

# Profile: Realbadcombination

by Kimberly A. Rinker



**ON THE TROT:** Realbadcombination, by Astreos, raced nine times as a trotter this year, including this win at Running Aces Harness Park on June 4 with Nick Roland in the sulky.

## Best of Both Worlds

Pacing-bred gelding finds success on both gaits

**C**ombination—the dictionary describes it as “an alliance united to achieve a common end.”

While it’s only one third of Realbadcombination’s name, it’s the third that perfectly describes the Iowa-bred, double-gaited gelding.

As well, it’s important to note that the 7-year-old son of Astreos-Catch Your Breath isn’t “real bad” in any aspect, either.

Realbadcombination didn’t begin his career in the double-gaited ranks. For the first three years he competed—from 2006 through 2008—he raced strictly on the pace, amassing an 8-6-8 record in 51 starts, and \$41,323 in purses. He took records at 2 (2:07.2h) and 3 (1:58.1) competing on the Hawkeye Fair Circuit and at Prairie Meadows for trainer Gary Liles.

In the fall of 2007, Realbadcombination shipped to Meadowlands Racetrack to trainer Scott Rollins,

where he raced in the \$15,000-\$20,000 claiming ranks—taking a 4-year-old mark of 1:53.4. In 2008 he was back in the Midwest, competing for different trainers at both Balmoral and Northfield parks.

Eventually, in the summer of 2009, the bay gelding found himself at Running Aces, when owner George Bourloukos leased him to conditioner Dan Poprawski.

“George bought him over the Internet when he was 4, and I’ve leased him on and off since,” Poprawski said. “This horse always jogged on the trot and one day I couldn’t get him to switch to the pace. He jogged so nicely that I trained him on the trot, then

qualified him on the trot and he finished third in 2:05. I entered him in a maiden trot and he won easy (in 2:04.1 on July 3, 2009), and won two more in a row (on July 10 in 2:05 and on July 17 in 2:04) on the trot.”

After a couple of sub-par trotting efforts, Realbadcombination rebounded to win on the pace in 1:57.4 on Aug. 4 of that same year.

“Since then I’ve switched him back and forth and he seems good that way,” Poprawski said. “The beauty of the Minnesota track is that I don’t have to re-qualify him like I do in Chicago.”

In 2009, Realbadcombination had 27 starts on the pace, a 2-1-1 record and \$5,588, and a mark of 1:55.1

“He’s smart and goes only as much as he has to,” said Dean Magee. “It’s amazing he’s **so smooth** at both gaits.”



You call.  
You save.  
It's that simple.



JOHN DEERE

John Deere has been a trusted supplier of equipment and service to the equine industry for generations. Now, as a member of a qualifying equine association, you can get savings on select John Deere tractors, utility vehicles, mowers, commercial worksite equipment, implements and more. Simply contact the USTA/HTA Member Benefits office at 888-257-8782 before you make your purchase. Once your membership and program category is determined, you'll be eligible for discounts on a wide variety of John Deere equipment.

Visit [www.ustrotting.com](http://www.ustrotting.com) or [www.harnesstracks.com](http://www.harnesstracks.com) for details.

### Five ways to save

The John Deere Equine Association Discount Program offers five levels.

- **Full-Time program** up to 28% savings
- **Part-Time program** up to \$1,000 savings
- **Construction program** up to 21% savings
- **Landscape program** preferred Platinum pricing
- **JohnDeereGifts.com** up to 10% savings on non-parts merchandise

Certain rules and restrictions apply. Must be members of approved associations and meet certain membership conditions. Call 888-257-8782 for more information and to qualify for your coupon. Offer subject to change without notice.



HB1111

## Profile: Realbadcombination

taken at Prairie Meadows. He started six times on the trot, with three wins and a third and \$3,767.

As a 6-year-old in 2010 the gelding garnered earnings of \$18,738—\$14,302 on the pace and \$4,436 on the trot.

"Luckily for the horse, Doc (Chicago racing secretary Narotsky) let me race him on the trot at Balmoral and on the pace at Maywood," Poprawski said. "That made life easier for him in Chicago."

Realbadcombination is a giant—over 17 hands—horse with an imposing presence.

"He wears a 64-inch hobble," Poprawski said. "He's so tall and has really big feet, and wears goliath shoes—aluminum up front and full swedges behind, with just a touch of borium. I put two head poles on him with a cheater hood, a snaffle and a birch over-check, and when he races on the pace I add a pair of knee and tendon boots."

For trotting events, Poprawski adds a set of high scalpers, hind trotting boots and heavy bell boots up front.

"He kind of tells me when he's ready to make the switch," Poprawski said. "I think he gets sore using those different muscles. I never train him, and he trots a half really well, and is super smooth in the turns. Anytime he makes a break, it's always in the straightaways."

Realbadcombination's big feet also could be the key to his success, as Poprawski makes no shoeing changes to the gelding's hooves when switching back and forth between gaits.

"I've had other horses that I'd switch between the gaits, but I always had to change their shoes to get that accomplished," Poprawski said. "I don't have to do that with him—he wears the same footwear for both gaits."

"In most of his trot races, he's 20 lengths back at the three-quarter pole before he really starts to trot. Then,

he'll pass horses like they're standing still. He can trot a quarter in 28 seconds no problem. He doesn't change his style on the pace either, except he races better covered up until the last quarter."

Driver Dean Magee, who has steered the gelding on the pace, agrees.

"Realbadcombination is as good-gaited as they come, and is just a natural pacer," Magee said. "He's so slick-gaited that he could probably race without hobbles. But he's smart and goes only as much as he has to. It's amazing he's so smooth at both gaits."

This season, at age 7, Realbadcombination continued his winning



**ON THE PACE:** As a pacer, Realbadcombination started 19 times, with his lone win coming at Running Aces on May 31 for driver Dean Magee.

ways. He won on Running Aces' opening night (May 31) on the pace in 1:57, and then on the trot in 1:59.3 on June 19. He has 27 starts to date in 2011, with three wins, one second, and four thirds and \$8,414 in seasonal earnings, and shows no signs of changing his habits anytime soon.

"I think this routine keeps him happy," Poprawski observed. "He's a free-for-aller when it comes to his feed tub—even if he's sick, he'll eat up everything in sight. He's a kitten to jog and to be around in the barn. He's every trainer's dream, really."

*Kimberly A. Rinker is a freelance writer living in Illinois. To comment on this article, e-mail us at [readerforum@ustrotting.com](mailto:readerforum@ustrotting.com).*

PHOTO BY PENSIVE PHOTOGRAPHY