

# Sweet Lou Prov Sweet Dre

Trainer Ron Burke doesn't get too nervous at races given the number his charges have completed. He admits he does feel butterflies before Sweet Lou Prov.  
"There's something about him that gets to me."

By M. Kelly Young • Photos by New Image Media



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## THE DAY AFTER

the biggest win of trainer Ron Burke's career was akin to the day after a milestone birthday; the party was over and it was time to go back to work.

His two-year-old pacing colt Sweet Lou may have won the Breeders Crown in a dominating 1:49 world record, but the seasoned trainer still had to return overnight to his Pennsylvania-based stable of nearly 200 horses and keep grinding away at what the Burke Stable does best, sending out winners.

"Basically we all got back on a plane together and I got home at 4:30 in the morning," recalled Burke of Crown night with his team of owners. The Breeders Crown effort, orchestrated by the colt's regular pilot Dave Palone, may be watched by [clicking here](#).

"It was the greatest win of our careers, but I said to my wife when I got home, 'You think when you win the Breeders Crown it's going to change your life.' But the next day was the same as the day before."

**Trainer Ron Burke (holding horse on left) poses with the rest of Sweet Lou's connections following the colt's very impressive world record performance in last year's Breeders Crown final at Woodbine. "It was the greatest win of our careers," said Burke.**

Just because Burke didn't do cartwheels on the Woodbine apron doesn't mean he's taking Sweet Lou's \$686,647 freshman season lightly.

"He's the one horse that does make me nervous whenever he races, and I know that probably separates him from the other horses," he admitted. "Other races I don't even get nervous any more, but there's something about him that gets to me."

That's not surprising considering the Yankee Cruiser colt won 10 of 12 starts last year, including the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes Championship and the International Stake in Lexington, and was second his other two outings, all with Palone on board.

"After his first couple of starts I think I realized that he might be that

special horse that you always wanted to have," Burke recalled. "It's silly to say that because we've had horses that are very, very special, but maybe the bigger thing is we own a big part of this horse and we started him as a baby."

Burke owns the colt with Weaver Brusceci (Mark Weaver and Michael Brusceci), Larry Karr and Phillip Collura. The group purchased him at Harrisburg for \$38,000, the third highest price for a Yankee Cruiser last year. Seth Rosenfeld, who operates under the name of Birnam Wood Farms, was the architect behind the mating of Yankee Cruiser to the Falcons Future mare Sweet Future.

"We had success with Yankee Cruiser in Ohio and were looking to pick one out that was bred to a better mare," explained the trainer.



## FEBRUARY 2012 STAKES PAYMENTS

NOMINATION FORMS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.THEREDMILE.COM](http://WWW.THEREDMILE.COM)

### Grand Circuit Events

#### #1) Kentucky Futurity #120

*Foals of 2009 to Race in 2012*

#### #2) Tattersalls Pace 2012

*Foals of 2009 to Race in 2012*

##### PAYMENT DUE FOR EVENTS #1 & 2:

	OPEN	FILLY
February 15	\$1,000	\$500
March 15	\$1,500	\$750

#### #3) Bluegrass Series #37

*Foals of 2009 to Race in 2012*

##### PAYMENT SCHEDULE FOR EVENT #3:

February 15	\$550
March 15	\$750
April 15	\$850

##### \*Supplemental Payment due February 15 \$5,000

\*Ineligible three year olds may be made eligible to the three year old events in 2012 by making the three-year-old supplemental nomination fee on February 15 of \$5,000 plus the March 15 and April 15 payments

### “TO BE RACED AT THE MEADOWLANDS”

#### THREE YEAR OLD FILLY EARLY CLOSERS (OPEN)

#### #4) NADIA LOBELL-3YO FILLY PACE

\$200,000E Friday July 20

#### #5) THE MONI MAKER- 3YO FILLY TROT

\$200,000E Friday August 17

##### PAYMENT SCHEDULE FOR EVENTS #4 & 5:

February 15	\$500
March 15	\$750
April 15	\$1,000
May 15	\$1,500
Declaration Fee	\$2,500

## SWEET LOU PROVIDES SWEET DREAMS



Sweet Lou's dam had already produced a couple of top performers including Bettor Sweet, a winner of \$2.2 million so far in his career and also a winner on Crown night at Woodbine over the best free for all pacers in North America. That race may be [viewed here](#).

Karr and Collura are long-time owners with Burke and he describes the two men as the biggest supporters of yearlings in his barn. Karr was partners on Ideal Weather, a New Jersey Sire Stakes standout who went on to earn more than \$850,000. Collura is part of the team on Foxy Lady, who was third in the Breeders Crown for three-year-old pacing fillies in 2011.

"Mark (Weaver) is more into the racehorses and these guys have always been interested in the young horses," explained Burke. "They are very instrumental in picking out the young horses. I don't know if anybody puts in more tape time or pedigree time than those two.

"They start eliminating horses and get it down to about 200 and from there we as a group start eliminating. Basically,

**On the same night that Sweet Lou captured his Breeders Crown final at Woodbine, his older brother, Bettor Sweet, was also victorious in the older pacing horse finale giving breeder Seth Rosenfeld and dam of each standout pacer, Sweet Future, a rare double.**

my dad (Mickey) and I have the last call, but a lot of what we see is based on what Larry and Phil have seen on tape and what they've done looking at the breeding. And Mark helps out too, so it's truly a group effort."

That group effort looked to pay off from the start when Sweet Lou showed talent early on.

"He trained down in the top set but I wouldn't say we thought he was our best colt. He was one of the best three or four we figured. I think maybe that's what made him great, he never had a bad day," said the trainer.

"The first time we put him in the bike, that's when we thought we might have underestimated him. He's always been a very willing horse, but when he goes slow he doesn't look that special," he said of his trainee.

"He's really pretty intelligent and hasn't been hard to train. We've done better jobs with way worse horses than him."

Burke's job was made easier by the fact that Sweet Lou never had a setback from the time he was broken until he was laid off at the end of the season.

"He was sound this whole year and I don't even know that he ever ran a temperature," said Burke. "I did notice that you didn't need to work him much if he had breaks in between. Usually one good training mile and he'd be ready to go. He seems to hold his fitness well, especially for a young horse."

One other individual very familiar with Sweet Lou is Chris Coyle of Olive Branch farm in Wingate, North Carolina. Coyle received the horse for some R&R time after his Breeders Crown win and has some interesting observations.



# Yonkers Raceway



## 2012 PETTICOAT & SAGAMORE HILL PACING SERIES

Late Closing Series For Three and Four- Year-Olds in 2012  
Nominations Close - February 1, 2012- No Starting Fee  
Nomination Fee - \$200 U.S. Funds Only

**PETTICOAT SERIES** - 3 & 4 YO Filly and Mare Pacers  
Non-winners 4 races and/or \$40,000 Lifetime through December 1, 2011.

**SAGAMORE HILL SERIES** - 3 & 4 YO Colt, Horse and Gelding Pacers  
Non-winners 4 races and/or \$40,000 Lifetime through December 1, 2011.

### PETTICOAT SERIES FILLIES

March 12  
March 19  
March 26  
April 2  
April 2

### SAGAMORE HILL SERIES COLTS, HORSES & GELDINGS

March 13	First Preliminary	\$12,500
March 20	Second Preliminary	\$12,500
March 27	Third Preliminary	\$12,500
April 3	Consolation	\$25,000
April 3	Final	\$50,000A - Fillies \$50,000A - Colts, Horses & Geldings

Nomination Fees Added To Final Race According to Sex

### CONDITIONS

- The fields and post positions for all races; preliminary, finals and consolations will be drawn by lot. All races 1 mile dashes.
- If there is more than one division of any preliminary race, each division will race for the full advertised purse. If more than three divisions of a preliminary race are required, right is reserved to race one or more of these additional divisions on the next two racing nights.
- The declared horses with the highest money-winnings will be eligible to the final and consolation races. The final and consolation races will be limited to eight starters. Choice of a starter for those horses that are declared in of horses with the same money-winnings will be drawn by lot except that a non-stable entry horse will be given preference over a horse creating a stable entry. In the event not enough money-winnings declare for the final or consolations, starters in the series that are not money-winnings may declare and will be drawn by lot, to obtain a full field of eight. A trainer and/or owner will be limited to only a two horse coupled entry in both the final and consolation. The consolation race must have six separate betting interests or it may be canceled by the raceway.
- Purse Distribution: 50% - First, 25% - Second, 12% - Third, 8% - Fourth, 5% - Fifth
- Declarations to start close at a prescribed time and date, and must be made for all preliminary, final and consolation races.
- Should circumstances prevent the racing of any or all of these races, monies paid in will be refunded to owners of horses nominated unless one race of the series has been contested. In the event of weather or other unforeseeable cancellation of any preliminary race, no make-up will be made. In the event of weather or other unforeseeable cancellation of the consolation and final races a make-up will be made the following week.
- One charted line meeting the qualifying standards is required within 30 days. If continued satisfactory performance is not maintained in races, additional qualifying line(s) will be required and subsequent declaration rejected until this requirement is fulfilled.
- There will be no refunds for horses that are not properly nominated.
- Yonkers Raceway reserves the right to refuse any horse, trainer, driver and/or owner to race in this series.
- These races will be conducted under the rules and regulations of the New York State Racing and Wagering Board and Yonkers Raceway General Rules and Procedures.
- Judges official order of finish will be used in determining eligibility to the Final events, exclusive of all appeals yet to be decided at the time of declaration to the Final events. In the case of a positive drug test, all appeals will be excluded from eligibility to final events until they are resolved by adjudication.

### NOMINATION BLANK

NAME	COLOR	SEX	AGE	SIRE	DAM
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Owner or Trainer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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## SWEET LOU PROVIDES SWEET DREAMS

"I was familiar with his mother, his grandmother and great grandmother and I saw him twice prior to his selling as a yearling. As most people would know I am very close to David Meirs of Concord Stud Farm where he was raised," explained Coyle.

"On one visit to the farm he caught my eye because of the very distinctive markings (the horse has a large blaze which covers almost his whole face, a white front coronet and his lower right hind leg is white with a large brown spot).

"He has a hind leg like no other we've ever seen and facially he is very much like (the colt's third dam) Fly Fly Dahrlin who I worked with. It looks like someday he will be going to stud somewhere and he will change the look of our breed with those distinctive white markings. But hey, Camluck and Jate Lobell left more white than most on their offspring so it can't be all bad."

"He looks great," added Coyle. "When he got here he was down maybe 75 pounds but given the racing he did that is not out of the ordinary.

"It's all back now and I'd say he's grown an inch and a half too. He was and is very good soundness-wise as are most of the Burke horses which is why they are the number one operation in the game.

"Not because the Burkes are clients of mine, but I do believe Sweet Lou will be one of major players in those big three-year-old races in 2012," he added.

Thanks to his performance last season, Sweet Lou was named the Two Year Old Colt Pacer of the Year when the Dan Patch award winners were announced in late December.

"I think it's really important to Mark and those guys. For some of them it is their first Dan Patch and that is always really exciting. But even for us (he and his father) it's exciting because it's a colt that was bought as yearling, broken by my father, and there's a lot of pride in doing that, too."

Sweet Lou has already headed back into training and there is no doubt eyes will be on him from the start, anticipating his return to the track. But the pressure of having one of the top three-year-

old pacing colts, the glamour division of harness racing, isn't something that keeps Burke up at night.

"With the group of my owners, I'm not getting fired if he comes out and goes zero for the rest of his life. With the rest of our horses, we're still going to win our overnight races and pay our bills and have fun.

"So basically I'm going to enjoy it and not worry about it and just do the best that I can," said Burke about dealing

**"The first time we put him in the bike, that's when we thought we might have underestimated him. He's always been a very willing horse, but when he goes slow he doesn't look that special. He's really pretty intelligent and hasn't been hard to train. We've done better jobs with way worse horses than him." - Ron Burke**

with the pressure.

The colt will train down in Florida and likely begin his season in the Pennsylvania Sire Stakes and then Burke plans to start him in every big stakes event there is. Although he hasn't been in the position of bringing back a freshman division leader before, the challenge of pacing a young horse for the sometimes brutal sophomore season doesn't intimidate him.

"In the last couple of years we have gotten used to racing stakes horses so it's not a big deal for us. The thing I've liked in the last few years is our two-year-olds have come back as better three-year-olds, almost across the board, so I'm

excited that hopefully the same thing will happen with Lou."

Even though he's already a world record holder, Sweet Lou will have to remain sound and speedy to stay on top of his peers.

"That's what I think we're probably known best for, making them go fast," admitted Burke. "That's not an issue we have. Maybe the bigger issue we have is over-pushing ours.

"I've gotten a little bit better in the last couple years, but the bigger thing with me is not worrying about the fact that he's going to have to go fast, it's about not making him go too fast too quick.

"We're going to make sure he doesn't always race on the front, pick the right spots and if he's not good for a race, we'll skip it. I like the fact that his family shows the ability to go along. Bettor Sweet was a much better three-year-old than he was a two-year-old, he was a better four-year-old than a three-year-old. I like to see that in the family so I'm hoping that will carry over to Lou," the trainer said.

So with big races on the horizon, and what Burke admits is the biggest ego among his ownership team, what does success look like next year for this colt?

"Being honest, earning less than \$1 million in some ways would be disappointing. We want to stay away from mediocrity. I want to try and win most of the big races next year, but I'm sure there are a bunch of other colt owners who feel the same way, too."

So even if winning the Breeders Crown didn't change Burke's life overnight, change could be coming.

"When I was younger I got myself sick before almost every big race. I'm not like that now when we go to the gate I know we've done everything we can do to make that horse ready and whatever the outcome may be my life is going to be the same when it ends," he explained.

"I love to race, I love to watch the horses race, so I'm always happy to go, but there's just something about him and that's how I know he's special. There's something about this horse that makes me think, you know, he can be a life-changing event." 🐾

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