



Secretariat: The Making of a Champion

William Nack

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In 1973, Secretariat, the greatest thoroughbred in horse-racing history, won the Triple Crown. The only horse to ever break the two-minute mark in winning the Kentucky Derby until recent winner Monarchos, Secretariat also pulled off one of the most astounding victories in the annals of horse racing by winning the Belmont Stakes by a record-breaking thirty-one lengths. Now William Nack updates his acclaimed portrait with a new afterword that examines the legacy of one of ESPN's "100 Greatest Athletes of the Century": the only horse to ever grace the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated* all in the same week.

Secretariat: The Making of a Champion Details

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From Reader Review Secretariat: The Making of a Champion for online ebook

Jan C says

What a wonderful read. What a wonderful horse. What wonderful memories come flooding back of watching him run in the Triple Crown. It is so very nice to see the behind-the-scenes story.

I had to laugh at the thought of the horse raking after watching one of the grooms raking. It made me laugh out loud.

Mario says

I picked up Secretariat for different reasons than most. It had nothing to do with Diane Lane or the Disney movie. I don't really even like horse racing. But a gentlemen I trust recommended it to me on Twitter. Andy Ihnatko (@Ihnatko) included this book as one of his Audible.com Picks of the Week. Having a stack of credits to burn through, I decided to give it a listen.

Secretariat begins slowly. You begin with a thorough foundation of lineage. At first that put me off. Why do I care about horses not named Secretariat? I mean I didn't pick up a book called Prince Quillo did I? But I began to be drawn in. I began to see that history was being woven in front of me. I was in the midst of an elaborate origin story. The creation of a super hero.

Soon I found myself engrossed in the long past life of Secretariat and those around him. Even though the events happened 10 years before I was born, William Nack made me smell smoke and taste the bourbon. I knew the outcome, I had read it before. I watched a breathless Diane Lane cheering a fake horse on to victory on the silver screen. But that was different. This book took me there. I was holding my breath, cheering on ever furlong. I was witnessing history.

That's about as high of praise as you can give a book like this. Nack is a really good writer and it's a pretty interesting subject. I highly recommend giving it a look.

Marnie says

This is the book that the popular Disney movie was based on. How anybody was inspired to create a movie from this particular book I have no idea. The book was very dry and boring.

Deborah says

Did you see the movie? I did, and can definitely say that the 'feel good' movie barely touched the surface of Secretariat and all that was going on before and around him....and was written by William Nack, who was a new Turf Reporter when Secretariat made his 2-year old appearance. So impressed, he decided to keep a

journal and a side-focus on Secretariat for the long term.

Therefore, this book starts with the history of the major players in Secretariat's life. The Chenery family, and how The Meadow came about. Claiborne Farm, still ranked among the top breeders. This book is definitely a lesson, not a novel....but was so very interesting. Details. Statistics. And a more indepth look into everything.

The coin toss. The birth. The naming. The training. All are given more substance as this goes into the actual details of what was going on. Like, the saving of The Meadow was initiated by Riva Ridge, another Chenery horse, who was a year older, and had won the 1972 Derby, lost the Preakness, and came back to win the Belmont.

So if you enjoyed the movie, but suspect that there was more? There was. Do you wonder about her long-distance marriage and how it was affected by her taking active leadership in the breeding & racing? How about the \$6.08 million syndication deal?

Regardless, this was a very informative book on Secretariat, and an excellent look at what goes on in the racing industry. Reading the chapters on the races had my heart pounding, just as if I was there and could feel the beat of the hooves. I totally recommend this...

Wendy says

2.5?

Maybe it's not fair to compare Secretariat to Seabiscuit, but here I go. While I can't judge who would have won in a race between the two horses, one's story is far superior, and that is Seabiscuit's.

Secretariat came from basically a royal bloodline, he was big and beautiful and upon his death was discovered to have an enlarged heart which may have been what helped him run so fast. I can appreciate that he was quite an amazing animal and probably pretty wonderful to watch (I haven't actually seen his races) but really, what could he do but win? Running from behind in a race is not the same as overcoming all odds to win, and knowing going into the story that Secretariat won the Triple Crown meant that there was very little suspense in the book. Here's the story in a nutshell: Secretariat is born, shows promise, is syndicated (before it's known if he will be a distance runner), wins the Triple Crown, and is retired to stud.

Not helping is Nack's writing style which I just didn't enjoy very much. It's very dry and factual and rather dull. The book is filled with times run and names of horses in Secretariat's bloodline. There's also a lot of digressions and an overly long section about the phone calls made to every single person who was offered a share when Secretariat was syndicated. The end of the book has one article which I enjoyed more than all the rest of the book -- it's a more personal story of Nack's relationship with the horse which made me understand why he loved Secretariat and wanted to write about him. I think I would have enjoyed the whole book a lot more if it was told in this way.

Seriously, just read Seabiscuit. Much more emotional journey of a horse overcoming obstacles and winning, much more interesting cast of characters (horse and surrounding personalities), much more interesting history and much better explanations of the horse racing world. Really, just a much better book.

Julia Langevin says

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. I've always had a love for race horses since my first horse was a OTTB turned eventing horse. The author does an amazing job of sharing Secretariat's story, and the love he had for this horse really showed throughout the entirety of the book. It was amazing to read about his journey leading up to the triple crown, and continuing on after the triple crown. I also learned a lot about the ins and outs of racing, and how even at the speed they're going, horses can change their leads around the corners of the racetrack. I also learned about running a "twelve clip" and lineage as well. This has become one of my favorite books, and even if you're not a horse person, I feel that anyone would enjoy this book about this amazing animal.

Lucinda says

A legend is born...

A true story of a remarkable Thoroughbred racehorse that has now also been made into a film for the big screen, Secretariat has to be one of my favorite books on racing ever written. Equivalent to works such as Seabiscuit, Arle and Red Rum this racehorse's story is one that is heartwarming, magical and truly inspirational proving that the sky is the limit. Fast-paced at a thrilling gallop this story maintains its momentum throughout, where you ultimately loose yourself within the melee of thundering hooves and the scattering of dirt whilst a commentary thunders in the background. Here is living proof that ones dream can turn into reality as long as one possesses the determination, drive and will to succeed that you can do anything. Penny Chenery is such a woman with a dream who is not afraid to stand out within the male dominated world of the racing game, where she must fight her way to the top. She is a heroine for all women who aspire to living their dream and making the impossible possible, with much courage and strength of character.

As her world is turned upside down with the death of her father Penny has to make a decision on whether to sell or keep her father's beloved farm Meadow Stables, and it is this crucial choice that sets in motion the course of her future. Things are never the same again once she takes the reins and breathes life into this failing, run-down yard that is balancing on a knife's edge giving all those that surround her a sense of hope and optimism for the future. With the aid of the outlandish but charismatic Lucien Laurin and a blazing, bright chestnut colt called Secretariat, Penny travels on the most exhilarating rollercoaster of a ride. Here the unlikeliest of combinations with a female trainer and a gangly looking horse get set to change history, by becoming the first Triple Crown winner in America for 25 years. A legend is thus born in the form of 'Big Red' as he was known, whose endurance and stamina astonishes all who encounter him.

Reading this book is like opening a window onto the past and being able to experience a poignant and unforgettable moment within history that along with other greats shall not be forgotten. Here dreams are made that flourish, blossom and grow hence turning the vision in ones mind into reality. Penny is a testament to all those who go that extra mile and beyond, who have that self-belief to push the boundaries and reach those unreachable heights.

Marie says

Great book. I liked it a lot more than the movie. I think that if you are a person who is not 'into horses' or does not know a lot about horses, you will like the movie better. This book is so well researched and filled with every single fact you could imagine, but could get confusing if you are not into horses and racing. Great writing, captured me within the first 3 chapters. I learned a lot about racing history in that time period and some of the facts stunned me. This book is a great collection of historical facts, along with a well written story of the truth behind a great race horse. I also liked that the author made a point to not choose sides or opinions, he kept his writing even and did not make any attempt to change the story of what really happened in those great years.

Shiloah says

My husband and I read this together. We thoroughly enjoyed this inspirational book. Reading about animals that have talents above others it is another reminder of God showing us that we can have hope in excellence and perseverance.

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

This story of 1973 triple crown winner Secretariat is packed with statistics on blood lines & racing stats; William Nack really knows his stuff. However, it is not a dry read at all. His behind the scenes look at the world of horse breeders is fascinating. I particularly liked his spin on the owner Helen Tweedy (aka Penny Chenery), and thought it pretty cool that both the jockey & trainer were Canadians. Now I know what "going the distance" really means, and it's got nothing to do with Field Of Dreams. This book is worth reading just for the chapter describing his Belmont Stakes record-breaking thirty-one length win, the author puts you in the stands yelling & cheering at probably the most exciting race in track history. William Nack's love of this horse he spent a lifetime following comes through loud & clear. Just a great, inspirational story.

Ann says

Wasn't sure if I was going to finish this book as the beginning and the genealogy was Just. So. Boring. But after I got through that part the rest of the book was good, especially the descriptions of the races. This book wasn't as easy to read as Seabiscuit, but a very thorough description of Secretariat and his accomplishments.

C says

Do you like equine genealogy? This book is for you!

Do you love horse racing? This book is for you!

Do you like loads of minutiae detail? This book is for you!

If you don't mind a story that jumps around and shifts focus constantly than this book is for you!

Everyone else I would suggest reading a summary or doing a bit of Google research and call it quits. What a

slog. Secretariat isn't even introduced until chapter SEVEN! I was so close to putting this one down. This might be one of those times where the movie is more engaging than the book, but I haven't seen it so I'm not sure.

Rick Reitzug says

I don't know much about horse racing and have wanted to read a book for some time that provides insight into the practices and culture of the horse racing world while also telling a good story. Secretariat more than filled the bill for both of these goals. While the early chapters drag a bit because the author goes into great detail about Secretariat's and other famous race horses genealogy, once you get past these chapters (I skimmed them) the book really gets cooking. I have a much better understanding of the basics of the horse racing world now and a true appreciation for the magnificent race horse, Secretariat. The book has made me eager to visit the Kentucky Horse Park, Churchill Downs Museum, etc. and I will be watching the Kentucky Derby and other horse races with much more interest in the future.

Michele A says

Great book a little slow reading in the beginning

Rachelle says

I really thought I would like this book and couldn't wait to read it but then once I started to read it I realized it was not at all what I expected. There were times in the book when I thought I was reading Genesis when they were going through the lineage of the horses. I really don't understand or care who parented who. I also am not into horse racing so all the timing and how they placed them in the race was foreign to me. I should take the time to learn something new but horse racing is at the bottom of my list of sports. I don't always agree with how they are used in racing and it hurt my heart so much to read about one of the horses dying on the track of a heart attack and the jockey had been hitting with his stick to make him run. That was just wrong. Maybe I'll try watching the movie and see what I think but the book had so much background into the business and how the money flowed and even though they took wonderful care of the horses it wasn't with love, it was a business.
