

# Chasing

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

## Champion owner Irv Naylor crosses into new territory with purses mark

In October, leading owner Irv Naylor went into the record books. In November, he entered uncharted territory.

Naylor, who is known for his three-win splurges at the Far Hills meet in 2011 and 2015, had only one win this year. But his lone victory was the one that counted the most, the \$350,000 Grand National (Gr. 1), which again attracted a star-studded international cast.

Naylor's Rawnaq, winner of the \$200,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) in May, held off a game Scorpiancer to win the Grand National's \$210,000 first-place purse. Along with two placings, the Naylor stable ended the day with \$227,000 and raised the 2016 total to \$841,800.

The annual total broke the \$778,650 record that Naylor had set a year earlier, and he accomplished that mark in the middle of October, five weeks before the conclusion of the 2016 National Steeplechase Association season.

In November, with only the Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup meet remaining on the calendar, Naylor crossed into country where no owner has ever ventured. Although he did not have any major victories to rival the Grand National, he crossed the line to exceed \$900,000 in annual earnings.

For Naylor, now based at his Butler, Md., farm, Rawnaq was a significant part of the 2016 record but by no means all of it. Second behind Naylor's Eclipse Award-winning Dawalan last year, Rawnaq blossomed into a star of the first order in the hands of trainer Cyril Murphy.

He won the Temple Gwathmey (Gr. 3) for fun and then prevailed in a battle for the ages against two notable Irish challengers in the Iroquois. Even the loss of jockey Jack Doyle to injury did not deter Rawnaq, who scored another courageous victory in the Grand National with 10-time champion Irish jump jockey Ruby Walsh in the irons.

Rawnaq's \$360,000 in 2016 earnings before a scheduled start in the \$150,000 Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup (Gr. 1) assured him the Lonesome Glory Champions Award as the NSA's leading earner, and he also will be the favorite in the balloting for this year's Eclipse Award as champion steeplechase horse.

Also among Naylor's top earners were Charminster, winner of the Virginia Gold Cup's David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2), and Virginia Gold Cup victor Ebanour, who also won the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup and the My Lady's Manor.

Jack Fisher, who trains Scorpiancer for Bruton Street-US, also ventured



Legendary Irish jump jockey Ruby Walsh posed with owner Irv Naylor and the Grand National trophy after Rawnaq's courageous victory.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

into new territory as the calendar turned to November. On the last weekend of racing before the Colonial Cup in Camden, S.C., Fisher passed the million-dollar marker for the third time.

The Maryland-based horseman is the only trainer ever to exceed \$1-million in annual purses. He established an earnings record with \$1,156,907 in 2008 and had purses of \$1,047,600 last year.

In addition to Scorpiancer, his stable included timber champion Two's Company and Special Skills, winner of the Foxbrook Champion Hurdle at Far Hills and the Steeplechase at Callaway's AFLAC Supreme Hurdle.



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## Two's Company claims timber title

With the last of the year's timber races in the books, Two's Company had no company atop the year's standings and reigned as the timber-racing champion of 2016.

Owned by Bruton Street-US and trained by Jack Fisher, Two's Company was the class of a high-quality timber contingent and amassed four wins and two second-place finishes in six starts.

Connor Hankin, the son of Bruton Street-US principal Mike Hankin and 2015's champion apprentice jockey, started the year with a score on the Irish-bred in the Carolina Cup's C.P. & Edith Wills DeBose Cup, a timber allowance race, on April 2.

The younger Hankin, now a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, had been the sole rider of Two's Company since his arrival on these shores for the 2015 racing season without a single sanctioned start on his racing record. The Soviet Star gelding won his first U.S. start, a division of the John Rush Streett timber maiden at My Lady's Manor, before a fall at the Queen's Cup.

He did not reappear until the New Jersey Hunt Cup, in which he never threatened and finished eighth. The Arthur O. Choate Memorial, a timber allowance at the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup, offered modest hope for the coming season when Two's Company finished a distant second behind front-running Grand Manan.

After the DeBose, the riding assignment passed to Sean McDermott, who was in the saddle for the rest of the 2016 season. Their first joint assignment was the Middleburg Hunt Cup, in which Two's Company drew away to a three-length score over Fisher-trained veteran Straight to It.

Fisher went top-class for the next start, the \$100,000 Virginia Gold Cup. Two's Company ran well at 7.50-to-1 odds and finished second,



Two's Company jumped a fence en route to a dominant victory in the National Sporting Library & Museum Cup at Virginia Fall on Oct. 8.

DOUGLAS LEES PHOTO

beaten 6 1/4 lengths by Ebanour, the My Lady's Manor winner.

Two's Company began the fall season with a well-timed victory over Zanclus, winning Shawan Downs' Legacy Chase by a neck on the money on Sept. 24.

He then devastated his opponents in Virginia Fall's National Sporting Library & Museum Cup, in which he drew off by 6 3/4 lengths

over 2015 timber champion Grinding Speed on Oct. 8.

The Great Meadow course again proved a challenge for Two's Company, and he ended the season with a second-place finish behind front-running Grand Manan. In all, Two's Company earned \$103,200 in 2016. Irv Naylor's Ebanour won the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup on Nov. 6 and closed the year with earnings of \$99,000.

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