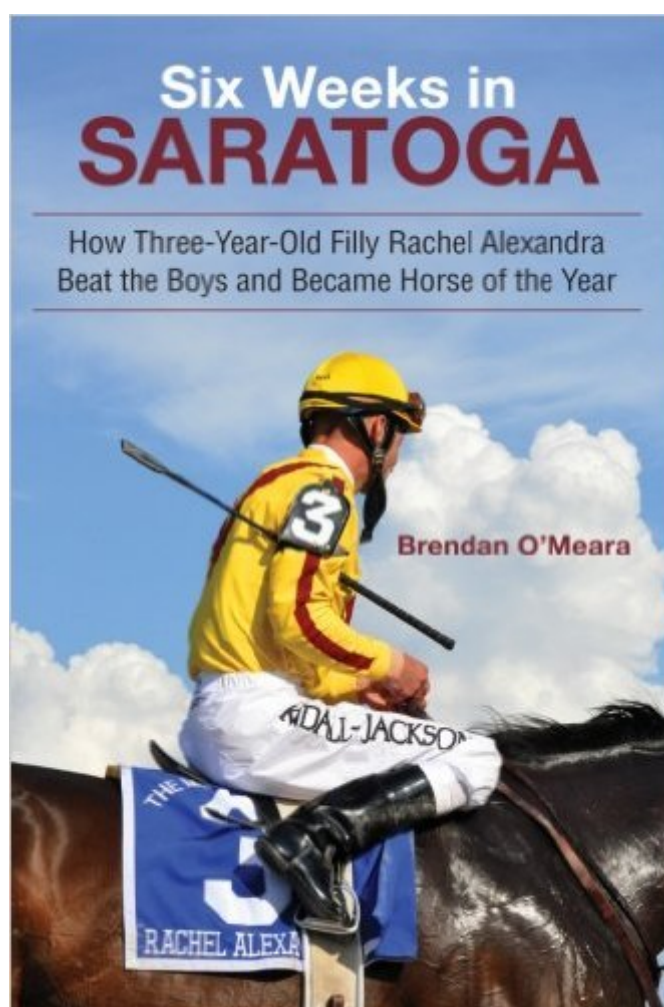


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Six Weeks In Saratoga: How Three-Year-Old Filly Rachel Alexandra Beat The Boys And Became Horse Of The Year (Excelsior Editions)



Synopsis

SEMIFINALIST â€” 2011 Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award, presented by Castleton Lyons and Thoroughbred Times

The inside story of how a three-year-old filly captured the hearts of racing fans and cemented her bid to be named Horse of the Year. When Rachel Alexandra thundered to a stylish win against the boys in the 2009 Preakness Stakes, her connections came to the 141st Saratoga Race Course meeting wanting more than just another victory. They wanted Horse of the Year. Her jockey, Calvin Borel, pointed triumphantly to the three-year-old filly beneath him. Rachel Alexandra was the best horse he had ever ridden and it was his job to ensure that she and her connections didn't leave Saratoga Springs without a victory. Hall of Fame trainer and gruff New Yorker Nick Zito felt he could slay the queen. He'd take his shots with two rival horses, Da Tara and Cool Coal Man, because, as he well knew, you can't win if you don't play. New York Racing Association president and CEO Charlie Hayward knew that Rachel Alexandra could run elsewhere and didn't have to come to Saratoga. The pressure was on him to keep this talented and magnetic filly on his property, but how far could he go without compromising his values? Then there were the other horses at the meet: the Zito-trained Commentator, eight years old and looking for one last try in the Whitney Handicap; Kentucky Derby winner Mine That Bird, aiming to reclaim his glory if he could only stay healthy; and Summer Bird, the Belmont Stakes winner, who demanded respect. Everyone was in the twilight of their careers. What would be their legacies? How would they be remembered? Never before has the famous racing season at Saratoga been illustrated through these threads, in real time. As we follow the jockey, the trainer, and the executive, we come to understand how they, and so many other racing fans and professionals, were drawn to the magnetism of one special horse, Rachel Alexandra. All of this happens in six weeks, all at Saratoga. Meara narrates the drama-filled story with behind-the-scene details that will grab the interest of racing enthusiasts and non-fans alike.

Hudson River Valley Review

Book Information

Series: Excelsior Editions

Paperback: 284 pages

Publisher: State University of New York Press (January 2, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1438439423

ISBN-13: 978-1438439426

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (21 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,933,271 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1087 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Individual Sports > Horses > Racing #1461 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Essays #3854 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Horses

Customer Reviews

Brenda O'Meara's *Six Weeks in Saratoga: How Rachel Alexandra Beat the Boys and Became Horse of the Year* recalls the meet at Saratoga in the summer of 2009. It was the year of the filly with contention between the three-year-old Rachel and the four-year-old Zenyatta locked in a fan rivalry that hadn't been seen since Sea Biscuit and War Admiral. Racing fans were driven along by the promise of a meet between the two female bi-coastal rivals: one that never happened. Yet in spite of the unfulfilled promise of that dream match, Saratoga's summer meet was bountiful with the presence of that year's most unlikely Kentucky Derby winner, Mine That Bird and Belmont winner Summer Bird: both out of the Saratoga scions Whitney family's Birdstone, but each with a much different path to the winner's circle. O'Meara captures the spirit of the place while relaying the tough business decisions that go into day-to-day operations of a top notch track that the casual fan doesn't see. He follows the NYRA's Charlie Hayward on his marketing crusade and the nerve-wracking job of keeping a premier track's take up during the height of the recession. Most writers can't pull this off. O'Meara, through the use of iconoclastic comparisons and the painting of the unpredictability of the Saratoga landscape, manages rather nicely. His juxtapositions and short vignettes allow the reader to see the complicated and fascinating history and business dealings of the track while keeping the focus on the stars of the industry which has always been the horses, the trainers, the jockeys and the connections. Rachel's tale of her and Calvin Borel's 2009 season is a fairy tale indeed and in this book she shines as brightly as her glossy chocolate coat.

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