

The *aratoga*

Year 20 • No. 9 • Wednesday, August 12, 2020



# Special



## Legal Ease

With eye on Derby, Tiz The Law thrashes Travers field





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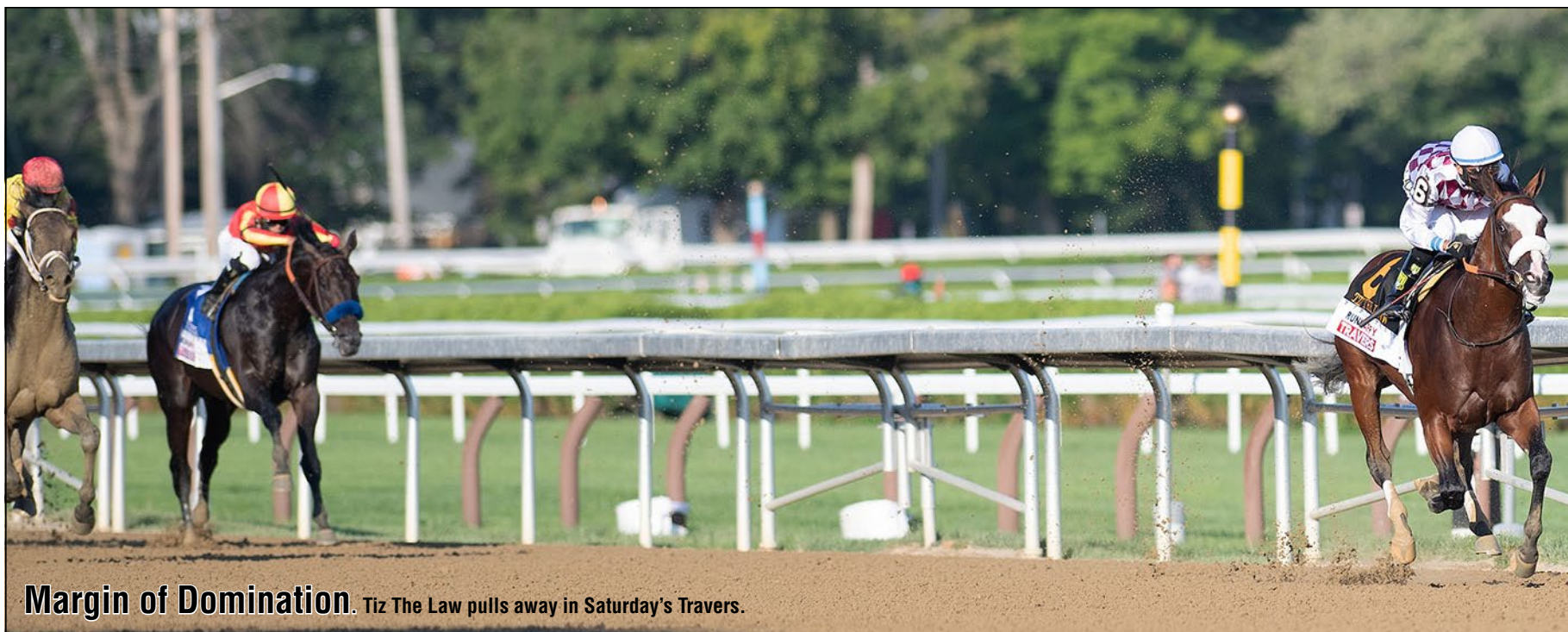
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**Margin of Domination.** Tiz The Law pulls away in Saturday's Travers.

Tod Marks

## here&there...in racing

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### BY THE NUMBERS

**2:** Anonymous gift cards to local restaurants sent to The Special's Tom Law so far (he thanks whoever sent the one for Walt and Whitman Monday morning).

**3:** Steeplechase wins for Gamine's "cousin" Brother Sy, who won over hurdles and timber in 2012 and 2014. His dam Cozzy Rhythm is out Grand Splash, the third dam of Gamine.

**8:** Winners on the Travers Day card for The Saratoga Special's John Shapazian, which improved his record to that point of the season to 69-for-184. He added two more Sunday and is hitting at an almost 37 percent strike rate. He's also on pace for nearly 150 winners for the meet, certainly a record.

**141:** Nominations for the \$600,000 Charles Town Classic and \$200,000 Charles Town Oaks, both set for Friday, Aug. 28.

**4,272:** Yearlings cataloged for the 77th Keeneland September sale, scheduled for 12 sessions Sept. 13-25 in Lexington.

**39,464,558:** Dollars in total handle for Saturday's 12-race Travers Day card, down 24.3 percent from last year's record \$52,129,344 bet on 13 races three weeks later in the meet. The 2020 Travers Day handle tops the meet to date and came in almost \$3.7 million more than Whitney Day Aug. 1.

### POETRY CORNER

#### THE TRAVERS

Tiz The Law was the odds on favorite  
And that was the news  
Some bet on another horse  
But they knew it would lose  
Uncle Chuck cast some doubt  
As they headed for the wire  
But Chuck ran out of gas  
And Tiz would never tire  
— **Peter Finley**

### LICENSE PLATE OF THE DAY

KN ICE — New York (Speaking of the Travers)

### NAMES OF THE DAY

**Anticipating, first race.** The Sherry Fenwick/Jonathan Sheppard steeplechase runner is by Overanalyze out of Confined.

**Eloquent Speaker, sixth race.** The 3-year-old filly, who races for Anthony and Stephen Mitola, White Owl Stable and Jeff Drown, is by Flatter out of Spoken Not Broken.

**Crick, 10th race.** The 4-year-old filly, a Siobhan McCormack homebred, is out of Kaydeross. The Kaydeross Creek (or Crick if you say it that way) is the largest river that lies completely in Saratoga County — originating in the Kayaderosses Range and passing through Corinth, Greenfield and Milton before emptying into Saratoga Lake. The name is a shortened version of the Mohawk tribe's Kayaderosses (which translates to Valley of the Crooked Stream). The tribe used the valley as a summer hunting and fishing destination. George "The Paper Bag King" West built a paper mill on the banks of the Kayaderosses Creek in Rock City Falls in 1962.

## The Saratoga Special

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**Thrill of Victory.** Tom Amoss employee Courtney Paye-Perez can't believe what she just saw after Serengeti Empress won the Ballerina.

Susie Raisher

## The Chief

"If I remember correctly, they used to gallop a lot slower in the old days. Those 2-year-olds, they used to gallop slower, further."

– *Trainer H. Allen Jerkens, 1929-2015*



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### WORTH REPEATING

"I don't see how he could have been any more impressive than that. Can't say I'm surprised watching him train here. He's been breezing like he was getting ready to put on a show. Like I said after the Belmont he's a hard horse to beat because he has such a high cruising speed then he rebreks. Hats off to Barclay and his team. They've done a great job with them. He's a really cool horse to watch race and train."

**Trainer Todd Pletcher on Travers winner Tiz The Law**

"Who do you have on there?"

**Trainer Ian Wilkes, eyeing Tom Law's pre-Stable Tour list last week**

"It's something I would have loved to do as a child. Being able to do so for them is nice. We're pretty blessed."

**Owner Michael Lund Petersen, on giving his children Axel and Olivia a chance to ride horses on the family's Maryland farm**

"We're just going to have to eat potatoes for the next month."

**Petersen, in May 2019, after he paid \$1.8 million for Gamine at Fasig-Tipton's Timonium sale**

"It's not even an exit on the Thruway."

**Exercise rider Anne Sinchak, on her hometown Fort Plain**

"Tiz the Tom."

**Trainer Jim Bond greeting The Special's Tom Law (also a New York-bred) Tuesday morning**

"I've been trying to keep Tom Law out of trouble, but that's a full-time job."

**The Special's John Shapazian, who has other responsibilities in addition to picking winners**

"It's gonna be all right. It's 2020, right? It's gonna be all right. I don't know when, but it's got to, right?"

**Owner Brad Grady, on a year that isn't over yet (and right, we think)**

### POSTCARD TO SARATOGA

Hello from Plymouth Meeting, Pa. I'm really missing my early mornings at Saratoga, sitting at a picnic table by the Morning Line kitchen with a hot bacon and ketchup sandwich, reading The Special, and listening to the racing gossip.

Saratoga is so intense. The world-class racing, of course, is sublime, but over the years I've come to appreciate those easily missed classic moments: over at Oklahoma, seeing LeRoy Jolley, Bobby Frankel and Bill Mott leaning on the rail by Bobby Frankel's barn shooting the breeze. How I wish I could have eavesdropped . . . The cherry and black perfection of the Phipps shed rows when Buzz Tenney kindly welcomed and introduced me to the magnificent Storm Flag Flying. Hanging out with "Griff" Gerard Griffin and his huge paint, Toby, at the Oklahoma gap.

Point Given's 2001 Travers win infected me for life with the Saratoga bug. The excitement when news broke just a few days before the race that The Big Red Train would be rolling into Saratoga created a rock-star environment. Another vivid Travers memory is Birdstone's win as that apocalyptic storm broke over us, and we all shared Marylou Whitney's joy despite the torrential rain.

This summer there are no crisp Saratoga mornings for me. Instead, I'm enduring endless plus-90-degree days, staying close to home and avoiding Covid. My two Golden Retrievers, Emlyn and Calon, are fun company and keep me on a good routine.

Thank goodness for The Special to keep me connected to my favorite place.

– *Della Micah*

*A Saratoga visitor every year since 1999, horse and dog owner, Della Micah is a retired high school principal from Plymouth Meeting, Pa.*

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## TOP OF THE STRETCH

Halfway through Friday's program, the clouds disappeared as the bell for the fifth race rang proud. Kept True, Bridlewood Cat and Skamania battled for the lead right out of the gate, while Jose Ortiz aboard Honor Way humbly embraced the muddy mist from the back.

The top of the stretch is where decisions must be made.

With a confident stride, Ortiz conclusively took Honor Way to the far side of the pack, ultimately resulting in his third win of the day. Only this one was different. It was . . . muddy.

A little more than halfway through the year, we've reached the top of the stretch. Now is the time to decide where we want to be when the dust (and mud) settles. Will you accept armor made of mud and reflect on 2020 as a year of tragedy? Or will 2020 be remembered as the year you learned to seek the opportunities disguised as challenges?

Life is a series of highs and lows where the convoluted journey to self-actualization is learning to harness the wonder in the chaos. I think 2020 is meant to teach us that some of the most unexpected misfortunes can brighten our lives in due time.

When odds are constant and the thrills diminish,  
Don't bet the favorite, for the longshot will strike.

Horses who lead the field from start to finish,  
Do not understand what dripping mud feels like.

As they bask in the winner's circle glory,  
It's the dirt that makes a worthwhile story.

— By Sami Loud

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Bowes Bond was a friend of my dad's in the depression days. He kept running a good horse for \$1,500 and just winning and winning. People finally said, 'Give us chance, will ya?' He said they could claim him any time they wanted, but of course nobody had \$1,500 back then."

— Owner/breeder Henry "Tim" Clark III



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Trainer: Justin Wojczynski



COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

**COOL ENOUGH**  
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5 1/2 at Colonial Downs

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Trainer: Phil Schoenthal

\*Bloodhorse.com



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## With Ian Wilkes

Kettle Hill bailed Ian and Tracey Wilkes out 13 years ago at Saratoga Race Course.

"One year we only won the last race on the last day," Tracey Wilkes said last week outside the barn at the far end of Clare Court.

"That's right, Kettle Hill," Ian Wilkes said. "Last race, last day and got off the duck."

"We had actually run a couple seconds and thirds, in big races, too," Tracey Wilkes said. "We just didn't win one."

"The horses were running. It was one of those things where we can't complain but we just didn't break through and get a win. Until the last race on the last day," Ian Wilkes said.

Team Wilkes, Saratoga regulars since 2006, won't need a Kettle Hill (who did indeed win the 10th and last race Sept. 3, 2007) bailout in 2020 thanks to a productive start heading toward the halfway point. The barn put a win on the board on Day Two when Counter Offer upset a 1 3/8-mile turf optional at 19-1. They added two more wins before July was through – Witez in an allowance and Sursum Corda in a maiden special weight – and brought a record of 3-2-1 from 10 starts into Week Five.

"It's been a good meet so far, hopefully we can keep it going," said Ian Wilkes, who trained Fort Larned to victory in the 2012 Whitney and Breeders' Cup Classic and also won Grade 1 stakes on the NYRA circuit with Warrior's Reward and Capt. Candyman Can.

A former longtime assistant to Hall of Fame trainer Carl Nafzger, Wilkes trains one of the country's leading 3-year-old fillies this season in Four Graces. He brought a smaller stable than usual this year from his main bases at Churchill Downs and Skylight Training Center in Goshen, Ky., but there's plenty of ammo left in the barn with young and old horses, dirt horses and turf horses and of course distance horses.

"We've got some marathoners," Wilkes said. "And I'm trying to build the next ones. I'll keep working on it."



Wilkes and The Special's Tom Law watched Let Them Eat Cake finish her training on Clare Court before making the short walk to his shedrow for his sixth appearance in this feature in as many years.

**Let Them Eat Cake:** Second in a maiden special weight here July 29, Elizabeth Valando's homebred Animal Kingdom filly is a half-sister to multiple stakes winner Free As A Bird. Free As A Bird won the Caress and Smart And Fancy here in 2014, training on Clare Court like her younger sister. "Let Them Eat Cake, I tried her long, like Free As A Bird but she just couldn't finish off her race. Then I ran her short and twice it was rained off. The other day was the first time on the turf short, closed well and finished well. She's pretty nice. She'll be better and better as she goes. Her sister used to be tough to gallop so I used to train her here. Tracey used to gallop her here. She was good here, I took her to the main track and she was about a run-off. This filly I bring her here, she likes it better here. I haven't had a horse for (Valando) in three or four years, since probably Free As A Bird. She was selling. She bred this filly and sent her to me, which is great."

**Modern Science:** Irish-bred son of Galileo cost Lothenbach Stables \$400,000 at the 2019 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga select yearling sale. He finished second in a maiden special weight here Aug. 1. "Nice colt. He's a big baby. He's all 2-year-old boy. He's figuring the game out. He ran a good race the other day, just second best. When the other horse came to us he made us run along with him. He's still learning. Now I know why Aidan O'Brien does so well. Those Galileos, they're tough. They're good and tough. Me and Drew Nardiello bought him for Bob Lothenbach. Good bone, he's very immature and when he fills out to that frame he's going to be a beautiful horse. Look at him, when he fills into that frame Sean Clancy would

NYRA Photo

**Counter Offer** gave trainer Ian Wilkes his first win of the meet with a 19-1 upset.

die for him. But he's not having him."

**Tizahra:** Shadowfax Racing's 4-year-old Raison d'Etat filly won two in a row before an eighth in an optional claimer here Aug. 6. "Improving filly, getting better, had won her last two. I was waiting to run her a mile-and-three-eighths, a mile-and-a-half. It's tough when you go up a condition to do it, but the filly is improving. Better and better."

**Incitatus:** Ironicus colt finished seventh in his career debut, a maiden special weight July 9 at Keeneland and followed it up with a fifth by 5 1/4 lengths in Travers Day maiden on the grass. "Gentle Ruler's brother. He's gray and she's bay. I ran him once at Keeneland, soft turf and just 5 1/2 (furlongs). He has no business 5 1/2 but it actually wasn't a bad race. He was picking them up at the end. I wanted the education."

**Counter Offer:** Son of Tapizar made it two in a row when he won an allowance July 16. The 4-year-old gelding was an \$80,000 purchase as a yearling for Six Column Stables and now has three wins from 14 starts. "He ran good, I'll come back in a three-other-than with him. Same again, not quite fast enough to beat them two turns but the three turns really helps him. And grass."

**Originator:** A winner early in last year's meet for Denholtz Stables, West Point Thoroughbreds and Head of Plains Partners, 5-year-old Artie Schiller mare is entered for \$62,500 in Thursday's third, a 5 1/2-furlong optional on the grass. "She's doing well right now, getting ready to run. I ran her a mile and Churchill but will probably shorten her up here. There's a mile-and-a-sixteenth here and I just think that's a little too far for her so I'm going to shorten her to the 5 1/2."

**No Mo' Spending:** By Uncle Mo and out of Grade 3-placed Stopspendingmaria, the 3-year-old filly made her second career start here Aug. 5 in a maiden special weight and finished third. "Just too short for her, she wants more distance. I've run her 5, 5 1/2, which is a shame because she's a big filly who wants to sit and travel, and run a little further. But improving."

**Sursum Corda:** Three-year-old daughter of Constitution won a maiden special weight here July 31 in her sixth start. A \$40,000 yearling purchase for Deborah Wilson, she is a half-sister to Grade 2-placed mare Glory. "Again, the filly was running consistent. Her race the other day was really good. They went very slow early and they clocked her the last three-eighths in 34 and 4 going a mile-and-three-eighths. I really like that filly going three turns, too. I always kept telling Deb Wilson

**Continued On Page 7**



# Stable Tour —

## ■ Continued from page 6

that this is my next Gentle Ruler. Hopefully she doesn't let me down. She's only knee-high to a grasshopper. She's not big, a small filly. She's all heart and that's what counts."

**Witez:** Runner-up in the Grade 2 Jessamine Stakes at Keeneland last fall, the Mary Ann Charleston homebred won an allowance here July 26, rebounding off a 12th in the Grade 3 Regret Stakes. "That was good a-other-than. I'll come back in the Lake George. She came out of the race well, I'm happy with her training since."

**Four Graces:** Whitham Thoroughbreds' homebred filly by Majesticperfection has won two Grade 3 stakes in a row, taking the Beaumont last time out and the Dogwood June 6. Out of the graded stakes-placed mare Ivory Empress, she's 4-for-5 and is a half-sister to Grade 2-winner McCracken. Didn't make the trip north and is working at Churchill, including a half in :52.40 last Wednesday in preparation for the Grade 2 Eight Belles Sept. 4. "Nice filly. She's done nothing wrong. I was devastated the day she got beat because I didn't think she could. Then I found out she displaced on me. Took care of that and she's come back and won three more since then. She'll stay short, I won't stretch her out. Seven furlongs is probably her best distance. I'll let each race dictate where we go but the Eight Belles is the next one."

**Bohemian Bourbon:** On the board in last year's Coronation Cup Stakes, Bourbon Lane Stable's 4-year-old Midshipman filly finished third in the Grade 2 Royal North Stakes at Woodbine July 18. "Wow, you have to be proud of her. She went to Woodbine and ran a tick under 1:07, got beat three-quarters of a length. That Mark Casse beat me with two, not just one, he beat me with two (Lady Grace and Eyeinthesky). If you can believe that. He needs to be a little more fair. But I was so proud of her. I'm going to point her for Kentucky Downs, the 6 1/2. The 5 1/2, she can run it but it's just a fraction too short. The 6, 6 1/2 is just a little better race for her."

**Turtle Trax:** Third behind Four Graces in the Beaumont, Brereton Jones' Cairo Prince filly won two races last year and has been in the money in three of her four races in 2020. "Nice filly. I'm pointing her to the Charles Town Oaks (Aug. 28). Seven furlongs, maybe two, or three turns? Whatever. You lose count, they go around so much. But it's two turns. She's graded-stakes-placed. She was stakes-placed before and now I need to get her a stakes win. She's a filly that's improving. This is a filly you might see being even better when she gets to 4. That's when you'll really see the improvement."

**Market Rumor:** Winner of a maiden special weight at Keeneland July 12, Randall Bloch and Six Column Stables' 3-year-old-filly finished sixth in the Grade 3 Monmouth Oaks in her last start. "Had a little bit of a tough trip, they never spread out and I thought there was a little more speed. That was coming out of a maiden to a stakes race, a tough assignment. She's got a great mind, which is an asset to her. I think as we go on she'll be a nice filly. Not sure yet, she's still got the a-other-than and I'll probably run her at Churchill. I'll look at the book there."

**Savvy:** Baccari Racing Stable's and Chester Prince's 4-year-old Flashback gelding won Ellis Park optional Saturday for his second win in five starts. "Nice horse, has some talent. I've had a few setbacks with him but as we go and if we can keep him sound I think he's pretty talented. Still figuring out his distance, whether he wants to be short or whether he's going to run long."

**Straight Shot:** Trappe Shot gelding made his first start off an 11-month layoff a win, taking an allowance at Ellis Aug. 2. The homebred for Whitham Thoroughbreds has two wins and three placings in his seven starts. "Came back off a long layoff and won the other day. Very talented horse. Gelded him for Mrs. Whitham. I think he has a bright future."

**Ry's The Guy:** Lothenbach Stables' colt by Distorted Humor was purchased at the 2017 Fasig-Tipton Turf Showcase yearling sale for \$90,000. He has been in the money seven times and most recently finished fourth in the

Continued On Page 8



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# Stable Tour —

## ■ Continued from page 7

Kentucky Downs Preview Turf Cup Stakes at Ellis Park Aug. 2. “He’s run good, consistent. I just need to get him into an easier race where he can get a win in a two-otherwise. Just a race he can get a win, get some confidence. He’s a talented horse and a smart horse.”

**Princess Causeway:** Five-time winner for Winchester Place Thoroughbreds has earned \$318,444 in 13 starts and finished fifth in the Kentucky Downs Preview Ladies Turf last time out at Ellis. Has more than repaid the owner for \$200,000 purchase at Fasig-Tipton Kentucky’s October yearling sale in 2017. “I’ll run her at Kentucky Downs, she’s 2-for-2 down there. Just had a little bit of a rough trip the other day, stuck at the back of the field but I think she’ll improve a lot.”

**Street of Dreams:** Eighth in the Runhappy Audubon Oaks Sunday at Ellis, the 3-year-old daughter of Street Sense (a \$150,000 purchase at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic’s 2-year-old sale last year) was second in the Grade 3 Forward Gal this year at Gulfstream. “She wants to get off the pace and come from out of it. I had her too fresh last time. I need to get her closing.”

**Nessy:** One of our favorites, Sierra Farm’s homebred won the Grade 3 San Juan Capistrano Stakes in 2018. He made only one start in 2020, finishing seventh in the Grade 2 Mac Diarmida Stakes at Gulfstream Park. Wilkes retired the son of Flower Alley after four wins, 15 placings and \$449,038 in earnings. “So proud of Nessy. He made one man the happiest man ever when he won the San Juan Capistrano. Ed Hudon told me, if nothing else happened to him he’d die a happy man. That



The Wilkes string has been a fixture at Clare Court for years.

meant a lot to me. I just wasn’t happy with Nessy’s training, I felt like he’d lost a step and I wasn’t going to push him. I talked to Sharon Hudon and Mike Callanan, who runs the farm, and they decided to retire him. He’s at Sierra Farm. Living life and he’ll have a home the rest of his life.”

**Big Dollar Bill:** Third in the Grade 2 Marathon Stakes and Grade 3 Greenwood Cup in 2018, the 6-year-old son of Midnight Lute finished in the money in 14 of his 24 starts and has \$328,861 in earnings. “He’s also retired. He’ll go to Dennis

Farkas’ place, he’s got a home there, too.”

**Joe Bananas:** Tracey Wilkes’ frequent morning ride, the barn pony returned to Saratoga for another season. Ian: “Don’t forget him. How old is he? No one ever knows how old he is. We asked Joe but Joe doesn’t tell us.”

Tracey: “He’s too tired to talk.”

Ian: “As long as he’s getting fed, he’s happy. A treat, look. Someone looked at his teeth and they thought he was around 12. He’s got a few more years in him.”

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# LIAM'S MAP

Unbridled's Song - Miss Macy Sue, by Trippi

## NEW STAKES WINNER FROM SECOND CROP

A new TDN Rising Star, two-year-old Crazy Beautiful exploded down the stretch to win the Debutante S. at Ellis Park. Congratulations to connections of the undefeated filly.

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**LANE'S END**



# Another Checkmark

Tiz The Law adds Saratoga's signature race to growing resume



Elsa Lorieul/NYRA

Tiz The Law (center) shows the way off the turn in the Travers.

## BY TOM LAW

The people gathered outside the fence near the corner of Nelson Avenue and Wright Street – the ones behind the translucent privacy screening erected before Opening Day by track and city officials to discourage congregating near a place where people have been doing just that for a century and a half – and let their appreciation flow.

Manny Franco heard it best, riding Tiz The Law back around the clubhouse turn after guiding the New York-bred colt to a flawless performance in the 151st Travers Stakes. The cheers, brief but audible, and the effort of the Constitution colt gave the soft-spoken rider something that's been missing at the racetrack in this Covid-19 world.

"He gave me chills," Franco said after his first Travers win, officially by 5 ½ lengths in 2:00.95 for 10 furlongs.

## TRAVERS STAKES RECAP

Tiz The Law, already the winner of the rescheduled Belmont Stakes and the Florida Derby this season, delivered the best performance of a seven-start career dating back exactly a year to his Saratoga maiden score Aug. 8, 2019. He did it that day before 25,404 fans who came out for a middle-of-the-meet Thursday card highlighted by the Saratoga Dew Stakes.

Roughly 100, including trainer Barclay Tagg and members of his inner circle and several partners of Sackatoga Stable including Jack Knowlton, saw the Travers. Plus that handful outside the fence.

Tagg said it didn't matter much that there were no fans – it certainly helped Tiz The Law stay calm in the paddock and warm-up just like he did in the June 20 Belmont Stakes – and joked that "the purse

is the same" when prodded by the press for the obligatory "What was it like without fans?" question.

Knowlton looked at it another way.

"I know Barclay and I will disagree on this; I wish there were 50,000 plus people here to see this performance live," he said. "We're fortunate that we're able to run these races, we're fortunate that NYRA was able to make accommodations for the owners to be here. It's something I'll never forget. It's a highlight, probably after winning the Derby, which is the highlight of anybody that's involved in this sport, this is easily number two."

Tiz The Law will now head to Louisville to try and give Sackatoga and Tagg a second Kentucky Derby, following their first rags-to-riches run through the 2003 Triple Crown with Funny Cide.

**Continued On Page 11**



# Travers —

■ Continued from page 10

Franco will try and win his first in his third ride in the race – following a 17th aboard Tencendur in 2015 and an 18th on Spinoff last year.

Tiz The Law enhanced his status as the heavy favorite in Louisville Sept. 5.

After Tagg tacked up the bay colt using the famous four-time Kentucky Derby-winning saddle made for Franco's agent Angel Cordero Jr. and used in recent big races by John Velazquez, Tagg made his way to the front of the clubhouse with longtime assistant and partner Robin Smullen and her niece and Tiz The Law's frequent work rider Heather Smullen.

Tagg didn't settle on a spot to watch the race right away; he stopped near the Curl-in Room for a bottle of water, was nearly knocked over by an owner and accepted a good luck post-time wish from Hall of Fame jockey Jorge Velasquez before finding a spot near a set of iron and concrete steps past the finish.

He watched the break through his binoculars, alternating between live and on the infield monitor before pulling them down to see the field of seven flash past the finish the first time.



Tod Marks

Manny Franco lets everybody know Tiz The Law is the one at the Travers finish.

Uncle Chuck, shipped in from California seeking Bob Baffert's fourth Travers win, set the pace just ahead of longshot Shivaree with Tiz The Law and Franco just to their outside in third. Country Grammer and Caracaro, 1-2 in the Grade 3 Peter Pan on Opening Day, chased fourth and fifth with Bel-

mont-third Max Player and Ohio Derby runner-up South Bend toward the back through the opening splits of :23.65 and :48.36.

The small crowd continued to look on as the field hit the far turn as Uncle Chuck and Luis Saez, starting to look softened up through 6 furlongs in 1:11.95, only held a half-length edge at the half-mile pole. Franco said he wanted to wait a bit longer to engage the leader, wary of potential late runners and because Tiz The Law (like the others) hadn't been tested beyond 9 furlongs.

"Going to the three-eighths, I was trying to wait more because I knew I got him," he said of Uncle Chuck. "He was riding and trying to keep up, so I was a little bit worried about the horses behind me. I was trying to save more horse before I made my move."

Tiz The Law, just like he did in the Champagne last year and Holy Bull, Florida Derby and Belmont this year, galloped away from the field with ease. Coming off the turn he opened up a clear advantage and Robin Smullen brought him home.

"Come on Tiz, come on Tiz, come on Tiz," she said while walking toward the outside fence with Tagg.

A camera crew followed every move and while Tiz The Law approached the finish Tagg provided one last bit of encouragement with a "come on,

Continued On Page 12

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# Travers —

■ Continued from page 11

that a boy” with his binoculars slung over his shoulder. Tiz The Law improved to 4-for-4 in 2020 and the \$535,000 first-place check boosted his earnings to \$2,015,300.

Tagg said he didn’t feel comfortable about the race until “right after the finish,” but it didn’t show. The only close call came after he plunged his hand into the ice chest for that pre-Travers bottle of water and nearly ran into someone on the clubhouse porch.

“You always have some doubt because many different things can happen,” Tagg said. “I’ve brought good horses to a race before that stumble out of the gate. Anything can happen. That’s always in the back of your mind, but I was very confident in the horse. Just myself, I was very confident in the horse.”

Tagg also won his first Travers, 17 years removed from having to scratch the fan favorite Funny Cide from Saratoga’s signature event the morning of the race. The ancient test, also won by New York-breds Ruthless and Thunder Rumble, is one he’s held in high regard since starting his training career in the early 1970s.

“I’ve been doing this a long time and I’ve always wanted to win the Travers,” he said. “The Travers has been in my head my whole life. I’ve always



wanted to win the Travers, I don’t know why. And now it happened so it couldn’t be better.”

Caracaro and Javier Castellano, second by a neck in the Peter Pan after a seven-month break, made a long, sustained run to finish second and were 2 lengths ahead of Max Player at the finish. South

Tod Marks  
Tiz The Law strikes a pose in the winner's circle with Sackatoga Stable's Jack Knowlton and groom Juan Barajas Saldana.

Bend finished fourth with Country Grammer fifth, Uncle Chuck a tired sixth and Shivaree essentially eased. First Line was scratched the morning of the race.

The trainers of the two immediately vanquished by Tiz The Law, Gustavo Delgado and Linda Rice, watched the replay on a small monitor on the clubhouse porch and saluted the winner while looking ahead.

“He’s amazing,” Rice said of Tiz The Law. “He’s got a lot of tactical speed and does it so effortlessly.”

Delgado held up three fingers, signifying the number of starts Caracaro made before the Travers and basically the number of weeks since his last start, before catching the rerun with members of owners Global Thoroughbred and Top Racing.

“Nice horse, nice horse,” Delgado said of Tiz The Law before taking a phone call and turning it over to his son and assistant Gustavo Jr.

“He’s getting there,” he said. “Second again, back in the Travers after three weeks, that’s a lot to ask for. We’re happy with him.”

Continued On Page 14



## Collector's item

**Bernardini's G2-winning son Art Collector wires the Ellis Park Derby.**

After **Lady Kate's** victory in the Groupie Doll, the Kentucky Derby prospect was Bernardini's second Stakes winner of the day.

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# Travers —

## ■ Continued from page 12

Max Player finished 7 1/2 lengths behind Tiz The Law in just his second start since winning the Grade 3 Withers at Aqueduct Feb. 1. The Honor Code colt will join Tiz The Law and Caracaro on the way to Louisville for the Sept. 5 Kentucky Derby, but will do so for a new trainer after Rice said Tuesday that Max Player was transferred by owners George Hall and Sport BLX Thoroughbreds to Steve Asmussen.

Tagg plans to train Tiz The Law in Saratoga with the rest of his string until about a week before the Derby.

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He said Sunday the colt would gallop for about 10 days with two breezes during the four-week gap between the Travers and Derby.

Knowlton figures the buzz for the colt would continue to rev up during that period, something he's well familiar with from Funny Cide's run through the 2003 Triple Crown that came up just short in the Belmont Stakes.

There's no Tiz The Law store — at least not yet — but there is merchandise honoring the colt and his New York-bred status. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo even took to social media to laud racing's latest star, saying on twitter he “does New York proud and is #NewYorkTough.”

“When we had Funny Cide and won the Derby, it was Funny Cide mania and this town was everything Funny Cide,” Knowlton said. “It's taken a little time I think for Tiz to get to that point. I really believe after this race that he is going to be adopted, not only by Saratoga but even more by New York, and hopefully the country. The mask we have with Tiz on it, we've been getting calls from California and all over the country; they want a Tiz The Law mask.”



Tod Marks

Barclay Tagg and Robin Smullen watch the horses load in the gate.



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# Success at Saratoga

Keeneland September graduates  
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**Serengeti Empress** - Ballerina S. (G1)

**Gamine** - Test S. (G1)

**Jackie's Warrior** - Saratoga Special S. (G2)

**American Sailor** - Troy S. (G3)

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# Too Good

Three-year-old filly star Gamine nails down another Grade 1



Tod Marks

Gamine pulls well clear of the field late in Saturday's Grade 1 Test.

## BY JOE CLANCY

A few minutes after selling the most expensive horse in the history of the sales pavilion at Timonium, Md., Brad Grady looked like a man who'd seen a ghost. One that sat down, said hello, slapped him on the knee and used his name.

"You can't expect that. We knew she was going to bring a good amount of money but to expect a million eight, no you can't expect that," Grady said in snare-drum tempo. He walked as he talked, rubbed his eyes a little, and then pondered what it would have been like to keep the filly who did indeed fetch \$1.8 million on a bid by agent Donato Lanni at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic's 2-year-old sale in 2019.

## TEST STAKES RECAP

"You're damn right . . . you're damn right it is . . . you're damn right," he blurted when asked if it was difficult to sell. "I'd be a liar if I said it wasn't. It's hard to let horses go. I race them too. I've had some good horses. We've taken a horse to the Derby and won Grade 1 races, there's no other feeling like that in the world."

A year later, there still isn't.

That record-setting filly became Gamine – winner of the Grade 1 Longines Test Stakes at Saratoga Race Course Saturday. Trained by Bob Baffert for Michael Lund Petersen, who spent all that money at the sale, Gamine has crossed the finish line first

in all four starts and rocketed into racing's consciousness with performances that defy description.

She won her debut at Santa Anita in March by 6 ¼ lengths. In her second start, at Oaklawn Park in May, she fought off future Grade 1 winner Speech by a neck. Next came an 18 ¾-length ripper in June's Longines Acorn in 1:32.55 for a mile at Belmont Park.

Saturday it was Saratoga's turn.

Sent off at a little more than 1-5 in a field of six, she broke well but under control as second choice Venetian Harbor set up outside of her. Wide but straight after leaning out in the Acorn, she went the first quarter-mile in :22.70. John Velazquez let his

**Continued On Page 17**





Venetian Harbor (center) gives futile chase through the lane as Gamine streaks away.

Tod Marks

## Test —

### ■ Continued from page 16

long hold do the job as Gamine moved toward the rail early on the turn and through a half-mile in :45.14. She led Venetian Harbor, a Grade 2 winner, by a half-length and extended it off the turn before simply running away. Velazquez got a little lower in the saddle, slapped her once on the shoulder, pumped his arms for real six times, looked under his right shoulder once and let her stride away. She won by 7 lengths, the 6-furlong split going by in 1:08.64 and 7 furlongs in 1:20.83 (.43 off a 42-year-old – to the day – track record).

Venetian Harbor stayed around for second, 6 ½ lengths clear of Up In Smoke.

“I just let her do whatever she wants to do,” Velazquez said. “The last time, I was a little too much in her mouth and she was kind of leaning out a little bit so today I just left the reins loose and let her be where she wanted to be and she was pleased where she was. Then on the turn, I took a hold of her and she went right back in so I didn’t worry about it. It feels as good as the last time, I’ll tell you that. Whatever the time was or how much she won by, it doesn’t matter. She’s still as good, and that’s what counts.”

At home in Texas, Grady watched in awe – again. A filly he and pinhooking partner Bobby Dodd bought at Keeneland September had taken yet another step toward stardom. Grady went to the Kentucky Derby with Girvin in 2017 and won Grade 3 stakes with Mom’s On Strike in 2018 and 2019. He’s got a good turf sprint-



Tod Marks

Gamine cools off after the win.

er in Fast Boat. He and Dodd have sold their share of expensive horses who turned out. But Gamine gives him goosebumps.

She’s blown past two milestones Grady pointed out as historic for him – a sub-1:33 mile and 7 furlongs faster than 1:21. He’d never seen the former, until the Acorn; and the latter just once, when champion Groupie Doll won the 2012 Breeders’ Cup Fil-

ly and Mare Sprint in 1:20.72.

“I’ve been in the game about a decade, and been fortunate to be around some nice horses but I’ve never seen anything like her,” he said of Gamine Tuesday. “I’m enamored by her. Personally, I’ve never seen one do that. Being a racehorse owner, with some decent ones over time but nothing like her, you’re in awe of a horse like that. It makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you just talk about them.”

The only blemish on Gamine’s record is a disqualification from that Oaklawn allowance, her only start around two turns, for an overage of the permitted medication lidocaine. Baffert has appealed, based on environmental contamination from a barn employee, but the DQ is there in the past performances – though it does little to diminish her reputation. The Kentucky Oaks, at 1 1/8 miles Sept. 4, beckons next.

Grady and Dodd paid \$220,000 for Gamine at Keeneland September in 2018. Bred in Kentucky by Barbara Banke’s Grace Thoroughbred

**Continued On Page 18**

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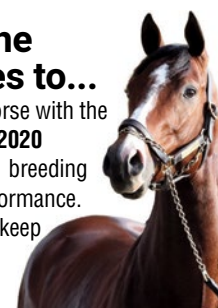


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- 1. Tiz The Law:** Belmont? Check. Travers? Check. Next stop, Derby. – Bred by Twin Creeks Farm
- 2. Gamine:** California-based 3YO filly left no doubt in Test.
- 3. Serengeti Empress:** Fought like a lioness in Ballerina triumph.
- 4. Vexatious:** Vanquished champ in Grade 1 Personal Ensign.
- 5. Improbable:** Beat quality group in Grade 1 Whitney.
- 6. Volatile:** Speedster made it look easy in Vanderbilt.
- 7. Starship Jubilee:** Four in a row this year, and getting better?
- 8. Echo Town:** Big noise in powerhouse Jerkens romp.
- 9. Decorated Invader:** He’s starting to remind us of someone . . .
- 10. Paris Lights:** Brave effort in the Coaching Club American Oaks.

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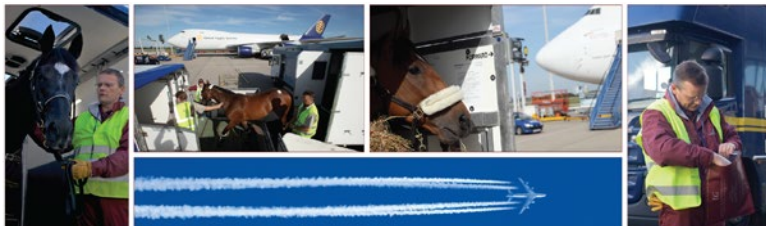


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## Test —

### ■ Continued from page 17

Holdings, the daughter of Into Mischief and the New York-bred Kafwain mare Peggy Jane came out of the Summerfield consignment and was Hip 1116 in the 4,000-plus horse sale. She went to Grand Oaks, a 415-acre farm in Reddick, Fla. and shined.

“Bobby, Mary Ellen Coenen, Forrest Woodward, they all had a good idea she was something special,” Grady said of the team at Grand Oaks. “The second time she ever breezed, Bobby called me and said ‘This Into Mischief filly is a freak.’ He doesn’t give out accolades like that too often, and even saying that you might hope she’d win a Grade 2 someday and we could say, ‘Remember when you told me she was a freak.’ ”

Grand Oaks buys yearlings to break, get started and sell as 2-year-olds after early work at the farm. The former Gulf Coast Farm has 128 stalls, a 7-furlong track and an equine swimming facility and the consignments are annually full of sought-after juveniles.

Sometimes, one sticks around and joins Grady’s racing stable.

Girvin was destined for the sales ring, until he stepped on himself and cut into a hoof. In Grady’s silks, he won his debut as a 2-year-old in December, and added the Risen Star, Louisiana Derby and Haskell as a 3-year-old.

He finished 13th in Always Dreaming’s Kentucky Derby, 11th in West Coast’s Travers, earned \$1.6 million and retired to Ocala Stud Farm as a stallion.

Gamine would have been some second act, though Grady isn’t sad or angry or jealous.

“None of us have a crystal ball. Yeah, I wish was she was wearing my orange and black,” he said. “But when Donato puts his stamp of approval on a horse, it means the world to me. He loved the filly. I love the connections that have her. The owner is an affable guy that loves the game. And we know the kind of job Bob Baffert does. I’m grateful she’s in the right hands. They’ve done the right thing by the horse. They didn’t run her at 2 and probably could have. Now look at her.”

Yeah, now look.

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# Queen of Speed

Serengeti Empress hangs tough in gutsy Grade 1 sprint score



BY PAUL HALLORAN

## BALLERINA STAKES RECAP

After operating on patients Monday morning, orthopedic surgeon Joel Politi made the two-hour drive from his home in Columbus, Ohio to Indiana Grand to watch his 2-year-old filly Littlestitious finish third in her career debut. No disrespect to the good folks in Shelbyville, but if Politi could have chosen one racetrack to visit over the last five days, he would have preferred to head east, not west.

With the ability to travel severely limited by the pandemic, Politi stayed home Saturday to watch on TV his Serengeti Empress notch her second Grade 1 triumph with a resolute win in the Ballerina at Saratoga Race Course.

Serengeti Empress, the 2019 Kentucky Oaks winner who lost a spirited battle to champion 3-year-old filly and female sprinter Covfefe in last year's Test Stakes at Saratoga, had to survive a bad break and blazing fractions in order to earn a spot in this year's Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint

via the Win and You're In Challenge Series.

"When they flashed :43.74 (for the half mile), I said, 'Oh-oh.' Nobody survives :43.74," said Politi, who watched the race with his wife, Julie, two of their daughters and a few neighbors. "Letruska is a nice horse and she was on her neck all the way around the turn."

The effort by Serengeti Empress becomes even more impressive when you realize how much Luis Saez had to use her to get to the lead after the slow break from the rail, an undesirable post at the 7-furlong distance.

"The first jump, she was not that fast but I asked her a little and she put me in position," Saez said. "I knew she was rolling . . . When we came to the stretch she was battling and waiting for the competition. When the horse came outside, she was fighting. She was really running."

By the time they turned for home, Letruska and Cookie Dough had called it a day, but Bellafina, the 2019 Filly and Mare Sprint runner-up, Vagrancy winner Victim Of Love and defending Ballerina winner Come Dancing were in position to make their moves. Considering the fractions (6 furlongs in 1:08.32) and the fact that Saez had her under a drive from the three-eighths pole, you had to figure Serengeti Empress was vulnerable.

If that's what you were betting on, you were disappointed, as the Tom Amoss trainee proved to be the equine version of the Energizer Bunny, holding on to win by a length over Bellafina, who was 1½ lengths in front of Victim of Love at the wire. The final time was 1:21.63; only four horses have run faster in the previous 41 editions.

"She showed how much grit she has," said Amoss. "Anyone who watched the Test last year knew she had a real chance at seven-eighths of a

Continued On Page 21



# Ballerina —

■ Continued from page 20

mile. We've been pointing to this race since she was well beaten by Midnight Bisou going a route of ground (in the Fleur De Lis at Churchill Downs June 27). We wanted to avoid Midnight Bisou."

If that's what it took to have Amoss cut her back to a sprint, he will certainly accept the results, and he fully plans on taking advantage of the automatic Breeders' Cup berth.

"Absolutely," Amoss said, when asked about keeping her sprinting. "I look forward to staying at the seven-eighths distance. Maybe we'll get her one more start before the Filly and Mare Sprint."

While the cutback had to have contributed to her staying power Saturday, Amoss felt it also played a role in her tardy start. "That hurt her leaving the gate in a sprint," he said, "but then her God-given ability took over. I couldn't be more proud. She is a very special filly."

Politi paid \$70,000 for the daughter of Alternation out of the Bernardini mare Havisham at the 2017 Keeneland September sale. The \$165,000



Tod Marks

**Trainer Tom Amoss (Geaux Tigers).**

she earned Saturday brought her career earnings to \$1,907,653.

"She's developed a lot," Politi said. "Physically, she's a better horse than she was last year. What we want for her is to solidify her legacy of what she is and she has done."

He would prefer to be an eyewitness to any future achievements.

"Pre-Covid, we went to every race," he said. "We've been to two Breeders' Cups, the Oaks, other Grade 1s. Every experience has been great."



Joe Labozzetta/NYRA

**Serengeti Empress hangs on late in the Ballerina.**

## CHURCHILL DOWNS 2020 Derby Week & September Meet Stakes Schedule

SEPTEMBER 1 - SEPTEMBER 27

### THE CHAMPIONS DAY MARATHON OVERNIGHT STAKES

Runs Tues., Sept. 1  
\$115,000  
Three Years Old & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(No nomination fee)  
1 1/2 Miles, Dirt

### UNBRIDLED SIDNEY

Runs Wed., Sept. 2  
\$150,000  
Fillies & Mares,  
Three Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$150 nomination fee)  
5 1/2 Furlongs, Turf

### POCAHONTAS (GIII)

"WIN AND YOU'RE IN BREEDERS' CUP JUVENILE FILLIES DIVISION"

Runs Thurs., Sept. 3  
\$200,000  
Fillies, Two Years Old

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$200 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Dirt

### OPENING VERSE OVERNIGHT STAKES

Runs Thurs., Sept. 3  
\$115,000  
Three Years Old & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(No nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Turf

## KENTUCKY OAKS DAY

### LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS (GI)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$1,250,000  
Second closing  
Fillies, Three Years Old

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$500 nomination fee)  
1 1/8 Miles, Dirt

### EDGEWOOD (GII)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$300,000  
Fillies, Three Year Olds

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Turf

### EIGHT BELLES (GII)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$300,000  
Fillies, Three Year Olds

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
7 Furlongs, Dirt

### LA TROIENNE (GI)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$500,000  
Fillies & Mares,  
Four Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 1/16 Miles, Dirt

### ALYSHEBA (GII)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$400,000  
Four Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 1/16 Mile, Dirt

### TWIN SPIRES TURF SPRINT (GII)

Runs Fri., Sept. 4  
\$250,000  
Three Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$250 nomination fee)  
5 1/2 Furlongs, Turf

## KENTUCKY DERBY DAY

### OLD FORESTER BOURBON TURF CLASSIC (GI)

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
\$1,000,000  
Second Closing  
Four Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$500 nomination fee)  
1 1/8 Miles, Turf

### IROQUOIS (GIII)

"WIN AND YOU'RE IN BREEDERS' CUP JUVENILE DIVISION"

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
\$200,000  
Two Year Olds

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$200 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Dirt

### PAT DAY MILE (GII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
\$500,000  
Three Year Olds

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Dirt

### DERBY CITY DISTAFF (GI)

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
\$500,000  
Fillies & Mares,  
Four Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
7 Furlongs, Dirt

### AMERICAN TURF (GII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
\$500,000  
Three Year Olds

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 1/16 Miles, Turf

### LONGINES CHURCHILL DISTAFF TURF MILE (GII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 5  
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Four Year Olds & Up

Closes Aug. 15  
(\$300 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Turf

### ACK ACK (GIII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 26  
\$100,000  
Three Year Olds & Up

Closes Sept. 12  
(\$100 nomination fee)  
1 Mile, Dirt

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# Shipping Up

American Sailor, DQ deliver first stakes win to trainer Potts



Tod Marks

American Sailor (right) battles to the line behind disqualified winner Imprimis in the Troy.

## BY PAUL HALLORAN

American Sailor, an 8-year-old gelding who has literally run at racetracks from coast to coast, gave Wayne Potts his first stakes win when he crossed the finish line second but was moved up to first in the Grade 3 Troy Stakes Saturday. Imprimis, returning from a nine-month layoff, was disqualified for interfering in the stretch with Shekky Shebaz and placed behind him in third.

“I was thrilled to run second to the horse that beat me,” Potts said Monday, still having trouble describing the magnitude of the win. “I’m still speechless. It was a great feeling to walk in the barn and see him this morning.”

The \$110,000 winner’s share moved American Sailor, by City Zip out of the Yes It’s True mare Yesshesarocket, into the half-million-dollar club, with \$568,264 in 45 career starts at 22 racetracks.

## TROY STAKES RECAP

He has 15 wins, 9 seconds and 3 thirds.

That’s right: 22 racetracks in 16 states: Del Mar, Remington, Delta, Oaklawn, Churchill Downs, Fair Grounds, Sam Houston, Keeneland, Canterbury, Indiana Grand, Ellis, Laurel, Gulfstream, Suffolk, Mountaineer, Tampa, Pimlico, Delaware, Colonial, Meadowlands, Monmouth. And Saratoga.

“He’s definitely well-traveled,” Potts said, in a Grade 1 understatement. “You couldn’t ask for a better shipper. And he always gives everything he has.”

Tyler Gaffalione became the 31st jockey to ride American Sailor, and there’s a story to that as well. Potts said he had a commitment from the agent of Kendrick Carmouche, but received a call from the agent at 11:03 a.m. Wednesday, the day of entries,

informing him that Carmouche would be riding Pure Sensation for Christophe Clement.

“I had some choice words for him,” said Potts, who was happy to land Gaffalione at the last minute.

“I talked to a few people and they all told me he tries hard for everybody,” Potts said. “The first time I ever met him was in the paddock. He is a very classy kid, very respectful. He did everything I asked.”

With American Sailor, the instructions are typically straightforward: Send. Gaffalione followed the script perfectly, opening a 2½-length lead in the 5½-furlong sprint after a quarter-mile in :21.92. Shekky Shebaz, also trained by Clement and ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr. made his move from between horses, while Jose Ortiz got Imprimis in gear on

**Continued On Page 23**



# Troy —

## ■ Continued from page 22

the outside and easily went past both, though he came in on his brother early in the stretch, resulting in an inquiry and disqualification of Imprimis, owned by Breeze Easy and trained by Joe Orseno. Favorite Chewing Gum finished fourth and Pure Sensation was last.

"I feel really bad for Joe and Breeze Easy," a remorseful Jose said after the following race, when he piloted My Sister Nat to a win in the Waya. "I made a mistake and I couldn't keep a straight course."

Fifth in the standings with 13 wins and fortunate to walk away unscathed from a spill Sunday when Frankel At Ascot ran into the rail, Gaffalione loved the effort from American Sailor.

"I'm thrilled with the race my horse ran," said Gaffalione. "It's not the way you want to get it done, but Mr. Potts and his team brought the horse over ready to run."

No need for anyone in the winner's circle to apologize, especially considering the humble beginnings of the connections. Potts started mucking stalls in 1998 for trainer David Rose at Shenandoah Downs in West Virginia, working his way up to hotwalker, groom and assistant trainer. He went out on his own in 2004 and has won 483 races, none as gratifying as the Troy.

You can say the same thing for owner Raj Jagnanan, who emigrated to the United States from Guyana in 1991 and bought his first horse in 2014.

"My father was a farmer and I grew up with horses and cows," said Jagnanan, a consultant and real estate investor who lives in South Ozone Park in Queens, N.Y. "I thought one day this was going to happen. To win a race at Saratoga is amazing. It's a dream."

It's a safe bet that Potts and Jagnanan weren't dreaming of the Saratoga winner's cir-

cle Sept. 3, 2017, when they claimed American Sailor for \$25,000 from Joe Sharp, who ran the horse in a 5-furlong off-the-turf race at Suffolk Downs. Ironically, they lost the horse in a \$7,500 claimer at Suffolk nine months later, but got him back in a private purchase within a few months.

"It was cheaper than \$7,500," Potts said. "And he's made more than \$340,000 for us since we claimed him."

Potts had reason for optimism heading into the race, after American Sailor, who has won races in eight states and whose only two previous graded stakes starts came in 2016, ran second in the Wolf Hill Stakes at Monmouth July 18, ahead of Shekky Shebaz.

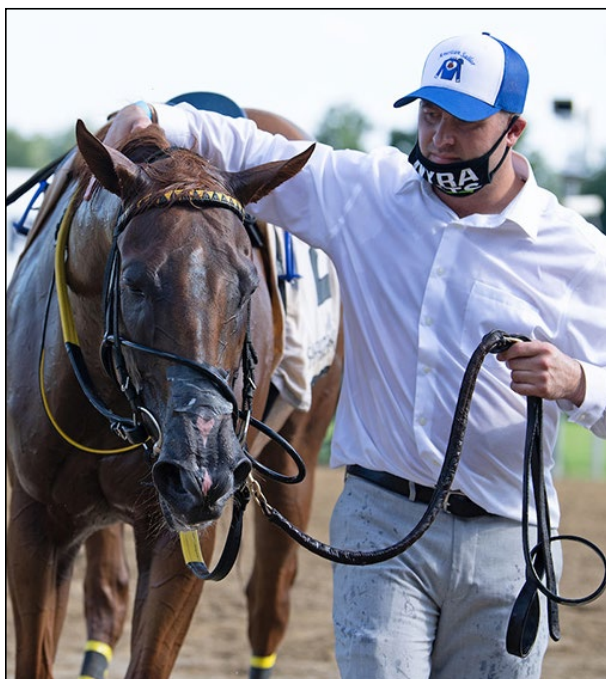
"He came out of the race good and he has been training great. I was pretty confident bringing him up here," said Potts, who suggested the Troy to Jagnanan.

"The trainer said he wanted to go in the Grade 3 and I told him, let's do it," Jagnanan said. "I'm very happy for Wayne. We're close and he has been getting the job done for me."

The Potts-trained Runabout, with Jagnanan's wife, Vedhya, as the listed owner, won the third race at Laurel Saturday, three hours before the Troy.

"My clients have stood behind me through the years with the claimers and this is where we're at," Potts said.

In the winner's circle at Saratoga.




Tod Marks

Trainer Wayne Potts and his first stakes winner.

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# Sister Act

French-bred mare wins first stakes in United States with late run



My Sister Nat (green silks) charges past Mrs. Sippy and Fools Gold to win the Waya.

Tod Marks

## BY PAUL HALLORAN

If this year's Waya Stakes at Saratoga Race Course were to be made into a TV show, you could call it "Family Ties."

The winning mare, My Sister Nat, is a half-sister to Sistercharlie, who won the 2018 Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf and finished third last year. Both are owned by Peter Brant, who, in his first go-around as an owner, campaigned Hall of Famer Waya.

"This is a race we've been targeting since (Peter) got back in the game," winning trainer Chad Brown said. "She just went into the Hall of Fame last year, the great Waya. It was really great to win this."

Brant and George Strawbridge Jr. bought the French-bred Waya prior to her 5-year-old campaign, in which she won the 1979 Eclipse Award for Champion Older Mare. The prior year, she had set the world record for fastest 1 1/8-mile time on turf (1:45 2/5) in winning the Diana for David

## WAYA STAKES RECAP

Whiteley. Waya finished her career with 14 wins in 29 starts and captured three Grade 1 stakes.

My Sister Nat was bred in France by Ecurie des Monceaux. She ran six times for trainer Francis-Henri Graffard before Brant bought her in 2018 and put her in the care of Brown. Prior to Saturday, she had run five times in the U.S. without visiting the winner's circle, though she was on the board five times.

"We've been watching her train the last couple of weeks and saw how well she looked," Brown said. "She seems to be set up for her best year yet."

If that comes to pass, the connections may look back on the Grade 3 Waya as the breakthrough race.

Jose Ortiz placed her closer to the pace than usual in the 1½-mile marathon, in last but only 5 lengths off the pace as the four mares and two fillies came by the stands the first time. Ortiz kept My

Sister Nat on the hedge up the backstretch, moving up one spot heading into the far turn.

"Jose came to the paddock with a really good plan," Brown said. "He stayed with the pack and didn't let her fall too far back. Jose deserves a lot of credit."

Ortiz took My Sister Nat – like Sistercharlie, out of the Galileo mare Starlet's Sister – off the rail entering the stretch and she outfinished Mrs. Sippy and Fools Gold, also a Brown trainee, who led into the stretch, to win by a neck.

"Chad always tells me in three-turn races to save ground on the first two turns and on the third turn do whatever you want," Ortiz said. "She's a tiny filly, but she's got a lot of heart."

The Waya marked the first time My Sister Nat went 12 furlongs. As far as Brown is concerned, the farther the better.

"This was her second three-turn race and we saw what she can do," Brown said. "We're going to try to keep her in races like this."



# The SARATOGA Special



## Publishing Calendar for 2020 season

An online newspaper for the summer racing season at Saratoga Race Course

|                            | SUNDAY   | MONDAY                                   | TUESDAY                | WEDNESDAY  | THURSDAY   | FRIDAY   | SATURDAY   |
|----------------------------|--|--|------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| J<br>U<br>L<br>Y           |  |  |                        |  | Opening Day <b>16</b><br><b>ISSUE 1</b><br>Schuylerville,<br>Peter Pan     | <b>17</b><br>Shine Again,<br>De La Rose  | <b>18</b><br><b>ISSUE 2</b><br>CCA Oaks,<br>Hall of Fame   |
|                            | <b>19</b><br>Lake Placid                               | <b>20</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>21</b><br>No Racing | <b>22</b><br><b>ISSUE 3</b><br>Lubash (NYB)      | <b>23</b><br>Statue of Liberty<br>(NYSS)<br>A.P. Smithwick<br>Steeplechase | <b>24</b><br>Quick Call  | <b>25</b><br><b>ISSUE 4</b><br>A.G. Vanderbilt,<br>Ballston Spa                                    |
|                            | <b>26</b><br>Bernard Baruch                            | <b>27</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>28</b><br>No Racing | <b>29</b><br><b>ISSUE 5</b><br>Dayatthespa (NYB) | <b>30</b><br>John Morrissey (NYB)  | <b>31</b><br>Coronation Cup  | <b>1</b><br><b>ISSUE 6</b><br>Whitney, Personal<br>Ensign, Allen Jerkens,<br>Bowling Green, Caress |
|                            | <b>2</b><br>Birdstone                                  | <b>3</b><br>No Racing                    | <b>4</b><br>No Racing  | <b>5</b><br>Summer Colony                        | <b>6</b><br><b>ISSUE 7</b><br>Cab Calloway (NYSS)                          | <b>7</b><br>Saratoga Special   | <b>8</b><br><b>ISSUE 8</b><br>Travers, Ballerina,<br>Test, Troy, Ways                              |
|                            | <b>9</b><br>Alydar                                     | <b>10</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>11</b><br>No Racing | <b>12</b><br><b>ISSUE 9</b><br>Adirondack        | <b>13</b><br>Union Avenue (NYB)  | <b>14</b><br>Perfect Sting   | <b>15</b><br><b>ISSUE 10</b><br>Saratoga Derby,<br>Alabama   |
|                            | <b>16</b><br>Saratoga Oaks                             | <b>17</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>18</b><br>No Racing | <b>19</b><br><b>ISSUE 11</b><br>Bolton Landing   | <b>20</b><br>Tale Of The Cat<br>N.Y. Turf Writers Cup<br>Steeplechase      | <b>21</b><br>Skidmore  | <b>22</b><br><b>ISSUE 12</b><br>Fountain Dave  |
|                            | <b>23</b><br>Diana                                     | <b>24</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>25</b><br>No Racing | <b>26</b><br><b>ISSUE 13</b><br>Mahony           | <b>27</b><br>Smart And Fancy<br>Times Square (NYSS)                        | <b>28</b><br>Lake George   | <b>29</b><br><b>ISSUE 14</b><br>Sword Dancer, Forego,<br>Amsterdam, Saranac                        |
|                            | <b>30</b><br>Shuvee                                    | <b>31</b><br>No Racing                   | <b>1</b><br>No Racing  | <b>2</b><br><b>ISSUE 15</b><br>With Anticipation | <b>3</b><br>P.G. Johnson<br>Park Avenue (NYSS)                             | <b>4</b><br>NY-bred Showcase<br>Albany, Fleet Indian,<br>Funny Cide, Seeking<br>the Arde, West Pt, Yaddo | <b>5</b><br><b>ISSUE 16</b><br>Woodward, Prioress,<br>Glens Falls, Jim Dandy<br>Ky. Derby Day      |
| A<br>U<br>G<br>U<br>S<br>T | <b>6</b><br>Spinaway,<br>Honorable Miss,<br>Lucky Coin | <b>7</b><br>Closing Day<br>Hopeful, Lure | <b>8</b><br>No Racing  | <b>9</b>   | <b>10</b>  | <b>11</b>  | <b>12</b><br><b>ISSUE 17</b><br>Season Wrap-Up   |
|                            |  |  |                        |  |  |  |  |
| S<br>E<br>P<br>T           |  |  |                        |  |  |  |  |
|                            |  |  |                        |  |  |  |  |

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Calendar for planning purposes only and subject to change.



# Wheelhouse

## Spinoff relishes return to 2 turns in restricted stakes company

BY TOM LAW

A day shy of the midpoint and there's a new, and familiar, leader in the clubhouse.

Not for golf's PGA Championship, that one ended Sunday in San Francisco with a fresh face on top of the standings.

Here at Saratoga it's one you'll recognize in Todd Pletcher, who sent out his 16th winner on Day 19 when Spinoff won the featured \$82,450 Alydar Stakes

Alain and Gerard Wertheimer's homebred 4-year-old son of Hard Spun, a veteran last year's spring classics, won the 9-furlong restricted event for older horses which have not won a sweepstakes in 2020 by 2 3/4 lengths over 3-5 favorite Endorsed.

### ALYDAR STAKES RECAP

He won for the second time in three Saratoga starts and for the first time since his victory here last August going the same distance.

Spinoff also made Pletcher, the winner of 13 training titles at Saratoga, the fifth conditioner to lead the table in 2020. Not that he thinks the lead will hold up.

"Honestly we're really pleased with the meet we've had," Pletcher said. "We didn't come expecting to have enough wins to win the title. We're grateful that we've gotten off to a great start but I don't think we have the volume to compete throughout the meet. In order to win these you've got to win every day. It's going to take



NYRA Photo

### Spinoff skips away late in Sunday's Alydar.

right at 40 wins these days. That's a lot to keep going at this stage."

The 16 wins over 19 days comes pretty close to a daily victory and Pletcher counts at least one win for all but four of the dates so far, and he didn't have a runner one of the days.

"We're pleased," he said. "I'm proud of my team. We've been understaffed all summer, everybody is putting in extra hours, and overtime and it's great that we're able to achieve the

**Continued On Page 27**

## One Horse

*Buyers and sellers remember some names from Keeneland September sales of years past.*



W-E



SEPTEMBER

SUN. 13 - FRI. 25

## GAMINE, 2018

*Brad Grady, Grand Oaks*

"The year before, Bobby Dodd and I ended up with some just OK fillies. There was nothing wrong, they were just OK. We had a conscious conversation before we started looking at and buying yearlings. We agreed that, 'Absolutely we're not buying a filly unless she's a 10, a stellar individual who can bring a million bucks. We've got to have the whole package. Got to, got to, got to.' We found her at Summerfield's consignment, and we were looking at her together, and it was like, 'Here's our filly.' The next question was, 'Can we afford her?'"

"To be candid, her pedigree wasn't all that. She's kind of made it now. She's out of Kafwain mare that had a few nice starts but nothing that made you say you had to have her because of that. It was all her, how she looked. Bobby did right by her. She had some minor, minor, minor veterinary issues. We gave her time at the farm and that helped her become who she is.

"We were ecstatic we bought her for \$220,000."

*Bred by Barbara Banke's Grace Thoroughbreds, Gamine was sold by Grady and Dodd for \$1.8 million as a 2-year-old and she's since gone on to cross the line first in all four starts including wins in the Grade 1 Acorn at Belmont Park in July and Grade 1 Test at Saratoga last week.*



# Alydar —

■ Continued from page 26

results we are.”

Spinoff capped a productive three-day stretch where the barn won a claimer Friday with Bean Counter and a Travers Day maiden special weight with heavy favorite Mutasaabeq. Irad Ortiz Jr., atop the rider standings heading into Week 5 with 32 wins and one more than his brother Jose, rode Spinoff.

Pletcher and Ortiz met in the paddock before the Alydar, which on paper looked like a spot for Endorsed to win after solid back-to-back efforts behind Code Of Honor in the Grade 3 Westchester and Vekoma, Code Of Honor and others in the Grade 1 Metropolitan Handicap downstate.

Trainer and jockey figured Its All Relevant would set the pace and Bodexpress would chase and that would leave Spinoff and Endorsed just behind with longshot Backsideofthemoon at the back.

“What do you think? I think the 4 and 5 go, you’ll be laying third and have the favorite to your inside,” Pletcher told Ortiz.

That’s exactly how it happened. Its All Relevant set a modest pace - :24.97 and :49.57 – without much pressure from Bodexpress while Endorsed raced along the inside with Spinoff in the clear on the outside.

Ortiz and Spinoff made their move while still three wide after 6 furlongs in 1:12.86 and quickly opened up. Endorsed tipped off the inside rail and went past the two tiring front runners turning for home, but Spinoff was already clear approaching the 3/16ths pole.

“Every once in a while it unfolds like it looks on paper,” Pletcher said.

Third in the Grade 2 Saratoga Special as a 2-year-old and second in the Grade 2 Louisiana Derby at 3, Spinoff finished 18th in the slop in last year’s Kentucky Derby. Pletcher figured the colt didn’t like the track that day and ran him back in the Belmont on five weeks’ rest and he finished sixth, beaten only 3 lengths by Sir Winston.

Spinoff earned a trip to the grass for the Grade 1 Belmont Derby after that and he didn’t take to the surface, finishing 11th of 14. He ran just once more in 2019, winning an option-

Continued On Page 28



Tod Marks

Mutasaabeq wins his debut on Travers Day for Shadwell Farm and Todd Pletcher..

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# Alydar —

## ■ Continued from page 27

al at 9 furlongs at Saratoga by 5 3/4 lengths over Lone Sailor and Cairo Cat, before going to the sidelines.

The Alydar, which came after a fourth in an optional and a second in the Sunday Silence Stakes in the slop at Gulfstream and a seventh going 1 mile at Belmont, might earn Spinoff a trip back to stakes company.

“We placed him ambitiously before so I don’t see why we wouldn’t give it a try again if he comes out of it well,” Pletcher said of the Grade 1 Woodward at 10 furlongs here Sept. 5. “He’s a horse we’ve always had high hopes for, he’s always shown us he has potential. Timing has always been a little tricky, he ran well first time off the layoff this year then I wheeled him back kind of quick because there was a mile and an eighth opportunity at Gulfstream, and didn’t know what was going on as far as shipping opportunities and stuff.

“His last race at Belmont he got a little rank in between horses and never really relaxed. Hopefully we can get



Tod Marks

**American Monarch breaks his maiden on Travers Day for owner/breeder Mike Rutherford.**

into a steady routine with him now and he can fulfill our hopes for him.”

- Pletcher looks to keep the momentum going as Week 5 begins today with a 10-race card topped by the Grade 2 Adirondack.

A field of six entered the 6 1/2-furlong stakes for 2-year-old fillies, in-

cluding Pletcher’s Saratoga debut winner Lucifers Lair. The Elkstone Group’s homebred Maryland-bred daughter of Quality Road won going 5 1/2 furlongs July 19 and is 3-1 on the morning line behind 9-5 choice Make Mischief for Mark Casse and 2-1 second pick Thoughtfully for Steve Asmussen.

“The original thought was we might just wait for the Spinaway, but she seems like she bounced out of it so well,” Pletcher said.

Pletcher wanted to wait on a work late last week before deciding on the Adirondack and Lucifers Lair went a half in :49.49 Thursday on the main track.

Make Mischief comes back in the Adirondack after finishing second at 16-1 in the Grade 3 Schuylerville on Opening Day for trainer Mark Casse. The New York-bred daughter of Into Mischief broke her maiden two back at Belmont Park June 18.

- Another well-regarded member of Pletcher’s stable, Shadwell’s 2-year-old Into Mischief colt Mutasaabeq, rolled to a 4 1/2-length victory in his debut on the Travers Day undercard. A \$425,000 purchase as a weanling at the 2018 Keeneland November breeding stock sale, Mutasaabeq elicited the fairly coy “he’s been training pretty smartly” comment from Pletcher in his Fasig-Tipton Stable Tour that appeared in the Aug. 8 edition of The Special.

**Continued On Page 30**

## KIP ELSER'S KIRKWOOD STABLES TWO-YEAR-OLDS TO GO



Photo Finish

Susie Raisher

## PHOTO OF THE DAY

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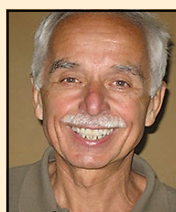




## Saratoga Race Course – Wednesday, August 12

the  
**Power**  
grid

Race #



**John  
Shapazian**



**Tom  
Law**



**Charles  
Bedard**



**Rob  
Whitlock**

|              |   |   |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1            | Fearsome<br>Hendriks entry<br>Brianbakescookies           | Brianbakescookies<br>Anticipating<br>Fearsome             | Hendriks entry<br>Zoom Zoom Zoe<br>Court Ruler      | Brianbakescookies<br>Hendriks entry<br>Anticipating   |
| 2            | Tiz He The One<br>Releasethethunder<br>Gun It             | Tiz He The One<br>Releasethethunder<br>Gun It             | Tiz He The One<br>Strike That<br>Releasethethunder  | Tiz He The One<br>Releasethethunder<br>Gun It         |
| 3            | Daring Disguise<br>Fluent In Sarcasm<br>Money In The Bank | Fluent In Sarcasm<br>Daring Disguise<br>Money In The Bank | Fluent In Sarcasm<br>Money In The Bank<br>Shandian  | Fluent In Sarcasm<br>Victory Built<br>Daring Disguise |
| 4            | Radiantrithym<br>Friend Of Liberty<br>Tied Up             | Radiantrithym<br>Friend Of Liberty<br>Tied Up             | Radiantrithym<br>Tied Up<br>Friend Of Liberty       | Radiantrithym<br>Camorra<br>Friend Of Liberty         |
| 5            | Digital Software<br>Maker entry<br>Gunman                 | Digital Software<br>Maker entry<br>Gunman                 | Digital Software<br>Scanno<br>Maker entry           | Digital Software<br>Maker entry<br>Break Beat         |
| 6            | Eloquent Speaker<br>Kinky Sox<br>Shesasuperfreak          | Eloquent Speaker<br>Shesasuperfreak<br>Bustin Scones      | Eloquent Speaker<br>Kinky Sox<br>Bustin Scones      | Eloquent Speaker<br>Kinky Sox<br>Saratoga Beauty      |
| 7            | Sandro The Great<br>Microsecond<br>Tackle                 | Sandro The Great<br>Scuttlebuzz<br>Tackle                 | Voliero<br>Microsecond<br>Mundacious                | Saratoga Beauty<br>Microsecond<br>Sandro The Great    |
| 8            | Lil Commissioner<br>Candy Tycoon<br>Forza Di Oro          | Candy Tycoon<br>Forza Di Oro<br>Singapore Trader          | Lil Commissioner<br>Candy Tycoon<br>Hunt The Front  | Candy Tycoon<br>Lil Commissioner<br>Liveyourbeastlife |
| 9            | Thoughtfully<br>Lucifers Lair<br>Make Mischief            | Thoughtfully<br>Make Mischief<br>Lucifers Lair            | Make Mischief<br>Thoughtfully<br>Beautiful Farewell | Lucifers Lair<br>Beautiful Farewell<br>Make Mischief  |
| 10           | Deeply Analytical<br>Mebs Web<br>Mia Bea Star             | Mia Bea Star<br>Deeply Analytical<br>Gringotts            | Mebs Web<br>Love Me Tomorrow<br>Mia Bea Star        | Peerless<br>Deeply Analytical<br>Gringotts            |
| 2020 Records | <b>71/194</b>   | <b>64/194</b>   | <b>61/194</b>                                       | <b>48/194</b>   |

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Young jockey Reylu Gutierrez says balancing the ups and downs of horse racing is key to building a successful career. Currently based at Saratoga, Gutierrez keeps an even keel knowing the best is yet to come. "It just takes one horse and one second, and all of your fortunes can change, and that's the beauty of horse racing."

## Alydar —

### ■ Continued from page 28

• Sunday's Alydar card also featured the anticipated debut of Seasons, the third foal out of multiple Grade 1 winner Winter Memories.

The 2-year-old daughter of Tapit, running for her breeder Phillips Racing Partnership and LNJ Foxwoods won the second race maiden going 1 1/16 miles on the grass.

Trained by Jimmy Toner, just like her dam, Seasons drew raves around the barn area with a sharp half-mile breeze in :48.79 on the Oklahoma turf course Aug. 3.

She won the second by a neck over fellow first-timer Ice Queen at 4-5 under Jose Ortiz.

• Today's card starts Week 5 and the return of steeplechase racing with a 2 1/16-mile allowance going as the opener at 12:50 p.m. and a hurdle handicap starting Thursday's card at the same time after a rainout last week.

Trainer Jack Fisher won the first three jump races of the meet and sends out Brianbakescookies, runner-up last time out in a similar race at Middleburg; and Prayer Hope, a 5-year-old son of Tapit who cost his former owners \$700,000 as a yearling

## Saratoga Leaders

| TRAINERS           | 1ST |
|--------------------|-----|
| Todd Pletcher      | 16  |
| Christophe Clement | 15  |
| Mike Maker         | 14  |
| Chad Brown         | 13  |
| Steve Asmussen     | 7   |
| Linda Rice         | 7   |
| Jim Bond           | 6   |
| Ray Handal         | 6   |
| Orlando Noda       | 6   |
| Rudy Rodriguez     | 6   |
| Wesley Ward        | 6   |
| Jorge Abreu        | 5   |
| Shug McGaughey     | 5   |
| Bill Mott          | 5   |

| JOCKEYS             | 1ST |
|---------------------|-----|
| Irad Ortiz Jr.      | 32  |
| Jose Ortiz          | 31  |
| Joel Rosario        | 28  |
| Javier Castellano   | 14  |
| Tyler Gaffalione    | 13  |
| Manny Franco        | 12  |
| Luis Saez           | 12  |
| John Velazquez      | 10  |
| Jose Lezcano        | 9   |
| Ricardo Santana Jr. | 7   |
| Junior Alvarado     | 7   |
| David Cohen         | 4   |
| Dylan Davis         | 4   |

### Through Tuesday

and a maiden winner in May 2019 at the Radnor Races.

Ricky Hendriks entered the coupled entry of Markhan and Global Freedom for Rosbrian Farm.



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# Tiz Franco

Manny Franco played shortstop. Watched Derek Jeter. Cheered for the Yankees. Franco was quick, deft at turning a double play, fast on the basepaths, could hit a curve. Baseball was all he wanted to do, dreaming of the big leagues.

But there were those Sundays. With his dad. For the stakes. At the track.

"Every Sunday I knew I was going to go to the racetrack so I was excited when the Sundays came. I fell in love with the horses," Franco said. "I loved baseball, too, but I was small, a little bit small for baseball."

Franco's dad bought him a horse.

"A street horse," Franco said. "Just a street horse."

They kept the horse with a friend of his dad's, in a stall behind the house in the city, five minutes from the Hipodromo Camarero, the racetrack named after the great horse who won 56 races in a row. Franco, 15, in a "big" saddle, rode the street horse in the street, of course. His dad, his friend, anyone who he could find, leading him at the walk. Then jogging on his own, never a gallop.

"I would practice on that horse," Franco said. "That's how I started. In the streets. In the streets."

All in preparation for the Escuela Vocacional Hipica Agustin Mercado Reveron, the famed jockey school that has turned out legends John Velazquez, brothers Jose and Irad Ortiz Jr. and so many others.

As baseball slipped to a childhood pipedream, Franco filled out the paperwork, applied and waited for his ticket.

"I knew before I went to the school, 'Man, this is what I want to do,'" Franco said. "You've got to be lucky to see if they'll call you back."

They called back. Franco was one of 12 students to be accepted in the 2011 class, a year behind future Eclipse Award winner Jose Ortiz. The boys arrived at Camarero at 6 in the morning and went home at 3, learning everything, grooming, mucking, walking. Riding came last.

Franco idolized Velazquez, Mike Smith, of course, but also watched local legends, Juan Carlos Diaz, Joel Cruz and Luis Jurado. Franco watched his first Travers in 2012, the dead heat between Alpha and Golden Ticket. Jockeys always remember the jockeys.

"Ramon Dominguez and David Cohen," Franco said in awe. "I remember that one. I watched it all the time. After that, I said, 'I want to be there one day, I want to go to America and be a success.'"

Franco won his first race aboard Skylight Citizen at Camarero Jan. 2, 2013, was in America two months later, at Parx for two weeks and at Aqueduct by March.

"By that time, Jose Ortiz was almost finishing his bug year," Franco said. "I was waiting for his year to be over."

By the end of that first season, Franco had won 130 races and joined classmates Edgard Zayas and Victor Carrasco as Eclipse Award finalists for leading apprentice. Carrasco won the award. Franco banged out 155 wins for \$8.2 million in 2014. In April, 2015, Franco's agent Mike Gonzalez was expelled from NYRA grounds for illegal use of NYRA's computer system and Franco transferred to agent Angel Cordero Jr. They didn't miss a beat, winning 151 races for \$9.3 million by the end of that season. Franco won his first Grade 1 aboard Joking in Oct. 2016, his second a week later with Yellow Agate in the Frizette, part of a 192-win \$12.4 million haul that season. In 2017, he kept it rolling with 187 wins for \$12.6 million. By 2018,



Franco won 252 races for \$17 million and was leading jockey in New York.

And then he had his breakthrough.

On his way to defending his NYRA title in 2019, Franco picked up the ride aboard Tiz The Law in the Grade 1 Champagne when Junior Alvarado stuck with Saratoga Special winner Green Light Go. Franco saw his name next to Barclay Tagg's bay colt on the overnight, went home, watched a replay of Tiz The Law's effortless debut win at Saratoga and knew this was the chance of a big horse.

"My agent doesn't really tell me I was going to ride the horse," Franco said. "I knew he was a very nice horse with a good chance."

Whether he learned it from watching Jeter or Velazquez, Franco turned the play, winning the Champagne Oct. 5.

"I was very impressed, like this is a very nice horse," Franco said.

Two months later, Franco and Tiz The Law faced adversity in the Kentucky Jockey Club. Hemmed in on a sloppy track, they finished third.

"They made the race difficult, I never could get outside. I had to stay there until the hole opened, when it opened, my horse went through but it wasn't his day. They rode a great race," Franco said. "I was a little worried that I wouldn't get the ride back. I tell my agent, we've got to keep that ride because I knew he was a nice horse."

And you know the story from there, Franco kept the ride and has been flawless in a 4-for-4 run as a 3-year-old, including a Travers jaunt for the ages Saturday.

"He gives you a lot of confidence. He's more mature, he's growing up, he's settled more than before, that helps a lot," Franco said. "You can turn it on and he goes. When you ask him to turn it off, he turns it off. When I asked him, he surprised me, he took off with me. It's unbelievable feeling."

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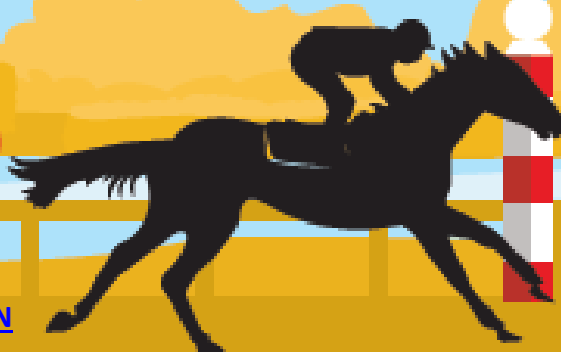
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# The **Big** Picture

with Tod Marks

**Tiz A Kiss.** Exercise rider Heather Smullen plants a smooch on Tiz The Law's nose after Saturday's Travers Stakes romp.

