



0. SANTA ANITA HANDICAP - Story Preface

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Seabiscuit won the Santa Anita Handicap, in 1940, with Red Pollard up. In this scene we see the Biscuit with Kayak II (also owned by the Howard family). Image online, courtesy Seabiscuit Heritage Foundation. PD

The biggest prize in horse racing, at the time, was offered in 1935 when Santa Anita launched its inaugural race. Located near Los Angeles, the track (where more than \$40 billion has been wagered since opening day) became an instant magnet, attracting owners of fast horses like Seabiscuit.

With Pollard atop, Seabiscuit tried, but failed, to win this race in 1937. He was edged out by a nose, again, in 1938 when George Woolf held the reins. Injured, he could not attempt it in 1939.

But in 1940, after Pollard had helped to nurse himself and Howard's horse back to health, Seabiscuit did the unimaginable. He won what had always eluded him: the \$100,000 Santa Anita prize.

That victory made Seabiscuit the biggest money-winning horse of his day. (In today's dollars, the prize was worth nearly \$1.25 million.)

The Santa Anita Handicap was Seabiscuit's last race. He beat another Howard-owned horse, Kayak II - pictured here with his owner. Today, The Biscuit is memorialized at Santa Anita.

There is a little-discussed incident about the 1940 Santa Anita Handicap victory which, some experts think, made a difference in the race's outcome. Just before the race started, Charles Howard met with race officials and "declared to win" with Seabiscuit.

"Declaring to win" meant that if the two Howard entries (Seabiscuit and Kayak II) had the rest of the field beaten as they neared the wire, Kayak II would be held back to allow Seabiscuit the win. It is said that the *Los Angeles Times*, reporting on the race, observed Kayak II could have won had his jockey used the whip as the horses approached the finish line.

Whether such speculation could be true is really beside the point, however. Even at the time, as news reports of the day verify, the little horse with the misshapen legs was an inspiration to an entire country of people wracked by the misery of unemployment and the Great Depression.

If it were possible for a written-off workhorse to become a great money-making champion, what could a down-and-out human being accomplish if given half a chance?

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SANTA-ANITA-HANDICAP-Seabiscuit>

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Santa Anita Race - Seabiscuit Injured

Image online, courtesy Thoroughbred Champions Image Gallery.

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Kayak II Photo

Image online, courtesy Thoroughbred Champions Image Gallery.

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Seabiscuit Memorial at Santa Anita

Image online, courtesy Thoroughbred Champions Image Gallery.

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