



MISTER ARAPAHOE

Get Happy Mister has never lost a race in his home state, and he earned his most impressive victory to date in the \$100,000 Arapahoe Park Classic.

**COLORADO-BRED
GET HAPPY MISTER IS
PUTTING HIS NAME IN
THE RECORD BOOKS**

**BY DENIS BLAKE
PHOTOS BY COADY
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Since even before the first Kentucky Derby in 1875, the Bluegrass State has far and away been the leading breeder of Thoroughbred racehorses. But there are exceptions to every rule; Secretariat was bred in Virginia and Cigar in Maryland, and a Montana-bred even won the Run for the Roses (Spokane in 1889). In recent years, state-bred programs around the region have produced some stellar horses of their own—Oklahoma has millionaire and graded stakes winner She's All In, Texas can boast about one of the nation's top 3-year-old fillies in Fiftyshadesofgold and Vicar's in Trouble won the Grade 2, \$1 million Louisiana Derby for his home state. Now, Colorado is getting in on the game with Get Happy Mister, who just might be the best horse ever bred in the Centennial State.

The safest bet at Arapahoe Park near Denver has been on the nose of the 4-year-old gelding, who in nine races at his favorite track has visited the winner's circle every single time. Consigned by breeder Willard Burbach to the 2011 Silver Cup Yearling Sale put on by the Colorado Thoroughbred Breeders Association, the son of First Samurai sold for \$46,000 to Annette Bishop's Tangarae Farms LLC. He debuted at Arapahoe in June 2012 with an easy maiden victory, and then in a span of barely a month he humbled his foes in the CTBA, Silver Cup and Gold Rush futurities by an average margin of nine lengths and with the last-named coming against open company.

As a 3-year-old, Get Happy Mister again proved he didn't need restricted competition or the Rocky Mountain air to win, as he defeated a strong field of sophomores in the \$100,000 Northern Spur Stakes at Oaklawn Park. He kicked off his 4-year-old campaign at Santa Anita Park with a good fourth behind eventual Grade 3 winner Fury Kapcori in the Santana Mile Stakes before returning home after not racing in Colorado as a 3-year-old.

In one of the most impressive displays at any racetrack, anywhere, Get Happy Mister reeled off five straight wins this season at Arapahoe at distances from 5 ½ furlongs to 1 ¼ miles. The last four all came against stakes company, with the grand finale in the \$100,000 Arapahoe Park Classic against a field that included East Coast stakes winner Ground Transport.

But the quality of the field didn't seem to matter to Get Happy Mister, as the Kenneth "Butch" Gleason trainee delivered yet another win under jockey Mike Ziegler to improve his career bankroll to \$324,928.

"He's a superstar," Ziegler said. "When you can go 1 ¼ miles and take command like he did, that's the sign of a real racehorse.

"He was a little rank early," the jockey added. "I saw the speed go. He fought a little bit. When he got halfway around the first turn, he leveled out. I just watched them until the three-eighths-pole. Then Mister just took me. He knows what he's doing. Down the lane he was kind of pricking his ears."

Even with his perfect eight-for-eight Arapahoe record going into the \$100,000 race, the betting public, or at least some of them and somewhat foolishly, bet against Get Happy Mister, sending him off as the 9-5 second choice behind 4-5 favorite Ground Transport. But at the wire, it was Get Happy Mister again.

"I'll just say one thing—It's hard to beat home cooking," Gleason said.

Colorado-bred Magical Twist also enjoyed some home cooking, as the 5-year-old gelding closed gamely to take second for owner Eli Diamant and trainer Sharlot Martinez. It marked the fourth consecutive race in which Magical Twist, the 2013 Colorado-bred

horse of the year, had chased Get Happy Mister, with the final two resulting in runner-up finishes. Bred by Menoken Farms, where his sire Oliver's Twist stood the 2014 breeding season for a \$1,000 fee,

Magical Twist has hit the board in 13 of 21 career starts with earnings of \$144,057.

Get Happy Mister was named the 2012 Colorado-bred horse of the year, and he'll need to start clearing some space on his shelf for a 2014 award.

"This race tested him to see if we know how far he can run and what he can do," said Bishop, who lives in Lakewood, Colorado. "It seems like any distance can work for him. He's the best horse I've ever had."

Get Happy Mister is out of the Colorado-bred mare Sara Margaret, a daughter of Elusive Quality who placed in two stakes at Arapahoe. The gelding is due for some well-deserved rest after his Arapahoe campaign, but he'll be back to try for his 10th local win next year.

"Right now, he's turned out, and I will start him at Santa



OWNER ANNETTE BISHOP LEADS GET HAPPY MISTER TO A FAMILIAR PLACE, THE ARAPAHOE PARK WINNER'S CIRCLE.

Anita again (in early 2015)," said Bishop about his return to the races, which will start in the barn of her son-in-law Mark Tsagalakis on the West Coast before moving back to Gleason's barn. "We'll bring him back to Arapahoe and see if someone wants to run with him."

No matter who lines up to run against him, Get Happy Mister is not going to back down from a challenge.

"He needs a few manners and likes to bite a little," Bishop said. "He knows he's the top boy, but he's a sweet, laid-back, fun horse. I was amazed at how calm he was for his last race; I was worried if he was alright. He just takes everything in stride. He knows happy and happy knows him."

As for his name, Bishop said it just kind of came to her at the sale.

"Butch and I were sitting there and they started bidding on him, and Butch got a little nervous," she recalled. "He said he wants this horse. So I said, 'get happy mister,' and that ended up being his name.

The name certainly fits.

"He's a happy horse, and he makes a lot of people happy," Bishop concluded. ★