

Year 22 • No. 5

Wednesday, July 27, 2022

The *Saratoga*

# Special

Saratoga's Racing Newspaper since 2001



## Bird Strike

Nest zooms to Coaching Club American Oaks romp

Dave Donk Stable Tour  
Clairiere wins Shuvee  
Bella Sofia eyes Honorable Miss



# BREED TO SPEED

**RUNHAPPY** won the  
King's Bishop (G1) at  
Saratoga in **1:20.54**  
scoring a **113** Beyer

## STAKES-WINNING PROGENY INCLUDE:

SMILE HAPPY (G2)

FOLLOWING SEA (G2)

HAPPY SOUL

ROTKNEE

NICKY THE VEST

JOYFUL CADENCE

GRAND AVE GIRL

HAPPY MEDIUM

RUNUP

RUN TO DAYLIGHT

# RUNHAPPY

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**Mind the Gap:** Nest runs away with Saturday's Coaching Club American Oaks.

Dave Harmon

## Here&There...in Saratoga

### By The Numbers

**1:** Fat groundhog living the good life behind Barn 42 in the Campfire Court section of the Oklahoma.

**1:** Former Todd Pletcher trainee jumping fences in the Oklahoma infield Tuesday morning. Ancient Times (4-1 in today's first) popped over two hurdles and blew out around the turn for trainer Arch Kingsley.

### Racetrack T-Shirt of the Day

I JUST HOPE  
BOTH TEAMS  
HAVE FUN

### License Plates of the Day

LUVTOGA, New Hampshire. Sent in by reader Jim Sweet.  
1 MTP, New York. NYRA01, New York.

### Special Trivia

Argentine-bred Afilador won the last jump race at Aqueduct, July 24, 1974, with Leo O'Brien aboard for owner Raymond Guest's Powhatan stable and trainer Pat Graham. Jockeys Kip Elser (aboard Crag's Corner at 138 pounds) and Peter Pugh (Sabinus, 139) finished fifth and eighth, respectively. Eclipse Award-winning photographer Douglas Lees came up with the correct answer and won a Saratoga Special hat.

Afilador made more history in 1978 when ridden in a hurdle race at Saratoga by future Hall of Fame flat jockey Jacinto Vasquez. They finished seventh.

### Names of the Day

**Proven Innocent, first race.** Bred by Stuart Janney III, the 4-year-old hurdler is by Blame. He's also a brother to graded flat winners On Leave, Quiet Harbor, Norumbega and Ironicus.



### Names of the Day (rewind edition)

**Jane Mast, fourth race Saturday.** The 3-year-old filly, owned by LBD, Manganaro and Ingordo, is by Distorted Humor out of Coming Attraction. Jane Mast was the pen name used by Mae West when she wrote the 1926 play "Sex," which earned her a jail sentence for indecency and corrupting the morals of youth.

The *Saratoga*  
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# Here&There...in Saratoga

## Worth Repeating

"They held me back in fourth grade so many times I could have taught it."

**Trainer Wayne Catalano on his early education**

"This is a par eight. This is a difficult course."

**Miles Clancy playing golf with a Wiffle ball and bat at The Special office**

"If it wasn't for a grass course, I'd be driving a truck for UPS or something."

**Trainer David Donk, cementing his turf-trainer reputation**

"Aaaaannnnndddd..."

**Announcer John Imbriale, calling Ampersand home in Sunday's second race**

"Names of the Day is a rite of passage. Nice work, Miles."

**Nolan Clancy, on the tradition of a young Clancy sussing out the creativity and filling space in the paper**

"It's not planned. When these kinds of things happen, it's divine intervention. It's something special with the horses and on the farm."

**Stonestreet Farm's John Moynihan, on watching Clairiere and Malathaat finish 1-2 in Sunday's Shuvee Stakes**

"Immediately, when she stumbled I thought Rags To Riches."

**Trainer Todd Pletcher, about Nest's trip in the Belmont Stakes**

"Mike would tell you a different number and Aron would tell you a different number."

**Bloodstock agent Jacob West about Mike Repole and Aron Wellman's buying plans for Nest**

"We think arguably we could have an Oaks and a Belmont trophy with this filly to go along with an Ashland and a CCA Oaks."

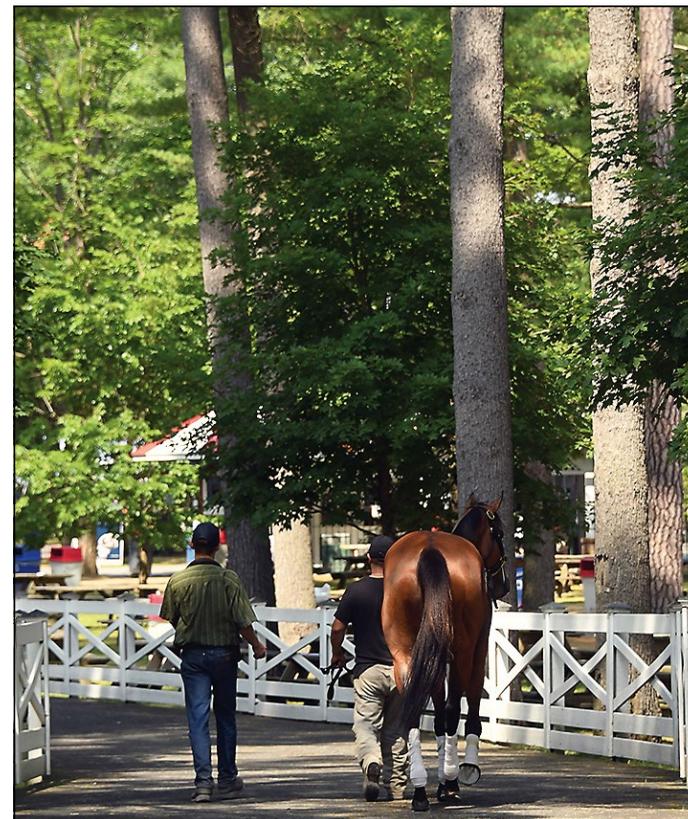
**Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners' Aron Wellman about Nest, second in the Kentucky Oaks and Belmont Stakes**

"When I worked for Tom, I'd put them on the van and send them home before he could do that."

**Trainer Todd Wyatt, former assistant to Tom Voss, on running a steeplechaser two weeks in a row**

"There's a lot of history there and it was fun for them to win a race at Saratoga. I appreciate them sending me horses. It's an honor really."

**Trainer David Donk, on getting horses to train from Stone Bridge Farm after trainer John Morrison retired**



Susie Raisher

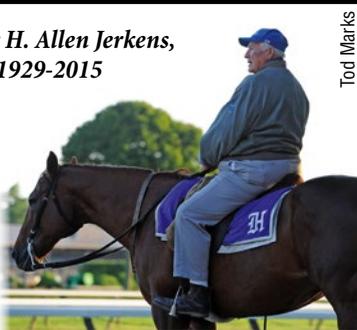
**Stepping Out.** Frank's Rockette, who runs in today's Honorable Miss, heads to the paddock for schooling last week.

## The Chief

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

Tod Marks

"Everybody says the game is no good. I say get the leaderboard and I'll guarantee the first 10 on that leaderboard think the game's great. First time I ever noticed that, a guy'd go to California, he'd do good, come back, 'how was it?' 'Jesus, man, that's the best place in the world.' Go back the next year, didn't win any races, come back, 'how was it?' 'I ain't going back to that damn place again.' Wherever you do good, that's where it's at. People say, 'How do you do it every day?' When you get older you don't think about not doing it every day."



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## Quote of the Day

"I have a feeling there will be a few Curlin mares in the paddock for the Breeders' Cup Distaff this year."  
**Trainer Steve Asmussen, after leading a Curlin exacta in Sunday's Shuvee with 4-year-old fillies Clairiere over Malathaat; a day earlier, the sire's 3-year-old daughter Nest won the Grade 1 Coaching Club American Oaks**



"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water" (John 4: 13-14)

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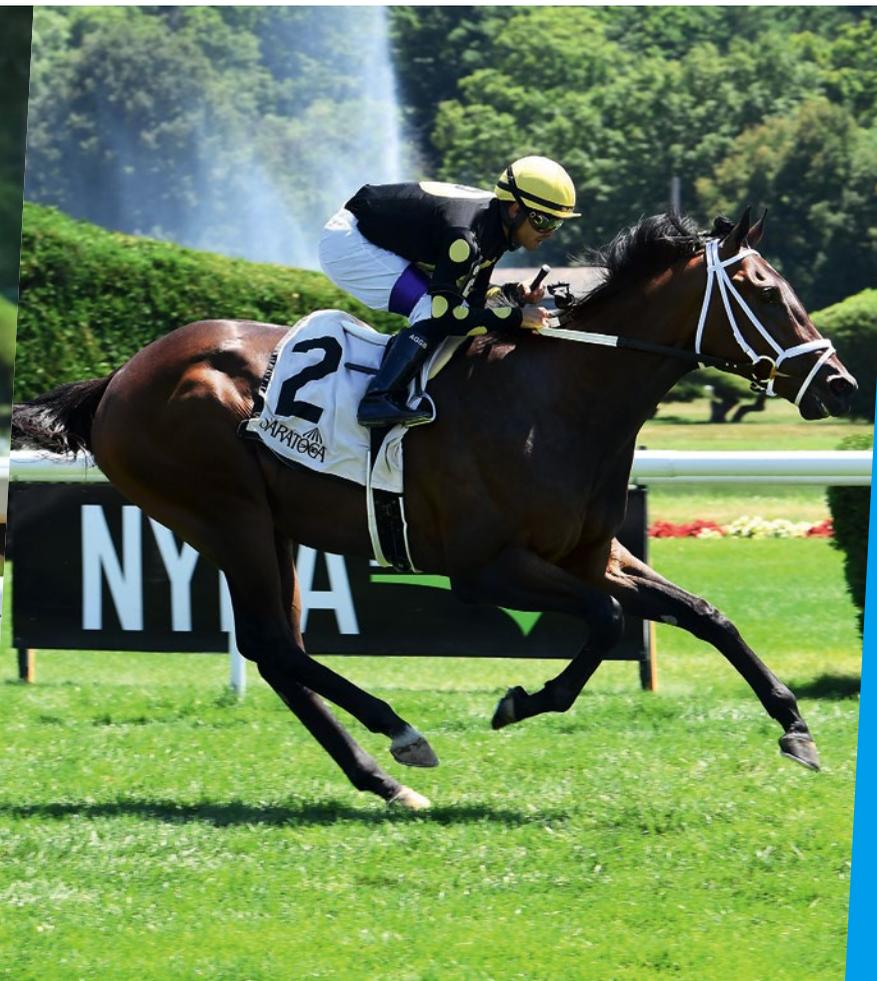
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# V GOOD

*V Mart and Really Good: the **Hard Spun** colts who both broke their maidens on debut in Saratoga MSWs last weekend. They looked really smart: because they are!*

*Just imagine* **Darley**

# STABLE TOUR

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## With David Donk

Show up at trainer David Donk's barn and ask about a Stable Tour this time of year and be prepared for a little bit of a hard time – and a laugh or two. “What, did everybody else say no?” is a common response. “I don't have many,” is another one. Then he'll ask about your kids, your wife, your business, tell a story about Alex Dominguez's Eagle Scout project, rewind the clock to his early days at the track and touch once or twice on the state of the Thoroughbred industry.

Finally, the conversation – typically conducted in the shade at an outdoor table while his wife Fay oversees a detail or two without him – Donk will tap on his iPad and check on his string. A fixture in Barn 30 just beyond the outside rail of the far turn since going to work there for Hall of Famer Woody Stephens in 1985, Donk is in the midst of a solid year fueled by 21 wins, another 20 seconds and \$1,192,993 in earnings through July 24. He won two at Saratoga July 17, and was beaten in a photo with Me 'n Sap Saturday.

The Donk barn stays busy at Saratoga, especially on the turf.

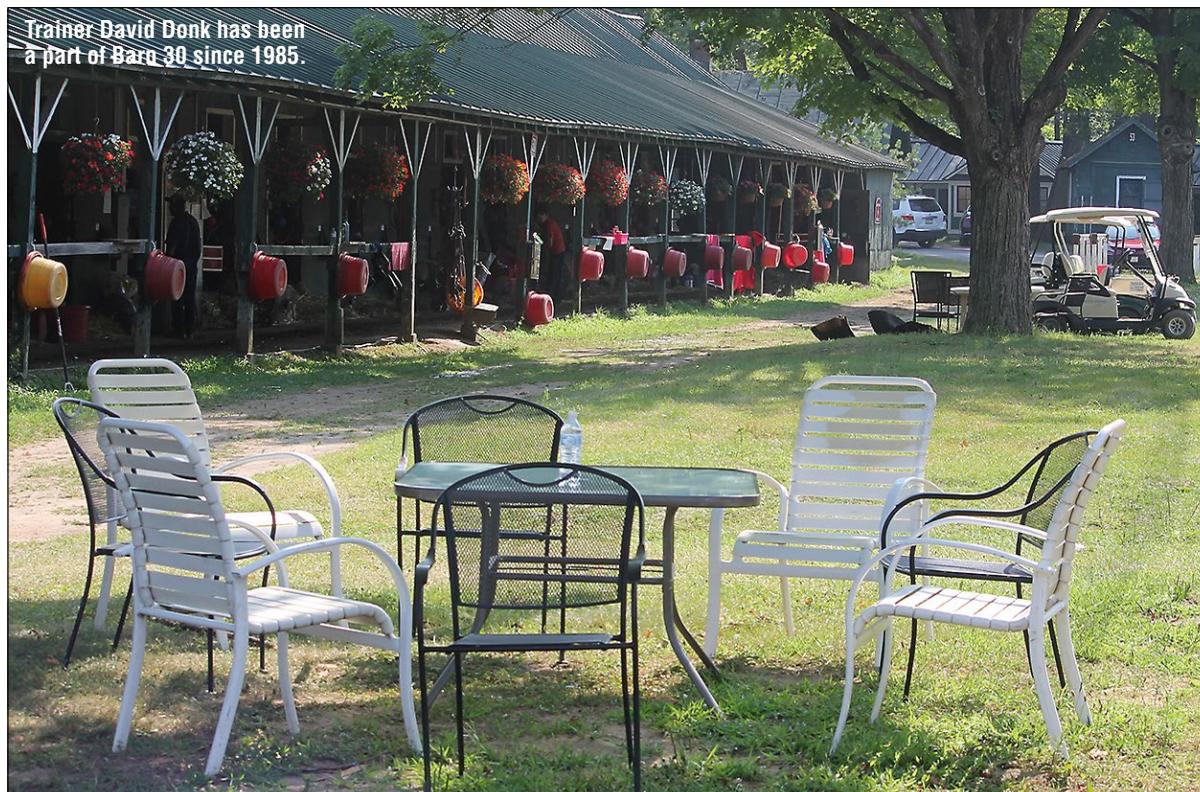
“Developing grass horses and hopefully finding some longevity with them is what we do best,” he said. “We have an eight-month turf season, they get turned out for a couple months and we try to have them ready for early April when the turf courses open up again. The purse structure is really good, so we try to take advantage of it. I like to say sometimes that I don't win enough, but seconds and thirds are a big deal for me and for my owners. It makes the wheel go around.”

Donk, who also has horses at Belmont Park, went through the Saratoga string with The Special's Joe Clancy Thursday.

**Barrel Of Quests.** Tri County Stable's 3-year-old homebred colt by Mission Impazible finished third here July 16 at 43-1. New York-bred won a maiden at Aqueduct in April while building on the legacy of his dam Barrel Of Joy (John Hertler trainer) and granddam Wide Barrel (Angel Penna Jr.) with Tri County. “That was a nice race, kind of back to where he was when he broke his maiden. He's a two-turn horse, and pretty useful. Like all of mine that have run early, hopefully they get to run at least once more at the meet.”

**Big Package.** Owned by Donk and Sean Carney, 5-year-old New York-bred finished second as the favorite in an open-company optional claimer going 5 ½ furlongs here July 21. In 18 starts, the Big Brown gelding has won five, with six other

Trainer David Donk has been a part of Barn 30 since 1985.



Miles Clancy

top-three finishes, while amassing \$333,846. Two wins and two seconds in four Saratoga starts – not bad for a \$20,000 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic yearling purchase. “He's a cool state-bred sprinter. He won a race off a long layoff here a couple years ago (at 23-1) and last year he won an allowance race on Travers Day. He likes the grass course here. You see horses for courses more here, dirt or turf. Dominick Schettino's horse that won here the other day [Danzigwiththestars], he won two here last year. Sometimes it's configuration. That's the challenge between Belmont and Saratoga. You're five-eighths or a two-turn mile here, where there you can be six- or seven-eighths one turn, even a mile on the Widener is basically one turn. Is it configuration, the turf itself, time of year? Probably all of them. We bought him as a yearling and thought we could have fun. We love him. He's been a lot of fun.”

**Fingal's Cave.** A, it's a sea cave on the island of Staffa off the coast of Scotland and named after the hero in an epic poem by James McPherson. B, it's a Pink Floyd song. C, she can run. Daughter of Carpe Diem, bred in New York by Chester and Mary Broman, races for Alistair Fyfe's Alifye Racing. She won her debut in May by 8 ½ lengths and repeated with a 9-length ripper in late June, both on the dirt against state-breds. Picked out by bloodstock agent Marette Farrell, 3-year-old filly is a granddaughter of the Bromans' star mare Seeking The Ante (a graded-stakes winner and stakes producer). Thursday morning, she was lazing in the breeze of a fan at the front of her stall and eyeballing visitors while waiting to breeze 6 furlongs in 1:13.40 under Jose Ortiz. Her shoulder will get your attention. The rest of her will keep it. “There's an allowance race next week if it fills. She's really classy. We liked her before she ran

the first time, just does everything well. She hasn't really beat much yet, but we'll come back in an allowance race and in a perfect scenario the Fleet Indian is the day before the Travers on New York-bred day (Aug. 26). It's restricted for 3-year-old fillies. That would be the right spot as long as things continue to progress.”

**Gustiamo.** Bob Spiegel's homebred 2-year-old daughter of Blame breezed seven times at Belmont and three more at Saratoga while eyeing her debut. Dam Steamy was unraced, but her dam Ruff won four (including the Grade 3 Miss Grillo) for Spiegel and Donk. Vision Perfect, a 2012 foal out of Steamy, earned \$802,154 for Donk and (after a claim) suspended trainer Jason Servis. “She wants grass and is not too far from running. She maybe would go long, but I'll probably sprint her once first. All of our 2-year-olds, we're looking toward the future, but she's got a little quality.”

**Marpin.** Another Spiegel homebred, the Super Saver filly is out of Radiant Cut (a half-sister to Steamy). Has breezed twice from the gate, plus a half-mile in :50.28 here Friday. “I think she's OK, too. She'll want to sprint on the grass. Those two fillies are not too far away. They need a couple good works. I only bring 2-year-olds to Saratoga that are going to be close to running. The rest stay at Belmont so they have plenty of company to breeze with. If they're here, it just means they're a little ahead of the class. Obviously, if they run here, it's a different animal. We're not going to see anything like the horses we see here at Aqueduct or Belmont.”

Continued On Page 7

# Stable Tour —

Continued from page 6

**Lady Jasmine.** Another 2-year-old filly, this one by Cairo Prince and owned by John Behrendt, Charles Marquis, Suzy Haslup, Sean Carney, Bill Punk and Phil DiLeo. Donk spent \$45,000 at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic's yearling sale and kept a piece for himself too. New York-bred is on the also-eligible list for Thursday's second. "She's a little ahead of the class of my New York-breds and has trained well for a partnership of a lot of longtime clients."

**Lady Thornhill.** Stone Bridge Farm's home-bred 4-year-old filly started a double for Donk July 17 with a win in the seventh, a first-level turf allowance for New York-breds. Last of 10 early, she and Jose Ortiz passed everybody to win by a head at 16-1. The daughter of Stormy Atlantic finished second here last summer, then won at Aqueduct in December. "She got up in time. Great judgment by Jose. She was a lot farther behind early than I thought she'd be, but I left it up to him. She ran once early in the year, got really sick the next day. We had eight horses in the barn get really sick. It was a tough virus and they really, really had a hard time getting over it. It took two to three weeks before they could think about returning to training. She trained well, I was just hoping she would come back and run well."

**Our Jessica.** The second half of the double won three races after Lady Thornhill, leaving the maiden ranks in her eighth try after three seconds for Sue and Gary Lundy. Daughter of Laoban dipped to the \$40,000 claiming level and won by 4 1/4 lengths. "She's a useful New York-bred filly who kind of hit the right level. Gary and Sue are local breeders, and Sue was here so it was fun for her to win. It's nice to win, but I get as much enjoyment watching clients and friends get some enjoyment out of it. I love to see that. I've done it a long time. I still love it and enjoy it, but it's fun to watch other people."

**Out Of Sight.** Four-year-old Not This Time filly won back-to-back races in May for James Iselin and Mark Gilman after opening 2022 with a second. New York-bred closed Belmont with a third in May and was fourth going a mile on the turf as the favorite here July 20. "She didn't get the best trip, but that happens. I always say on the grass you've got to get the trip, but it doesn't always work out that way. She was a little farther back than she needed to be. She doesn't have the biggest turn of foot, but she was fourth and hopefully she gets to run here once or twice more."

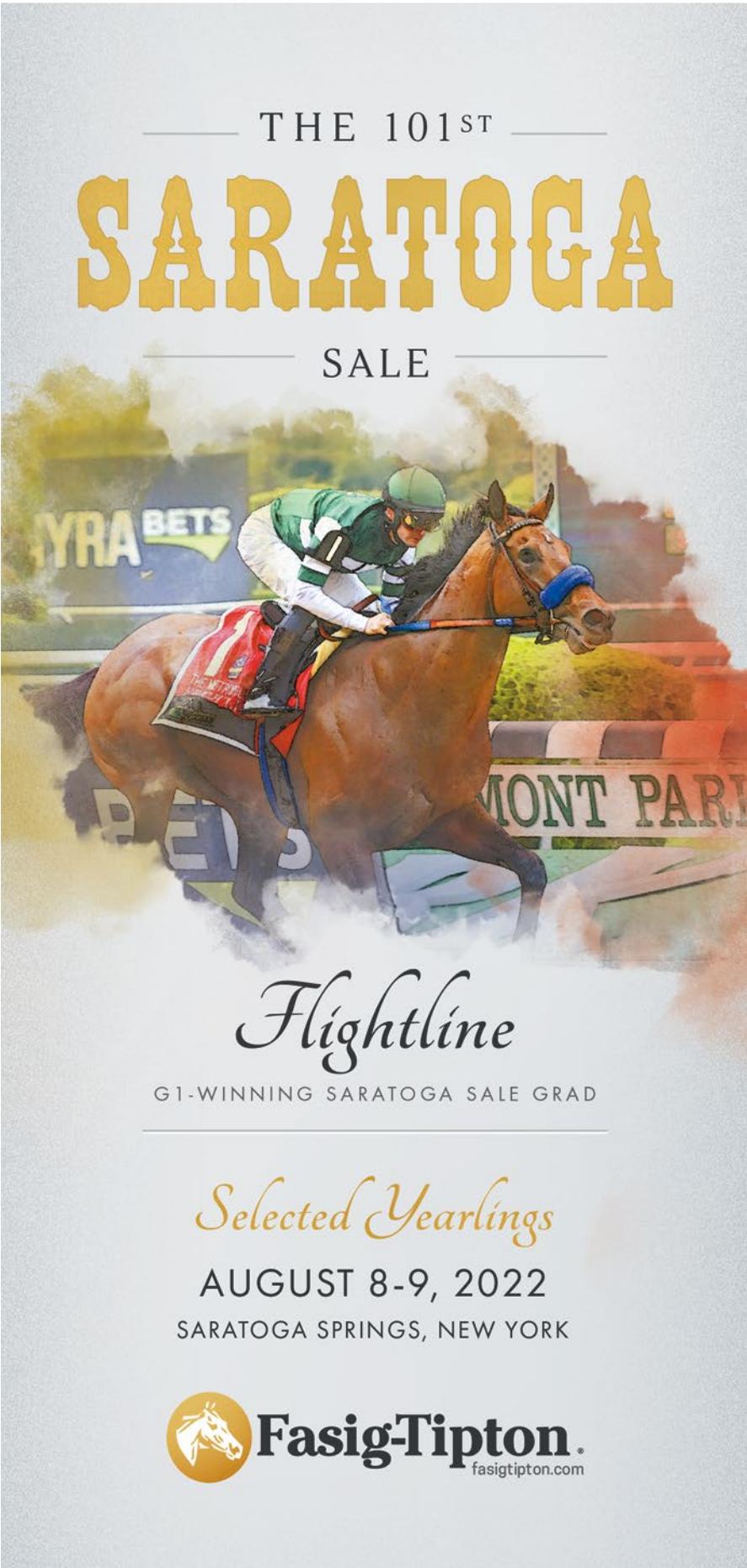
**Succulent.** One of several Donk trains for former trainer Phil Gleaves (who retired after Saratoga last year) and partners Steve Crist and Ken deRegt, 3-year-old Candy Ride filly has lost all seven starts — three for Gleaves last year — but might be finding her stride after

a fourth on the turf here July 16. "I've been waiting to run her long. She finished up well and that was a pretty decent field of horses. Todd [Pletcher] won it and there were a few others in there that look OK too."

**Thin White Duke.** Another in the barn via Gleaves, who bred the 4-year-old Dominus gelding and owns with Crist, deRegt and Bryan Hilliard, New York-bred has won three and earned \$285,001. He's entered in Thursday's seventh, an open allowance going 5 1/2 furlongs on the turf. Won two stakes for Gleaves as a 2-year-old, the Funny Cide here and the Aspirant at Finger Lakes. Won his second start of 2022 at 33-1 in April, but has lost his last three against tougher. "He has run pretty competitive in open allowance races, and he'll come back in a sprint here next week."

**Yes And Yes.** Six-year-old half-brother to Thin White Duke has been part of a preview or two, and a Stable Tour with Gleaves who enjoys explaining the name. The three-word answer came from a Domino's Pizza staffer when Gleaves and his wife Amy called at 2 in the morning after their wedding in 2011. Gleaves hadn't even asked a question, but the guy answered the phone with "Yes and yes." Gleaves laughed. "Anybody who calls at this time of night has two questions: 'Are you open?' and 'Do you deliver?'" The Sidney's Candy gelding, owned by Gleaves, Joe Straus and Hugh Fitzsimons, won three at Belmont in May and June. Ousted Big Package by a head June 23. Last of 11 for jockey John Velazquez in the Forbidden Apple here July 15. "He loves, just loves Belmont Park. Phil told me. He loves that three-quarters, seven-eighths on the grass. We knew coming up here, where he's run fair, we were in a jam. He's not eligible for much and do you run him 5 1/2 furlongs or a two-turn mile? We ran him a two-turn mile. He got really shook up. The crowd and stuff shook him. Johnny said he was too jacked up in the post parade, never settled and then never settled in the race. Maybe the two-turn mile is too far, but if he doesn't settle it's definitely too far. We might try to sprint him once here and get back to New York. We'll be able to run 6 (furlongs) on the grass. That should suit him, and there's no crowd."

**Water's Edge.** The big horse. Four-year-old Candy Ride gelding won twice (with three seconds) last year and rolled into 2022 with two wins and a second — including a Haynesfield Stakes score at Aqueduct in March — before catching whatever sickness affected much of the barn and going on the shelf for owners/breeders John and Sandy Crowe of Empire Equines. "He got really sick and he just struggled getting back. Then his feet were bothering him some, so we turned him out at Patty Hogan's (equine clinic/farm in New Jersey). He's on vacation, and we won't get in a hurry. It's unfortunate for John and Sandy not to have him here, but he's been a cool horse. He ran eight times — four wins, four seconds, won a stake, we're not complaining."



THE 101<sup>ST</sup>

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# Beautiful Girl

## Bella Sofia, connections bid for another major sprint prize

BY TIMOTHY LITTAU  
AND SPENCER RIPCHIK

Bella Sofia enters Wednesday's Grade 2 Honorable Miss Handicap with wins in five of her last six starts – five graded stakes – with the lone loss a fourth in the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint in November. The 4-year-old filly has won four of the major distaff sprints in New York and taken trainer Rudy Rodriguez and her connections on a ride they're not ready to jump off.

"I don't think you've seen her best yet," co-owner Libby Imperio said this week before watching the filly breeze on the main track at Saratoga Race Course.

Michael and Libby Imperio – part of Bella Sofia's ownership group with

### HONORABLE MISS STAKES PREVIEW

Medallion Racing, Sofia Soares, Vincent Scuderi and Parkland Thoroughbreds – started their relationship with Rodriguez in 2009.

"We were with Rudy when he was a jockey," Libby Imperio said. "We had a horse named General Maximus and he rode for us first time out. Afterward when we were going to (a race) in Florida, he decided he was going to go out on his own and be a trainer. And we actually gave Rudy half the purse of the first win and that helped him go out on his own.

"As soon as he went on his own we shipped everybody over to him."

Rodriguez, about to oversee the



NYRA Photo

Bella Sofia works at Saratoga July 16.

daughter of Awesome Patriot's half-mile work in :50.63 Sunday, remembered it well.

"Good people," he said.

Twelve years later Bella Sofia came along and won her debut. Three races later she won the Grade 1 Test

Stakes at Saratoga and ended the year with four wins and a second from six starts. Now 4, Bella Sofia is 2-for-2 this season with wins in the Grade 3 Vagrancy Handicap and Grade 2

**Continued On Page 10**



SARATOGA

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FIRST YEARLINGS AT F-T SARATOGA.

 SPENDTHRIFT

# Honorable Miss —

## ■ Continued from page 8

Bed o' Roses Stakes, both at Belmont Park, heading into the \$200,000 Honorable Miss.

Bella Sofia meets three opponents in the 6-furlong Honorable Miss — Grade 1 winner Kimari, multiple graded stakes winner Frank's Rockette and Ohio shipper Amadevil, who also seeks her third straight win.

"They are tough horses," Rodriguez said. "It's a stakes race and they don't give you nothing. You can't take anything for granted. You still have to run your race. We just hope that she's very good and don't worry about the rest of the group; just worry about my own horse."

Luis Saez, aboard for all but one of Bella Sofia's eight starts, takes the return call on the 1-2 morning-line favorite. Bella Sofia is 2-for-3 at 6 furlongs and Rodriguez is looking forward to her next test.

"I think that she can put herself together (and win) at either (6 or 7 furlongs)," he said. "She has a lot of speed. ...She uses the break very

good. Luis knows her very well. We have to bring her in the best way possible. We're just enjoying the ride."

Bella Sofia has already squared off against Frank's Rockette, beating her by a nose in the 6 1/2-furlong Vagrancy May 14 at Belmont. Owned by Frank Fletcher Racing and trained by Bill Mott, Frank's Rockette won the Grade 2 Prioress at Saratoga in 2020 after finishing second in the Grade 2 Adirondack and Grade 1 Spinaway here in 2019.

Second in two starts this year, Frank's Rockette breaks from the rail under Flavien Prat and is 2-1 on the morning line.

Kimari, the 4-1 third choice for trainer Wesley Ward and jockey Joel Rosario, won the 2020 Purple Martin Stakes at Oaklawn Park by 1 3/4 lengths over Frank's Rockette.

Owned by Westerberg Limited, Mrs. John Magnier, Jonathan Poulin, Derrick Smith and Michael Tabor, the daughter of Munnings won an allowance-optional at Gulfstream in early March. She exits back-to-back Grade 1 starts in the Madison Stakes (third) at Keeneland and Derby City Distaff (fifth) at Churchill Downs.

Amadevil ships in from Thistle-

down for owner and trainer David Wolochuk. The 4-year-old Ohio-bred daughter of Dominus comes off a 5 3/4-length win in the Best of Ohio Diana Stakes at Belterra Park June 3.

The Honorable Miss goes as the fourth race on Wednesday's card with post time at 2:49 p.m.

## Thursday's Birdstone offers Saratoga stamina test

Thursday's feature, the \$200,000 Birdstone going 1 3/4 miles on the main track, also goes early on the card as the fifth at 3:21 p.m.

A field of five entered, including defending champ Lone Rock and Grade 2 Brooklyn winner Fearless.

Fearless, the 4-5 favorite for trainer Todd Pletcher and jockey Luis Saez, won the 1 1/2-mile Brooklyn by 2 3/4 lengths on the June 11 Belmont Stakes Day undercard.

The 6-year-old son of Ghostzapper finished second in back-to-back starts going 1 mile in stakes at Gulfstream Park before returning to two-turn races that resulted in wins in the Grade 3 Ghostzapper and Brooklyn and a second in the Grade 2 Oaklawn Handicap.



Tod Marks

**Distance specialist Lone Rock tries to win the Birdstone again Thursday.**

Lone Rock finished third, beaten 3 lengths as the 7-5 favorite, in the Brooklyn. Listed at 6-5 on the morning line, the 7-year-old Majestic Warrior gelding gets a new jockey in Irad Ortiz Jr. Lone Rock won last year's Birdstone by 4 lengths to cap a four-race win streak that also included an 11 1/4-length tally in the Brooklyn.

Original Intent, Portos and Shooger Ray Too complete the Brooklyn field.



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*Photo accreditation: Brenda Black, Tod Marks & Wade Payne.*

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# Inspired Plan

## McPeek takes aim at restricted stakes with Creative Minister

BY TIMOTHY LITTAU

Creative Minister may have been slow to start his career, but he is the one to beat in Friday's \$135,000 Curlin Stakes at Saratoga Race Course.

"He was not all there as a 2-year-old," said Ken McPeek, who trains Creative Minister. "He was a horse that had some little baby problems. He was growing fast and he just really wasn't ready at 2. We had to put him on the shelf a couple times as a 2-year-old before we thought he was ready go. As an early 3-year-old at Gulfstream he really started to come around and getting stronger, and I was really impressed in his work early in the year."

Second on debut March 5 at Gulfstream, the Creative Cause colt broke

### CURLIN STAKES PREVIEW

his maiden second time out April 9 at Keeneland. He went to Churchill Downs from there and won an allowance race on the Kentucky Derby Day undercard. That gave McPeek and owners Fern Circle Stables, Back Racing and Magdalena Racing the confidence to run in the Preakness Stakes, where he finished third, before a fifth in the Belmont Stakes.

"This is a good next spot for him," McPeek said of the 9-furlong Curlin, restricted to 3-year-olds which have not won a graded stakes at a mile or over in 2022. "He's run well at a high level. His race in the Preakness, I thought was excellent. He didn't

**Continued On Page 14**



Belmont Stakes starter Creative Minister looks to leap back into the 3-year-old picture in Friday's Curlin Stakes. Tod Marks

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## Curlin —

### ■ Continued from page 12

handle the track too well at Belmont, kind of struggled over the deep surface.

“He’s done good up here and this is kind of a more conservative spot for him, dropping him from a couple Grade 1s to a listed race, it should be ideal.”

While this is the right spot for Creative Minister for now, McPeek has bigger plans for the gray 3-year-old colt if he rises to the challenge.

“He needs to be able to beat a group like this to justify that he’s a Travers horse, and we’re hopeful that the Curlin is a nice steppingstone to the Travers,” he said. “We’re fortunate that he’s eligible, otherwise he would have had to run in the Jim Dandy.”

Creative Minister will have Dylan Davis aboard for the first time from post seven, and he may have a stablemate, Wolfe County, to his inside depending on how other races are drawn.

“He’s going to probably be re-entered in an allowance race the next day,” McPeek said. “If that race goes, then he’s likely to scratch. If it doesn’t go, he’ll run in the Curlin.”

The Joseph Murphy-owned Wolfe County broke his maiden going 1 3/16 miles last time out at Churchill, the eighth start of his career. The June 24 win was Wolfe County’s second start for McPeek after he was transferred from Brendan Walsh.

“This is a horse we didn’t have as a 2-year-old,” McPeek said. “But he’s done well in his two runs. He needed a little confidence booster when he ran second first time for us. Then he came back and was real impressive in his maiden win.”

McPeek has no distance concerns for the son of Medaglia d’Oro and the Vindication mare Dawn Raid, though he’s holding off speculating about a possible start in the Travers Aug. 27.

“He’s a half-brother to Exaggerator, so he very well could be a stallion prospect,” McPeek said. “At

some point in time, he’s got to show that he’s good enough to compete at that level. His speed numbers haven’t shown it yet, but then again he’s just a 3-year-old. He’s a horse that’s going in the right direction.

“Maybe. We’ll just have to see (about the Travers). I haven’t thought beyond the 29th and 30th with him.”

Julien Leparoux, aboard for the maiden breaker, has the call.

Even if the Saturday allowance falls through, McPeek thinks he has two contenders for the Curlin.

“Two solid horses,” McPeek said. “Creative Minister, looks like a lot easier spot than he’s been running and the other colt, it’s a step up but I think he’s up for it.”

Creative Minister is not the only Belmont Stakes runner in the field as the Mark Casse-trained Golden Glider makes his comeback after finishing eighth in the June 11 classic. He finished second in the Peter Pan Stakes May 14 at Belmont prior to that effort. The son of Ghostzapper will break from post five with Tyler Gaffalione in the irons.

Another Peter Pan runner entered in the Curlin is Western River, who finished fourth behind stablemate We The People. Trained by Rodolphe Brisset, the son of Tapit stretched out to win a 1 1/2-mile allowance on the dirt June 18 at Churchill.

Trainer Bill Mott sends out Gilded Age, 13th in the Grade 2 UAE Derby in March. The son of Medaglia d’Oro returned from more than three months off to win a 9-furlong allowance-optional July 4 at Churchill.

Todd Pletcher sends out two runners in Make It Big, off since finishing 10th for Saffie Joseph in the Grade 3 Sam F. Davis in February at Tampa Bay Downs; and Be Better, a distant third to Jack Christopher in his debut last summer at Saratoga and winner of back-to-back starts in June and July at Monmouth Park. Chad Brown entered Juddmonte’s Artorius, a maiden winner in his second attempt at Belmont June 5. A. P.’s Secret, a Cupid colt conditioned by Saffie Joseph Jr. who finished third in the Texas Derby May 30 at Lone Star Park, completes the field.



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# SARATOGA ENTRIES

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Wednesday, July 27.

## 1ST (1:05PM). \$70,000, ALW, 4 YO'S & UP, 2 1/16M (HURDLE)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

1	1	Ancient Times	M. Watts	A. Kingsley, Jr.	4-1
2	2	Proven Innocent	J. Bargary	J. Fisher	5-1
3	3	Bee Major	H. Beswick	L. Young	6-1
4	4	Grey Giant	T. Davies	J. Davies	12-1
5	5	Spring Heeled Jim (IRE)	B. Dalton	K. Brion	8-1
6	6	Freddy Flintshire	P. Hendriks	K. Brion	6-1
7	7	State of Affair	T. Garner	T. Wyatt	5-1
8	8	Welshman	G. Watters	J. Fisher	9-2
9	9	Take Profit	S. McDermott	W. Dowling	10-1

## 2ND (1:39PM). \$32,000, CLM \$14,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 6F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double

1	1	Knot Anymore	M. Franco	B. Russell	1-1
2	2	London Gold	J. Samuel	R. Persaud	15-1
3	3	Bastet	A. Castillo	G. Rodriguez	8-1
4	4	Daily Briefing	J. Gomez	J. Terranova, II	9-2
5	5	Bells On Her Toes	D. Davis	C. Baker	3-1
6	6	Big Tony's Girl	K. Carmouche	J. Ryerson	5-1

## 3RD (2:13PM). \$88,000, MSW, 2 YO, 5 1/2F (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double, Quinella

1	1	Twenty Six Black	J. Ortiz	H. De Paz	4-1
2	2	Disarmed	J. Rosario	C. Clement	8-5
3	3	General Banker	J. Gomez	J. Ferraro	12-1
4	4	Disco Demolition	J. Alvarado	R. Lugovich	10-1
5	5	Noble Huntsman	J. Castellano	M. Friedman	5-1
6	6	Weyhill Farm Rd.	D. Davis	C. Clement	7-2
7	7	Vince the Prince	K. Carmouche	M. Nevin	6-1
8	8	AE-MTO.Shortsinthewinter	K. Carmouche	M. Hennig	5-1

## 4TH (2:49PM). \$200,000, STK - THE HONORABLE MISS, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 6F

Exacta, Pic 3, Daily Double

1	1	Frank's Rockette	F. Prat	W. Mott	2-1
2	2	Bella Sofia	L. Saez	R. Rodriguez	1-2
3	3	Amadevil	J. Ortiz	D. Wolochuk	12-1
4	4	Kimari	J. Rosario	W. Ward	4-1

## 5TH (3:21PM). \$115,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, 1 1/2M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Quinella, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 6, Daily Double

1	1	Neotropic	J. Ortiz	J. Toner	8-1
2	2	Forwardly	F. Prat	C. Brown	5-2
3	3	Jarreau	I. Ortiz, Jr.	M. Maker	7-2
4	4	Curbstone	T. Gaffalione	B. Walsh	6-1
5	5	Dante's Fire	L. Saez	M. Maker	5-1
6	6	Mooney Love (IRE)	J. Rosario	W. Mott	2-1
7	7	AE-MTO.Hometown	Rider TBA	R. Atras	6-5

## 6TH (3:55PM). \$88,000, MSW, 2 YO, F, 6F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double

1	3	Gambling Girl	I. Ortiz, Jr.	T. Pletcher	7-2
1a	AE	Book and Cancel	L. Saez	R. Rodriguez	7-2
2	1	Recognize	J. Lezcano	W. Mott	9-2
3	2	Berning Honor	D. Davis	D. Schettino	15-1
4	4	Danseur d'Oro	K. Carmouche	W. Morey	4-1
5	5	Silver Skillet	J. Rosario	C. Clement	6-1
6	6	Disruption	M. Franco	C. Brown	5-1
7	7	Miracle	F. Prat	R. Brisset	8-1
8	8	August Bloom	T. Gaffalione	J. Sharp	20-1
9	9	Luna Loca	J. Velazquez	R. Schosberg	20-1
10	10	Alice Kramden	L. Saez	J. Abreu	10-1
11	AE	Banterra	J. Ortiz	S. Asmussen	5-1
12	AE	Little Linzee	J. Castellano	D. Schettino	20-1

## 7TH (4:29PM). \$72,000, CLM \$40,000, 3 YO, F, 1 1/16M (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double

1	1	Hatari	I. Ortiz, Jr.	M. Maker	9-5
2	2	Spooky Road	L. Saez	M. Maker	6-1
3	3	Vintage Girl	J. Ortiz	J. Ryerson	9-2
4	4	Fish Mooney	T. Gaffalione	M. Casse	4-1
5	5	Mirth 'n Merriment	J. Alvarado	T. Hamm	2-1
6	6	Miss Invincible	M. Luzzi	A. Chichakly	15-1

## 8TH (5:05PM). \$35,000, CLM \$16,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 6F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

1	1	Saratoga Commando	J. Gomez	R. Rodriguez	10-1
2	2	Keen Dancer	E. Cancel	R. Persaud	30-1
3	3	Lady Yellen	I. Ortiz, Jr.	L. Rice	10-1
4	4	Handle the Truth	H. Harkie	R. Metivier	30-1
5	5	Preposterous	T. Gaffalione	S. Joseph, Jr	4-1
6	6	Majestic Spirit	J. Velazquez	R. Schosberg	15-1
7	7	Anotherworldinside	M. Franco	M. Trombetta	8-1
8	8	O'Gotten Girl	L. Saez	T. Pletcher	1-1
9	9	Unlock	D. Davis	T. Albertrani	6-1

## 9TH (5:39PM). \$125,000, AOC \$80,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 1M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double

1	1	High Opinion	F. Prat	A. Dutrow	7-5
2	2	Wholebodemeister	H. Diaz, Jr.	M. Hemingway	30-1
3	3	Phantom Vision	T. Gaffalione	M. Maker	12-1
4	4	Amalfi Princess	L. Saez	M. Maker	4-1
5	5	Messidor (IRE)	J. Castellano	C. Clement	2-1
6	6	Tass	J. Lezcano	C. Martin	12-1
7	7	Evvie Jets	E. Cancel	M. Kantarmaci	6-1
8	8	AE-MTO.Misty Veil	Rider TBA	T. Amoss	8-5
9	9	AE-MTO.W W Fitzy	R. Santana, Jr.	R. Diodoro	6-5

## 10TH (6:13PM). \$105,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 6F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

1	1	Ms. Solveig	F. Prat	P. Antonacci	15-1
2	2	Adam's Angel	L. Saez	C. McGaughey III	7-2
3	3	Liquidity Provider	I. Ortiz, Jr.	C. Brown	4-1
4	4	Course Runner	J. Lezcano	G. Arnold, II	6-1
5	5	Backyard Money	J. Ortiz	D. Lukas	12-1
6	6	Alessia	E. Cancel	N. Zito	8-1
7	7	Glitter Up	D. Davis	T. Hills	10-1
8	8	Dover Dreams	T. Gaffalione	B. Walsh	12-1
9	9	Mattapoisett	J. Castellano	W. Mott	12-1
10	10	She's Awesome	R. Santana, Jr.	S. Klesaris	20-1
11	11	Aquila Moon	J. Alvarado	D. Stewart	5-1

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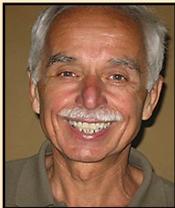
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2	Knot Anymore Daily Briefing Big Tony's Girl	Daily Briefing Bells On Her Toes Big Tony's Girl	Knot Anymore Daily Briefing Bells On Her Toes	Knot Anymore Bells On Her Toes Big Tony's Girl	Knot Anymore Bells On Her Toes Daily Briefing
3	Disarmed Twenty Six Black Weyhill Farm Rd.	Disarmed Twenty Six Black Disco Demolition	Weyhill Farm Rd. Shortsinthewinter Disco Demolition	Disarmed Weyhill Farm Rd. Twenty Six Black	Disarmed Vince The Prince Twenty Six Black
4	Bella Sofia Frank's Rockette Amadevil	Bella Sofia Frank's Rockette Kimari	Kimari Bella Sofia Frank's Rockette	Bella Sophia Frank's Rockette Kimari	Bella Sofia Frank's Rockette Amadevil
5	Hometown Mooney Love Forwardly	Mooney Love Forwardly Neotropic	Hometown Forwardly Mooney Love	Mooney Love Forwardly Dante's Fire	Mooney Love Curbstone Forwardly
6	Banterra Gambling Girl Disruption	Recognize Danseur d'Oro Alice Kramden	Danseur d'Oro August Bloom Silver Skillet	Danseur d'Oro Disruption Silver Skillet	Luna Loca Gambling Girl Disruption
7	Hatari Mirth 'n Merriment Spooky Road	Hatari Fish Mooney Mirth 'n Merriment	Vintage Girl Hatari Fish Mooney	Spooky Road Vintage Girl Mirth 'n Merriment	Spooky Road Vintage Girl Hatari
8	O'Gotten Girl Unlock Preposterous	O'Gotten Girl Lady Yellen Majestic Spirit	O'Gotten Girl Anotherworldinside Majestic Spirit	Preposterous O'Gotten Girl Unlock	Lady Yellen Majestic Spirit Preposterous
9	W W Fitzy High Opinion Messidor	High Opinion Messidor Amalfi Princess	Messidor W W Fitzy Evvie Jets	High Opinion Messidor Amalfi Princess	Amalfi Princess Messidor High Opinion
10	Adam's Angel Liquidity Provider Alessia	Adam's Angel Liquidity Provider Aquila Moon	Liquidity Provider Adam's Angel Alessia	Course Runner Adam's Angel Liquidity Provider	Adam's Angel Course Runner Liquidity Provider
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# Flying Filly

Clairiere ousts Malathaat as Stonestreet-breds go 1-2

BY JOE CLANCY

After winning a Grade 1 and earning more than \$1 million as a 3-year-old last year, Clairiere didn't have all that much room to upgrade her racetrack performance. But here she is, carrying a 3-for-4 (with a second) record midway through her 4-year-old season after winning the Grade 2 Shuvee Stakes at Saratoga Race Course Sunday.

"My favorite thing to see and say, is incremental improvement, you know?" said trainer Steve Asmussen while watching the replay on the first floor of the clubhouse. "She started out fabulous and has consistently gotten a little better. Incremental improvement. We look for it all the time."

The Hall of Fame trainer and owner/breeder Stonestreet Stable found it with the bay daughter of

Continued On Page 20



Dave Harmon

Clairiere strides toward the finish of Sunday's Shuvee Stakes.

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## ARLINGTON MILLION, GRADE I

\$1,000,000  
Runs Sat., August 13  
Three Year Olds and Upward  
1 1/8 MILES, TURF

## PUCKER UP, GRADE III

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Fillies Three Year Olds  
1 1/8 MILES, TURF



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## Shuvee —

### Continued from page 18

Curlin, who won the \$200,000 Shuvee by 1 1/2 lengths over rival Malathaath after 1 1/8 miles in 1:51.96. Crazy Beautiful was third with Exotic West completing the four-horse field.

The Shuvee may have lacked numbers, but more than made up for it with Clairiere and Malathaath – foaled 10 days apart at Stonestreet in Lexington, Ky., – meeting for the sixth time on the racetrack. Malathaath, sold by Stonestreet for \$1.05 million at Keeneland September in 2019, won the first four last year by capturing the Kentucky Oaks and Alabama and finishing one spot ahead of Clairiere in the Coaching Club American Oaks and Breeders’ Cup Distaff.

The 2022 scorecard reads 2-0 Clairiere. She edged Malathaath by a head in the Grade 1 Ogden Phipps at Belmont Park last month, closing from well off a fast pace to get up in the final yards. She repeated the effort Sunday, in different fashion as the small field produced a race with all the tactics of an Olympic Mile.

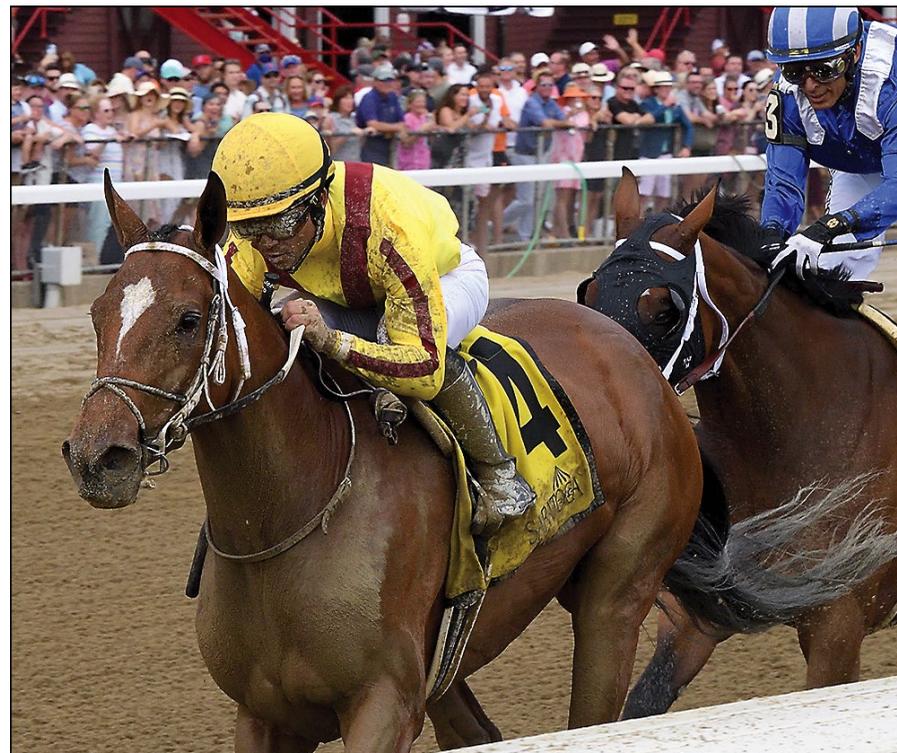
Clairiere broke on top from post four, but let everyone else make a play for the lead and angled to the rail af-

ter a furlong. Exotic West found the front, and took the field through an opening quarter-mile in :24.75. To her outside, a length down, stalked Crazy Beautiful. Favored at 3-5, Malathaath and John Velazquez sat third, with the 3-2 Clairiere and Joel Rosario to her inside under a long hold.

“Sometimes you have to play the race how it goes,” said Rosario. “I got to the inside and she looked like she liked it and I just decided to stay there and say, ‘Hopefully something opens up.’ She wanted to be there. If I had to push her to stay there, if she wasn’t comfortable there, I wouldn’t stay there.”

Crazy Beautiful pulled alongside the leader after a half-mile in :49.45, with the favorites side-by-side in identical spots just behind. The spacing got even tighter as Clairiere stuck her head just outside of Exotic West’s hip. Velazquez nudged Malathaath for a little more, and she took third while forcing Clairiere to idle. Off the bit, but keeping pace, Clairiere went around a tiring Exotic West after 6 furlongs in 1:13.91 and started to push her way outside Crazy Beautiful coming to the quarter pole. Velazquez made sure that didn’t happen, but Clairiere simply altered course to the

Continued On Page 22



Clairiere (and a muddy-goggled Joel Rosario) defeat Malathaath in Sunday’s Shuvee.

Chelsea Durand/NYRA Photo

Jim McKay  
**Maryland Million Day** 2022

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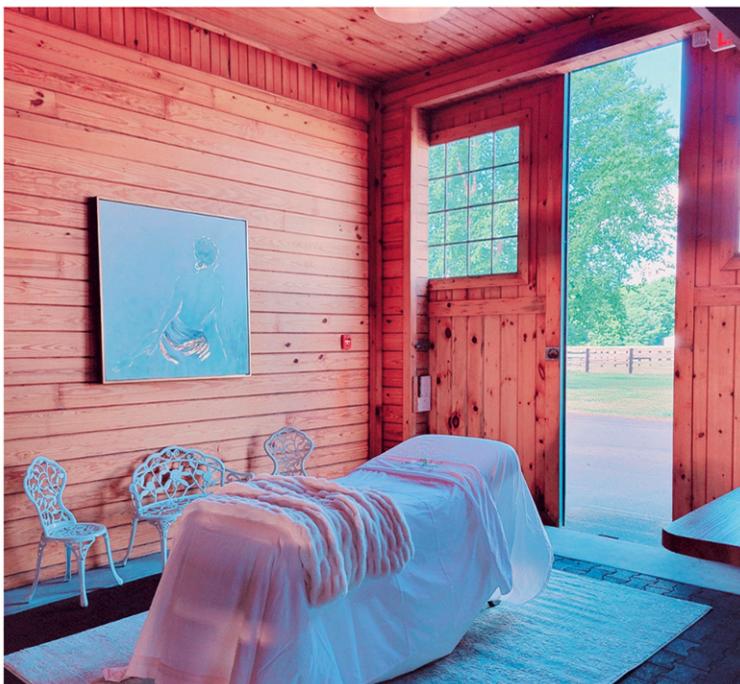
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## Shuvee —

■ Continued from page 20

inside, found room and accelerated. Crazy Beautiful fought back, but yielded as Malathaat tried to cut into the margin from the outside. She got to Clairiere's hip, but no more as the winner pulled away late.

"It's different if you are inside without a lot of horse, then you are in trouble," Rosario said. "I knew I had the two horses in front of me. Johnny was on the horse to beat and when I saw him start to ride his filly a little bit, maybe, I felt pretty good."

Asmussen admitted to sweating through those early stages, then came around.

"Forty-nine-and-two, you know me, I'm concerned about everything," he said. "I'm like, 'Man, Johnny's got her right where he wants her.' But Joel said she was very responsive underneath him. She just needed like an inch and she was going to fire."

Clairiere won for the sixth time in 14 starts, without finishing worse than fourth, and pushed her career earnings to \$1,909,592.

After a winter break at Stonestreet's training center in Ocala, Fla., she took advantage of a three-otherwise-than condition and started 2022 with an easy win at Fair Grounds in March, finished second to champion Letruska in Oaklawn Park's Grade 1 Apple Blossom in April and has won two in a row over Malathaat after finishing behind her four times last year. Clairiere was fourth in the Kentucky Oaks, 3 lengths behind Malathaat in their first meeting.

"She's better," Asmussen said. "It's really fun to see her physical development. We were near Malathaat in the Oaks in the paddock and [I saw] how much bigger Malathaat was in the Kentucky Oaks and then next to her today in the paddock here it's how much more comparable we are physically."

Stonestreet's John Moynihan echoed Asmussen's assessment, and paid some credit to time spent away from the racetrack this winter.

"They thrive, they get better, get happier," Moynihan said. "We sent her out in September of her 2-year-old year so that's the first bit of time she had off in a long time. It was really good for her. It's good to get away from the racetrack, a quiet environment. She's grown, she's a little bit more substantial and Steve thinks she's better this year than last."

Pedigree counts too and Clairiere gets plenty of quality from her sire and dam, who won three Grade 1 stakes for trainer Kiaran McLaughlin. The Stonestreet weanling purchase won all four starts at Saratoga — the Adirondack at 2, the Test and Prioress at 3 and the Personal Ensign at 4 — on the way to \$2 million in earnings. Clairiere will get her shot at the Personal Ensign Aug. 27.

"She's got a tremendous amount of Curlin in her — very businesslike, straightforward, knows what's expected of her and accepts it," said Asmussen, who trained the two-time Horse of the Year. "Thank goodness we had done well enough to be one of the recipients of racing royalty like her. You know? She's a Curlin out of Cavorting that looks like that. As ex-

Continued On Page 23



Tod Marks

Clairiere jumps into the race early in Sunday's Shuvee.

# Shuvee —

## Continued from page 22

pected she has continued to get better with age and she's just fabulous.”

## Notes

- Shadwell Stable's Malathaat, a daughter of Curlin and Stonestreet Grade 1 winner Dreaming Of Julia, settled for second while racing with blinkers for the first time. Trainer Todd Pletcher wasn't disappointed in his filly, but searched for an answer to a dull performance.

“She's normally a very classy filly but she was way too subdued today,” he said. “I don't know if she wasn't handling the heat well or what, though she wasn't showing any external signs of it. I said to Johnny leaving the paddock, ‘Try to put her on her toes a little bit out there she's acting really, really dull.’ She kind of ran that way, especially for one first-time blinkers you'd think they'd be a little sharper, show a little more initiative. Johnny just said she didn't feel like she gave as much of her effort as she can. We'll see how she bounces out of it and regroup.”

- Moynihan called the success of the two fillies special to Stonestreet, the Thoroughbred operation founded by the late Jess Jackson and now under the guidance of his wife Barbara Banke. Clairiere and Malathaat “absolutely” would have shared the same field as foals.

“They move around, but they would have been together at some point,” he said. “Both mares were good New York mares and to see their daughters perform so well in New York too is something. We get as much excitement out of watching Malathaat run as we do watching Clairiere. We're very proud of them both.”

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# Heat Wave

## Warm weather blasts Week 2; Sunday race called 'no contest'

Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday all featured one thing in common: the temperature hit 97 degrees each day. Racing went on at Saratoga Race Course despite the warm temps without any heat issues for horses or jockeys.

Training staff and track employees hustled with a bucket in each hand after every race, giving each horse a bath of ice water. Several jockeys grabbed a water bottle from the cooler in the winner's circle after weighing in after each race, and some also took a few ice cubes with them.

"I drink water, two or three bottles in a day depending on how bad it is, how thirsty I feel," said Luis Saez, last year's leading rider.

Jockeys also keep plenty of drinks in the jockeys' room fridge, which is stocked by their valets.

"Keeping the fridge stocked with drinks on a day like today with the weather that it's been," said Rodney Paine, valet for Saez and Kendrick Carmouche. "We've got a fridge, got to keep their drinks labeled and keep them hydrated."

Saez doesn't need much else to stay fueled. Apart from water, it's just, "peanuts and coffee in the morning," he said. "That's all."

Luis rides in eight or nine races just about each day, but the heat does not



Dave Harmon

Luis Saez

### SUNDAY'S RACING RECAP

faze him.

"They handle it, they're athletes," Paine said. "They're so fit and can take the cold and heat. Luis, being from Panama, he'd rather have the heat than the cold. But they're tough and ride in any kind of weather. Being Australian, we're born for this, this weather is beautiful."

Paine was a jockey for eight years in his native Australia before he hung up the saddle as he battled making weight.

"I would have to go to the sauna and lose weight, but then I kept getting bloody noses so they cauterized it," Paine said. "Cauterizing it still didn't work, so I would have to put the sweat gear on and have to go running in the middle of the Sydney summer and go running with layers of clothing and that's how I'd make the weight."

Paine's race-riding career may not have worked out, but he was a sought-after exercise rider on the NYRA circuit for years and also pushed himself to the limit on a different kind of racecourse.

"I became a marathon runner," he said. "I guess just running in the tank top and shorts was a lot easier than running in the full sweat gear. I've done 12 to 15 marathons. I was the first Australian man home in Boston in 2006. I did Boston in 2:46. I've done New York in 2:50. Rio de Janeiro, Miami, Lake Placid."

A multi-talented athlete, Paine is not just someone that his jockeys can go to for physical needs.

"Basically, we've just got to be there for them," he said. "(Keep them) confident. If they have a bad ride we got to pump them up and if they have a tough beat in a photo finish you keep them upbeat because they're going at it again and will try to win the next race."

— Timothy Littau



Dave Harmon

### Nota Bene cruises to victory in Sunday's ninth race for trainer Ian Wilkes.

• Runners in the seventh race, a 1 1/16-mile maiden for 2-year-old fillies on the inner turf, got off to a good start. Better than the tractor moving the starting gate anyway.

The gate crew hustled into action after the tractor failed to move, and the backup pulled the gate out of the way. An outrider alerted jockeys on the backstretch about the dilemma in the homestretch and Flavien Prat, Eric Cancel and Junior Alvarado, aboard the last three runners in the field, pulled up.

The other six continued racing, and Tyler Gaffalione and Towhead fought back to cross the wire first by a nose after losing the lead in the stretch to beat the 4-5 favorite Idea Generation. The race wound up for naught after a roughly 15-minute general stewards' inquiry resulted in the race being declared a no contest.

"It really sucks for the owners (Deuce Greathouse, Cindy Hutson and Brett Setzer)," Towhead's trainer Mike Maker said. "This horse laid it down today, so now (we have) to try to cram a race in to get the earnings up to run in a stake in the fall. When you break your maiden at Saratoga, you're thinking about bigger and better things and we're no different. So, it takes away from earnings there and who knows how much that strong effort is going to take out of her."

Irad Ortiz Jr. would have been on the losing side of that photo finish with Idea Generation for trainer Chad

Brown and owner Klaravich Stables.

"It was the right call to call the race (a no contest)," Ortiz said.

Towhead finished second and third in two starts at Churchill Downs, before trying the turf for the first time Sunday. Despite the winning effort, she's still a maiden.

"I don't really want to talk about it," Gaffalione said.

Bets on or starting with the seventh race were refunded, while all other Pick 3, Pick 5, Pick 6 and Grand Slam wagers were considered an "All" for the corresponding leg of the wager, according to NYRA. Consolation payouts were given for the daily double that started in the sixth race.

"Ensuring a safe racing environment for jockeys and horses is paramount," Pat McKenna, NYRA's vice president of communications, said in a statement. "Our outriders are highly skilled and experienced professionals who made a swift decision today based on concern for the safety of the jockeys and horses in the heat of competition."

— Timothy Littau

• Irad Ortiz Jr. leads the meet after the second week with 15 wins, while Joel Rosario and defending title winner Luis Saez are tied in second with 10 wins apiece.

The king atop the throne clinched his 15th victory in Sunday ninth aboard Nota Bene, which was Ian

Continued On Page 25

# Sunday —

## ■ Continued from page 24

Wilkes' first win of the meet and perhaps a bit of a thank you from jockey to trainer

"Ian's a humble guy, we've got a good relationship, he's always nice to me," Ortiz said. "He (helped) me win the meet back at Belmont, I won the last race for him. And I won by one (win). It was good to win here at Saratoga now for him. It's special for him and for me, too. We're a team and we've been doing good. I don't ride too many for him but when I ride for him we're there, we're close, we hit the board."

Ortiz said he studied the 4-year-old Declaration Of War filly's history to know what kind of horse he had underneath him.

"She always comes from way back, at the half-mile she was a little closer today so I didn't panic," Ortiz, Jr. said. "I just took my time because I knew she was good enough and should get there because she was a lot closer today than she used to be."

Nota Bene dropped back to seventh early before making a three-wide run to the lead on the way to a 1 1/4-length win over Tuscan Queen.

"I was very happy with the way she was doing," Wilkes said. "I was fortunate enough to get Irad to ride her. He's got an uncanny ability to never get stopped on the turf."

— Timothy Littau

• Sunday's third held special meaning for winning jockey Junior Alvarado, who was joined in the winner's circle by his son Adrian.



Dave Harmon

Junior Alvarado

"To put it into words it's hard," said Alvarado, who spent much of the winter and spring riding in Florida. "He is always watching. At first, it was just for me when it was just myself, but now I have a family, and I do everything for them. It's always exciting to have them here and get to share a picture and a moment with them."

Alvarado won aboard Brad Moore's Doctor Love for trainer Dallas Stewart in the 6-furlong \$25,000 claimer.

"I always talk with him," Alvarado said of Stewart. "My agent [Mike Sellitto] is a good friend to him. Every time I ride in Churchill, Fair Grounds, he always puts me on something there. It has been a good relationship so far. I'm just glad I could get this horse home. It's always great to ride for him. I know he wasn't here today, but we can give him 120 percent."

— Spencer Ripchik

• Two entries and two wins for trainer Phil Serpe — Ampersand in the second and King Angelo in the fourth.

"We're just happy," Serpe said after the fourth. "This is a tough place."

Continued On Page 26



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## Sunday —

Continued from page 25

You've got to be happy when you win here because it's the hardest racing in the world against the best horses, the best riders and the best trainers. You're fortunate when things like this happen, but this horse is a nice horse. I've loved him since the day he walked through the barn two years ago and just taken a little time to get to this point, but I think you're going to see a lot more out of them."

King Angelo, a 5-year-old son of Lemon Drop Kid, won the 5 1/2-furlong New York-bred allowance-optional on the Mellon Turf Course. Ampersand won his 1-mile race for \$16,000 claimers on the main track. The latter was claimed out of the race by Peter Walder.

"Things just have to work out," Serpe said. "The horse we ran in the second race, he fit right there with those horses. We've tried winning allowance races with him and he's finished second and third. You got to put them where they belong. This horse fit right there. He, unfortunately, wasn't close enough in his first race after a layoff, but that's fine. He got a race under his belt. I really thought he would run like this."

## Saratoga Leaders

TRAINERS	1ST
Chad Brown	9
Todd Pletcher	8
Mike Maker	6
Christophe Clement	4
Brad Cox	4
Phil Serpe	3

JOCKEYS	1ST
Irad Ortiz Jr.	15
Luis Saez	10
Joel Rosario	10
Jose Ortiz	7
Manny Franco	7
Javier Castellano	6
Dylan Davis	5
Flavien Prat	5
John Velazquez	5

Through Tuesday

Even with a 2-for-2 day and three wins so far at the meet, Serpe won't stray from his normal routine.

"Me, celebrate?" Serpe said. "I don't know. I will probably celebrate with my horses."

— Spencer Ripchik



King Angelo heads for home in Sunday's fourth race.

Dave Harmon

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# Roost Ruler

Kentucky Oaks, Belmont runner-up dominates Gr. 1

BY SEAN CLANCY

Jacob West saw it. Aron Wellman saw it. Todd Pletcher, he had been seeing it since June 11. That day, Nest ran hard, ran long to finish second in the Belmont Stakes. Six weeks after that honorable showing, Nest walked into the paddock as the favorite for the Grade 1 Coaching Club American Oaks. Six weeks and another world.

“From the Belmont to today, she’s grown,” Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners’ Wellman said. “She’s always had that scope, but she’s definitely

Continued On Page 29



Dom Napolitano/NYRA Photo

Nest (center) cuts the corner in command of Saturday's Coaching Club American Oaks.

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# CCA Oaks —

■ Continued from page 28

put more daylight underneath her.”

“When she walked by, out of the corner of my eye, she got my attention again,” Highgate Sales’ West said, “Our filly, I swear, since the Belmont, she’s grown half a hand and put on weight.”

That’s what Pletcher had been seeing and saying since Nest finished 3 lengths behind stablemate Mo Donegal in the final leg of the Triple Crown.

“We’ve run a lot of horses in the Belmont and had plenty of them come out of it fine but none of them came out of it any better than she did,” Pletcher said. “Every day, you’re looking. Every day was good for her, just looking at her, you could tell. You get back to training, she was gaining weight, strong in the tub, breezes were good, every day was good. It was an easy decision.”

Easy decision and easy effort as Nest toyed with Kentucky Oaks winner Secret Oath and three others in the \$500,000 stakes, sauntering to a 12 1/4-length win over Secret Oath and Nostalgic. Owned by Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners, Repole Stable and Michael House, the daughter of Curlin improved to 5-for-8, tacking on her second Grade 1 victory. Ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr., Nest finished 9 furlongs in 1:51.04.

Longshot Butterbean stumbled from the inside post and expected pacesetter Society bungled the break as well. As those two tried to recover, Nest, Nostalgic and Secret Oath played from the same playbook, rolling into the



Dom Napolitano/NYRA Photo

**Nest takes a minute after her second Grade 1 victory.**

first turn three abreast and wide. From the inside of those three, Ortiz stayed off the rail, allowing a headstrong Society through to take the lead through the first quarter-mile in :24.10. The undefeated Society led by a half-length over Nest. Nostalgic stayed in the mix, a half-length back in third with Luis Saez opting to stay in the clear and close with Secret Oath.

**Continued On Page 30**

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# CCA Oaks —

■ Continued from page 29

The quartet stayed in formation, marching down the backstretch in a line, posting a half in :47.46. Leaving the backside, Nest easily dispatched Society to her inside and Nostalgic to her outside. A two-horse race on paper was quickly a two-horse race on track. Nest rolled through three-quarters in 1:11:05 as Secret Oath clawed at her flank, the others were competing for a line of Grade 1 blacktype.

Past the quarter pole, Ortiz had done nothing more than nudge, sneaking a glance over his left shoulder as Saez emptied his toolbox to his outside. From there, it was a matter of how far. Two slaps, a look under his right shoulder, two glances at the big screen in the infield and a geared-down romp in a Plan B Grade 1.

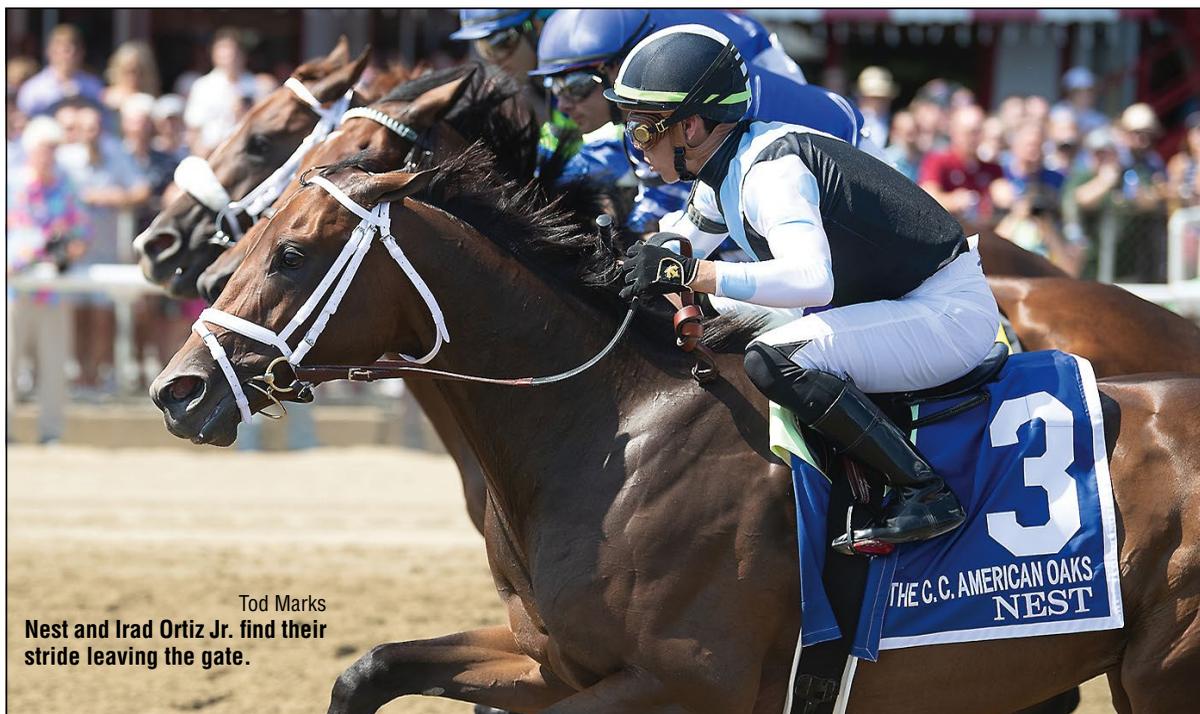
The Alabama Aug. 20 was Plan A.

“After the Belmont, our concern was, ‘Well, if she needs to wait for the Alabama, that’s fine,’ ” Pletcher said. “She never gave us a reason not to run.”

Feed tub, check. Early gallops, check. Breezes, check.

Pletcher called Wellman 10 days after the Belmont and told him to move his travel schedule up a month.

“Our original inclination was to wait for the Alabama. The mile and a quarter, it plays right into



Tod Marks  
Nest and Irad Ortiz Jr. find their stride leaving the gate.

our strengths,” Wellman said. “Todd called, when he gives you the green light, it’s go time. It’s hard to keep a filly that’s doing that good in the barn for a half a million-dollar Grade 1 with the prestige of this. This is what it’s all about, to see two fillies throw down in the CCA Oaks at Saratoga. That’s why we’re in the game.”

Two breezes over the training track at Belmont and one here a week before the CCA Oaks kept Nest in the game and she delivered on all that she had touted.

“That was a powerful performance,” Pletcher

**Continued On Page 31**

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# CCA Oaks —

## ■ Continued from page 30

said. “She was under pressure today, inside, outside. We thought we would be laying second, come out and establish position. Society stumbled and altered that. Irad did the right thing, he left the rail open to let her up in there, so she didn’t get pressure right away. We expected Luis to make that move and we were able to fend that off.”

Nest fended off Secret Oath quicker than Sydney McLaughlin leaps hurdles, evening their score to 1-1. Secret Oath got the best of Nest in the Kentucky Oaks, taking advantage of getting first run on the final turn. As Nest waited for a seam, Secret Oath shut the door to win by 2 lengths. The two fillies took different approaches after that. Secret Oath wheeled back in the Preakness in two weeks, finishing fourth. Nest waited for the taxing 12 furlongs of the Belmont in five weeks, finishing second. The effort in the Belmont was stellar, the recovery was better.

“Stumbled, rushed up, got bumped, had to wait, kept closing to the wire,” Pletcher said. “I don’t know internally if some horses can regroup quicker than others. Running in the Belmont, we know from a pedigree perspective that she wants to go that far. Maybe you take one and stretch them to their maximum staying ability, then that’s different.”

Nest is certainly different.

Bred by Ashview Farm and Colts Neck Stable, the bay daughter of Curlin enticed a final bid of \$350,000 from Eclipse and Mike Repole at

Keeneland September Sales in 2020. Ashview and Colts Neck might have done the mating, but West did the matching.

“The beauty of working with Mike and Aron is I’m out in front looking at the horses and making a list and there are certain ones that I come back to them, I put her to both of them,” West said. “At first, it was like, ‘I’ll pay X amount for her,’ and ‘I’ll pay X amount for her.’ Then it was like, ‘Let’s buy her together.’ When the dust settled, it was no point bidding against each other. Aron has had so much luck with Curlin fillies. Mike wants two-turn horses, these are the races he wants to win. It made sense.”

Then and now.

Nest made her debut at Belmont in September, dominating four rivals by 5 lengths in a 1 1/16 mile maiden. She shortened up and closed to finish third, beaten three-quarters of a length in the 1-mile Tempted and came back to win the Grade 2 Demoiselle at 1 1/8 miles to close her juvenile season. This year, she won the Suncoast at Tampa Bay Downs in February and added the Grade 1 Ashland at Keeneland in April. Runner-up finishes in the Kentucky Oaks and Belmont put her in the mix for filly championship honors. The CCA Oaks pushed her to frontrunner.

“We thought, tough race in the Oaks, tough race in the Belmont, wheel right back in the CCA Oaks to a mile and an eighth against the Oaks winners...that’s ballsy,” Wellman said. “But you can’t play this game scared. With a championship on the line, they’ve got to settle it on the playing field.”

This one was in the nest.



Tod Marks

Nest heads back to the barn with Sophie Green and Martin Estrada.

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# Bright Flash

NY-bred Robin Sparkles dazzles in G3 turf sprint

BY TOM LAW

Jon Taisey called it the biggest win for Hibiscus Stable as a breeder.

Bruce Brown celebrated like it was his first graded stakes win – because it was.

And supporters – either at the windows or simply fans of the front-running New York-bred mare – won big Saturday when Robin Sparkles upset the Grade 3 Caress Stakes on the Coaching Club American Oaks Day card at Saratoga Race Course.

“It’s huge,” said Taisey, who heads up sales and client relations for Mike Oliveto’s and Doris Ann Hayes’ Hibiscus Stables. “It’s our biggest win as a



Tod Marks

Robin Sparkles (right) stays clear to win Saturday's Caress Stakes.

breeder. We’ve had a lot of big wins. I think the Albany was our biggest before this with Funny Guy. This is our biggest. It doesn’t get any better than this.”

Robin Sparkles, a 5-year-old daughter of Elusive Quality out of the Dehere mare My Sparky, lit up the tote board in a big way in the \$200,000 Caress. Dismissed at 21-1 in a field of nine that included de-

fending race winner Caravel, graded stakes winner Souper Sensational and six other stakes winners, Robin Sparkles won for the ninth time in 16 starts in the 5 1/2-furlong turf sprint stakes. She won by a head over Souper Sensational under Javier Castellano to give Brown his breakthrough stakes victory.

“It’s awesome,” said Brown, who trains Robin

**Continued On Page 33**

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Photo by Dan McCanna

# Caress —

■ Continued from page 32

Sparkles for Michael Schrader.

Brown and Castellano teamed to win the Troy and Lucky Coin Stakes at the 2014 meet with Spring To The Sky, who competed in 10 graded stakes including the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint in 2013 at Santa Anita Park but never broke through at the highest level. He placed in the Grade 3 Woodford at Keeneland and won three stakes overall.

"Nope, never a graded stakes," Brown said. "Usually, I have a bunch of New York-breds, and they don't have graded stakes for them."

Bred by Hibiscus and foaled and raised at Waldorf Farm in North Chatham, Robin Sparkles is a product of the \$5,700 purchase My Sparky at the 2014 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga fall mixed sale. She was sold in foal to Frost Giant at that sale and her subsequent foal, Cold Sober, sold for \$20,000 at the 2016 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga New York-bred yearling sale. The gelding went on to win two of 18 starts in his career.

My Sparky's second foal, the Majestic Warrior mare G's Warrior, raced for Hibiscus Stables and won one of nine starts. Robin Sparkles came next, born in 2017 and sold to Linda Rice for \$30,000 at the 2018 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga New York-bred yearling sale.

Tenth and last in her debut after showing speed in a 6 1/2-furlong dirt state-bred maiden race for Brown and Schrader at Belmont, Robin Sparkles made amends in her next start when risked for \$40,000 in a state-bred maiden claimer on the grass. She won by 4 3/4 lengths that day, never ran for a tag again and has only finished off the board once in 14 subsequent starts.

Third in both the Grade 3 Caress and Smart And Fancy during the 2021 Saratoga meet, Robin Sparkles returned from more than seven months off to win Monmouth Park's off-the-turf Politely Stakes May 21. She then finished third in Monmouth's Goldwood Stakes on the turf after getting up in what Brown called a "suicidal" early pace of :21.43 and :43.49. She faded to finish 3 1/2 lengths behind

Continued On Page 34



Tod Marks

Robin Sparkles and Javier Castellano head to the post, from the Paddock Bar's second floor.

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# Caress —

■ Continued from page 33

the winner, Bout Time, the eventual second choice in Saturday's Caress.

Castellano took the mount on Robin Sparkles for the first time in the Caress, reuniting with Brown and bringing back good memories of those wins in 2014 with Spring To The Sky.

"He rode my good sprinter Spring To The Sky and won a few races on him and I told him in the paddock, 'let's try to do that and get her out there,'" Brown said. "She doesn't like to be held too tight, just a loose rein and nurse her around there and that's exactly what she did."

Robin Sparkles and Castellano broke well from the gate, while 2-1 Caravel got off just a smidge slow in search of back-to-back graded wins after taking Belmont Park's Grade 3 Intercontinental in June.

Robin Sparkles led through the opening quarter-mile without any serious pressure in :21.54 and by the same 1-length margin to the half in :44.21. She opened up 3 lengths in midstretch while Souper Sensational, Lady Edith, Miss J McKay tried to rally. Souper Sensational came closest, but a head short. Lady Edith finished a half-length back in third with Miss J McKay fourth and Caravel last of nine. Robin Sparkles won in 1:01.98 over the firm turf.

"I really like the horse and the way she did it today," Castellano said. "The horse is a free-running horse. She only likes to go to the lead. She broke so well out of the gate, I took a big advantage and put her on the lead and tried to slow down the pace the best I could. I like the way she fin-



Tod Marks

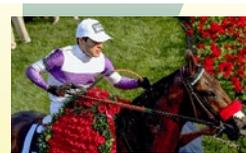
**Trainer Bruce Brown picked up his first graded stakes win in the Caress.**

ished. She is such a game horse. Today, she put in 100 percent and Bruce did such a good job."

Robin Sparkles improved to 9-for-16 and collected \$110,000 for the win, boosting her bankroll to \$530,668. She's 2-for-3 in 2022 after a three-win campaign in seven starts last season.

"Last year she had some bad luck and different things going on," Brown said. "She was very in-and-out as far as how she was doing, but she's really come back better and better each start. The last race was down in Monmouth and that was a suicidal kind of pace, but she bounced out of it real good and has been eating the bottom out of the feed tub and has really been doing great."

"She's had different things and just different issues. Colds, throat infections and different things going on. We've got all that behind her and she really seems like she's coming into her own now."



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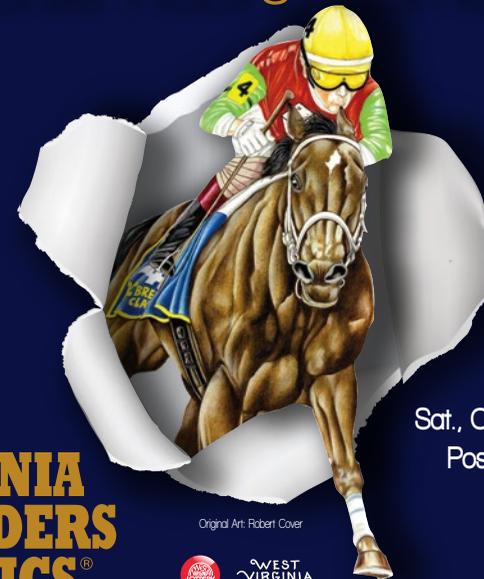
— Sean Clancy, Riverdee Stable

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# On Her Way

## Jane Mast improves in 2nd start

Trainer Cherie DeVaux and owners David Ingordo, LBD Stable and Manganaro Bloodstock won the Wilton Stakes on Opening Day with Tarabi and may have another star in the making in Jane Mast.

Jane Mast won her second start in Saturday's fourth race at Saratoga, a \$105,000 maiden for fillies and mares going 1 mile on the inner turf.

"The experience was the difference," DeVaux said after the 3-year-old Distorted Humor filly won by a neck over Veronica Green. "(John Velazquez) rode her conservative the first time knowing that she was going to need the experience, and sometimes, for first-time starters, winning is the hardest thing. ... She learned a lot from her first start and the added distance was definitely in her favor."

Velazquez put the 7-2 second choice just behind pacemaker Get Respect, took the lead at the top of

### SATURDAY RACING RECAP

the stretch and had to hold on after Veronica Greene made a run. Despite the win, DeVaux is planning to pump the brakes.

"It looks like we're going to need to give her some time to mentally get her back to where we want her to be," she said. "We'll just have to see how she trains and how she's progressing and we'll figure it out from there."

Jane Mast has been enthusiastic – perhaps too much – both in the afternoons and mornings.

"She's trained really well, she's been aggressive, though," DeVaux said. "That's a concern and it's not something you want to reward them with, to come back with another race. We'll just have to take a step back with her, which we've had to do her whole career. It's nothing physical,



Tod Marks

Jane Mast (gray) digs in to win Saturday's fourth with John Velazquez.

but she was very headstrong into that first turn and it's kind of the way she is. We just want to make sure she doesn't get too out of control with that behavior."

Being a daughter of Distorted Humor and the Tapit mare Coming Attraction – who descends from the family of Personal Ensign, My Flag and others – comes with a little bit of pressure. Not that the filly feels it.

"We've always had high expectations for her, she's bred really well and comes from a really deep family," DeVaux said. "It's not a surprise that she's come out and run two really solid races but we have to manage her to make her career the best, not every race we're running the best."

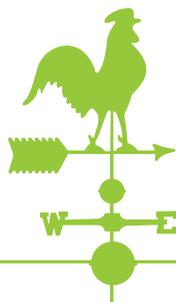
– Timothy Littau

Continued On Page 36

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# Saturday —

## ■ Continued from page 35

• Tom Morley clinched his first win of the meet in Saturday's second when Brazillionaire won the a 5 1/2-furlong \$35,000 claiming event by a nose. Morley claimed the 5-year-old Candy Ride gelding two starts prior to Saturday's race for owner Robert Murray.

Prior to being claimed by Morley, Brazillionaire "had been showing a very decent level of form and still had a couple of conditions left when we trained him," Morley said. "I just felt that he was running over the wrong trip. (Former trainer Linda Rice) "kept running him long, and putting him on the lead."

Brazillionaire won in his second start for Morley June 25 at Belmont.

"He might be a horse that sort of is the need-the-lead type," Morley said. "That happened at Belmont. He got a very soft lead going seven-eighths at Belmont and won very, very comfortably. Now obviously today, cutting back again to 5 1/2, a major concern of whether he would make the lead. And if he didn't make the lead, would he be comfortable passing horses? And he had to work hard to get by these horses today, this is probably a trip short of his best. But he got the job done and that's what matters."



Dave Harmon

Brazillionaire (left) rallies to win Saturday's second.



Tod Marks

Eric Cancel makes a point while winning with Stage Left Saturday.

Javier Castellano was aboard for both of Brazillionaire's wins for Morley.

"We have a very good relationship, Javier and I," Morley said. "He rides a lot of horses for our barn, he has a lot of confidence in the job that we do. It doesn't matter if they're 20-1 or 1-2, Javier goes out there and tries as hard as anyone on these horses so I have every confidence in him when he leaves that paddock on one of mine that it's going to get a good ride."

The first win was "nice to get off the duck," Morley said. "Had a couple of slightly disappointing horses that have run at the meet so far but as Maggie (Wolfendale) said to me 'start worrying if you go winless until August the 20th, not July the 20th.'"

Brazillionaire was claimed out of the race by trainer Jeremiah Englehart for owner Jesse Englehart.

— Timothy Littau

• Trainer Mertkan Kantarmaci and jockey Eric Cancel teamed for their first wins of the meet when Stage Left upset the eighth, a 6-furlong allowance

on the main track, at 14-1.

"First win of the meet, I'm very happy to knock it out," Cancel said. "Especially for Mertkan, he's been a really big supporter of me and I really appreciate it."

The 6-year-old Congrats gelding went off as the longest price in the field of eight and topped the group that included Favorite Outlaw and even-money favorite Highly Respected. Stage Left won by 5 3/4 lengths over 12-1 Peaceful Waters with Favorite Outlaw another 1 1/2 lengths back in third.

Kantarmaci's win came with his sixth starter. He'd won with his first starter at last year's meet and in 2020 and 2018.

"Usually we win our first starts the last three, four years here," Kantarmaci said. "This one came a little bit later, but its good. I was expecting good things from this horse."

Cancel had ridden Stage Left in the mornings for Kantarmaci and also expected a good run.

"I've been breezing the horse, the horse has been breezing really well and I told him 'they're going to have to kill us to win,' " Cancel said. "I was expecting a big performance and the horse didn't let me down. By the three-eighths I knew I had a lot of horse. I was just waiting to see who was going to fire. No one really came at me (but) my horse was 100 percent ready."

Claimed for \$25,000 at Keeneland in April, Stage Left improved to 3-for-5 in 2022 and won for the first time for Kantarmaci and owners Krakow Racing and America's Pastime Stables.

"This is a really good speed horse," Kantarmaci said. "With 6 furlongs he can come off of the pace a little where he can do better things."

With the first win in the books, Kantarmaci entered one horse for Wednesday's card, two for Thursday and more down the road.

"I have like a lot of horses lined up to run the first week of August," Kantarmaci said. "I don't know the book yet, so I don't know what races are coming up after the first week of August. I'm going to have a pretty good meet with what I have."

— Spencer Ripchik and Timothy Littau

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# OnCourse

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Howard Kravets can truly understand what Red Smith was talking about.

You've heard the famous quote, attributed to the legendary New York Times sportswriter, whose directions to Saratoga Race Course from Manhattan included driving north for 175 miles, turning left onto Union Avenue and going back 100 years.

It's hard to fully appreciate the ageless charm of America's oldest sporting venue until you make that turn off I-87 for the first time and head west for about 6 furlongs. Then you know.

Kravets, a lifetime Chicagoan, has been a passionate racing fan for at least half of his 50 years. He is a player turned podcaster, utilizing skills acquired as an Indiana University journalism major, albeit almost three decades later.

He learned the game at Arlington Park and figures he went to 15 Arlington Millions – when the race was actually run at Arlington Park; what a novel idea. He has been to Santa Anita, Keeneland and Del Mar, and chalked the Belmont Stakes off his bucket list in June, yet somehow he had never made the pilgrimage to the cathedral on Union.

That changed last weekend.

"Saratoga was everything I had hoped it would be and more. It's very old-school, in a good way," Kravets said this week, back home in the Chicago suburbs and needing some stall rest after a whirlwind 96-hour tour.

And since we all like to compare new experiences with familiar ones: "It reminds me of Wrigleyville," the Cubs fan said. "You have these huge houses and older buildings surrounding an iconic sports venue."

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# Welcome

Like most who follow or work in racing, Kravets is very much a fan. So he didn't hesitate to play tourist on his first Saratoga visit, with a group that included his friend, 2021 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge champion Matt Miller. There was a backstretch tour led by Richard Migliore and arranged through Kim Weir at the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, a look inside the jockey silks room and a tour of the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame hosted by Tom Durkin. He also checked in on Magistrate, a 2-year-old colt he owns a piece of with the Adelphi Racing Syndicate, at the In Front Training Center in Ghent, N.Y. A fall debut is planned for the son of Tapwrit.

"It was absolutely amazing," said Kravets, whose hhracingpodcast.com has come a long way since he launched it to a live audience of about 15 in late January 2021. "I had no graphics. It was just me in front of the camera talking about the Pick 4 at Gulfstream and holding PPs in my hand. It was as raw as possible."

Kravets was confident enough in his ability to communicate – based on that journalism degree, the 26 years he has spent educating math students in suburban Chicago high schools and three guest appearances on Matt Bernier's podcast – but he was starting from scratch when it came to production skills.

"I knew zero about tech," said Kravets, who as a college student dreamed of an on-air broadcasting career, but opted for grad school and a teaching career when he didn't see that materializing. "I watched about 50 hours of YouTube videos on how to do podcasts."

Kravets has come a long way in 18 months. That first podcast has been viewed on YouTube 133 times, but how about Episode 134 – three nights before this year's Kentucky Derby – drawing 16,388 views and counting.

He's up to 1,350 subscribers on his YouTube

channel and has welcomed a large stable of racing personalities on the live broadcast (co-hosted by Maryland horseplayer Pete Visco and your faithful correspondent), which typically streams Thursday at 8 p.m. ET, including Todd Schrupp, Simon Bray, Bernier, Andy Serling, Anthony Stabile, Acacia Clement, Nick Tammaro, Michelle Yu, Claiborne Farm's Walker Hancock and English punter Davy Lane. He landed Laffit Pincay Jr. to talk about Woody Stephens' Belmont Stakes streak and Rey-lu Gutierrez and Sophie Doyle a few nights before their Breeders' Cup mounts last year.

Schrupp and TVG did him a big favor by putting him on live for a race at Keeneland and he appeared with Seth Merrow on Capital OTB's Racing Across America while in Saratoga.

"The racing community overall is pretty tight-knit," he said. "People are willing to help out the little guy. People want to promote the game in a positive light. They see someone who is doing something grassroots to energize racing fans. I've been very encouraged by the response from the people I have reached out to."

Kravets also distributes a weekly subscription-based blog with his selections for key races. He has become a formidable contest player, finishing second in this year's Ultimate Betting Challenge and earning \$63,000 and future contest entries. He had a weekend to remember in January, finishing fifth in the Pegasus World Cup Betting Challenge on Saturday and winning a Santa Anita tournament on Sunday. He is already qualified for the 2023 NHC and Pegasus tournaments and is hoping for a return to the Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge, after qualifying for Del Mar last year.

For now, Kravets will, like the rest of us, try to solve the daily handicapping puzzle at Saratoga and Del Mar, and prepare for the start of school at Round Lake High in a few weeks. And you can bet the house on a 2023 return to Saratoga.



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I make a lot of declarations. List a lot of goals. Always have. Read 52 books in a year. Write a book a year. Run 1,000 miles during the year. Be a millionaire before I graduate college. Win 440 races in my career. Write every day. Take the nephews to the Grand Canyon. Visit every state (32...). Go racing at every course in Great Britain (27...). A marathon every year, OK, decade. Campaign a champion. Marry Annie. Own a farm. Have a kid. And on and on.

I actually have a list. Several lists. One written while in high school, another in college, another here and another there. One that sits on my desk-top of my laptop, a short-term list and a long-term list. The lists are pipedreams, mostly embarrassing, somewhat discouraging, but occasionally, I check off one of the things on those lists, for a moment, I feel accomplished.

Most fade out, a whimper, a blot on a one-sided ledger. My friends and family scoff these days when they hear a declaration, a resolution. Ryan, Jack and Nolan have never forgiven me for the un-built game room in Landenberg, Pa., it was a shed and still is a shed. Keegan and Delaney gave up on the Grand Canyon long ago, my uncle promised the Grand Canyon and all I got was this lousy T-shirt. Tom and Joe have left me on the couch while they set off in pursuit of the 1,000-mile Challenge every day, every year, Strava a beacon for them, a burden for me. I've learned to temper the prognostications, the promises. I don't know if that's good or bad. Less public shaming. Less angst at Thanksgiving. Less disappointment for the kids. But, perhaps now, I set fewer goals. Complacency is the devil of accomplishment.

But old habits die hard, and I told Miles we would go to every baseball stadium before he graduates high school. College is the backup. Maybe a master's will help the cause. We made the plan on a trip to a Little League game a few years ago. Fist



bumped on it. Miles doesn't know about the game room or the Grand Canyon. He's going into eighth grade, the end of high school looks like eternity. College? Eternity squared. He's 13 and hasn't been derailed or disappointed by life. At least, often. He thinks it's doable. Like it's a certainty, we will simply do it. You said it will happen, then it will happen. And we will! Fire up the GPS. Download the MLB app. Buy The Ultimate Baseball Road Trip by John Pahigian and Kevin O'Connell. If they can do it, so can we. Let's go. Damn, there I go again.

With that goal in mind, we hatched a plan, a road trip from Saratoga to Boston this summer. Like all good plans, it needed action. Cc Larner and Tom Law provided the action, securing tickets for the Red Sox against the Blue Jays Sunday. First and second rows down the third-base line. Cc, Tom, Declan Molloy, Maddie Irish, Carter Irish, Owen Hill, Miles and me.

An easy drive from Saratoga on a Sunday, the Mass Pike was good to us, we missed our reserved parking, went around the loop and hit it the second time. Sunscreen. Lots of sunscreen. We strolled a mile, through the Boston University campus, down two flights of steps, following the Red Sox jerseys, around the bend, Tom pointed to the Citgo sign. It looked small from over here. Fenway Park rose in the distance, the city streets appear to run in one

# Thirty

side and out the other, like the stadium got dropped out of a hole punch, an irregular hole punch, on a sweet summer night in 1912. We passed the retired numbers...Jackie Robinson's 42 ... Ted Williams... Jim Rice...Pudge...Pedro...

Grilled sausages and French fries to start. Wicked Fenway IPA. Frozen lemonades for the seventh-inning stretch. Water, lots of water, over our heads, poured into hats, down backs. It was 100 degrees, felt hotter, the red plastic of the seats ricocheting the sun like baking sheets off a Weber in a backyard cauldron.

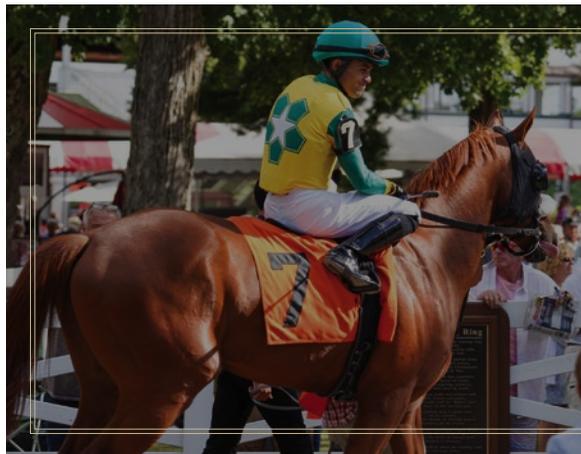
The Blue Jays attacked early. Hits, errors, walks, they were up 5 after a half-inning. The Red Sox won the rest of the game 4-3. But it was never about the score.

We wandered out, sweat-stained and spent but satisfied in sport.

I'm not an expert on parenting and certainly not an expert on life, but if you declare a goal, you might hit it. That's the objective here. If we didn't say we were going to 30 stadiums, we would have gone to Fenway another summer. Another summer never comes. Miles is a baseball junkie. He wears 21 for Roberto Clemente. He recites WHIP and WAR and a bunch of other stats that I don't understand. He and I share the game, like so many fathers and sons, mothers and daughters before us. As life gets more challenging for him and less interesting to me, we'll hopefully always have baseball. We'll have the memories of Little League diamonds strewn across Northern Virginia, strikeouts and walkoffs, diggers and dingers and maybe we'll have the memories of 30 stadiums from Fenway to Wrigley.

As often as I've been disappointed by my own failed declarations, there have been small victories along the way. Fenway Park Sunday, a day with my friends, my son, felt like a big one.

Fenway followed Nationals Park and Camden Yards on the list. That's three. Twenty-seven to go.



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