

By John Manzi

After spending the past several years at Pocono Downs last season Jimmy Taggart, Jr. returned to Monticello Raceway, the place where he began his career, and he had a stellar season at the Sullivan County oval. His 285 wins here ranked him third on the local leaderboard and his seasonal output of 321 driving victories was 118 more than his previous best during 2001. And his purse earnings of \$1.59 million were second only to the \$1.83 million his horses earned in 2007.

Again this year Taggart is off to a good start having already won 19 times which includes the four-bagger he had on Wednesday, January 25.

Taggart waited until late on that card to get in high gear. He won the eighth race with trotter Sin To Win in 2:02.1 and then won the 10th with another trotter Mandinga, in 2:03. His victory with Strongbow, a trotter that he won 12 times with during the 2011 campaign, rebuffed a strong late challenge to win by a nose in 2:03.1. Taggart then capped his afternoon by winning the final race on the card with a pacer by the unusual name of Arm And A Leg in 2:00.2.



“I enjoyed a good season last year and hope to have a similar one again this year,” said Taggart, a Monticello-native who stepped from the amateur ranks to being a professional harness driver in 1988. “Hey, I’m off to a pretty good start and with Billy (“Zeke” Parker, Jr.) and Bruce (Aldrich, Jr.) laid up for a while I hope to get more catch-drives; at least early on.”

Taggart was referring to the operations that both Zeke and Bruce have recently undergone which will keep both drivers out of action for a while. Taggart was third best in races won last year behind Aldrich and Parker.

Photo: *Geri Schwarz*