

Chasing

NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE ASSOCIATION | 400 FAIR HILL DRIVE, ELKTON, MD 21921

Champions of '18 to be crowned

The National Steeplechase Association's leading competitors of 2018 will be honored Thursday, Jan. 17, at the NSA's annual awards dinner, to be held for a second consecutive year at the Maryland Club in Baltimore in conjunction with the Race Chairmen's meeting and an NSA Board of Directors meeting.

Topping the owner list by a wide margin was the Rosbrian Farm of Mandy and George Mahoney, which earned \$712,050 from 54 starts. The stable had 14 victories, and among them were two Grade 1 victories—the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois and Belmont Park's \$175,000 Lonesome Glory Handicap—by five-year-old Zanjabeel, who is owned by Rosbrian in partnership with Wendy and Ben Griswold's Meadow Run Farm.

Trained by Ricky Hendriks, Zanjabeel will be a leading candidate for the Eclipse Award with earnings of \$265,000.

Securing the Lonesome Glory Award as the year's leading earner was Jury Duty, who earned \$270,000 with his 3 1/4-length victory in Far Hills' \$450,000 Grand National (Gr. 1), the year's richest race. Owned by the Sideways Syndicate, Jury Duty was trained to his New Jersey victory by leading Irish horseman Gordon Elliott.

Hendriks also trained Rosbrian's Optimus Prime, winner of Saratoga Race Course's New York Turf Writers Cup (Gr. 1) and the International Gold Cup's David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2).

Rosbrian was represented by one champion, three-year-old Caldbeck, who won Far Hills' \$50,000 Gladstone Stakes.

Hudson River Farms' Iranistan ruled as the year's champion novice with purse earnings of \$145,000. Trained by Racing Hall of Fame member Jonathan Sheppard, the four-year-old won the Iroquois Steeplechase's \$125,000 Marcellus Frost Champion Hurdle for novices,



Sideways Syndicate's Jury Duty claimed the Lonesome Glory Award with his victory in the Grand National (Gr. 1) at Far Hills.

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finished second in Saratoga's A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1), and third in the New York Turf Writers.

Check Mark Stables' Willow U, winner of a \$45,000 Virginia Gold Cup allowance hurdle against male competitors, reigned as the Life's Illusion Filly and Mare champion.

Doc Cebu, now owned by Charles Fenwick Jr., Michael Hankin, and Charles Noell, claimed his second straight timber championship with a repeat win in the International Gold Cup on Oct. 27. Trained by Jack Fisher, the Doc also won the Willowdale Steeplechase and the Genesee Valley Hunt Cup for the second year in a row and added a win in Shawan Downs' Legacy Chase.

Two major titles, champion trainer by wins and champion jockey by wins, were achieved with remarkable come-from-behind surges. Jack Fisher picked up his seventh straight title when he moved to the top of the list on the next to last weekend of the season. He won 22 races, one more than Hendriks. Fisher had purse earnings of \$983,850 and was the top trainer by purses for the fifth straight year.

Reigning champion jockey Darren Nagle made his usual autumn surge and took down the wins title with a victory at Charleston. He had 17 wins, one more than Jack Doyle, who had led the standings from the first day of the season. Ross Geraghty was the top jockey by earnings.



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Optimus Prime claims top rating with Grade 1 and Grade 2 victories

Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime, winner of Grade 1 and Grade 2 stakes races in three U.S. starts, has been awarded the top 157 rating by the National Steeplechase Association's panel of expert handicappers.

Trained by Ricky Hendriks, the French-bred arrived in the U.S. in late spring and scored a 1 1/2-length victory in Saratoga Race Course's New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1) on Aug. 23. He came back in four weeks to finish third in Belmont Park's Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1), two lengths behind stablemate Zanjabeel.

Optimus Prime overwhelmed his competition in the International Gold Cup's David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2) on Oct. 27, when he kicked clear to win by 18 1/4 lengths under regular jockey Ross Geraghty. Despite his limited U.S. campaign, the six-year-old ended the season third on the leader board with \$167,500 in purse earnings.

Second in the rankings at 156 was Sideways Syndicate's Jury Duty, who shipped over for the Far Hills Races' \$450,000 Grand National (Gr. 1) and won by 3 1/4 lengths for leading Irish trainer Gordon Elliott.

Zanjabeel, owned by Rosbrian and Meadow Run Farm, was ranked third at 152 by the panel comprising Martin Chamberlin, Joe Clancy, and Will O'Keefe. The panel, which prepares the ratings under the supervision of NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr., rated 103 horses.

Also trained by Hendriks, Zanjabeel won the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) in addition to the Lonesome Glory. The British-bred five-year-old also finished second in the Marion duPont Colonial Cup (Gr. 1) and the Temple Gwathmey Handicap (Gr. 2).



Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime and jockey Ross Geraghty jumped the last fence of the International Gold Cup's David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2) with an large lead and won by 18 1/4 lengths.

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