Locals Only
NY-breds take center stage on Showcase Day
The members of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association (NYTHA) are proud to join hands with the many partners who support the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance Foundation (TAA). Owners competing on the NYRA circuit donate $5 per start to the TAA.
Funny Days. New York-bred great Funny Cide (circa 2006) drags Simon Harris around Clare Court at Saratoga. The 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner is the leading New York-bred earner of all-time with more than $3.5 million.

WORTH REPEATING The Special's quotes from all over

“…and he's a New York-bred.”
– Trainer Danielle Hodsdon about steeplechase horse In My Eyes and plans for Saratoga

“I'm doing the Belmont Park, Penn National, Fair Hill triple.”
– Owner Matt Groff, completing the third leg of the Memorial Day Weekend Trifecta

“You have to love Pine Bluff, I love that on the mother's side.”
– Trainer Gary Contessa, discussing Uncle Sigh’s pedigree

“She definitely has that cowboy try in her.”
– Shirl Penney on his homebred filly Flipcup, who goes in the Bouwerie

“I've only got the one, and he's main-track only. So I've got nothing for you guys. I can't even help my brother's program out.”
– Trainer David Cannizzo, brother of NYTB executive director Jeffrey Cannizzo

“Everybody but King Kreesa.”
– Trainer Tim Hills on the small but loaded field for the Kingston

“It's great. For me staying here year round I've kind of accumulated New York-breds. I'd say a good 90 percent of my barn is New York-breds, so anything they can do to help them is going to be a big plus for me.”
– Trainer Bruce Brown, who runs Prairie Stone in the Bouwerie and Compliance Officer in the Kingston

“These are my stress relief.”
– Brown, pointing to the two large fish tanks in his barn office

“Let's get this one done any way we can; you'll be so happy that you'll want us to do all your printing and then we can worry about getting the details.”
– Times-Union printing tech wizard Sandi Costello, opting for the quick fix (for now) of Google Drive over a cantankerous file transfer protocol setup
BY THE NUMBERS

69: Lifetime wins by the 13 entrants in the Commentator Handicap. Big Business leads the way with nine, followed by three horses with seven each.

117: Horses entered on Saturday’s card – all bred in New York.

6: Entries for Disco Rico, highest among sires.

NAMES OF THE DAY

Irish Sweepstakes, third race. Alan Brodsky’s filly is by Any Given Saturday out of Miss Blarney Stone.

Deceived, fifth race. Treadway Racing Stable’s colt is by Broken Vow out of Naughty Natisha.

I Got Id, sixth race. You guessed it, Six String Stable’s colt is by Freud and is named after one of the three parts of the good doctor’s structural model of psyche. The id consists of the basic human instincts and is present from birth.

MOTHER’S DAY

Every year for seven years, Karakorum Elektra won at least one race for trainer Linda Rice. The New York-bred won claimers, starters, stakes, whatever until getting claimed as a 9-year-old midway through 2013. Karakorum Elektra even won for her new connections, taking an optional claimer at Saratoga for Drawing Away Stable and David Jacobson.

When the daughter of Freud finished last in a November race at Aqueduct, while racing for a $14,000 tag, Jacobson gave her back to Rice. The 13-time winner, and earner of $485,061, was bred to City Zip and recently declared in foal.

Congratulations everybody.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Chip McEwen races Mike Lee entrant Uncle Sigh and the rest of his horses under Wounded Warrior Stable and silks.

The name is a cause, as McEwen and his fiancée, Lynne Langermann donate at least 10 percent of their horses’ earnings to charities that support injured veterans and their families.

“I always raced under my own name, but after I saw a wounded war veteran coming off a plane in Charlotte, I realized we have to do more for those people and the circle of people around them because once somebody’s wounded, the entire family dynamic changes forever. They have to figure out, ‘how are we going to get the kids to school, how are we going to get a job, how are we going to pay our bills?’ We dropped the ball on that as a nation, people forget. I was guilty of it like anybody else, but that put it on the forefront of my mind. Lynn and I decided to do something about it, put some money where our mouth is, we’ll continue this journey however it turns out.”

New York-bred veteran Karakorum Elektra – see “Mother’s Day” item at left – is in foal to City Zip.

WORTH REPEATING

“The whole day is a good day of racing.”
– Trainer Leah Gyarrafi, about Showcase Day

“I’m a big believer in the New York program. I’ve been buying them for quite a few years now as weanlings, yearlings, 2-year-olds. The horses are getting stronger and stronger every year and so is the program as a whole.”
– Trainer Linda Rice, on the New York-bred program

“They call it a Showcase and it is. These are horses that could easily run in open-company graded stakes. When you look back 20 years, New York-breds were nothing like they are today. They can run with anybody today.”
– Mike Caruso, of Bethlehem Stable

“I’ll be watching. I’ve been so busy this week I haven’t even looked at entries.”
– Kiki Courtelis, breeder of Commentator contender Pinball, when told the 5-year-old would be running today

“You never know when it’s going to come and you never know when it’s going to end, but you know it’s going to come and you know it’s going to end.”
– Owner and breeder Joe Gioia, who races under the Very Un Stable banner

“That needs to go on the wall in the office.”
– Trainer John Morrison in response to Gioia

“What’s in a name?”
– NTRA’s Joan Lawrence when Tom Law stopped by to see Derby and Preakness winner California Chrome train Thursday morning

“Both.”
– Tom Law

“Don’t plan to lead with him.”
– The Special’s Tom Law to Sean Clancy, after interviewing trainer Mike Hushion for the Mike Lee preview

“He’s just a couple weeks from coming back. My almost quarter-of-a-million bonus horse.”
– Hushion, about Amberjack, who just missed winning a $250,000 bonus last year

“Do they have that bonus again this year? Finger Lakes didn’t list it on the nomination thing.”
– Hushion, asking about the 2014 bonus (they do not)

“Never had one.”
– Trainer John Shirreffs about New York-breds
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Best of luck to California Chrome and all the horses running in the Belmont Stakes. From a company that knows a thing or two about going the distance.
Turf or dirt? That was the question for the connections of Pinball as the days counted down to today’s Big Apple Showcase.

Based on current form and recent experience the 5-year-old son of Unbridled’s Song looked like a major player for the Kingston Stakes going 1 mile on the grass. He’d won back-to-back starts against open company in South Florida, then finished a decent fourth as the favorite behind three major players for the Kingston.

Based on what’s on paper – in this case speed figures and a combined margin of victory of 14 1/4 lengths for three races – he fit in the Commentator Stakes going 1 mile on the dirt too.

Thankfully the humans at the controls of Pinball, a group that includes Hall of Fame trainer Bill Mott and co-owner and managing partner Michael Dubb, are well versed at making such decisions. The Commentator was the choice and Pinball will face a dozen other New York-breds in the co-featured $200,000 event of Saturday’s Big Apple Showcase card.

“What’s interesting about this horse, we still aren’t sure if he’s better on turf or dirt,” said Mike Caruso, whose Bethlehem Stables is a partner with Dubb, Stuart Grant’s The Elkstone Group and Gary Aisquith in the ownership of Pinball. “And if you look at his sheet numbers, and I’ve discussed this with Mike Dubb and Bill Mott, we always say the sheet numbers are almost exactly the same. Consistently.

“So we put our heads together and said, the Commentator, as tough as that looked, the grass race was going to be even tougher and we’ve got a $200,000 purse as opposed to $125,000, so it just made a little more sense. Of course 95 percent of the time we leave these decisions to the trainer.”

Mott would be the man to make the call. He’s trained the $125,000 buy out of the 2010 Keeneland September yearling sale since WinStar Farm sent the gray or roan colt to him back in 2011. Pinball raced twice in the WinStar colors, finishing third behind fellow Commentator entrant Awesome Vision in an Aqueduct state-bred maiden in early 2012 and second in an open-company maiden a little more than eight months later. WinStar pulled the plug after that effort, going ahead and running the then 3-year-old through the ring during a dispersal at the 2012 Keeneland November breeding stock sale.

He caught the eye of bloodstock agent Jane Buchanan, who suggested that Dubb, Caruso and the other partners take a look. Selling toward the end of the lengthy sale, Pinball needed a bid of $185,000 to land in his new owner’s hands. He stayed with Mott and found the winner’s circle in his second

See COMMENTATOR page 8
STOP CATS WINNING MILLIONAIRE / RICH FAMILY OF GRADE 1 WINNERS

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STANDING:  BOYS AT TOSCONOVA   •   COURAGEOUS CAT   •   LEWIS MICHAEL

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STORM CAT - TRANQUILITY LAKE, BY RAHY.
FULL BROTHER TO MULTIPLE GRADE 1 SW AND GRADE 1 SIRE AFTER MARKET.
MULTIPLE GRADED SW AT 3, 4 AND 5 AT BELMONT PARK, SARATOGA, GULFSTREAM PARK AND HOLLYWOOD PARK. WON AT DISTANCES OF 7 FURLONGS TO 1 1/8 MILES.
WON THE SHOEMAKER MILE-G1 IN 1:33.19; NAT’L MUSEUM OF RACING HALL OF FAME S-G2 IN 1:45 FOR 1 1/8 MI.; CANADIAN TURF S-G3 IN 1:31.58 FOR A MILE.

OUT OF THE MULTIPLE GRADE 1 SW MILLIONAIRE TRANQUILITY LAKE, BY RAHY.
FULL BROTHER TO MULTIPLE GRADE 1 SW AND GRADE 1 SIRE AFTER MARKET.
MULTIPLE GRADED SW AT 3, 4 AND 5 AT BELMONT PARK, SARATOGA, GULFSTREAM PARK AND HOLLYWOOD PARK. WON AT DISTANCES OF 7 FURLONGS TO 1 1/8 MILES.
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STANDING:  BOYS AT TOSCONOVA   •   COURAGEOUS CAT   •   LEWIS MICHAEL
start for Dubb and his partners. The first win came in mid-January 2013 and started a five-race win streak that stretched to this past March on the grass at Gulfstream.

“We’re always looking for a horse that can improve and trying to play at the stakes level,” Caruso said. “Jane was the one who pointed him out. She’s a good horseperson. I have to give her the credit. She knew that Bill Mott trains for us and was training him at the time.

“Any time you can get a horse that remains with the trainer, that’s a good thing. She was the one who mentioned it to us. Bill had one, I guess Todd Pletcher had another. We bid on both of them and didn’t get the other one. Actually, I don’t even remember the other one’s name and he went for quite a bit more money than what we paid.”

While Pinball is on his way toward earning back his purchase price, another Commentator entrant making his stakes debut is already well past that point.

Prohibition was claimed by trainer Cal Lynch for himself and co-owner Sean Hand’s Two Hands LLC for $7,500 back in September 2013. He was gelded shortly after being claimed and has earned $123,300 since, winning four of six starts for his new connections.

The 4-year-old son of Lawyer Ron is unbeaten in his last two starts on the dirt, the latest a 4 1/2-length victory going 1 mile and 70 yards May 2 at Parx Racing. That race followed a fifth going a mile on the grass against open company April 12 at Aqueduct.

“That good race got him back on the radar after the bad race on the turf,” Lynch said. “I tried him on that turf, but it wasn’t to his liking or maybe it was the level of competition. That horse Front, who is a nice horse, was in there, so after that we went looking for something else and the Parx race looked like a nice spot.”

Frankie Pennington rode Prohibition in his last three starts and keeps the mount for the Commentator. Prohibition gets in at 115 pounds for his stakes debut, eight less than Zivo and six less than Readtheprospectus, a pair of 5-year-olds sent out by Chad Brown.

Zivo figures to be the favorite off four straight victories, including the Whodam and Kings Point this year. Thomas Coleman’s homebred son of True Direction owns two wins at Belmont and is 5-for-8 at the Commentator’s 1-mile trip.

Klaravich Stable’s and William Lawrence’s ReadtheProspectus makes his 2014 debut after ending last season with a seventh in the Empire Classic on New York Showcase Day at Belmont. The Empire Classic loss ended a string of seven straight wins dating back to his 3-year-old campaign, a streak Brown chalked up to the Read the Footnotes gelding’s preferences.

“It’s distance not surface,” Brown said earlier this year of the finalist for New York-bred champion older male. “He is pretty versatile, and can run on the dirt or the turf. We ended up finding out he could run on both, but it was more the distance of the races that mattered. Once we got him to those longer distances he was very effective.

“He really did do well for us. He’s a very consistent horse and got on quite a roll there.”

Leah Gyarmati is anxious to get Bona Venture Stable’s Smooth Bert back on a roll after back-to-back fifths in open company stakes to end his 3-year-old season. The winner of the Damon Runyon on the 2012 New York Showcase card in the fall at Belmont takes on older horses for the first time in stakes company in the Commentator.

“He’s doing phenomenally,” Gyarmati said. “His works have been fantastic. He’s been on it, but it’s a question whether he makes this jump. If he doesn’t, I don’t know where you go with a horse like him.

“There’s a gap in the New York-bred program. He’s 3 turning 4, he was competitive in the 3-year-old New York-bred races, but he won the Damon Runyon so he loses two conditions, he loses the New York-bred a-other-than and the open a-other-than so my choice with him is either open two-other-than or older New York-bred stake horses, hopefully he can make this jump because it gives him a lot to do for the rest of the year. If not, I need to rethink where I go with him.”

The bulky Commentator field also includes two other finalists for New York-bred championships last year in Awesome Vision (older male) and Comandante (3-year-old male). Moneyinyour Pocket, Big Business, Weekend Hideaway, Bernardo, This Hard Land and Crafty Dreamer round out the field.
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Ron Mattia - Facilities Manager
NEW YORK SHOWCASE DAY ENTRIES


1ST (1:20PM). $40,000, CLM $20,000, 3 YO’S & UP, 6F
Exactly, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double
1 11 1.Won Great Classic C. Velasquez L. Rice 8-5
1a 5 5.B Shanny C. Velasquez L. Rice 8-5
2 2 2.Say Mr. Sandman L. Saez C. Englehart 8-1
3 3 3.Southbeachsand A. Worrie G. Contessa 15-1
4 4 4.Run Run Forrest L. Mejias B. Levine 12-1
5 5 5.Reggie D A. Rojo Guullo 20-1
6 7 7.Patriotic Duty A. Lezcano R. Persaud 30-1
7 8 8.Stophesfer R. Maragh A. Renson 20-1
8 9 9.Lucci the Lion T. Rice G. DiPrima 12-1
9 10 10.Jeter I. Ortiz, Jr. D. Jacobson 3-1
10 11 11.Dr Disco M. Luzzi B. Brown 5-1

2ND (1:52PM). $125,000, STK - THE KINGSTON, 3 YO’S & UP, 1M (TURF)
Exactly, Quintella, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double
1 1 1.Lubash J. Alvarado C. Clement 2-1
2 2 2.Hidden Vow R. Maragh P. Quick 20-1
3 3 3.Hear the Footsteps J. Ortiz L. Rice 6-2
5 5 5.MTO Sir Leslie A. Lezcano P. Serpe 5-2
6 6 6.Special Selection C. DeCarlo D. Shivmangal 50-1
7 7 7.Compliance Officer J. Lezcano B. Brown 10-1
8 8 8.Notacatbutallama J. Velasquez T. Fletcher 7-2
9 9 9.Street Game C. Velasquez M. Nevin 12-1

3RD (2:24PM). $125,000, STK - THE BOUWERIE, 3 YO, F, 7F
Exactly, Trifecta, Pic 3, Daily Double
1 3 3.Elmara R. Maragh M. Hennig 15-1
1a 4 4.Irish Sweepstakes J. Lezcano M. Hennig 15-1
2 1 1.Flipcup J. Rosario W. Mott 5-2
3 2 2.Isabelle A. Solis L. Lewis 5-1
4 5 5.Prairie Stone M. Luzzi B. Brown 6-1
5 6 6.Henry’s Gal C. Velasquez R. Rodriguez 3-1
6 7 7.Ms. Sylvia A L. Mejias M. Nevin 6-1
7 8 8.Stored Lady J. Castellano J. Hertler 10-1
8 9 9.Champagne Ruby T. Rice L. Rice 8-1

4TH (2:56PM). $125,000, STK - THE MOUNT VERNON, 3 YO’S & UP, F & M, 1M (TURF)
Exactly, Quintella, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double
1 1 1.Joy Seeker J. Rosario J. Terranova, II 15-1
2 2 2.Mah Jong Maddnes T. Rice J. Morrison 10-1
3 3 3.Frosty Bay J. Castellano D. Schettino 15-1
4 4 4.Lady’s Lunar Luck J. Alvarado J. Kimmel 10-1
5 5 5.Effie Trinket L. Saez R. Violette, Jr. 2-5
6 6 6.Dreaming of Cara C. Velasquez M. Friedman 30-1
7 7 7.Roses for Romney I. Ortiz, Jr. C. Clement 30-1
8 8 8.Miz Owell V. Espinoza C. Maker 12-1
9 9 9.Stock Fund A. Solis C. Martin 30-1

5TH (3:28PM). $125,000, STK - THE MIKE LEE, 3 YO, 7F
Exactly, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 6, Daily Double
1 1 1.Empire Dreams J. Velasquez T. Albertrani 12-1
2 2 2.Uncle Sigh J. Rosario G. Contessa 4-5
3 3 3.Eye Luv Lulu I. Ortiz, Jr. C. Martin 20-1
4 4 4.Double Gold A. Lezcano L. Miranda 50-1
5 5 5.Deceived R. Maragh L. Gurmati 15-1
6 6 6.John’s Island A. Arroyo J. Jerkens 20-1
7 7 7.Swell C. DeCarlo P. Pugh 10-1
8 8 8.Freddie G. M. Luzzi M. Hushion 20-1
9 9 9.Loki’s Vengeance M. Franco M. Hushion 6-1
10 10 10.Captain Serious J. Ortiz M. Hushion 5-1

6TH (4:00PM). $65,000, AOC $40,000, 3 YO’S & UP, 1 1/16M (TURF)
Exactly, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double
1 1 1.Orino L. Saez H. Bond 6-1
2 2 2.Sneaky Kitten I. Ortiz, Jr. M. Maker 7-2
3 3 3.Powerful Instinct J. Ortiz C. Brown 4-1
4 4 4.Hyman Roth L. Mejias L. Lewis 20-1
5 5 5.Rocky F. M. Franco M. Niel 30-1
6 6 6.So Lonesome J. Rosario T. Bush 3-1
7 7 7.Captain Gaughen J. Lezcano J. Ryerson 15-1
8 8 8.Giant Finish R. Maragh G. Sciacca 12-1
9 9 9.Goodtlook J. Velasquez G. Contessa 5-1
10 10 10.Go the Basil A. Solis R. Violette, Jr. 12-1
11 11 AE Got Id J. Velasquez C. Martin 6-1
12 12 AE Breathaway C. Velasquez G. Sacco 20-1
13 13 AE. Jonah J. Lezcano D. Frisco 8-1
14 14 MTO Cousin Michael M. Franco D. Jacobson 4-1
15 15 MTO Socialsaul M. McNulty M. Cannizzo 5-1
16 16 MTO Tug of War G. Contessa 6-1

7TH (4:33PM). $200,000, STK - THE CRITICAL EYE, 3 YO’S & UP, F & M, 1M
Exactly, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double
1 1 1.Sunny Desert I. Ortiz, Jr. B. Levine 4-1
2 2 2.Hot Stones J. Velasquez B. Levine 10-1
3 3 3.Miss Da Point C. Velasquez J. Toscano, Jr. 12-1
4 4 4.Macha J. Rosario J. Hollendorfer 6-1
5 5 5.La Verdad J. Ortiz L. Rice 1-1
7 7 7.Carameaway R. Maragh M. Friedman 20-1
8 8 8.Tahoe Tigress M. Franco J. Englehart 12-1
9 9 9.Princess Mara T. Rice P. Quick 15-1

8TH (5:06PM). $62,000, ALW, 3 YO’S & UP, 6F (INNER TURF)
Exactly, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double
1 1 1.Can’t Catch Me Now F. Valentin O. Barrera, III 50-1
2 2 2.Sun Worshipper A. Solis P. Kelly 6-1
3 3 3.Adam’s Note J. Velasquez M. Dilger 5-2
4 4 4.Slimshady M. Luzzi L. O’Brien 30-1
5 5 5.Sandcat J. Alvarado J. Kimmel 20-1
6 6 6.Waterway E. Prado R. Cash 12-1
7 7 7.Lord of Love I. Ortiz, Jr. J. Hertler 10-1
8 8 8.Sanctify M. Franco W. Mott 8-1
9 9 9.Tickled Forever J. Lezcano J. Ryerson 5-1
10 10 10.Archer Hill J. Ortiz L. Lewis 15-1
11 11 AE Greeley Pack W. Garcia K. Forren 50-1
12 12 AE Soul House R. Maragh G. Weaver 7-2
13 13 AE Pegasus Red L. Mejias O. Barrera, III 20-1
14 14 MTO Station Chief M. Luzzi G. Contessa 2-1
15 15 MTO Horatio R. Maragh J. Toner 12-1

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N.Y. SHOWCASE DAY ENTRIES

9TH (5:42PM). $200,000, STK - THE COMMENTATOR, 3 YO’S & UP, 1M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double
1  1....Prohibition                           F. Pennington          C. Lynch              6-1
2  2....Moneyinyour Pocket                   J. Velazquez          C. Baker              20-1
3  3....Big Business                         C. Velasquez          D. Jacobson           12-1
4  4....Smooth Bert                          M. Luzzi              L. Gyarmani           20-1
5  5....Zivo                                 J. Ortiz              C. Brown             2-1
6  6....Awesome Vision                       L. Saez               T. Albertran          8-1
7  7....Readtheprospectus                   J. Alvarado           C. Brown             8-1
8  8....Comandante                           I. Ortiz, Jr.         T. Pletcher           15-1
9  9....Weekend Hideaway                     J. Lezcano            P. Serpe             10-1
10 10.....Pinball                            J. Rosario           W. Mott              5-1
11 11.....Bernardo                           M. Franco            J. Toscano, Jr.       20-1
12 12.....This Hard Land                     A. Arroyo             R. Ubillo             30-1
13 13.....Crafty Dreamer                     R. Maragh            J. Iselin             15-1

10TH (6:13PM). $60,000, MSW, 3 YO’S & UP, F & M, 6F (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta
1  1....Colloquial                           M. Franco            R. Ribaudo           15-1
2  2....Barrier to Entry                     L. Mejias            P. Kelly              30-1
3  3....Sweethots                            L. Saez              P. Serpe             12-1
4  4....Freud's Sunset                       M. Luzzi              G. Gullo              7-2
5  5....Lavender Road                        W. Garcia            A. Adsit              20-1
6  6....Winter Wish                          J. Rosario           G. Weaver             9-2
7  7....Lakeview Lady                        J. Lezcano           J. Hertler           12-1
8  8....Jennys Creek                         J. Velazquez         C. Martin            8-1
9  9....Keen Katana                          R. Maragh            J. Toner              15-1
10 10.....Midnightatmarions                  T. Rice              J. Ryerson            20-1
11 11.....Distorted Beauty                   J. Ortiz              B. Levine             4-1
12 12.....Royal Jest                        E. Prado            R. Lugovich           6-1
13  AE......Myfriendthebird                   R. Maragh            G. Contessa          30-1
14  AE......Saharan Serenade                  A. Worrie            J. Toscano, Jr.       30-1
15  AE......Read It and Weep                 L. Saez              T. Pompay             6-1
16  MTO. Pretty Like Me                      I. Ortiz, Jr.        J. Servis             4-1

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**Race 2:** Lubash finally turned tables on Kharafa in a prep at Aqueduct April 24. However, it is third-place finisher from that race, NOTACATBUTALLAMA, that intrigues us most. He was a three-time open-company stakes winner in 2013 and should be best here while making his second start off the layoff with John Velazquez returning to the saddle.

**Race 3:** Half this field is stakes-placed or a stakes winner and five come in off open-length victories. Mark Hennig and Alan Brodsky will be represented with two yearling buys. ELMRA has never been worse than second and rides a two-race winning streak and has trained fabulously, catching the eye of California Chrome, who whinnied loudly as she galloped past Thursday. Entrymate IRISH SWEEPSKATES started against the boys last June and was a clear second behind future graded stakes winner Wired Bryan before breaking her maiden at Aqueduct April 24. However, it is third-place finisher from that race, NOTACATBUTALLAMA, that intrigues us most. He was a three-time open-company stakes winner in 2013 and should be best here while making his second start off the layoff with John Velazquez returning to the saddle.

**Race 4:** Since Funny Cide won the Kentucky Derby in 2003 we see New York-breds shipping around the country and winning top races. In 2013 NY-breds accounted for 28 open-company stakes wins. EFFIE TRINKET has hit the board in three straight Grade 2 races including a game third on Derby Day in the Distaff Turf Mile and is the best bet on this contentious card as she returns to face restricted company.

**Race 5:** The talk of this field will be Uncle Sigh in his first start since the Kentucky Derby. He can win but is not a sure thing by any stretch in a deep field. We will know early if Empire Dreams is going to run a big race. The son of Patriot Act can be cantankerous and tough to saddle and if that’s the case you can go to the window. The tougher he is before the race the better he seems to run. Mike Hushion, has three chances with Freddie G who seems to be improving, the undefeated Captain Serious named after Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews and LOKI’S VENGEANCE, who was much the best in the New York Stallion Series Stakes at Aqueduct in his last start and we will settle on him being our top pick here.

**Race 6:** Pinball had a winning streak snapped in his last start, and returns to dirt where he has never finished off the board in four starts. The last two breezes indicate his readiness for top connections Bill Mott and Joel Rosario as they will try to end the winning streak of Zivo who will be coming late in what should be a thrilling finish to this inaugural $200K race.

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Saratoga and getting black type at Finger Lakes. She should handle 7 furlongs and work out a good stalking trip.

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Growing Up
La Verdad progresses into stakes filly for Rice, Lady Sheila Stable

BY JOE CLANCY

La Verdad translates to The Truth and two years ago the truth was she had a long way to go.

“She was coarse, big, growthy, her knees were wide open,” said trainer Linda Rice about the Grade 2 winner and favorite for Saturday’s Critical Eye Stakes, the female headliner on Big Apple Showcase Day at Belmont Park. “We never thought she’d grow into the nice, big filly she is now. She’s a beautiful filly with a bright future.”

Truly.

The daughter of Yes It’s True has won seven of her nine lifetime starts including a five-race winning streak from April 2013 to January 2014. She finished second in the Grade 2 Barbara Fritchie, her first stakes start, in February but returned to win twice more – the Broadway for New York-breds at Aqueduct March 29 and the Grade 2 Distaff Handicap at Aqueduct April 19. Ridden throughout by Jose Ortiz, La Verdad extends to a mile for the first time, but is favored to continue her winning ways for Rice and Lady Sheila Stable.

Rice pinned at least some of the success on patience. La Verdad got started with the rest of the 2-year-olds, even looked like she might be quick for her size. Rice kept thinking long term, however, and knew a juvenile campaign was not in the best interests of the daughter of Yes It’s True.

“We turned her out until summer, and started training in September,” Rice said. “She didn’t come to New York until late in her 2-year-old year and that’s been very good for her. She’s grown and matured and become a nice filly. It’s nice when you can do what’s best for the horse.”

La Verdad made her career debut as a 3-year-old in March 2013 and finished a green fourth as the favorite. Then came the winning streak as she ripped through a maiden win, two state-bred optional claimers and two open optional claimers. La Verdad led early, but settled for second to the capable My Wandy’s Girl in the Fritchie at Laurel Park. La Verdad hasn’t trailed a horse since, scoring easy front-running victories in the Broadway and Distaff to get to today.

Rice will use the 1-mile Critical Eye as a distance test, and a springboard to potentially bigger steps this summer at Saratoga.

“This is the longest distance we’ve run, but we wanted to try her,” the trainer said. “The long-term goal is the Ballerina at Saratoga, seven-eighths, Grade 1. She ran a pretty nice race in Maryland at seven-eighths. A mile is the question mark for La Verdad on Saturday and we’re hoping she gets through that unscathed.”

Don’t expect La Verdad to change her tactics due to the added distance. She’s quick from the gate, and puts opponents under pressure early.

See CRITICAL EYE page 15
"Jose and I have discussed letting someone else run away from her and let her settle off the pace a little bit, but typically that doesn’t happen,” said Rice. “She’s got a lot of gate speed and ends up in front. We’ve had one instance where a filly ran by her, and La Verdad let it happen and ran her down in the lane. She hasn’t had much practice at it and they would have to be pretty fast to get by her, but it’s nice to know that she can do it if she has to.”

California trainer Jerry Hollendorfer takes the rare route of Grade 1 stakes to New York-bred stakes with Macha. In her most recent start, the 4-year-old filly finished seventh in the Santa Margarita at Santa Anita. She gets class relief, but will still need to step forward.

Macha won her debut at Golden Gate Fields late in 2012 and has flirted with stakes success – without winning – with a fourth in the California Oaks and a third in the Grade 2 Honeymoon at Hollywood Park last summer. She finished seventh, beaten just 4 lengths by Emollient, in the Grade 1 American Oaks last summer. The daughter of Majestic Warrior, bred by Belwood Stable and purchased for $85,000 at the Ocala Breeders Sale as a 2-year-old, won an allowance race two starts back at Santa Anita.

As usual with New York-bred distaff tests, the Critical Eye is full of players.

Saul and Max Kupferberg’s Sunny Desert won three stakes in each of the last two years. She makes her second start of 2014 for trainer Bruce Levine. The 5-year-old daughter of Wild Desert finished third behind La Verdad in the Broadway at Aqueduct March 29. The chestnut mare has never lost in three starts at a mile.

Levine also entered Hot Stones, a 4-year-old daughter of Bustin Stones, who seeks her third win of 2014. She exits a narrow win in open optional-optional claiming company at Aqueduct in March for Roddy Valente, Charles Casale and Darlene Bilinski.

Nine-time winner Miss Da Point opened 2014 with a stakes win in January and won back-to-back optional claimers in state company for Bran Jam Stable and David Clark and trainer John Toscano. Mr Amore Stables Lady Gracenote makes her third start of 2014 for trainer Jason Servis. The daughter of Read The Footnotes was fourth in the Grade 2 Top Flight last year and exits a second to today’s rival Princess Mara in an optional claimer.

Owner/breeder Richard Greeley’s Carameaway exits two races with the same trifecta finish as she placed second between Miss Da Point and Dreaming Of Cara going a mile at Aqueduct. Rajiv Maragh takes the return call from trainer Mitch Friedman.

Jeremiah Englehart sends Neal Allread’s Tahoe Tigress out for her first start since a second to Miss Da Point in January’s Judy Soda Stakes. The 5-year-old mare carries a 4-for-5 mark on Belmont’s main track. Trainer Patrick Quick claimed Princess Mara for $40,000 last out and seeks a stakes win for Paradise Farm and Knights of the Round Stable. The 6-year-old mare has won nine races and more than $340,000, including three wins this year.
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It had to be asked.

“You know I’m not going to say that,” trainer Mike Hushion answered, taking a few strides into the shedrow of his Belmont Park barn. “No way.”

Shrewd as a pool hustler, Hushion never shares much, especially when asked which of his three horses he likes most in today’s Mike Lee Stakes.

‘Hey Eddie, this table open…?’

Hushion entered Freddie G, Loki’s Vengeance and Captain Serious in the $125,000 stakes for New York-bred 3-year-olds going 7 furlongs.

With or without Hushion’s insight, the trio casts a long shadow after you get past 4-5 morning line favorite Uncle Sigh, who is a questionable starter.

Owned by Wounded Warrior Stable and Anthony Robertson and trained by Gary Contessa, Uncle Sigh exits a 14th-place finish in the Kentucky Derby. The son of Indian Charlie would return to New York-bred competition for the first time since breaking his maiden at Aqueduct in November. After that win, he finished second in the Grade 3 Withers and Gotham, then fifth in the Wood Memorial before leading for part of the Derby. Thursday, Contessa was weighing options, including the Pegasus at Monmouth or the Easy Goer on Belmont Day.

If Uncle Sigh doesn’t show up, then Hushion’s trio looms large.

Blue Bison’s Loki’s Vengeance won the New York Stallion Stakes at Aqueduct at the end of April. The son of Frost Giant owns three wins from six starts, his recent defeats coming in open stakes.

Barry Schwartz’s homebred Captain Serious rips into his stakes debut, fresh off two April wins. The gelded son of Successful Appeal won his debut April 5 and returned three weeks later to win again.

Bloom Racing’s Freddie G won one of three for Contessa before moving to Hushion this winter. The son of Old Fashioned won his most recent start in a first-level allowance for New York-breds at Belmont May 4.

Hushion, batting 27 percent this year, entered three horses who are winning at 57 percent for him this year. He remained neutral.

“My having three in there with three different owners is good for racing anyway. Three betting interests,” Hushion said. “Loki’s Vengeance will be on the lead, Captain Serious will be laying close and Freddie G will be farther back.”

Hushion’s trio drew the outside three stalls in the field of 10.

“I did a double-take when I saw the overnight,” Hushion said. “Going seven-eighths at Belmont that’s not a terrible thing.”

Taking on Hushion is another Allen Jerkens protégé as Leah Gyarmati entered Treadway Racing’s Deceived.

BY SEAN CLANCY & TOM LAW

MIKE LEE STAKES PREVIEW

Stakes winner Loki’s Vengeance is one of three contenders in the Mike Lee for trainer Mike Hushion.
The two-time winning son of Broken Vow makes his first start since finishing off the board in the Grade 3 Gotham in March. Ever the pragmatist (learned it from Jerkens), she explained the decision to take on stakes horses again.

“He’s 3 years old, he’s a New York-bred and he’s already won the a-other-than, so my options are limited, it’s either a-other-than open company, two-other-than optional which is a salty field or straight 3-year-olds in a New York-bred stake,” Gyarmati said. “Even if it’s not the most ideal distance, it seems like the best of all the options. He’s got some speed, he’s got a turn of foot, seven-eighths isn’t out of his range, he came running going 5 1/2 at Saratoga in his first start.”

Deceived made his debut in the slop at Saratoga, closing from 17 lengths to finish third behind Free Mugatu and Empire Dreams. Three starts later, the $180,000 2-year-old purchase broke his maiden going a mile at Aqueduct. In his next start, he finished third behind Samraat in the Damon Runyon, then dominated a first-level state-bred allowance in January. Gyarmati aimed high, sending out Deceived to finish seventh behind Samraat and Uncle Sigh in the Gotham. Samraat finished fifth in the Derby and Uncle Sigh finished 14th.

“I wasn’t disappointed,” Gyarmati said. “I didn’t really know what he was, there weren’t many options at that time, it was worth a shot, it was an experiment. I thought, ‘Now is the time to see if he can run with the nicer 3-year-olds in open company.’ He wasn’t and that’s OK.”

While Samraat and Uncle Sigh went to the Wood and the Derby, Gyarmati tried to freshen Deceived. It didn’t really work.

“He’s a tough horse. It’s not that he’s hard to train, but he’s always on the muscle, he’s tough to gallop, he loves to train, he loves to gallop, his works have been really good, I can’t complain about anything,” Gyarmati said. “I was trying to give him a little breather because he’s pretty much trained and ran all the way since Saratoga, I was thinking I could give him a little time in the round pen and back off him, but he doesn’t want you to back off him, he’s on it. I wanted to keep him in light training, but he was screaming to breeze. He was going to breeze whether I wanted him to or not so I figured I better schedule it.”

Deceived posted a bullet 3-furlong drill April 7 and a bullet 4-furlong drill May 21. In between, he posted four breezes from 4-6 furlongs. He’s ready.

“He’s doing phenomenally,” Gyarmati said. “It’s certainly a good race, some horses just starting to show that they’re nice and others that have been good already, that you know about. It’s a nice, big field on a good day of racing.”

Gyarmati has contributed to two of the 10 starters. She trained John’s Island for his first three starts before the son of Posse returned to trainer Jimmy Jerkens. Owned by John Confort and Albert Weis, John’s Island won his two most recent starts against state-bred competition for Jerkens.

“Jimmy had him before he went to Florida and he spoke to his owners and they agreed to leave him with me for the winter,” Gyarmati said. “When Jimmy came back I took him back to him, we’re sharing the credit with that one. It was good for both us.”

Empire Dreams will recognize competitors in the Mike Lee. Owned by West Point Thoroughbreds, the son of Patriot Act split Loki’s Vengeance and Double Gold in the New York Stallion Stakes April 27. Empire Dreams has never stepped out of the New York-bred division, compiling two wins, three seconds, a third and a fourth and nearly $200,000 in seven starts.

Carlos Martin, who entered horses in four races on the card, sends out Eye Luv Lulu for owner/breeder Donald Newman. The son of Pollard’s Vision won three times at Aqueduct from November to April. Irad Ortiz, who has ridden Mike Lee starters Empire Dreams, Uncle Sigh, Double Gold, Deceived and Freddie G, rides for the first time.

Luis Miranda claimed Double Gold for $20,000 at Aqueduct and wheeled the son of Posse back in eight days to finish third in the New York Stallion Stakes behind Loki’s Vengeance and Empire Dreams. Swell makes his stakes debut for trainer Peter Pugh and Cherry Knoll Farm. Purchased for $40,000 at Saratoga in 2012, the son of Langfuhr won his career debut at 22-1 in October before finishing fifth in an allowance race in November. He returned to finish second behind Captain Serious in April.
The New York Showcase racing programs expanded again in 2014, with a summer event at Saratoga added to the spring and fall events at Belmont Park.

Today’s Big Apple Showcase, which features six stakes races worth $900,000 in purses, kicks off the three-pack of events for New York-breds. The Saratoga Showcase follows Aug. 24 at Saratoga Race Course, the day after the prestigious Travers Stakes, and the Empire Showcase brings the series to a close Oct. 18 at Belmont.

Tom Law, managing editor of The Saratoga Special, recently caught up with New York Thoroughbred Breeders’ executive director Jeffrey Cannizzo to discuss the past, present and future of the New York Showcase events in advance of the Big Apple Showcase.

The Saratoga Special: Discuss the evolution of the Showcase programs from a single event in the fall to two events last year to three for 2014.

Jeffrey Cannizzo: Showcase Day originally was a one-day event highlighting the best New York-breds at the restricted stakes level. It was the brainchild of many past NYTB board members and NYRA decades ago. At that time New York-breds served a smaller role in the regular NYRA racing scene and nationally. Therefore, the New York breeding community desired a day to showcase our talent.

You’ve seen various other states mimic these similar days as they’ve become quite popular to each regional market. Fast forward to today and the level of New York-bred participation is tremendous – 33 percent of NYRA races are carded for New York-breds and it’s done so due to supply and field size. The New York-bred horse population at NYRA is beyond 40 percent and the quality of these horses grows with each foal crop.

The original Showcase Day in October was annually NYRA’s second largest day for handle and attendance at the Belmont Park Fall Championship meeting only behind Jockey Club Gold Cup Day.

TSS: You mentioned the differences between New York-breds of yesterday compared to today, what are the major changes?

JC: The biggest difference from decades ago is that New York-breds week in and out run across the country in open-company stakes. This truly shows where we are today. Expanding these Showcase days simply further demonstrates the strength of the program and spotlights it to not only to New York, but the rest of the country.

TSS: How did the first Big Apple Showcase do last year?

JC: Last year’s inaugural Big Apple Showcase Day went very well. We had large fields and the quality of horses entered were many of our best New York-breds. We essentially merged the Mike Lee, Bouwerie, Kingston, Mount Vernon days together then added two additional dirt races for older horses to create one giant day in Belmont’s spring meet. NYRA did very well with handle and attendance.

TSS: What were the expectations for that first event?

JC: We expected to see horses point to these races last year and they did. It’s created a showcase of talent in the spring that carries into the summer meet. So now there is more of a natural progression of New York-breds for each division and a schedule in place for participants to target. It’s beneficial to all and a success.

TSS: Nuts and bolts, where do the purses for the Showcase Day events come from?

JC: All Showcase Day purses are funded via NYRA’s purse account. One of the major aspects that makes these days worthwhile for the racetrack, horsemen and breeders is due to the field sizes. The handle significantly outweighs the expense of the purses themselves. Therefore, the racing product actually pays for the purses distributed and then some. So everyone wins. Big days like this are rewarding.

TSS: Is there extra interest in this year’s event and subsequently the event set for the day after the Travers?

JC: This year, as you will see, field sizes are chock full. So I’d like to say the strategy has panned out. One added perk this year was the increase in purse size to the older divisions. The Commentator and Critical Eye stakes are both now worth $200,000. It’s big money and our big horses are showing up.

We’ve stepped up our game yet again by adding a third Showcase Day at Saratoga. This will be held the day after the Travers. It will further create a spotlight for our program and a progression for our stakes horses to follow. I’m expecting it to be another colossal success. We have six stakes races worth $1,150,000. We’ve merged the Albany — the biggest stakes for our 3-year-olds — and made it worth $250,000 with the marquee summer turf stakes, the West Point and Yaddo. Additionally, we’ve added a 3-year-old filly stakes worth $200,000 called the Fleet Indian. Lastly, to cap it off we’ve created two 2-year-old stakes worth $200,000 apiece and named them the Funny Cide and Seeking the Ante.

TSS: How much can you capitalize on the excitement over California Chrome bidding for the Triple Crown?

JC: People are Triple Crown crazy. I’m one of them. I’ve received more calls from racing outsiders interested in California Chrome than I have from actual racetrackers. That surely says something. When national primetime media is covering racing it’s a good thing. It seldom if ever happens. When it does, we need to capitalize. California Chrome is doing it all for us. I think the story has further legs that will span as he keeps winning. People want to relate. It’s racing’s biggest problem, relating to the people who don’t understand. We racetrackers speak a foreign language. We often don’t understand why the outsiders can’t understand. National media is the language barrier if done right to bridge that gap. The more Chrome does, the longer that media keeps translating for us.

TSS: Obviously California Chrome is a California-bred, not a New York-bred, but does the fact that he comes from an even smaller (and maybe shrinking vs. expanding like in New York) “regional breeding program” add any excitement to the New York-bred ranks?

JC: It does, it shows that great horses can come from anywhere. Sure, it doesn’t happen every day. However, this industry is made on dreams and when you have one in the making that’s a feel-good story it carries interest for all. People like to support their roots and many roots are in each individual state.

TSS: Could there be another expansion, possibly making it a quarterly event?

JC: I believe you could see another Showcase Day appear at Aqueduct. It’s the last space left to fill. Possibly end-of-year or New Year’s. It’s a vacated space of the racing calendar. Knowing that New York-breds fill that vacancy leaves us with many options to expand this as our foil crops improve. Anything is possible if we’re all open-minded.

TSS: Where would you like to see the Showcase racing programs in five years?

JC: I’d like to see the Showcase Days continue to grow with participation. When you have more New York-breds running in stakes company it shows that our breeding program is improving in quality which is the underlying goal. If we can continue to improve our year-long stakes calendar to point toward these marquee days that will further strengthen our program. Open company is what defines national success. The horses running on these Showcase Days are graded competitors, so if we can continue to get New York-breds to run and be successful in open company and then point toward these events, it’s a positive measure. Lastly, it would be great to eventually see these days get nationally televised.

TSS: What are the main priorities for the NYTB into the rest of 2014, 2015 and beyond?

JC: The NYTB’s and my focus is protecting the interest and integrity of our New York-bred program and breeders. It’s a 24/7 job. The years to come will bring change to New York, the privatization of NYRA is to be determined. Ensuring that the breeders’ best interests are considered when it comes to revenue sources, race meets, racing days and venues is always a priority moving forward.
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Effie Trinket took the torch from an older and more accomplished stablemate right here at Belmont Park back in the fall of 2012 and she’s been raising the standard ever since.

The standard was held by Gitchee Goomie, a graded stakes winner with earnings close to $700,000 for owner Patsy Symons and trainer Rick Violette. Effie Trinket, who figures to be a heavy favorite in today’s $125,000 Mount Vernon Stakes on the Big Apple Showcase card, came along toward the end of Gitchee Goomie’s strong career. She was the newcomer in the barn, but certainly no pushover.

She out-breezed her elder stablemate that fall morning on the grass and she’s gone on to win four stakes since. That’s three more than Gitchee Goomie earned her first two seasons of racing and the same number she earned in her career. Effie Trinket brings a bankroll of $521,820 into the grassy 1-mile Mount Vernon, a shade less than $160,000 below Gitchee Goomie’s career haul. It feels like only a matter of time.

“The fact of the matter is she’s setting a new standard,” Violette said inside the tunnel Thursday at Belmont, just a few minutes after winning a maiden-claiming race with Permanent Campaign. “She’s done a whole lot more than Gitchee had done. She’s earned more money to this point. She’s a pretty remarkable filly in her own right.”

Remarkable? Certainly.
Consistent? Definitely.

Effie Trinket is 5-for-6 in New York-bred races, the lone blemish a third sprinting on the dirt off a layoff in her 3-year-old debut. She’s won the Aristie, John Hettinger and Ticonderoga against state-breds, along with a win against open company in the Diamondrella and in the restricted Auntie Mame.

Effie Trinket finished third in both of her starts this season – the Grade 2 Honey Fox at Gulfstream and the Grade 2 Distaff Turf Mile on Kentucky Derby Day at Churchill Downs.

“We went big-game hunting in the graded races,” Violette said. “She was doing so great off the bench and I thought that was a good spot to try a Grade 2. And then she ran terrific at Churchill. A couple nice horses beat her and she beat a few nice ones, too.”

Eight others are entered in the Mount Vernon, including multiple stakes winner Frosty Bay and last-out winners Mah Jong Maddnes, Roses for Romney and Miz Owell.

Undoubtedly it will take a strong effort by any of the eight if Effie Trinket runs back to her form.

BY TOM LAW

Effie Trinket makes her third start of 2014, and seeks her fourth stakes win at Belmont, for Patsy Symons and trainer Rick Violette.
The Chief. . .about a NY-bred

We used to never have New York-bred races 50 years ago. We never even had that to think about. I had a New York-bred filly who would have been great, they were just starting with the New York-bred races, she won a lot of other races, but never a New York-bred race. In fact, she won her first race.

I gave the people a service to Third Martini, they raised her on their little place on Long Island, about two acres. He was a friend of mine and his wife was a great friend with my wife Anne, so naturally I got her to train. We broke her when she was a 2-year-old, cantankerous little thing with a white eye. After we got back from Saratoga, we spent all fall breaking her, then we turned her out again, we put her in training the next year when I got back from Florida.

I had a guy named Jay, he worked her one day, and he got off her, he said, ‘I know you’re going to call me a dumb…but I swear to God, this filly can run.’ I said, ‘God, I hope so.’

We got her to the races at Saratoga and she won, 40 down to 35 maiden. Roger Velez rode her. I’ll never forget what my wife said when we got in bed that night, it breaks me up every time, she said, ‘This is one of the most important races you’ve ever won.’

Every race has to be the World Series to me, I could never give a horse a race, always wanting to win, always getting shook up. I get shook up, always did, doesn’t help you. God knows, there’s been a million times when you get shook up, people always ask you what was the biggest, how can you ever know, they’re all so important at the time. That New York-bred winning for our friends, that was big for them, at that moment...that was important. All of them are important, all of them.

– Trainer Allen Jerkens

Mount Vernon —

Continued from page 22

from last year and to start her 2014 campaign this spring. Violette could have entertained running in the Grade 1 Just A Game on the Belmont Stakes undercard next weekend and no one would have argued.

“She’s doing great and is remarkably consistent,” he said. “I tell you, $125,000 is tempting and she’s probably going to be odds-on. She usually shows up with her game face on. She always does. She deserves to win a race and her owner deserves to make a little money. Hopefully this works out and if we want to step up again we can do that.”

Mah Jong Maddnes is stepping up despite coming off a win in an open-company a-other-than last time out going 6 furlongs on the turf.

The 5-year-old Freud mare won before off the bench – taking a state-bred entry-level allowance to start 2013 and then lost three straight. Owner Joe Gioia, who bred Mah Jong Maddnes and races her in the name of his Very Un Stable, joined trainer John Morrison for training hours Thursday morning at Belmont’s training track. They watched recent maiden winner Saythreewithmymary’s train and then talked about their optimism for Mah Jong Maddnes’ chances.

“We hope she runs a huge race this time, too,” Morrison said. “It’s a solid field and Effie Trinket is obviously the horse to beat. The main concerns are the pace and trip. That’s the two issues.

Mah Jong Maddness is 0-for-4 going 1 mile, but 4-for-11 on the grass at Belmont. Morrison said that despite her record at the trip, she’s ideally suited for the middle distance.

“Last time my concern was that it was going to be too short for her,” he said. “I wanted to run her 7/8ths, but there were no options for that. So we shortened her up and went for the three-quarters race and it worked out. She’s probably a 7/8ths, miler type, although she’s won farther. That’s her best distance, somewhere in there.”

Others entered for the Mount Vernon are Joy Seeker, Lady’s Lunar Luck, Dreaming of Cara and Stock Fund.

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Saratoga winner Joy Seeker heads into the Mount Vernon for trainer John Terranova.
Fun and Games

Named for drinking game, Flipcup in the mix for Penney, partners

BY TOM LAW

She’s a registered New York-bred filly by an Ontario-based stallion that got her name from a drinking game that’s so popular it’s been called a “classic” and even “the mother of all drinking games.”

Flipcup is her name and the registered New York-bred daughter of Milwaukee Brew is herself quickly becoming one of the most successful horses campaigned in the blue and gold colors of owner/breeder Team Penney Racing. A few more wins – maybe even one in today’s $125,000 Bouwerie Stakes – and she’ll be able to buy a lot more than the beer to fill the cups.

“My wife named her,” said Shirl Penney, founder and president of the Manhattan-based Dynasty Financial Partners and half of Team Penney with his wife, Mary Ann. “There’s a fun drinking game called flip cup, and with her father being by Milwaukee Brew, my wife played around with a bunch of names related to that and thought that Flipcup was a cute one.”

Flipcup hasn’t been too cute to her rivals.
She’s won three of six starts with on-the-board efforts in the others.
She’s won on Woodbine’s synthetic surface and Aqueduct’s inner dirt track and ran well on a traditional dirt course last time out at Churchill Downs.
Flipcup raced that day for the partnership of Team Penney, Wachtel Stable and Brous Stable and she’ll go for them again today against eight others in the 7-furlong Bouwerie.

The Bouwerie field includes five fillies coming off wins and four – Elmra, Prairie Stone, Henry’s Gal and Ms. Sylvia A. – riding multiple-race winning streaks. The fifth winner, Isabelle, exits a 1 1/2-length maiden win at Belmont 22 days ago.

Flipcup’s most recent start was just as impressive even if it came in defeat. She faced open company in the third race on the Kentucky Oaks Day program at Churchill, went off as the 2.30-to-1 second choice in a field of 11 and finished third after making the lead in the stretch. Joel Rosario rode the filly for the first time that day for trainer Bill Mott and he rides again in the Bouwerie.

“She’s an interesting horse in that she’s by a Canadian sire, Milwaukee Brew, and was foaled here in New York, so she qualifies for the restricted races up in Ontario and here in New York,” Penney said.
Flipcup was a finalist for New York-bred champion 2-year-old filly honors, along with Miss Narcissist and Grade 1 winner and eventual champion Artemis Agrotera.
She impressed enough in three starts with Brian Lynch at Woodbine, including a third in a small...
stakes, and then with a win in the East View against New York-breds and a second in the Busanda against open company for George Weaver in New York, to attract interest.

Adam Wachtel of Wachtel Stables made an offer, the Penneys took on new partners and terms of the deal moved the stakes-winning filly to Mott. Flipcup wintered with Mott’s string at Payson Park and made her 2014 debut going 1 1/16 miles in that Oaks Day optional claimer.

“[After the Busanda] we decided to give her some time off and I was approached by Adam Wachtel,” Penney said. “He’s a great guy, owned Ron The Greek and some terrific horses.

“[In the Oaks Day race,] Rosario rode her a little different. He held her a little more than she normally is held and unfortunately we got in traffic, he had to go five or six wide and she ended up running quite a few number of lengths further than the winner, who beat us by 1 1/4 lengths. I thought she was much the best that day.”

Henry’s Gal was much the best in her last two starts. The daughter of Disco Rico, claimed for $75,000 March 2 by frequent partners Michael Dubb, Gary Aisquith, Bethlehem Stables and Michael Imperio, won a starter allowance by 11 1/4 lengths a month later and added the New York Stallion Stakes by 4 lengths 23 days later.

Trained by Rudy Rodriguez, Henry’s Gal will again be ridden by Cornelio Velasquez.

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Trained by Rudy Rodriguez, Henry’s Gal will again be ridden by Cornelio Velasquez.

Bruce Brown sends out three starters in the opening three races and is represented in the Bouwerie by John Dillon’s and James Mulvey’s Prairie Stone, a homebred daughter of Stonesider who comes off back-to-back wins in maiden and allowance company.

“Seven-eighths might be a little short for her,” Brown said. “She’s won going longer. Hopefully she can come running and pick up some pieces. Hopefully a big piece. There’s a lot of speed in there and we’re hoping it will set up for her.”

Alan Brodsky and trainer Mark Hennig entered two in the Bouwerie, and both Saratoga yearling purchases are accomplished.

Saratoga maiden winner Irish Sweepstakes won her 2014 debut over Henry’s Gal and came back to finish fourth at Aqueduct last month. Her stablemate Elmra has won two of three (with a second) this year including an easy allowance win at Aqueduct April 25.

Stakes-tested Champagne Ruby (second to Henry’s Gal last out and Flipcup one start before that) seeks her first win since September for owner Clyde Rice and trainer Linda Rice. The daughter of Utopia leads the field with eight prior starts, five in stakes company.

Ms. Sylvia A. has won two in a row, including an open-company starter allowance for trainer Michelle Nevin April 18. In March, the daughter of First Defence wired state-bred maidens by 8 3/4 lengths. Trainer John Hertler sends out Storied Lady, third behind Henry’s Gal and Champagne Ruby in late April’s New York Stallion Stakes.
Old Buddies

Compliance Officer tangles with Kharafa, Lubash, Notacatbutallama

BY TOM LAW

Don’t stop if you’ve seen, read or heard about the following scenario.

Compliance Officer, off since a strong race in New Orleans and returning from a winter freshening, is one of the main threats in the Kingston Stakes. It happened two years ago, back when the Officer gelding was a sprightly 6 years old and it happens again today when the $125,000 Kingston leads off as the first of six stakes on the Big Apple Showcase program at Belmont Park.

Compliance Officer won the Kingston back in 2012, defeating familiar foes Lubash and Street Game in the process. He came off a nearly six-month layoff that day, a well-earned rest after back-to-back runs in two events not many tackle in consecutive starts – the Breeders’ Cup and Claiming Crown.

Many similarities remain for the La Marca Stable runner in the 1-mile Kingston, although his last two starts came in an optional claimer at Aqueduct and the Buddy Diliberto Memorial at Fair Grounds. The Breeders’ Cup and Claiming Crown they are not, but the races were against open company and one was a win. He got a nice long rest after the Dec. 21 race at Fair Grounds and that brings him to today. Jose Lezcano rides the 8-year-old gelding, who seeks his 13th lifetime win and is closing in on $700,000 in career earnings.

“It seemed like last year he was rounding back into form, like right at the end of the year, winning the race at Aqueduct and then running a good race down at the Fair Grounds,” trainer Bruce Brown said inside his barn office Wednesday morning, just a few feet from Compliance Officer resting in his stall. “He's coming back great.

“I was kind of hoping for an easier spot before this race but he’s won this off the bench before, so hopefully we can relive some of his past glory. He always runs well fresh.”

Brown said the son of Officer is actually more fresh than usual, something he chalks up to how well the gelding’s been since getting back from his winter break in Ocala.

“The other years when we gave him time off we had a reason to,” Brown said. “Last year there was no reason to give him off other than it was a New York-bred in the wintertime. What do you want to do, beat him up all winter down at Gulfstream for no real money, especially when all these big races are sitting here for you?”

Those same big races frequently bring together a familiar cast and like clockwork the leaders of last year’s state-bred male grass division are lined up.

The field, which also drew main-track-only entrant Sir Leslie, includes three of the five finalists for last year’s New York-bred champion turf male...
in Kharafa, Lubash and Notacatbutallama.

Tim Hills did take the Gulfstream route with Kharafa, who finished second in the 2013 Kingston behind New York-bred champion turf male and older male King Kreesa before wins in the fall in the Ashley T. Cole and Three Coins Up.

The Grade 3 Appleton going 1 mile in late March was the early target and Kharafa finished eighth. The 5-year-old Kitalpha gelding rebounded with a second behind Lubash in a 1 1/16-mile turf optional claimer at Aqueduct April 24.

Trouble lines accompany both starts, traffic up backstretch in the Appleton and a wide journey at the Big A, but there might have been more to the rare back-to-back losses for Kharafa.

“We had an issue with him hitting himself with an opposite hoof and he sustained some cuts on the inside of his hind legs that were really bothersome,” Hills said this week from his main spring/summer base at Monmouth Park. “So my blacksmith, Mark Dewey, made some corrections and he is not hitting himself anymore. That had as much to do with him getting beat, that and the fact Lubash is a rival, but he had that issue with his shoes.

“During the winter I had a different blacksmith shoeing him and it changed it just subtle enough that we couldn’t quite get it right. It was really dramatic in his last race. He was late changing leads and I didn’t know why. Sure enough, cooling out he had a pretty good gash inside of his hind leg, so it was enough to make a difference.”

Javier Castellano, who rode Kharafa three times last year, is back aboard for owners Paul Braverman and Timothy Pinch.

Aliyu Ben J Stable’s Lubash, a 7-year-old homebred by Freud, puts his strong Belmont turf record on the line off that win at Aqueduct in April.

Trained by Christophe Clement, Lubash hadn’t won since the Grade 3 Fort Marcy last May at Belmont but was second twice and third in the Kingston and Three Coins Up. Lubash is 4-for-16 on the turf at Belmont with five seconds and two thirds.

Notacatbutallama was remarkably consistent in 2014, piling up seven top-three finishes from nine starts for Mike Repole and trainer Todd Pletcher. The son of Harlan’s Holiday won three times – the Solar Splendor and Grade 3 Hill Prince on turf and the Grade 3 National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame on dirt.

The field also includes Street Game, who makes his first start off a November claim for Michelle Nevin; and 2013 West Point runner-up Hear the Footsteps. Hidden Vow and Special Selection round out the field.

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NYRA Photo/Chelsea Durand

Kharafa exits a solid second to today’s rival Lubash for trainer Tim Hills.
Commentator’s 2005 Whitney still a thriller

BY SEAN CLANCY

The Commentator, Saturday’s featured stakes, is named after the New York-bred gelding who won 14 of his 24 starts and earned more than $2 million. The Saratoga Special covered one of his greatest moments, a neck victory over Saint Liam in the 2005 Whitney Handicap a few days before trainer Nick Zito’s Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Commentator returned to win the Whitney three years later and finished third in the Saratoga fixture’s 2009 edition, his final start. Trained by Nick Zito for Tracy Farmer, Commentator won all five starts in his debut season, 2004, as a 3-year-old and continued a run of that took him to racing’s highest reaches.

The two-time New York-bred Horse of the Year was honored with a peppermint key to the city of Saratoga Springs and led the post parade for the first Commentator Stakes, run at Saratoga in 2009. Bred by Michael Martinez, Commentator is retired now, a much-loved resident of Old Friends in Kentucky and still the fourth leading New York-bred earner of all-time.

Here’s a walk down memory lane from Aug. 7, 2005:

Nick Zito has been tinkering with his Hall of Fame speech for weeks now. Known to be glib, natural, open, Zito wanted to write it all down to be sure he includes everyone he needs to thank but he also wants to be himself, let it be natural, conversational, don’t read it like a script.

After the day Zito had Saturday, you can be sure he went home and made some notes in the margins of his white legal pad. Ugh, Noble Causeway cases...In The Gold breaks horribly...entry two-three in the Test...then Commentator...in Marylou’s Whitney...for Tracy Farmer...talked with Kim about wanting a good weekend before the induction...the ups and downs told Stevens he was his kind of horse...guts on the lead...signed autographs...high-fived crowd...press talked to me...kissed Kim on the way out...walked back to test barn...the game...that’s the game.

It will be some speech come Monday.

Commentator saw to that with a stoic and determined victory in the 78th Whitney Invitational Handicap. Ridden for the first time by Zito’s fellow Hall of Famer Gary Stevens, Commentator broke sharply, securing the lead from favorite Saint Liam. Swingforthefences found a comfortable spot in third while the closing duties were split between Sir Shackleton, Limehouse, Pollard’s Vision, Eurosiver and Wiggins.

On the backside, Commentator looked like he had strung Christmas lights across an orchard as the field dissipated behind his scorching speed. After a half-mile, it was a 15-length spread from Commentator to Wiggins. After 6 furlongs, it was 32 and counting between Commentator and the retreating Pollard’s Vision.

See MEMORY LANE page 29

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After the day Zito had Saturday, you can be sure he went home and made some notes in the margins of his white legal pad. Ugh, Noble Causeway cases...In The Gold breaks horribly...entry two-three in the Test...then Commentator...in Marylou’s Whitney...for Tracy Farmer...talked with Kim about wanting a good weekend before the induction...the ups and downs told Stevens he was his kind of horse...guts on the lead...signed autographs...high-fived crowd...press talked to me...kissed Kim on the way out...walked back to test barn...the game...that’s the game.

It will be some speech come Monday.

Commentator saw to that with a stoic and determined victory in the 78th Whitney Invitational Handicap. Ridden for the first time by Zito’s fellow Hall of Famer Gary Stevens, Commentator broke sharply, securing the lead from favorite Saint Liam. Swingforthefences found a comfortable spot in third while the closing duties were split between Sir Shackleton, Limehouse, Pollard’s Vision, Eurosiver and Wiggins.

On the backside, Commentator looked like he had strung Christmas lights across an orchard as the field dissipated behind his scorching speed. After a half-mile, it was a 15-length spread from Commentator to Wiggins. After 6 furlongs, it was 32 and counting between Commentator and the retreating Pollard’s Vision.

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Edgar Prado gave favorite Saint Liam every opportunity, keeping him close enough to Commentator to have chance when the frontrunner’s burner ran down. Commentator fanned the flame all the way to the wire, bravely repelling Saint Liam by a diminishing neck in the $750,000 Grade I stakes.

Owned by Tracy Farmer, the New York-bred son of Distorted Humor pushed his career tally to seven wins from eight starts. The chestnut gelding made his debut last summer at Saratoga. He rattled off five straight one-turn victories before faltering in the 1 1/8-mile Hal’s Hope in January. Zito sent him to the bench for nearly six months and he returned bigger and better; drawing off to win a 7-furlong allowance/optional claimer at Belmont by 16 1/2 lengths.

Zito thought about sprinting Commentator, opted for the Whitney and in return got the pole vault for Monday’s induction.

“‘This is probably the most important victory of my life, going into the Hall of Fame Monday. It’s a special day for me and we’re going in the right way,” Zito said. “I was happy when that wire came. It was unbelievable. He’s an amazing horse, but it’s a hard style. I always say, ‘Play the game. Play the game.’”

Zito played the game Friday, but the game had done nothing but shove the 57-year-old trainer. Noble Causeway, who was a vet scratch in last Saturday’s Jim Dandy, pulled up in the third race. Zito’s favored entry Hide And Chic and In The Gold finished second and third in the Test with In The Gold forfeiting all chance with a bumbling start. Zito was 0-for-5 on the day and needed a jolt.

“‘It takes a lot out of you,” he said. “But it’s like when they asked me after I had all those horses in the Kentucky Derby, I said, ‘When you think about what happens in life, you know, this isn’t that bad.’ No matter how up or down we get, we get a shot to play this great game. The Hall of Fame is a career, maybe this is the best race of my life. We’re going into the Hall of Fame on the greatest note you could possibly have, winning the Whitney.

Stevens knew Zito wasn’t having his best day, or meet for that matter, and was glad to help roll out the red carpet.

“I hadn’t said anything to Nick about the Hall of Fame. The last couple of weeks for him were a little tough. Started out the meet a little slow, then with Noble Causeway being scratched the other day and pulling up today, his chin was dragging a bit,” Stevens said. “People don’t realize, getting inducted into the Hall of Fame, you want to keep a good form going into the Hall of Fame so you can say, ‘Yeah, I belong here,’ because it’s kind of hard to believe. All I told Nick down there was he belongs in the Hall of Fame, ‘Enjoy it and I’ll see you Monday morning.’ He got a big smile on his face and I know it picked his head up a little bit.”

Zito doesn’t need a history lesson or set of name tags to understand and respect where he’s going Monday.

“It’s been a long journey, it’s a great, great honor. Seeing Mr. Whiteley, Mr. Mack Miller, Mr. Nerud, Mr. Jerkens who I talk to all the time, all those great Hall of Famers,” Zito said. “Going into the Hall of Fame, this is the way you want to do it. What a way, to go into the Hall of Fame, the right way.”

Now about that speech.

“I started on a legal pad and then typed it up but like everybody says, you’re not supposed to just read, I gotta have some notes because I don’t want to forget the people who took me there,” Zito said. “A lot of my friends and people I’m close to, they really want me to talk the way I talk to the press, that’s what people like. Of course, you have to write something because there are a lot of people you have to thank but I’m going to say a few things. I’ve written it myself, if it comes out bad, no one’s to blame but me. I’ll say what I have to say and I won’t disappoint you.”
Those were the sage words from editor Tom Law regarding this blank-soon-to-be-filled column space. Offered right before a road trip, the words resonate as I turn left out of the driveway...my favorite New York-bred...I drive and think, turn off NPR, drive and think, don't make a phone call, just drive and think.

Fourstardave comes to mind, of course, and the endless summers spent under the shedrow of Leo O'Brien's barn, galloping Four Star Something and Roscommon Something and a Pitchunia or two, the glory years, when we won everything at Saratoga, including the Hopeful. Yes, Leo O'Brien won the Hopeful. But I digress.

Fourstardave, the iconic everyman's horse, winning at Saratoga like Big Ben striking noon, tried and true, year after year. I rode him a few times, ponied him for a few weeks, turned him loose once and stood in awe of him as he ran sideways through that last furlong, pounding on his right lead to win another turf stakes.

Hard to think of the highlight, there were so many, especially the ones at the end, when it started to sink in that they weren't going to last forever. Certainly the lowlight was when he was taken down in the 1993 West Point, after stumbling at the start and running them all down. So high one minute, so low the next. Leo's son Keith and I picked up our sport coats off the floor of a dusty third-row box, as Leo's daughter Leona cried, we trudged home. The wins and losses etch deep ruts when you're 23, but in a strange way they make the ones at 44 bearable.

I remember when he got hurt, chasing Lure and Paradise Creek in the 1994 Bernard Baruch, his groom Juan, crying. Then Keith crying. Then me. Maybe that was the lowlight. He came back, but was never the same.

Fourstardave – and his brother Fourstars Allstar were personal. The brother always had more talent but not as much appeal. He won the Irish 2000 Guineas in 1991, Janet Elliot screaming the result as Keith and I were in the paddock to ride a claimer at the Radnor Steeplechase in Malvern, Pa. Now, nearly 25 years later, winning the Irish 2000 Guineas seems too far-fetched to believe.

I drift, then return as the Beltway turns into 95, and think of others watched from afar, tantalized but not quite as awed.

Commentator using his speed and tenacity to win two renditions of catch-me-if-you-can Whitney spectacles (see pages 28-29). I think back to a story about one of those Whitneys, didn’t I talk to Carlos Correa, his exercise rider...? Then Tom Law emails me a link to the story, written in 2008, I skim it while driving (don’t tell Mom), Commentator might not be my favorite New York-bred but he’s certainly Correa’s. I find his quote and read it aloud, “I love this horse. I love this horse. I’ve galloped other big horses, but this one is the greatest. He’s always got to run hard, he’s a warrior. I know him like a book. When I gallop him, I make him go like a pony because he’s a fragile horse. I galloped him from day one, he hasn’t changed. When he’s right, he’ll beat anybody, believe me. Seven years old, still running – you don’t see horses like him. When he’s on, he’s an amazing horse. When he’s on, he’s a freak.”

I drive and think of others. The fleeting ones.

Win. It took him seven tries to break his maiden and then he danced in all the big ones – the Manhattan, the Man O’ War, a couple of Baruchs, talk about tenacity.

Scott The Great, a punch-the-clock gelding who wound up 9-for-66, including the Poker. I loved that horse. He once lost 18 in a row, then lost 16 in a row. Tough. I think of Funny Cide winning the Derby, the Preakness and taking us all on a ride that made California Chrome’s journey feel like a walk to the mailbox. Thunder Rumble, Dave, Gander, Irish Linnet, Naughty New Yorker, Critical Eye, Say Florida Sandy...

An hour, maybe two into the drive, I think of one more, yeah, probably my favorite New York-bred of all-time. Amarettitorun. Pronounced am-a-ready-to-run. Certainly personal, I galloped him for O’Brien. Actually, I never galloped him, we jogged day after day, summer after summer, at Saratoga. Fragile, we would jog once around the Oklahoma, then twice around the main track, loping when I couldn’t hold him any longer, then we’d go home the long way, stopping on the turn to eat the leaves off the trees. By the end of the summer, we were out of trees, the bottom of all the trees bare. Amarettitorun won two races in four days, three in 32 days in 1996, took Keith and me to Hong Kong in 1997, got claimed in 1999. I let him down in the end, watching him slide down the ladder and break down in an $18,000 claimer at Monmouth Park in 2000.

I pull into my office at Fair Hill, two and half hours after thinking about Fourstardave. I’m thinking about Amarettitorun. My favorite New York-bred.
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