

Reprinted from "The Blood-Horse"

Despite Late Night, Polk Enjoys Sunny Skies

By Claire Novak @BH_CNovak | July 1, 2017 7:14 PM



Photo: Coady Photography

Nancy Polk of Normandy Farm was at Churchill Downs to watch Sunny Skies romp in the Debutante Stakes

A rainy late night at **Churchill Downs** didn't keep Nancy Polk from enjoying **Sunny Skies**.

The 2-year-old daughter of **Animal Kingdom** became the first stakes winner for her sire June 30 in the \$100,000 Debutante Stakes around 10:30 p.m. EDT, and Normandy Farm owner Polk, also Sunny Skies' breeder, was on hand through stormy weather for the filly's second win in as many starts.

"It was nerve-racking, but very exciting, obviously, with the outcome," Polk said.

Primarily a commercial breeder, Polk has just two runners in her stable - homebreds Sunny Skies and **Daddys Lil Darling**, the latter a graded stakes winner.

Sunny Skies is the last foal out of the Marquetry mare Skyscape, who was retired this year at age 22.

"We chose Animal Kingdom because he was a (Kentucky) Derby winner," Polk said. "My bloodstock people and I collaborated and figured that it was a good mating for the mare, and it turned out to be so."

Sunny Skies, bought back by Polk for \$47,000 at the Keeneland September yearling sale, aired by nine lengths April 27 going 4 1/2 furlongs at **Keeneland** in her debut to become Animal Kingdom's first Northern Hemisphere winner. She won the six-furlong Debutante by 1 3/4 gate-to-wire lengths in 1:11.83 on a sloppy, sealed track to give the Darley stallion his first black-type honors.

"It's very exciting to see her progress," Polk said of Sunny Skies. "She skipped the allowance phase and went straight to a stakes, which shows you how much confidence my trainer has in her. Obviously she was worth the trust."

Sunny Skies will point next to the 1 1/16-mile Pocahontas Stakes (G2) at Churchill in September, a Breeders' Cup Challenge "Win and You're In" event for the 14 Hands Winery Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) in November at **Del Mar**.



Photo: Coady Photography

"It's a 'Win and You're In,' so that would be great to get to the Breeders' Cup, and obviously that's our aim," Polk said.

In the meantime, Polk will look to the other half of her talented duo for excitement. Daddys Lil Darling, runner-up to **Abel Tasman** by 1 1/4 lengths in the May 5 Longines Kentucky Oaks (G1) last time out, is scheduled to race in the July 8 Belmont Oaks Invitational (G1T) at **Belmont Park**. The 3-year-old Scat Daddy filly traveled to Royal Ascot for a

run in the June 2 Investec Oaks (G1), but dropped her rider before the start and had to be scratched.

"It doesn't seem like (the incident) took much out of her," said Polk, who also went to Royal Ascot to watch the race in person. "That was one of the more disappointing days of my life. To go all that way and not be able to run was really too bad, but that's horse racing for you."

Daddys Lil Darling is out of the Houston mare Miss Hot Salsa.

"Mainly I breed to sell. I'm not really a racing person," Polk said. "I've just had a few over the years, but with both of these we wanted to keep the bloodlines going, which is why we've kept the daughters of the two mares. We're incredibly lucky both of them turned out the way they did. It's been a great adventure."