

Year 23 • No. 3

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

The *Saratoga*

Special

Saratoga's Racing Newspaper since 2001



Bright Light

Whitebeam catches In Italian in Diana

AI Stall Stable Tour

Stakes Previews

Entries & Handicapping



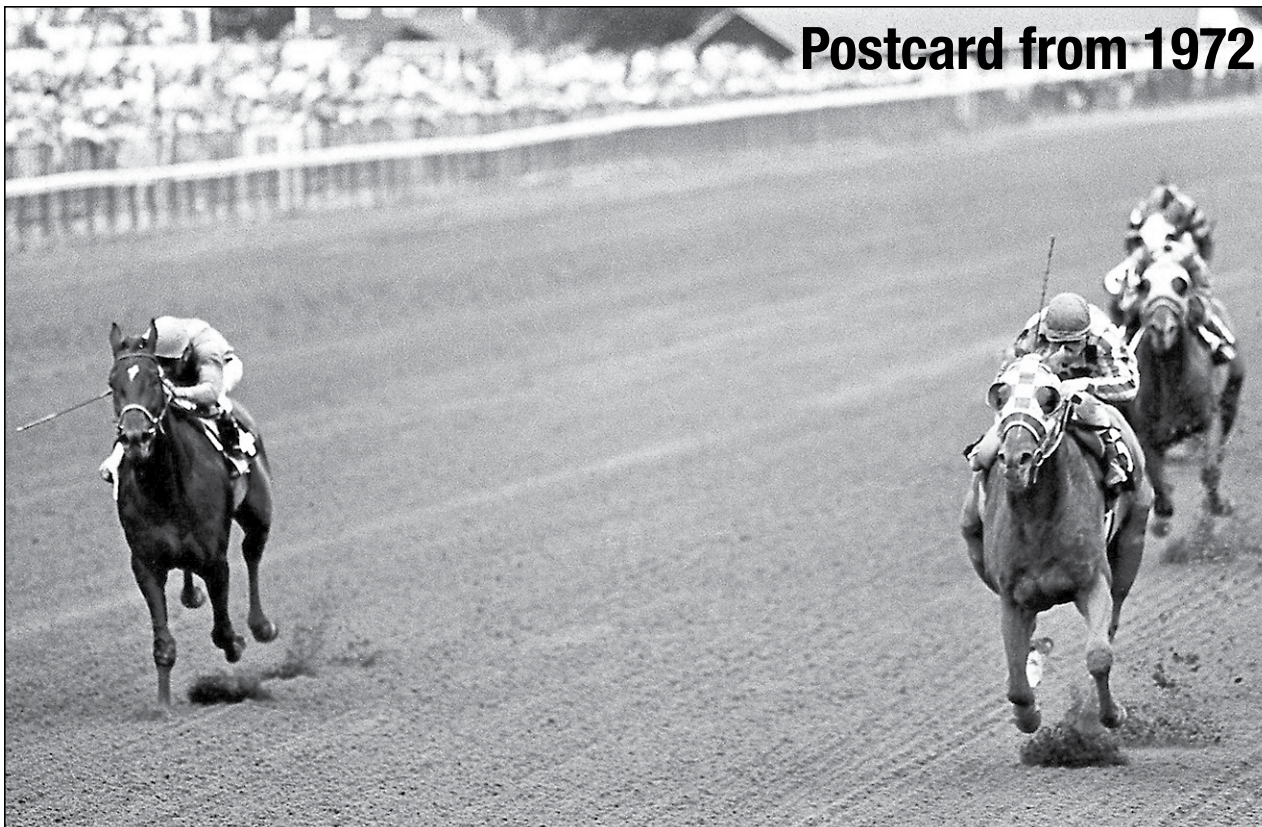
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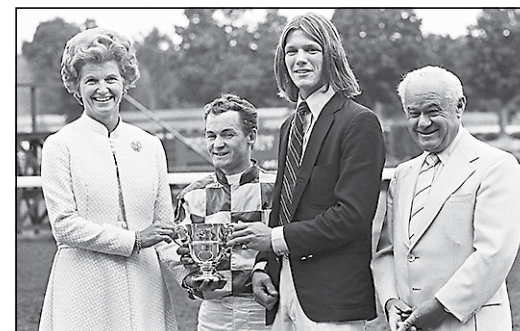
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Postcard from 1972



Douglas Lees

Fifty-one years ago at Saratoga, Secretariat won the Sanford Stakes – an early step on the first of his two Horse of the Year crowns for Meadow Stable, trainer Lucien Laurin and jockey Ron Turcotte.



Here & There...in Saratoga

Name of the Day – Dog Division

Davis. He's the patient dog with his head out the car window in Saturday's edition.

By the Numbers

1: Barefoot trainer at the Paddock Bar Saturday.

3: Diana wins for Juddmonte Farm after Whitebeam's score Saturday. The international racing operation, founded in 1980 by the late Prince Khalid bin Abdullah and now overseen by his family, won with Tates Creek (trained by Bobby Frankel) in 2002 and Proviso (trained by Bill Mott) in 2010. Frankel's former assistant Chad Brown trains Saturday's Diana winner Whitebeam.

5: First-time starters who won graded stakes races since 1991 in the U.S. and Canada, according to statistics from Equibase. Becky's

Joker, winner of the Grade 3 Schuylerville on Opening Day, joined Gale Force (2016 Mazarine Stakes), My Conquestador (2013 TVG Summer Stakes), Know More (2012 Best Pal Stakes) and Sprung (2006 Nataima Stakes) on the list.

5: Years in a row (2018-2023) Casa Creed has started at Saratoga Race Course. The record includes seven starts, four wins – 7-furlong dirt maiden, Hall of Fame Stakes in 2019, Fourstardave Stakes in 2022 and Kelso Stakes in 2023 – and two thirds.

6: Winners picked by The Special's Charles Bedard on Sunday's card at Saratoga Race Course, including the cold late pick five of He's Got Swagger, Ouster, Nakatomi, Uncashed and Maggie that paid \$598.50 for a 50-cent wager. The picks appeared on our website, thisishorseracing.com, as they will throughout the meet on most Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. Charles led the handicappers four days into the meet with 15 winners from 40 races, a strike rate of 37.5 percent.

Names of the Day

Noah And The Ark, first race. The heavyweight in the A.P. Smithwick Steeplechase is out of Well Water.

Now Showing, third race. The 3-year-old filly, who races for Hidden Brook Stable and Denholtz Stable, is out of Giant Screen.

Reunion Tour, fifth race. The 5-year-old gelding is out of One Show Only.

Dufresne, seventh race. The 4-year-old filly is by Uncaptured out of Rapids. Watch The Shawshank Redemption.

Nostalgic, eighth race. Godolphin's homebred 4-year-old filly is out of Been Here Before.



The Saratoga Special

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Here&There...in Saratoga

T-Shirt Slogan of the Day

I love golf and horse racing and maybe three people.

Worth Repeating

"They're so small."

Saturday racing fan, as jockeys walked past

"The Fox Sports show adds so much fun to it. They do a fantastic job. They make you feel like you're there."

Juddmonte Farm's Garrett O'Rourke, somewhat regrettably watching Saratoga from home in Kentucky

"It would have been a good result yesterday if she lost that photo, and it was a freaky good result as it happened."

O'Rourke, on the difference between a Grade 1 placing and a Grade 1 score for Diana winner Whitebeam

"Have a good night."

Jockey Angel Castillo, finishing off an entirely in Spanish interview, after winning the Grade 3 Sanford aboard 46-1 shot Yo Yo Candy

"I think about him still, how can you not? He's as good as there ever was and he could have done some more the next few years."

Trainer Al Stall, about jockey Garrett Gomez, a Hall of Famer who died in 2016

"I should be a genius."

Trainer Sam Cockburn when told you learn more by losing than winning

"We're clocking you."

Trainer Todd Pletcher, when The Special's Joe Clancy said he needed five minutes with recent 2-year-old winner Pirate



Linzay Marks

From Saratoga with Love. Danny, stable mascot at the "007" barn of Jim Bond, awaits his next assignment while visiting the backside last week.

Pete's Poems

Forte

Got scratched in Kentucky
And things only got worse
You sat out the Preakness
And got boxed in by a horse
But you'll win the Jim Dandy
And turn things around
Just carry a rabbit's foot
When you come into town

— Peter Finley

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It's good for their pedigree pages to get a Grade 1 placing, but we're not going to go in there at 33-1 either."

Juddmonte Farm's Garrett O'Rourke, about running Whitebeam in Saturday's Grade 1 Diana



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With Al Stall

You wouldn't need two guesses to figure out Al Stall's favorite day at Saratoga as a trainer.

Blame won the 2010 Whitney by a head over favorite Quality Road, the horse's fifth consecutive graded-stakes win and part of an Eclipse Award-winning season. Predictably, the triumph set off a memorable night in Saratoga. The Stall team hosted a post-race party at the barn on the Oklahoma side attended by everyone from hotwalkers to winning jockey Garrett Gomez. After that it was dinner at Siro's.

"We had a big old table of my crew, family and friends and stuff," Stall said. "There were 10 or 12 of us and I knew I was going to get hooked for the tab. There was no telling what that mutuel was going to be."

Stall would have been happy to pay, but when it came time for the check, the waiter said that fellow Louisianan Mike Moreno, who'd won the Grade 1 Test a race earlier with Champagne d'Oro, had paid for dinner.

"True story," Stall said. "On the way out, we walked over, said congratulations to them – and thank you – and off we went. It was like in the movie (Let it Ride) where the guy says, 'I'm having a very good day.' I had a really good day in Saratoga. Horses take you places, that's for sure."

Blame went on to win the Breeders' Cup Classic over Zenyatta and became a stallion at Claiborne Farm in Kentucky. Stall continues to add to a training career that started in 1991 and has included major winners Tom's d'Etat, Dalika, Departing, Joyeaux Dancer and others among 1,765 lifetime training wins. Saratoga has been part of the equation since 1996, when he won two races after getting recruited to the summer meeting by then racing secretary Howard Battle.

"The barn next to us, Todd Pletcher was there in his first year," said Stall. "That seems like a long time ago. We look forward to coming to Saratoga. Once it's in your blood and I have to say it's in my blood, it's on the calendar every year. I don't see it stopping unless something else makes it stop."

Stall won four races from 17 starts here last year and finished second with Unleash The Power on Opening Day to start 2023. Thirteen horses were bedded down in his barn between the main track and Clare Court with a few more likely from the base in Kentucky. Friday, Stall went through the list with The Special's Joe Clancy.



Tod Marks
Champion Blame (here with groom
Edward Moss in 2010) gave trainer
Al Stall a Saratoga thrill in the Whitney.

Unleash The Power. Columbine Stable's homebred Curlin gelding finished second in a starter allowance on the inner turf Opening Day while looking for his first win of 2023. The 4-year-old chased favorite My Sea Cottage and lost by 2 ½ lengths. "He ran well, just ran second on a very firm inner turf, on which speed carries. That's the way it goes sometimes. That race comes back, it's a staple. He'll get a chance to come back in a race you know is going to fill."

Mo Saturdays. Three-year-old Mo Town gelding was entered in a \$75,000 maiden claimer on the turf Sunday, but was scratched when the race was moved to the dirt because of rain. Owned by FTGGG Racing, he finished second in his debut here last year and has found the maiden win elusive in six total starts. "We're a little disappointed in him, we thought a little bit more of him when he was a younger horse. Hopefully that's a good spot for him. It's not the maiden allowance, but everyone's dropping from maiden allowance so it's tough enough. We think he fits in there."

Vesture. Owned and bred by Linda Juckette, Hard Spun colt out of Saratoga turf winner Athena's Aegis breezed three times at Churchill Downs before making the trip north. "He's a very nice-looking colt and we'll try him on the turf up here when the time comes. None of my babies have run yet, but they're all close."

Repealing. Bal Mar Equine's 4-year-old filly visits Saratoga for the third season. She made her debut here in 2021 and won here last year. Off since December after ankle surgery, she breezed a

half-mile from the gate in :47.85 Saturday. "We took a flake out of an ankle and gave her some time off, but she has come back nice. She's getting close. I like to bring horses up that have shown that they like it up here."

Royal Take Charge. Fourth in the Grade 2 Delaware Handicap July 8, Altair Farm's 4-year-old filly has won three of five including two allowance races last year. The graded company was a little deep, and Stall would prefer a condition race for the daughter of Will Take Charge. "We might have bitten off more than she can chew at Delaware. It wasn't bad, but kind of a distant fourth. She wasn't as comfortable as she normally is, listening to what the jock thought and from what I thought as far as being sweaty and things like that. She's a three-other-than. It would be nice to find one here but who knows if we'll get it? She's a perfect one for an overnight race with a condition on it, but they've dropped a lot of those."

Le Gris. The house horse. Owned in part by Stall and his brother Andrew, after being purchased as a yearling from breeder Peter Brant's White Birch Farm, City Of Light 2-year-old colt paused at the tackroom door before heading to the track. Stall checked all four legs, patted the gray on the hip and took a step back. "He's a nice big horse that maybe we can have some fun with." Le Gris means "The Gray" in French, and Stall went back to his past to come up with the name. "There was a horse running when I was younger named Le Gris. The guy who trained him would literally

Continued On Page 8

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Stable Tour —

Continued from page 6

run his horses every four days. He was a gray too. He ran like 18 times at the Fair Grounds meeting one year, a racing secretary's dream. I'm not sure we'll follow in his footsteps, but he seems like a nice type of horse." Foaled in 1974, the other Le Gris made 112 starts (putting up a record of 19-18-15 while racing outside Louisiana just once). At the Fair Grounds meet of 1976-77, he started 12 times; the next year, he made 14 starts; in 1978-79, he went to the gate 11 times.

Constitution-Blip n' Th Bye colt. Spendthrift Farm sent the unnamed 2-year-old colt to Stall and the trainer thought something seemed familiar. "I looked and had to call them up to say, 'You know I trained the mare, right?' They didn't know that." Blip n' Th Bye won three races including an overnight stakes and placed in the Grade 2 Eight Belles in 2016 for Stall and owner/breeder Beau Lane. "He's a typey little horse, forward."

Huntress For Hire. Ruiz Racing Team's 3-year-old filly graduated the maiden ranks in a 6 3/4-length romp at Churchill Downs on Kentucky Oaks Day. Stall planned to run her back at the Kentucky track, but when the meet shifted to Ellis Park opted to wait for Saratoga. "She ran a big race and we just said, 'Saratoga here we come' after they moved everything to Ellis. She runs hopefully next Saturday in a non-two allowance."

Colonial Rose. L and L Racing Stable's 2-year-old Constitution filly is "ready to run" and – to Stall anyway – a mystifying example of race conditions and circumstances. "We put her in on closing day at Churchill downs, \$120,000 purse, and the race didn't fill. On opening day at Ellis Park, there were 21 entries for a lower purse. Don't even think about it, it'll make you crazy. "She's owned by Lloyd and Laura Schwing, they're not new to the game, but they're very excited to come to Saratoga for the first time with a nice horse."

Lucchesi. The More Than Ready 2-year-old colt, purchased by Stall for Paul Varga in March, was battling Saratoga weather while getting ready for a debut. "He was scheduled to work on the grass (Friday), but that didn't work. We're in no big rush, but he's a nice typey horse."

Distorted Humor-Lady Gottcha filly. Another sent by Spendthrift after being purchased this year. The unraced dam is a half-sister to 2016 Travers runner-up American Freedom, Saratoga steeplechase stakes winner Awesome Pearl and \$933,570 earner Gottcha Gold among others. Stall will aim for a turf debut.

Hero's Medal. Columbine Stable 3-year-old colt crossed the wire fourth in Friday's second race, a 1 1/8-mile maiden special, before getting demoted to sixth for bumping with two foes in the stretch. Hero's Medal took them a long way on the lead, but couldn't match the late speed of



Linzay Marks

Al Stall talks shop las week.

heavy favorite Dreamlike (third in a photo in the Wood Memorial last time). "I didn't expect to see a horse like that in a maiden race, but welcome to Saratoga."

Fannie And Freddie. Columbine's stakes-placed 4-year-old Malibu Moon filly has won twice in 10 starts including a Fair Grounds optional claimer in February. "We just want to run her two full turns and I didn't think that Ellis would have a two-other-than going that far. The mile-and-an-eighth here, maybe she could lay close to the lead and keep running."

Forever After All. Dixiana Farm's 4-year-old filly will make you look up her pedigree as she's a half-sister to Tom's d'Etat, who won 11 races (three at Saratoga) and \$1.7 million for Stall. She won a maiden special going 1 1/8 miles at Ellis Park June 24 – after finishing second six times – and Stall would love to find an allowance at that distance before shipping her from Kentucky. "She could run against those horses who were in the first race (on Opening Day, won by Bustin Bay). We'd be very happy to do that. Because I don't have confidence in the race filling, we would enter, hit the overnight and then come up. Otherwise, she's here for no reason. She came up here and ran second last year, opening week, and the race never filled the rest of the meet. Fillies and mares long on the dirt is tough, really tough."

Masqueparade. Another in the Kentucky string, he won't make a Saratoga trip but is aiming for the Grade 3 West Virginia Governor's Stakes for FTGGG Racing at Mountaineer Race-track Aug. 6. The earner of \$680,086 finished third in the 2021 Jim Dandy and second in the 2022 Alydar here. He missed nine months after the Alydar, and has run three times this year including a third in a stakes at Horseshoe Indianapolis July 6. "He doesn't have any allowance conditions and there are no overnight stakes for him here. I'm not going to go in the Whitney with him. He's good now though. I didn't realize they made that race \$200,000. He might be OK in there. He's had three races back and I think he's finally race fit and mentally ready."

Dalika. The Grade 1-winning turf mare, who ran at Saratoga each of the last four years, was retired after a fourth in the Pegasus World Cup Filly and Mare Turf in January after 10 wins and \$1.4 million in earnings. "She's in foal to Flightline and will sell in November."

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Shiner

Whitebeam gets up in final strides to catch In Italian

BY JOE CLANCY

A half-length behind 1-5 favorite In Italian deep in the stretch of the Diana Stakes on Saratoga Race Course's Mellon Turf Course Saturday, Whitebeam found a little more push to carve the margin to a neck, a head, a nose. Finally, in the last strides of a 1 1/8-mile Grade 1, Whitebeam made all that momentum pay off to win by a nose.

You can't literally will a horse to victory, but plenty of people tried via a television in Lexington, Ky.

"There were a lot of people in our household screaming our lungs out," said Garrett O'Rourke, general manager of owner Juddmonte Farm's American operation. "Maybe the winds got her home."

Tod Marks
Whitebeam (center) edges In Italian (right) and Fev Rover in the Diana.



Whitebeam would have accepted any assistance, but produced a signature effort on her own to deny In Italian a second consecutive Diana and third consecutive Grade 1 of 2023. Sent off at 8-1, the winner collected her first Grade 1 while covering the distance in 1:48.33 as In Italian settled for a brave second and Fev Rover finished a half-length back in third. The winner, bred in England by Judd-

monte, won her fifth race and more than tripled her lifetime earnings to \$396,308.

Trained by Chad Brown, Whitebeam improved to 2-for-3 in the United States after racing in England and France with Harry and Roger Charlton. The 4-year-old daughter of Caravaggio and the Oasis

Continued On Page 12

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Diana —

■ Continued from page 10

Dream mare Sleep Walk finished third in her debut last spring at Newbury, won three in a row and was beaten a head in a 1-mile stakes at Newmarket in September before finishing ninth in heavy going at Longchamp in October. O'Rourke credited Juddmonte's Barry Mahon with the decision to try America.

"It's what we've done with fillies that showed a lot of ability over there without maybe reaching their peak number one, and number two, it's horses that probably need better ground," O'Rourke said. "I know everyone was saying the ground was soft [Saturday], but by European standards it was firm. She was a filly that needed some good ground, she has tactical speed and you thought she might do well in America. You pick them for those reasons and then you've got to bring them over and then they've got to do it. Some of them work, some don't. We've been doing it long enough that we have a pretty good handle on it."

Whitebeam prepped with Brown in Florida over the winter and finished second by a neck in the Plenty Of Grace Stakes at Aqueduct in April. A month later, she won the Grade 3 Gallorette at Pimlico to earn a chance at the Diana and a showdown with stablemate In Italian. Peter Brant's star won four of seven last year, topped by the Grade 1 Diana and First Lady plus a second at the Breeders' Cup. This year, the 5-year-old won the Grade 1 Jenny Wiley and Just A Game.

Brown was confident in the favorite, but knew his other three entrants carried chances in the field of five.

"He kept saying she was doing well," said O'Rourke. "He knows the goal, and the tremendous value added to just a Grade 3 winner by getting Grade 1 placed, but at the same time he was telling us she was training super."

Whitebeam broke well from the outside for Flavien Prat, let In Italian move forward from post two and rolled into second just outside Fev Rover a length behind the leader. There they stayed through a quarter-mile in :23.96. Fev Rover pulled Javier Castellano into second after a half in :48, and Whitebeam responded. She advanced to second, kept Fev



Tod Marks

Flavien Prat.

Rover inside and drew to the leader's hip coming off the turn. In Italian answered the call of Irad Ortiz Jr. in the stretch, but couldn't fight off the winner's last push as Fev Rover made up ground late too.

"She was really brave and gave everything to get the win, and the job done," said Prat, whose filly carried 118 pounds to In Italian's 124. "To be honest I thought I would be a little farther back, but she broke so well and naturally she took me into the race, so I didn't want to take anything away from her. She relaxed well. I was following In Italian who I thought was the filly to beat and she really dug in. She had to."

Brown watched the battle and knew he would win an eighth Diana, just not which horse. The course was labeled firm, but rain made an impact.

"In Italian ran her heart out," Brown said. "The turf was pretty soft and she was going pretty quick there. Flavien rode a good stalking race. [Fev Rover] really wanted to be up in there and Flavien told me he really had to go early and keep pressure. Javier looked like he wanted to be where Whitebeam was . . . Pretty fast fractions on this soft of turf but, Whitebeam, she also ran just a little bit better today and was able to handle the soft ground and showed a lot of heart late."

Brown said Whitebeam showed quality early this year at Payson Park.

"I was shocked she got beat first time out to be honest," he said of the April race. "She trained really well. I'm just so happy Juddmonte sent me this horse in excellent shape, she's sound and the first time I breezed her I called Garrett O'Rourke and just thanked him for sending me the horse. I could see in the first work there was Grade 1 potential anyway."

Here's another good read

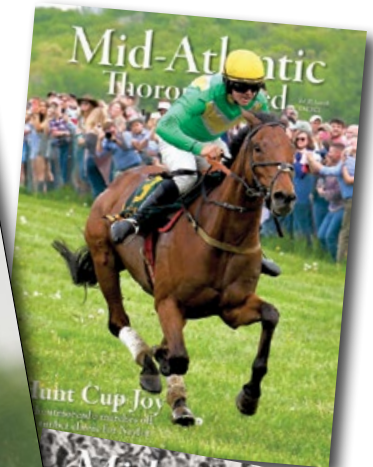
Our July/August issue is now available on line or at the Saratoga Special office

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred has a whole new look this year and still boasts great stories from those familiar Saratoga Special faces, Joe and Sean Clancy, and Tom Law, plus new staff writer John Piassek. Bright and refreshing, this award-winning regional publication is sure to entertain you.

Our July/August issue is packed full of the kind of stories you can't find anywhere else. From the spring classics, to the highly successful Fasig-Tipton Midlantic 2 Year Old in Training Sale... from the significance of Tesio on the modern Thoroughbred, to remarkable stories from the steeplechase circuit.

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As a monthly publication, Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred magazine exists to bring stories – not news – to readers. In that vein, and with the racing/breeding calendar in mind, each edition strives to tell stories about the region's Thoroughbred industry and the people who live and work in it. Hopefully, readers find gems they can't find elsewhere while fostering a deeper connection to the horses they care about.

www.MidAtlanticTB.com

In Favor

Casa Creed improves to 4-for-7 at Saratoga

BY TOM LAW

Casa Creed, like so many who turned out for Opening Weekend, loves Saratoga Race Course. Lee Einsidler, who owns the 7-year-old son of Jimmy Creed, can give him an easy run for his money when it comes to his affinity for the upstate New York racing oasis.

The celebration of all things Saratoga spilled into the winner's circle on Day 3 of the meet Saturday as Casa Creed won his fourth race from seven tries – the wins are all stakes – here in the Grade 3 Kelso. A winner on Saratoga's main track in his second start at Saratoga at 2, Casa Creed thrives even more on the Saratoga turf and improved to 3-for-5 on the Spa sod in the 1-mile Kelso.



Dave Harmon

Continued On Page 15

Casa Creed streaks to victory in Saturday's Kelso Stakes, the fourth Saratoga win of his career.

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Kelso —

■ Continued from page 14

“Not only Casa Creed but his owner loves Saratoga, too,” said trainer Bill Mott, who saddled Casa Creed to his seventh stakes win. “I guess we all get hyped up about Saratoga, right? Casa Creed is one of us.”

Casa Creed transferred that hype into a 1-length victory over odds-on favorite Annapolis in the \$175,000 Kelso, winning as the 2-1 second choice under Luis Saez. Casa Creed added the Kelso to his other Saratoga victories in the Grade 2 National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame Stakes in 2019 and last year’s Grade 1 Fourstardave Handicap.

A return date to the Fourstardave for Casa Creed appears likely for the Mott, Einsidler and co-owner JEH Racing Stable. But Team Casa Creed wasn’t about to let the good times stop after the Kelso.

Einsidler beamed as he made his way from the box seats to the winner’s circle, exchanging high fives along the way with fans, fellow owners and horsemen. He purchased Casa Creed for \$105,000 at the 2017 Keeneland September yearling sale – on the advice of trainer Ken McPeck – and isn’t shy about his passion for the horse who has banked \$2,185,308 in 32 starts.

“He’s special. He’s taken us around the world and he’s made a huge difference in our lives,” Einsidler said. “When you get into this game, they become part of your family. Life is all about building memories and this is another great one.”

Casa Creed added more memories in the Kelso, which came up salty for a Grade 3 with Grade 1 winner Annapo-

Continued On Page 16



Tod Marks

Owner Lee Einsidler (right) and trainer Bill Mott.



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| AWESOME AGAIN | FRIZETTE | MAKER’S 46 MILE (3) | SPINSTER |
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| DELAWARE HANDICAP | IROQUOIS HURDLE (2) | NEARCTIC STAKES | WHITNEY HANDICAP (2) |
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Kelso —

■ Continued from page 15

lis, multiple Grade 2 winner Filo Di Arianna, Grade 3 winner English Bee and multiple stakes winner Big Everest in the field.

Second in the \$1.5 million 1351 Turf Sprint on the Saudi Cup undercard in late February, Casa Creed came into the Kelso with a third in his only other start this season in the Grade 1 Jaipur Stakes on the Belmont Stakes Day program. He'd won back-to-back editions of the 6-furlong Jaipur prior to this year, including last year's renewal in 1:07.44, so his fondness for Saratoga isn't exclusive.

"He wants to run, so as long as he's telling us he wants to run that's what we'll do," Einsidler said of bringing the star back at 7. "When he tells us he wants to retire, we'll find a home for him."

Saez found a home for Casa Creed in the early to middle stages of the Kelso that made the difference. Breaking from the outside post in the field of seven, Casa Creed found a spot behind dueling frontrunners Big Everest and Filo Di Arianna and stalkers Anaconda and English



Tod Marks

Casa Creed stays ahead of Annapolis late in Saturday's Kelso.

Bee past the finish the first time and into the first turn.

Casa Creed raced alongside Annapolis around that bend and up the backstretch as Big Everest clicked off the opening quarter over the firm inner

turf in :23.35. Saez held that spot entering the far turn and past the half in :47.07, keeping Annapolis and Irad Ortiz Jr. toward the rail and behind English Bee and Anaconda. Saez knew where he wanted to be and stayed there.

"The key was to try to be right there on top of the favorite," Saez said. "Everything came out perfect. He broke pretty sharp. I can feel it behind the gate, too, he was a little bit tough. So, I don't want to take too much. I just let him break and be comfortable, and he was pretty comfortable."

Casa Creed made a three-wide run at the leaders around the far turn, getting the jump on Annapolis turning for home and taking over with less than a quarter-mile to run. He sprinted home from there, passing Big Everest and English Bee and holding off Annapolis inside the final sixteenth. Casa Creed won in 1:35.51 and improved to 8-for-32 with five seconds and five thirds.

"It says something for Casa Creed because the horse he beat is a real horse and a real tough competitor. And he handled him today," Mott said, winning the race previously named the Forbidden Apple for the first time.

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Upset Jawn

Philly shipper Yo Yo Candy delivers at 46-1 in juvenile Gr. 3

BY TOM LAW

Danny Velazquez stood in front of the large fan blowing in the winner's circle, allowing the air to cool his sweat-soaked black shirt if only for just a few seconds and wondered aloud how he got there.

"Oooh, that feels good," Velazquez said, stopping for about three seconds of fan-blast. "How did that happen?"

Those that remained of Saturday's paid crowd of 31,458 wondered the same thing, after Yo Yo Candy sprang the upset of the young meet in the co-featured Grade 3 Sanford Stakes for 2-year-olds. The California-bred son of Danzing Candy delivered for Velazquez, owners Happy Tenth Stable and his backers to the tune of 46-1, and his \$94 win payout for a \$2 bet

SANFORD STAKES RECAP

is far and away the highest through the first four days of racing.

"I jumped from the balcony over here. I don't even know how I got here," Velazquez said. "This is a dream come true. As a kid you wish to win races here and here I am."

A former jockey who won 212 races before hanging it up and starting his training career in 2009, Velazquez got his first cup of coffee in the big leagues when he saddled Brooklyn Strong in the 2021 Kentucky Derby after getting in the race at the 11th hour. The Sanford is just his second graded stakes victory – after Brook-

Continued On Page 18



Tod Marks

Longshot Yo Yo Candy heads for the finish of Saturday's Sanford Stakes.



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Sanford —

■ Continued from page 17

lyn Strong's win in the Grade 2 Remsen Stakes at Aqueduct in 2020 – and first Saratoga score.

Jockey Angel Castillo, who like Velazquez came in from Parx Racing just outside Philadelphia for the Sanford, also celebrated his first graded stakes win and first Saratoga victory in just his second ride in upstate New York. He finished second aboard Salamera in the Grade 2 Adirondack Stakes in 2012.

"I wasn't aware if it was my first, the second, I don't know," Castillo said through an interpreter. "I guess it is but I wasn't aware. I would like it if they would give me more opportunities. Of course, I would be here and be committed."

Yo Yo Candy came into the Sanford an outsider and off a distant third behind odds-on favorite Gold Sweep in the Tremont Stakes June 11 at Belmont Park. He'd won a 4 1/2-furlong maiden at Parx prior to that run.

Bettors discounted Yo Yo Candy in the Tremont, sending him off at 26-1. He finished 10 1/4 lengths behind Gold Sweep that day. Velazquez noticed him break "a little sluggish" in the Tremont



Angel Castillo (left) and Danny Velazquez enjoy the aftermath of the Sanford.

Tod Marks

and opted to add blinkers to the colt purchased for \$35,000 at this year's OBS March sale of selected 2-year-olds in training.

"I added the blinkers and took him back to the gate twice after the race," Velazquez said. "I told Angel, 'If he's as good as we think he is, we're going to be competitive.' No respect on the board,

but we knew that we did everything right coming into this race. I was very, very satisfied watching him out there warm up, and said, 'OK, he's ready to run.'"

Yo Yo Candy broke well, bumped a bit with Raming Speed to his outside and settled into third behind Dickens and Market Street up the backstretch and to the opening quarter in :22.15.

Odds-on favorite Gold Sweep didn't fare near as well after he stumbled at the start, bumped with Market Street to his outside and dropped back to last early. The Steve Asmussen-trained son of Speightstown got up to second last heading to the far turn while racing toward the outside.

"Obviously, it didn't go as expected, but it's pretty self-explanatory," Asmussen said. "We didn't plan on him losing, but we didn't plan on him getting left either."

Castillo kept Yo Yo Candy behind the leaders around the far turn, as

Market Street put pressure on Dickens and eventually took command approaching the quarter-pole and the half-mile split in :45.83. Market Street and Dickens continued to battle in the lane as Castillo tipped Yo Yo Candy off the fence and surged past.

Continued On Page 19

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Sanford —

■ Continued from page 18

“It was good, all good,” Castillo said. “Easily done by the horse, he knew what to do. In the first few meters he got into position. He had to go a little bit wide (on the turn), but I kept him steady waiting for the stretch, and when I asked him to run, he kept coming. He got the trip and gave it his all.”

Yo Yo Candy opened up inside the sixteenth pole as Dickens tried to hang on down inside while Woodbine shipper Triple Trea and Gold Sweep battled for a piece. Gold Sweep put away those two rivals but was no match for the winner, who won in 1:11.83 on the fast track.

“The horses don’t know if they are favorites or not,” Castillo said. “We traveled here to throw ourselves in and see if we could win. And even if we didn’t win, at least we would give it our best try.”

Velazquez credited the blinkers adjustment, new figure eight and tongue tie and the continued use of a breast plate to prevent the saddle from slipping on the thin colt, who is out of the two-time Saratoga-winning and multiple graded stakes-placed Two Punch mare Yolanda B. Too.

“Once I get him more calm and collected he’s going to be dangerous,” Velazquez said. “He’s still hopping around and being a baby . . . The saddle slips, that’s another thing. He’s a little thin on the ribs, so if you leave it the saddle slips. We’re not having that, so I figured I’d put it on. Can’t have that happen, especially not here at Saratoga. I used it the first time he ran and ever since. It’s a lucky strap now.”

Yo Yo Candy was one of two Cal-bred sons of Danzing Candy that Velazquez picked out and purchased at the OBS March sale, the other a colt out of the Bertrando mare Visual Treat for \$20,000. He bought Yo Yo Candy for Happy Tenth Stable, owned by Tom Lamont, who wasn’t on hand for their first graded stakes

victory. Happy Tenth also bought a colt by Mitole for \$50,000 at the OBS March sale.

“Here’s how ironic the world is, I never go to that March sale. Never. Ever,” Velazquez said. “I said, ‘I’ve got to try my luck and try the March sale.’ I picked him out and some others. I liked his conformation, like the way he looked. He cost \$35,000, a Cali-bred. I figured if it doesn’t work out, I can take him to California and run him there. The minute he started training I was like, ‘wow.’ Now I’m pumped.”

Velazquez said he’d target the Grade 1 Hopeful Stakes on Closing Day for Yo Yo Candy.

“Honestly, I just want to go home and I’ll dry off and we’ll go from there,” he said.

*Additional reporting by Joe Clancy.
Translation by Annise Montplaisir.*

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SEPTEMBER 14 – OCTOBER 1

IROQUOIS (GIII)

"Breeders' Cup Dirt Dozen"
Runs Saturday, September 16
Closes August 30
\$300,000
Includes \$75,000 from KTDF
Two-Year-Olds
1 Mile

LOCUST GROVE (GIII)

Runs Saturday, September 16
Closes August 30
\$400,000
Includes \$100,000 from KTDF
Fillies & Mares, Three-Year-Olds & Up
1 1/16 Miles

POCAHONTAS (GIII)

"Breeders' Cup Dirt Dozen"
Runs Saturday, September 16
Closes August 30
\$300,000
Includes \$75,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Two-Year-Olds
1 Mile

LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY

Runs Saturday, September 16
Closes August 30
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three-Year-Olds & Up
6 Furlongs

OPEN MIND (Listed)

Runs Saturday, September 16
Closes August 30
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Fillies & Mares, Three-Year-Olds & Up
6 Furlongs

SENECA OVERNIGHT STAKES

Runs Saturday, September 23
Closes September 6
\$175,000
Includes \$65,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Three-Year-Olds
1 1/16 Miles

BOURBON TRAIL

Runs Saturday, September 23
Closes September 6
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three-Year-Olds
1 3/16 Miles

HARRODS CREEK

Runs Saturday, September 23
Closes September 6
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Three-Year-Olds
7 Furlongs

DOGWOOD (GIII)

Runs Saturday, September 23
Closes September 6
\$300,000
Includes \$50,000 from KTDF
Fillies, Three-Year-Olds
7 Furlongs

ACK ACK (GIII)

"Win and You're In Dirt Mile Division"
Runs Saturday, September 30
Closes September 13
\$400,000
Includes \$100,000 from KTDF
Three-Year-Olds & Up
1 Mile

LUKAS CLASSIC (GII)

Runs Saturday, September 30
Closes September 13
\$500,000
Includes \$100,000 from KTDF
Three-Year-Olds & Up
1 1/8 Mile

JEFFERSON CUP

Runs Saturday, September 30
Closes September 13
\$200,000
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Three-Year-Olds
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Yo Ho Ho

National Treasure's half-brother Pirate steals the show in debut

Pirate stole all the pre-race hype in Saturday's opener at Saratoga Race Course. He was bet down to 1-5 in the field of six and delivered on the buzz with a 3-length victory for owners Harrell Ventures and Starlight Racing, trainer Todd Pletcher and jockey Irad Ortiz Jr.

After an aggressive warmup on the clubhouse turn, the half-brother to 2023 Preakness Stakes winner National Treasure darted away from the gate from his inside stall and took the lead.

"He's had good natural speed," Pletcher said. "The rail made it so we didn't want to take any chances. We were prepared to pop outside of somebody if we needed to."

Pirate withstood pressure from Ar-

SATURDAY RACING RECAP

teta and Just Steel, clicking off splits of :22.26 and :45.70 before drawing away in the stretch.

"He hustled to get that position and he was fast enough to stay there. That was the key," Pletcher said.

The victory was the fifth of the meet for Ortiz to that point. He added two more Sunday to head into Week 2 tied with his brother Jose for the lead in the rider standings at seven victories.

Pletcher praised Pirate's morning preparation and was relieved to get his first Saratoga 2-year-old winner of

Continued On Page 21



Tod Marks

Pirate and Irad Ortiz Jr. coast to victory in Saturday's first race.

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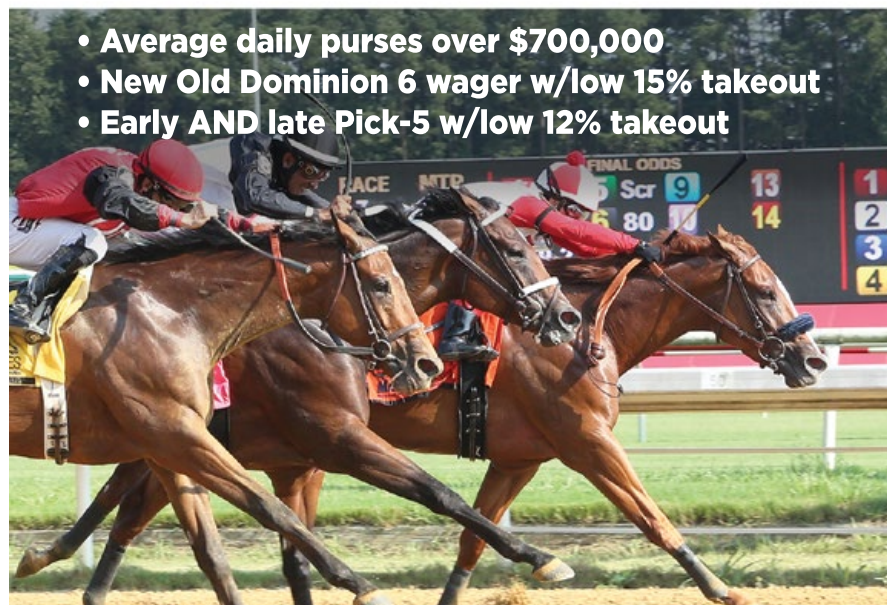


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VIRGINIA HORSE RACING

Saturday —

■ Continued from page 20

the season.

“When you draw the 1 hole going 5 1/2, and you’re a heavy favorite, you want to make sure you hopefully get it right,” Pletcher said. “He got away alertly, but they put a lot of pressure on him early, and the horse in behind him had the benefit of a start, so I thought it was a good performance and very professional like he’s been every day since we got him.”

Bred by Peter E. Blum Thoroughbreds — who also bred National Treasure — Pirate was purchased for \$350,000 at last year’s Keeneland September yearling sale. The victory puts him on track for one of Saratoga’s major graded stakes for juveniles, most likely in the Grade 1 Hopeful Stakes Sept. 4.

“We’ll play it by ear,” Pletcher said. “Normally we’d wait for the Hopeful, but we’ll see how things go.”

— Alec DiConza

• The odds read 23-1, 45-1, 9-1. That was the trifecta of the third, which ended in a five-way photo. Epic Miss Justice prevailed by a nose, breaking her maiden in her fourth start after two consecutive on-the-board finishes. The win triggered a \$5,621.25 trifecta payoff for a 50-cent bet and was the first at the meet

for trainer Kelly Breen and jockey Joel Rosario.

“Very grateful, and thanks to Kelly Breen for the opportunity,” Rosario said after winning the 1 1/16-mile maiden on the inner turf. “Very nice to have the first win of the meet, so we’re looking forward.”

Epic Miss Justice broke from post 10 and settled mid-pack through fractions of :24.54, :50.03 and 1:15.41. Under Rosario’s encouragement, the Liam’s Map filly moved wide off the turn before running down the front-runners.

“The main thing was to be happy and sit wherever she was,” Rosario said. “I thought we’d be a little forwardly placed. The main thing was being happy where she was. She came with a run. She did the job. We were a longshot, but she tried really hard. I was never worried about it.”

First-time starter Why Waste Words finished second, just edging Brendan Walsh’s King’s Secret. Rosario earned another trip to the winner’s circle aboard Silver Skillet in the sixth.

— Alec DiConza

• Chester and Mary Broman’s homebred Mariachi danced his way across the finish in the fifth, a 6-furlong allowance for New York-breds. The 3-year-old Maclean’s Music colt broke sharply under Kendrick Carmouche but was challenged early by

Continued On Page 22



Dave Harmon

Epic Miss Justice (right) hands on to win Saturday’s third race.

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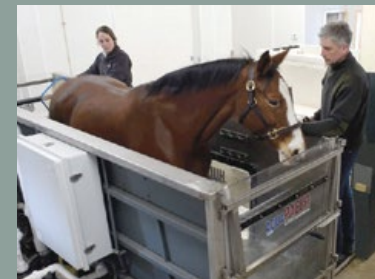


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Saturday —

■ Continued from page 21

Zeebear to his inside. Those two duelled for the first 5 furlongs, before Mariachi took off and notched a commanding 2 3/4-length victory for trainer John Kimmel.

“I ran him a little bit short the first time, the seven-eighths,” Kimmel said of a third June 17 at Belmont Park. “There were no more races in the book for him. Let me get a race into him. He ran awful hard, got a little fatigued at the end of the race but this race was perfect timing coming back at 6 furlongs. Seven would’ve been fine too today but I knew his fitness level would be up to par.”

Mariachi gave Kimmel his first win of the 2023 Saratoga meet but Kimmel, who is hopeful for more this summer.

“I like a lot of my horses running this week,” he said. “Maddie’s Grace, Im Just Kiddin and Vacation Dance are all running (this week) and I think they’ll run well.”

— Mary Rufo

• John Velazquez reunited with Playlist in the seventh and the Uncle Mo filly – who he rode to three defeats early in her career – came through with a victory in the 5 1/2-furlong turf allowance-optional.

“Finally learned how to run,” Velazquez joked



after Playlist won by three-quarters of a length for her third win in six starts. “She’s been a lot of work and we always liked her from the beginning.”

Playlist lost starts at Saratoga and Del Mar last year and at Santa Anita Park this year for Velazquez. She won back-to-back starts heading

into Saturday – in February at Turfway Park and in June at Ellis Park. Sent off the 9-5 favorite in the field of seven, Playlist made a three-wide run for the lead around the far turn after racing third early

Continued On Page 23

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Saturday —

■ Continued from page 22

behind Bombdiggity and Glitter Up. She won in 1:03.31 over the firm turf.

“Even Wesley said to me, ‘with all of the work we’ve put into her, I think she finally put it together,’” Velazquez said. “We got what we expected from her. It’s nice when they run what you expect from them.”

— Mary Rufo

• The combination of trainer Linda Rice and jockey Jose Ortiz — coming off individual titles at the Belmont Park spring meeting — teamed for their fourth victory at Saratoga through Saturday when Ichiban won the eighth. The 3-year-old daughter of Street Sense won the 7-furlong New York-bred maiden special weight by 2 1/2 lengths as the 3-1 favorite, continuing a long and successful working relationship between trainer and jockey.

“Jose has ridden for me for a lot

of years, since he was an apprentice,” Rice said. “He used to ride La Verdad for me a long time ago. I’ve had a lot of winners with Jose and I also use Jose Lezcano a lot. The two of them ride the bulk of my stable and they’re both just superb.”

Rice and Ortiz teamed again Sunday to win the second with Winning Move Stable’s Jolly Miss Jill.

Rice said the shortened trip to 7 furlongs and the recent improvements by Ichiban contributed to her first victory in five starts.

“I thought [the cutback] was OK,” she said. “This filly was improving in her training, just week to week, month to month. The last six weeks she has really been coming forward. I was excited about running her.”

Rice won 34 races at the Belmont spring meet for her 11th title on the NYRA circuit. She won five of 13 starts so far at Saratoga, where she won the title in 2009.

“It’s a perfect storm,” she said. “It has to come together and hopefully we can continue.”

— Alec DiConza



Tod Marks

Ichiban and Jose Ortiz win Saturday’s eighth for trainer Linda Rice.



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Dave Harmon

Uncashed heads for home in Sunday's featured Quick Call Stakes.

Four Straight

Uncashed keep win streak intact in off-the-turf Quick Call Stakes

SUNDAY RACING RECAP

Irad Ortiz Jr. was going to be riding Uncashed for the first time when the 3-year-old gelding's trainer, Larry Rivelli, gave him the mount in the Sunday's Grade 3 Quick Call Stakes presented by the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

So, he did his homework. He watched a couple of race replays, looked up his form, then talked with Rivelli on the phone.

The 5 1/2-furlong Quick Call was something of a departure for Uncashed. It was to be his first race outside of the Midwest, his first race on grass and his first graded stakes. Clearly some question marks, but one thing that was never in doubt was the racing strategy.

Uncashed came into the Quick Call with four wins in five races for owner Patricia's Hope LLC. He led after every call in each of those wins. The strategy was obvious: take the lead from the gate and stay there. When the race started, it became clear that Uncashed knew the strategy, too. He burst from the gate and was in front before the betting windows were fully shut.

"He made the lead on his own," Ortiz said. "After that, well, he doesn't know how to slow down, but he was comfortable, relaxed and waiting for me. At the quarter pole I could feel the rest making their move,

but he put his ears up and I knew he was going to be there.

"I asked him, and it took him maybe a few strides, but he kicked in at the three-sixteenth pole and I said, 'All right, he's home.'"

And he was.

The final margin was 5 1/2 lengths with Joey Freshwater, under Jose Ortiz, coming up for second. Two Of A Kind finished another 3 lengths back in third.

Rivelli is in the midst of his best year as a trainer. His winning percentage is currently a gaudy 36 percent and he's won four graded stakes on the year. The Quick Call would have been a fifth but was downgraded when it was moved off the turf.

Rivelli knew he had a good one with Uncashed but wanted to challenge the gelding to see what else he could do.

He looked around for a dirt race around this time, but couldn't find one, so thought he'd see what he could do on grass. "That test turned moot when a downpour the day before and more rains during Sunday's card moved the Quick Call to the main track. The transfer also led to

Continued On Page 25

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LIFELOVENLAUGHTER

wins Saratoga allowance
 Friday, July 14

Owner: The Elkstone Group

Trainer: Mike Trombetta

DAVE HARMON PHOTO



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Sunday —

■ Continued from page 24

six scratches and narrowed the field to a half-dozen.

The change to Uncashed's familiar surface was welcome, but it remained a question mark because all five of his previous races had been on fast tracks. As it turned out the track rated sloppy and sealed fit the gelding's front-running style.

Even though previously unseen in these parts, Uncashed's record on paper was impressive enough that he went off as the 6-5 favorite and paid \$4.40 to win. It's understood that almost all the Uncashed tickets were cashed.

Runner-up Joey Freshwater, winner of the Grade 3 Bay Shore Stakes in February, was coming hard from the quarter pole on but was no match for the winner. The Linda Rice-trained gelding generally runs behind the leaders, but Jose Ortiz said he broke well so he was able to keep him away from the wet kickback.

"He gave me a good effort," Ortiz said. "He just wants a little more ground."

Rivelli, happy with the Quick Call victory which now gives the gelding a four-race win streak, was still cautious when asked about the next move. Could it be the 7-furlong, Grade 1 H. Allen Jerkens Stakes Aug. 26, also for 3-year-olds and with \$500,000 purse?

"I don't know, that's a big step

up," the trainer said. "But we'll see. I don't rule it out."

— Terry Hill

• If anybody doubted that winning at Saratoga was a special experience, they would be proven wrong if they saw owner and trainer Natalia Lynch's exuberant smile coming out of the winner's circle after Sunday's fourth race.

Lynch was greeted by hugs from friends after teaming with jockey Dylan Davis to win with Ensign Parker. The 5-year-old Soldat gelding broke alert, dueled with two other pacesetters and took the lead around the far turn. He went on to win the \$14,000 claiming event at 6 furlongs by 4 1/2 lengths.

"I was holding my breath," Lynch said of watching the field turn for home. "That's it. I don't think I had any feeling in my body. I was holding my breath."

The race was slightly delayed by five minutes due to heavy rain, and run on a sloppy and sealed surface. Lynch remained confident Ensign Parker would perform at his best despite the uncertain and wet conditions.

Sunday was the third time she saddled Ensign Parker, who was coming off two on-the-board finishes after being transferred from Ray Handal's barn.

"He was ready to run today," Lynch said. "He's been training real-

Continued On Page 26



Dave Harmon

Ensign Parker splashes to victory in Sunday's fourth for trainer Natalia Lynch.

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Dave Harmon

Friends and family of Daily Racing Form writer and handicapper Dave Litfin, who died of cancer in November, gather in the winner's circle after Sunday's fifth race. Litfin was the Form's leading handicapper in New York from 1991-2016. He wrote two books about handicapping, contributed to the Form's "Champions" book and was a regular at Saratoga and other tracks for decades.

Sunday —

Continued from page 25

ly good and we've been third, second and now I think he ran his race to win and he deserved it."

Ensign Parker gave Lynch her first win of the meet and the first of two on the day for Davis, who later added the seventh aboard Ouster.

Lynch won her first race at Saratoga last year with Road To Remember on the Alabama Day card. This season, Lynch has one big wish for the remaining 36 days.

"I hope they all run like that; that's all it is," she said.

— Alec DiConza

- Always A Warrior proved too fast in the fifth, winning his debut by 1 ¾ lengths after leading by 6 lengths in midstretch, but the impressive performance didn't surprise owner and breeder Ron Lombardi.

"He's been training great, getting

out of the gate quick," said Lombardi, who bred the New York-bred Poseidon's Warrior colt in his Mr. Amore Stables. "I felt if he had a good break, with Irad (Ortiz Jr.) it's always a great possibility. He rode him great."

Lombardi has had success with his homebreds, namely Grade 1 winner Firenze Fire, who is also by Poseidon's Warrior. Always A Warrior is a half-brother to another recent winner for Mr. Amore, Little Luca, whose dam She's Always Ready is becoming an impressive producer.

"I have a bunch of broodmares," Lombardi said. "I took five of them and went back to Poseidon's Warrior, because at the time I thought I was going to keep Firenze Fire. So, I was trying to build up his repertoire a little bit, and it turns out that so far all the horses I have with him, they all look good."

"This one is great. I got a couple yearlings and weanlings that look good, so we'll see what happens. Everything is good."

Another Mr. Amore homebred,

Andiamo A Firenze, won last year's Funny Cide Stakes on Saratoga Showcase Day. Always A Warrior could return to defend the title for the stable.

"We'll take a look and see how he comes out of this. Talk to Carlos and see," Lombardi said of Always A Warrior's trainer Carlos David.

As for Andiamo A Firenze, Lombardi said he could ship to Saratoga later this week.

"Trying to get him back on the winning trail, too. So, we'll see," he said.

— Alec DiConza

Saratoga Leaders

| TRAINERS..... | 1ST |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Linda Rice | 5 |
| Chad Brown..... | 3 |
| Phil Antonacci..... | 2 |
| Christophe Clement | 2 |
| Mark Hennig | 2 |
| Bruce Levine..... | 2 |
| Bill Mott..... | 2 |
| Todd Pletcher..... | 2 |
| Wesley Ward | 2 |

| JOCKEYS..... | 1ST |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Irad Ortiz Jr..... | 7 |
| Jose Ortiz | 7 |
| Flavien Prat | 4 |
| Kendrick Carmouche | 3 |
| Javier Castellano | 3 |
| Dylan Davis | 3 |
| Manny Franco..... | 2 |
| Joel Rosario..... | 2 |
| Luis Saez..... | 3 |
| John Velazquez..... | 2 |

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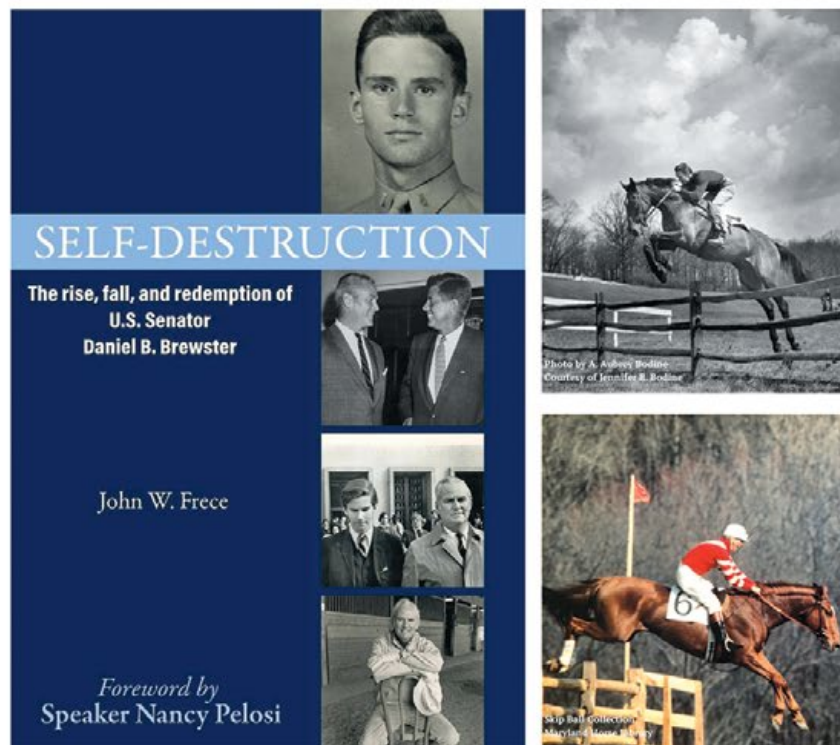


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Working Holiday

Salvino gives owner, trainer chance in first Saratoga sojourn

BY NOLAN CLANCY

Patrick Merrigan and Patrick Neville followed Salvino from the stakes barn, across the shady one-way street and into the Saratoga Race Course paddock Tuesday morning.

The friends from Ireland are both in Saratoga for the first time, taking in the scenery over a little more than a week's stay.

"Saratoga didn't paint a real picture of Saratoga. When I watch a jump race at Saratoga, I see an infield and horses running," Merrigan said.

"You see this here?" he asked, pointing at the picnic areas and clubhouse between the trees. "It's unbelievable."

The bay gelding trained on the main track after the 8:30 a.m. break, while Neville and Merrigan watched from The Porch in the clubhouse.

"When we got here, we were like 'look at this place!' " said Merrigan, who came to the races Sunday with Neville as fans and took in the scene from The Post Bar. "Horse racing is Saratoga and Saratoga is horse racing."

Today, their 7-year-old Leading Light gelding will take on eight other horses in the Grade 1, \$150,000 A.P. Smithwick Memorial Handicap, the first steeplechase race of the 2022 meeting.

A.P. SMITHWICK STAKES PREVIEW

The Smithwick will be a rather large step up in class to the American Grade 1 level, but Merrigan, Salvino's owner and Neville's former assistant trainer, thinks his gelding's experience prepared him well.

"I don't think you can make a jumper in America. You don't want to come here with an underdeveloped 3-year-old," Merrigan said. "You've got to bring a horse that's been through a few little wars."

Salvino, an Irish-bred, has raced 11 times, all in Great Britain, where Neville is now based. His lone win came in November, after finishing second four times in his first six starts.

Neville trains a string of horses out of Ann Duffield's yard in North Yorkshire in England after moving there from Limerick in Ireland in 2021. The star of his stable is The Real Whacker, winner of the Grade 1 Brown Advisory Novices Chase at the Cheltenham Festival in March.

When Salvino goes to the post today, he'll represent Neville's first starter in the U.S.

"He came through [the air travel] well," he said. "That was the only thing I dreaded was the traveling."

Neville said a stalking trip behind



Sean Clancy

The English-based Salvino strolls the stakes barn at Saratoga Tuesday.

the speed of the race suits Salvino best, but that he trusts jockey Gavin Sheehan to use his own judgment.

"We're here because this horse is ready to run," Merrigan said. "Is he a genuine Grade 1 horse the first day he lands here? He has to answer that. I think he is once he settles in, whether that's [today] or a month from now."

Merrigan plans to leave Salvino in the United States with an American trainer moving forward.

"I know that he'll benefit from the different style of racing, which is a lot of pace and not so strong in the final bit of it," he said.

Salvino will have to deal with two American-bred runners in the nine-horse field. The Jack Fisher-trained Welshman, a 5-year-old son of Flintshire out of the Giant's Causeway

mare Unforgiving, has won three of his last four starts dating to October 2022. Most recently, he defeated today's rivals Gordon's Jet and Belfast Banter in a Grade 2 at the Virginia Gold Cup meeting in May.

Two years ago, he was part of trainer Barclay Tagg's flat stable (including a Saratoga start in July 2021).

Freddy Flintshire, a 5-year-old gelding by Flintshire trained by Keri Brion, is the 3-1 morning-line favorite as he continues to find a second career over jumps.

Formerly trained by Brendan Walsh, Freddy Flintshire went winless in nine starts on the flat, but has rattled off three wins and two seconds in his last five starts over jumps includ-

Continued On Page 29

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Preview —

■ Continued from page 28

ing an allowance win at Saratoga last year.

Roger Horgan, a former trainer and Walsh's assistant, remembers Freddie Flintshire as agreeable and uncomplicated, traits that may seem ordinary but that he said can lead to successful jumpers.

"Those kind can go on and do something else," Horgan said. "They can do anything, whether it be foxhunter, showjumper or if they've got enough talent, they can be a pretty good jumper."

Horgan remembers training Be Certain on the flat in 2007 before he began a jump career with the late Hall of Fame trainer Tom Voss as a 3-year-old.

"The second we put him over fences, Tom called me up and said 'This is the most God-given natural jumper I've ever been around in my life,'" Horgan said.

Be Certain went on to win two stakes races over hurdles and finish second in the Grade 1 New York Turf Writers Cup as a 4-year-old in 2008.



Tod Marks

Freddie Flintshire looks to duplicate his 2022 Saratoga win.

The A.P. Smithwick, today's first race with a post time at 1:10 p.m., also features Grade 2 winner Redician, Grade 1 Lonesome Glory Handicap winner Noah And The Ark and two-time U.S. stakes winner Historic Heart.

West Newton enters Grade 1 company following back-to-back victories for trainer Ricky Hendriks. Gordon's Jet eyes his second win in three starts in the U.S. for Fisher. Belfast Banter rounds out the field of nine in search of his first graded stakes win for Cyril Murphy.

- The \$150,000 Statue of Liberty division of the New York Stallion Series Stakes highlights the flat card on Wednesday, the last of nine races following the A.P. Smithwick.

Five of the nine runners exit the same race, the Cupecoy's Joy division of the NYSS June 18 at Belmont. Mz Big Bucks bested the field that day for trainer Michelle Nevin. The bay daughter of War Dancer was followed by Little Linzee and Red Moon in second and third. Both return today. Bernt Again and Orange Freeze come off wins at Belmont, both stepping up to stakes company for the first time. The 1-mile event for 3-year-old fillies goes on the inner turf at 6:18 p.m.

- Ramblin' Wreck highlights the \$150,000 Cab Calloway division of the New York Stallion Series Stakes, the feature on Thursday's card.

The chestnut colt by Redesdale bested seven horses last time out in the Spectacular Bid division of the NYSS June 18 at Belmont, including four entered in the Cab Calloway. Twenty Six Black finished second, and has won two of four starts for trainer Horacio De Paz.

Vacation Dance finished fourth in the June 18 race, and won in his debut last year at Saratoga for John Kimmel. Thursday's Cab Calloway goes as the 10th race at 6:18 p.m.

- Friday's card features a pair of stakes – the \$135,000 Curlin for 3-year-olds on the main track and the Grade 3 Lake George for 3-year-old fillies on the grass.

The 1 1/8-mile Curlin, restricted to 3-year-olds which have not won a graded stakes at a mile or



Sean Clancy

Gordon's Jet eyes his second American steeplechase win.

over in 2023, attracted a field of five including three who made their last starts in a Triple Crown race.

Blazing Sevens, second by a head to National Treasure in the Preakness, figures to be favored in the Curlin for trainer Chad Brown. He takes on Perform, sixth in the Preakness for trainer Shug McGaughey; and Il Miracolo, seventh in the Belmont Stakes for Antonio Sano.

The Curlin goes as the fourth race on the card at 2:52 p.m.

A field of 10 entered for the 1-mile Lake George, including five from Brown's deep barn. Liguria and Tax Implications, 1-2 in the Wild Applause last time, lead the group along with multiple graded stakes-placed Revalita and maiden winners Surge Capacity and Utilization Rate.

Christophe Clement sends out a major player in Queen Picasso, who ran her record to 2-for-2 with a 2-length victory in the Grade 3 Soaring Softly in late May at Belmont Park.

The Lake George goes as the ninth of 10 races at 5:44 p.m.



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SARATOGA ENTRIES

Wednesday, July 19.

1ST (1:10PM). \$150,000, STK - THE A.P. SMITHWICK MEMORIAL, 4 YO'S & UP, 2 1/16M (HURDLE)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Freddy Flintshire | ..... | P. Hendriks | ..... | K. Brion | ..... | 3-1 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Redicean (GB) | ..... | R. Dunne | ..... | L. Young | ..... | 12-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Noah And The Ark (IRE) | ..... | H. Beswick | ..... | T. McKenna | ..... | 4-1 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Historic Heart (IRE) | ..... | D. Mullins | ..... | K. Brion | ..... | 6-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Salvino (IRE) | ..... | G. Sheehan | ..... | P. Neville | ..... | 6-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | West Newton (GB) | ..... | S. Mulqueen | ..... | R. Hendriks | ..... | 8-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Gordon's Jet (IRE) | ..... | T. Garner | ..... | J. Fisher | ..... | 8-1 |
| 8 |8 | ..... | Welshman | ..... | G. Watters | ..... | J. Fisher | ..... | 9-2 |
| 9 |9 | ..... | Belfast Banter (IRE) | ..... | B. Foley | ..... | C. Murphy | ..... | 20-1 |

2ND (1:46PM). \$52,000, MCL \$40,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 1M

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

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|-------|-----------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------|-------|------|
| 1 |3 | ..... | Hineni | ..... | J. Gomez | ..... | N. Zito | ..... | 6-1 |
| 1a |4 | ..... | Vigano | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | N. Zito | ..... | 6-1 |
| 2 |1 | ..... | Cloud Forest | ..... | J. Lezcano | ..... | W. Mott | ..... | 7-5 |
| 3 |2 | ..... | Happy Bob | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 8-5 |
| 4 |5 | ..... | Union Tap | ..... | K. Carmouche | ..... | J. Kimmel | ..... | 15-1 |
| 5 |6 | ..... | Steady Progress | ..... | D. Davis | ..... | N. Chatterpaul | ..... | 12-1 |
| 6 |7 | ..... | Golden Purchase | ..... | D. Brown | ..... | E. Jones | ..... | 50-1 |
| 7 |8 | ..... | Memphis | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | T. Pletcher | ..... | 5-1 |

3RD (2:19PM). \$70,000, STR \$50,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 5 1/2F (TURF)

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

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Maddie's Grace | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | J. Kimmel | ..... | 6-5 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Proud Foot | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 10-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Flip My Id | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | K. Breen | ..... | 12-1 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Golden Dagger | ..... | D. Davis | ..... | W. Morey | ..... | 8-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Now Showing | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | J. Terranova, II | ..... | 6-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Western Lane | ..... | K. Davis | ..... | N. Lynch | ..... | 5-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Boss of All | ..... | K. Carmouche | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 7-2 |
| 8 |AE-MTO | ..... | Pout | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | N. Zito | ..... | 10-1 |
| 9 |AE-MTO | ..... | Try It Again | ..... | Rider TBA | ..... | M. Arenas | ..... | 8-1 |
| 10 |AE-MTO | ..... | Mursal | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | R. Dutrow, Jr. | ..... | 5-2 |
| 11 |AE-MTO | ..... | Sa Foradada | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | R. Dutrow, Jr. | ..... | 9-5 |
| 12 |AE-MTO | ..... | Carbon | ..... | J. Alvarado | ..... | M. Kantarmaci | ..... | 8-1 |

4TH (2:52PM). \$28,000, CLM \$10,000, 4 YO'S & UP, 1M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|------|
| 1 |2 | ..... | Dontbelate | ..... | O. Hernandez Moreno | ..... | R. Persaud | ..... | 8-1 |
| 1a |10 | ..... | Jumpster | ..... | E. Escobar | ..... | R. Persaud | ..... | 8-1 |
| 2 |5 | ..... | Back Ring Luck | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | D. Jacobson | ..... | 1-1 |
| 2b |7 | ..... | Musical Heart | ..... | F. Geroux | ..... | D. Jacobson | ..... | 1-1 |
| 3 |1 | ..... | Bourbon's Hope | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 8-1 |
| 4 |3 | ..... | Breadman | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | R. Falcone, Jr. | ..... | 6-1 |
| 5 |4 | ..... | Treasure Trove | ..... | J. Gomez | ..... | N. Cash | ..... | 7-2 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Grumps Little Tots | ..... | E. Greenidge | ..... | C. Baker | ..... | 15-1 |
| 7 |8 | ..... | Great Workout | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | M. Maker | ..... | 20-1 |
| 8 |9 | ..... | Souper Catch | ..... | K. Carmouche | ..... | R. Atras | ..... | 12-1 |

5TH (3:26PM). \$35,000, CLM \$16,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 1M

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

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Little Frappucino | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | R. Diodoro | ..... | 9-2 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Dee's Speedstre | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | O. Noda | ..... | 6-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Run Smitty Run | ..... | R. Santana, Jr. | ..... | E. Barker | ..... | 8-1 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Ginnsu Warrior | ..... | G. Huayas | ..... | J. Ferraro | ..... | 15-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Papi On Ice | ..... | A. Castillo | ..... | R. Persaud | ..... | 20-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Reunion Tour | ..... | E. Greenidge | ..... | J. Ferraro | ..... | 30-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Rock the Weekend | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | J. Antonucci | ..... | 6-1 |
| 8 |8 | ..... | Magical Ways | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | D. Jacobson | ..... | 4-1 |
| 9 |9 | ..... | Excess Demand | ..... | F. Prat | ..... | C. Brown | ..... | 9-5 |

6TH (4:00PM). \$83,000, MSW, 2 YO, F , 5 1/2F

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

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Lisa's Palace | ..... | J. Rosario | ..... | K. Breen | ..... | 12-1 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Queen's Martini | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | D. Gargan | ..... | 4-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Iikefunsize | ..... | J. Toledo | ..... | A. Farris | ..... | 7-2 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Crazy Cami | ..... | I. Castillo | ..... | M. Maker | ..... | 15-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Flowers for Me | ..... | D. Davis | ..... | J. Ryerson | ..... | 20-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Sun and Wind | ..... | J. Velazquez | ..... | R. Rodriguez | ..... | 8-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Gunuccha | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | R. Reid, Jr. | ..... | 6-1 |
| 8 |8 | ..... | Almond Fudge | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | F. Gutierrez | ..... | 8-1 |
| 9 |9 | ..... | Khozy Colby | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | M. Casse | ..... | 3-1 |
| 10 |10 | ..... | Bertrille | ..... | T. McCarthy | ..... | B. Brown | ..... | 20-1 |
| 11 |AE | ..... | Tempting Lady | ..... | R. Santana, Jr. | ..... | J. Barkley | ..... | 8-1 |
| 12 |AE | ..... | She Takes Cash | ..... | J. Rosario | ..... | O. Noda | ..... | 15-1 |

7TH (4:34PM). \$100,000, AOC \$45,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 1M (INNER TURF)

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

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-------|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Classic Colors | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | B. Russell | ..... | 8-1 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Master of the Tunes | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | J. Lee | ..... | 9-2 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Duffresne | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | O. Barrera, III | ..... | 20-1 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Lisa's Vision | ..... | F. Prat | ..... | J. Abreu | ..... | 6-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Home for Christmas | ..... | J. Lezcano | ..... | G. DiPrima | ..... | 20-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Golden Rocket | ..... | J. Gomez | ..... | P. Farro | ..... | 5-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Collaboration | ..... | D. Davis | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 3-1 |
| 8 |8 | ..... | Toolcat | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | R. Potts | ..... | 8-1 |
| 9 |9 | ..... | Im Just Kiddin | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | J. Kimmel | ..... | 7-2 |
| 10 |AE-MTO | ..... | Cinderella's Cause | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | R. Falcone, Jr. | ..... | 3-1 |
| 11 |AE-MTO | ..... | Amanda's Folly | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 9-5 |

8TH (5:10PM). \$162,500, AOC \$80,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 1M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Midnight Stroll | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | J. Terranova, II | ..... | 10-1 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Gerrymander | ..... | J. Rosario | ..... | C. Brown | ..... | 3-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Nostalgic | ..... | J. Alvarado | ..... | W. Mott | ..... | 9-2 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Sixtythreecaliber | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | T. Amoss | ..... | 8-5 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Movie Moxy | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | L. Rice | ..... | 7-2 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Favor | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | T. Pletcher | ..... | 6-1 |

9TH (5:44PM). \$149,500, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 5 1/2F (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|------|
| 1 |8 | ..... | Miss Domina | ..... | J. Ortiz | ..... | G. Weaver | ..... | 6-1 |
| 1a |AE-MTO | ..... | Cupid's Heart | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | B. Levine | ..... | 6-1 |
| 2 |1 | ..... | Hihellohowareyou | ..... | L. Saez | ..... | J. D'Angelo | ..... | 15-1 |
| 3 |2 | ..... | Cadencia | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | W. Morey | ..... | 3-1 |
| 4 |3 | ..... | Anna Karenine (FR) | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | C. Brown | ..... | 5-2 |
| 5 |4 | ..... | Gun Boat | ..... | T. Gaffalione | ..... | C. McGaughey III | ..... | 9-2 |
| 6 |5 | ..... | Little Mombo | ..... | F. Geroux | ..... | P. Bauer | ..... | 8-1 |
| 7 |6 | ..... | Dekanter | ..... | F. Prat | ..... | J. Abreu | ..... | 12-1 |
| 8 |7 | ..... | Fleetfooted | ..... | J. Castellano | ..... | J. Sharp | ..... | 5-1 |
| 9 |AE-MTO | ..... | Happy Sophia | ..... | G. Huayas | ..... | G. Rodriguez | ..... | 12-1 |

10TH (6:18PM). \$150,000, STK - THE NEW YORK STALLION SERIES, 3 YO, F , 1M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|------|
| 1 |1 | ..... | Red Moon | ..... | I. Ortiz, Jr. | ..... | W. Morey | ..... | 2-1 |
| 2 |2 | ..... | Bernt Again | ..... | M. Franco | ..... | D. Schettino | ..... | 8-1 |
| 3 |3 | ..... | Mz Big Bucks | ..... | J. Gomez | ..... | M. Nevin | ..... | 5-2 |
| 4 |4 | ..... | Camp Akeela | ..... | T. McCarthy | ..... | T. Amoss | ..... | 12-1 |
| 5 |5 | ..... | Clover Street | ..... | J. Velazquez | ..... | M. Hennig | ..... | 10-1 |
| 6 |6 | ..... | Little Linzee | ..... | K. Davis | ..... | D. Schettino | ..... | 5-1 |
| 7 |7 | ..... | Bea Bea Kaz | ..... | L. Luzzi | ..... | D. Synnefias | ..... | 30-1 |
| 8 |8 | | Queens Over Threes | | T. Alpander | | L. Gyarmati | | 30-1 |
| 9 |9 | | Orange Freeze | | J. Rosario | | W. Morey | | 6-1 |

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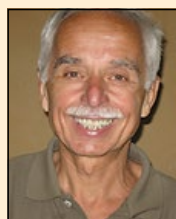
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The **POWER** Grid



John Shapazian



Tom Law



Rob Whitlock



Charles Bedard



Jessica Paquette

| Race | John Shapazian | Tom Law | Rob Whitlock | Charles Bedard | Jessica Paquette |
|--------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | Welshman Freddy Flintshire Noah And The Ark | Gordon's Jet Welshman Freddy Flintshire | Freddy Flintshire Noah And The Ark Welshman | Gordon's Jet Welshman West Newton | West Newton Freddy Flintshire Welshman |
| 2 | Cloud Forest Happy Bob Memphis | Cloud Forest Happy Bob Memphis | Cloud Forest Happy Bob Vigano | Cloud Forest Steady Progress Zito entry | Happy Bob Cloud Forest Memphis |
| 3 | Sa Foradada Maggie's Grace Boss Of All | Sa Foradada Maddie's Grace Now Showing | Mursal Sa Foradada Proud Foot | Try It Again Maddie's Grace Boss Of All | Golden Dagger Maddie's Grace Proud Foot |
| 4 | Jacobson entry Bourbon's Hope Breadman | Bourbon's Hope Back Ring Luck Treasure Trove | Bourbon's Hope Grumps Little Tots Back Ring Luck | Jacobson entry Persaud entry Treasure Trove | Bourbon's Hope Back Ring Luck Breadman |
| 5 | Excess Demand Magical Ways Little Frappucino | Excess Demand Little Frappucino Dee's Speedstre | Excess Demand Rock The Weekend Little Frappucino | Excess Demand Dee's Speedstre Magical Ways | Excess Demand Rock The Weekend Dee's Speedstre |
| 6 | Ilikefunsize Almond Fudge Sun And Wind | Khozy Colby Sun And Wind Queen's Martini | Ginuccha Queen's Martini Ilikefunsize | Sun And Wind Almond Fudge Crazy Cami | Sun And Wind Ginuccha Almond Fudge |
| 7 | Amanda's Folly Collaboration Golden Rocket | Amanda's Folly Collaboration Im Just Kiddin | Amanda's Folly Im Just Kiddin Golden Rocket | Amanda's Folly Collaboration Im Just Kiddin | Classic Colors Collaboration Im Just Kiddin |
| 8 | Sixtythreecaliber Gerrymander Movie Mox | Nostalgic Gerrymander Sixtythreecaliber | Sixtythreecaliber Nostalgic Gerrymander | Sixtythreecaliber Movie Mox Nostalgic | Favor Nostalgic Gerrymander |
| 9 | Cupid's Heart Anna Karenine Gun Boat | Anna Karenine Gun Boat Cadencia | Gun Boat Anna Karenine Fleetfooted | R.A. Hill Stable entry Anna Karenine Fleetfooted | Fleetfooted Gun Boat Anna Karenine |
| 10 | Mz Big Bucks Red Moon Little Linzee | Mz Big Bucks Little Linzee Orange Freeze | Mz Big Bucks Bernt Again Red Moon | Mz Big Bucks Bernt Again Red Moon | Clover Street Orange Freeze Queens Over Threes |
| 2023 Records | 13/40 | 9/40 | 13/40 | 15/40 | 12/40 |



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Farewell Champ

New York-bred hero Funny Cide dies at 23

Originally written for nytbreeders.org

BY JOE AND SEAN CLANCY

A good racehorse can change everything, and Funny Cide sure did that. The New York-bred gelding, who retired in 2007 as the program's career earnings leader with \$3,529,412 and died Sunday at age 23, sent waves of influence through the lives of scores of people and – in reality – an entire state's Thoroughbred industry.

“It was life-changing for all the 10 partners and from the business perspective, it put the New York-bred program on a plateau where it had never been before,” said Jack Knowlton, co-founder and operating manager of owner Sackatoga Stable. “And it hasn't gone away. Once you win the Derby, people see that anything is possible with a New York-bred and the program has only gotten better and better. All of the things we got to do around his Triple Crown run, the Today Show, all of that. If that horse doesn't come along, would Sackatoga Stable still be around? Who knows? He touched an incredible number of lives, he had a fan base that continued right up until today. I can't begin to count the number of texts, calls, emails that I've gotten. People sharing pictures they have with him at the Horse Park. He was such a fan favorite.”

Foaled at McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds for breeder WinStar Farm in 2000, Funny Cide sold to Tony Everard for \$22,000 at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred yearling sale in Saratoga.



Tod Marks

Funny Cide (Simon Harris up) headed back to the barn with assistant trainer Robin Smullen after training at Clare Court.



Tod Marks
Trainer Barclay Tagg rode the retired Funny Cide as a lead pony at Saratoga in 2007.

“Tony Everard was an old friend of ours and we had to push him to buy him,” Joe McMahon said Sunday. “He was a beautiful-walking horse, he was a smart-looking horse but he had long, slopey pasterns, so be careful of the horses you knock for that.”

Via trainer Barclay Tagg, Everard sold the chestnut son of Distorted Humor to Sackatoga as a 2-year-old the following year. Funny Cide won all three starts (two stakes) in New York-bred company as a 2-year-old.

At 3, he hit the big time – placing in three preps for the 2003 Kentucky Derby before landing the nation's most famous Thoroughbred race in a 13-1 upset of the favored Empire Maker.

Sackatoga and its horse were instant news.

“Part of it was the human story, us guys being ordinary guys, going to the Derby in a school bus, people saw us as the every-man kind of story,” Knowlton said. “There have been others somewhat like it afterward but we were in the right place at the right time. It was a difficult time for the country, with a war going on and all kinds of stuff. And, in Saratoga, he was born here, that just embellished the whole story. The local horse. Being a New York-bred, once he won the Derby, all of New York embraced him as theirs.”

Two weeks after the Derby, Funny Cide dominated the Preakness, winning by 9 3/4 lengths to set up a Triple Crown attempt in the Belmont Stakes. Empire Maker got his revenge there, winning over



Tod Marks

Funny Cide won the Jockey Club Gold Cup at Belmont Park in 2004.

Ten Most Wanted with Funny Cide third.

“Anne and I sat in the box with Robin (Smullen) and Barclay when he won the Derby. It was like, ‘This stuff doesn't happen.’ It changed a lot of lives and it changed the face of the business, for a New York-bred to win the Derby and the Preakness, that was huge. It gave New York a little credibility that they could raise a good horse. It changed the partnership business, the idea that for a small amount of money you could get a classic horse. It gave great exposure to inexpensive horses and multiple partic-

Continued On Page 33

One and Only

A lot of you are probably wondering how I managed to get this prestigious internship at The Saratoga Special.

OK, maybe a few of you.

When I applied for the position five years ago, my resume had a huge hole in it – it showed no journalism experience or training. Zero. Plus, I was about to turn 75, which would have to be somewhere between three and four times the age of the ideal intern.

It's true I had been a writer and a racing fan my entire sentient life. But still, how could the three serious journalists who are the principals of this paper take seriously an old dog trying to learn a new trick. A guy who would probably spend his time doddering around the office asking if anyone had seen where he left his bifocals and whether "How?" was one of the five Ws.

I had spent my working life writing 30-second television commercials. A 30-second spot is supposed to have a maximum of 68 words in it. A typical race recap in this paper will run 300 to 500 words. I wasn't sure I even knew that many words, though I figured I might be able to use some of them more than once.

After an audition writing assignment which called for more than 68 words, by some fluke I was told they'd give me a shot. I was a full week on the job before I worked out what that "fluke" was. It happened the first time I checked out The Special's on-line edition. Its address is thisishorseracing.com.

To anyone interested in horse racing writing or journalism, that address is an obvious tribute to the legendary writer Joe Palmer.

In my cover letter to The Special I had mentioned that as a teenager I had read Joe Palmer's book of his selected columns three times. The book is called *This Was Racing*. So, while my new editors didn't really have a clue if I could write my way out of

a Dick and Jane book or produce a race recap, they knew for certain that I had good taste in racing journalists.

Based on that, I'm guessing, they gave me my chance.

Palmer's book was published in 1953, a year after his early death at the age of 48. It featured an introduction by his friend and sports writing colleague at the New York Herald Tribune, Red Smith. In it, Smith wrote, "Joe Palmer could write better than anybody in the world whose appeared in newspapers."

Coming from Red Smith whose work appeared in newspapers and is considered one of the great sports journalists of all time, that's mighty high praise.

Palmer was born and grew up in Lexington, Ky., which means that he came by his love of racing honestly, but he started out to be an English professor. He earned a Phi Beta Kappa key and a master's degree at the University of Kentucky and then upgraded to the University of Michigan where he taught English literature and started working toward a PhD. (All right, I guess I have to come clean, the use of the word "upgraded" might be a tiny bit influenced by the fact that Michigan is my alma mater. Go Blue!)

After completing all his requirements for his doc-

torate except his dissertation, he was offered a job as a racing writer in Kentucky. He immediately gave up his academic career in favor of the lure of horse racing.

Right call.

There are thousands of English professors, but there's only one Joe Palmer. His writing style was inimitable. I say that with absolute certainty because for years I tried very hard to do just that.

And though his book has been out of print for years, I'm OK because I have two copies. One for our home in Mexico and the other for our apartment in New York – both dog-eared.

There's also a copy at The Saratoga Special office. On a podcast from the Henry Street Taproom, my editor Tom Law once said, "Sometimes when we've put the paper to bed, we'll depress ourselves by getting out Palmer and reading a piece or two and then think – what the hell do we think we're doing?"

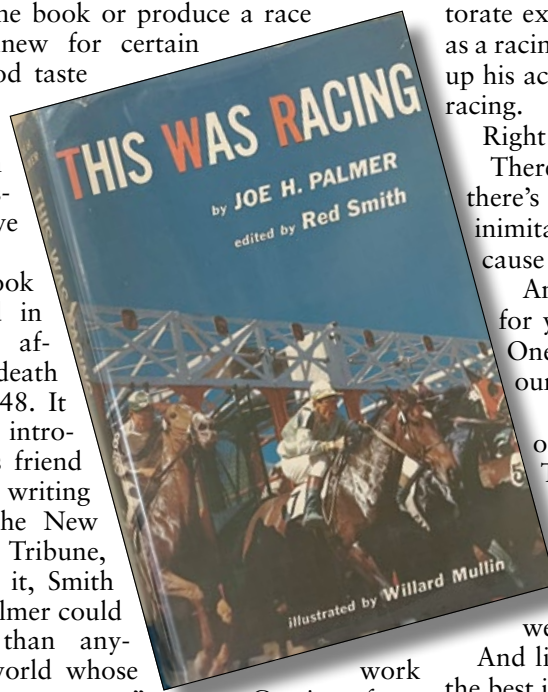
And like all of us, Saratoga always brought out the best in Palmer.

"Perhaps nothing is as hard to do as to keep time from passing and Saratoga has mastered at least the illusion of this. Saratoga has its critics, of course, but it is customarily shelled from long range. Let a man hang around the place for a while and drink his breakfast from the clubhouse porch and you have no more trouble with him."

What the hell do we think we're doing?

Red Smith said that every day when Palmer sat down to work at his typewriter (remember typewriters?) he would raise his eyes heavenward and say, "Give us this day our daily plinth."

A plinth is a square stone slab that will support a column. For this column I found my plinth in Joe Palmer.



Funny Cide —

■ Continued from page 32

ipation for not a lot of money. He did change the game."

At 4, he won the Grade 3 Excelsior at Aqueduct in April and the Grade 1 Jockey Club Gold Cup at Belmont Park in October. As a 6-year-old, Funny Cide won two more stakes (topped by Woodbine's Grade 3 Dominion Day). In his final start, July 4, 2007, he won the Wadsworth Memorial at

Finger Lakes. Racing in six seasons, 2002-07, Funny Cide won 11 races, finished second six times and was third eight times. He was the New York-bred Horse of the Year three times, also collecting divisional trophies as champion 2-year-old, 3-year-old and older horse.

In retirement he was the Tagg stable lead pony for a bit and then moved to the Kentucky Horse Park, where he proved a popular attraction with visitors to the Hall of Champions. He died due to complications of colic and will be cremated and buried

at the Horse Park. Saratoga hosts a stakes for New York-bred 2-year-olds in his honor (this year's is Aug. 27) and he appeared in the paddock as a retiree in 2015.

Twenty years since he won the Kentucky Derby, and five since Mind Your Biscuits claimed the New York-bred earnings lead with \$4,279,566, Funny Cide is still a measuring stick for the state's Thoroughbred industry.

"Funny Cide was arguably the most popular and most accomplished New York-bred thanks to his memo-

orable performances on track including his unforgettable victories in the 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness," said Najja Thompson, executive director of New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc. "He helped to elevate the New York-bred program to national prominence, and I am thankful we were able to honor Funny Cide and his connections last year at Saratoga. On behalf of New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc. we offer our sincere condolences to everyone directly involved in his life and all who cheered for him during his career."

And so, it begins.

Another Saratoga. The 23rd for The Special. The 34th full season for me. There were overnight trips, weekend jaunts and a few when we spent more time in the back of the horse van than in Saratoga long before my first full summer, a job with Mickey Preger, in 1989. How many in all? Closer to 50 than 40. For whatever that's worth.

I pull into the office late Monday night, four racing days late and two hours late for dinner with Tim Keefe and his daughter Ryan. In the dark, I stretch my cranky back and hips, trying to unleash seven hours of solitary confinement before unloading a crammed Subaru.

Three computers, two bags of cereal, nuts and pretzels, Tom Law's favorite Virginia IPA (Power Moves by Aslin), a couple of jackets, a hanger full of ties and bag of computer cords and plugs in a tangle.

Before reaching into the trunk for the first load, John Wayne Eastwood pulls up in a golf cart, drifts to a stop on the sidewalk, fills me in on what I missed and offering one more pronunciation of Shapazian. He doesn't stay long, a barn full of horses and an impending night check or perhaps another stop on the joy ride awaits.

The quilt and all its patches.

I wave good night, spin the key and climb the stairs. Tom and Joe are long gone, their desks neat and fastidious, settled in for the meet, for the grind. Tom in the front staring out the door, his name plate at the front of his desk, must have come with the Thoroughbred Times settlement. Joe to the left, he got a new desk, nice, staring out the glass window, like a drive-through worker awaiting an order.

I walk into my office, flip the light. A stark, empty table in a stark, empty office. My 2023 press pass lying on the table, my old mountain bike from college leaning against the wall, tires pumped, chain

greased (see why I bring the Power Moves). That's it, nothing else.

I trudge back to the car, grab the slim Apple desktop, then the laptop with the busted screen and the monitor that kicks it to life and another laptop that carries the load. I begin to maneuver computers and cords on the table, stack sales catalogs and a book about the Turcottes on the ledge, they fall onto the floor, and I give up. Tomorrow's chores.

Back to the car, pop the trunk, pull out the last thing for the night, place it on the table and pull off the 2000 Hong Kong International Races jacket, hastily wrapped seven hours earlier, from the photo of Allen Jerkens and me after he won the 2012 Priores with Emma's Encore.

It hangs in my closet at home and in my office here. The nail is still in the wall, overlooking my desk in the back corner of the old field store. I hang the photo, nudge the bottom right corner to make it straight and smile. My hero.

A long road trip complete. A long race meet awaits.

Traffic was light, surprisingly. Thought was deep, predictably. The possibility of Saratoga palpable, calculable, tangible. What can we accomplish? Can we change our life? What will raise our pulse, what will break our heart? It's all ahead, all possible.

Tim, Tom and I convene for a late-night beer at Tom's house on Circular Street. The Reds are in a rain delay.

I eat a cold piece of pizza, the first of many along this eight-week odyssey. We talk about Funny Cide, goodbye New York-bred giant. We talk about Golden Gate Fields, goodbye Northern California gem. We talk about the cards that have already come and gone, Casa Creed, Contessa and the upset in the Sanford. An old cat stalks and squawks.

"What's your story in the morning?" Tom asks, his go-to when it's time to wrap it up.

Night and Day

"I don't know. Don't have a real plan. I guess I'll get out there at some point."

I drive Tim back to the Hampton Inn. How things have changed at Saratoga. One beer at night and a thousand chores by day.

I don't set an alarm. Dream about Migliore riding a jumper. And hit the stakes barn by 7.

Gordon's Jet romps off the main track a few minutes later. Talk about the possibility, palpable, calculable, tangible. Of course, there are eight other horses, eight other teams thinking the same thing about the Grade 1 A.P. Smithwick, Wednesday's opener.

I watch Welshman jog once around the main track, offer condolences about Funny Cide to Robin Smullen as she jogs to the wire on a Barclay Tagg runner and catch up with former Jerkens' assistant Fernando Abreu, back in Saratoga with 11 horses.

Back at the stakes barn, Gordon's Jet and then Welshman flip and flop in the sand pit in the center and West Newton weaves from behind a blue webbing. I take photos of British raider Salvino, looking to upset the Smithwick, as he walks through the paddock and Nolan Clancy interviews trainer Patrick Neville.

Tom and I reminisce about Whitmore, an old standby at the stakes barn. The upset winner of the 2018 Forego isn't here this summer, retired, his halter hangs from a hook above my bed on Circular. I think Salvino is in his old stall.

It's past 9, morning's over and I head back to the house for two pieces of toast and a change of clothes.

Then back to the office, back into the far-right parking spot and swing open the door.

Tom, Joe and Nolan look up from clacking keys. "Heeeey...helloooo...yo..."

Like we never left.

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