



IN STITCHES: Hey Its Only Money qualified in 2:01 with a hoof nail accidentally sewn into his leg, as shown in the X-ray. Since it has been removed, he has won five races and took a 1:53.3f mark at Plainridge.

Tough as Nails

As the rain poured down, Kathy Blash grew more concerned about Hey Its Only Money's pari-mutuel debut at Plainridge Racecourse. Now that the 3-year-old gelded son of Allamerican Ingot had finally made it to the races, he was going to get mud kicked in his face, and Blash had no idea how the pacer she called "Joey" would handle the off track, or if he would even return to the barn sound.

Her homebred proved there was no need to worry—Hey Its Only Money cruised home the easiest of winners by more than seven lengths in 1:59.2.

"For a horse that went through all the tragedy he has, it was great to see him go out and win like that," said Blash, who owns about two dozen head at her Four Winds Farm in North Oxford, Mass. "I have to admit before he raced, I always wondered how fast he could go without that nail in his leg."

In June 2008, Blash's husband Ed, who trains all their horses, noticed Hey Its Only Money was missing his left hind shoe as he loaded him on the trailer for a qualifying race. He took the gelding back to the barn to replace the shoe, but the pacer jumped away, and the nail that remained in his left hind

Pacer showed steely resolve after trailering accident

hoof penetrated the inside of his right hind leg near the ankle.

"He had eight stitches put in his leg," Blash said. "We bandaged it and had him on antibiotics. He healed up within a week.

"Since it was healing so well, we decided to jog him and the following week he finished second in a qualifier, with his last quarter in 28.2, so we thought everything was healed up."

Ed Blash brought Hey Its Only Money home and turned him out in a paddock overnight. While Kathy Blash was getting ready for work the following morning, she glanced out the window and was terrified to see Joey



on three legs.

Blash immediately called veterinarian Kris Koss, fearing a broken bone or an abscess. An ultrasound, however, revealed the cause of Joey's lameness: the nail from the missing shoe had been sewn inside his ankle.

Koss stopped by the farm on the way to Virginia, so Blash had to wait several days for the vet's return before the nail could be taken out. It was a long wait.

"All I could think about was what kind of damage the nail had caused and how I was going to keep this horse quiet until Dr. Koss got back," she said. "He's

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a big horse, about 16.2 [hands], and just a big baby. He squeals at you and bucks and rears in his stall. He loves people and has a great personality, but he's rambunctious."

When Koss returned, Hey Its Only Money was placed in crossies and administered a local anesthetic. Koss then used a needle to locate the nail, and made a small incision to remove it.

"The pointy end of the nail was still in there," Blash explained. "We think it might have chipped off a small piece of his sesamoid bone, but it never did any damage to anything else, like tendons, ligaments or blood vessels."

Hey Its Only Money was then turned out to heal, and Ed Blash began jogging him back in January. Since his maiden victory on April 6, the pacer has torched the Plainridge oval, finishing first or second in eight of nine starts and taking a mark of 1:53.3f on June 2. He has earned more than \$9,000 while pacing faster each race against much more experienced horses.

And he has never shown any ill effects from the nail that was lodged in his leg.

"Can you believe that nail never did anything while it was rolling around in his leg?" Blash said. "Even after the pounding it took for him to race on it? It had to be moving around, going up and down. I can't believe it never did anything."

The Blashes are pointing Hey Its Only Money toward a series at Rockingham later in the season, but he may not stop there.

"If he's good enough, we will definitely take him to The Meadowlands, or what we call 'over the bridge,'" Blash said with a laugh. "It's an easy ride, and he has tearing speed."

"But after all he's been through, I just want to keep him in bubble wrap."

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