

Sports

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Curalina is Aiken-Trained Horse of the Year

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Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners' Curalina has come a long way this year.

She won her first race in March and then developed rapidly into one of the country's top female thoroughbred runners.

On Thursday, the Aiken Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame and Museum announced in a press release that Curalina is the 2015 Aiken-Trained Horse of the Year.

"It's an award that has been received by some extraordinary racehorses in the past, and it's a true feather in Curalina's hat to join that esteemed list," wrote Eclipse President Aron Wellman in an email to the *Aiken Standard*.

To be eligible for Horse of the Year during a particular season, an Aiken-

List of winners

- 2002 – Congaree
- 2003 – Wando
- 2004 – No horse eligible
- 2005 – Limehouse
- 2006 – Bob and John
- 2007 – Country Star
- 2008 – Midshipman
- 2009 – Quality Road
- 2010 – Quality Road
- 2011 – It's Tricky
- 2012 – Alpha
- 2013 – Palace Malice
- 2014 – Palace Malice
- 2015 – Curalina

trained thoroughbred must win at least one Grade I race or reach the \$1 million mark in career earnings. Both Curalina and another Aiken-

trained horse, Godolphin Racing's Wedding Toast, qualified. Because they each captured two Grade I races, their earnings in 2015 were compared to determine the Horse of the Year winner, said Lisa Hall, the Hall of Fame and Museum's coordinator.

It was close, with Curalina's \$990,200 barely topping Wedding Toast's amount of \$988,756.

"We have the upmost respect for Godolphin's operation and to beat out such a phenomenal mare like Wedding Toast is tremendous," Wellman wrote. "She was equally as deserving."

A 3-year-old chestnut filly, Curalina won the Grade I Acorn Stakes and Grade I Coaching Club American Oaks. In the latter race, she got the victory when the stewards at Saratoga Race Course in New York disqualified the first finisher, I'm a Chatterbox, for interference in the stretch.

Curalina's other 2015 efforts included a runner-up finish in the Grade I Beldame Stakes, which Wedding Toast won, and third-place finishes in the Grade I Alabama Stakes and the Grade I Longines Breeders' Cup Distaff.

Wedding Toast was favored in the Distaff on Oct. 30 at Keeneland in Kentucky. The 5-year-old mare ran near the front of the pack early, but faded to 11th in the field of 14 fillies and mares.

Mike and Kari Schneider, who live in Aiken in Three Runs Plantation, are members of the Eclipse partnership that owns Curalina. They also were members of the Dogwood Stable partnership that owned Palace Malice, who was the Aiken-Trained Horse of the Year in 2013 and 2014.

"It's quite an honor to have been

Please see **CURALINA**, Page 2B



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY BARRY BORNSTEIN

Curalina, shown here at Saratoga Race Course in New York earlier this year, is the 2015 Aiken-Trained Horse of the Year.