

Upstate New York



John W. Stark Jr.

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John Stark was synonymous with Vernon Downs through the mid-1980s. He was the top provisional driver in both 1977 and 1978. He later won both the dash-winning (124) and percentage (.350) driving titles in 1985. He added dash titles in 1986 (158), 1987 (127), 1988 (188), as well as additional percentage championships in 1987 (.307), 1988 (.358), 1997 (.472), 2001 (.471) and 2003 (.449). He was also the track's top trainer for wins (1987 (64), 1988 (76), and percentage 1987 (.362), 1988 (.365).

Stark raced at several tracks after leaving Vernon in 1989 and was equally successful wherever he went. He captured a dash title at Muskegon and both dash and earnings titles at Fairmount Park and Saratoga Raceway.

Stark achieved his greatest success in the sport training and driving the remarkable pacing filly Bunny Lake. At two, the daughter of Precious Bunny was flawless in NYSS action, capturing four legs and then going wire-to-wire in 1:58.3 in the \$150,000 final.

In her 3-year-old campaign Bunny Lake scored 18 consecutive victories and earned \$1,146,219, the most money (at the time) ever banked by a pacing female in a single season. Stark drove her to victories in the \$150,000 New York Sire Stakes Final and the \$812,292 Breeders Crown Final. Bunny Lake was selected as the 2001 Horse of the Year, as well as Pacer of the Year and 3-year-old filly pacer of the year.

Bunny Lake retired with 47 career wins and \$ 2,843,476 in purse money. Her lifetime mark was 1:49.

Other top horses over the years for Stark include Total Composure, Commanche N, Battle Front, Teeth of the Dog, Getting Personal, Adadot, Mimz, Hamilton White, and Algiers Hall.

To date, John Stark Jr. has amassed 4088 wins and \$ 20,961,807 in purse money driving as well as 1328 wins and \$ 15,675,191 in purse money training. He is the consummate horseman and is still going strong.