



# Hard Twist

*The following Vintage Article on the great Hard Twist, a 1942 Chestnut Stallion, by Cowboy P-12 and out of Mamie Taylor, is reprinted from the April 1951 issue of 'Western Horseman'.*

By Nelson C. Nye

Sired by Yellow Jacket's greatest son, Cowboy P-12, and out of the great Quarter running mare Mamie Taylor, there was born to Lou Kirk of the Farmington country in July 1943 a Quarter Horse as truly bred as any you will find in the nation today. He was named by Jim Shirley, who broke him to saddle. Shirley called him Hard Twist because, he said, the colt was "one of the hardest twisted, toughest muscled little horses" he had ever tried to do business with. The Texas Livestock Journal, in their December 195 issue, in a poll of trackmen and other qualified observers, named him Comeback King Of The Year. Between his birth and his latest ovation, Lewis Blackwell's gallant sorrel stallion has made plenty of headlines and become known as a sire of some mighty fine young 'uns, giving considerable indication he may remain a big name long after he has gone to greener pastures.

Mamie Taylor, his dam, was sired by Jack Dempsey out of a mare called Red Cloud, who was out of Headlight out of Little Pet, an own daughter of Traveler from a Peter McCue mare. As a three year old, Mamie flung track dust all over Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, and was considered one of the fastest mares of her day (see March 1949 issue The Western Horseman). Mr Kirk says: "I gave her to my son, Louis as a colt, later buying her back as a broodmare. While he owned her, my son trained and

raced her, winning many an outstanding race with her. She was so fast it was like watching a shadow."

Hard Twist got speed from his dam's sire too, who had also been a noted performer as well as a great stock horse. He carved a name for himself in a day when there were lots of top horses and mighty little money to run for. He was bred by a veteran of the short tracks named Schultz.

Hard Twist's own sire, Cowboy P-12, has been justly celebrated as one of the greatest cattle working horses in the country. Cowboy was out of one of the greatest mares in the Panhandle, Roan Lady by Stalks. His sire, Yellow Jacket, was the most celebrated running Quarter Horse in the whole Southwest until Traveler beat him at Kyle, TX, very nearly throwing the town into the hands of the receivers. Cowboy sired eight horses in the Register Of Merit of the AQHA: Shue Fly, Gangster D, LaChee, Bulldog, Mug, Georgie F and Basin Bess as well as Hard Twist.

With such a heritage of performance, it is easy now to see that the Kirks' sorrel colt was destined for greatness. Yet Lou Kirk sold him, as a two year old, to Wayne Brand, of Yuma, AZ in March 1945, probably the greatest mistake old Lou ever made.

No one has ever disclosed what Brand gave for the colt, but he obviously knew a good thing when he saw it. Brand says: "When I bought him he hadn't been saddled more than 10 or 12 times. Although he never bucked a jump while I had him, he was an extremely rank colt, not mean but mighty rough and playful. I believe he was better bred on his dam's side than on his sire's, being out of Mamie Taylor, one of the greatest running mares of her time. She won from 350 yards to 5/8 of a mile."

Under brand's ownership, the colt ran up an impressive array of victories. His first start was in a 350 yard purse race at Corona, CA, which he won in 18.0; his last great triumph was winning the stallion championship at Tucson in February of 1947. For Brand he ran 18 races, winning 14 of them. He was named World's Champion Stallion for 1947.

Among horses he outdistanced during this period were Barbra B, Commadore, Lady Bug, Major D, Bluestone, Jughead, B Seven, Jap, Senior Bill, Roper, Piggins String, Tonta Gal, Bay Annie and Blondie L. He set, and for a short time held, the world's record for stallions by going the quarter in 22.6.

Then Brand sold him to Lewis Blackwell, his present owner, who after a few more races retired him to stud. He had never been bred while Brand owned him. During his first season at stud, he was bred to a very limited number of mares, some of the more noteworthy were: Nancy Hance, Miss Revenue, Red Sails, Black Princess, Tic Tac, and Our Blue.

As a sire, he served Blackwell very well indeed, getting many sons and daughters of quality. One colt, sold in public auction at weaning time, brought \$1000. Mary Twist, at five months of age, topped an Art Beall sale at Bartlesville, OK, at \$1400. Carl Craig, of Texahoma, sold Red Sail's horse colt by Hard Twist at weaning

time for \$1000. The same gentleman in 1949 sold a 17 months old colt out of Black Princess and sired by Hard Twist for \$2500. These are a few of the random sales which show what other horsemen think of Mamie Taylor's son, who seems destined to become a leading sire. Only two of his first crop of colts got to the track in 1950, and both qualified for the Register Of Merit. Black Twist, the sorrel colt out of Black Princess, qualified to AA at Kremmling, CO, running 300 yards in 16.2, and Legal Tender, a sorrel filly, ran 400 yards at Ruidoso, in 22.2 on a muddy track.

This last fall, after better than two years of stud duty, Lewis Blackwell, following his dispersal sale, put Hard Twist back into training again. He turned him over to W J Harris, who took the stallion to Bay Meadows and on October 7 entered him in a 350 yard race around the turn, the Invitational Handicap for all ages. In an 11 horse field, Hard Twist came in 5<sup>th</sup> behind Ed Heller, M T Pockets, Lee Moore and Barred. Ed Heller won this go round, setting a new track record of 18.3 for the distance.

Most of the railbirds shook their heads. "Blackwell's crazy. That old horse doesn't stand a chance against these modern speedballs. Cripes, that sorrel's eight years old!"

Trainer Harris kept his mouth shut. Mr Blackwell offered no comments. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Harris entered him again, this time in an open handicap against seven other "speedballs" at 350 yards around the turn. Hard Twist made his initial fame on the straightaway, and this curve business had kind of balled him up that first time. This race he took going away in 18.2 defeating, in the following order, Leota W, Band Man, Sister Time, Barred, Gin High, Tiptoe Prince and Oattie Adams, paying \$29.10 for a \$2 ticket.

"Luck!" said the skeptics. "Just plain bull luck!"

Harris only grinned.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Hard Twist was entered in a 400 yard handicap for all ages and came in first over Ed Heller, Miss Mobil, Leota W, Band Man, Little Sleepy Joe, and Drifter by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a length in 20.9, setting a second new track record.

Some of the railbirds began to look doubtful.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, in another 400 yard open handicap (11 horses entered), Hard Twist came in second by a neck to Ed Heller who won the dash in 20.7, lowering Hard Twist's 14 day old record by  $\frac{2}{10}$  of a second.

Seven days later, in the Barbra B handicap at 400 yards, Hard Twist came back to outdo himself and everybody else by lowering Ed Heller's track record by  $\frac{4}{10}$  of a second, defeating as follows:

Lee Moore, Ed Heller, Clabbertown G, Drifter, Jeepers A, Little Smoke, Barred, Leota W, War Star, Clabber's Lady V and Little V. In this race, Lee Moore and Ed Heller were disqualified for fouls and since the electric timer wasn't used, the Racing Division of the AQHA has refused to accept the time. Just the same it was a whale of a race for an eight year old "has been."

Then Harris fetched him to Tucson where, at Rillito, he was entered in a 440 feature allowance for all ages. When it was discovered Hard Twist had been entered, only two other sprinters, both mares, displayed the willingness to take a run at him; these were Little Sister W and Silhouette, who came in in that order, Hard Twist finishing third. This was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December.

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, trainer Harris entered him in a 330 yard allowance for AA horses. It was a six horse field, and Hard Twist, in winning set a new track record of 17.3. A great deal of credit goes to River Flyer, also, who led to within a few yards of the finish and was beaten by one length, with Battle Creek third, Miss BK, Pie Face and Wagon N in the beaten field.

He may not be as young as he was, but he's a long way from being on crutches yet. Any eight year old horse who can come onto the short tracks after two years of stud service and perform as he has is little short of remarkable. Consider the record: seven starts, four wins, one place, one show and one fifth, plus four track records. It just has to add up to a whale of a lot of horse!



In his short career, Hard Twist set four new track records, equalled four track records, earned an AQHA racing ROM, and was named AQHA Racing Champion Stallion in 1951 and 1946.

He then went on to be a great sire, siring: 42 winners out of 90 starters, earning \$187,946, 42 Race ROMs, and 6 superior race awards. Not limited to race horses, he also sired 85 AQHA halter points, 138.5 performance points, and his offspring earned 6 AQHA Performance ROMs, 1 AQHA Championship. In addition, Hard Twist offspring earned \$3,611.80 in NCHA.

Below: Hard Twist setting a new track record at Bay Meadows in 1950. (Photo Patrol)

