

Westfield Jockey To Receive Highest Honor

August 4, 2015

By The Post-Journal

SARATOGA SPRINGS - A 2015 inductee of the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame will be honored Friday for his horse racing successes.

Vincent Powers, a champion flat and steeplechase jockey, and later a champion steeplechase trainer from Westfield, and Billy Kelly, an elite racehorse during the first quarter of the 20th century, have been elected to the National Museum of Racing's Hall of Fame by the museum's Historic Review Committee.

Powers and Billy Kelly will be inducted into the Hall of Fame along with contemporary selections Chris Antley, King Leatherbury, Lava Man and Xtra Heat. The ceremony will be held Friday at 10:30 a.m. at Fasig-Tipton, and is open to the public and free to attend. Randy Anderson, president of the CSHOF, will receive the honor for Powers.

Born, June 6, 1891, in Westfield, Powers was North America's champion flat jockey in 1908 (324 wins) and 1909 (173 wins), champion steeplechase rider in 1917 (15 wins) and champion steeplechase trainer in 1927 (19 wins). He won on 26 percent of his mounts in 1908 and 25 percent in 1909. He also won 107 races in 1910. Powers remains the only rider in North American history to top the national standings as both a flat and steeplechase jockey. From 1907 through 1910, Powers won 654 (22.2 percent) flat races from 2,936 mounts.

Powers became only the second rider to win 300 races in a year (Hall of Famer Walter Miller won 388 in 1906 and 334 in 1907). Although his career as a flat jockey in America was brief, Powers won several major races, including the 1909 Kentucky Derby with Wintergreen, as well as the Kentucky Oaks (1908), Latonia Oaks (1908), Great Trial Stakes (1909), Lawrence Realization (1909), Coney Island Jockey Club (1909), Breeders' Futurity (1910), Delaware Handicap (1910), Fashion Stakes (1910) and Saratoga Cup (1910). His most notable mount was Fitz Herbert, recognized as the top handicapper in 1909 and 1910. When American racing came to a virtual standstill in 1911, Powers went with future Hall of Fame trainer Sam Hildreth to Europe for a guaranteed salary of \$10,000. He competed successfully in France and Germany before weight became a problem and necessitated his transition to steeplechase riding.

Powers returned to America in 1914 when World War I broke out in Europe and became a contract rider for Greentree Stable steeplechasers. In 1917, Powers was the top steeplechase rider in America with 15 wins from 39 mounts. His major wins as a steeplechase jockey included the Grand National (1919, 1920), Brook (1918, 1926), International (1920), Meadow Brook (1918, 1919, 1920, 1922), North American (1920, 1922), Saratoga Steeplechase (1916) and the Shillelah (1917).

In 1921, Powers took over as Greentree's steeplechase trainer. He had considerable success as a conditioner, winning the Grand National in 1926, 1927, 1928 and 1937; the Saratoga Steeplechase in 1926, 1935 and 1937; and the Temple Gwathmey in 1936 and 1937, among others. As a trainer, Powers was best known for conditioning Hall of Famer Jolly Roger, the first steeplechaser to earn \$100,000. Jolly Roger won back-to-back editions of the Grand National in 1927 and 1928, as well as the Appleton Memorial, Corinthian (twice), Bayside, Brook and North American steeplechases. Powers was America's leading steeplechase trainer in 1927 when he saddled 19 winners and had purse earnings of \$103,889, setting a record for a steeplechase conditioner. Powers trained until 1946 and died Oct. 19,

1966.

A bay gelding by Dick Welles out of the Free Knight mare Glena, Billy Kelly was purchased during his 2-year-old season in 1918 for \$25,000 by J.K.L. Ross and trained for the majority of his career by H. Guy Bedwell. With a record of 39-14-7 from 69 career starts (including 19 stakes wins) and lifetime earnings of \$99,782, Billy Kelly was widely considered the greatest sprinter of his era and was able to stretch out his speed and win at distances up to 1 miles.

A multiple stakes winner at ages 2, 3, 4 and 5, Billy Kelly was a stablemate of Hall of Famer Sir Barton, the first Triple Crown winner. Billy Kelly raced against Sir Barton 12 times, winning outright or finishing ahead of him eight times. As a 2-year-old, Billy Kelly compiled a record of 14-2-0 from 17 starts and earnings of \$33,783. His stakes wins included the Idle Hour, Bashford Manor, Flash (setting a stakes record), United States Hotel and Sanford Memorial (by eight lengths), as well as the Grab Bag (carrying 135 pounds), Eastern Shore, Annapolis and Columbia handicaps.

After beginning his 3-year-old season in 1919 with wins in the Hartford and Philadelphia handicaps, Billy Kelly finished second to Sir Barton in the Kentucky Derby. Billy Kelly also won the Toboggan and Capital handicaps that year and several allowance races to finish with a record of 9-6-2 from 19 starts and earnings of \$26,563. At age 4 in 1920, Billy Kelly defeated Hall of Famer Old Rosebud in the Hartford Handicap and defeated Sir Barton twice (and finished ahead of him two other times). His record at age 4 was 6-4-2 with earnings of \$16,048 from 12 starts. Billy Kelly began his 5-year-old campaign with six straight wins, including his third consecutive Hartford Handicap. He carried 130 pounds or more four times during the stretch, including 135 in his Connaught Handicap win at Montreal's Blue Bonnets. Billy Kelly owned a mark of 9-0-2 and earnings of \$20,488 from 17 starts for his 1920 season. Billy Kelly had injury issues in 1921 and competed only once, finishing second to Hall of Famer Exterminator while attempting to win a fourth consecutive Hartford Handicap. He won once in three starts in 1923 as a 7-year-old.

The Hall of Fame's Historic Review Committee is comprised of chairman Michael Veitch and racing historians Ed Bowen, Al Carter, Jay Hovdey, Ken Grayson, Gary West, John von Stade, Jane Goldstein, Bill Mooney, Bill Nack, Steve Haskin and Mary Simon. From an initial candidate pool featuring nominations by those in the racing industry, historians and members of the public, the Historic Review Committee selects a maximum of three finalists to be considered for election to the Hall of Fame. The candidates that become finalists are required to receive 75 percent approval from the Historic Review Committee to gain election to the Hall of Fame.