

Harness the Stars!!

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Gary Magee

“If you are going to do it—do it right.”

It just wouldn't be the Waupaca County Fair without seeing Gary Magee down to drive in the majority of the races carded. Unfortunately, due to a farming accident, Gary has been sidelined from the sulky. His spirits are high, and he continues to preside over his stable of trotters, who are as usual, winning races!

This third generation horseman was born into this business and has been piloting horses for 42 years. He was fortunate to learn his trade from Wisconsin Hall of Fame member Elwood Magee (his father), but always took the opportunity to learn from other greats such as Del Insko, and little cousin Dave Magee. (See Barn Notes for more on Dave)

Gary recently retired from teaching school, but has been keeping busy running his farm and training center. It's at his farm in Shawano where Gary trains his beloved trotters "Getty" and "Bunns." Fox Valley Bunns is a two time Wisconsin Trotter of the Year and Get Physical is currently leading the point standings this year. Gary himself was named Wisconsin Driver of the Year in 1996, Runner-Up Driver of the Year 5 times, and currently has the longest running total of Top Ten Driving finishes at 21 years.

Although Gary's home is on the Wisconsin Fair scene, he is no stranger to pari-mutuel driving. He won his first pari-mutuel race behind Mo Rich at Balmoral Park and still loves driving there when the opportunity presents itself. Gary also thoroughly enjoyed driving at the now defunct Sportman's Park in Cicero, Illinois. It's quite a strategy adjustment going from half mile county fair ovals to Chicagoland mile ovals, but Gary has proven to handle it well.

All drivers have a particular race in which they didn't win, but will forever stick out in their minds. Most are the time they got photo-ed out of the win, or hit the board in a big purse race. Gary's on the other hand is a little more unique. "As we were about to get the word GO, the horse I was driving tripped. I was thrown out of the bike and landed on the horse's back—I rode him to a stop and drove him off the track." Not too shabby for a man who never studied acrobatics in high school!

Today, Gary sends his two trotters postward, only this time he must watch patiently from the sidelines, as his son Mike climbs into the sulky. Mike has now piloted Get Physical to three consecutive victories, and the ever jesting Wisconsin horsemen like to razz Gary about the wonderful job Mike has been doing. Gary's response is stated with a simple wry smile. "Not only can I train good horses, but I can train good drivers." Well said, Gary. Well said.

