

## Remembering Belmont's Secretariat

### Guest Column

By Adrienne Neary

The power. The elegance. The remarkable beauty. The intense anticipation. The moment. The race. The dirt flies.

In 1973, a horse named Secretariat struck out of the starting gate with all of the other Kentucky Derby contenders. It was this day that he set himself apart from every other horse in history. He had won the 99th Kentucky Derby that year in an unprecedented way. Every quarter he ran was faster than the previous one, running from dead last out of the gate to win, by over 2 lengths. He was the first horse to run 1 1/4 miles in under 2 minutes. He defied logic. In all other situations, horses begin to fatigue along with the length of the race. He did what no other horse has ever done. He ran faster as the race progressed!

In the Preakness, he broke out of the gate last again. He went from last to first in about 180 yards during the first turn. His acceleration was amazing - and seemingly far too early. Down the backstretch, he eased into position, and ran for an easy 2 1/2-length win. People fell in love with Secretariat, during a very tumultuous time in our own history.

As we witnessed the details of Watergate, Secretariat was on the front of *Time* magazine, and *Sports Illustrated*. He was magnificent. No scandal, just pure beauty. He would become the first Triple Crown winner since Citation in 1948, and he inspired us and gave us something to believe in.

On June 9th 1973, Secretariat captured our hearts, and our imagination, and he did not disappoint. He seemed to know what he needed to do for the grueling third leg of the Triple Crown, and he did it with panache and fire, exactly when he meant to. Before the race, his muscles were rippling, his nostrils flared, his ears flickered. He nickered. He reared. He was ready.

He broke out of the gate very well, and was on the inside going into the first turn. Sham and Secretariat were together during the first turn. He felt terrific, and felt like running. Many people thought: Let him run. Let's see what he can do. Down the backstretch, he left Sham at the 3/4 mile mark in a blistering 1:09 2/5. Before the second turn he widened his lead. It was an insane pace. But he kept pulling away. Nobody knew he could do this! With 1/4 mile to go, he was 14



#### Vital Statistics: Secretariat

Born March 30, 1970 - Died October 4, 1989

Height: 16'2 Hands Weight: 1200 Pounds

Number of foals: 653 - 57 Stakes Winners

Current Popular Descendents:

A.P. Indy, Gone West, Storm Cat, Elusive Quality, Smarty Jones

lengths in the lead. Coming out of the turn for home, he was ahead by 18 and simply annihilating his field of competitors. The calling of the race, infused with great awe, "He's moving like a tremendous machine!" was indelibly etched in many memories. Secretariat won the 1973 Belmont Stakes by an astonishing 31 lengths in a world record time of 2:24.00. He owns the Belmont. It wouldn't be right to have the Belmont Stakes without honoring the great Secretariat.

Everybody was screaming with joy, and exhilaration and then many simply began weeping. It was amazing. This was perfection. Many people never cashed their winning tickets. That was their piece of something great.

Horsing is filled with unpredictable, and very intense moments. This year's Belmont is going to be a nail biter. Many of the horses that raced in the Kentucky Derby will meet again. This is the longest race of the Triple Crown trail. One of the contenders, who came in second in the Derby is a horse named Bluegrass Cat. He is by a horse named Storm Cat, and out of a mare named She's a Winner. He has Secretariat in his

pedigree twice, once on the sire's side, and once on the dam's side. Another horse coming to Belmont, N.Y. on June 10, is Steppenwolf.

He was 3rd in the Derby, and he has three Triple Crown winners in his pedigree: Secretariat 1973, Seattle Slew 1977, and Citation 1948!

Other challengers for the 2006 Belmont Stakes include: Sweetnorthernstain (2nd in the Preakness), Hemingway's Key

(3rd in the Preakness), Jazil (4th in the Derby), Deputy Glitters, Bob and John, Point Determined, Sunriver, High Cotton, and Lewis Michael - all running for more flowers.

Of course, don't forget the flowers! Carnations will grace the shoulders of the Belmont Stakes winner. This blanket is actually composed of 350 to 400 carnations, carefully glued to a large piece of felt weighing approximately 30 to 40 pounds! There's quite a bit of work that goes into the continuing the Tradition of the American Triple Crown, and there's something in it for all ages.

Although there are many prestigious races all over the world, the Triple Crown races are very special,

and carry with them a torch of unforgettable memories. Throughout history, contests have been waged from the backs of horses. It is a fascinating part of our lives, as we measure and test our abilities, hone our skills and feel the beat of destiny. Horses are an inexorable part of all of us. We wouldn't be where we are without them. Catch all the coverage leading up to this year's Belmont Stakes beginning June 8 at 1 p.m., and June 9 at 5 p.m. on ESPN2. Or: [www.sports.espn.com/sports/tvlivings/schedule](http://www.sports.espn.com/sports/tvlivings/schedule).

Live coverage for the 138th running of the Belmont Stakes on June 10 begins at noon on ESPN, and switches to ABC at 5 p.m. Post time for the 2006 "Test of the Champion" Belmont Stakes is at 6:35 pm. For more information go to: [www.nyra.com/Belmont/](http://www.nyra.com/Belmont/)

Adrienne Neary trains horses in Wilton Maine. She has produced a Web site for horse lovers, which features valuable information about the horse, and her nationally recognized artwork at [www.wingspanartsintl.com](http://www.wingspanartsintl.com)



#### Race Record: Secretariat

Record: 21-16-3-1 (Over two years)  
Earnings: \$1,316,808

In 1972, at age 2:

Won the Sanford Stakes, Hopeful Stakes, Belmont Futurity, Laurel Futurity, Garden State Stakes. Placed in the Champagne Stakes (disqualified from 1st). Named Champion 2 year-old colt and Horse of the Year.

In 1973, at age 3:

Won the Kentucky Derby (new track record), Preakness Stakes (new track record), Belmont Stakes (new world record), Bay Shore Stakes, Gotham Stakes (tied track record), Arlington Invitational, Marlboro Cup (new world record), Man O'War Stakes (new course record), Canadian International. Placed in the Woodward Stakes and Whitney Stakes. Showed in the Wood Memorial. Named Champion 3 year-old colt, Champion Grass Horse, and Horse of the Year.

Source: [www.secretariat.com](http://www.secretariat.com)

