



# Omaha

*by Kathleen Jones*

America's third Triple Crown winner didn't look like a champion in the making at age two. He won only once in nine starts in his juvenile year, and came into the Kentucky Derby off a third place in the Wood Memorial. Still, in a field of 18 runners, he was made the 2nd choice at 4-to-1 behind the Calumet filly Nellie Flag.

The Derby in those days was begun from a standing start, and after they were all in line, the race began with Plat Eye, St Bernard and Boxthorn contesting the early fractions. Nellie Flag suffered interference soon after the start and again on the first turn. She ran a good race to finish 4th. Omaha escaped the crowding at the start, and bided his time in mid pack. After the first mile was covered, he swept into the lead. The only real challenge in the stretch came from Roman Soldier, who was a great closer, but Omaha kept him comfortably at bay.

A week later came the Preakness. His odds dropped to 95 cents on the dollar. The Jeffords entry of Firethorn and Commonwealth was second favored at about 4-to-1. There was a 3 1/2 minute delay at the post as the starter tried to stage a fair start from the standing stalls. Finally, that was accomplished. Just as in the Derby, Omaha began casually in 6th place of the 8 runners. The longshot, Brannon, went out on the front end with Boxthorn attempting to go with him. Omaha coasted, waiting. When the two leaders began to fade, it was Omaha who assumed the mantle of leadership and swept on to an easy 6 length victory.

Between the Preakness and Belmont Stakes, he entered the Withers, but had to check sharply behind a wall of six horses. Eventually he got clear and showed a terrific turn of foot but could not reach the winner in time. He was beaten a half length by Rosemont.

The Belmont that year was contested in a downpour. The track was a sea of slop, and only five horses came postward, one of which was Rosemont who was made the second choice to Omaha. Trainer Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons was confident that there was no horse in America who could beat Omaha at 1 1/2 miles, and so it proved to be. Again Omaha waited patiently in mid pack and with three furlongs to go, went for the lead. But this time, Firethorn was a tough customer. A sharp struggle ensued in the homestretch. But finally Firethorn cracked, lacking the heart to go head to head with Omaha. The Triple Crown was won that day by a length and a half. Rosemont finished in third.

Other successes followed, such as the Dwyer Stakes in which he had to concede from 5 to 13 lbs to each of his opponents. But that was no problem. He travelled to Saratoga to tackle the historic Travers Stakes, but on the eve of that event, Omaha went inexplicably

lame. Fitzsimmons scratched him from the Travers and Saratoga Cup hoping to reserve him for the Lawrence Realization later in the year, but that engagement also had to be abandoned. So he was done for the season.

In January of the following year, back to his old self, he was shipped to England where he was certain to find the distance races he loved. He was allowed to run in England, but would not have been allowed to stand at stud there as he was not eligible for registration in the English Stud Book. His pedigree failed to comply with the rule of 1913 which stated that every line of the pedigree must trace to a broodmare from the early volumes of the stud book. Omaha's lines contained both Hanover and Celt which had been barred from the General Stud Book.

No matter - the British racing fans were well aware of his American accomplishments, and he was hailed as a welcome addition to the weight-for-age ranks. He began there in the Victor Wild Stakes at 12 furlongs (the Belmont distance.) Won that, then advanced to the 2 mile Queen's Plate and won that also. In both events, he was conceding weight to his beaten foes.

These races were meant to be preps for the Ascot Gold Cup at 2 1/2 miles. The popular consensus before the race was that it would be determined by only two horses in the field of nine, Omaha and the brilliant mare Quashed. The opinions were absolutely correct, as the finish came down to a hard-fought nose margin. There was great celebration over the mare's victory, but at least an equal amount of glory was heaped upon Omaha, who had carried 3 lbs more.

This was not the first Kentucky Derby winner to run in the Ascot Gold Cup. In 1929, Reigh Count also ran a fine 2nd to repeat winner Invershin.

Two years following Omaha's narrow defeat, his full brother Flares won the Ascot Gold Cup.

Omaha was returned to the U.S. for stud duty, and was a disappointment, but not totally without influence. He sired a handful of stakes winners including PREVARICATOR, HIDALGO, SOUTH DAKOTA, and others. But it is through a single daughter that his contribution to modern thoroughbreds is most keenly felt. His daughter FLAMING TOP produced a daughter named FLARING TOP, who produced a daughter named FLAMING PAGE, who produced a son named NIJINSKY. Without Nijinsky, our racing world would be markedly different, since he has been a very influential stallion. So many great runners would not exist today if the "failure of a stallion", Omaha, had not existed yesterday.

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Pedigree:

|                             |                   |                         |                  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Omaha, ch.c.<br>foaled 1932 | Gallant Fox, 1927 | *Sir Gallahad III, 1920 | *Teddy           |
|                             |                   |                         | Plucky Liege     |
|                             | Flambino, 1924    | Marguerite, 1920        | Celt             |
|                             |                   |                         | *Fairy Ray       |
|                             |                   | *Wrack, 1909            | Robert le Diable |
|                             |                   |                         | Samphire         |
| *Flambette, 1918            | Durbar II         |                         |                  |
|                             | La Flambee        |                         |                  |

(female family # 17)

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**Born:** 1932, bred in Kentucky by Belair Stud

**Died:** April 24, 1959 (age 27), buried at AkSarBen racetrack, Omaha, Nebraska

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Racing Record:

| Year  | Age | Starts | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | unp. | earnings  |
|-------|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----------|
| 1934  | 2   | 9      | 1   | 4   | 0   | 4    | \$ 3,850  |
| 1935  | 3   | 9      | 6   | 1   | 2   | 0    | 142,255   |
| 1936  | 4   | 4      | 2   | 2   | 0   | 0    | 8,650     |
| total |     | 22     | 9   | 7   | 2   | 4    | \$154,755 |

Starts and earnings at age 4 were in England.

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Stakes Record:

at 2:

- 2nd - Sanford Stakes

at 3:

- won - Kentucky Derby
- won - Preakness Stakes
- won - Belmont Stakes
- won - Dwyer Stakes
- won - Classic Stakes
- 2nd - Withers Stakes
- 3rd - Wood Memorial
- 3rd - Brooklyn Handicap
- **Champion 3yo Colt**

at 4 (in England)

- won - Victor Wild Stakes
- won - Queen's Plate
- 2nd - Ascot Gold Cup (by nose, 2 1/2 miles)
- 2nd - Princess of Wales' Stakes (by nk, 1 1/2 miles carrying 138 lbs.)