



Roseben

by Kathleen Jones

Roseben was known to all as "The Big Train", so named because of his size (an inch short of 18 hands), and his ability to carry a great load of freight. Of his 111 races, Roseben carried 130 pounds or more 59 times and conceded weight to all of his opponents 86 times. Furthermore, he carried 140 pounds or more in 29 races and won 14 of those. He won carrying 144 pounds, 146 pounds, and on four

occasions, won carrying 147 pounds. In the four races in which he was assigned 148 pounds, he tallied 3 seconds and a third. In the race in which he carried 150 lbs, he ran 2nd.

Roseben was the greatest sprinter of his time, and many will argue that there have been none to equal him since. In modern sprints, a 10-pound concession means little, but it is now unheard of to set a 6 furlong track record while conceding 60 lbs, as Roseben did at Aqueduct in 1906. He also set or equaled track records at 6, 7 and 7½ furlongs while carrying up to 147 pounds, and established American records for 6 and 7 furlongs.

Roseben was not always a powerhouse. Like most trains, he began his career slowly, and his first owner must have wondered if Roseben would ever get up to full speed. Owner John Drake had purchased the gelding as a yearling and impatiently waited for him to mature. Finally, in October of his 3yo season, Roseben found the winner's circle following a 6½ furlong maiden race at Morris Park. Drake then put him up for auction, and Davy Johnson bought him for \$3800. Within 10 days, Roseben had won a pair of overnight races for his new owner.

In May of 1905, with a record 4 wins in 7 starts, Roseben came to brand-new Belmont Park to face the great colt Race King in the Toboggan Handicap. Race King had just previously dead-heated with Sysonby two days earlier in the Metropolitan Handicap, and was the hot favorite. Few had heard of Roseben yet, but the stewards allowed Race King two pounds less. The train rolled right on past him and gave him a sound beating.

In his next race, Roseben met Race King again, and gave him 9 pounds in the Claremont Handicap, but the result was the same. Thereafter the assigned weights steadily increased. He won 13 more races that year, stringing together streaks of six and seven consecutive victories on separate occasions. The race he will probably always be remember for was the Manhattan Handicap that year in which he won by 5 lengths while carrying 147 pounds to victory. He had faced 3 rivals, giving away between 42 and 49 pounds to each of them, including Race King who receive 43 lbs. His time for the 6

furlongs, 1:11 3/5, was reported in The Thoroughbred Record magazine as a New World Record, and that the 147 pound impost also set a new American weight-carrying record.

A week and a half later, The Daily Racing Form reported the following regarding Roseben's historic achievement on October 16th of that year:

"ROSEBEN, the champion sprinter of the year, and the fastest horse of his time, ran 7 furlongs around one turn in 1:22. There were 15,000 people at the course (Belmont Park) and they nearly cheered themselves hoarse at this most wonderful achievement on the part of Davy Johnson's bread-winner. The best previous record for the seven-eighths of a mile was 1:23½, made by Bella B. over the straightaway at Monmouth Park. The previous record for this course was 1:25 flat. Roseben returned to the scales as the band played Hail To The Chief."

(NOTE - that American record would be equaled in 1937 at Arlington Park by the mighty sprinter Clang, but not broken until 1947 at Hollywood Park by Honeymoon. It would stand as the track record at Belmont until being broken by Bold Ruler in 1957.)

At age six, one of Roseben's most brilliant performances came in a 6 furlong handicap at Brighton Beach in mid-July. Conceding 60 lbs to the runner-up, Smoker, he finished the race in near-record time, winning by two clear lengths.

The Big Train continued to roll through his 6 year old season but at age seven began to lose some steam. He won only 9 of his 26 starts that year, none of his victories coming in stakes events. At eight, he won only 3 of 10 outings and finished his career in a lowly \$1000 selling race. In that final event, he bowed a tendon, and so ended a glorious career.

The owner gave the gelding to New York politician James Wadsworth who in turn gave Roseben to his daughter as a pleasure horse. In April of 1911, the following article appeared in the Thoroughbred Record:

"ROSEBEN, the great sprinter... the idol of a million lovers of the thoroughbred and racing, is now the favorite mount of the daughter of former Representative James W Wadsworth, and can be seen almost any fair day on the Speedway at Washington. Miss Wadsworth is an expert horsewoman, and has never had the least trouble in handling the big sprinter. David C Johnson gave Roseben to Mr Wadsworth, knowing he would take the best care of the old racer. Miss Wadsworth soon found that he made an ideal mount and obtained her father's permission to ride him. He is gentle as a kitten. Roseben broke several track records for sprint distances and demonstrated his ability to finish in front despite the most crushing imposts that could be devised by the official handicappers. It was toward the end of his sixth year on the turf that Roseben's legs "went bad" and it became apparent that his racing days were over. His legs are still bad -- that is -- for a Roseben. Good enough though on occasions to greatly chagrin some of the crack cavalymen in Washington as he flashes by them like a rocket..."

Almost a century later, he is still remembered as one of the greatest of sprinters. Annually, at Belmont Park, a 6 furlong Graded Stakes race bearing his name is held in his honor.

Pedigree:

ROSEBEN, b.g. foaled 1901	*Ben Strome, 1886	Bend Or	Doncaster
			Rouge Rose
	Rose Leaf, 1890	Strathfleet	Scottish Chief
			Masquerade
		Duke of Montrose	Waverly
			Kelpie
Fulgurite	Thunderbolt		
	La Belle Jeanne		

(female family # 36)

Born: 1901, bred by Thomas J Carson at Dixiana Stud, Lexington, KY

Owners: John A Drake, Davy C Johnson, Lucien O Appleby.

Trainers: Enoch Wishard, Charles Oxx, Frank Weir

Died: 1918, (age 17)

Racing Record:

Year	Age	Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	unp.	earnings
1903	2	1	0	0	0	1	\$ 0
1904	3	9	3	2	1	3	2,405
1905	4	29	19	5	2	3	22,085
1906	5	22	11	5	3	3	27,870
1907	6	14	7	4	2	1	13,995
1908	7	26	9	5	4	8	6,340
1909	8	10	3	4	0	3	2,415
total		111	52	25	12	22	\$75,110

Stakes Victories:

at 4:

- won - Manhattan Handicap (NWR, 147 lbs, conceding up to 49 lbs.)
- won - Toboggan Handicap (conceding 25 lbs to runner-up)
- won - Bronx Highweight Handicap
- won - Claremont Handicap

at 5:

- won - Carter Handicap (129 lbs., conceding 23 lbs to runner-up)
- won - Manhattan Handicap (147 lbs.)
- won - Bayview Handicap (146 lbs. in the mud)

at 6:

- won - Flight Handicap