

Harrison's hopes rest with In The Arsenal in Meadowlands Pace

by Carol Hodes, for the SBOANJ

Manalapan, NJ --- Kelvin Harrison was in the right place at the right time when the opportunity to train Crawford Farms Meadowlands Pace finalist In The Arsenal was presented to him.

He was at the Harrisburg Sale with money enough to buy one yearling -- this would be the filly Sweetwithout sugar, who cost \$20,000.

"I happened to buy one of (the White Birch Farm) yearlings," recalled Harrison, who is stabled at the White Birch Farm Training Center in Allentown, N.J. "I talked to the farm manager, Steve Williams, and he thanked me for buying one of theirs. We've been friends for many, many years. He asked me if I would be interested in taking one that they had bought back. I had actually looked at the colt. He was small but was a nice colt. Absolutely nothing (wrong with him). He was very, very correct and just a beautiful looking colt with a smart head on him, great body, just small."

That colt was In The Arsenal, whom White Birch's owner, Michael Parisi, bought back when the bidding stopped at \$7,500. Coming into the \$706,000 Crawford Farms Meadowlands Pace final on Saturday night at the Meadowlands, the son of [American Ideal](#)-Ladyotra has banked \$751,663.



Vicki Wright photo

In The Arsenal enters the Meadowlands Pace final with career earnings of \$751,663.

The Meadowlands Pace is the tenth race on the stakes-laden 14-event card.

In The Arsenal, paired with driver Brian Sears, has been installed as the 3-1 second choice (to 4-5 Wiggle It Jiggleit), leaving from post six.

In The Arsenal might be small in size, but there has been little question that he has a big engine.

"This colt was great from Day 1," said Harrison, who has 12 horses in training. "As soon as we put the hobbles on him, he was incredible. He wasn't one of those you had to teach to go fast; he was one of those you had to throttle back his speed to keep him from going too fast. He was a natural. He is a smart colt."

Harrison, who was born in Methuen, New Zealand and came to the United States in 1972, has had a long and successful career. For the last 10 years, he has been a member of the Standardbred Breeders & Owners Association of New Jersey's Board of Directors.

"This is my 50th year in the business," said Harrison, a Bordentown, N.J., resident known by his friends as Red. "I got out of school when I was 15 years old, and I am now 65."

"Fifth years I've been doing this," he repeated. "If I could win the Meadowlands Pace 50 years down the line, it would be amazing. Training horses is not work for me. It's not a job; it's a life. You are all in, or you're not in at all. It's a full commitment."



Vicki Wright photo

Trainer Kelvin Harrison will send In The Arsenal into the Meadowlands Pace on Saturday.

I had none.

For many years, Harrison campaigned 30-horse stables, racing at the tracks in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. In 1989, he won the premier Meadowlands race for 2-year-old pacers, the Woodrow Wilson Pace, with Sam Francisco Ben. A mare he trained, Frightening P, became the first female to break the 1:49 barrier with a 1:48.4 clocking at the Meadowlands.

His stable star in 1992 was Direct Flight, who competed in the Meadowlands Pace, the showcase event for 3-year-old pacers, and finished third. In The Arsenal will mark his return to the Meadowlands Pace for the first time in 23 years.

"Hollywood (Meadowlands interviewer Bob "Hollywood" Heyden) asked me why it took me so long (to get back in the Meadowlands Pace)," Harrison mused. "Well maybe it's because I broke two yearlings last year, maybe it's because I broke two the year before and maybe the year before that

"This game is still a matter of opportunity," he noted. "I had a good year this year -- I broke three colts. The odds are just amazing. The odds are ridiculous. I had two in the Breeders Crown last year, Beach Story (who finished sixth) and In The Arsenal (who was second by a half-length). This weekend we have (4-year-old pacing mare) Beach Story in the \$213,450 Golden Girls and In The Arsenal in the Meadowlands Pace."

At two, In The Arsenal posted six wins, one second and one third from 11 starts, earning \$396,318. His victories included the \$125,000 Lawrence B. Sheppard at Yonkers, a pair of stakes at Lexington's Red Mile and the \$193,200 Matron at Dover Downs.

In December, White Birch Farm sold a 40 percent interest in the bay to In The Arsenal Racing of Long Beach, N.Y., which includes Edwin Gold, Lorraine Muscara, Mark Muscara, Robert Muscara, Cheryl Rondinelli, Howard Taylor, and Jerry and Teresa Silva's J&T Silva Stables.

This year the colt (he was a ridgling at two), has five wins, one second and one third in eight starts, adding \$255,345 to his bankroll. He won the \$300,000 Art Rooney final at Yonkers on May 30.

After winning his North America Cup elimination, he was fourth in the \$810,000 final. In the \$500,000 Hempt on July 4 at The Downs at Mohegan Sun Pocono, he was third, behind Wiggle It Jiggleit and Artspeak.

He paced a lifetime best of 1:49.1, taking his Meadowlands Pace elimination on July 11.

"The only thing with him is that he's a little aggressive," said Harrison. "He's not the complete package yet. He has a tendency to over-race. He has a tendency to get fired up. When he's on the front end, he's nice and relaxed, and if he's first up, he's nice and relaxed. But when he's following cover, he doesn't relax like he should. He's vastly improved from what he was. Each week he gets better and better."

After the Meadowlands Pace, In The Arsenal will get a few weeks off and return to the Meadowlands for the Cane Pace before traveling to Northfield Park for the Milstein, Pocono for the Battle of the Brandywine, Yonkers for the Messenger and Delaware for the Little Brown Jug.

On Saturday night, as he has all year, Harrison will turn the lines over to Brian Sears to drive In The Arsenal.

Victory would be a sweet way to celebrate 50 years in the industry for Harrison, who has no plans to retire.

"That's what we're here for," he said. "It's great (to have a top horse). I'm very appreciative."