



**TOP BRASS**  
Brass Hat wins  
the MassCap



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**School  
Days**



**SUFFOLK**

# Heavy Mettle

*Brass Hat and the MassCap, both on the comeback trail, hit it off in East Boston*

BY PAUL DALEY

For the last 15 years, despite little relief from the Massachusetts legislature, Suffolk Downs, the racetrack, has refused to die.

It's fitting, then, that the 6-year-old gelding Brass Hat, who was practically given up for dead twice because of serious leg injuries, should power past 7-10 favorite Fairbanks to win the 65th running of the \$500,000 Massachusetts Handicap by three-quarters of a length before a return-to-glory crowd of 19,191 in East Boston. It was the largest MassCap crowd since the coronation of champion Cigar in 1996.

The on-track handle for the 11-race card was \$826,415, with an all-sources handle of \$3,137,927. Needless to say, Suffolk's management team was pleased with the buzz that surrounded the plant. In fact, when trainer William "Buff" Bradley and his father, Fred, who bred and owns the son of Prized from his Dixie Brass mare Brassy, received the trophy and \$300,000 winner's check from Suffolk majority owner Richard Fields, one fan strained over the winner's circle railing and yelled: "Thanks for bringing it (MassCap) back for us."

Fields turned and smiled. His eyes were moist.

So were those of the Bradleys, whose horse paid \$10.20 as the third choice in the seven-horse field. Not only were they thrilled with the effort of their horse, who came into the MassCap off a pair of dull performances in the Whitney Handicap and Woodward Stakes (both gr. I) at Saratoga, but also with the ride given by jockey Willie Martinez.

And then there was the matter of their treatment by Suffolk Downs.

Fred Bradley said: "I willed the horse to win because we've been treated so nice, better than any track we've been to. That lobster and Sam Adams was so good last night. Now I think we'll have a few Coronas tonight and decide what's next. The Breeders' Cup is out because we're not nominated. Besides, we've got to come back to Suffolk next year and defend our title."

On a track that was glib all day, local runner Fire Striker was allowed to set crawling fractions of :24.45 and :49.37 in the nine-furlong race. Fairbanks and jockey Richard Migliore sat second in a stalking position. Martinez was asked if he worried at that point about Fairbanks inheriting too soft a lead entering the far turn.

"I was outside horses, so I was able to dictate the race a little," Martinez said. "We've overcome a slow pace before. But this track was in great condition and, while we're not a push-button horse, we're like a freight train when we get going. Brass Hat does not have the best legs in the sport, but he's got the right heart."

Brass Hat did take the lead from Fairbanks at the three-sixteenths pole and, while Team Valor's horse fought valiantly on the inside, he wouldn't have pushed by Brass Hat if they had gone around again. The final time of the race was 1:49.72. Dr. Pleasure finished third, 4½ lengths in back of Fairbanks.

In the Lone Star Derby (gr. III) on the Breeders' Cup undercard Oct. 29, 2004, Brass Hat sustained a condylar fracture of the right front ankle and had to be vanned off the track. "We were just trying to save him then so he could be turned out as a pet," remembered Buff Bradley after the MassCap. "We weren't even thinking about racing him then. We put two screws in and the ankle healed."

"Then, a few days after a fifth-place finish in the Stephen Foster Handicap (gr. I) at Churchill Downs in June 2006, we had him out for a maintenance work and he broke a sesamoid. We were so worried about the blood flow to the ankle."

Still, Brass Hat came back again, culminating in his MassCap tour de force.

"Horse racing is a roller-coaster ride, but he's been a remarkable horse for our family and everybody who works with him," said his trainer.

The good news for the Bradleys is that Brass Hat is in the car at the top of the roller coaster right now and has no plans on ending the ride anytime soon.

Migliore didn't leave Suffolk Downs empty-handed. The rider was aboard Afrashad, a four-length winner of the \$100,000 James B. Moseley Sprint Handicap, on the MassCap undercard. A 5-year-old son of Smoke Glacken—Flo White, by Whitesburg, Afrashad runs for Godolphin Racing and is trained by Saeed bin Suroor. He was bred in Texas by Fred Mehew. □



Six-year-old gelding Brass Hat rumbles past Fairbanks to win the MassCap