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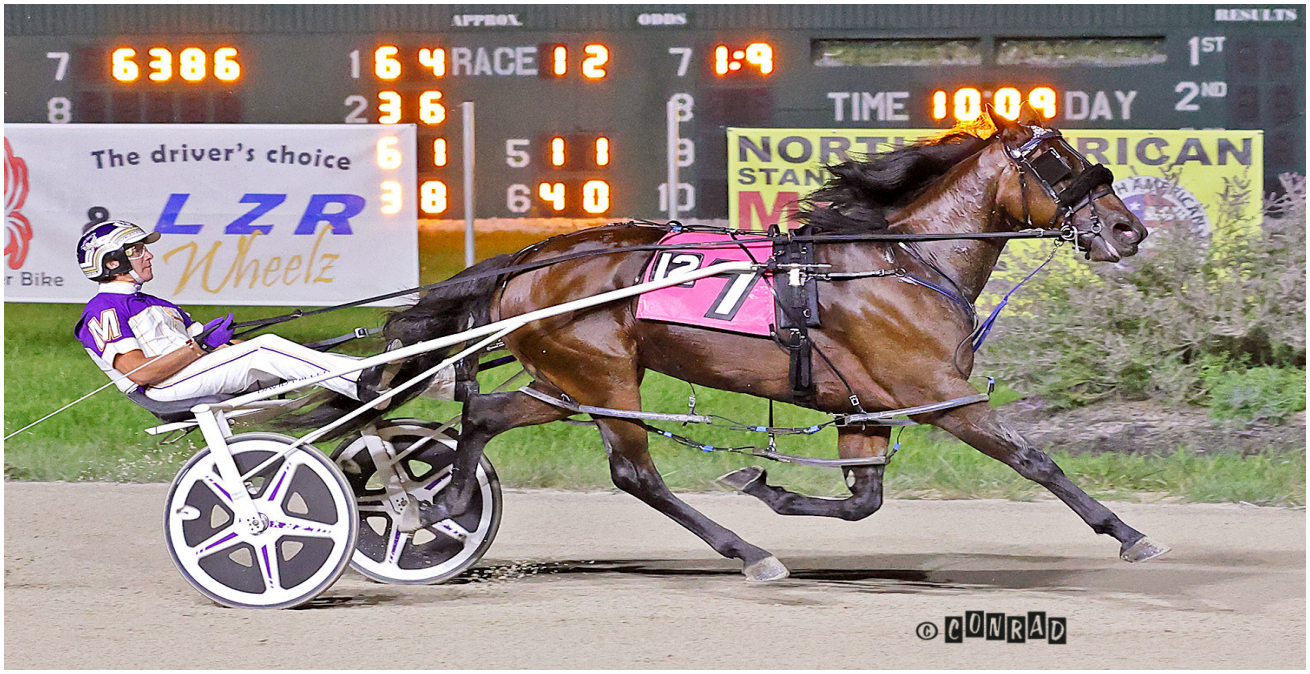

Tempting Flames with driver David Miller at Eldorado Scioto Downs on Aug. 29

'She Seems Pretty Perfect'

Tempting Flames Impresses with Hot Freshman Season

By Wes Mayberry

Ask trainer Michael Hitchcock about Tempting Flames, and you'll likely hear high praise.

"I'm very pleased with her," he says. "She's done everything anybody would want."

That includes hitting the board in all seven starts thus far in her freshman campaign with five wins, two seconds, and $228,100 earned. And the competition hasn't been easy. The Catch The Fire filly out of Hotshot Temptress made her debut purse start in the $150,000 Next Generation at Eldorado Scioto Downs and has raced in the Ohio State Fair Stake and all five legs of the Ohio Sires Stakes. But Hitchcock, of South Vienna, Ohio, saw shades of what the filly could become early on.

"Training her down, I thought she was going to be a pretty nice filly," he says. "She's very powerful. She has a very nice build to her — she's built very strong. She's very muscular and rugged."

Bred by Ivy Holdings, of Apple Creek, Ohio, Tempting Flames was a $52,000 purchase by William Hartt, of Carmel, Maine, at the Ohio Selected Jug Sale in September 2025. As a member of Hitchcock's stable, the filly pacer finished second and first in a pair of qualifiers leading up to the Next Generation race on July 4. She put her racing talents on display that night, tripping the wire in 1:52.3 in a photo finish with win-

ner Real Classy.

Next came a runner-up finish to Party Up in the first leg of the OSS at Northfield Park, but, much to the delight of her connections, it's been nothing but wins ever since.

"She's very well behaved and doesn't do anything wrong. She's almost like an aged racehorse in the barn and in training," Hitchcock says. "She gets a little high-strung in the paddock, but other than that, she seems pretty perfect."

Tempting Flames followed a win in the second leg of the OSS at Scioto Downs in 1:51.3 with a one-length victory over Real Classy in 1:52 in the Ohio State Fair Stake at the same track. She was victorious in the third leg of the OSS at Northfield in 1:52.3, and then came the start that put her in the record books.

With Hall of Famer David Miller in the sulky for Tempting Flames' fourth-leg race back at Scioto Downs, the filly stretched a two-length lead at the halfway mark into a victory by seven and a half lengths in 1:50 on Aug. 18. That performance not only broke the track record for 2-year-old filly pacers, it equaled the world record for a five-eighths mile track.

"To be honest, I was kind of not believing it because I didn't think the fractions were right, but we'll take it," Hitchcock says.

Breadnbutterz led at the quarter pole in :28 that night, but Tempting Flames went in front going to the :54.2 half and passed the three-quarter mark in 1:22.1. While that performance was certainly impressive, Hitchcock liked what he saw in her next race — the fifth leg of the OSS at Scioto Downs on Aug. 29 — even better.

"To me, her last start was more impressive than the start she went in 50 just because we raced her out of a hole, and she was so manageable," he says. "Dave (Miller) was very, very happy with her."

That night, Thought I Had It, who went off as a 61-1 longshot, led the field past the first three calls in :26.3, :56.2, and 1:25 as Tempting Flames sat in fourth place between three and four lengths back. But the Hitchcock trainee used a late burst of speed to take command down the stretch and win by three and a half lengths in 1:52.1.

There's no doubt that Tempting Flames is carrying plenty of positive momentum into the OSS Scarlet Championship on Sept. 12 at Scioto Downs. She finished the five legs with 230 points in the series, well ahead of second-place Party Up (188) with Cleveland Darby (160), Breadnbutterz (125), and Moni N The Safe (83) rounding out the top five in the standings. But Hitchcock isn't making her the prohibitive favorite just yet.

"They're all very good horses, so everybody has a chance," he says. "We'll just take it one week at a time and hope for a good post and see what happens."

But to her competitors' connections, Tempting Flames appears to be the one to beat.

"It doesn't look like we're going to beat that killer of Hitchcock's right now — that might be the best filly in the country from what I've seen," says Party Up trainer Joe Bongiorno. "I think that we might be second best."

Tempting Flames' record-breaking performance at Scioto Downs on Aug. 18

2026 Ohio Sires Stakes Final Standings

Divisional Top 10

3-Year-Old Colt Pace
1. Up In Place- 153
2. Pet Project- 141
3. Prolific Blend- 129
4. Backninebar- 115
5. Myboypank- 112
6. Tsunami Seas- 103
7. Skull N Crossbones- 76
8. When Is Parade- 72
9. Rock Son- 53
10. Crocodile Station- 45

3-Year-Old Colt Trot
1. Tom Largo- 230
2. Rose Run Boom- 141
3. Rose Run Banker- 112
4. Big Ranger- 102
5. Grape Crush- 92
6. Soulful Saul- 72
7. Knob Creek Moni- 65
8. Water Slide- 57
9. Special Moni- 39
10. Max The Mighty- 35

2-Year-Old Colt Pace
1. Don'ttruckwithme- 205
2. Jett James- 179
3. Night Surfer- 153
4. North Rim- 125
5. The Mighty Brix- 80
6. First Grade- 79
7. Ocean Party- 76
8. Atlantic Ivey- 32
9. Into The Blaze- 26
10. Jidoo Bythesea- 21

2-Year-Old Colt Trot
1. Iluvmymoni- 205
2. Debt Free- 192
3. Mind On My Moni- 179
4. Roll'n In Moni- 109
5. Royal Moni- 92
6. Motor Earle- 87
7. Walks The Fire- 78
8. Sigurd- 59
9. Cool Julio- 54
10. Jet Range- 40

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
OHIO
SIRES STAKES

3-Year-Old Filly Pace
1. Sassy By The Sea- 175
2. Vanna By The River- 150
3. Laude Da- 113
4. Seaside Shuffle- 112
5. Rodeo Dancer- 109
6. Kb Wrecking Ball- 96
7. Seaside Charm- 77
8. Rhodena Blue- 60
9. Laughing Two- 57
10. Shacarri- 49

3-Year-Old Filly Trot
1. Rose Run Brooke- 129
2. Chip Shot- 102
3. Mooter Tooter- 88
4. Faster Horses- 81
5. Godusa- 78
6. Setyoursightshigh- 77
7. Sarah's Mission- 75
8. Fairytale Moni- 66
9. Charlotte Elise- 65
10. Seven Lick Range- 63

2-Year-Old Filly Pace
1. Tempting Flames- 230
2. Party Up- 188
3. Cleveland Darby- 160
4. Breadnbutterz- 125
5. Moni N The Safe- 83
6. Splendid Station- 67
7. Jar Of Hearts- 50
8. Thought I Had It- 37
8. Yourgonaloveme- 37
10. Miki Grad- 36
10. Dancin Miki- 36

2-Year-Old Filly Trot
1. Made For More- 180
1. Rose Run Cybill- 180
3. Secrets Ilia- 163
4. Miz Ella Paige- 117
4. Envious Queen- 117
6. Kissme Ifyoucan- 102
7. Moni Line- 70
8. Blue Ranger- 65
9. Lady Bountiful- 63
10. Janet's Big Star- 45

Peglos Dream's Improbable OSS Championship

Peglos Dream and connections in the winner's circle at Eldorado Scioto Downs on June 12, 1992. Credit: Conrad Photo

By Bob Roberts

String them together and the anticipated becomes the expected. For repeat winners, relief of not having failed often out-hooves the thrill of being the very best. Stop and smell the roses? No time. Must move on to the next challenge.

Then there are the "one-title wonders." They wear their solo success proudly, grateful for having reached the pinnacle. The once-in-a-lifetime achievement is a badge they never tire of polishing and displaying.

In Buckeye harness racing circles, few prizes are more valued than an Ohio Sires Stakes championship. The annual series is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Its archives are stacked high with somewhere between 2,500 and 3,500 OSS races on the books, the majority of them point-earning preliminaries leading to a handful of rich, late-season title miles.

A fascinating chapter among the one-title wonders is the story of Peglos Dream, a little filly with an eye for the winner's circle. She literally stuffed a career of racing into one season, the one during which she won 20 of 30 starts and was crowned the 1988 Ohio Sire Stakes 3-year-old pacing champion.

That she got to the races at all is an accomplishment. Peglos Dream ranks among the most unwanted and inexpensive Standardbreds in pari-mutuel history. The daughter of Cookie Monster out of the Melvin's Woe mare Sunny Carolina was a sales ring throw in, part of a 1985 package with her dam.

It was a two-for-one deal that married couples Paul and Lois Brooks and Kenny and Peg Warren couldn't pass up. They got both for sales ring pocket change — just $600.

"Paul owned a trucking company, and Kenny sold Peterbilt trucks," says Kip Yates, who served as Peglos Dream's groom. "They had a horse together named Irish Demon (a winner just once in 34 starts), but they went to a mixed sale in Ohio looking to buy a broodmare. They liked Sunny Carolina. Standing alongside her in the sales ring was a weanling filly, no more than four of five months old. They got both, and that weanling was none other than Peglos Dream."

That puts Peglos Dream's sales ring value somewhere between zero dollars and $600. She was named for the wives of Brooks and Warren because it was their dream to own a racehorse.

Fast forward two years and Brooks and Warren were looking for somebody to train their bargain-basement filly. They met with trainer Mike Morris and Yates because of the sire Cookie Monster.

"There were three Cookie Monster horses in Ohio in 1987. Me and Mike had the two colts, Brooks and Warren had the other one, a filly, which was Peglos Dream," says Yates. "They had come over to the farm where we were at and said they wanted us to train the filly along with an old knee-knocker they had that they wanted to race at Raceway Park. They said the filly was broke but not broke that well."

Morris and Yates quickly found out what "not broke that well" meant.

"Kenny lived on a country road outside of Findlay," say Yates. "The road was about a half-mile long, and there was very little traffic on it, so that's where she

jogged. He would hook her up in his truck and go down the road. That's how she was broke, if you can call that broke."

Peglos Dream was put in the hands of Morris and Yates in January of her 2-year-old year. They broke her the proper way, although she fought them hoof and nail.

"She was absolutely meaner than a snake — tiny, jet black, and nasty," recalls Yates. "Mike and I were the only people that got along with her. She would stand in her stall with her back end to us, looking over her left shoulder. You didn't rush her — you did things on her time. You didn't control her, which we figured out in a hurry. Otherwise, she'd swat you."

Peglos Dream trained at a little track in the Wood County village of Hoytville, which Yates says "had a population of about 600, but if you count the dogs, it was 650."

When Morris and Yates got her to the races in 1987, she was a pleasant surprise. Competing on the county fair circuit, she won 11 of 14 starts with three seconds, good for $16,980 (around $50,000 in 2026 dollars). Among those victories were track records at Napoleon, Urbana, and Upper Sandusky.

"In those days, she was racing for $2,000 purses," says Yates. "And her record doesn't include the four matinees she won before that. We knew we had something when we both caught her pacing a last quarter in 29 seconds in a jog cart up at Raceway Park."

Following Peglos Dream's freshman year, she was stabled full-time at Raceway Park. The partnership of Brooks and Warren ended with a unique twist.

"Paul bought out Kenny," says Yates. "The deal was that Kenny, in addition to some cash, got Sunny Carolina, the dam of Peglos. Everybody was happy. There were no hard feelings."

Peglos Dream began her championship year in February, racing at Northville Downs in Michigan. She won twice, competing against males and beating colts at Raceway Park.

"They didn't have a fillies and mares open at Raceway Park," says Yates. "We then went to Northfield Park for a series. She won all three legs and the final."

The Ohio Sires Stakes began in May at Lebanon, and Peglos Dream, racing on top of her game, was more than ready, going wire-to-wire to win by nearly five lengths.

"I was very superstitious. I could never watch her leave the starting gate," says Yates. "I would always turn my back to the track. When I heard the announcer say they were racing, I'd turn back around. She loved being on the front end and dictating the pace."

The second leg was Memorial Day weekend at Scioto Downs, and Peglos Dream finished second. She would finish second again in the third and fourth legs at Northfield Park and Scioto Downs, respectively. The final leg was back at her home track in Toledo, and she shed her bridesmaid tag to win.

The racing gods and the luck of the calendar were in Peglos Dream's favor because the Aug. 28 championship mile was at Raceway Park.

"It was pretty much over at the half," says Yates. "She held that lead down the stretch, and as she approached the wire, track announcer Sam McKee, who had a soft spot in his heart for her, told the crowd, 'The dream has come true.'"

Driven by Ray Paver Jr., the weanling that was a sales ring throw-in with her inexpensive dam, had won a stakes race worth $150,000.

Yates still cherishes the winner's circle photo that he gladly shares with anybody and everybody.

"You can see in the picture that there were so many people, Ray was pushed way down the line," says Yates. "What you can't see are another 100 people on the other side of the fence who couldn't get in the picture."

After the OSS score, Peglos Dream, as if she felt there was nothing else to prove, was an infrequent winner. The filly who had won 31 of her first 44 career starts won just 12 of her remaining 204 starts.

"A freak of nature," says Yates. "She caught lightning in a bottle the year she won the Sires championship."

Peglos Dream retired after her 10th year of racing in 1996. She lived into her 20s and died on Brooks' farm.

All four of Peglos Dream's owners have passed away. Morris, her trainer, is retired and living in Tennessee.

Yates lives in suburban Columbus and has been known to parade around with a scarlet T-shirt with gray lettering that spells out Ohio Sires Stakes over an outline of the Buckeye state.

"At the top of the shirt is the word 'winner,'" says Yates. "The shirt is 38 years old and is still in good shape. Peglos Dream won it for me."

2026 New All-Age Track Records at Ohio Fairs

Pacing

Circleville - Burnout, 1:56
Bellefontaine - Gypsy's Brother, 1:56.1
Mount Vernon - Gypsy's Brother, 1:55.2
Marysville - Fired Up Henry L, 1:54.3
Sidney - Ants Marching, 1:56
Athens - Gc's Legend, 1:56.1
Celina - Ants Marching, 1:52.3
Zanesville - Hunka Hunka, 1:56
Napoleon - Woodrow Blue Chip, 1:56.3
Lima - Carbine, 1:54.3
Woodsfield - Gc's Legend, 1:55
Canton - Stoke The Fire, 1:57
Findlay - Carbine, 1:55.1

Trotting

Bucyrus - Lynn Range, 1:58
Athens - Out Of Range, 1:59
Berea - Where Theres Smoke, 1:59.4
Napoleon - Macmorris Hanover, 1:59.3
Wellington - Macmorris Hanover, 1:58
Woodsfield - Out Of Range, 1:59
Findlay - Jefferson Hanover, 1:58.2

Ohio Fair Racing - Upcoming Schedule

Dates and start times subject to change

Friday, Sept. 4

Geauga County Fair (Burton, OH), 4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 5

Mahoning County Fair (Canfield, OH), 11 a.m.

Fulton County Fair (Wauseon, OH), 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, Sept. 6

Washington County Fair (Marietta, OH), 1 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 7

Van Wert County Fair (Van Wert, OH), 12 p.m.

Mahoning County Fair (Canfield, OH), 11 a.m.

Washington County Fair (Marietta, OH), 1 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 8

Fulton County Fair (Wauseon, OH), 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 9

Hardin County Fair (Kenton, OH), 6 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 10

Hardin County Fair (Kenton, OH), 6 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 11

Morgan County Fair (McConnelsville, OH), 1 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12

Morgan County Fair (McConnelsville, OH), 1 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 14

Guernsey County Fair (Old Washington, OH), 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 15

Wayne County Fair (Wooster, OH), 12 p.m.

Wyandot County Fair (Upper Sandusky, OH), 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 16

Wayne County Fair (Wooster, OH), 12 p.m.

Guernsey County Fair (Old Washington, OH), 1 p.m.

Williams County Fair (Montpelier, OH), 1 p.m.

Wyandot County Fair (Upper Sandusky, OH), 5 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 20

Delaware County Fair (Delaware, OH), 1 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 21

Delaware County Fair (Delaware, OH), 1 p.m.

Ashland County Fair (Ashland, OH), 12 p.m. & 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 22

Delaware County Fair (Delaware, OH), 1 p.m.