

Banner Season for Iowa Harness Racing's Dan Roland!



From *Iowa Harness Racing News* · Independence, Iowa
FFI: Mary Lou Lawless · Cell: 563-920-9183

On a sunny September day in 2008, I mustered a dose of courage before hiking the length of the Keokuk County Fairgrounds at What Cheer to reach Dan and Jeri Rolands stable in the east barn. I typically arrive in a rush, nab a program and head for the grandstand, anticipating updates on harness racing news and some photos of the amazing trotters and pacers competing in the "Born in the USA" sport of harness racing. On that day, I overheard "Isn't that awful?! The colt dropped on the track... Dan was just warming him up!" My heart sunk. This was NOT the news I was there for!



ABOVE: Dan Roland pilots I Want Fabulous to victory on the final Night of Champions at Prairie Meadows, October 22, 2011.
Coady Photography

AT LEFT: Larry Jenson presents the UDRS Drivers Trophy for 2010 to Dan Roland and his wife Jeri, Lucas and Kennedy who are flanked by Dan's parents, Gene and Juanita Roland of Cedar Falls, IA.
Mary Lou Lawless Photo

I found Dan and Jeri, with son Lucas, daughter Kennedy, and other family and friends, mourning the loss of their promising 2 year old trotting colt Heybattabattaswing. With 10 wins out of 11 starts and one 3rd place finish, the homebred colt by Weight Lifter had earned close to \$17,000 on Iowa's county fair tracks and had achieved a best time of 2:02.2 on the one mile oval at Springfield, IL that summer. The tears flowed anew as the family accepted the championship picture trophies at the annual awards banquet the following January.

Just a year or so prior, they were forced to part with the darling of Danjer Farm, the accomplished mare Trou Inspiration, because of an off the track injury that, despite months of care and specialized treatment, just wouldn't heal. The Family established The Trou Inspiration Award Trophy which they present to the leading aged trotter each year at the banquet.

As 2011 racing was about to conclude with 10 programs at Prairie Meadows in October, Iowa's harness racing community rallied again for the Rolands as they welcomed their third child, a daughter named Briar. She arrived a month earlier than expected, by "emergency c section" on October 5th, just before the October 7th opening at Prairie Meadows! Thus Jeri, who joyfully serves as "Barn

Mgr", "Head Groom," etc. etc. for Danjer Stable, had to sit this one out, but did so tuned in to Prairie Meadows quality live racing video!

Dan drew national recognition during the meet, when his name and statistics hit the TOP of the list naming US harness drivers making less than 300 race starts this year! The status is based on the driver's UDRS, a rating system similar to a batting average in the sport of baseball. Out of 139 race starts, Dan Roland won 58 races, finished second in 28 and third in 15 contests for a UDRS of 0.565. Purse earnings resulting from his efforts total \$125,723! Roland is rated second in the US in his category as a trainer, as well

"I wouldn't think I'll ever finish first in the nation in anything the rest of my life, so it's an exciting thing" said Dan to Prairie Meadow's publicist, Dan Johnson. The record shows Roland rated very high in 2010 and simply made a few extra drives for other trainers to cover the minimum of 120 starts this year.

On the Night of Champions, October 22nd, Dan drove "3 in a row" of the ten winners competing in the very last harness racing event at Prairie Meadows for the foreseeable future, per state legislation passed last spring. Dana Pederson is the owner, breeder and trainer of the 2 year old pacing filly Fiftyonefifty, who conquered the mile in 1:58 flat to win race 4, the \$10,000 Keith Hopkins Pace. Roland



then piloted Jeralene's big Weight Lifter gelding, Mama Made Me Blue, to a 1:58.4 victory in race 5, the \$10,000 Jodevin Trot. In the 6th race, Dan reined Danjer Farm's own full sister to Heybattabattaswing, (Weight Lifter-Sorority Hall-Conway Hall) three year old I Want Fabulous, to her win in the \$10,000 Brooklyn Jet Trot in 2:00 minutes flat!

Having witnessed the sore trials and unique triumphs that have punctuated the Rolands life in the Standardbred sport and industry during the few short years of our acquaintance, I rate them "passionately committed" to Iowa's Standardbred industry!. I'll never forget the day when I made a trip to their original farm on business (Dan and Jeri are among those who helped me obtain breeding stock and participate in the Horse & Dog Breeding Program established within Iowa's Dept of Ag). Before I left for home they excitedly loaded me up, along with the kids, and drove to the 150 acre plot of ground they had just

contracted for to build Danjer Farm! Their excitement was contagious then, as we stood on the peak where the house would be and overlooked the spot where the training track would lay. Their excitement is contagious now, as they enjoy the fruits of their hard work, dollars spent for the strategic purchase of the stallion Weight Lifter, the blessings that are theirs because they continue to help others get involved in harness racing. Dan has served as a director and secretary of the association for many years and has worked relentlessly with the team of officers and the membership to bring about legislation to help secure this way of life for those of us who are hooked on Standardbreds!

"See Iowa Harness Racing on Facebook"

BELOW: With the help of extended family members, Dan and Jeri host Ms Judy Schafer of Ackley, IA in the winners circle at Iowa's State Fair in August 2011. Judy and her family attend harness racing events at Humboldt and other sites and she knew the horses and drivers well enough to pick the first 10 winners from the 12 race program. As a reward for her loyalty and diligence Judy received a \$1500 check from the IA Harness Horsemen's Association!

Mary Lou Lawless Photo

