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Ron Mitchell
Online Editor
859-276-6729

Jack Shinar
Night/Weekend Editor

'Battle' Is On in Sprint for Simon, Manoogian

by Evan Hammonds
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Battle-tested Battle Won got a tour of the Belmont Park layout Thursday morning, but when he faces Lost in the Fog and the other 10 entrants in the TVG Breeders' Cup Sprint (gr. I), it won't be his first start over the track. The 5-year-old gelding, owned by Jay and Gretchen Manoogian and trained by Chuck Simon, raced at "Big Sandy" back during his 3-year-old campaign under different circumstances.

Early in his career, the son of [Honour and Glory](#) raced for Lazy Lane Farms and was trained by Frank Brothers. After three sharp wins from his first four career starts, Battle Won was pitched into the Riva Ridge Breeders' Cup Stakes (gr. II) on the Belmont Stakes (gr. I) day undercard. Breaking from the rail in the slop, he attended the pace before fading to finish seventh. Winning that day was [Posse](#), who held on tenaciously by a nose over Midas Eyes. Later that day, [Empire Maker](#) stopped Funny Cide's bid for the Triple Crown in the Belmont.

By the following spring, however, Battle Won had a new owner and trainer. The dark bay or brown gelding bred in Kentucky by Glencrest Farm made his last start for Brothers and Lazy Lane April 28 at Churchill Downs before being sold for \$150,000.

"We were looking for a good horse and we were trying to buy one at a reasonable price," said the 38-year-old trainer. "I'd seen the horse run and I'd followed his career a little bit. I always thought he was a talented horse."

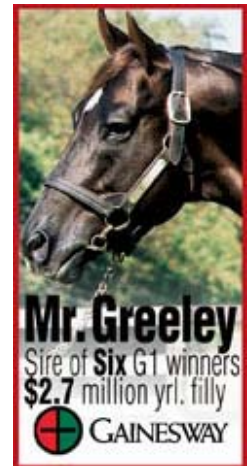
The acquisition of Battle Won was seemingly a date with destiny.

"I had a horse Derby week in the last race one day, the last race of the day," Simon's yarn begins. "It was like a 20 claimer. It was a horse I really liked and thought would run well. I was going to be the favorite. This horse (Battle Won) was in the feature race that day. I bet a big double with Battle Won and my horse. Well, we both lost, but he (Battle Won) ran a great race that day. He broke really slow and circled the field and ran a huge race. I was thinking to myself that that horse was going to win a really big race."

Prior to that afternoon at the track, Simon, on behalf of the Manoogians, had had a conversation with [Marette Farrell](#), a bloodstock agent with Nicoma Bloodstock.

"I said, 'If you see anything, let me know because I'm in the market for one,'" Simon said. "Two days later, lo and behold, she said 'I have a horse you might be interested in.' She showed me the name. I thought this was too ironic."

The Manoogians were riding high that Derby week, with starter Quinton's Gold Rush, fresh off a victory in the Coolmore Lexington Stakes (gr. II).



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"Jay told me at the Derby, 'find me a good horse,'" Simon said. "I asked him what kind of price, and he said, 'just find me a good horse.' I said, 'Well, I've got you one.'"

On May 19, Battle Won rattled off a 31/2-length win over an optional-claimer field at Churchill Downs for his new connections. Graded stakes wins and a trip to Hong Kong to face Silent Witness in the Hong Kong Sprint (HK-I) would follow. This year, Battle Won has won only one of six starts, but nailed down the Churchill Downs Handicap (gr. II) -- giving Simon his first graded win as a trainer-- and has faced grade I sprinters from New York to California.

A try on turf as his Breeders' Cup Sprint prep didn't go as planned as Battle Won was locked up behind runners for most of the 5 1/2-furlong trip at Keeneland Oct. 9, finishing a close-up fifth as the 3-5 favorite.

"The only thing that's gone wrong since Saratoga is that we got a poor trip in that race," said Simon. "Everything else has gone perfect. That's the worst trip we've had. Hopefully we've got the bad trip out of the way."

There have been few bad trips for Jay Manoogian, a 48-year-old native of upstate N.Y., near Simon's hometown of Saratoga. Manoogian now resides in Coto de Caza, California and is founder and president of Preferred Property Maintenance. His Kela was second to Speightstown in last year's Sprint at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie, Texas.

"Last year was pretty exciting," Manoogian said outside Barn 56 Thursday morning. "I have a 10-horse barn and I've had back-to-back Breeders' Cup horses and a Derby horse.

"They're two different kinds of horses," he said of Kela and Battle Won. "Kela was a come-from-behind type of horse. He had to have things work out his way. Battle Won has enough natural speed."

Manoogian met Simon through a mutual friend, Howard Dewey, a financial consultant who lives in the Saratoga area. "He did a lot of work for Chuck," Manoogian said. "He's friends with Chuck from Saratoga. And he's from Hoosick's Falls, which is my home town. He was calling me trying to do some business and I was looking to get some horses on the East Coast. He said, 'I know this guy who is a horse trainer.' So he introduced me to Chuck."

With the introductions out of the way, the battle will soon be on.

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