



**VENERABLE (Walner – Jolene Jolene – Muscle Hill)**

Off the odds-on choice in her Hambletonian Oaks elimination, Venerable wasted no time in firing for the front and coasting home to hold off all late challenges and win by three-quarter lengths in a 1:52.4 mile.

Venerable exits one of the richest seasons ever by a 2-year-old trotting filly – a season only topped by Snow White, who banked \$1.2 million from 13 starts in 2007. Venerable's million-dollar freshman campaign had nine wins from 11 starts, including a victory in the \$392,000 Peaceful Way and a win in the second edition of the Mohawk Million. Though, her season ended in rocky form with a break in stride costing her a spot in the Breeders Crown final followed by a second-place finish in the \$479,450 Goldsmith Maid. She slowly regained her footing towards the start of her 3-year-old season before nabbing a win in the \$25,620 Zweig Filly Trot consolation and finishing second to Hambletonian finalist Joviality S in a \$100,000 Del Miller Memorial division.

### **Quotes**

On her performance in the elimination, trainer Richard “Nifty” Norman said “I was happy with her. I thought she was pretty good. She was coming off a week off, you got the final next week, I was happy with her run. I thought she was handy. She seemed to win quite easily, I thought. She had her ears pricked.

“A couple of guys asked me about the time and the fractions, but if you look at the card, the times and the fractions haven't been good. And the front end hasn't been good. Some good horses got beat on the front. The track is a bit deep, not that fast. So, I thought her run was fine. She'll be good next week. We're in, we'll get a decent draw, and we'll see what happens. I thought she was a little fresh [Saturday], a little grabby in the score down. She had a week off, and usually it's good doing it this way. That's how we planned it out. Hopefully, it comes to fruition. You always need luck.”

Regarding her break in stride in the New Jersey Sires Stakes final on May 27, Norman said “I just think she wasn't ready, didn't have her head in the game. She's never looked like doing that again. It wasn't physical, it wasn't anything I was concerned about. Her run in the Zweig Consolation was a good run. Then her second to Joviality [in the Miller] was a good run, she was still coming at the wire. I just think she's been getting a little better all the time.

“A lot has to do with expectations. You win a million dollars last year and they think you’re going to win a million dollars again. It’s not that easy. It’s hard to be good all the time.  
“Physically, she’s changed. She’s grown quite a bit. She’s still growing all the time. She’s going to be a beautiful mare by the end of the year size-wise.

### **Breeding Info**

Venerable is from the first crop of hot sire Walner, and is one of three finalists for the stallion in the Oaks – the others being Warrawee Xenia and Fashion Schooner. She is out of the Muscle Hill mare Jolene Jolene, who showed promise herself as a 2-year-old in 2014 when finishing second to speedster filly Mission Brief in the Merrie Annabelle. Venerable is the third foal from Jolene Jolene with her siblings including half-million-dollar earner Crucial and Ineffable, who banked near \$100,000 in her career.

She was bred by Maumee River Stables, Black Creek Farm, Martin Schmucker and Steve Stewart from Hunterton Farms. The collection of breeders are all trying for their first victory in the Oaks. Though Steve Stewart owns himself a Hambletonian victory when a horse he bred, Forbidden Trade, won in 2019.

### **Driver Bio**

**DAVID MILLER**

**Born: 12/10/1964 – Birthplace: Columbus, OH – Resides: Robbinsville, NJ**

**Hall of Fame:** Class of 2014.

**Dan Patch Award Driver of the Year:** 2016, 2015, 2003.

**Hambletonian Oaks wins (1):** Personal Style, 2012.

David Miller won the 2012 Hambletonian Oaks with Personal Style, trained by Richard “Nifty” Norman.

Miller is seeking his first Hambletonian trophy but has never driven a horse in the final at odds lower than 7-1. He had third-place finishes with Gimpanzee in 2019, Uncle Lasse in 2015, and Corky in 2013. In 2017, he drove What The Hill, who crossed the finish line first but was disqualified for interference in the stretch.

He finished fifth in the 2021 Hambletonian final with Take All Comers.

Last year, Miller won the Hambletonian Maturity for 4-year-old trotters with Beads for trainer Per Engblom.

A 2014 inductee into the Hall of Fame, Miller ranks No. 2 all time in purses with \$265 million and has finished among the top five in earnings 22 of the past 23 years. John Campbell, now president and CEO of the Hambletonian Society, holds the sport’s record for purses with \$300 million.

Miller is No. 6 all-time in wins with more than 13,750.

In 2003, Miller led the sport in purses and drove No Pan Intended to the Pacing Triple Crown and Horse of the Year honors. In 2016, he was the driver of Horse of the Year Award winner Always B Miki, who paced the then-fastest mile in harness racing history when he won in 1:46 at Lexington’s Red Mile.

Last year, Miller was the regular driver of Horse of the Year winner Test Of Faith, who became the fourth 3-year-old female pacer to receive the honor.

In 2015, Miller set a record with five Breeders Crown wins in a single year.

Miller, who received the 1993 Rising Star Award from the U.S. Harness Writers Association, was already a standout in his native Ohio when he headed to the East Coast in the late 1990s. He

captured multiple driving titles at the Meadowlands Racetrack in the early 2000s and has been a force on the Grand Circuit ever since he made the move.

### **Trainer Bio**

#### **RICHARD “NIFTY” NORMAN**

**Born: 10/21/1960 – Birthplace: New Zealand – Resides: Allentown, NJ**

**Dan Patch Award Trainer of the Year: 2021.**

**Hambletonian Oaks wins (3):** Bella Bellini, 2021; Bee A Magician, 2013; Personal Style, 2012. Nifty Norman is a three-time winner of the Hambletonian Oaks, training 2012 winner Personal Style, driven by David Miller; 2013 champion Bee A Magician, driven by Brian Sears; and 2021 winner Bella Bellini, driven by Dexter Dunn.

Bella Bellini was named the 2021 Dan Patch Award winner for best 3-year-old female trotter. She was winless in seven races at age 2 and became the first horse since Jalopy in 2005 to go without a victory as a 2-year-old and win the Oaks the following year.

Bee A Magician was Horse of the Year in both the U.S. and Canada in 2013. She was 17-for-17 and earned \$1.54 million. Her earnings were a record for a 3-year-old filly trotter. She retired with multiple Dan Patch and O’Brien awards and her \$4 million in career purses put her among the richest trotters in history. She was voted to the Hall of Fame in 2020.

In 2020, Norman sent out his first Hambletonian finalist, Amigo Volo, who finished fourth from post 10. Amigo Volo went on to win the Kentucky Futurity and Breeders Crown and received the Dan Patch Award for best 3-year-old male trotter.

Norman’s stable set career highs in 2021 with 142 wins and \$6.05 million in purses. He ranked No. 4 among trainers in North America in earnings. This year, Norman ranks No. 10 in earnings with \$1.82 million.

He was named the 2021 Trainer of the Year by the U.S. Harness Writers Association. His top stars were Bella Bellini and 2-year-old female trotter Venerable, who also was a Dan Patch Award winner. Norman trained 15 horses that won Grand Circuit and/or state-bred stakes.

For his career, Norman has won nearly 1,600 races and earned \$48 million in purses.

A native of New Zealand, where he worked with horses after leaving school, Norman came to California in 1985 to visit his friend, trainer Ross Croghan, and ended up staying to help with Croghan’s stable. He later worked with Brett Pelling before starting his own stable.

### **Owner Bio**

Venerable races for owners David Mc Duffee, Melvin Hartman, Paul Bordogna and Steven Arnold. McDuffee and Hartman teamed to win a Hambletonian Oaks in 2013 with their star filly Bee A Magician, also trained by “Nifty” Norman. Mc Duffee himself owned last year’s Oaks winner Bella Bellini and will look to become just the third owner to win back-to-back Oaks, with Castleton Farm winning in 1973 with Colonial Charm and 1974 with Berna Hanover; and Al Libfeld and Marvin Katz winning in 2016 with All The Time and 2017 with Ariana G.