brewers) has taken on a fascinating international reputation. The purse is giddy, with \$600,000 to the winning owner and \$30,000 for simply running fifth. The timing is right, falling midway between the two great weight-for-age classics of Europe, the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes and the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. And its prestige is already secure, given the identities of the first two winners.

In 1981, John Henry, that relentless gelding, refused to quit on a deep surface he obviously loathed and was just up at the wire to defeat The Bart, once trained in Ireland. John Henry went on to be America's first unanimous Horse

of the Year.

This year's winner was Perrault, bred in England by Danton Stud and sold to Criquelette Head as a weanling. After that, the brooding chestnut became a thoroughly international racehorse. His early racing was in France for Baron Thierry Van Zuylem and trainer Pierre Pelat. Late last year the Swiss diamond dealer Serge Fradkoff bought a half interest, and Perrault was sent to Charlie Whittingham in California.

Victories in the San Luis Rey Stakes and Hollywood Gold Cup made Perrault the star he never was in France, and now his triumph over an international field in the Million has brought him full cycle.

Perrault's winning margin at Arlington Park was just over two lengths from Keith Hsu's *Be My Native*, winner this year of the Prix la Force at Longchamp and a sterling second to *Peacetime* in Sandown's Guardian Classic Trial last April, both contested at the Million's 10-furlong distance.

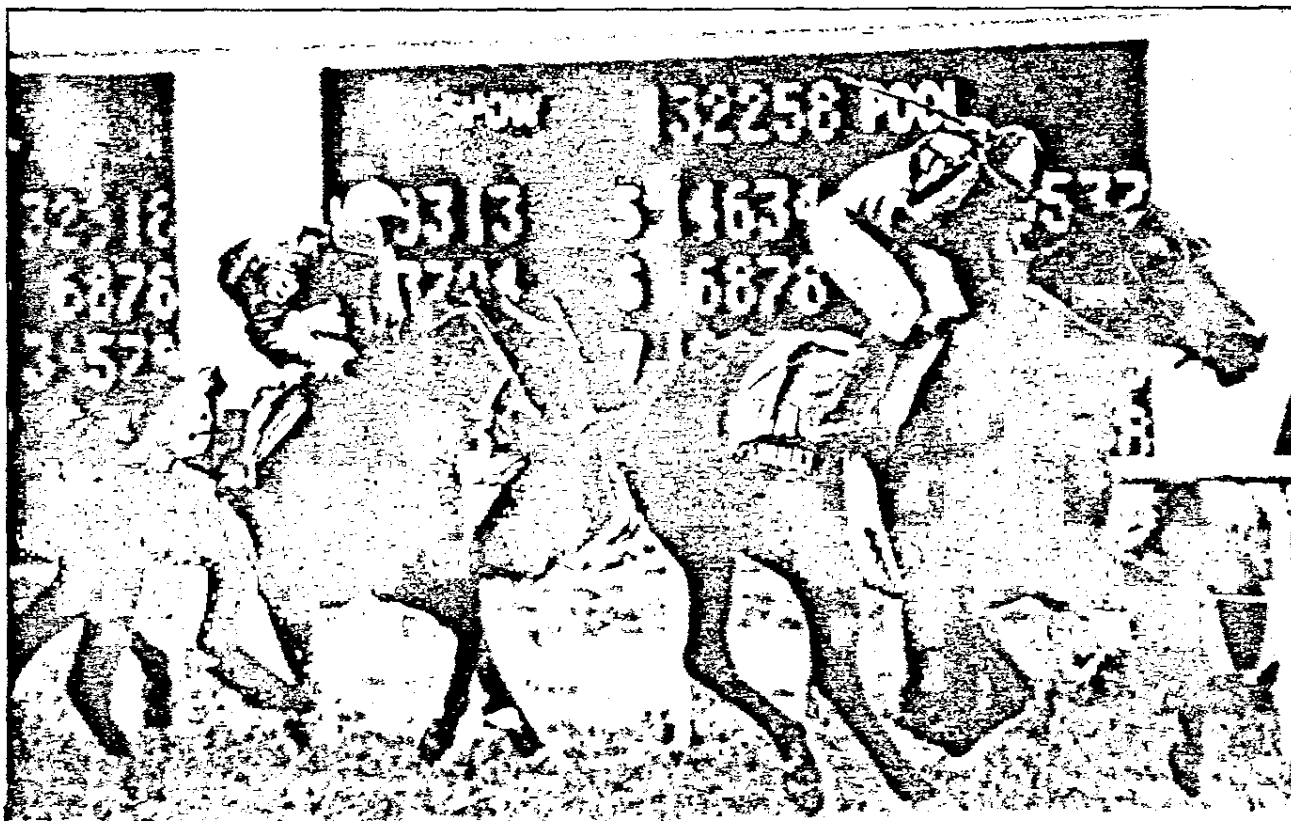
Finishing third was Robert Sangster's *Motavato*, a son of *Apalachee* whose best run came in the Group II Lockinge Stakes in May.

Fifth under the line, about six lengths behind Perrault, was Sangster's four-year-old filly *Star Pastures*, rated even with *Fairy Footsteps* and just behind *Madam Gay* among female milers in England last season. Since the fall of 1981 she has been in California with John Gosden.

Erins Isle, winner of Hollywood Park's Sunset Handicap, was sixth, a disappointment to his owners and the handicappers who predicted he would upset his stablemate, Perrault. Fortunately for them, the two were coupled in the on-track tote because of the common trainer, so the only damage done was to the egos.

And coming in seventh was Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's *Noalto*, ridden by Lester Piggott and offering a price of 131-to-1. There was speculation that *The Maestro* had never been astride such a rank outsider in the betting, but he got the

Laffie Pincay drives Perrault up to the line ahead of Be My Native (Don Brumfield, nearside) and the almost hidden Motavato (Steve Cauthen) to win the Budweiser Million.



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most out of the son of Nonoalco, and unfinished seven more highly fancied entrants, including the South American champion Duplex, Prix d'Isipahan winner Al Nasr and the mare Ack's Secret.

For those not keeping count, six of the first seven finishers were products of the racing or breeding of the British Isles. Such complete dominance was a shock to the American system, for only the Kentucky-bred Lemhi Gold (by Vaguely Noble) could penetrate the forward echelon to finish fourth. Because he boasted victories over both Perrault (in the San Juan Capistrano) and Erins Isle (in the Sword Dancer Stakes), Lemhi Gold was a respected 3-to-1 at the windows, but poor racing luck and an interruption in his training compromised his best form.

But six of the first seven! They each deserve a look, saving Perrault for last.

Be My Native is a son of the accomplished American stakes winner Our Native, who had the misfortune to be foaled the same year as Secretariat. On one of his many prospecting trips to America, Anthony "Tote" Cherry-Downes found Be My Native at the Keeneland Fall Sale and paid \$45,000 in the name of Keith Hsu.

"The prices are quite mad at the Keeneland summer sale," said Tote on the morning of the Million as he stood outside Arlington's quarantine barn. He'd also purchased Diomed Stakes winner Prima Voce at the same sale, going to \$25,000.

Be My Native arrived in Chicago, along with Motavato and Noalto, on the Wednesday before the Sunday race. "He's a perfect little gentleman," remarked Tote, who retained an interest in the three-year-old colt. "English horsemen say that a trip to France is like a race in itself, but we have no idea yet what a trip like this will take out of him."

"Between May 12 and June 15 he had four tough races, and two of them were in France. He was just a bit over the top for that last one, but we've got him back to his best weight now. This is, after all, the kind of race you want to have your best wares on display."

In his race prior to the Million, Be My Native finished sixth of seven in the Benson and Hedges Gold Cup, won so impressively by Assert. "You could put a blanket over the next five finishers that day," observed Tote.

Trainer Robert Armstrong and his advisors decided to go with a local jockey for the Million, one who knew the course and would not be daunted by the influx of foreign talent. "Use Don Brumfield," re-

commended Piggott. "He's only a couple of years younger than me." Instead, they went with Earlie Fires, whose reputation for fearless attack and smart moves was solid throughout America's heartland.

It turned out to be a big weekend for Fires, who began by winning the \$480,000 Arlington-Washington Futurity aboard the Greek Answer colt Total Departure on the day before the Million.

"One thing our colt would prefer,

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however, is a bit of give to the ground," added Tote as he looked skyward. "A little rain would be fine just now. Actually, that was one of the reasons we came, because we were told it always rained here in August." The course was dry, firm and springy, but Be My Native had no trouble with it at all. Except for a bit of snarled traffic at the turn for home, he had a clear run all the way, coming from 11th position early to run down the gallant Motavato. Keith Hsu, whose company deals in military software, regretted that there wasn't another furlong left in which to catch Perrault. But a second prize of \$200,000 was some consolation.

Only Noalto was a longer price in the betting. Be My Native, who two months before had been favoured in the Group II Prince of Wales, went postward at 72-to-1. Linked with Perrault in a "perfecta", the numbers paid \$174 for a two-dollar stake.

Motavato, a four-year-old Kentucky-bred, posed an intriguing mystery for American players. The names of Sangster and jockey Steve Cauthen were immediately identifiable with success, but their horse had never raced beyond 8½ furlongs. His best losing effort may have come last fall at Newmarket when he was beaten only three lengths by Moorestyle.

If an American horse had presented such credentials to punters, they would have immediately seen him as a likely

pacesetter and tried to project his stamina. Frankly, no one should have been surprised when Cauthen popped out of the stalls with Motavato and placed him right on the lead. He was flanked by Ack's Secret, a Gr. 1 race winner of more than \$800,000, but with distance limitations, and the French entry Al Nasr, showing unlikely speed. Motavato was relaxed and running on an easy gallop.

Cauthen dispatched his pursuers down the long backstraight and opened daylight. At the top of the stretch, with less than a quarter of a mile to go, he was still unaccosted. "If I can just lull them for another few yards," thought Cauthen. "That's the breather he needs to hold them off."

But Perrault came flying under Laffite Pincay Jr., a wise and powerful rider who knows what Cauthen can do on the lead. Perrault throttled Motavato for a half furlong and then spat him out, but in tribute to the Sangster colt, he did not quit. It took an opportunistic Be My Native to seize second by only a neck.

Sangster's other entry, Star Pastures, is on her way to becoming thoroughly American. But her season has been fraught with obstacles, beginning early in the year.

"She had a terribly hard campaign last year," noted John Gosden, the son of a trainer with family in Sussex. "It took her a while to come back, and when we finally got her to the races she came out with a badly bruised foot. Had to cut away nearly half the hoof."

The daughter of Northfields made an indelible imprint on Southern Californians in her American debut. Coming on with a slicing move along the rails, she nearly pulled off an exciting upset in the Grade I Yellow Ribbon Stakes at Santa Anita Park. She was beaten by the King's Bishop mare Queen to Conquer.

The Yellow Ribbon was the 11th start of 1982 for Star Pastures, who would never be described as robust. Her strength is in her action, and her aggressive, steady acceleration when called on.

"She is as good now as she's been all year," said Gosden the day before the Million. "After that last race (a victory in the Palomar Handicap at Del Mar) she was ready for a big effort - wherever it came. Mr Sangster wanted her in this race, so here we are."

Actually, it wasn't until the Monday before the Million that Star Pastures was officially in the starting field. Spence Bay, owned by Nelson Bunker Hunt and Bruce McNall, was withdrawn at the last minute, and Gosden had to hustle to find a cargo

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