

Polynesian

by Kathleen Jones

If overcoming adversity is the sign of greatness, then Polynesian was certainly as great a horse as there has ever been. His dam, Black Polly died shortly after foaling him, and lacking a nurse mare for the orphaned Polynesian, the breeders raised him on cow's milk, served to him from a bucket.



His first two juvenile starts were promising third place efforts, but in his third start, he bucked his shins and was removed from training to recuperate. He then suffered an attack of Azoturia, known commonly as "tying up", characterized by a severe tenseness in the loins. Polynesian found even casual movement to be uncomfortable. Although the ailment soon vanished, the colt was left with psychological trauma. Turned out into his paddock, he would stand motionless for hours, fearing the pain if he moved. Then one day he was attacked by a swarm of bees. Terrified, he galloped wildly around the paddock to elude them, and although he suffered many stings, his fear of moving was completely cured.

He returned to training and raced seven times more as a juvenile. His first start back found him in the winners' circle for the first time. Following another third, he ripped off a string of four consecutive victories including the Sagamore Stakes at Pimlico. Despite missing much of the juvenile season, he was weighted 119 lbs. at year-end (only 7 lbs below co-highweights Pavot and Free For All) on the Experimental Free Handicap scale.

On the Triple Crown trail of 1945, Polynesian ran in the Wood Memorial but finished a well-beaten fourth to Hoop Jr. Then in the Withers, Polynesian upset the hugely favored Pavot to hand that colt his first defeat. Polynesian skipped the Derby, which was just as well as owners were concerned about his staying ability. It was Hoop Jr who plowed through the Churchill Downs mud to win the Kentucky Derby. But Polynesian would meet him once again in the Preakness.

At odds of 12-to-1, the son of Unbreakable shot straight for the lead in the second jewel of the Triple Crown, and withstood the valiant challenge of Hoop Jr. The Derby winner finished second on a bowed tendon and would be retired. Co-favored Pavot ran unplaced.

With the mile and a half Belmont Stakes clearly out of his range, Polynesian went next in the 8½ furlong Shevlin Stakes but finished fifth. Meanwhile, Pavot won the Belmont by five lengths. With a month's rest, he came back with a fine win in the 6 furlong Saranac Handicap at Saratoga. But in the star-studded Pimlico Special he could only manage sixth place behind Armed, First Fiddle, Stymie and Gallorette. He finished off his sophomore season with a win in the Valorous Handicap.

At four, Polynesian certainly kept busy, making 20 starts. He began with a bang in the Toboggan, but ran unplaced next in the Metropolitan Mile after trying to take it as a five furlong sprint. He finished unplaced behind the marvelous filly Gallorette. Backing off to 6 furlongs, he shouldered 126 lbs. and aced the Roseben Handicap in the very fast time of 1:08 4/5. One had to wonder what the owners were thinking when they started him next in the mile and a quarter Suburban Handicap. It was no surprise that he trailed in tenth of the eleven starters while the race was won by Armed.

Polynesian started next in a 6f sprint at Delaware and equaled the track record. Following a third at 132 lbs in the Fleetwing, the near-black colt scored again in the Rumson. When he just failed in the 1 mile Wilson, bravely hanging on in fourth, two necks and a head behind Pavot and Gallorette, it should have been a clear sign that he didn't want the distance, but he was started next in the 10 furlong Whitney at Saratoga. In that event he could not keep up with Stymie, and finished 14 lengths back in fourth. Continuing out of his depth, he was runner-up in the 9½f Merchants' & Citizens' Handicap, and the 10f Saratoga Handicap. In the latter, he pushed the winner to a new track record and finished only ¾ lengths behind in second, and defeated Stymie who ran third.

The case of tying up which afflicted the colt as a youngster occasionally returned, interrupting training. Trainer Dixon admitted it was a terribly difficult prospect to keep Polynesian fit enough to run the longer distances when having to deal with unexpected downtime, and with the colt's sometimes reluctant desire to work. Fortunately Polynesian pretty much kept himself fit enough for a quick sprint.

At five, he was twice victorious in races exceeding a mile, but was nearly unstoppable in sprints, even those in which he bore huge weights. Before he left the track permanently, Polynesian finally got the better of the mighty Armed. Clashing with him in an overnight ¾ mile race at Belmont, Polynesian had no trouble keeping his foe at bay. Then in a most flattering tribute to the quality of Polynesian, Armed destroyed Triple Crown winner Assault by 8 lengths in a match race in his very next start.

Polynesian finished his career with a smooth victory in the Janney Handicap under weight of 134 lbs. He then retired to stud at Elmendorf for a first season fee of \$1500. Compare that to Derby winner Hoop Jr, standing for \$500.

Polynesian produced 12 crops of foals, but his best son arrived in the second crop. This was NATIVE DANCER, who except for a narrow loss in the Kentucky Derby, would have been undefeated in 22 starts, and a Triple Crown winner. Inheriting stamina from his broodmare sire, Discovery, he clearly got his world-record speed from Polynesian. Other offspring of note for Polynesian are: BARBIZON, POLYLAD, IMBROS, BUREAUCRACY, ALANESIAN, STURDY MAN, DARLING ADELLE, POLLY'S JET, TAHITIAN KING, PINK VELVET, and many others.

Daughters of Polynesian have produced: PRIMONETTA, CHATEAUGAY, WINDY SANDS, LAPLANDER, FLYALONG, SERENE QUEEN, JOHN WILLIAM, MY FRIEND

PAUL, GOOD COUNSEL, EAGLESHAM, PRINCESSNESIAN, SWING EASY, and many more.

Until Polynesian came to prominence, most racing fans had never heard of his sire Unbreakable, and labelled him an "obscure" sire. Unbreakable had been bred by Elmendorf and sent to race in England, where he was the winner of the Waterford Stakes (134 lbs.), the Richmond Stakes (133 lbs.) the Exeter, Soltykoff Stakes and Victoria Cup. He then was returned to the American farm of his birth for stud duty.

Polynesian was leading juvenile sire in 1952, which is the year his Native Dancer was Champion 2yo and Horse of the Year. He was second on the general sire's list in 1953, and was subsequently syndicated for a then-record amount of \$560,000.

Pedigree:

POLYNESIAN, br.c. foaled 1942	Unbreakable, 1935	*Sickle, 1924	Phalaris
			Selene
		*Blue Glass, 1917	*Prince Palatine
			Hour Glass II
	Black Polly, 1936	*Polymelian, 1914	Polymelus
			*Pasquita
		Black Queen, 1930	Pompey
			Black Maria

(female family # 14)

Born: 1942, bred by Elmendorf Farm, Lexington, KY

Owner: Elmendorf Farm

Trainer: Morris H. Dixon

Died: December 29, 1959 (age 17) due to twisted intestine

Racing Record:

Year	Age	Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	unp.	earnings
1944	2	10	5	1	3	1	\$ 17,035
1945	3	14	5	4	1	4	102,190
1946	4	20	8	3	5	4	113,840
1947	5	14	9	2	1	2	77,845
total		58	27	10	10	11	\$310,910

Stakes Record:

At 2:

- won - Sagamore Stakes
- 2nd - Endurance Handicap

At 3:

- won - Preakness Stakes
- won - Withers Stakes
- won - Saranac Handicap
- won - Reistertown Handicap
- won - Valorous Handicap
- 2nd - Ritchie Handicap
- 3rd - Experimental Free Handicap

At 4:

- won - Riggs Handicap (9f)
- won - Scarsdale Handicap (9f)
- won - Toboggan Handicap
- won - Roseben Handicap
- won - Rumson Handicap (NTR - 130 lbs.)
- won - Pageant Handicap (EWR for 6f - 126 lbs.)
- won - Turf & Field Handicap (9f)
- 2nd - Trenton Handicap (10f)
- 2nd - Saratoga Handicap
- 2nd - Merchants' And Citizens' Handicap

- 3rd - Washington Handicap
- 3rd - Vosburgh Handicap (130 lbs.)
- 3rd - Bay Shore Handicap (130 lbs.)
- 3rd - Fleetwing Handicap (132 lbs.)

At 5:

- won - Camden Handicap (NTR - 129 lbs.)
- won - Atlantic City Inaugural Handicap (130 lbs.)
- won - Long Branch Handicap (129 lbs.)
- won - Wilmington Handicap (132 lbs.)
- won - Oceanport Handicap (134 lbs.)
- won - Omnibus Handicap (NTR - 129 lbs.)
- won - Janney Handicap (134 lbs.)
- won - Fighting Fox Handicap (130 lbs.)
- 2nd - Excelsior Handicap
- 2nd - Paumonok Handicap (130 lbs.)
- 3rd - Toboggan Handicap (134 lbs.)
- TITLE: **CHAMPION Sprinter**