

Field set for 35th Pepsi North America Cup final

Lather Up, Stay Hungry and Wes Delight win eliminations

MARK MCKELVIE

The field is set for the 35th edition of the \$1-million Pepsi North America Cup following Saturday evening's three \$50,000 eliminations at Woodbine Mohawk Park.

A group of 29 three-year-old pacers were split into a trio of eliminations with the top-three finishers from each division, plus a fourth-place finisher drawn by lot, advancing to next week's \$1 million final.

O'Brien Award winner Stay Hungry came from third-over turning for home to capture the first elimination in 1:50.

Driven by Doug McNair, Stay Hungry got away sixth and would see the two horses in front of him angle out at the half. Summer Travel led by the half in :55.4 and battled first-up challenger Done Well by three-quarters in 1:23.1.

In the stretch, Done Well eventually muscled by Summer Travel, but Stay Hungry charged home with a :26 final-quarter and got by in deep stretch to win by a head.

Hayden Hanover, who got the second-over trip, finished third, while Summer Travel was fourth.

Trained by Tony Alagna, Stay Hungry came into his elimination off a 1:49.1 qualifying mile last week at the Meadowlands, which followed a second-place finish in his season debut. The son of Somebeachsomewhere

won six of nine starts last season, including the Breeders Crown, and banked over \$500,000 for owners Brad Grant and the late-Irwin Samelman.

McNair, who was last year's top driver at Woodbine, will have his third-career drive in the Pepsi North America Cup and his first with an elimination winner.

"That's always what you dream of when you're growing up watching the race," said McNair. "To be in the race and have one that is legit and low odds is a great feeling."

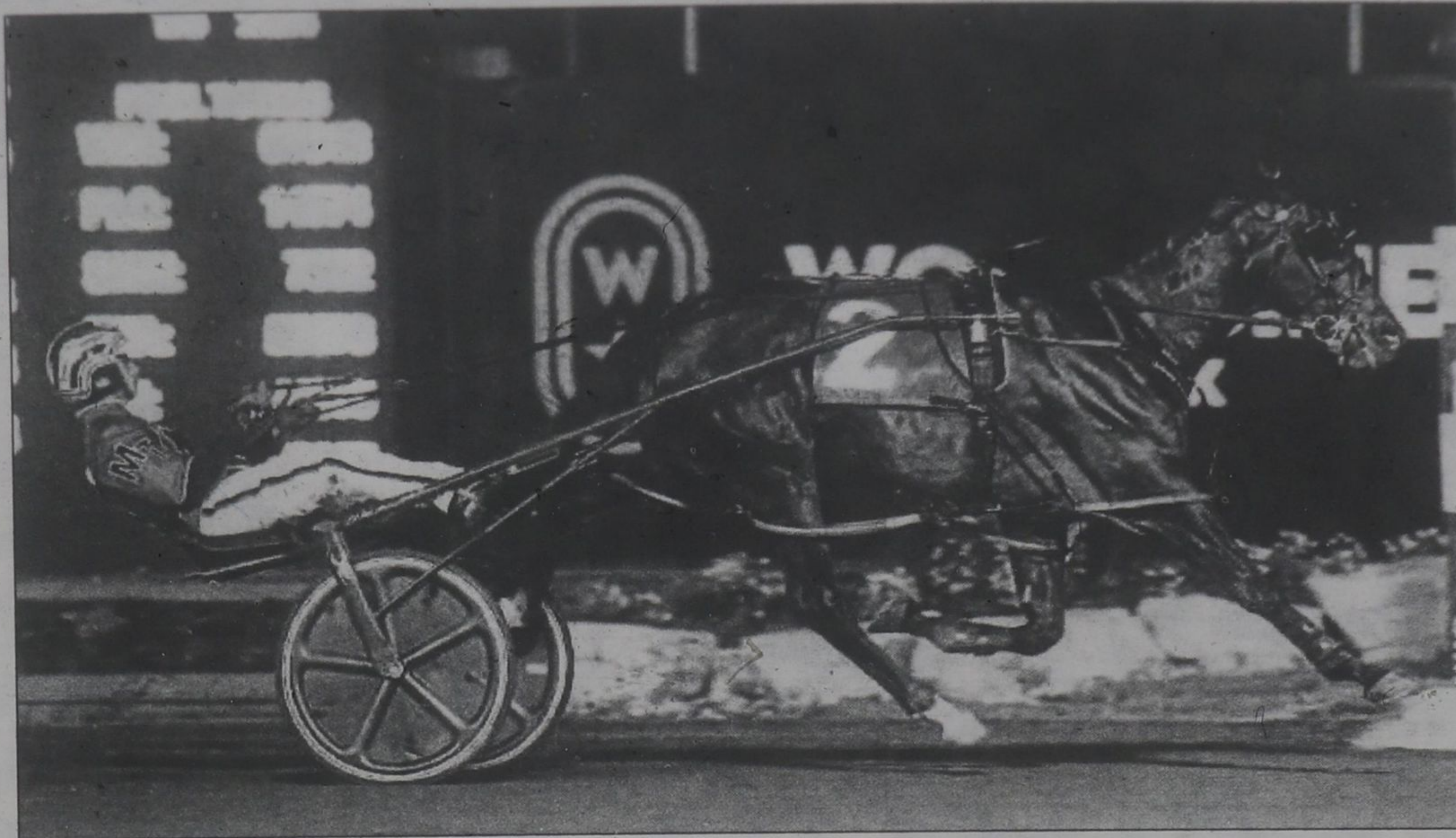
Stay Hungry paid \$4.10 to win.

Wes Delight split between rivals to capture the second elimination for driver Corey Callahan and trainer Mark Harder.

A son of Bettors Delight, Wes Delight fired out early and got a two-hole ride, as American History cleared to the lead at a :26.1 opening-quarter and took the field by the half in :54.3.

Dorsoduro Hanover came first-up on the far turn to pressure American History, who paced by three-quarters in 1:22.4. Nutcracker Sweet sat on the back of the first-up challenger and was poised for a strong stretch bid.

In the lane, American History and Nutcracker Sweet met up for a battle, but both were surpassed by Wes Delight, as Callahan angled off the rail and had room to split rivals and win in 1:50.2. Nutcracker Sweet finished



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Lather Up and Montrell Teague race to victory in the third elimination of the North America Cup Saturday at Woodbine Mohawk Park. They had the fastest time on the night, clocking in at 1:49.2.

second by a neck, while American History was beat less than a length in third.

"Yannick's horse (American History) went on enough (in the stretch) that I could sneak out there," said Callahan. "This little horse is so gritty, he just loves to win."

Wes Delight is now five for six this season and has banked \$108,496 for owners Rick Phillips, Deena Rachel Frost and Harder. The Bettors Delight colt increased his career numbers to eight wins and \$232,573 earned with his Cup elimination score.

A \$2 win ticket on Wes Delight returned \$5.70.

Lather Up improved to five for five in 2018 with a dominating 1:49.2 victory in the third elimination.

The Clyde Francis trainee and driver Montrell Teague made an opening-quarter move from second to first, but didn't carry the lead long. Lost In Time rushed to the lead in the second-quarter and posted a :54.2 half.

Lost In Time continued to lead at three-quarters in 1:22.2, but had his momentum interrupted when Courtly Choice, who was pressuring first-up, got too tight and hooked wheels with the leader.

The lead pair became un-

hooked with a little more than an eighth of a mile to go, but the rail opened and Lather Up stormed by his rivals with powerful strides and drew away to win by two and three-quarter lengths.

St Lads Neptune finished second, while Hitman Hill was third. Lost In Time recovered to hang on for fourth and won the draw as the fourth-place finisher to qualify for the \$1 million final.

A son of Im Gorgeous, Lather Up has been an incredible run to start his three-year-old season. The homebred for Gary & Barbara Iles is undefeated in five starts and passed his tough-

est task to date on Saturday.

"I knew there was going to be a couple of them leaving out of there and I wasn't going to be able to get my way the whole time like I been doing the last few times," said Teague. "I figured out a trip and it didn't look like the best one, but we figured it out."

Lather Up now has nine wins and career earnings of \$167,100.

The Francis trainee paid \$3.50 to win.

The \$1-million, Pepsi North America Cup takes place Saturday (June 16). Doors open at 4 p.m. and first-race post-time is 6:30 p.m.

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