

Year 22 • No. 18

Saturday, August 27, 2022

The **Saratoga**

Special

Saratoga's Racing Newspaper since 2001

Big Day

Epicenter gets his chance in Travers



Saturday Stakes Previews

**Sword Dancer • Forego
Jerkens • Personal Ensign
Ballston Spa • Travers
New York Showcase Day
Johnny V wins 1,000th**

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Tod Marks

Boss Hopper. Boss makin boss moves catches air leaving the gate on his way to winning Friday's Albany Stakes on New York Showcase Day.

Here & There...in Saratoga

License Plates of the Day

TIZDLAW, New York. CHROMIE, New York.

By The Numbers

45: Combined wins of the five-horse field for today's Grade 1 Personal Ensign.

9,286,186: Combined earnings of the Personal Ensign's five runners – Letruska, Search Results, Crazy Beautiful, Clairiere and Malathaat.

6:52: Post time of today's finale, the 13th race.

29: Combined starts – all without Lasix – for Travers Stakes entrants Rich Strike, Epicenter, Early Voting and Zandon.

1: Guy driving a golf cart and pushing a shopping cart at the same time around the track Thursday morning.

1: Start in a non-graded stakes for sprint star Jackie's Warrior, who won his debut in a maiden race June 19, 2020. It's been nothing but graded stakes since – eight Grade 1, five Grade 2 and two Grade 3.

Names of the Day (World History Edition)

Jane Grey, 13th race. Godolphin's homebred 4-year-old filly is by Into Mischief out of Crowned. Lady Jane Grey was briefly the Queen of England and Ireland in 1553. She was nominated as successor to the crown by Edward VI in his will, which removed his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth from the line of succession. After Edward's death, Jane was proclaimed queen July 10, 1553 but support quickly changed and Mary was named queen July 19. Jane was held prisoner in the Tower of London and convicted of high treason in November. When her father, the Duke of Suffolk, Henry Grey, became involved in a rebellion against Queen Mary's intention to marry Philip II of Spain, Jane and her husband were executed in February 1554. Here's to a happier life for Jane the horse.

Names of the Day

Didinger, first race. Cash Is King and LC Racing named their 2-year-old colt after Philadelphia sports writer, broadcaster, author and Pro Football Hall of Fame member Ray Didinger, who retired in May after 53 years of covering Philadelphia sports. Go Eagles.



High Opinion, fourth race. Five-year-old mare owned by Woodford Racing and Team D is out of More Respect.

Fluffy Socks, fourth race. Head of Plains Partners' homebred 4-year-old filly is by Slumber out of Breakfast Time.

Drafted, fifth race. The 8-year-old gelding is by Field Commission.

Steerage, 12th race. The 3-year-old colt is by Astern.

The Saratoga
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Here&There...in Saratoga

Worth Repeating

"He's in heaven."

Trainer Mark Casse on his son Colby starting his freshman year at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida

"Think about it. It's 33 a year for 30 years. That's a long time."

Trainer Todd Pletcher, about jockey John Velazquez's 1,000 wins at Saratoga

"I blew the turn . . . I'm wondering if they need a starter around here."

Blue Knott, Oaklawn Park's starter, wandering through the stable area at Saratoga Thursday morning

"Watch him ride Jackie's Warrior. It's interesting, watching him ride that horse, as fast as he is, he just lets him run his race. Drops the reins and lets him run."

Trainer Shug McGaughey, on the style of jockey Joel Rosario

"I've always said that they're so sure of the outcome they'll let you bet on it."

Trainer Steve Asmussen, about the vagaries of horse racing

"You've got paper boxes and color now? Wow."

Nancy the Paper Lady, on a backstretch reunion tour, admiring The Special and its modern improvements

"I'm just coming over here to see if Erma's golf cart is OK. There must be something wrong if she's parked in the middle of the road like that."

Trainer Bill Mott, solving a problem – where there really wasn't one – during a backstretch bottleneck Thursday morning

"I'm headed toward 10,000 steps."

Stonestreet's Barbara Banke when asked where she was headed Friday morning

"I'm represented as a fan Saturday."

Cheyenne Stable's Everett Dobson, without a Travers Day runner but still looking forward to the card

"A little guy like me, you don't get shots like that often. You have to take advantage of them when you get them."

Kentucky-based trainer Mike Tomlinson, who runs Conagher in the Gr. 1 H. Allen Jerkens

"When he came into the paddock at Prairie I was like, 'Holy cow.' He's an impressive individual. He looks the part. He's a very impressive horse."

Tomlinson's longtime assistant D. W. Fries on Travers contender Ain't Life Grand

"Back again and back for more."

Trainer Michael McCarthy, who sends out champion Ce Ce in Sunday's Grade 1 Ballerina



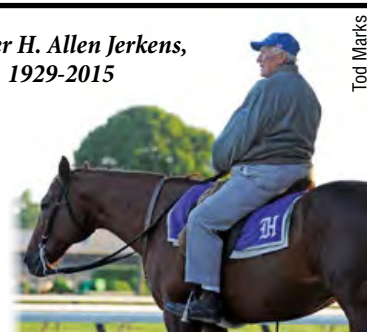
Tod Marks

Channel Five. Turf star Channel Maker preps on the Oklahoma for his fifth consecutive start in the Sword Dancer. He finished second in 2018, fourth in 2019, won in 2020 and was sixth last year. Today, he's 8-1 and coming off a win.

The Chief

Trainer H. Allen Jerkens, 1929-2015

"Admiral Vee was my first real good horse, not my first stake winner, but my first good horse. Claimed him for \$7,500 at Tropical Park, won the shake, two people in on him. He was by War Admiral. They rolled some water bandages on him and brought him over, nobody was with him, just the groom. I came running in, 'Go ahead, go ahead, put it in, put it in.' He said, 'Are you sure? What about the water bandages?' I said, 'He just put them on.' He said, 'Are you sure?' I said, 'Yeah, put it in, put it in.' That was one time in my life that I was pretty sure. He won that day, galloped."



Tod Marks



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Quote of the Day

"I'm blessed for the people who have pulled me to the right path, the people who have picked me up when I'm down."
John Velazquez about winning 1,000 races at Saratoga



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Here&There...in Saratoga

Worth Repeating

"Yes, John Forbes. On the grass. The owner's son is still in the business. He was from Jersey, he got me going. They got me rolling. I was only here three months when I started riding for him, he liked the bug. We hit it off."

Jockey John Velazquez, on if he remembered his first win at Saratoga, Color Blue for trainer John Forbes Aug. 5, 1990

"Nope. I don't remember the second one."

Velazquez when asked about Busy As A Bee, trained by Joe Lostritto, who paid \$127.60 four races later

"P.G. Johnson was a great help. As soon as I lost the bug, he said, 'I want to see you at 6:15 every morning. That's my first set. If I need you, I'll let you know. 6:15 every morning, I want to see your face.' "

Velazquez about the Hall of Fame trainer

"A lot of sacrifice. Having the right people to work with you, that trust you. The very lows, the accidents. When you have to come back again and those people trust you and give you the opportunity. Me putting that effort in to come back and produce. People have accidents and come back and can't seem to produce, they change their mind, change their style of riding, they change something that doesn't seem to click. It's clicked for me every time. People trust me."

Velazquez on how he made it through the hard times



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Travers Smooch. Jordan Freeman plants one on Travers Stakes hopeful Cyberknife Thursday morning. Trained by Brad Cox for Gold Square, the Haskell Stakes winner is the 7-2 second choice behind Epicenter in the Grade 1 stakes.

Tod Marks

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With Mark Casse

No Hall of Fame speech to worry about this year, but the Hall of Fame career rolls on for trainer Mark Casse out of his barn on the far turn of the main track at Saratoga Race Course, not to mention his other strings in Canada, Florida and Kentucky.

The barn has four wins with four seconds and five thirds from 50 starts so far at the meet, including the Fasig-Tipton De La Rose with Our Flash Drive on Whitney Weekend.

“Ehhhhhh, it’s been OK,” Casse said after watching a late set train Wednesday morning. “I don’t want to jinx us, but I think we could have a good strong finish to it.”

Casse’s stable hit the eight-figure mark in purses earned in nine of the last 10 years and is on the way to another with \$8,679,666 through Thursday. He’s won seven graded stakes in 2022, all at Woodbine, and finished second and third there last weekend in the Queen’s Plate with Hall Of Dreams and Sir For Sure.

Casse went through the Saratoga string with The Special’s Tom Law.

Wonder Wheel: D. J. Stable’s 2-year-old daughter of Into Mischief won her first two starts at Churchill Downs, including a 6 3/4-length win in the Debutante July 4. Breezed a bullet furlongs in :59.40 Aug. 19 on the main track. “She’s the one we have to start with. She’s really something special. I put her up there with the Classic Empires, the War Of Wills of the world. I really think she’s special. The ease she does things. She’s 2-for-2, and really never been asked to run. She has a super mind and has done really well since she’s been up here. She’s headed to the Spinaway.”

Proven Strategies: One of the veterans of the Saratoga string, 5-year-old son of Sky Mesa finished fourth in two stakes and second in another this season. Owned by D. J. Stable, Jonathan Green and Empire Racing Club, he’s 5-5-2 in 23 starts with \$347,214 in earnings. “He’ll run in the Lucky Coin. He’s interesting. The first horse I ever trained for D. J. Stables and now of course they own Wonder Wheel. We’ve tried a lot of different things with him and we started sprinting him on the turf and he ran really well two starts ago at Monmouth. Then he had a horrid trip in his last start.”

Our Flash Drive: Live Oak Plantation homebred 4-year-old Ghostzapper filly won the Fasig-Tipton De La Rose Stakes Aug. 7. She won the Grade 3 Selene and Grade 3 Ontario Colleen at Woodbine last summer and placed in three other stakes this season. “She’ll run back (today) in the Ballston Spa. She’s



Tod Marks

Bring Theband Home won a maiden race here July 23 and could turn up in the Hopeful.

a handful but she’s gotten better as she’s gotten older. This race obviously will be tougher but she ran well and I think she’ll run well again.”

Bring Theband Home: Live Oak homebred 2-year-old son of Into Mischief broke his maiden July 23, after a second in his debut June 18 at Gulfstream Park. Live Oak bought his dam, the Street Cry mare Tizatude, for \$800,000 carrying Bring Theband Home at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November mixed sale. “Possibly the Hopeful. I want to see. He got a little sick after he won, and I just want to see. His next work will be crucial if I decide to run him or not.”

Strong Quality: A \$500,000 weanling purchase by Casse’s brother Justin Casse at the 2019 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November mixed sale, 3-year-old son of Quality Road is on the comeback trail. He’s been first, second and third in three starts but off since finishing second in a Fair Grounds optional March 19 for owners Gary Barber and Kinsman Stable. “I’m running him here the last day or so in an allowance race. I feel like he could be a really nice horse. He’s only started three times. He had a foot bruise that put him out. I had, at one time, thought about running him in the Belmont. I thought he was pretty good.”

Make Mischief: Last year’s champion New York-bred 3-year-old filly won Friday’s off-the-turf Yaddo Stakes. She’s won seven of 20 starts, including three stakes to go with five graded stakes placings, and earned \$746,150. Owned by Gary Barber, the 4-year-old daughter of Into Mischief won the Critical Eye Handicap on Big Apple Showcase day in May at Belmont and finished third in the Grade 2 Princess Rooney Invitational July 2 at Gulfstream. “Unfortunately we tried to run her in the mile dirt race (the Johnstone Stakes) but it didn’t fill. She would have been the favorite. So, we tried the turf. We breezed on the turf and she really went over it well. Dylan (Davis) was on her. She has four siblings that have tried the turf and all of them have won on it.”

Boppy O: A debut winner May 20 at Gulfstream Park for John Oxley and Breeze Easy, 2-year-old son of Bolt d’Oro finished 10th in the Grade 3 Sanford the first Saturday of the meet. “He’s Pappacap’s half-brother. We ran him in the Sanford and he didn’t run very well. There was a lot of kickback and I just felt he didn’t care for it. Since then I’ve worked him on the turf. He’s by Bolt d’Oro, who is by Medaglia d’Oro and he’s out of a Scot Daddy mare. So he’s going to run in the With Anticipation (Aug. 31).”

Continued On Page 9

Stable Tour —

Continued from page 8

Determinedly: Oxley's 2-year-old Cairo Prince colt finished fourth in his June 30 debut going 5 furlongs on the dirt at Churchill Downs then a troubled second in 1 1/16-mile turf maiden here July 30. "He had a trip from hell in his only start here, ended up second. Joel Rosario rode him. That was the day he won four; should have won five. I'm not blaming Joel, either, it was just circumstances. If you get a shot, go watch the race. I'm going to run him in the With Anticipation even though he is a maiden."

Forever Dixie: Oxley's homebred 2-year-old Quality Road filly is entered for her third start in the opener Sunday. She's finished fifth in both previous starts, including here Aug. 14. "She's out of a mare I trained, Dixie Strike, that made over \$1 million. She ran here on the grass and kind of had a troubled trip. She's going to run again. Worked really well on the dirt. I'm almost tempted to maybe try her again on the dirt."

Renegade Rebel: A \$700,000 purchase by D. J. Stable in April, 2-year-old daughter of Nyquist out of the Hard Spun mare Hasilah finished third in debut going 7 furlongs Aug. 7. "She's a filly that I'm high on. Third in her first start here and will probably make one more start at the end of the meet."

Pappacap: Rustlewood Farm's homebred 3-year-old son of Gun Runner, winner of last year's Grade 2 Best Pal and second in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile, is winless in six graded stakes this season. He finished fourth in the Grade 2 Amsterdam July 31. "I sent him home. He came back after he ran in the Amsterdam and couldn't open either eye. The kickback."

Janis Joplin: Gary Barber's 2-year-old daughter of California Chrome out of Seeking The Blue finished third in the Grade 3 Schuylerville and second in the Grade 3 Adirondack. "She is headed to Kentucky Downs in a race down there going a mile on turf. Her races up here weren't bad. I bought her for my wife and then after she made her first start Gary bought my wife out, as he often does. Two good races."

Whichwaze: Owned by Tina Casse's Quintessential Racing Florida, 2-year-old daughter of Cross Traffic won her debut Aug. 13 on the all-weather track at Woodbine. "We tried to name her Waze after the app, because she's by Cross Traffic, but they wouldn't let us so we came up with Whichwaze. They gave that to us. She won her first start at Woodbine and we're bringing her to run in the P.G. Johnson. My wife makes good names. Janis Joplin, everybody loves that one."



Mark Casse.

Tod Marks

Hall Of Dreams and Sir For Sure: Casse's Queen's Plate duo couldn't handle runaway winning filly Moira, finishing 7 and 9 lengths back, respectively. "They're probably going to go to the Prince of Wales. We're going to see. They both have a little bit of grass breeding. I'm not sure whether they can transfer that

over to dirt. That's what makes it so interesting up there. We have Tapeta, dirt and then turf. I would think both of them will handle it. Sir For Sure is by Sligo Bay. That's who Lexie Lou was by. Only thing is Lexie Lou was about 15-3 and Sir For Sure is about 17-1. Hall Of Dreams is by Lemon Drop Kid."

Run For Cover: Two-year-old daughter of Get Stormy out of Morethanawarning finished sixth in 5 1/2-furlong turf maiden Aug. 5 in her debut for Tina Casse, Rocky Top Stable and Tara Sweeney. "Get Stormy out of a More Than Ready mare. She ran once, just OK. She belongs to my wife and some friends."

Fish Mooney: Tina Casse's 3-year-old daughter of Lookin At Lucky is 2-2-2 in 11 starts with \$97,530 in earnings. She finished fifth in \$50,000 claiming race on the turf Aug. 19. "She's got a cute name. She's run here a couple times, a second and a fifth. She's out of Gotham City Girl. Tina looked up Gotham City and it's a cartoon. The main female character is Fish Mooney and that's how she got her name. Tina takes her naming very seriously."

Styles: The stable's pony, and Sam Busanich's ride most mornings. A chestnut son of Street Hero, he raced from 2012 to 2015 as Anyriderill Do. He won two of 12, earned \$90,504, finished third in the 2014 Arlington Sprint Stakes and ran in the Grade 3 Jaipur Invitational in 2014 at Belmont Park and Grade 3 American Turf in 2013 at Churchill Downs.

Bussanich: "You have to put Styles in the Stable Tour. He had a year and a half off at the best farm in Ocala, aka the Casse Training Center. And he came up here for his first job. He was stakes-placed as a racehorse. Anyriderill Do."

Casse: "She's telling me things I don't even know. How old is he?"

Bussanich: "He's 12."

Casse: "He is a good pony, isn't he?"

Bussanich: "Yes, this is his first job and he's doing really well."

Casse: "And he likes what kind of cereal?"

Bussanich: "Trader Joe's, almond butter puffs. We go to the Trader Joe's in Clifton Park for it, 20 minutes away."

Casse: "This horse is so special they drive out of their way just to get it for him."

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Asmussen Day?

Trainer's strong lineup
poised for big things

BY JOE CLANCY

With world-class horses in two barns in the Oklahoma Training Track stable area, and divisions at multiple race-tracks around the country, Steve Asmussen has plenty to do.

But he'd be happy to add a task to his list.

"If we were fortunate enough to win the Travers, I'd gladly help them paint the canoe," the Hall of Fame trainer said Thursday morning. "You know, that would just be fabulous."

Doesn't NYRA have people for that?

"Why should they have all the fun?"

Continued On Page 12



Tod Marks

Trainer Steve Asmussen and assistant Scott Blasi coach Epicenter through a paddock session Thursday.



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Asmussen —

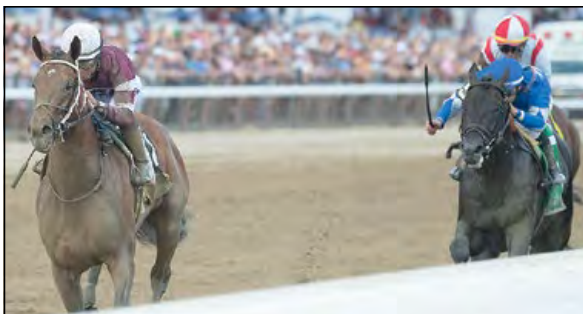
■ Continued from page 10

While he's not necessarily checking behind his truck seat for brushes and a boxy white hat, Asmussen could be in line for some painting Saturday evening as 7-5 favorite Epicenter leads a field of eight for today's Grade 1 Travers Stakes at Saratoga Race Course.

Worth \$1.25 million, the race headlines a 13-race card featuring six graded stakes. The 1 1/4-mile Travers, the 11th race with a 5:44 p.m. post time, attracted Kentucky Derby hero Rich Strike, Preakness Stakes winner Early Voting, Haskell winner Cyberknife, Blue Grass victor Zandon, Iowa Derby winner Ain't Life Grand, late-blooming Curlin winner Artorius and Curlin runner-up Gilded Age. Nobody comes in with a deeper resume than Epicenter, however. First or second in all six starts this year, Winchell Thoroughbreds' Not This Time colt won the Jim Dandy at Saratoga July 30 to signal his readiness and prowess over the Saratoga track.

Asmussen likes where the bay colt, who will be ridden by Joel Rosario from post six, is.

"I couldn't be more pleased with his race in the Jim Dandy, how he handled Saratoga and what he looked like on that day," said Asmussen, second in last year's Travers with Midnight Bourbon and third in 2016 with Gun Runner. "Knock on wood, his preparations went ideally. We've got a very hap-



Tod Marks

Epicenter pulls away from Travers foes Zandon and Early Voting in the Jim Dandy.

py horse right now."

Bred by Westwind Farm, Epicenter sold for \$260,000 at Keeneland September in 2020. He finished sixth in his debut at Churchill Downs Sept. 18, then won going a mile in November and closed 2021 with a victory in the Gun Runner Stakes at Fair Grounds. The top Derby prospect from Louisiana after wins in the Risen Star and Louisiana Derby, he started as the 4-1 favorite in Kentucky. Epicenter did everything but win, taking the lead in deep stretch before getting caught by 80-1 Rich Strike. Favored again in the Preakness two weeks later, Epicenter got squeezed out of position early and rallied from eighth to finish second again – this time to Early Voting.

Asmussen surely said a few things to the racing gods about fate and luck and such, but never wavered in his beliefs. Epicenter has won three Grade

2 stakes and been second in his two Grade 1 tries.

Going 1 1/4 miles in the Derby, Epicenter wound up 6 lengths off an opening half-mile in :45.36, made the lead in the stretch and got run down by a horse who navigated a trip from 17th. At 1 3/16 miles in the Preakness, Epicenter broke a half-step slow from post eight of nine, eased left to find a stalking spot, got squeezed between Skippy Longstocking and Happy Jack and wound up eighth early when the goal would have been third or fourth. The opening half of the Preakness went two seconds slower than the Derby, giving Early Voting the advantage from second early.

"Everybody watched the Derby, everybody watched the Preakness so you realize nothing is guaranteed," Asmussen said, "but we're glad to have him and we feel like he's the right horse in the right race."

Epicenter bypassed the Belmont Stakes, went back to Churchill Downs for June and aimed for Saratoga. The Jim Dandy attracted just four runners, all Triple Crown starters – Epicenter, Early Voting, Zandon and Tawny Port. From the inside post, Epicenter let the others clear and was last early through a half-in :48.28. Still behind everybody on the turn, Epicenter tilted five wide (in a four-horse field) off the bend and ran by everybody. Rosario never turned over his whip in a 1 1/2-length, ears-pricked win.

Asmussen loved it, and pointed to his horse's at-

Continued On Page 14

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Sep 03	DMR	TVG Pacific Classic	Longines Classic	West
Sep 03	DMR	Del Mar Handicap Presented by The JRA	Longines Turf	West
Sep 03	SAR	Jockey Club Gold Cup	Longines Classic	East
Sep 03	SAR	The Flower Bowl	Maker's Mark Filly & Mare Turf	East
Sep 04	DMR	Green Flash H.	Turf Sprint	West
Sep 10	KD	Kentucky Turf Cup	Longines Turf	Midwest
Sep 10	KD	FanDuel Turf Sprint	Turf Sprint	Midwest
Sep 17	WO	Natalma Stakes	Juvenile Fillies Turf	Canada
Sep 17	WO	Pattison Summer Stakes	Juvenile Turf	Canada
Sep 17	WO	Ricoh Woodbine Mile	FanDuel Mile	Canada
Oct 01	AQU	The Champagne	TVG Juvenile	East
Oct 01	AQU	The Miss Grillo	Juvenile Fillies Turf	East
Oct 01	CD	Ack Ack Stakes	Big Ass Fans Dirt Mile	Midwest
Oct 01	SA	Awesome Again Stakes	Longines Classic	West
Oct 02	AQU	The Frizette	NetJets Juvenile Fillies	East
Oct 02	AQU	The Pilgrim	Juvenile Turf	East
Oct 02	SA	Speakeasy Stakes	Juvenile Turf Sprint	West
Oct 07	KEE	Darley Alcibiades	NetJets Juvenile Fillies	Midwest
Oct 07	KEE	JPMorgan Chase Jessamine	Juvenile Fillies Turf	Midwest
Oct 07	KEE	Stoll Keenon Ogden Phoenix	Qatar Racing Sprint	Midwest
Oct 08	AQU	The Vosburgh	Qatar Racing Sprint	East
Oct 08	KEE	Thoroughbred Club of America	Filly & Mare Sprint	Midwest
Oct 08	KEE	Claiborne Breeders' Futurity	TVG Juvenile	Midwest
Oct 08	KEE	Coolmore Turf Mile	FanDuel Mile	Midwest
Oct 08	SA	Rodeo Drive Stakes	Maker's Mark Filly & Mare Turf	West
Oct 08	SA	American Pharoah Stakes	TVG Juvenile	West
Oct 08	SA	Chandelier Stakes	NetJets Juvenile Fillies	West
Oct 09	AQU	The Futurity	Juvenile Turf Sprint	East
Oct 09	KEE	Juddmonte Spinster	Longines Distaff	Midwest
Oct 09	KEE	Castle and Key Bourbon	Juvenile Turf	Midwest
Oct 09	KEE	Indian Summer	Juvenile Turf Sprint	Midwest

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Asmussen —

■ Continued from page 12

titude toward competition as a key to the win.

“Whether it’s a difference in him or not I don’t know but he appeared to be a lot more confident in the running of the race in the Jim Dandy,” he said. “He was farther back off a moderate pace than would have been ideal, but he was comfortable, he was carrying himself, he was patient and he got there and looked like he had something left and we’re going to need all of whatever may have been left on Saturday.”

Three More Chances

Epicerter isn’t the only Asmussen charge with a chance to shine Saturday. Sprint star Jackie’s Warrior — 5-for-5 in his career at Saratoga — is favored at 1-2 in the Grade 1 Forego. The 4-year-old Maclean’s Music colt cruised to a Grade 1 win in the Alfred Vanderbilt here July 30, his fourth win in as many tries this year after winning the Eclipse Award as champion male sprinter last year.

He takes on six others in the 7-furlong race worth \$600,000.

“It’s so funny,” Asmussen said. “He’s 4-for-4 and you’re going into the Forego and watching his last race thinking, ‘Have we done enough?’ He’s fun to watch.”

The fifth race on the card, the Forego attracted a field of seven, including Vanderbilt runner-up Kneed-eepinsnow and meet winners Baby



Tod Marks

Sprint champion Jackie’s Warrior eyes his fifth consecutive win.

Yoda and Three Two Zone.

In the eighth, the \$500,000 H. Allen Jerkens, Asmussen and Winchell send out Gunite off a win in the Grade 2 Amsterdam here July 31. At 6-1 on the morning line, the 3-year-old Gun Runner colt takes on heavy favorite Jack Christopher at 7 furlongs. The trainer is counting on a step forward from his horse, who finished second in last year’s Grade 2 Saratoga Special before winning the Grade 1 Hopeful. Gunite closed 2021 with a fifth, 14 lengths behind Jack Christopher, in the Grade 1 Champagne in October before an eight-month break and wins in two of three starts this year.

“We were soundly beaten by Jack Christopher in the Champagne, the difference is this race is run here at



Tod Marks

Clairiere is favored in the Personal Ensign.

Saratoga where Gunite has run his best races and we are a way fresher horse than we were last year,” Asmussen said. “We are a fresher horse going into the Jerkens than we were last year going into the Champagne. I think that matters for him. He’s never needed to be favorite to have success. We’ve noticed that with him. He runs his race.”

Star 4-year-old filly Clairiere represents the team in the Grade 1 Personal Ensign, a five-horse throwdown. Each has earned more than \$1 million and four are Grade

Continued On Page 15



Kentucky Derby winner Rich Strike checks out the Saratoga paddock

Tod Marks

Striking Toughness

Derby winner eyes Travers win

BY TIMOTHY LITTAU

TRAVERS STAKES PREVIEW

Resilience is not always easy to muster. And it is exactly what Travers Stakes contender Rich Strike and his trainer Eric Reed share.

Rich Strike's name appeared in a program for the first time last summer at Ellis Park, going a mile on the turf in a maiden special weight for Joe Sharp. He finished last, only momentarily passing two horses on the backstretch before finishing 14 lengths behind the winner.

"I didn't see much turf in that pedigree," Reed said. "Something told me, it was all a hunch, that they ran him in that race because they wanted

the mile more than they wanted the turf."

There was not much to see in the Keen Ice colt – except for his workouts, going 5 furlongs in 59.60 on Churchill's dirt 11 days before his Aug. 15 debut, 4 furlongs in 47.20 in his first work back Aug. 29 and 3 furlongs in 37.60, his last tune up before a Sept. 17 maiden claimer at Churchill going a mile on the dirt.

"Two-year-olds that work like he was working, before they ever run a

Continued On Page 18



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Rich Strike —

■ Continued from page 16

race, have some talent,” Reed said. “That’s why I decided to tell Rick (Dawson), and Rick and I both agreed that it was worth the gamble to see if the turf was the only reason he ran poorly.”

Rick Dawson of Red-TR Racing and Reed put in the \$30,000 claim. Rich Strike won by 17 1/4 lengths.

“We were just hoping nobody else had dropped the slip on him,” Reed said.

Less than eight months later, Rich Strike upset the Kentucky Derby at 80-1. Winning the Derby is famously difficult. Winning it with a horse you claimed would only increase the odds. It took Reed 38 years of training and plenty of curves in the road. The first twist came four years into his career in 1989.

“I’d been at Churchill for a couple years, but that spring, they put people on hold until after the Derby,” he said, “and for whatever reason they put me on hold and I was at Keeneland with nowhere to go.”

Reed called Frank Gabriel, then a racing executive at Arlington Park.

“Stalls had already been allotted at that time, but Frank found me more stalls than I needed and I just sent the whole barn there,” he said. “Had that not happened I don’t know what would have happened because I had a really big owner at the time and if I had lost him that probably would have been the end of it.”

Reed and Gabriel, now NYRA’s senior vice president of racing operations, reconnected at Belmont Park ahead of the Belmont Stakes this spring.

“I was shocked when I saw Frank at Belmont, I didn’t know he worked there,” Reed said. “I just said, ‘Look what happened when you gave me stalls.’”

That’s not the only chapter in Reed’s training book. In 2002, he nearly bought 25 acres to start a breaking/training business only to see the property sold to someone else.

“I was pretty down and disgusted,” he said. “I didn’t realize it, of course, but if I’d have bought it I wouldn’t have been able to buy Mercury (Equine Training Center in Lexington) two years later when the op-

portunity came. So what I thought I needed wasn’t what I needed.”

What he really did not need was lightning to strike at Mercury – literally – as 23 of his 36 horses perished in a barn fire Dec. 18, 2016. He called a return to training, “an impossible task” and contemplated quitting.

“I was gutted,” he said. “When the first horse went to the track a few days later, I realized it was going to be OK to a point and then I got flooded with well-wishes and love and friendship. Sometimes bad things happen when you think everything’s as good as it can get and you realize it really wasn’t as good as it can get, it can always get better and you just can’t let anything keep you down. I learned more from that than anything in life. And I thought I had some bad times, but when you have something like that happen to you and you can find the courage to keep going, it makes you feel really good about it.”

Resilience became a theme for Rich Strike as well.

Bobbled, bumped and shuffled at the start of his Oct. 9, 2021 allowance at Keeneland, he fought back to finish third.

“For me it was the first time that I

even thought about a potential Derby horse because it was Keeneland, it was 2-year-olds, it was a mile-and-a-sixteenth and he wanted to go farther, and he had gotten in trouble against a pretty quality group.”

November’s Grade 2 Kentucky Jockey Club at Churchill was supposed to come next, but Reed skipped it when his horse drew post three of 14. Pointed to Remington Park’s Springboard Mile Dec. 17, Rich Strike got sick. He shipped to Fair Grounds for the Gun Runner Stakes Dec. 26 and finished fifth (14 lengths behind Epicenter) after getting stirred up in the paddock.

“He lost his composure,” Reed said. “It took four of us to put the saddle on him, he was wringing wet. But at Keeneland he was like a gentleman, so he was completely out of character . . . He managed to get going down the stretch and finished fifth. But what kept us going after the race, instead of just throwing the towel in and saying, ‘Thank God it’s over,’ he ran by every horse galloping out as hard as he could and got right to Epicenter.”

Continued On Page 20

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Rich Strike —

■ Continued from page 18

Reed figured he'd try one more time, and Rich Strike finished third in the Leonatus Stakes at Turfway Park in January. Fourth in the Battaglia Memorial and third in the Jeff Ruby Stakes to garner some Derby points, Rich Strike made the also-eligible list for the first Saturday in May. You know the rest of the story. Rich Strike got into the field after a scratch and shocked everybody.

The connections bypassed the Preakness, watched their horse finish sixth in the Belmont and aimed for the Travers. The trainer called it "another race I never thought I would be in. I'm just hoping we get a good race out of it. If Richie shows up, he's got a chance. The way he worked on the track, he's got a chance."

Rich Strike breezed 5 furlongs over the main track in :59.82 Aug. 19. Reed thought he fouled up the clocking, so did assistant trainer Sid Scott.

"I wasn't worried about if he would be tired, I was just worried whether he struggled over the track or not," said Reed. "He wouldn't have done that if he struggled. I was just giving him a protection work because his work at Churchill the other day (5 furlongs in :59.40 nine days earlier) was his hard work. And this is kind of what he did before the Derby, when he worked by himself and did it so easy. He got us pretty excited that day."

Physically, Rich Strike is an easy horse to train. Mentally, he is difficult to get focused, and does his best running with a horse to his outside.

"He still doesn't want to be the only horse outside," Reed said. "As long as he has a horse to his right it doesn't matter where he's at. He can be five wide as long as there's a six-wide horse."

The 10-1 sixth choice on the morning line, Rich Strike breaks from post two in the eight-horse Travers field for regular jockey Sonny Leon. Reed knows plenty there is plenty more to prove.

"I think if he wins this race he'll still have to prove himself because people have already deemed him not to be what he is," the trainer said. "I think he'll have to prove himself no matter what he does for the rest of his career."

• • •

The Travers field, led by 7-5 favorite Epicenter, goes pretty deep. After finishing 18th in the Derby, Cyberknife has won his last two, the Grade 3 Matt Winn at Churchill and the Grade 1 Haskell at Monmouth Park July 23. Trained by Brad Cox, Gold Square's Gun Runner colt breaks from the inside for Florent Geroux at 7-2 while looking for his third Grade 1 score.

RPM Thoroughbreds' Ain't Life Grand won the Iowa Derby July 9 and backed that up with a romp in the Iowa Stallion Stakes, both at Prairie Meadows. The Not This Time colt, bred in Iowa by his owners and trained by Kelly Von Hemel, eyes his sixth win and will be ridden by Tyler Gaffalione at



Tod Marks

Team Rich Strike: Rick Dawson (left) and Eric Reed.

20-1 from post three. Grandview Equine and Don Alberto Corp. entered Gilded Age off a second in the Curlin Stakes here July 29. Junior Alvarado rides the Medaglia d'Oro colt for trainer Bill Mott at 30-1 from post four.

Juddmonte Farm's Artorius won the Curlin, just his third start, for trainer Chad Brown. Irad Ortiz Jr. takes the return call at 9-2 from post five. Early Voting won the Preakness and was last of four after leading the Jim Dandy. Jose Ortiz rides for Brown and Klaravich Stable from post seven at 8-1. Jeff Drown's Zandon makes it three runners for Brown while looking to one better than his second in the Jim Dandy and two better than his third in the Derby. Flavian Prat rides the Upstart colt from post eight at 5-1.

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Irish Raider

O'Brien sends Broome to Spa for competitive Grade 1 turf test

BY PAUL HALLORAN

You have to figure Aidan O'Brien is eventually going to win a race at Saratoga Race Course – perhaps even today, when the Irish trainer sends out Broome in the Grade 1 Sword Dancer.

"We're always trying. It's obviously very tough," O'Brien said by phone Friday. "We've sent a lot of good horses, but we haven't won any races. It's tough, competitive racing but that's the way it should be, isn't it? We very much respect everyone there."

Any horse from the barn of O'Brien, who has won 13 Breeders' Cup races, commands instant respect, including Broome, a 6-year-old son of Australia who finished second in last year's Breeders' Cup Turf at Del Mar.

"We're very happy with him," said

SWORD DANCER STAKES PREVIEW

O'Brien, 0-for-9 at Saratoga and 3-for-27 on the NYRA circuit, having won the Belmont Oaks twice and Belmont Derby. He also won the 2001 Breeders' Cup Juvenile at Belmont with Johannesburg. "The last time he ran very well he just came up yards short. Everything has gone very well since."

Broome contested the pace before finishing fourth in the Group 1 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at Ascot July 23, behind dual Group 1 winner Pyledriver, 2021 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe champion Torquator Tasso and 2021 Juddmonte International and Saudi Cup winner Mishriff. In his

Continued On Page 24



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Broome, here training for last fall's Breeders' Cup Turf, returns to the U.S. for Aidan O'Brien.

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Sword Dancer —

■ Continued from page 22

previous race, Broome led all the way in the Group 2 Hardwicke Stakes at Royal Ascot June 18.

“He did everything right that day,” said O’Brien, who is hoping Broome can fare slightly better than Japan, who finished second in last year’s Sword Dancer. “It was probably his best run of the year. We felt he came back every bit as good if not better than before. He’s a horse that’s maturing very well.”

That gives O’Brien confidence that the Sword Dancer is the right spot for the horse owned by Masaaki Matsu-shima, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael Tabor and Derrick Smith.

“We try to go places that he might win,” he said. “We have the Breeders’ Cup Turf in the back of our mind as well. We could have kept him home for the Champions Stakes or the Juddmonte International, but we thought this maybe is a better fit.”

Broome, who has won eight times in 25 starts with more than \$1.9 million in earnings, has been at Saratoga for a week and has trained on the main track. Ryan Moore is in to ride.

“Everything seems to be going well,” O’Brien said.

On paper, it looks as if the Sword Dancer is not loaded with early speed, so Broome may be on or near the pace.

“He’s very happy to be forward and very comfortable to be forward,” O’Brien said. “If that’s the way it happens, we’d be delighted.”

Broome has a chance to do what Japan could not: beat Gufo, the Christophe Clement trainee who won last year’s Sword Dancer and is back to defend his title. The 5-year-old son of Declaration of War is coming off a fifth-place finish in the Grade 1 United Nations at Monmouth, in which he was 15 lengths behind halfway through the 11-furlong race.

“The horse was left with a lot to do in the race in New Jersey,” Clement said Friday morning, after watching Gufo gallop 1¼ miles on the Oklahoma training track. “It’s very annoying because he got nothing out of it, but he actually ran a very good race. He made up like 14 lengths in the last quarter but he just could not make up 15 lengths. We put the blinkers back on to try to make it a bit easier to stay a little closer.”

Continued On Page 26



Adhamo looks for a second Grade 1 win.

Tod Marks



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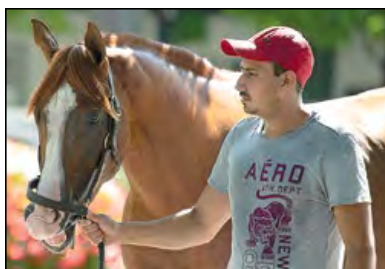
Sword Dancer —

■ Continued from page 24

Gufo, owned by Stephen Cainelli's Otter Bend Stables, ran in blinkers in his last four starts of 2021, including the Sword Dancer win, but Clement thought he was too keen for the Breeders' Cup Turf, in which he finished 10th, so he removed them heading into this year.

"We took them off for the winter," Clement said. "He won at Gulfstream (Pan American) without them and ran very well (second) in the Man O' War without them. He ran OK in the Manhattan (third). I probably should have put them on for the race at Monmouth. He still ran OK, but he was too far back with too much to do, so we will correct that for this race."

Clement believes jockey Joel Rosario will have to keep Gufo more in touch with the field if the trainer is going to win his fourth Sword Dancer.



Tod Marks

Gufo defends his Sword Dancer title.

got to help me. He can be 4-5-6 but he can't be 8-9-10. We should have a decent amount of pace and the blinkers should be able to keep him a little closer. His work in the morning shows you that with the blinkers he's going to be a bit more handy."

Gufo has worked three times on the Oklahoma turf since the United Nations. He is the 9-2 third choice on the morning line behind Broome (3-1) and Adhamo (7-2), who won the United Nations for trainer Chad Brown and jockey Flavien Prat.

"We've been lucky to win it with Honor Glide (1999), Winchester (2011) and Gufo last year," he said. "We know what it takes to win it, but it's not a walk in the park. It's a tough race. Joel's

"It's not just Broome," Clement said. "Chad Brown has a few nice horses and Channel Maker is always tough. It's a good field."

Gufo has lost three straight but still recorded at least a 100 Beyer Speed Figure in all four of his starts this year, leading Clement to think he is still in form.

"You never know if they're quite the same," he said. "His works have been good. I worked him with City Man. He is a nice horse (who won the Grade 3 Forbidden Apple July 15). He always finishes his works and he has been coming out of them in good order. He looks well, he's very sound and he's been eating well. This is a logical spot."

Brown also has Rockemperor, coming off a win in the Bowling Green, and Tribhuvan, who won the Manhattan on the Belmont Stakes undercard. Bill Mott sends out 8-year-old Channel Maker, a nine-time winner and \$3.6 million earner. New York-bred Cross Border, Clement's Soldier Rising, Mira Mission for Ian Wilkes and six-time winner Cold Hard Cash complete the field.

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Tod Marks

Champion Letruska, last year's Personal Ensign winner, schools in the paddock after arriving from Kentucky.

PERSONAL ENSIGN STAKES PREVIEW

Tall Order

Letruska defends title in deep field for Grade 1

BY PAUL HALLORAN

If you're looking for an explanation for Letruska's last-place finish in the Grade 1 Ogden Phipps on the Belmont Stakes undercard, her trainer would recommend you not overthink it.

"This is part of the races. Not every day you will have the same horse," Fausto Gutierrez said Friday morning outside of David Donk's barn on the main track, where the 2021 champion older dirt female has been bedded down for a week since arriving from Churchill Downs. "It's like pitchers. One day they're out in the second inning and you say, 'what happened?' It happens even with cars and machines. She is a horse who has been putting it on the line for five years. That day, all the circumstances were not in our favor."

Continued On Page 30

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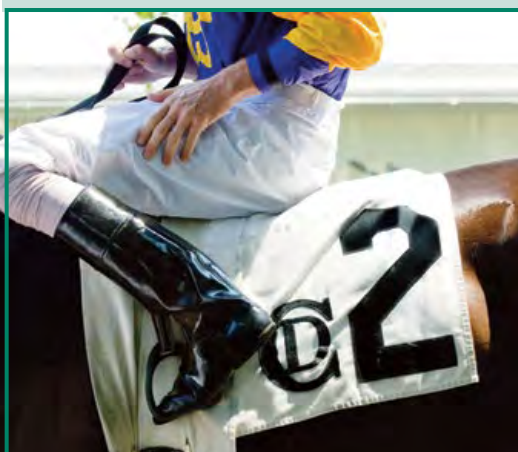
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Closes Sept. 3
\$300,000
Includes \$75,000 from KTDF
Two Year Olds
1 1/16 Miles

LOCUST GROVE (GIII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 17
Closes Sept. 3
\$400,000
Includes \$100,000 from KTDF
Fillies & Mares, Three Years Old & Up
1 1/16 Miles

POCAHONTAS (GIII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 17
Closes Sept. 3
\$300,000
Includes \$75,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Two Year Olds
1 1/16 Miles

LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY

Runs Sat., Sept. 17
Closes Sept. 3
\$275,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three Year Olds & Up
6 Furlongs

OPEN MIND (Listed)

Runs Sat., Sept. 17
Closes Sept. 3
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Fillies & Mares, Three Years Old & Up
6 Furlongs

SENECA OVERNIGHT STAKES

Runs Sat., Sept. 24
Closes Sept. 10
\$160,000
Includes \$65,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Three Year Olds
1 1/16 Miles

BOURBON TRAIL

Runs Sat., Sept. 24
Closes Sept. 10
\$275,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three Year Olds
1 3/16 Miles

HARRODS CREEK

Runs Sat., Sept. 24
Closes Sept. 10
\$275,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three Year Olds
7 Furlongs

DOGWOOD (GIII)

Runs Sat., Sept. 24
Closes Sept. 10
\$275,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Three Year Olds
7 Furlongs

ACK ACK (GIII) "Win and You're In Dirt Mile Division"

Runs Sat., Oct. 1
Closes Sept. 17
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three Year Olds & Up
1 Mile

LUKAS CLASSIC (GII)

Runs Sat., Oct. 1
Closes Sept. 17
\$400,000
Includes \$100,000 from KTDF
Three Years Old & Up
1 1/8 Mile



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Personal Ensign —

■ Continued from page 28

That's an understatement.

Known for playing catch me if you can – and they usually can't – Letruska was given no free pass in the one-turn Ogden Phipps, with Chad Brown's Search Results engaging her from the start. The pair whisked through a quarter mile in :22.75 and a half in :45.23, separating themselves from the other three fillies by 10 lengths into the turn.

Search Results took the lead on the turn and looked like a winner until getting nailed by Clairiere and Malathaat just before the wire. Letruska faded to last and ended up losing by more than 35 lengths.

"She did not have the best trip from Kentucky, but that's not an excuse," Gutierrez said. "The rhythm for the race was very aggressive and she decided to quit – fast."

Jockey Jose Ortiz, who jogged Letruska on the main track Friday morning in preparation for Saturday's Grade 1 Personal Ensign, said the race flow was the issue.

"It was a fast race. There was a lot of pressure applied to her," Ortiz

said. "She had been winning on the lead. I guess they didn't want to keep getting beat like that. They applied a lot pressure and we faded. It set up for the horses in the back."

Ortiz and Gutierrez are hoping for a markedly different scenario in the two-turn Personal Ensign, to be run as the ninth race on the Travers Stakes card at 4:32 p.m.

"Two turns is a little better for her to get a breather on the backside," said Ortiz, who will ride Letruska for the fourth consecutive race, after taking over for his brother, Irad. "Horses can't talk and say if they are 100 percent or not. She's happy. Fausto's happy. And he knows her better than anybody else."

The trainer is confident that his magnificent mare has not lost her fastball at age 6.

"I hope tomorrow we erase that race," he said. "That day she was not the horse she normally is. We gave her a small break and she continued to train (at Churchill). She arrived here with six very consistent workouts (four bullets). I try to be a little stronger with her than normal and she responded very good."

Letruska, who started her career

Continued On Page 32



Malathaat has fun in the Saratoga paddock Wednesday.

Tod Marks

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DEL MAR OAKS G1 WINNER

SPENDARELLA

BENOIT PHOTO ©

Global G1 performer SPENDARELLA cruised to a 4 1/2-length victory at Del Mar, August 20, defeating 12 foes in her second G1 test. The 3-yr-old NY-BRED is now 4-1-0 in 5 starts, with earnings of \$596,495.

"When (Spendarella) kicked for home and left them, that was pretty incredible." - ALICE CLAPHAM, assistant trainer
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"She's special. I have to give Graham and his team all the credit. I don't get to ride too many like her."
- TYLER GAFFALIONE, jockey
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Personal Ensign —

■ Continued from page 30

with six straight wins in Mexico, will break from the rail as she attempts to capture the Personal Ensign for the second straight year and a Saratoga stakes for the third year in a row, having won the Grade 3 Shuvee in 2020. She has won 19 races in 26 starts, including 10 graded stakes, and will almost certainly go over the \$3 million mark in earnings Saturday.

“She’s a horse who has a lot of character for the good and the bad,” Gutierrez said. “She’s very aggressive now. I have confidence.”

In the Personal Ensign, the daughter of Super Saver will take on three of the same opponents from the Ogden Phipps – Clairiere, Malathaat and Search Results – along with Crazy Beautiful. NYRA oddsmaker David Aragona installed Clairiere as the 6-5 morning line favorite in the field of five.

“All these important races have short fields (now),” Gutierrez said. “Do you want a field of 14 that doesn’t have quality? It’s a tough field, but she’s part of that field. She’s one of the horses to make the race more complicated. To beat this horse you have to run strong. You see the record she has. We are here again. Why not (win a race) three years at Saratoga?”

If she does that, she will earn it. Clairiere has won two straight and three of four in 2022, while



Tod Marks

Crazy Beautiful was third in the Shuvee.

2021 Kentucky Oaks and Alabama Stakes winner Malathaat will be looking to get back in the winner’s circle after running second in the Ogden Phipps and Shuvee.

Dull in the paddock and while warming up for the Shuvee here July 24, Malathaat returns for trainer Todd Pletcher and Shadwell Stable while looking to avenge the two losses to Clairiere. The daughter of Curlin looked sharp while paddock

schooling Wednesday, bucking and kicking out on the horsepath while walking back to the barn. Since the Shuvee, she’s breezed three times including a bullet 5 furlongs in 1:01 on the main track Aug. 12.

“I think it was the heat, that’s the only thing that makes any sense to me,” Pletcher said of his filly’s paddock behavior before the Shuvee. “You could tell she was just a little clammy and just like super quiet. She’s a very classy filly, not animated at all times, but she was different that day. I told Johnny (Velazquez) to warm her up good and see if he could put her on her toes a little bit in the post parade. He said she galloped fine, warmed up fine, but as soon as she got next to the pony she was super dull.”

Today’s forecast calls for a high of 79, good news to Malathaat’s trainer.

“Hopefully, it’s not quite as hot and it’s just a one off and she puts it behind her,” he said. “She didn’t run badly. We just felt like there was more there.”

Search Results comes off a win in Monmouth’s Grade 3 Molly Pitcher while Crazy Beautiful looks to get closer to Clairiere and Malathaat after finishing third in the Shuvee.

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Sean Clancy

Conagher brings four wins into Allen Jerkens Memorial.

Stepping Up

Speedy arrival Conagher tackles Gunite, Jack Christopher in Gr. 1

BY TOM LAW

H. ALLEN JERKENS PREVIEW

Conagher walked into the courtyard between a couple small barns on the Oklahoma Training Track near the maintenance area and members of Phil Bauer's team took immediate notice.

"What race is that horse running in?" they asked Bauer, seeing the chestnut son of Jimmy Creed taking in the scene. "He's a beast."

Bedded down for the short week in the same barn that's produced five winners from nine starts at the meet, Conagher and his four wins in nine starts fits right in. His connections – trainer Mike Tomlinson and owners Patricia's Hope and Mark Farrar – hope he fits in Saturday's Grade 1

H. Allen Jerkens Memorial Stakes at Saratoga.

"He's been an exceptional horse this year," Tomlinson said Friday morning, before Conagher turned in a light training session on the main track along with a short stop to stand in the starting gate. "We're pretty lucky to have him."

Tomlinson and his owners wound up with Conagher after the colt made his debut in a 4 1/2-furlong maiden race for 2-year-olds last spring at Keeneland. A \$9,000 purchase at the 2020 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky October

Continued On Page 36

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Jerkins —

■ Continued from page 34

yearling sale, Conagher started his career for owner/trainer Bobby McCutchen.

Conagher finished second, 2 1/4 lengths behind eventual Sanford Stakes runner-up Headline Report, in his debut and McCutchen let Tomlinson know he was for sale.

"Hey, I have a pretty nice colt over here," McCutchen told Tomlinson.

Tomlinson, who brought graded stakes winner Barbados to Saratoga to finish third in the Grade 2 Amsterdam in 2015, liked what he saw and a deal was struck.

"Of course he was considerably higher than the \$9,000, but we got him bought," Tomlinson said. "And they've turned a profit already."

Conagner comes into the 7-furlong Jerkins, where he drew post one in the field of nine, with \$312,353 in earnings. He's made the bulk of it this year, after back-to-back blowout victories at Keeneland and Churchill Downs, a second in the Iowa Derby and a win in the 7-furlong House-

buster Stakes last time at Colonial Downs.

Conagher won going 6 furlongs in 1:09.95 at 73-1 in April at Keeneland, then followed up with a victory over Jerkens entrant and Grade 1 winner Gunite in a 7-furlong optional at Churchill in 1:20.62. Conagher was the narrow favorite — 8-5 versus 9-5 — over the comebacking Gunite and beat him by 5 1/4 lengths.

"We're no dummies though; we know that was Gunite's first race back," Tomlinson said. "But when he came to us at the eighth pole, our horse was just like 'See you later.' He did it the right way. We'll see what happens. Gunite sure has made us look good since."

Gunite was installed as the 6-1 fourth choice on the morning line for the \$500,000 Jerkins behind 6-5 favorite Jack Christopher, 7-2 Conagher and 9-2 Accretive.

Gunite beat Accretive by a neck in the Grade 2 Amsterdam July 31, putting a cap on a huge weekend for Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen that also featured wins by Jackie's Warrior in the Grade 1 Vanderbilt and Epicen-

Continued On Page 38



Jack Christopher eyes a third Grade 1 victory.

Tod Marks

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Jerkens —

■ Continued from page 36

ter in the Grade 2 Jim Dandy. Gunite figures to stalk the early pace, which could wind up being set by Conagher from the rail. He drew the rail and set the pace winning the Housebuster, and also led from the front in his win over Gunite at Churchill. Joe Rocco Jr. comes in from Colonial Downs to ride Conagher.

“He’s very tactical, has got a lot of speed and obviously Joe knows him,” Tomlinson said. “The one hole kind of forces your hand in some respects but we’ll see how the race unfolds.”

Jack Christopher, who broke his maiden on Travers Day last year before winning the Grade 1 Champagne in early October, cuts back in distance after finishing third behind Cyberknife and Taiba in the Grade 1 Haskell Stakes going 9 furlongs July 23 at Monmouth Park. The Haskell was the Munnings colt’s first loss in five starts and he won the Grade 1 Woody Stephens at 7 furlongs by 10 lengths prior to that run. Trained by Chad Brown, Jack Christopher drew post six and reunites with regular rider Jose Ortiz.

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Brown also entered Klaravich Stable’s Accretive, second by a neck to Gunite in the Amsterdam. The Practical Joke gelding makes his third start.

Actuator also shortens up after winning the Grade 3 Indiana Derby going 1 1/16 miles at Horseshoe Indianapolis July 9. The son of Bodemeister broke his maiden going 7 furlongs prior to that effort June 8 at Churchill and ships in from trainer Michael McCarthy’s Kentucky string in Louisville.

“The horse has earned the right to come on up,” said McCarthy, who will send out 2021 champion female sprinter and Breeders’ Cup Filly and Mare Sprint winner Ce Ce in Sunday’s Grade 1 Ballerina. “This is certainly a different type of race. I had always been curious about the cutback. I thought he ran so well breaking his maiden so it was always in the back of my head to go ahead and try him again. Obviously this being a Grade 1, Saratoga, it all made sense.”

John Velazquez, fresh from winning his 1,000th Saratoga race Thursday, picks up the mount on Actuator from post four.

Another Jerkens entrant shortening up after the Haskell is Howling Time. He finished fourth, beaten 6 1/2 lengths, and returns to a sprint distance for the first time since a debut maiden win last September for Dale Romans. Joe Talamo comes in from Kentucky for the mount on the son of Not This Time, who is 10-1 on the line.

The other three runners in the Jerkens are double-digit longshots – Kentucky Derby and Preakness starter Happy Jack (15-1), Amsterdam third Runninsonofagun (30-1) and Totalizer (50-1).



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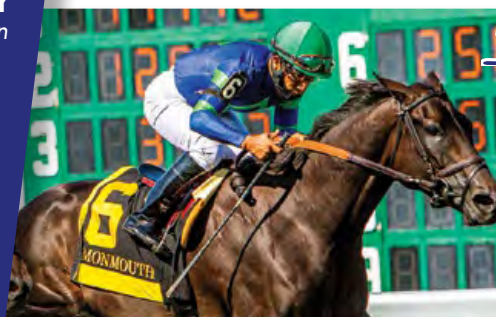
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4 of Saratoga's Grade 1 stakes running this weekend have been won by Maryland-breds.



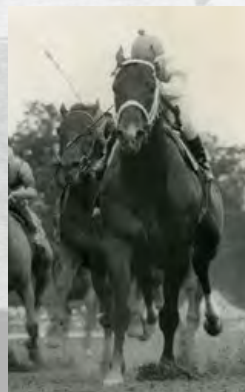
Millionaire **URBANE** won the G1 Personal Ensign in 1996.



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Snow Day

Former claimer takes on five-time Grade 1 winner in sprint stakes

BY SEAN CLANCY

Matt Shirer ducked under the webbing of stall 13, wedged between Peter Pugh and Tom Morley near the Oklahoma training track Friday morning. "Checking shoes," Shirer said.

With six horses in his first season at Saratoga, the 38-year-old trainer has time to check shoes. Especially when they're on the white hooves of his big horse, Kneedeepinsnow. The 6-year-old son of Flat Out chased Jackie's Warrior in the Grade 1 Alfred Vanderbilt July 30, finishing second by a deceptive 2 lengths at 22-1. The chestnut gelding tries again, taking on the 1-2 favorite in today's Grade 1 Forego, the fifth race on a stakes-packed Saturday card.

FOREGO STAKES PREVIEW

Shirer claimed Kneedeepinsnow for \$80,000 on behalf of Jeremy Sussman, Marshall Gramm's Ten Strike Racing and Cory Moelis Racing from an optional claimer at Keeneland in April.

"It wasn't quite last second, but we usually talk about our claims the day before," Shirer said. "This one, I had a horse in at Keeneland and Marshall texted me, 'Take a look at this horse Kneedeepinsnow.' I took a look at him and watched some replays on him. We thought he had some traffic trouble in some of those stakes races, we thought he was a little bit better than the PPs showed and we went ahead and took a shot."



Tod Marks

Kneedeepinsnow and trainer Matt Shirer (left) take on Jackie's Warrior again today.

A four-time winner and a participant in four stakes before that race, Kneedeepinsnow led early and drew off to win by 3 1/2 lengths. Shirer felt good about it when he walked into the Keeneland racing office only to be greeted by a two-way shake.

"That's way more nerve-wracking than a 10 way because you don't ex-

pect to win those," Shirer said. "Two-way and the way he ran, you're sitting there thinking, 'Oh man, if I lose this shake...' Luckily we won it and he's been good ever since."

Without any conditions and fresh off a win, Kneedeepinsnow went

Continued On Page 41

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Forego —

■ Continued from page 40

knee deep into the stakes pool, finishing second in the Work All Week at Hawthorne June 11, third in the Kelly's Landing at Churchill Downs July 2 and waste deep in the Vanderbilt. Breaking from the rail, Kneedeepinsnow dropped to last before circling wide to handle all reasonable rivals. A month later, he tries again. For the first time for Shirer, the five-time winner draws an outside post.

"It's exciting, he's already run second in a Grade 1, we'll just see what happens, we've got to run against the best sprinter in the country, it's not like we expect to win but hopefully he runs his race. It's cool, running in a Grade 1," Shirer said. "He's doing good. He likes it up here, he's a little bit better, he put on a little bit of good weight. It's nice and relaxing up here, he likes Churchill's track but the environment around here is just a little more relaxed, he's got a nice window, he's had two good breezes."

Friday morning, Kneedeepinsnow stood at the front of his stall and volleyed back and forth between a wooden stall door taking the worst of his teeth and the sky above the next barn over attracting his gaze. With two white socks to his knees, he's a sure thing for Name of the Day once you get a look at him.

"He's pretty," Shirer said. "Everybody likes him. I don't know if it's the name, the look, the markings. He's pretty cool."

For Shirer, a former assistant to Ken McPeck, Kneedeepinsnow has contributed to a solid year. The Ohio-native who got his start walking hots at Thistledown has notched 13 wins from 62 starts this year and has hit for the cycle in four tries at Saratoga. Quick Return won a claimer early, Kneedeepinsnow finished second in the Vanderbilt, O'Trouble picked up a third in a claimer and H. T. Xena finished fourth in a starter. Shirer lost Quick Return and O'Trouble to the claim box, his bread and butter since going out on his own in 2015.

"I took my trainer's test and literally didn't have a horse to my name," Shirer said. "Then I started claiming for the one owner I had and built it from there. Maybe two years into training, Ten

Continued On Page 42

BOOK ONE • Barn 5

Tuesday 9/13

250 c. SPEIGHTSTOWN – Foolish Living

1st foal out of a young Medaglia d'Oro mare from the family of Champion HALFBRIDLED.

333 f. CURLIN – Malibu Bonnie

Out of a Graded SP daughter of Malibu Moon from the family of G1 2yo SW WHYWHYWHY.

371 f. JUSTIFY – Overheard

From the second crop of Champion JUSTIFY out of multiple Graded SW (\$548,656) OVERHEARD.

BOOK TWO • Barn 34

Wednesday 9/14

397 c. VINO ROSSO – Quippery

Half-brother Graded SW BEYOND BLAME from the first crop of Breeders' Cup Classic-G1 winner VINO ROSSO.

453 f. MEDAGLIA D'ORO – Spring Party

Half-sister to GSW MARZO out of a SW by SMART STRIKE. Family includes G1 SWs CONSTITUTION, EMCEE, etc.

494 f. UNCLE MO – Tonasah

Half-sister to Graded SP 2yo UNION GABLES out of a Graded SP MALIBU MOON mare.

539 f. MORE THAN READY – Athena

Out of ATHENA (\$459,222), won/placed in 10 stakes. Family of multiple G1 SW BEACH PATROL, etc.

568 c. INTO MISCHIEF – Carolina Bertie

1st foal out of a half-sister to multiple G1 SW BEACH PATROL (\$2,532,945) Arlington Million-G1, Turf Classic-G1, etc.

668 f. FLATTER – Harlee Honey

Out of a half-sister to Santa Ynez-G2 winner CALIFORNIA NECTOR, SW REDSTART, and SP Star Rocker.

751 f. MUNNINGS – New Angel (GB)

1st foal out of a daughter of Graded SW ANGEL TERRACE, from the family of G1 SW ORDER OF ST GEORGE (Ire).

BOOK THREE • Barn 6

Saturday 9/17

1162 f. HARD SPUN – Revel in the Win

1210 f. PRACTICAL JOKE – Stormandaprayer

1232 c. CURLIN – Tangere

1324 c. STREET SENSE – Bernadetta

1329 f. FLATTER – Beyond Blame

1414 f. CAIRO PRINCE – Exclude (GB)

1416 c. CATHOLIC BOY – Fancy and Flashy

1468 c. GHOSTZAPPER – Katie's Kiss

1546 c. GHOSTZAPPER – Orageuse


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Forego —

■ Continued from page 41

Strike came along and gave me some money to claim. We started claiming horses.”

Asked what attracted Ten Strike to a start-up trainer, Shirer laughed.

“Because I bugged them. I kept texting. I met Marshall up here when I was an assistant for McPeck, just random, he kind of remembered me and I just tried to stay in touch with him, ‘Hey, can I claim a horse? Can I claim a horse?’ Eventually he said OK,” Shirer said. “I claimed a horse at Indiana for \$25,000 on the grass. He actually doesn’t like grass horses, he loves long dirt. I didn’t know that at the time. He was cool enough to give me a shot. I ran her at Churchill a month or two later and we won a 2X, we’ve built from there.”

Earlier in the year, Gramm suggested aiming at Saratoga and Shirer didn’t hesitate to fill out the stall list for his first official foray to Saratoga. He has six horses in Saratoga and 18 at his home base at Churchill Downs, most owned or co-owned by Ten Strike.

“Marshall supports a lot of little guys, a lot of the younger guys. It shrinks our business when the horses go to the same three guys. It’s good for those guys,” Shirer said. “It’s been a pretty good meet here. We’ll come back next year. Hopefully with more. I’d like to focus on quality rather than quantity, two strings, up to 50 or so, concentrate on better horses.”

Kneedeepinsnow fits that bill.


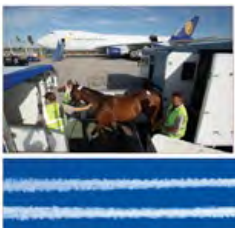


An eclectic group of seven crossed the entry box for the Forego, including the best sprinter in the country.

Jackie’s Warrior seeks his fifth win in a row, his sixth Grade 1 and sixth stakes win at Saratoga. Owned by Kirk and Judy Robison and trained by Steve Asmussen, the 4-year-old son of Maclean’s Music breaks from post three for Joel Rosario.

The bay colt leaps out of a dominant win in the Vanderbilt, becoming the first horse to win a Grade 1 stakes at Saratoga in three successive seasons. In 16 starts, Jackie’s Warrior has lost four times. He finished fourth in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile to close his juvenile season and third in the Southwest to open his 3-year-old season, his last two starts at two turns. He lost a by a neck in the Woody Ste-

Continued On Page 43

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Cody's Wish trains on the Oklahoma Thursday.

Tod Marks



Tod Marks

Three Two Zone exits a win over the track July 17.

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Forego —

■ Continued from page 42

phens last summer, after bungling the start. He finished sixth in the Breeders' Cup Sprint at Del Mar in November and came out of it with a chip in his left knee.

"Honestly he's had a reason every time," Asmussen said. "He got beat going two turns because he was a sprinter. He got beat in the Woody Stephens because he probably ran a quarter in 20 and change five jumps from the gate and still ran well. In the Breeders' Cup, he got hurt. That's his lifetime four losses. That's incredible."

Bill Mott sends out two in the Forego. Baby Yoda exits an allowance win earlier in the meet. The six-time winner, seeking his first stakes win, breaks from the inside for Jose Ortiz. Cody's Wish rides a two-race win streak, taking the Grade 3 Westchester at Belmont in May and the Hanshin at Churchill Downs in July. Junior Alvarado takes the call.

Dave Duggan ventures north from

his Belmont Park base with Drafted. The 8-year-old veteran won the Grade 2 Runhappy at Belmont in May and the Mr. Prospector at Monmouth in June. He finished second in the Alapocas Run at Delaware Park in his most recent start. A world traveler, the son of Field Commission began his career with a win at Keeneland in 2016. He ran at Royal Ascot and Del Mar to complete his 2-year-old season. He made his next 12 starts in Dubai before finishing sixth in the Saudia Cup Sprint in February, 2020. He returned to the U.S. and lost eight in a row. He's now won three of his last five. Luis Rodriguez rides.

Three Two Zone tries to win his first stakes in his 17th career start. The 4-year-old son of Street Sense won a third-level allowance here earlier in the meet. Dylan Davis rides for trainer Ray Handal.

Pipeline returns for his first start since finishing second in the Grade 3 Monmouth Cup for trainer Chad Brown. The son of Speightstown broke his maiden at the Forego distance here last summer. Irad Ortiz Jr. rides for the first time.

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Thumbs Up

Casse targets Grade 2 with Our Flash Drive

BY TOM LAW

Our Flash Drive made her first appearances at Saratoga Race Course during the spectator-free pandemic meeting in 2020.

Things didn't go well for the then 2-year-old daughter of Ghostzapper.

"Her 2-year-old year was the only year she wasn't good," said Mark Casse, who trains the filly for owner/breeder, Charlotte Weber's Live Oak Plantation. "We brought her here and she was terrible. I brought her here because I thought she was really pretty good. She really disappointed us."

Our Flash Drive finished seventh and fourth in two Saratoga appearances that season, beaten 9 and 18 lengths,

Continued On Page 45



Dave Harmon

De La Rose winner Our Flash Drive seeks a Saratoga double in the Ballston Spa.



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LITE THE FUSE <i>Three Year Olds and Upward // 6 Furlongs</i>	\$100,000
ALL ALONG (LISTED) <i>Fillies and Mares - Three Year Olds and Upward // 1 and 1/8 Mile (Turf)</i>	\$100,000
SHINE AGAIN (R) <i>Fillies and Mares - Three Year Olds and Upward // 6 Furlongs</i>	\$75,000

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Ballston Spa —

■ Continued from page 44

respectively. She didn't resurface at the races for almost a year, but came back a different filly and has racked up four wins, two seconds, one third and two fourths in eight stakes and a maiden race since.

"We gave her some time and from that point on she's been good," Casse said.

Two of the victories came in graded stakes and Our Flash Drive bids for her third win at that level in Saturday's Grade 2 Ballston Spa, which kicks off the six-pack of stakes on the loaded Travers Day card at Saratoga.

Our Flash Drive, 4-1 on the morning line with Dylan Davis taking the return call, comes out of a victory on the inner turf course in the restricted 1-mile Fasig-Tipton De La Rose Stakes Aug. 7. Casse would prefer the inner for the 1 1/16-mile Ballston Spa, which goes on the Mellon Turf Course.

"A mile-and-a-sixteenth, maybe just a tad long for her, but we're here, it's a small field and we're going to give it a try," Casse said.

Casse considered sending Our Flash Drive back to Woodbine, where she prepped for the De La Rose, for the Grade 2 Canadian Stakes on Sunday's Queen's Plate Stakes card. He won that event with Fev Rover.

"That was my other choice, and we won the race, but that was going a mile-and-an-eighth," Casse said. "She could not get a mile-and-an-eighth at Woodbine. Different places. I actually think this place, on the inner turf, plays more like 7 1/2. That's why Got Stormy loved it. When you run at Woodbine I add a sixteenth of a mile. When I run at Kentucky Downs, I add an eighth of a mile. ... She has a lot better shot at getting a mile-and-a-sixteenth here, but we play the hand that's dealt. I will say this, she's in a good place and that's all you can ask."

Our Flash Drive takes on four opponents in the Ballston Spa — last year's

runner-up High Opinion for trainer Tony Dutrow and a trio from trainer Chad Brown's barn in Lemista, Fluffy Socks and Technical Analysis.

The oddsmaker pegs Technical Analysis the best chance to give Brown an eighth Ballston Spa victory since 2012. The 4-year-old daughter of Kingman is even-money on the morning line off her second to In Italian in the Grade 1 Diana the first Saturday of the meet. The Irish-bred won last year's Grade 2 Lake Placid and Grade 3 Lake George at Saratoga, and will be ridden by Jose Ortiz.

Lemista, winner of the Grade 3 Matchmaker on Haskell Day July 23 at Monmouth Park, is 3-1 for Brown and jockey Flavien Prat. The 5-year-old Raven's Pass mare finished two spots behind Our Flash Drive three starts back in the Grade 3 Beaugay. Fluffy Socks finished a half-length behind her stablemate in the Matchmaker and is 7-2 with leading jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. named.

High Opinion, the outsider on paper at 8-1 for John Velazquez, finished fourth as the 6-5 favorite in a 1-mile optional July 27 at Saratoga. The 5-year-old daughter of Lemon Drop Kid won the Neshaminy Match Series Stakes at Parx Racing two back and finished third, one spot behind Our Flash Drive, in the Beaugay three starts back. Owned by Woodford Racing and Team D, High Opinion lost the 2021 Ballston Spa by a nose to Viadara.



Tod Marks

Fluffy Socks looks for her fifth win.

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

Saturday, August 27.

1ST (11:35AM). \$105,000, MSW, 2 YO, 6F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Game Warden	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
2	.....2.....	Track Mate	.....L. Saez	.....D. Lukas	.....8-1
3	.....3.....	Verifying	.....J. Rosario	.....B. Cox	.....5-2
4	.....4.....	Didinger	.....J. Lezcano	.....R. Reid, Jr.	.....6-1
5	.....5.....	Narciso Dali	.....B. Hernandez	.....A. Chichakly	.....20-1
6	.....6.....	King's Glory	.....T. Gaffalione	.....S. Asmussen	.....9-5
7	.....7.....	Standard of Proof	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....7-2

2ND (12:08PM). \$105,000, MSW, 2 YO, 1 1/16M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Quinella, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double					
1	.....8.....	Fire Baron	.....K. Carmouche	.....M. Maker	.....8-1
1a	.....9.....	Decanted	.....K. Carmouche	.....M. Maker	.....8-1
2	.....1.....	Scat Tu Tap	.....J. Leparoux	.....R. Rodriguez	.....20-1
3	.....2.....	Highland Lord	.....D. Davis	.....B. Tagg	.....10-1
4	.....3.....	Alexis Zorba (GB)	.....J. Velazquez	.....J. O'Brien	.....7-2
5	.....4.....	Triple Start	.....L. Saez	.....T. Pletcher	.....5-1
6	.....5.....	Read On	.....J. Alvarado	.....D. Romans	.....10-1
7	.....6.....	America's Guest	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....D. Gargan	.....4-1
8	.....7.....	Take Me to Jimmy	.....M. Franco	.....C. Brown	.....3-1
9	.....10.....	The Count	.....F. Prat	.....T. Pletcher	.....10-1
10	.....	AE-MTO.Funtastic Again	.....J. Velazquez	.....W. Ward	.....7-2

3RD (12:44PM). \$95,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, 7F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	On the Hill	.....L. Saez	.....H. Bond	.....3-1
2	.....2.....	Bold Journey	.....J. Ortiz	.....W. Mott	.....9-2
3	.....3.....	Colormepazzi	.....E. Cancel	.....C. Englehart	.....8-1
4	.....4.....	G Munning	.....M. Franco	.....S. Joseph, Jr	.....9-2
5	.....5.....	Tommy the Torch	.....J. Flores	.....J. Tebbutt	.....15-1
6	.....6.....	Majority Partner	.....J. Lezcano	.....L. Rice	.....4-1
7	.....7.....	Colloquy	.....D. Davis	.....C. Clement	.....10-1
8	.....8.....	Mr. Kringle	.....J. Leparoux	.....J. Terranova, II	.....15-1
9	.....9.....	Great Workout	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....L. Rice	.....6-1

4TH (1:17PM). \$400,000, STK - THE BALLSTON SPA, 4 YO'S & UP, F & M , 1 1/16M (TURF)

Exacta, Quinella, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	High Opinion	.....J. Velazquez	.....A. Dutrow	.....8-1
2	.....2.....	Lemista (Ire)	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....3-1
3	.....3.....	Our Flash Drive	.....D. Davis	.....M. Casse	.....4-1
4	.....4.....	Fluffy Socks	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....7-2
5	.....5.....	Technical Analysis (Ire)	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....1-1

5TH (1:55PM). \$600,000, STK - THE FOREGO, 4 YO'S & UP, 7F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Baby Yoda	.....J. Ortiz	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
2	.....2.....	Drafted	.....L. Rodriguez Castro	.....D. Duggan	.....30-1
3	.....3.....	Jackie's Warrior	.....J. Rosario	.....S. Asmussen	.....1-2
4	.....4.....	Three Two Zone	.....D. Davis	.....R. Handal	.....12-1
5	.....5.....	Cody's Wish	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....7-2
6	.....6.....	Pipeline	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
7	.....7.....	Kneedeepinsnow	.....R. Santana, Jr	.....M. Shirer	.....15-1

6TH (2:32PM). \$70,000, STR \$50,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 7F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 6, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Must Be Love	.....J. Lezcano	.....G. Rodriguez	.....15-1
2	.....2.....	Life Changer	.....J. Rosario	.....J. Terranova, II	.....7-2
3	.....3.....	Leddy	.....K. Carmouche	.....L. Rice	.....10-1
4	.....4.....	Jet Speed	.....L. Saez	.....M. Hemingway	.....8-1
5	.....5.....	Baltasar	.....M. Franco	.....H. De Paz	.....4-1
6	.....6.....	Smokey White	.....F. Prat	.....G. Preciado	.....8-1
7	.....7.....	Swift Tap	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....R. Atras	.....6-1
8	.....8.....	Luni Sima	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....P. Walder	.....6-1
9	.....9.....	Doctor Love	.....J. Davis	.....D. Clarke	.....20-1
10	.....10.....	Misbehaved	.....T. Gaffalione	.....T. Pletcher	.....6-1

7TH (3:12PM). \$120,000, AOC \$62,500, 3 YO'S & UP, 5 1/2F (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double					
1	.....7.....	Comedy Town	.....T. McCarthy	.....M. Trombetta	.....9-2
1a	.....8.....	Old Chestnut	.....D. Davis	.....M. Casse	.....9-2
2	.....1.....	Maxwell Esquire	.....L. Saez	.....M. Maker	.....5-1
3	.....2.....	Discreet Tune	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. David	.....4-1
4	.....3.....	Noble Emotion	.....J. Ortiz	.....H. De Paz	.....9-2
5	.....4.....	Ranger Fox	.....J. Rosario	.....J. Terranova, II	.....7-2
6	.....5.....	Charmed (GB)	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....P. Antonacci	.....8-1
7	.....6.....	Cazadero	.....T. Gaffalione	.....B. Walsh	.....8-1
8	.....9.....	Battle Station	.....K. Carmouche	.....L. Rice	.....10-1
9	.....	AE-MTO.Higher Standard	.....Rider TBA	.....T. Amoss	.....3-1
10	.....	AE-MTO.Foolish Ghost	.....K. Carmouche	.....R. Rodriguez	.....2-1
11	.....	AE-MTO.Amundson	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....R. Diodoro	.....5-2

8TH (3:52PM). \$500,000, STK - THE H. ALLEN JERKENS MEMORIAL, 3 YO, 7F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Conagher	.....J. Rocco, Jr.	.....M. Tomlinson	.....7-2
2	.....2.....	Runninsonofagun	.....K. Carmouche	.....J. Toscano, Jr.	.....30-1
3	.....3.....	Howling Time	.....J. Talamo	.....D. Romans	.....10-1
4	.....4.....	Actuator	.....J. Velazquez	.....M. McCarthy	.....12-1
5	.....5.....	Happy Jack	.....F. Prat	.....D. O'Neill	.....15-1
6	.....6.....	Jack Christopher	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....6-5
7	.....7.....	Totalizer	.....L. Saez	.....M. Maker	.....50-1
8	.....8.....	Gunite	.....T. Gaffalione	.....S. Asmussen	.....6-1
9	.....9.....	Accretive	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....9-2

9TH (4:32PM). \$600,000, STK - THE PERSONAL ENSIGN, 4 YO'S & UP, F & M , 1 1/8M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Letruska	.....J. Ortiz	.....F. Gutierrez	.....3-1
2	.....2.....	Search Results	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....7-2
3	.....3.....	Clairiere	.....J. Rosario	.....S. Asmussen	.....6-5
4	.....4.....	Crazy Beautiful	.....J. Leparoux	.....K. McPeek	.....15-1
5	.....5.....	Malathaat	.....J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....5-2

10TH (5:05PM). \$750,000, STK - THE RESORTS WORLD CASINO SWORD DANCER, 4 YO'S & UP, 1 1/2M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4					
1	.....1.....	Adhamo (Ire)	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....7-2
2	.....2.....	Cross Border	.....T. Gaffalione	.....M. Maker	.....15-1
3	.....3.....	Broome (Ire)	.....R. Moore	.....A. O'Brien	.....3-1
4	.....4.....	Cold Hard Cash	.....J. Velazquez	.....L. Rice	.....30-1
5	.....5.....	Rockemperor (Ire)	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
6	.....6.....	Gufo	.....J. Rosario	.....C. Clement	.....9-2
7	.....7.....	Tribhuvan (Fr)	.....M. Franco	.....C. Brown	.....5-1
8	.....8.....	Soldier Rising (GB)	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Clement	.....15-1
9	.....9.....	Channel Maker	.....L. Saez	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
10	.....10.....	Mira Mission	.....J. Leparoux	.....I. Wilkes	.....12-1

11TH (5:44PM). \$1,250,000, STK - THE RUNHAPPY TRAVERS, 3 YO, 1 1/4M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double					
1	.....1.....	Cyberknife	.....F. Geroux	.....B. Cox	.....7-2
2	.....2.....	Rich Strike	.....S. Leon	.....E. Reed	.....10-1
3	.....3.....	Ain't Life Grand	.....T. Gaffalione	.....K. Von Hemel	.....20-1
4	.....4.....	Gilded Age	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....30-1
5	.....5.....	Artorius	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....9-2
66.....	EpicenterJ. RosarioS. Asmussen7-5
77.....	Early VotingJ. OrtizC. Brown8-1
88.....	ZandonF. PratC. Brown5-1

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

12TH (6:20PM). \$88,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 5 1/2F (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double

1	.....	1	.....	Kreesa	.....	J. Velazquez	.....	D. Donk	.....	5-1
2	.....	2	.....	Feathers Road	.....	J. Lezcano	.....	L. Rice	.....	7-2
3	.....	3	.....	Chief Engineer	.....	J. Panaijo	.....	R. Cash	.....	30-1
4	.....	4	.....	Empire Sky	.....	K. Carmouche	.....	K. Demasi	.....	4-1
5	.....	5	.....	Ripe for Mischief	.....	L. Saez	.....	H. Bond	.....	8-1
6	.....	6	.....	Fuoco	.....	T. McCarthy	.....	P. Serpe	.....	12-1
7	.....	7	.....	Heymackit'sjack	.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....	K. Brion	.....	3-1
8	.....	8	.....	Sir John	.....	J. Alvarado	.....	W. Mott	.....	12-1
9	.....	9	.....	Steerage	.....	J. Rosario	.....	B. Brown	.....	6-1

13TH (6:52PM). \$115,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 1M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

1	.....	1	.....	Parnac (Fr)	.....	J. Rosario	.....	C. Clement	.....	3-1
2	.....	2	.....	Invincible Gal (GB)	.....	F. Prat	.....	C. Brown	.....	5-2
3	.....	3	.....	Runaway Rockette	.....	T. McCarthy	.....	T. Morley	.....	15-1
4	.....	4	.....	Wicked Groove	.....	M. Franco	.....	R. Atras	.....	8-1
5	.....	5	.....	Join the Dots	.....	J. Velazquez	.....	C. McGaughey III	.....	15-1
6	.....	6	.....	Salimah (Ire)	.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....	C. Brown	.....	7-2
7	.....	7	.....	Rhombique	.....	J. Samuel	.....	R. Ribaldo	.....	30-1
8	.....	8	.....	A Little Faith	.....	L. Saez	.....	B. Levine	.....	10-1
9	.....	9	.....	Miss Tapirado	.....	J. Lezcano	.....	W. Mott	.....	5-1
10	.....	AE-MTO	.....	Wasp	.....	F. Prat	.....	T. Pletcher	.....	2-1
11	AE-MTO	Minute Waltz	J. Leparoux	P. Bauer	6-1
12	AE-MTO	Jane Grey	Rider TBA	W. Mott	9-5

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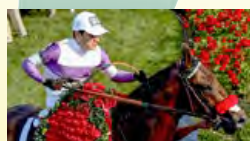
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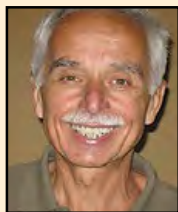
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Race #

1

Verifying
King's Glory
Standard Of Proof

Verifying
King's Glory
Game Warden

King's Glory
Verifying
Standard Of Proof

Verifying
Didinger
King's Glory

Verifying
Standard Of Proof
Game Warden

2

Take Me To Jimmy
America's Guest
Maker entry

Alexis Zorba
America's Guest
Triple Start

Alexis Zorba
Take Me To Jimmy
Scat Tu Tap

Alexis Zorba
America's Guest
Maker entry

America's Guest
Triple Start
Alexis Zorba

3

Bold Journey
Majority Partner
On The Hill

On The Hill
Bold Journey
G Munning

On The Hill
Colloquy
Colormepazzi

G Munning
Bold Journey
Majority Partner

On The Hill
Colloquy
Majority Partner

4

Technical Analysis
Lemista
Fluffy Socks

Technical Analysis
Our Flash Drive
Lemista

Technical Analysis
Fluffy Socks
Lemista

Technical Analysis
Lemista
Our Flash Drive

Lemista
High Opinion
Flash Drive

5

Jackie's Warrior
Pipeline
Baby Yoda

Jackie's Warrior
Cody's Wish
Baby Yoda

Jackie's Warrior
Cody's Wish
Baby Yoda

Jackie's Warrior
Cody's Wish
Kneedeepinsnow

Jackie's Warrior
Cody's Wish
Baby Yoda

6

Luni Sima
Life Changer
Baltasar

Life Changer
Baltasar
Jet Speed

Life Changer
Baltasar
Jet Speed

Life Changer
Baltasar
Swift Tap

Swift Tap
Misbehaved
Doctor Love

7

Discreet Tune
Noble Emotion
Amundson

Amundson
Comedy Town
Noble Emotion

Foolish Ghost
Maxwell Esquire
Ranger Fox

Live Oak entry
Battle Station
Ranger Fox

Discreet Tune
Comedy Town
Cazadero

8

Jack Christopher
Gunite
Conagher

Gunite
Conagher
Jack Christopher

Jack Christopher
Conagher
Actuator

Gunite
Jack Christopher
Accretive

Conagher
Gunite
Jack Christopher

9

Letruska
Clairiere
Malathaat

Malathaat
Clairiere
Letruska

Clairiere
Letruska
Malathaat

Malathaat
Letruska
Clairiere

Letruska
Clairiere
Malathaat

10

Broome
Adhamo
Gufo

Adhamo
Gufo
Broome

Gufo
Tribhuvan
Channel Maker

Adhamo
Broome
Rockemperor

Channel Maker
Broome
Adhamo

11

Epicenter
Artorius
Zandon

Epicenter
Cyberknife
Zandon

Rich Strike
Epicenter
Cyberknife

Epicenter
Zandon
Ain't Life Grand

Zandon
Epicenter
Artorius

12

Heymackit'sjack
Kressa
Empire Sky

Feathers Road
Kressa
Heymackit'sjack

Heymackit'sjack
Feathers Road
Steerage

Feathers Road
Empire Sky
Heymackit'sjack

Kressa
Heymackit'sjack
Sir John

13

Jane Grey
Parnac
Salimah

Jane Grey
Invincible Gal
Parnac

Invincible Gal
A Little Faith
Runaway Rockette

Parnac
Invincible Gal
Wicked Groove

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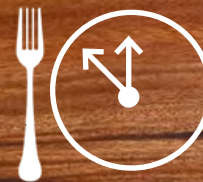
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Boss of New York

Clear Stars runner triumphs in Albany on wet NY-bred day

If the East Avenue Racing people thought they were a lock for Most Raucous Winner's Circle at Saratoga Race Course this year, the Clear Stars Stable folks would like a word.

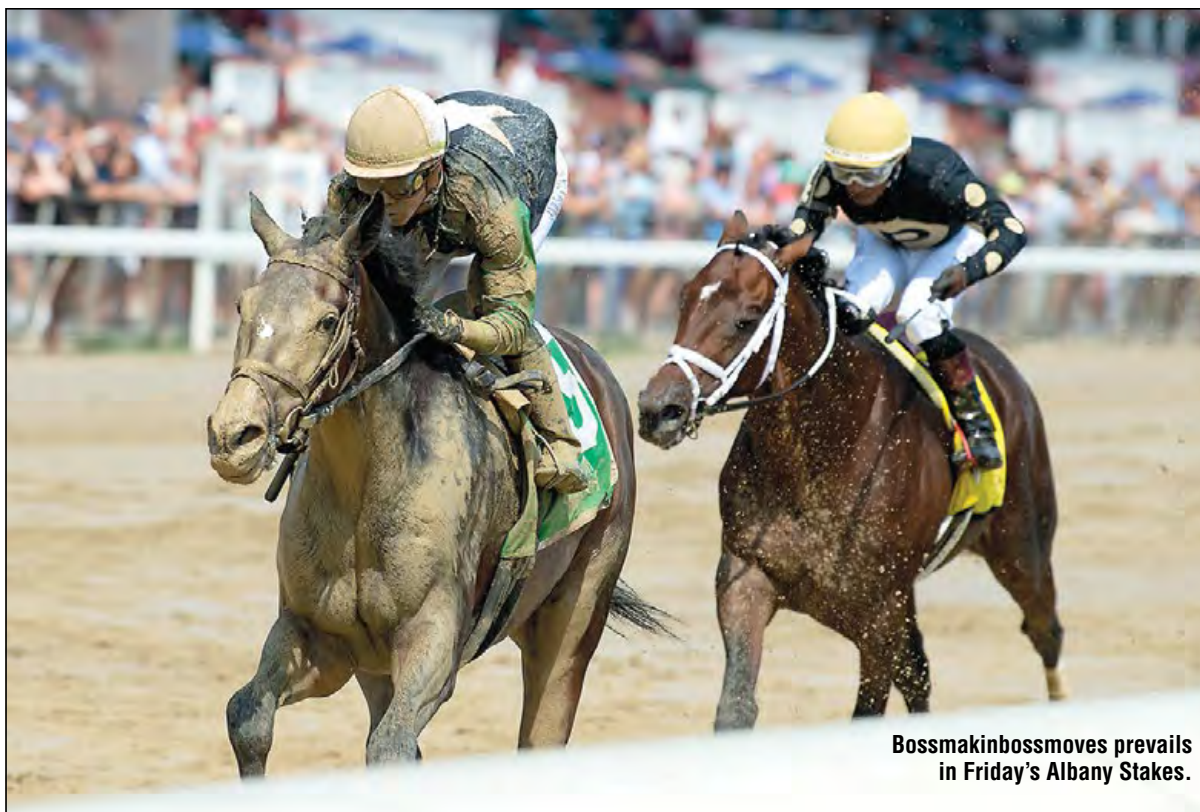
Two weeks after East Avenue turned up the volume in its celebration of Vallelujah's state-bred allowance win, Michael Sternklar and his group from Clear Stars raised the roof when Bossmakinbossmoves overcame a terrible start to win the \$232,500 Albany Stakes for 3-year-olds on Saratoga Showcase Day Friday.

"One time in the paddock another trainer came up to me and said, 'If I don't win I hope you guys do because there's nothing like watching your team celebrate,'" Sternklar said.

Hopefully, that trainer was around Friday.

By Laoban out of the Bernardini mare Marsh-tini and owned by Clear Stars Stable, Mitre Box Stable and trainer Rick Schosberg, Bossmakinbossmoves hopped at the start of the 1 1/8-mile Albany and immediately trailed the four-horse field by 2 lengths.

Jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. allowed the gelding to get into his stride while not losing touch with the field down the backstretch.



Bossmakinbossmoves prevails in Friday's Albany Stakes.

Tod Marks

"He jumped at the break," Ortiz said. "Our plan was to let the speed go and make the last move, so I don't panic. I let the horse get his stride and let him do his thing. He was moving on his own and doing good."

Ortiz had Bossmakinbossmoves, bred by McMahon of Saratoga and Spruce Lane Farm, about 5 lengths behind the triumvirate of Price Discipline, Barese and Montebello, all 2-1 odds or less, down the backstretch. He made an inside move on the turn, then swung wide and powered past Barese and Montebello at the sixteenth-pole to win by three lengths in 1:51.29 and ignite the mayhem.

Bossmakinbossmoves, a \$52,000 purchase at the 2020 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic fall yearling sale, was bought by Clear Stars for \$75,000 at the 2021 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic May 2-year-old sale. The third winning foal out of Marsh-tini, he broke his maiden in the mud at Aqueduct last December, but

lost seven straight heading into the Albany. Schosberg removed the blinkers for the previous race, resulting in a second behind Price Discipline, giving the connections some confidence.

"We took the blinkers off," Schosberg said. "We took a lot of the equipment off of him and he's settled down. We've been training him at Clare Court and he's really relaxed over there. I think he's matured and his last race showed it, but this was a wonderful surprise."

Sternklar started Clear Stars 17 years ago on a suggestion from his best friend and University at Albany roommate Rich Honen.

"We were splitting \$5 bets and Rich said, 'Some-day, we'll be able to own horses,'" Sternklar said. "In 2004 or 2005 he calls me up and says, 'You know, we're not poor anymore. We can actually do

Continued On Page 51

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Friday —

■ Continued from page 50

this,' I guess we can.'

Equine artist Michael Geraghty introduced Sternklar to Schosberg and they have been together ever since. Their first win was with Zippy Shannon in the Schenectady Stakes at Belmont Park in 2006 and they won the inaugural Seeking the Ante Stakes in 2014 with Myfourchix. Last year, A Bit o' Irish Sass brought home the New York Oaks at Finger Lakes.

Nothing, however, compares to what occurred on Union Avenue Friday.

"Of all of them this is the best," Sternklar said, "because this is Saratoga and it's a horse that, frankly, no one thought was going to win. These people around me, this community we've built at Clear Stars, I love them all."

Clear Stars has 14 horses in training, all New York-breds.

"What isn't appealing about the NY program?" said Sternklar, a Saratoga Springs resident and CEO of a healthcare benefits company. "If you're going to race in New York, financially there are such benefits. You can race for purses that are bigger than stakes races in 47 states around the country. This is a friends and family group. If you're into a community of people who like to feel like you're an owner and not just an investor, That's who we are. We're about having fun."

That was evident Friday.

— Paul Halloran

- David Donk has given John Velazquez a leg up on many a winner, so he was feeling pretty anxious when the Hall of Fame jockey aboard Let Her Inspire U led the field into the stretch of the \$194,000 Fleet Indian Stakes for New York-bred 3-year-old fillies.

"She had to work for it today," said Donk, wearing his customary New York Jets hat in the winner's circle. "That's a Hall of Famer in front."

Jose Ortiz is pretty good in his own right and he had enough horse underneath him to catch the frontrunner and keep Fingal's Cave's record a perfect 4-for-4 in the Fleet Indian.

"You don't plan on them being undefeated," Donk said. "We know



Tod Marks

Fingal's Cave heads for home in Friday's Fleet Indian to remain undefeated in four starts.

she is a nice horse. She's got a lot of class."

By Carpe Diem out of the Mine-shaft mare Barbie On a Budget, Fingal's Cave was bred by Chester and Mary Broman. Alifye Racing bought her at the 2021 OBS April 2-year-olds in training sale.

"I worked with bloodstock agent Murette Farrell," said Alistair Fyfe, who owns the racing partnership. "She thought she was a very nice mover."

Fingal's Cave had some minor issues and was sent to Kentucky to Becky Maker, who recommended giving her time to develop. She won a state-bred maiden special at Belmont in May and an allowance in June by a combined 17 1/2 lengths. Donk stretched her to 1 1/8 miles to win an open allowance at Saratoga July 29, setting her up for the Fleet Indian start.

"David still thinks there is a lot to come," said Fyfe, who has been in the ownership game for about 20 years and won his first stakes Friday. "We haven't been really pushing her. We'll probably take a little swing for the fences next time and see where we can go."

Let Her Inspire U set honest fractions of :24.19, :48.15 and 1:12.34 while maintaining a half-length lead over Fingal's Cave down the backstretch. Velazquez extended the lead to a length around the turn as Ortiz took aim and favorite Venti Valentine dropped back. Fingal's Cave finally got a head in front at the sixteenth pole and won by a half-length in 1:51.59.

"When we hit the three-eighths pole, things started getting serious," Ortiz said. "The other filly kept en-

Continued On Page 52



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Friday —

■ Continued from page 51

gaging with me. Every time Johnny asked her she kept on giving it. Finally, I got head-to-head with the other horse. My filly had run a mile and an eighth, the other one hasn't. So, I rode her with a lot of confidence from the eighth pole to the wire and she got the job done."

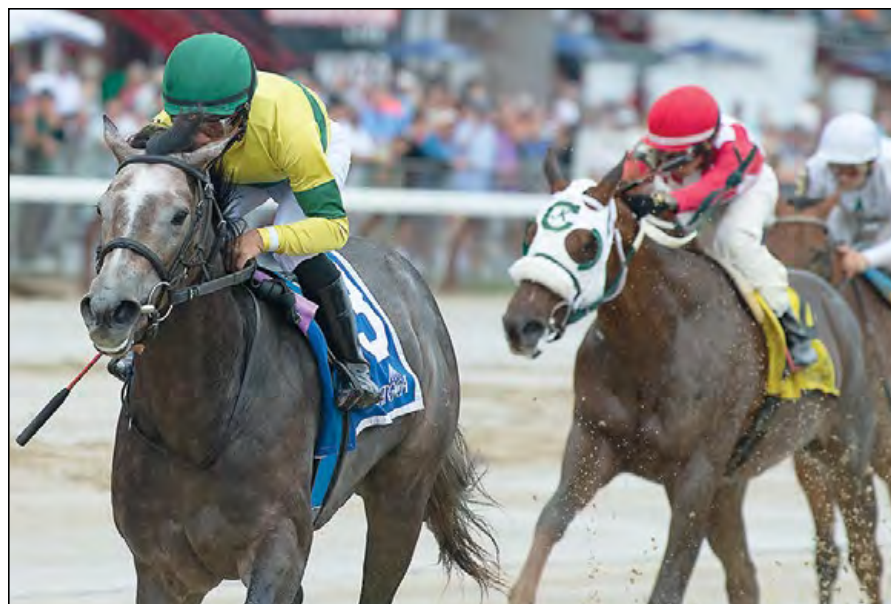
— Paul Halloran

- Jeremiah Englehart was struggling with how to break the news to Bill Parcells that he would not be at Saratoga Race Course August 10 for the debut of Parcells' filly, Maple Leaf Mel.

"This is his locker room," Englehart said of the Hall of Fame coach. "When I missed her run the first time, I was watching a Mets game with my kids. He said, 'I could see myself telling Mr. (Wellington) Mara, I'm not going to be able to make the NFC Championship game this week because I gotta take my kids to a Mets game.'"

Parcells actually took the news in stride and it was all good when Maple Leaf Mel rolled to a 5-length win in the maiden special weight for New York-breds. It was even better Friday when the daughter of Cross Traffic made it 2-for-2 — this time with the trainer front and center — with a 3 1/2-length score in the slop in the \$194,000 Seeking the Ante Stakes to kick off Showcase Day.

"We knew she was a talented filly," Englehart said. "She handled another test, coming back on short rest and she handled the off track. I thought Joel (Rosario) put her in a super spot.



Tod Marks

Maple Leaf Mel stays clear in the Seeking The Ante Stakes.

When you ask her, she goes."

Maple Leaf Mel, who was bred by Joe Fafone and foaled at Waldorf Farm in North Chatham, is the fourth foal and now third multiple winner out of City Gift. She battled with Song Parody early Friday before taking the lead going down the backstretch of the 6 1/2-furlong stakes for 2-year-old fillies. Longshot Lady Mine took over second on the far turn and appeared as if she might pose a serious threat, but Rosario had plenty of horse left, something which was obvious to the astute Parcells.

"I know Joel pretty well," Parcells said. "I've seen what he does and how he behaves. He's worked the horse, he's been on the horse. I knew he had horse left."

Parcells, who celebrated his 81st birthday Monday, was pleased to be back in the Saratoga winner's circle.

"It's the best," he said, when asked

to compare winning a horse race with his myriad of gridiron accomplishments. "It's nice to be my age and have something like this to get you as excited as this."

Englehart said he was smitten when he saw Maple Leaf Mel, an \$18,000 yearling at Keeneland last September, at the Fasig-Tipton Midlantic May 2-year-olds in training sale.

"You want to have those horses that when they come out of the stall and they show them to you, you get stars in your eyes," he said. "Maybe that's a little dramatic, but she was one of those horse that gave you that good feeling."

Robbie Medina, who buys a lot of horses for Parcells, and trainer George Weaver were all on board and they went to \$150,000 to add her to Parcells' August Dawn Farm roster.

They named her for Englehart's assistant, Ontario native Melanie Gid-

dings, which Englehart figured might give him a leg up in getting the horse into his barn. The plan worked and Maple Leaf Mel is doing her namesake, a Stage 4 cancer survivor, proud.

"I talked her into coming up here last year just to live again, to get going again," Englehart said. "She probably hated me for it because it was a lot of work. We're like brother and sister. You can have an argument but you still love 'em. I trust her more than anyone."

After the impressive debut win, open company was a consideration for the second start, but the connections were looking for Maple Leaf Mel to get more of a stern test before taking that leap.

"The first race wasn't a contest," Parcells said. "We wanted her to be in a little better scuffle. We'll talk about the next one."

It will be yet another conversation with the coach that Englehart values, even if they are not all cordial.

"I tell anyone, you haven't been yelled at until you've been yelled at by a two-time, Super Bowl-winning, Hall of Fame football coach," he said. "I'm a better person for knowing him and being able to work with him. In the last four years of our friendship the life lessons I've gotten from him is like having another dad."

— Paul Halloran

- When you have horses coming into a state-bred race off an open stakes in which they were very competitive, the result is often predictable. That was the story of Friday's \$200,000 Funny Cide Stakes.

Andiamo a Firenze, a homebred younger brother of nine-time graded stakes winner and \$2,730,350-earner

Continued On Page 53



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Friday —

■ Continued from page 52

Firenze Fire, rebounded from a third in the Grade 3 Sanford Stakes July 16 and rolled to an easy victory as the odds-on favorite in the race named for the 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness champ.

“He ran great today,” said owner and breeder Ron Lombardi of Mr Amore Stable. “The last race was a little disappointing. He got tired. Kelly got him back to where he needed to be and I think today he showed what he’s all about.”

Trainer Kelly Breen said the ability to run in a state-bred stakes race with such a big purse was the perfect opportunity for the son of Speightstown and the fourth winning foal out of the Langfuhr mare My Every Wish.

“We increase our purse and get to run against New York-breds, so it’s a win-win for us,” Breen said. “This gives him great experience and is maybe a confidence booster. He did run hard the last time and he was tired after that race.”

I’m Wide Awake set a blistering pace, completing the first quarter-mile in :21.29. Belt Parkway tracked him in second and it is no coincidence that the pair finished fifth and sixth in the six-horse field. Irad Ortiz Jr. had Andiamo a Firenze a close third heading into the far turn of the 6 1/2-furlong race, took the lead as they straight-

ened for home and the horse showed his class in winning by 5 1/2 lengths in 1:18.72.

“They went very fast, :21.1,” Lombardi said. “Irak knew he had the horse and when he asked him to go by, he put them away quite easily.”

If all goes well, Andiamo a Firenze will try to follow in his brother’s footsteps by winning the Grade 1 Champagne Stakes Oct. 1 in the Belmont at the Aqueduct fall meeting.

“We’ll celebrate today and hopefully he comes out of this well and the Champagne is in our sights and we’ll move him forward,” Lombardi said.

Breen thinks his colt can build off of Friday’s performance.

“This is a great steppingstone,” he said. “The timing was great, everything about it. We nominated to the Hopeful as a back-up plan if this race didn’t fill. Today he ran fast early and just kept on going.”

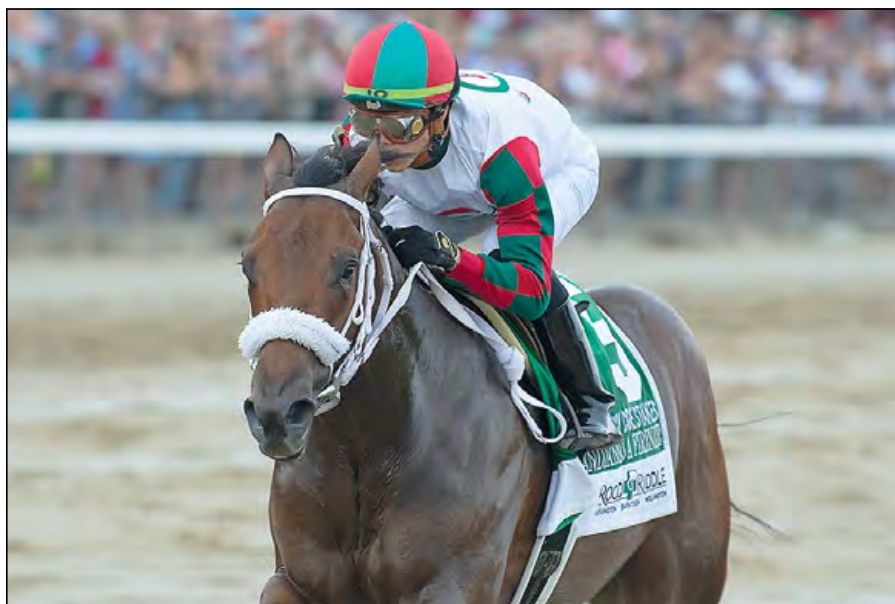
— Paul Halloran

- Mark Casse wants to give Make Mischief a run on the turf. Seriously, he does.

He said as much this week, in the days leading up to the Yaddo Handicap. He said it again Friday with 15 minutes to post for the \$200,000 stakes for older New York-bred fillies and mares.

“I really want to try her on the grass sometime, but I’ll take this,” Casse said, this being a rained-off and scratch-laden field of five going 1 mile

Continued On Page 54



Tod Marks

Andiamo A Firenze cruises to victory in the Funny Cide.

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Friday —

■ Continued from page 53

for a \$110,000 first-place check.

Casse said it again after Make Mischief powered to an 8 1/2-length victory over Ice Princess in 1:37.63 over the muddy and sealed main track. A week removed from being crowned champion New York-bred 3-year-old filly, Make Mischief won for the seventh time in 20 starts and boosted her bankroll to \$746,150 for owner Gary Barber.

"I actually wanted to run her on the grass," Casse said in the winner's circle. "She worked really well on the grass. The mare is 4-for-4 to produce (winners on the grass). We'll wait for another day.

"As soon as they said it was off-the-turf my confidence rose. I wasn't sure how many had scratched but I knew there would be a few."

Friday's late-morning rainstorm moved the Yaddo to the main track and shortened it from 1 1/16 miles to 1 mile out of the Wilson Chute. Only four fillies and mares showed up in the paddock to take on Make Mis-



Tod Marks

Make Mischief gets a pat from Dylan Davis while winning the Yaddo.

chief, who went to the post 3-5 under Dylan Davis.

Wasp, the 5-2 second choice who drew in as a main track only runner, took the early lead from Make Mischief under Flavien Prat and led through splits of :24.63 and :47.50. Davis was content to let Wasp clear from the outside, give up his inside position and stalk from the outside.

"I broke sharp and after that I was going to take an easy lead," Davis said. "Flavien opted to come to me early. I just let her have it. I wanted to be comfortable and she was comfortable on the outside."

Make Mischief took the lead on the far turn with little argument from Wasp and opened up. She and Davis led by 6 in midstretch and cruised from there as Ice Princess edged Wasp

for the place spot by three-quarters of a length.

Mario and Dawn Martinez, who bred Make Mischief out of their Speightstown mare Speightful Lady, were on hand for the filly's latest victory.

"She's a nice filly. It was an easy race for her," Mario Martinez said. "After getting 3-year-old filly for New York, she's just been doing better and better."

— Tom Law

• Somelikeithotbrown also picked up a New York-bred championship last Friday night — his fourth — and added another stakes to his resume with a victory in the rained-off \$174,000 West Point to close the

Continued On Page 55

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Friday —

■ Continued from page 54

stakes portion of the Showcase Day card.

The 6-year-old son of Big Brown, voted New York-bred champion at 2 and 3 and as turf male the last two seasons, won for the first time on dirt over two opponents in the 1-mile West Point. The longest price on the board at 5-2 behind odds-on favorite and recent Evan Shipman winner Bankit and 8-5 second choice Jerry The Nipper, Somelikeithotbrown won by 6 lengths under Jose Ortiz in 1:37.68. Bankit finished second, 4 1/2 lengths ahead of Jerry The Nipper.

Somelikeithotbrown came into the West Point with 20 of 26 starts on the grass, along with four on synthetic tracks. He'd raced just twice on dirt and one of those gave trainer Mike Maker plenty of confidence.

"It [coming off the turf] didn't bother me," Maker said. "I knew it would be a short field. He ran fourth as a 3-year-old in the Blue Grass. A mile and an eighth was probably a bit too far for him. We figured we'd give it a shot. I talked to the ownerships and they said, 'If you feel he's doing well enough, let's run.'"

Bred by Hot Pink Stables and Sand Dollar Stables and campaigned by Skychai Racing and David Koenig, Somelikeithotbrown won his seventh stakes in the West Point.

"It's been a while since he ran on

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Flavien Prat	29
Manny Franco	24
Javier Castellano	23
Jose Ortiz	22
John Velazquez	17
Tyler Gaffalione	14
Jose Lezcano	13

Through Friday

the dirt," Ortiz said. "He's shown tremendous ability over the turf. Mike has done a tremendous job with him since he was a 2-year-old. ... He's got great form on turf and he ran good today on dirt, but it's a three-horse race. It's nice to know that if you're going in on turf, and if it rains, which happens a lot, you can run on the dirt."

— Tom Law



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Grand Master

Velazquez reaches 1,000 wins at the Spa

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Who better than Hall of Fame jockey Ramon Dominguez to put into proper perspective the magnitude of the accomplishment of his friend, John Velazquez, who won his 1,000th Saratoga race Thursday.

“What he has accomplished on the track is not as much as what he has accomplished personally – the human being he is, the family man he is, the role model he is, not only for his peers, but for anyone in contact with him,” Dominguez said in the winner’s circle, after Velazquez reached the milestone aboard Precursory for Bill Mott in the eighth race. “He’s nothing short of amazing. I love Johnny. He’s a great guy and an incredible jockey as well.”

Dominguez won 4,985 races and three straight Eclipse Awards (2010-12) in a career cut short by injury. He was dominant at Saratoga, setting a record for wins with 68 in 2012, eclipsing the mark Velazquez set (64) in 2004.

“One thousand wins at any track is a big deal, but here at Saratoga it’s an even greater deal,” Dominguez said. “It’s not surprising coming from someone like him.”

Velazquez had to work for the milestone, winning a fierce stretch battle with Joel Rosario and Tizzy in the Sky. Velazquez said he was not consumed by the chase for 1,000.



Tod Marks

Precursory and John Velazquez win Thursday’s eighth race to give the jockey 1,000 Saratoga victories.

“I never look at numbers,” said Velazquez, who has 6,440 wins and two Eclipse Awards. “Three years ago my wife looks at the standings and said, ‘We’re close to 1,000. You’ve got to keep going for 1,000.’ I said, ‘Who are you? Where is that coming from? When do I actually follow stats and numbers? I might be retired by then. I’m going to ride and enjoy my time. If it happens, it happens, if it doesn’t, it doesn’t.’”

It happened Thursday, leading to a winner’s circle celebration that included his wife, Leona, father-in-law, Leo O’Brien, and at least a half-dozen fellow jockeys who came in for the photo.

“This is one of the best,” Velazquez said. “Coming here (from Puerto Rico) at 18 years old. I flew

from LaGuardia to Albany with Angel (Cordero). Then we drove here and he told me everything about Saratoga and how special it was. My first year I won (four) races and my (third) year I won two. I was furious. This was not a special place for me.”

He obviously figured it out over the years.

“Saratoga is very special and Angel made it special for me,” he said, of his former agent and fellow Hall of Famer. “He wanted to put in my head that if you thrive here at Saratoga you’re going to thrive anywhere you go.”

What a grand idea.

Continued On Page 57

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Thursday —

■ Continued from page 56

• Flavien Prat enjoyed a 4-win day Thursday, capped by a victory aboard Gina Romantica in the Riskaverse Stakes for 3-year-old fillies who had not won an open-company stakes at a mile or over.

“(Trainer Chad Brown) told me to ride her with confidence,” Prat said. “I was expecting her to be a little closer. She didn’t break well. I got myself tucked inside and she was traveling well. It felt like the pace was pretty fair.”

The Peter Brant-owned Gina Romantica, by Into Mischief out of the Unbridled’s Song mare Special Me, was eighth of 10 after a half-mile that frontrunner Missy Greer ran in :47.40. The winner was still seventh at the top of the stretch, before Prat set her down in a rally that saw her win by 1¼ lengths.

“Turning for home the field was spread out,” Prat said. “I was going to drop myself inside but I found myself behind a wall of horses so I went to Plan B. I went around everybody and she kicked well.”

The Riskaverse was the first turf start for Gina Romantica, a Machmer Hall-bred \$1.025 million yearling purchase in 2020.



Tod Marks

Gina Romantica strides away to win Thursday's Riskaverse Stakes.

“She came from the dirt so I didn’t know if she can accelerate on grass,” Prat said. “The grass had a bit of give in it and she went very well.”

All four of Prat’s wins Thursday came on the turf, starting with a come-from-behind score on first time starter Dontlookbackatall in the second race, a 5½-furlong maiden special weight. Prat had the Pennsylvania-bred by Peace and Justice sitting sixth for the first half of the race before making a move on the outside after they straightened for home and winning by 2 lengths at 11-1.

The horse, owned by West Point Thoroughbreds, Scarlet Oak Racing and Titledown Racing Stables sold for \$150,000 at the OBS March 2-year-old sale.

Prat also had a wire-to-wire win aboard Beside Herself in the sixth, a 1½-mile optional claimer, and a come-from-behind score on James Jones in the seventh, an 11-furlong allowance.

“It’s really competitive (here) and I’m riding for the right connections,” he said. “I try to do my best. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. Today it worked.”

Hitting 1,000

Jockey John Velazquez reached 1,000 victories at Saratoga Race Course Thursday when Precursory won the eighth race. The Hall of Famer’s victory total by year at the Spa:

Year	Wins	Year	Wins
2022.....	*17	2005.....	40
2021.....	19	2004.....	64
2020.....	16	2003.....	61
2019.....	21	2002.....	41
2018.....	23	2001.....	52
2017.....	46	2000.....	10
2016.....	44	1999.....	27
2015.....	45	1998.....	30
2014.....	38	1997.....	33
2013.....	46	1996.....	18
2012.....	30	1995.....	25
2011.....	54	1994.....	11
2010.....	57	1993.....	4
2009.....	26	1992.....	2
2008.....	36	1991.....	8
2007.....	22	1990.....	4
2006.....	30		

*-Through Aug. 26



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Five Spot

Roderick gives Bauer another win at meet

BY TOM LAW

Phil Bauer came to Saratoga Race Course with his usual mid-sized string from Kentucky confident they'd compete.

"Top to bottom, whatever works in Kentucky is going to work up here," Bauer said Thursday morning from his barn on the Oklahoma Training Track. "Your outliers are some of your 2-year-old races. You can't predict what's going to come in there. And then your stakes. But other than that, your maiden claimers, your conditioned claimers, then your allowance foes, there's not much difference."

Bauer picked up yet another win at the meet in one of those conditioned claimers, sending Roderick out to victory in Wednesday's fifth race for 3-year-olds which had never won three races. Offered and claimed for his \$50,000 tag, Roderick gave Bauer his fifth win from nine starts at the meet through Wednesday. Rigney Racing's Roderick won the 1-mile event by 1 1/4 lengths over Forty Two Ace as the 3-5 favorite.

"It's been fun; a fun summer," Bauer said.

Bauer gave a tip of his cap to fellow Kentucky-based trainer Brad Cox for the win.

"I saw Brad this



Dave Harmon

Roderick scores in Wednesday's fifth for trainer Phil Bauer.

morning and told him thanks for the assist," Bauer said, referring to the scratch of morning-line favorite Kinetic Sky. "When that horse scratched out of there, you're 3-5, you're supposed to win those races. Not that it happens, they get beat, but we were very confident that he would run the way he'd run. It worked out. He's a useful little horse."

Bauer and Rigney claimed Roderick for \$50,000 in May at Churchill Downs. He finished second, fourth and ninth – the latter race July 28 at Saratoga going 10 furlongs in an off-the-turf optional – for them before Wednesday's win. Mike Maker claimed Roderick out of Wednesday's race for owner Three Diamonds Farm.

• Eddie Barker and owner J and M Racing Stables turned a quick profit when Cathedral Beach

won the fourth, a claiming event going 6 1/2 furlongs. Claimed for \$16,000 Aug. 3, Cathedral Beach picked up \$35,000 for winning and was claimed for \$32,000 by trainer Natalia Lynch for owner Ken Ramsey.

"That's one you'd want to do about six times a year, right?" Barker said Thursday morning. "The way things are going up here, I expected him to get claimed. It was a five-way shake."

Barker claimed Cathedral Beach the day he won by 6 3/4 lengths. He followed that up with a head victory under Manny Franco.

"He's an honest little horse; didn't have any issues," Barker said. "I actually tried to get him into a never-win-three for \$25,000, but it didn't go. Then

Continued On Page 59



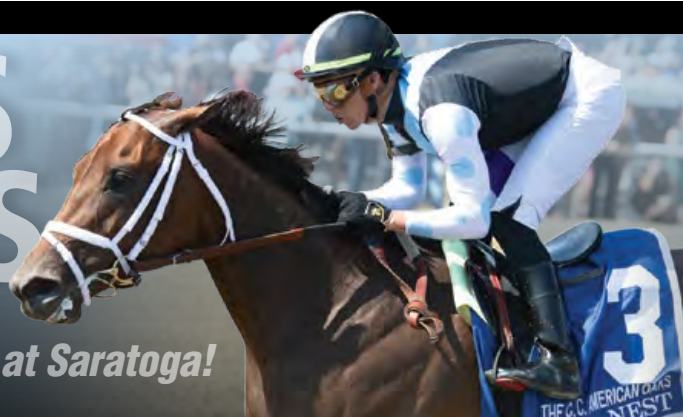
Tod Marks

Phil Bauer.

BIG DAYS BIG WINS

NEST wins TWO Grade 1 stakes at Saratoga!

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Wednesday —

■ Continued from page 58

I put him in a never-win-three for 50, and that didn't go. So, I went straight 3-year-old \$32,000. You're jumping a condition but he fit there.

"Listen, it was good for the owners. They needed it. They've had a little bit of bad luck. I've had like four seconds for them this year. It's nice to win, especially off the claim."

The victory was Barker's first of the meet from 10 starts.

- Tuesday's rain moved Wednesday's five flat races off the grass — including the featured John's Call Stakes — and caused a cancellation of the opening steeplechase allowance.

The \$130,950 John's Call, shortened from 1 5/8 miles on the Mellon Turf Course to 10 furlongs on the main track, lost just one entrant and five went to the post. Three Diamonds Farm's Girl Dad, the second longest price on the board at 5-1, edged stablemate Bluegrass Parkway by a head for his first stakes victory.

Mike Maker trained the first two finishers, who were 6 1/4 lengths clear of graded stakes winner Tide Of The Sea, who he had trained until Tom Morley claimed him in early June. Maker claimed Girl Dad for \$35,000 July 22 at Saratoga. He finished eighth, beaten 2 3/4 lengths going 1 mile on turf after a troubled trip, that day.

"It's taken me all meet to win a stake, so I'm very thankful," Maker



Tod Marks

Girl Dad (right) scores in Wednesday's off-the-turf John's Call Stakes.

said. "Hopefully, it's a sign of some good things to come. Both my horses ran winning races and unfortunately only one could win."

Girl Dad, a 4-year-old gelding by Malibu Moon, trained at Belmont Park after the claim and with the original intention of staying on the grass.

"The original thought was to run him at a mile and three-eighths on the turf," said Three Diamonds' Kirk Wycoff. "But when we got him back to the barn, he's such a big, strong horse. Give credit to Mike Maker and his crew. We took him down to Bel-

mont and he had a couple of really good works on the dirt and the training track isn't easy.

"That gave us some enthusiasm to run on dirt. We probably would

have scratched if this race was on the turf, because there was a dirt race for him on September 5, which we are now not eligible for but that's a good thing."



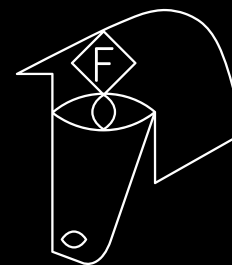
Dave Harmon

Cathedral Beach (3) prevails in Wednesday's fourth for trainer Eddie Barker.

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A Golden Travers

BY RICHARD ZWIRN

"God made the horse from the breath of the wind, the beauty of the earth, and the soul of an angel."

— Anonymous

"Hey, pass me another beer."

"If we don't pick a winner soon we'll be WALKING home to Jersey and Philly."

"I still can't believe how long that horse's private part was."

My fraternity brothers were getting restless and disheartened. They had come from faraway places to reunite over the weekend at our recently purchased old farmhouse in close proximity to Saratoga Race Course where we attended the Travers Stakes on this late-August day. The year was 1987. We were young men starting careers and relationships while uncertain about our futures. Our relatively carefree days were numbered, and it was scary as hell. Stability was calling. Mortgage payments, too. Thus, the weekend getaway seemed like a worthwhile distraction – a veritable "last call for the good old days."

We hadn't picked a winner all day. The Travers Stakes was only an hour away and I sensed we needed a Hail Mary.

I had them follow me to the grand old elm tree with a "4" placard nailed to it. There, a magnificent horse stood before us in all his glory. I pointed to the horse and said, "This is Java Gold – he's our last and best chance." My oblivious buddies could barely delineate between this stunning, dappled, strapping Thoroughbred and a lumpy old carriage horse in New York City's Central Park for goodness sake, but they humored me in their attempts to fake an appreciation. Also in the vicinity was owner Paul Mellon, whose famed Rokeby Stable had already won three Travers Stakes, and his highly respected, soft-spoken friend MacKenzie Miller. In Rokeby's famed gray and yellow silks, jockey Pat Day ambled up to the duo. Three of the classiest men to ever grace this sport – all future Hall of Fame honorees.

Java Gold had won the Whitney Handicap against older horses a few weeks prior. His sire, Rokeby's Key To The Mint, won the 1972 Travers. And, a decade earlier, I was able to watch his mother, the beautiful, Miller-trained Nijinsky II race filly, Javamine, win many stakes races as she became an all-time favorite. They passed along their gifts to this royally bred, powerful package. I'd been following him closely since he shipped from Aiken, S.C. as a 2-year-old –dreaming of all that he would accomplish. Breed the best to the best and hope for the best.

Every horse has a story. The Special will tell a bunch via this column, which will run periodically through the meet. They will mostly be mine. I hope these accounts entice and enthrall, as well as help readers realize what a remarkable animal and sport we have here.

I concluded my pep talk and said that after the blanket of 1,500 carnations is draped over his neck in the Travers winner's circle, it will be a party to remember that night. Grogginess turned to giddiness...flightiness to focus.

We went to the windows and laid it all down. Every. Last. Dollar.

Suddenly, the skies opened. It was a Saratoga summer storm for the ages. Torrential downpours turned the track into a sea of slop. The field of 3-year-olds, arguably the best assembled, included the year's Kentucky Derby, Preakness, Belmont, and Haskell winners. The race promised to be a stern test. My confidence waned. A lump formed in my throat.

My sense of awe became one of dread, when the starting gate opened and our gallant horse fell some 20 lengths behind after only a half-mile. The racecaller's voice warbled over the loudspeaker system – with nary a mention of our pick as he was so far behind. Around the far turn, Java Gold looked hopelessly beaten. A collective groan could be heard from all around me. An insistent thump pounded in my ears.

Amongst the flickering of falling raindrops, however, a bay blur could be seen as if catapulted on the outside, skimming atop the goo...as best as I



Coglianese/NYRA

Rokeby Stable's Java Gold and Pat Day splash to victory in the 1987 Travers.



Every Horse

*Presented by the
New York Thoroughbred Breeders*

could tell with my binoculars in my shaking hands, a horse with a 4 on its saddlecloth. Mud-splattered Java Gold gobbled up ground and took dead aim at the leaders. With an exhilarating rush at the eighth pole, he seized command late and drew away like the champ he was born and raised to be. He was poetry in motion – class personified.

My buddies and me? Classless. Let's just say it was the muddiest love fest since Woodstock.

Euphoria...I whispered to the heavens.

Java Gold. A lovely horse, indeed. A horse whose breathtaking effort we all chattered about into the wee hours of the morning and had us wake up the next day feeling renewed and hopeful – actually welcoming the dawn of a new era in our rather complicated lives. A horse who not only made it a payday, but also an unforgettable event that helped forge meaningful memories and deeper bonds of kinship. A horse which inspired.

My hobby turned into passion. The stage had been set. A few years afterward, my wife and I took out trees, put up fence and broke ground on a small barn. We created a lifestyle in which we breed and raise Thoroughbreds – with love and dedication. The land has become a haven for horses and sanctuary for humans in an increasingly vulnerable world, a sheltered place where one's priorities become clear. It's not just about horses, it's about life.

We call it Rainbow Fields. Not only does the sky above glow with a spectrum of color after rain showers, but the proverbial pot of gold seems like something now more within reach.

My fraternity brothers still call me some 35 years later. They are now widely dispersed, all successful in their various endeavors. They ask about my health. I ask about their families. The long-ago Travers Stakes almost always comes up, too. The story has become legend. It has found its way to our collective core. These guys may not know the difference between a jog and a gallop, a knee and a hock, or a bay and a chestnut. But they surely will never forget Java Gold. To keep the flame burning, I mention that we may currently have a promising weanling colt right here on the farm that could be just as good as our hero from long ago.

But that's another story for another time.

Richard Zwirn, a member of the New York Thoroughbred Breeders, has been a racing fan for 50 years and a hands-on Thoroughbred breeder for the past 25 on a small farm seven miles from Saratoga Race Course.

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John Velazquez was going home. Home to Puer-
to Rico. Finished.

A couple of solid years long behind him, the
20-year-old jockey was struggling at Saratoga in
1992. He had been involved in a four-horse spill
that winter, the one that ultimately forced his men-
tor, Angel Cordero Jr. to retire. A disappointing Bel-
mont spring meet had forged straight into a dismal
Saratoga meet. Cordero wasn't in Saratoga to of-
fer a steadying hand, a balancing pole. Velazquez
had changed agents, then split with that agent,
asked around for a new one and had gotten rejected
quicker than a fake ID at The Metro. His 3-year-old
nephew had been attacked in the face by a dog. It's
not one straw that breaks the back, it's all of them.

"It was the worst three months and then the
worst week," Velazquez said. "I didn't know what
the heck I was going to do. I was frustrated. I was
crying like a baby."

In a rental house in Saratoga, Velazquez cried in
front of his father, his cousins, his sister, his girl-
friend. In front of them, but to his mother.

"Let's pack up and go home," Velazquez said.
"I'm going."

Mrs. Velazquez doesn't raise quitters.

"You're not going anywhere," she said. "Go out
there and get to work, get yourself an agent and
start working. Things happen. Work it out."

Velazquez somewhere in the midst of a 2-for-85
skid at Saratoga, drove through the stable gate the
next morning, without an agent, without a plan.
There is no lost, like a 20-something lost. Wandering
around the backside, Velazquez saw Ralph Theroux
Sr. standing at the rail, watching horses go past on
the Oklahoma training track. Out of options and
knowing he couldn't go back and tell his mother he
still didn't have an agent, Velazquez played his last
card. He walked up and stood next to the 71-year-
old agent he had fired, at Cordero's behest, near the
end of his stellar apprentice season.

"Hi, Ralph. How
are you?"

"I'm good," Ther-
oux said without
looking away from
the track.

"What are you do-
ing? Do you have any
jockeys now?"

"Nah, nobody."

"Do you want to
work for me?"

Theroux, the World War II veteran and race-
tracker to the core, took a long drag of his cigar,
exhaled a plume of smoke, let it waft in the air and
looked at Velazquez.

"When do I start?"

Theroux went to the racing office for a condition
book. And Velazquez went to work. For 30 years.
For 992 more wins at Saratoga.

Long since inducted in the Hall of Fame and three
agents since Theroux, Velazquez won his 1,000th
race at Saratoga in the eighth race Thursday, guid-
ing Precursory to win a maiden on the dirt for Hall
of Famer Bill Mott. Velazquez's wife, Leona, the
girlfriend way back in 1992, led the 3-year-old filly
into the winner's circle after Mott asked her if
she wanted the honor. She tossed her phone and her
purse and grabbed the leather shank like she did so
many years ago with Tiffany's Taylor, Irish Linnet
and Diane Suzanne when a struggling jockey from
Puerto Rico fell for the trainer's daughter from Gar-
den City.

"That was beautiful," John Velazquez said. "Very
professional. It couldn't have been any better."

Because that's what Saratoga is all about for
Velazquez. Wins, for sure. But, family, forever.
Thursday's winner's circle included Leona's brother
Keith O'Brien, their father Leo, valets, fellow jock-
eys.



Tod Marks

Grand

"From day one, we have had family with us in
Saratoga," Velazquez said. "Her family. My family.
This is where they meet. Kids come and more kids
come. Those are the special times outside the race-
track. It's been great for our family and friends. Our
daughter is 24, our son is 19. Keith is here, his kids,
my father-in-law is here. Saratoga is special for fam-
ily. It's a work thing, I concentrate on my work, but
I spend time with my family. It's special."

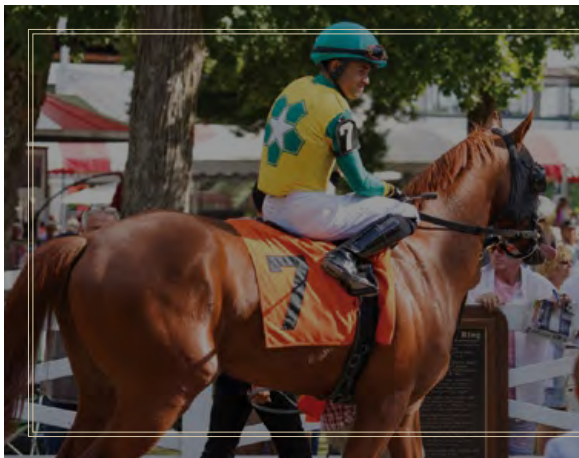
After winning two races at Saratoga in 1992,
Velazquez came back the next season and won four.
Then 11, then 25, 18, 33, 30...a record-setting 64
in 2003, another 57 in 2010 and at least 16 every
year since, capturing five riding titles along the way.
He won his first Travers on Flower Alley in 2005,
won another on Code Of Honor in 2019. Velazquez
won six races in a day in 2001. In 2013, he became
the winningest jockey in Saratoga history, surpassing
Jerry Bailey at the top. With definitiveness and
determination, Velazquez has added another 306,
including 17 this year.

"Every win counts in Saratoga. I don't think
about numbers, I concentrate on every race I ride.
My pride and joy is to try to do my best on every
horse I ride," Velazquez said. "Try to make the least
possible mistakes and do the best for that particular
horse. When it comes together, it's rewarding, it's
exciting. Especially at Saratoga. It's a special place.
The fans are crazy for horse racing. People love it.
People love Saratoga. I'm glad to be a part of it."

And it all could have come undone back in 1992.

"I didn't know what I was going to do. I was
very confused. I would have made the worst mis-
take of my life," Velazquez said. "Then I had that
feeling when I saw Ralph standing there by himself.
I thought he was going to say, 'Go (screw) yourself.'
I was cringing about what he was going to say. It
was incredible when he said, 'When do I start?'"

Theroux started that morning. Thirty years later,
Velazquez is far from finished.



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