



# SWEET'N LOW

## 2023 WIHS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Sweet'N Low, a 17.1-hand, grey Thoroughbred gelding owned by Donald and Barbara Tober and ridden by Anthony D'Ambrosio, entered Washington International Horse Show (WIHS) history in a record-setting puissance performance. Sweet'N Low is the first equine athlete to join the esteemed list of some of the best horsemen and women in the industry as the 2023 inductee into the WIHS Hall of Fame.

WIHS celebrates its 65th anniversary this year, and throughout those decades, there have been many special moments. One of the most memorable and exciting was when U.S. show jumping athlete Anthony D'Ambrosio set the world indoor record for the puissance with Sweet'N Low in 1983.

The Puissance has a rich history in equestrian sport. Puissance means "powerful," or having the power to do something. It is a class that requires special talent and concentration from the horse and rider. The competition involves jumping a puissance wall. The starting height is a minimum of 4'6" and often is raised to over seven feet tall. The Puissance is not the same as the High Jump, because the Puissance is a series of wooden bricks built as a wall rather than angled poles as used in the high jump.

WIHS opened up competition in 1958 at the old National Guard Armory on East Capitol Street, across the street from Washington, DC's famous RFK Stadium. In 1975, the show moved to the Capital Centre, which became the U.S. Airways Arena, outside the Beltway in Landover, Maryland. It was in this building that D'Ambrosio set the record.

The year before he set the record, D'Ambrosio competed with Sweet'N Low in the puissance class at WIHS. They jumped seven feet, one inch and finished in second place. "We didn't try for the record that year," said D'Ambrosio. "I actually pulled him out of the competition at that point. The following year we went back and had the opportunity to jump for the record." Because of Sweet'N Low's experience in 1982, D'Ambrosio felt confident that the nine-year-old gelding would do well the following year in the puissance class.

At that time, D'Ambrosio had a training stable full of horses and students in Mount Kisco, NY. Sweet'N Low came to the program he and his wife Michael ran after a short racing career in Pennsylvania in the spring of 1981. The horse was started by Jack Rockwell in the jumpers and competed up to the grand prix level with Terry Rudd. He was named after

the artificial sweetener that owner Donald Tober made famous as CEO of Sugar Foods.

"He was an excellent grand prix horse and could jump any course anyone could build. He had scope, and he was brave," said D'Ambrosio. "However, he was an airy jumper, so we had to work hard to get inside the time allowed. You had to be very soft with your seat, otherwise his back would get rigid, and he wouldn't jump as well. He wasn't a quiet horse and was difficult to keep relaxed, but he was a kind Thoroughbred."

D'Ambrosio added, "One of nicest classes we ever won together aside from the puissance was the Ben O'Meara Trophy at Washington. We had the only clear round in the class that year."

It was not just luck that helped D'Ambrosio set the world record at WIHS in 1983. It was also the result of thoughtful preparation for himself and his horse. "I always had a puissance wall in my ring at home, and we would not necessarily jump huge all the time, but I taught them how to jump a wall. If they were preliminary horses jumping 4'3" to 4'6", I'd let them jump the wall from four to five feet, just so they could learn how to make the effort," he explained.

"Before we would go show at the indoor circuit, I would let them try over a bigger wall at home," continued D'Ambrosio. "With Sweet'N Low, we would jump him in our own ring at home before he went down there, about 6'9" or 6'11". I didn't try and break a record at home; it was just so he understood what to do and what kind of shape he had to be in to jump the wall successfully."

D'Ambrosio also gave credit to Sweet'N Low's caretaker, Diane Lee, who worked for the D'Ambrosios at the time. While she could not be at WIHS that week, D'Ambrosio said it was her care that made him a quieter and easier horse to ride.

D'Ambrosio recalled that puissance specialist Barney Ward was in the class in 1983, but it was German rider Filippo Moyersoen that



Since its inception in 1997, Sweet'N Low will become the first horse to be inducted into the WIHS Hall of Fame.



*Sweet’N Low, a 17.1-hand, grey Thoroughbred gelding ridden by Anthony D’Ambrosio, entered WIHS history in a record-setting puissance performance, jumping 7’ 71/2” in 1983, to set a record that stands today.*

went into the final round with him to attempt the record. Moyersoer had the wall down, and D’Ambrosio rode Sweet’N Low into the ring as the last to go.

“There was a lot of tension and excitement that night,” remembered D’Ambrosio, who was 29 years old. “They were always sold out at Washington. The puissance record got broken three years in a row, so people showed up expecting a new record each year.”

As D’Ambrosio and Sweet’N Low took off from the ground and suspended over the top of the wall, the horse lightly brushed the top block. “He touched the block a little bit in

his stifle, then flipped his hind end so high,” said D’Ambrosio. “It was really a remarkable feeling – jumping that big of a wall, the length of time it took to jump, and the steepness of the descent. It was radical!

“I knew what to expect in a puissance, but of course when you jump three inches higher than you ever have before in your career, you feel like you’re in the air even a little bit longer, especially on a horse like him that jumped quite high,” he continued. “I think if the wall was at eight feet, he still could have jumped it.”

Sweet’N Low and D’Ambrosio had set the world record in an exciting class at night at

WIHS, but the talented rider and trainer could not fully celebrate his momentous win.

“We went to the restaurant, and they were closing it, so we didn’t celebrate!” he laughed. “We just went to bed and got ready to go to work the next day.”

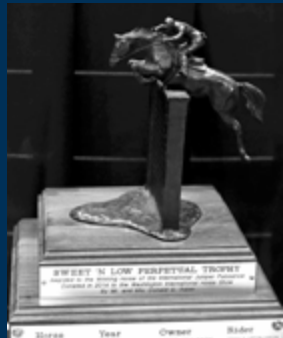
Speaking to The Chronicle of the Horse, D’Ambrosio remembered, “It was so exhilarating, knowing that we did it and won and set a record. It was a huge adrenaline rush. It’s a great feeling of accomplishment. It was something I had hoped to be able to do at one point in my life. I had set the record in Madison Square Garden in 1973 [with Sympatico], and it had been broken several times between ‘73 and ‘83. I felt like I had a horse that could help me get the record back, and I was very happy that I did.”

After success in the show jumping ring as a rider, D’Ambrosio turned his skills into becoming one of the most sought-after course designers in North America. He holds an FEI Level 4 rating and has designed the tracks at some of the biggest international competitions in the world.

In 2014, The Tabors donated a new perpetual trophy to WIHS for the puissance class winner, which is a stunning bronze of D’Ambrosio and their horse clearing the puissance wall. After nine years of presentations, the trophy has been retired.

D’Ambrosio and Sweet’N Low had four years together before he was retired after a hock injury in the summer of 1985.

While the Puissance is no longer a part of its show schedule as of 2023, WIHS remembers and honors this special class that drew legions of fans throughout the years to watch spectacular horses and riders take on the famous wall, and especially the one record set by an unforgettable horse.



**The Sweet’N Low Trophy**  
*Donated by Mr. and Mrs. Donald G. Tober in 2014.*  
Presented to the winning horse in the Puissance.

2014	.....	Sunshine
2015	.....	Lisona
2016	.....	FINOU 4   ZZ Top VH Schaarbroek Z
2017	.....	Finou 4
2018	.....	Finou 4
2019	.....	Finou 4   Very Chic Du Tillard
2020	.....	(not held)
2021	.....	Catoki/The Diamant Rose Z/Imar
2022	.....	Catoki   Eristov   Oak Grove’s Carlyle

WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL HORSE SHOW

*I Call OF Fame*

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