

HE'S THE MAN MONTE MAN

Intrepid Sprinter Treasured by His Connections and Louisiana Racing Fans
Retires following Louisiana Champions Day

By Martha Claussen



Monte Man wins the 2021 Louisiana Champions Day Sprint in the final start of his career.

Louisiana Champions Day at Fair Grounds is always special as breeders, owners and scores of racing fans dress up and salute quality Louisiana-breds in day-long stakes competition. The 2021 edition of the race was all that, but

with a bittersweet ending as one of the most durable and endearing stakes winners, Monte Man, defended his title in the Sprint, and then was retired.

His unique story began in Louisiana on February 1, 2013 at

Val Murrell's Clear Creek Stud in Folsom, Louisiana. Sired by Custom for Carlos out of Sarah's My Angel, Murrell vividly remembers that Monte Man was special.

"He was a grand individual," stated Murrell. "It was the first crop



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of Custom for Carlos and his dam, Sarah's My Angel was a very nice mare; all of her babies were winners."

Monte Man was sold for \$55,000 at the 2014 Fasig-Tipton Select Yearling Sale in Kentucky, and one year later was purchased for \$125,000 at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Company March 2015 Two-Year-old in Training Sale.

It was a rough debut for the bay gelding on January 16, 2016 at Aqueduct, finishing sixth and off the board in his first four career starts in New York. On May 19, he ran a game second in a \$40,000 claiming race at Belmont Park. He made 21 starts on the New York circuit in the barn of several trainers including Linda Rice, John Terranova and Hall of Fame conditioner Steve Asmussen, before he was claimed by Brian Ivery for \$25,000 on October 17, 2017.

Ivery, 47, owns a commercial construction company in Ithaca, New York. He met trainer Ron Faucheux nine years ago at Saratoga.

"Ron and I became friends and had our eye on Monte Man," shared Ivery. "We were very lucky to get him for \$25,000. I live in upstate New York, but have always enjoyed the city of New Orleans. Ron knew that there were plenty of stakes opportunities for Louisiana-breds."

Monte Man made his first start in the Pelican State on December 23, 2017. Robby Albarado was in the saddle, winning the \$43,000 optional allowance claiming race from off the pace, covering six furlongs in 1:11.33. He returned to the Fair Grounds winner's circle one month later, also with Albarado in the saddle. Two wins off the claim was encouraging for his connec-

tions.

"As an owner, I've had plenty of ups and downs," said Ivery. "Some of the horses meet our expectations and some don't. Ron and I always believed in Monte Man, but had no idea that he would have the kind of success he did when he left New York and headed to Louisiana."

What he did was to win seven consecutive races in Louisiana, including his first stakes, the \$120,000 Louisiana Premier Night Sprint at Delta Downs on February 10, 2018. With jockey Gerard Melancon aboard, Monte Man overcame a poor break, but got into gear and rallied four wide off the turn to win by a neck over a sloppy track. He earned a 112 Beyer Speed Figure to the delight of Ivery, whose Ivery Sisters Racing silks are named for his three daughters: Zoe, Flynn and Harper.

"Monte Man broke so badly, but

“Ron and I always believed in Monte Man, but had no idea that he would have the kind of success he did when he left New York and headed to Louisiana.”

Brian Ivery

finished incredibly well,” recalled Ivery. “Even Gerard felt the ‘wow’ factor!”

Monte Man made 50 starts in his storied career, winning 18 races and purses of \$794,223, including stakes at each of the four Louisiana racetracks. Fans at Delta Downs, Louisiana Downs, Evangeline Downs, and of course, Fair Grounds all enjoyed his tenacity.

Louisiana native Melancon celebrated his 5,000th career win last June and was proud to be part of Monte Man’s prolific run in Louisiana.

“He had amazing instincts and would tell me where to go,” added Melancon. “If the pace was slow, he’d go to the lead; if the fractions were fast, he knew what he had to do. It’s fun to ride the good ones! I was blessed to ride him.”

Ivery lauded both Melancon and Adam Beschizza for not only their skilled rides, but giving Fauchaux “really good input” throughout Monte Man’s 29 starts in Louisiana. He has three Louisiana-breds in training and looks forward to watching them progress.

Fauchaux is understandably emotional as he reflects on the accomplishments of Monte Man. Over the 5-years that Monte Man ran in Louisiana, Fauchaux mourned the deaths of two assistants: Joey Fontenot and more recently Cory Kofalt. His current assistant Noely and grooms Jorge and Miguel have each been a part



Jubilant owner Brian Ivery, in the winners circle after the 2021 Louisiana Champions Day Sprint.

of the team.

“He is the horse that defined me and my team,” stated Fauchaux. “As a trainer, you always want to have one big horse in the barn. Sending him off to retirement has been hard for all of us, but we are appreciative for his many wins and to see him return to full force in his final start.”

Credit to Joe Kristufek and Kevin Kilroy at Fair Grounds for publicizing the retirement of the 9-year-old Monte Man following his Louisiana Champions Day Sprint victory on December 11. In their press release, they included the iconic call of track announcer John Dooley who heralded the defending champion with these words:

"Here comes the gladiator, Monte Man, with that battler's heart

for Adam Beschizza. Monte Man now an 18-time winner—well done Monte Man!"

Adam Beschizza piloted Monte Man to three stakes wins at Fair Grounds, beginning with the 2018 Costa Rising, the 2020 Louisiana Champions Day Sprint at Fair Grounds and the 2021 edition of the championship, which proved to be the final race of his career.

“I didn’t think any of us thought it would be his last hurrah,” he said. “He was very versatile and talented. His enjoyment for racing never waned and he instilled confidence into me as a jockey. Sometimes he thrived on getting into trouble, but became very wise toward the end of his career.”

On Sunday, December 12, Beschizza went to Fauchaux’s barn to bid farewell to Monte Man. He posted a photo on social media standing in front of the handsome bay gelding.

“He’s a bit herculean and I’m pretty small,” said Beschizza. “He was a true racehorse and one I will never forget.”

“Brian and I have talked about retiring Monte Man and always knew it would be bittersweet,” admitted Fauchaux. “He has given so much to us and deserves a quality retirement.”

So it’s fitting that the breeder who brought Monte Man into the world, will bring him home.

“Monte Man has been special from day one,” added Murrell.

“Sending him [Monte Man] off to retirement has been hard for all of us, but we are appreciative for his many wins and to see him return to full force in his final start.”

Ron Faucheux

“When I heard John Dooley’s call, it sent chills down my spine.”

Will he live his life in luxury, grazing in the pasture at Clear Creek Stud, just one hour north of his noted history at Fair Grounds or will that smart Louisiana-bred warrior transition to a second career? Murrell’s son, Jerold, is a veterinarian and polo player and envisions Monte Man as a potential star who would dazzle the well dressed, champagne drinking attendees. It’s not difficult to imagine the gallant sprinter charging onto the polo field saying “this chuckker is mine!”



Trainer Ron Faucheux

Here’s hoping that will happen, but even if it does not come to fruition, Monte Man has earned a well-deserved place in the hearts of his connections and countless scores of racing fans.

Martha Claussen served as publicity director at Sam Houston Race Park for ten years. She continues to be active in writing and racing publicity in Texas, Louisiana, Indiana and other regions in North America.

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