

Year 25

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Saturday, June 7, 2025

Special

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Triple Crown

Belmont draws top three sophomores

Preakness hero Journalism



Derby winner Sovereignty



Upset-minded Baeza

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Here&There...in Saratoga

Quips, Quotes, Names, Numbers & Notes found along the way

By The Numbers

1: Lead pony who wouldn't walk through a puddle between barns in the Oklahoma stable area Friday morning.

14: Todd Pletcher trainees at attention outside the barn at 9:22 Friday morning.

3: Videographers outside Sovereignty's stall at 5:22 Friday morning.

7: Time for open mic night at Caffe Lena every Monday night, you might even catch a few racetrackers on the stage (see you there Makaia Carpenter).

10: Pounds of carrots (juiced) Baeza eats for breakfast every morning.

License Plate of the Day

PLC2B, New York.

Names of the Day

Draft Riots, second race. Peter Brant's 3-year-old colt is by War Front out of Boxer Rebellion.

States' Rights, 10th race. The 3-year-old colt is by Constitution, a veritable cornucopia of quality names. Thirteen Colonies, not by Constitution, is in the same race.



Patch Adams, 11th race. Founder of the Gesundheit! Institute, a not-for-profit health care facility in West Virginia, Adams is a physician, comedian, social activist, clown and author. The horse named for him, a 3-year-old colt owned by CHC Inc. and WinStar Farm, is by Into Mischief out of Well Humored. Robin Williams played Adams in the 1998 film, "Patch Adams."

Sovereignty, 13th race. The Kentucky Derby winner and Belmont Stakes contender is out of Crowned.

Then, 14th race. The 4-year-old colt is by Not This Time.

Gene And Jude, 14th race. The name has nothing to do with the Glen Hill Farm homebred's pedigree, but if you want a hot dog in Chicago apparently Gene and Jude's is the place to go.

Saratoga Special, fourth race, The Curragh, Wednesday. The 3-year-old filly finished fifth.



Olivia Witkowski

Weather Or Not. A storm sent fans scrambling for cover Friday afternoon.

Pedigree Note of the Day

Roswell, who runs in today's first race, descends from one of racing's most dynamic and historic female families. The 4-year-old filly's fourth dam Courtly Dee – a daughter of Never Bend and the War Admiral mare Tulle – produced Grade 1 winner Ali Oop, Grade 3 winner Native Courier and stakes winner Princess Oola for Lee Eaton and Leo Waldman.

Purchased for \$900,000 by Helen Groves, Helen Alexander and David Aykroyd in 1980, Courtly Dee produced five more stakes winners including champion Althea and was the Kentucky Broodmare of the Year in 1980. Ten of her 11 daughters became stakes producers and all these years later the family stretches in all directions to include major winners in the United States, Europe and Japan. Roswell's branch of the pedigree goes through Althea. Her daughter Aurora (by Danzig) won seven races including a stakes for trainer Scotty Schulhofer. Aurora's daughter Acoma (by Empire Maker) won nine, topped by the Grade 1 Spinster, and earned \$1 million for Dave Carroll.

Acoma hasn't quite lived up to the family reputation, but has produced four winners. Trained by Bill Mott for Alexander, Roswell won her debut in January 2024 and has finished second three times. She makes her first start of 2025 today.

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Here&There...in Saratoga

Quips, Quotes, Names, Numbers & Notes found along the way

Worth Repeating

"Tough woman, gotta keep her happy."

Trainer Richard Baltas on Jaipur contender Ag Bullet

"This is the legend of Saratoga."

Godolphin's Michael Banahan to The Special's Tom Law walking through the Oklahoma barn area Friday morning

"We got the recommendation from Steve Byk. We figured he was the right person to ask about food."

Country Life Farm's Sallyellen Hurst, who brought treats from the Bread Basket to The Special office

"There's one left, but let me check... Oh, Michael McCarthy wants it. Sorry."

Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation's Maggie Sweet, who saved the last backside iced coffee for the trainer of the Belmont Stakes favorite

"There's only six and I can say only because there are eight tomorrow."

The Special's Tom Law, about the Friday stakes schedule

"I slow down a little bit on the return trip."

Trainer John Shirreffs on his walk back from the main track Friday morning

"How much do I owe you for each mention?"

John Fahey making Worth Repeating yet again this week

"I had to ask them if the printer was working."

Godolphin's Johnny Burke having trouble getting his boarding pass on his flip phone

"He's the last one."

Godolphin's Dan Pride about Burke's flip phone

"That's a long way up there."

Neil Poznansky after a leg up on Bill Mott trainee Kay Army Friday morning

"I'll be back someday."

Saudi-based trainer Nicholas Bachalard leaving Saratoga Friday morning

"See any jumpers?"

Bill Mott to The Special's Sean Clancy as a Mott set galloped Friday morning

"I said, 'Oh, I know this move.'"

Tom Law retrieving The Special's abandoned golf cart and finding the previous driver Sean Clancy at John Shirreffs' barn Friday morning

"A break is five minutes of questioning where your sanity went, then you get back to work."

Former Special intern Mary Eddy about keeping up with the pace



Olivia Witkowski

Baby Race. Kendrick Carmouche makes a young fan's day Friday at Saratoga Race Course.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What's he going to do all day?"
*John Shirreffs, trainer of Baeza,
about the 7:04 post time of the Belmont Stakes*



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Big Three

Sovereignty meets Journalism, Baeza in Triple Crown finale

BY TOM LAW

Who else would you want in the field for today's 157th running of the Belmont Stakes?

Surely some would answer this 3-year-old, or that 3-year-old or some other 3-year-old, but they wouldn't carry any of the panache of the unofficial "big three" that are lined up for the final jewel of the 2025 Triple Crown. Sovereignty, Journalism and Baeza, the first three past the finish in the Kentucky Derby five weeks ago, stand tall in the field for the second renewal of the Belmont at Saratoga Race Course while construction continues downstate on the new Belmont Park.

The three throw it down in today's \$2 million Belmont that headlines a star-studded 14-race Belmont Day card that also features four other Grade 1s and eight stakes in total. The 1 1/4-mile Belmont – also shortened again from 1 1/2 miles due to Saratoga's main track configuration – goes as the 13th race with post time set for 7:04 p.m. ET.

A capacity or near capacity crowd of 50,000 will likely show up with others watching on Fox's broadcast to see the renewed rivalry of Derby winner Sovereignty, Derby runner-up and Preakness Stakes winner Journalism and Derby third Baeza. Five others are in the field but they appear in deep water against those heavyweights.

Connections of the big three are eager for the showdown.

"It's great. You get the 1-2 finishers of the Kentucky Derby coming back in the Belmont, a mile and a quarter," Trainer Michael McCarthy said last weekend af-



Samantha Decker

Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty shines while training this spring on the Oklahoma training track.

ter watching Journalism complete his final serious and lone workout between the Preakness and Belmont. "A little bit of the same thing this time as it was last time with Sovereignty being able to spend a fair bit at Churchill Downs and then obviously a fair bit of time here. It goes both ways. The Breeders' Cup this year, we'll be in our backyard. Hope-

fully, both horses at the end of the year are around and ready to do it all over again. It'd be great for racing."

Bill Mott bypassed the Preakness two weeks after the Derby – and any chance at a Triple Crown sweep in the truncated Belmont – with Sovereignty and shipped the colt to his Saratoga base on the Oklahoma Training Track grounds to prep for today. John Shirreffs also skipped the Preakness with Baeza, sending the regally bred colt back to his Southern California barn to ready for a return to the classics in the Belmont.

McCarthy and Journalism's connections leaned into the Triple Crown scene, went to Baltimore and came away with the blanket of Black-Eyed Susans when their Curlin colt survived a scary incident at the top of the stretch and ran down Gosger in the stretch of the Preakness. Journalism headed to upstate New York the day after the Preakness and his team liked what they saw in the \$825,000 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga yearling to make every race in the Triple Crown.

"He is a horse that I've thought could participate in all three races," McCarthy said. "He's taken dirt at four different racetracks. It seems like he's handled it



Olivia Witkowski

Preakness winner Journalism cools out at the barn.

Continued on Page 8

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 **SPENDTHRIFT**

Belmont Stakes -

■ Continued from page 6

fine. I don't see why Saratoga would be any different."

Journalism was installed as the 8-5 favorite on the morning line for regular jockey Umberto Rispoli. Sovereignty was pegged as the 2-1 second choice as he attempts to become the first Derby-Belmont winner since Thunder Gulch in 1995.

A homebred for Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum's global breeding and racing operation Godolphin, Sovereignty improved to 3-for-6 with his 1 1/2-length victory over Journalism on a sloppy track in the Kentucky Derby. Mott bred the son of Into Mischief three times over the Oklahoma between the Derby and the Belmont – two half-miles sandwiched around a 5-furlong move in 1:02.54 May 24. Sovereignty also made trips to Saratoga's main track to gallop, giving Mott positive signs heading into the Belmont.

"He's been moving well over the track and eating the bottom out of the feed tub," Mott said last weekend. "He's carrying his weight well. I hope he's doing as good on Saturday as he was this morning. He's improved, as many of these horses have. This entire group, if you look at their form and the way they've developed over the course of this year, I think they've made steady progress. It should be an interesting race."

Baeza adds a level of interest after a tumultuous spring that included a rough trip when he finished a close second to Journalism in the Grade 1 Santa Anita Derby. He failed to earn sufficient points in the Santa Anita Derby – mainly because of a rule that limits the points distributed in races with short fields – and landed on the also-eligible list in the Kentucky Derby.

Baeza drew into the field when Rodriguez, who was entered in the Belmont by trainer Bob Baffert,



Olivia Witkowski

Heart Of Honor trains on the main track.



Samantha Decker

Trainer John Shirreffs (right) keeps an eye on Baeza at the barn.

scratched out of the Derby with a foot injury. Starting from the extreme outside post in the field of 19, Baeza endured another troubled trip but still managed to finish third and just 1 3/4 lengths back.

Flavien Prat rode Baeza for the first time in the Derby and returns today on the 4-1 third choice. Prat also breezed the half-brother to 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage and last year's Belmont Stakes winner Dornoch in his half-mile work in :48.93 Monday on the Oklahoma.

"I always tell people I don't think there's anything I would want to change with him," Shirreffs said Friday. "He's not too big, he's not too heavy, the first time he ran on an off track, it didn't affect him, because he's so light on his feet. He runs on the top of it."

Baeza breezed twice at Santa Anita after returning from the Derby and before shipping to Saratoga.

"It seemed like we had a lot of time and now here's the race," Shirreffs said. "We work in weeks, the events are weekly events. Five weeks, that means there are four events, a work or whatever you're going to do. That happens really quickly. In between those, 'Should I walk him? Should I jog him? What am I going to do?'" Then bingo I'm out of time."

Beyond the three major players, Rodriguez figures to generate some interest as Baffert seeks his third Belmont win and first since Justify swept the Triple Crown in 2018. He won the Grade 2 Wood Memorial at Aqueduct on the lead under Mike Smith, who returns on the 6-1 fourth choice.

The other four entrants are double-digit longshots – Grade 3 Peter Pan winner Hill Road (10-1) for trainer Chad Brown, Sir Barton winner Crudo (15-1) and 2024 Saratoga debut winner Uncaged (30-1) for Todd Pletcher and European shipper and Preakness fifth-place finisher Heart Of Honor (30-1) for trainer Jamie Osborne.

Additional reporting by Sean Clancy and Alec DiConza.



Samantha Decker

Crudo represents Todd Pletcher in the Belmont.



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Oldtime Matchup

White Abarrio, Fierceness face off in historic Grade 1

BY JOE CLANCY

It's not quite the Forego vs. Master Derby clash of 1976, but maybe – just maybe – today's Metropolitan Handicap will force some comparisons to the days of a deep older-horse division.

White Abarrio, a 6-year-old with \$6.9 million in the bank and four Grade 1 wins on his chart, squares off with Fierceness, a star 3-year-old of the prior year making his second start as an older horse in the \$1 million Grade 1. Both are in form, proven at the top level and seeking further validation of future stallion careers in a race known to do that. The improving Just A Touch and Group 2 Godolphin Mile winner Raging Torrent add further class to a field of five along with longshot Castle Chaos in a race that dates to 1891. The eighth on a 14-race card, the Met Mile goes at 3:17 p.m. from the Wilson Chute at Saratoga Race Course.

Thursday morning, White Abarrio tolerated a bath in the shade outside trainer Saffie Joseph's barn on the backside of the main track. The son of Race Day has come a long way from sale prices of \$7,500 (yearling) and \$40,000 (2-year-old) at OBS in 2020 and 2021. For trainer Carlos Perez, the gray colt won his debut by 6 3/4 lengths in September.

Sold to C2 Racing Stable and La Milagrosa Stable, he ruled allowance foes a month later for Joseph and was a top 3-year-old of 2022 – winning the Holy Bull and Florida Derby, making the Kentucky Derby field and placing in the Cigar Mile. His 2023 included one start for Joseph and three for trainer Rick Dutrow – a third to Cody's Wish in the Met Mile and wins in the Grade 1 Whitney and Breeders' Cup Classic. In February 2024, White Abarrio went international and finished 10th in the \$20 million Saudi Cup. He came back and tried the Met Mile again last year at Saratoga and was no factor when fifth behind National Treasure.

Returned to Joseph's care, White Abarrio returned off a five-month layoff and won an allow-



Olivia Witkowski

White Abarrio trains at Saratoga this week, with eyes on another Grade 1 victory.

ance at Gulfstream Park in November. Second in the Grade 3 Mr. Prospector in December, he handled 10 foes in the Grade 1 Pegasus World Cup in January and did the same in the Grade 3 Ghostzapper in March.

In an era of 3-year-old retirements, White Abarrio can qualify as a throwback with 10 wins in 21 starts over five seasons for an ownership group that now includes Gary Barber along with C2 and La Milagrosa.

"The owners said let's run; they like to race," said Joseph. "He missed his whole 5-year-old year, basically. He had two runs, and then it was going to be a decision. If he didn't come back to form, he would have gone to stud then but he came back to the top level, and the plan is to race him through his 6-year-old year and hopefully finish it off with the Pegasus next year, and then go to stud."

"The Met Mile is an important stallion race. If he could add his fifth Grade 1, it would be a great achievement for him and I think it's important for the game because it creates a following when a horse can come back like he has."

Joseph pinned the gaps in his horse's form – and back-to-back poor starts last year – on the trip to



Samantha Decker

Last year's Travers Stakes winner Fierceness preps for the Met Mile.

Continued on Page 12

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Met Mile -

■ Continued from page 10

Saudi Arabia. White Abarrio arrived back in the barn after the 2024 Met Mile in need of a rest.

“He just wouldn’t come around,” the trainer said. “We sent him to the farm. It took a little while, longer than I thought it would, and then we just babied him, played around with him, played around with him. We sent him to Florida, he started to come around. He was always good, he just went through a spell where the trip to Saudi took a toll on him. To see him rebound like that, that’s a good sign. That shows his true class.”

The 9-5 favorite on the morning line, White Abarrio breaks from post two for Irad Ortiz Jr. and there are few secrets to his strategy.

“We’re going to come away from there running,” Joseph said. “Our horse likes to be placed forwardly. We’re drawn inside, but it’s not a big field, so it’s just going to be little tactical. We’re going to come away from there and make sure he is on the pace.”

To his inside, even-money second choice Fierceness makes the second start of his 4-year-old season after a 3-year-old campaign that took him to the verge of a divisional championship with wins in the Florida Derby, Jim Dandy and Travers Stakes plus a second to divisional champion Sierra Leone in the Breeders’ Cup Classic in November.

The son of City Of Light returned off the bench in the Grade 2 Alysheba at Churchill Downs May 2, and landed a dagger – rolling past rivals while wide on the turn, putting away Most Wanted in the stretch and scoring by 1 1/2 lengths in 1:40.66. The time set a track record for 1 1/16 miles, and made a statement.

“I don’t know how many mile-and-a-sixteenth races they’ve run at Churchill, but I would imagine it’s quite a few,” said trainer Todd Pletcher. “Usually, when horses set track records, it’s a different set-up than that. It’s usually a fast pace, an early pace, and horses close into that. This race, they went a half in :48 and then set a track record, which is pretty unusual.”

And pretty impressive. Most Wanted put up modest fractions of :24.39 and :48.31 before Fierceness gassed up the tank and made off with his sixth win in 10 lifetime starts while pushing his career bankroll past \$4.3 million.

A year ago, off a 15th as the favorite in the Kentucky Derby, Pletcher bypassed the Belmont Stakes with Fierceness in favor of a summer/fall campaign. The payoff has included three graded-stakes wins and a second in the Breeders’ Cup Classic. Nobody calls him inconsistent anymore.

“I think he just physically improved, he got a



Candice Chavez/Eclipse Sportswire

Just A Touch rides a two-race winning streak into the Met Mile for trainer Brad Cox.

little stronger, a little heavier, gained some mass,” said Pletcher of the change in 12 months. “He’s always been a really good breezing horse, so I can’t really say that he’s necessarily changed in that way, except that he consistently impresses you whenever you work him.”

Bred and owned by Repole Stable, which added Derrick Smith, Michael Tabor and Mrs. John Magnier to the equation as part of a stallion deal with Coolmore, Fierceness and jockey John Velazquez will have to navigate the inside post while dealing with a top-class rival to his outside.

“You’ve got to have a lot of respect for that horse,” Pletcher said of White Abarrio. “He’s a really, really good horse, really consistent. He’s maintained his form for a long period of time. And some of the other horses in there aren’t slouches either. It’s not an easy race to win.”

While the two stars grab the attention, Brad Cox trainee Just A Touch will try to muscle his way into the picture for Qatar Racing, Resolute Racing and Marc Detampel. The bay colt exits blowout wins at Fair Grounds in March and Keeneland in April. They came against allowance company, but the son of Justify finished second to Sierra Leone in last year’s Blue Grass Stakes and made the Kentucky

Derby field. Florent Geroux rides from post four at 4-1.

“He’s a Grade 1 talent. Of course I say that and he’s yet to win a stake,” trainer Brad Cox said. “This was kind of by design, starting him at the Fair Grounds, giving him another run at Keeneland and having him prepped and ready for this Met Mile. Look, he’s got to step up and we’ll see. He trains like a Grade 1 horse but we need to see it in the afternoon.”

To his outside, Raging Torrent makes his first East Coast start for trainer Doug O’Neill. Owned by Craig Dado and Yuesheng Zhang, the Maximus Mischief colt found his best form at 7 furlongs in California last year with wins in the Grade 2 Pat O’Brien and Grade 1 Malibu before landing this year’s Godolphin Mile in Dubai two months ago. Frankie Dettori, aboard for the last two, takes the riding assignment at 5-1 from post five.

Seven-year-old Castle Chaos, fourth in last year’s Met Mile, completes the field while looking for his first win since November 2023 for trainer Robert Falcone Jr. and jockey Flavien Prat from post three at 20-1.

•••

Back in 1976, 6-year-old champion Forego carried 130 pounds and gave 4-year-old Preakness winner Master Derby four pounds. Forego won by a head, his first of two consecutive Met Mile wins to go with a third in 1975 (under 136 pounds) and a second in 1974 (134).

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Tribe Legacy

Clement sends out strong trio in Gr. 1 distance turf stakes

BY ALEC DICONZA

Miguel Clement stood on the horse path between his barn and the Oklahoma Training Track midway through Monday morning. Watching his horses prepare for their works as he discussed his weekend stakes prospects, he paused after mentioning his formidable trio in today's Grade 1 \$1 million Resorts World Casino Manhattan Stakes.

"Dad would be very excited," he said after about five seconds of silence.

Clement's father Christophe Clement passed away May 25 from metastatic uveal melanoma, a rare and incurable disease. Miguel Clement, his longtime assistant, is now the lead trainer of the Clement stable and earned the first win of his individual career Wednesday when Coach Case won the last race at Saratoga. Today, Clement has three chances to add a Grade 1 victory to his resume in the Manhattan, a race his father won three times.

"I'd love to win this race for so many reasons," he said. "If I could pick one this weekend, that'd be the one."

Clement's best chance arguably comes with LSU Stable's Far Bridge, the 3-1 second choice on the morning line breaking from the far outside in post nine under Joel Rosario. Despite a long run to the first turn in the 1 3/16-mile turf event, Clement is concerned about the wide draw for a horse who has gained a reputation for doing his best running inside.

"Terrible post position," he said. "Nevertheless, he's top class and he's bailed us out on different ground, different surfaces, different distances. Top-class horses tend to overcome any adversity."

Far Bridge is indeed top-class. The 5-year-old son of English Channel is a three-time Grade 1 winner with victories in the 2023 Belmont Derby Invitational, 2024 Sword Dancer and 2024 Joe Hirsch Turf Classic. Far Bridge returned just



Samantha Decker

Far Bridge is one of three turf stars in Saturday's Manhattan for the Miguel Clement stable.

as good in 2025, winning the Grade 3 Pan American at Gulfstream Park before a 1-length score in the Grade 2 Man o' War at Aqueduct in May. Last year, Far Bridge finished in a dead heat for third in the Manhattan.

"In my opinion, he was the best 3-year-old in the country, he was the best 4-year-old last year on the grass, and hopefully this year as a 5-year-old on the grass, long on the turf," Clement said. "Nevertheless, this race is maybe a touch shorter than ideal, but he's top class. It's up to him and Joel to figure it out. Fortunately, Joel is the pilot, so he has to figure it out and work out a trip from the outside

post position. They make a dynamic duo, the two of them together."

Deterministic and Carson's Run have raced against each other three times for Clement, with Carson's Run winning two of their showdowns. Deterministic is the shorter price of the two on the morning line after a 4 1/2-length front-running score in the Grade 2 Fort Marcy, a performance in which Deterministic broke the track record for 9 furlongs on the turf at Aqueduct. Carson's Run, who came off a five-month layoff in the Fort Marcy, finished second.

"They had a good, long maintenance work on the turf the other day, and it's fun," Clement said. "Carson's Run got a race under his belt. That should improve him a bit. Deterministic showed new versatility, showing more speed in the morning. I expect him to be forwardly placed."

The Fort Marcy marked the first time Deterministic used front-running tactics on the turf. With Kendrick Carmouche in the saddle that day, the son of Liam's Map impressed Clement enough to convince him that going to the lead again in the Manhattan is likely the right move.

"I thought it went so well, why would we change it," Clement said. "Kendrick rode him brilliantly, and he's been showing a new versatility, a new dimension in the mornings. It panned out on race day."

Carson's Run, owned by West Point Thoroughbreds and Steven Bouchev, beat Deterministic



Olivia Witkowski

Carson's Run exits a second in the Ft. Marcy at Aqueduct.

Continued on Page 16

The Two Year Old Source

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Manhattan -

■ Continued from page 14

istic when winning the Grade 1 Saratoga Derby here last summer and the Grade 3 Jockey Club Derby Invitational in October at Aqueduct. The 4-year-old son of Cupid boasts five wins in 11 starts and earnings of \$1,620,629. Two of his wins have come at Saratoga, with the remaining three coming at three other tracks.

“He’s done very well everywhere,” Clement said. “He won the (Jockey Club) Derby as well at Aqueduct, he won a stakes at Monmouth, he won the Grade 1 Summer Stakes at Woodbine. He would run anywhere well. He even showed affinity at Kentucky Downs. He was second that day.”

Deterministic, owned by St. Elias Stable, Ken Langone, Steven Duncker and Vicarage Stable, will break from post five with Carmouche keeping the mount. He is the co-third choice on the morning line at 9-2. Carson’s Run, 12-1 on the morning line, will break from post four under Dylan Davis.

The 5-2 morning line favorite in the Manhattan is Spirit Of St Louis, a two-time Grade 1 winning son of Medaglia d’Oro who goes out for trainer



Chelsea Durand/NYRA

Deterministic looks for his first Grade 1 win.

just missing the course record. He then finished fourth in the Grade 2 Muniz Memorial Classic at Fair Grounds, and most recently returned with a last-to-first victory by three-quarters of a length in the Grade 1 Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic on Kentucky Derby Day.

“I always thought he was a good horse,” Brown said about the 6-year-old gelding owned by Madaket Stables, Michael Dubb and Richard Schermerhorn. “That’s why I spotted him in a Grade 1 at Keeneland last fall. He just didn’t get a good trip in there, and I went back to Florida and regrouped a little bit. He was still training so well, that’s when we decided to go right back in a Grade 1 in the Pegasus. Here he’s come, he’s developed into one

Chad Brown. The New York-bred tried graded stakes company for the first time in last year’s Grade 1 Coolmore Turf Mile at Keeneland, finishing fifth. He won the Mohawk against state-breds before jumping back into the deep end in the Grade 1 Pegasus World Cup Turf at Gulfstream Park. He closed from seventh to win by a neck,

of the best turf horses in the country. He’s run a little further than I thought he could run, that’s another pleasant surprise. Overall, he’s always had a lot of potential. He’s a very well-bred horse, a very good-looking horse and I’m very happy that he’s fully matured now and on top of the game.”

Spirit Of St Louis will try to give Brown his ninth Manhattan from post six under Manny Franco.

Mark Casse trainee Corruption won a \$35,000 maiden claiming race in January and followed with three wins in four starts. His one loss was a second in the Grade 3 Pan American behind Far Bridge. He’s 15-1 on the morning line for jockey Jose Ortiz.

“It just shows you what confidence can do,” Casse said about Corruption’s progression. “This horse has just gotten better and better. He’s a very happy horse right now, and we’re just fortunate. He had a long time off, we brought him back and he’s just gotten better and better.”

Integration has two Grade 1 placings to his name this year, including a run behind Spirit Of St Louis in the Pegasus World Cup Turf. He will try to turn the tables on that rival from post two. He sits at 9-2 on the morning line. Highway Robber finished third behind Spirit Of St Louis in the Turf Classic at Churchill for trainer Brian Lynch. He will break from post three. Endlessly, ninth in last year’s Kentucky Derby, and Tucson, a recent allowance winner at Keeneland, complete the field.

The Manhattan will go as the 12th of 14 race Belmont Day races, immediately before the Belmont Stakes, with post time at 6:09 p.m.

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Turf Plus

Think Big transforms on grass, eyes Grade 1 for Stidham barn

BY JOE CLANCY

Think Big finished fifth in his debut in the mud at Churchill Downs last summer, then thumped maidens on the dirt at Colonial Downs. The Godolphin homebred was on his way, and then he wasn't – losing two allowance starts while making no impact.

At Fair Grounds in December, and somewhat out of variables to switch, trainer Mike Stidham found a turf race.

And changed everything. Think Big won by 2 1/4 lengths to check off the first-level allowance condition.

"I never had so many people come up to me from just a regular allowance race and say, 'Wow, that was impressive,'" Stidham said. "It was. He was last, and he just flew home down the middle of the racetrack."

Two starts later, Feb. 7, he duplicated the performance in a two-otherwise-than at Fair Grounds. Stepped up to stakes company for Keeneland's Grade 2 Shakertown April 8, and sent off at 10-1, Think Big won again. A month later, he backed up that performance with a victory in the Grade 2 Twin Spires Turf Sprint at Churchill Downs. That's four wins in as many turf starts and \$658,400 in earnings – in five months.

The success translated to a spot in today's Jaipur Stakes, a 5 1/2-furlong Grade 1 on the Mellon Turf Course at Saratoga Race Course. Worth \$500,000, the day's ninth race lured a field 10 for its 4:08 p.m. post time. Six months after his turf debut, Think Big is the 6-5 favorite from post two for regular jockey Ben Curtis.

Stidham was honest and didn't say he saw it coming, though the son of Twirling Candy and turf-stakes winner Always Thinking brought some pedigree to the program.

"We always knew that grass was in the family, but when they run well on the dirt, you want to explore that first,

JAIPUR STAKES PREVIEW

and then you can move to grass," he said. "We ran him twice on the dirt (after the maiden win) and both times he would break, just start spinning his wheels and not really get much."

Built nothing like a blocky sprinter, Think Big gets plenty on the turf. He breaks, puts himself in the race and runs into quick paces. The Shaker-town, against the likes of European shipper Rogue Lightning and stakes winners Arzak, Our Shot, Coppola and Run Carson, convinced Stidham.

"Going down the backside, he's like fourth, the rider isn't moving and he's putting himself in a perfect spot and I was like, 'Where's this from?'" he said. "That's just how comfortable he is on the grass. He's able to break, put himself in a good spot where he's not giving himself so much to do. Then he's still got the acceleration. That's cool to see."

At Churchill, Think Big was even better as Boss Sully shook loose off the turn and kicked clear by the eighth pole. Three lengths behind there, Think Big got up in the final yards



Olivia Witkowski

Ag Bullet faces males while looking for a Grade 1.



Olivia Witkowski

Think Big aims for his fifth win in as many starts on turf.

and won by a widening three-quarters of a length as part of a big Kentucky Derby Day for Godolphin.

"I swore we had no chance to make it," said Stidham. "Your experience tells you he can't have that much turn of foot, but we all know that that's what good turf horses have, that instant acceleration, and he seems to have it. It changed him from a nice horse to a really nice horse. That's what we're all looking for."

Stidham passed some credit to exercise rider Hunter Rea, who deals with Think Big in the morning.

"He's pretty tough, but Hunter really gets along with him," said Stidham. "A lot of times those horses, you have one guy breezing them and a big, strong guy that gallops them. Hunter weighs about 115 pounds, but he's able to do both. I give him a lot of credit."

In the paddock for a schooling session Thursday, Rea deflected to his horse.

"He goes out and pretty much just trains himself every morning," Rea said. "He can get pretty competitive when horses are coming by and things like that, but I feel like that's a lot of

them. He's gotten smarter and he's started taking it easy on himself in the mornings too. That helps him a lot. It saves him for the afternoons."

Trainer Richard Baltas shipped Ag Bullet to Saratoga for the Jaipur in search of the last bit of black type the 5-year-old mare doesn't have on her resume.

"I picked it because it's Grade 1," said Baltas, based primarily in Southern California with a string at Keeneland. "I'm always trying to enhance the value of the horse. She's already won a Grade 2, earned over a million dollars and she's Grade 1-placed twice. This is the Grade 1 and there aren't many left, especially in California."

Owned by Calvin Nguyen and Joey Tran, Ag Bullet nearly landed a Grade 1 in her final two starts of 2024 at Del Mar. She finished third, beaten a neck against males in the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint going 5 furlongs and third again by a length to Sacred Wish and Gina Romantica in the Matriarch Stakes going 1 mile. Ag Bullet's biggest win came in the \$1,378,260, Grade 2 Ladies Turf Sprint Stakes go-

Continued On Page 20



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Jaipur -

■ Continued from page 18

ing 6 1/2 furlongs last August at Kentucky Downs.

"She's won going a mile a couple times but not against the top horses," Baltas said as he finished doing the mare up after training hours Friday. "Her best distance is between 6 1/2 and seven-eighths, but there's no seven-eighths race. She surprised me at Del Mar when she ran so well against the boys in the Breeders' Cup. That was probably too short for her but 5 1/2 (in the Jaipur) is better than 5, right?"

Ag Bullet finished seventh as the favorite last time out in the Grade 3 Unbridled Sydney Stakes going 5 1/2 furlongs on the Kentucky Oaks Day undercard at Churchill Downs. She'd won six of 12 starts before that, where she finished 5 1/4 lengths back after a troubled trip in her first start in five months.

"She was ready to run off the lay-off, but didn't have anywhere to go," Baltas said. "She got blocked. When she's running this short, she's better off the pace. I don't think she's one to be up front like she was at Kentucky Downs going 6 1/2. There's enough speed in this race that she should be OK. We're on the outside, speed on the outside of us. It's a good race. It's a Grade 1, but there are no Grade 1 winners in the race."

By Twirling Candy like Think Big, Ag Bullet is 7-2 and breaks from post nine for Flavien Prat.

To her inside, Delaware Park-based Alagon takes a swing at a Grade 1 for trainer Ned Allard. The 6-year-old California Chrome gelding broke his maiden for a \$25,000 claiming tag in 2022 but has added five wins – three in stakes company – since. He exits a troubled third behind today's rivals My Boy Prince and Bold Journey in the Elusive Quality Stakes at Aqueduct May 3. Third early, he got shuffled to seventh leaving the backside and closed late while beaten a

length and missing second by a nose.

Jose Ortiz takes the ride on the 10-1 shot, who makes his second start off a six-month layoff.

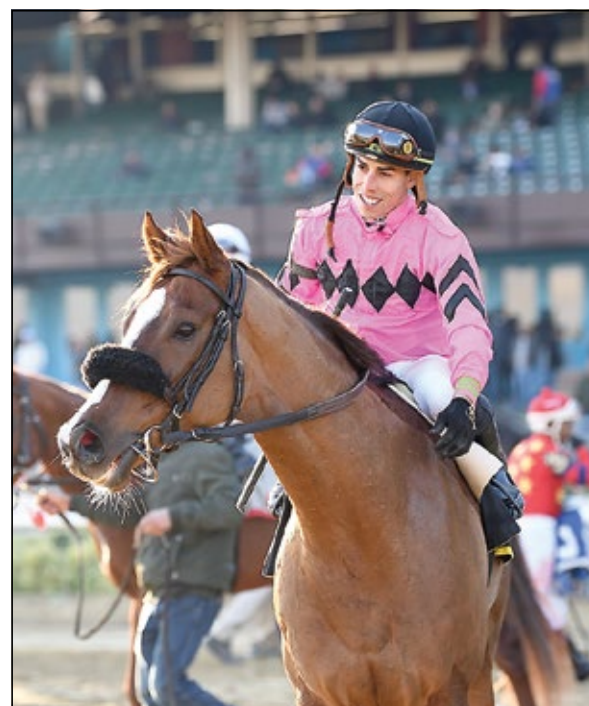
"Jose has won a number of races for me, and I'm real comfortable with him as a rider," said Allard. "Alagon shipped up here well, he's galloped the last couple of days great, he's got an outside post so I think he can come away from there, get a comfortable spot and not get in a traffic jam. I really think he's got a shot today."

Owned and bred by Charles Matthes, Alagon has alternated first and thirds for four starts, all turf sprints.

"He just seems to be blossoming," said Allard, who won the Grade 1 Alabama at Saratoga with Hall of Famer Mom's Command in 1985 as part of a training career with 2,811 wins. "He's just matured. It's amazing how much better he looks and feels this year, and is running. It's almost like he really came into himself late in the fall last year and is continuing to do so."

Second in last year's Jaipur, Arzak looks for his first win in more than a year at 8-1 from post five for Sonata Stable and trainer Mike Trombetta. The son of Not This Time finished seventh as the favorite in the Shaker-town. Irad Ortiz Jr. takes the return call.

Additional reporting by Tom Law.



Susie Raisher/NYRA

Alagon looks for his seventh career win.

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High Goal

Crichton bids for Gr. 1 with Macho Music

BY ALEC DICONZA

Trainer Rohan Crichton caught the racing bug early in life.

“My dad owned horses when I was a child and I got into it very, very young,” he said. “As most people who are passionate in racing, that doesn’t leave you. Getting up in the morning is fun. Spending a day in the barn is fun still, after many years.”

Today, Crichton stares at an opportunity to win his first Grade 1 in the Grade 1, \$500,000 Woody Stephens with Macho Music, a 3-year-old colt Crichton also co-owns with Mark Taylor and Daniel Walters. The son of Maclean’s Music exits a win in the Pat Day Mile on Kentucky Derby Day.

“It would be special,” Crichton said about the possibility of a Grade 1 victory. “We’ve never won a Grade 1 before. Matter of fact, we just won our first graded race in the Pat Day (Mile), so it would be special.”

In the Pat Day Mile, Macho Music sped straight to the front over the sloppy and sealed Churchill Downs surface, set a quick pace and extended his margin to 3 1/4 lengths at the wire to win under Javier Castellano, who returns to ride Macho Music again today.

“We liked him going in, but obviously we’re still overjoyed and feeling the emotions and all that,” Crichton said. “A little bit more tense now, I guess,

WOODY STEPHENS STAKES PREVIEW

because now we have higher expectations. He is training really well. We’ve noticed that his energy level is way up, and everything is so far going as planned.”

Crichton has been impressed by Macho Music’s mental progression over the last year. Despite showing some greenness early, the colt always displayed promise. Now, as a more mature 3-year-old, Crichton is confident Macho Music can get even better.

“I knew he had talent before we even ran him, and he had loads of talent,” Crichton said. “I was concerned about him mentally. To even breeze him, an average breeze was a task. But now, he’s completely listening to the rider, moving when you ask him to move, switching when you ask him to switch leads, and all of that. Now, he’s got both things going for him. He’s grown up mentally, and his speed, that’s what God gave him.”

As is often the case in the Woody Stephens, a 7-furlong sprint for 3-year-olds, there are many horses with early speed. While Crichton said he doesn’t plan to push Macho Music too hard in the early stages, he believes the \$60,000 OBS March sale purchase is fast enough to lead the pack.

“We just have to run our own race,” he said. “We have speed, but we’re not interested in using



Olivia Witkowski

Pat Day Mile winner Macho Music seeks his fifth win.

that and sacrificing ourselves. But, speed is our game. He is quick. They probably have to match his speed, and if they can, then we’ll have to go to plan B.”

Macho Music will break from post three and sits at 8-1 on the morning line. The Woody Stephens is the 11th race on the card with a post time of 5:28 p.m.

Flanagan Racing’s Chancer McPatrick returns to the site of his first two victories that included a win in the Grade 1 Hopeful last summer. The son of McKinzie trained by Chad Brown tried to make the Kentucky Derby starting gate, but after a sixth in the Grade 1 Blue Grass at Keeneland, Brown decided it was time to cut back to a sprint distance.

“Early on in his works, the horse really stood out. I was happy to see him develop throughout his 2-year-old year into one of the top 2-year-olds in the country,” Brown said. “Going into this race, cutting him back to what he was doing so well last year, which was to go one turn in the dirt races, hopefully that gets him back on track.”

Chancer McPatrick, the 4-1 morning line favorite from post 10 who will be ridden by Flavien Prat, is one of only a few horses in the Woody Stephens without an abundance of early speed. Brown hopes that will mean his colt gets a good pace set-up.

“I’m just hoping for a good pace in front of him to spread the field out a little bit, give him something to run into,” he said.



Samantha Decker

Madaket Road exits a second to Macho Music in the Pat Day Mile

Continued on Page 24

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Stephens -

■ Continued from page 22

Another horse whose connections had Kentucky Derby aspirations is Patch Adams, who had the racing world buzzing after his 10 1/2-length maiden score on second asking at Churchill last fall. The son of Into Mischief owned by China Horse Club and WinStar Farm finished fourth in both the Grade 3 Southwest and the Grade 3 Tampa Bay Derby for trainer Brad Cox.

“We always thought he was hopefully a horse that could march toward the Kentucky Derby,” Cox said. “Some of those races were maybe too far for him and for whatever reason just wasn’t breaking quite as well as we needed him to in those Derby preps.”

He cut back to 6 1/2 furlongs last time at Churchill, and the colt returned to winning ways when defeating an allowance-optional field by 2 1/4 lengths.

“We cut him back last time and he broke well,” Cox said. “Very talented horse. Once again, that’s going to be



Olivia Witkowski

Gunmetal brings a 2-for-3 mark into the Woody Stephens.

a race (the Woody Stephens) where the winner gets the trip. I don’t know how fast they’re going to go. They’re going to go quick, but we’ll see.”

Cox also trains Gunmetal for the same owners. After a winning debut, the son of Gun Runner finished third in the Swale at Gulfstream before a

victory in an allowance-optional at Keeneland by 3 3/4 lengths.

“He’s a good colt, too,” Cox said about Gunmetal. “He should set a good trip on the outside, hopefully outside the speed a little bit.”

Patch Adams (5-1) will break from post four under Luis Saez and Gun-

metal (8-1) starts from post eight with Irad Ortiz Jr. in the saddle.

Bob Baffert brings a pair to the Woody Stephens led by last year’s champion 2-year-old male Citizen Bull. The colt by Into Mischief cuts back to 7 furlongs after finishing 15th in the Kentucky Derby. Baffert’s other entrant is Madaket Road, who finished a strong second behind Macho Music in the Pat Day Mile.

Neoequos is another returning Kentucky Derby runner in the Woody Stephens. After qualifying for the Derby by running third in both the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth and the Grade 1 Florida Derby, the colt by Neolithic finished 13th at Churchill for Saffie Joseph Jr.

Big Truzz breaks from the rail for trainer Brian Lynch. He won his debut at Keeneland before finishing second to Patch Adams last time out at Churchill. T Kraft returns from a three-month layoff for Bill Mott after winning the Jimmy Winkfield at Aqueduct by a neck. Gate To Wire, fourth in the Pat Day Mile, completes the Woody Stephens field for Todd Pletcher. Colloquial, at one time a major contender in the race, is expected to scratch.

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Road Warrior

Grade 1 winner Mullikin travels to tackle sprint for WinStar, Brisset

BY PAUL HALLORAN

TRUE NORTH STAKES PREVIEW

Mullikin has proven he does not have to take his racetrack with him, running at seven ovals with five wins and four seconds in 12 starts. If he does have a favorite, however, you can make a strong case for Saratoga, based on just one start.

In last year's Forego Stakes, Mullikin led every step on the way to a convincing 5 ³/₄-length score, registering a career high 105 Beyer Speed Figure. It was his fourth straight win, sending him into the Breeders' Cup Sprint at Del Mar as the favorite, where he ran a non-threatening third.

"I think every race last year up to the Breeders' Cup, he looked pretty tough in each spot," trainer Rodolphe Brisset said Friday morning, after taking his horse to the gate and galloping an easy 1 ¹/₄ miles on the main track. "And it looked like he could be one of the leaders in the division, sprinting mid-distance."

Brisset is hoping for a repeat performance – or a reasonable facsimile – in today's Grade 3 \$400,000 True North Stakes at 6 ¹/₂ furlongs. Mullikin, who will break from post six, is the 2-1 morning-line favorite.

In the 6-furlong Breeders' Cup Sprint, Mullikin was eighth after a half-mile and came running, but could get no closer than 3 lengths at the wire.



Dave Harmon

Book'em Danno looks to repeat his Woody Stephens win.

"I don't think he really wants 6 (furlongs)," said Elliott Walden of WinStar Farm. "I think 6 ¹/₂ to a mile is really what he wants."

Brisset said a lot went wrong at Del Mar.

"He ran great. We were not expecting Skelly to not break that day," he said. "Then maybe he got a little further back than what we were hoping. The pace was hot, but not hot enough. The fact that Skelly was not up there, the whole complexion of the race changed. If it's 6 ¹/₂ (furlongs), he would have been right there. If it's seven, eight, he would have maybe won. It's the Breeders' Cup. They are the toughest races to win. Everything has to go perfect."

Brisset ran Mullikin in the Cigar Mile at Aqueduct and he finished second to Locked. The trainer gave him a five-month layoff and brought him back in the Churchill Downs Stakes on the Kentucky Derby undercard. The son of Violence fought his way to the lead at the stretch call, but faded to fifth under Luis Saez.

"The first idea was the Churchill Downs, the Met Mile, the Forego, and then the Breeders' Cup – which Breeders' Cup (race) we don't know yet," said Brisset, who changed plans after the fifth in Kentucky, even though he was not disappointed in the effort.

"He got beat, but he ran a really good race," the trainer said. "Being caught three or four wide and turning for home he made the lead and then really got tired the last sixteenth. I don't think we have to be ashamed of that race. I don't think that was a poor performance from the horse at all."

Not long after that race, Brisset chose the True



Olivia Witkowski

Mullikin tries to duplicate his win in last year's Forego at Saratoga.

North, opting to keep his other stand-out sprinter, World Record, at home for the Aristides at Churchill May 31, a race in which he ran second.

"I don't know if I can really explain it," he said of skipping the Met Mile with Mullikin. "I don't really want him to get beat too many times, either. I'd rather go to the True North, keeping my eyes on the Forego and a Grade 1 down the line, than be 20-1 in the Met Mile and finish fourth. It just makes sense."

The plan for Mullikin, who will be ridden by Flavien Prat, is to run in the Forego again with World Record headed to the Grade 1 Bing Crosby at Del Mar July 26. If all goes well, the French-born trainer could have a horse in the Breeders' Cup Sprint and Dirt Mile.

"It's a long road," he said. "We have two Grade 1s before the Breeders Cup. I would love to have one in each. That's what I have in my mind."

Mullikin, who needs \$19,000 to become a millionaire, worked three times at Keeneland and shipped to Saratoga Wednesday. In his final work – 4 furlongs in :47 ⁴/₅ – Brisset got on the walkie talkie and told the rider to slow it down.

Book'em Danno is 5-2 and will break from post five.

The well-traveled gelding comes off a hard-luck fourth in the Churchill Downs, losing by a neck and finishing

worse than third for only the second time in a 13-race career.

"These necks are costing me a fortune," said trainer Derek Ryan, who arrived at Saratoga with Book'em Danno at about 3:30 p.m. Friday. "If he can run his race, he'll be right there. Any time you run in these type of races it's not easy."

Book'em Danno won the Woody Stephens last year after a head loss in the Saudi Derby. He ran third in the H. Allen Jerkens and was fifth in the Cigar Mile. He started his 4-year-old campaign with a win at Colonial Downs before the Churchill Downs Stakes.

Immediately to Book'em Danno's left will be Nakatomi, another accomplished sprinter who comes in off a neck loss in the Dubai Golden Shaheen. The 6-year-old gelding won the A.G. Vanderbilt here last year.

"When he got back (from Dubai), we were intending on giving him more time, but he was just feeling so good, that we decided to give him an easy work," trainer Wesley Ward said. "He came out of that and was always up at the front of the stall with his ears pricked, happy, and bouncing all the way to and from the track."

Nutella Fella, the 2023 Hopeful winner who was third in last year's Woody Stephens, breaks from the far outside in the True North. The rest of the field includes Concrete Glory, Crazy Mason, Surveillance and Full Moon Madness.



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All Ready

Lee looks forward to challenge with Tapit filly in Gr. 2 turf race

BY ALEC DICONZA

Trainer Joe Lee won his first graded stakes last year with May Day Ready in the Grade 2 Jessamine at Keeneland Race Course. Rather than focusing on the personal achievement, Lee cared more about watching those around him celebrate the victory.

"It was great," he said. "Having worked for Godolphin and traveling all over the world, I've been fortunate to experience graded races, whether it was the (Epsom) Derby, or the Arc, or in Japan. But to actually see other people enjoy it, that was probably the best thing, to see other people enjoy what I've been fortunate enough to enjoy (throughout) my life."

A former assistant to trainer Kieran McLaughlin, Lee trains just six horses but has a lot of firepower in KatieRich Stable's May Day Ready. A three-time winner in five starts and an earner of \$1,014,025, the daughter of Tapit returns from a six-month layoff in today's Grade 2 \$300,000 Wonder Again Stakes on the inner turf for 3-year-old fillies.

May Day Ready broke her maiden in her first start at 25-1 last year at Saratoga. She then won the Kentucky Downs Juvenile Fillies and Jessamine before a second in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf concluded her stateside 2-year-old campaign.

"I was glad to see her run well," Lee said about his filly's effort. "She'd done everything right up to that. You just want to see horses run well. Maybe we got in trouble a little bit in the first turn, but I'm not going to say that cost us at all. Just to see horses run well, or do their best as long as they try, that's all you can ask for."

Lee challenged May Day Ready with a trip to Japan for the Grade 1 Hanshin Juvenile Fillies. She finished 13th of 18, but Lee didn't lose faith.

"I believe the reason was she had come into season," Lee said. "The medication that you're permitted to

WONDER AGAIN STAKES PREVIEW

use here, a medication called Regu-Mate, you're not permitted to use over there. What it does is it keeps them from coming in heat, let's say. So, she came into season. That's kind of the same reason we missed the Edgewood. She came into season maybe three weeks or so before and kind of just lingered. She's back on Regu-Mate now, and we've kind of controlled that physical part of her."

Lee took comfort in knowing his filly's capabilities weren't reflected in her performance.

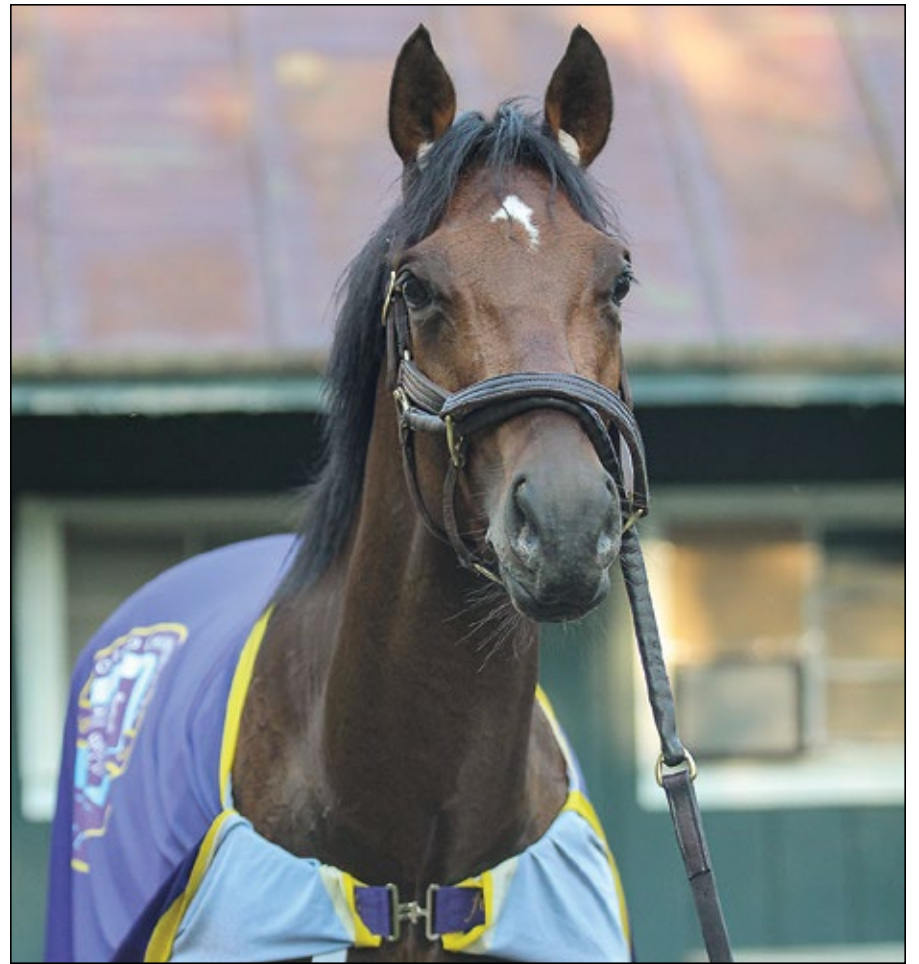
"I know she's better than that," he said. "After the race she was bouncing, fresh, kicking, bucking like she didn't do anything. And she really didn't do anything, to be honest with you. She came out of the race in great shape – legs, physically, mentally. It was just unfortunate that we couldn't use the same medication there that we used here all year up to the Breeders' Cup."

Lee believes May Day Ready is showing the right signs but may need a race to get her season going.

"She's doing extremely well," he said. "We've worked her in company. But working and running are two different things. I'm a little concerned about how the track may be. It looks like we're going to get about two inches of rain from (Friday) afternoon until (Saturday) morning. Hopefully, the track won't be too soft. She's going to need a race, but aside from the race in Japan, she's always tried for us. Can't say anything negative about her efforts along the way."

May Day Ready will be ridden by Frankie Dettori, who has been aboard for all five of her starts. She will break from post two and sits as the second choice on the morning line at 9-2.

The biggest threat to May Day Ready and the rest of the field is D J Stable's Nitrogen, a daughter of Medaglia d'Oro who rides a four-



Oliva Witkowski

May Day Ready stays focused on today's Wonder Again Stakes.

race winning streak for trainer Mark Casse. She came into 2025 winless but had a second in the Grade 1 Nattalma and a third in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf. This year, she won the Ginger Brew, Grade 3 Florida Oaks, Grade 2 Appalachian and Grade 2 Edgewood. Breaking from post six, the even-money favorite will be ridden by Jose Ortiz.

"She was an extremely good horse as a 2-year-old," Casse said. "I thought with a better trip she would've given the Breeders' Cup winner a run for her money. The good news is she came out of that and has gotten better and better. She's nice because Jose is able to get her to shut off, and when he asks her to go, she goes. That's something you get with maturity. A little concerned, of course that we're going to get some rain. The turf has played very speed-favoring, which is not going to help her. Maybe with a little rain, we'll be all right."

Chad Brown enters with three chances to earn his fourth consecutive victory in the race. Al Jafara won her

only start in the United States when flying home from last in a Keeneland allowance. She raced twice in France prior to that effort, coming up with a win and a fourth before transferring to Brown. She'll break from the rail under Flavien Prat. Virgin Colada finished 13th in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf and returned with a third in the Memories Of Silver at Aqueduct in April. Joel Rosario has the mount on the daughter of More Than Ready, who broke her maiden at Saratoga last summer. Opulent Restraint could be the speed after nearly wiring the Memories Of Silver. Irad Ortiz Jr. returns today.

Laurelin is an undefeated 3-for-3 after breaking her maiden and winning two stakes at Aqueduct. The winner of the Tepin and the Memories Of Silver breaks from the outside in post eight under Kendrick Carmouche for trainer Graham Motion. Bessie Abbott, second to Al Jafara in a Keeneland allowance, and Love You Anyway, a recent maiden winner, complete the field.

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

Saturday, June 7

1ST (10:45AM). \$110,000, AOC \$50,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 6 1/2F

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

1	.....2	.....Save Us Melania.....	J. Lezcano	.....L. Rice	.....6-5
1a	.....8	.....Sarir.....	J. Ortiz	.....L. Rice	.....6-5
2	.....1	.....Roswell.....	J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....7-2
3	.....3	.....Majestic Return.....	K. Carmouche	.....M. Giangiulio	.....12-1
4	.....4	.....Proud Foot.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....F. Abreu	.....8-1
5	.....5	.....Maggy's Palace.....	F. Prat	.....J. Ryerson	.....8-1
6	.....6	.....Willow Bend.....	U. Rispoli	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....10-1
7	.....7	.....Best Impression.....	L. Saez	.....P. Serpe	.....15-1
8	.....9	.....Will Be Famous.....	M. Franco	.....R. Atras	.....6-1

2ND (11:20AM). \$100,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Dew.....	K. Davis	.....G. Contessa	.....30-1
2	.....2	.....Onepac.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....J. Terranova II	.....20-1
3	.....3	.....Henry's Hope.....	F. Villa Pino	.....E. Jones	.....50-1
4	.....4	.....Mainstream.....	L. Saez	.....B. Cox	.....6-5
5	.....5	.....Stars and Strides.....	J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Copious.....	J. Lezcano	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
7	.....7	.....Draft Riots.....	D. Davis	.....C. Brown	.....5-1
8	.....8	.....Life and Times.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....T. Pletcher	.....6-1
9	.....9	.....Mr R T.....	O. Hernandez Moreno	.....J. Jimenez	.....30-1
10	.....10	.....Secured Lender.....	F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....9-2

3RD (11:55AM). \$115,000, AOC \$75,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 11/8M (INNER TURF)

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

1	.....5	.....Big Blue Line.....	D. Davis	.....W. Walden	.....10-1
1a	.....11	.....Palazzi.....	J. Ortiz	.....M. Casse	.....10-1
2	.....1	.....Swiftsure.....	L. Saez	.....M. Maker	.....8-1
3	.....2	.....Crystal Quest.....	P. Lopez	.....M. Trombetta	.....6-1
4	.....3	.....El Rezeen.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....T. Pletcher	.....6-1
5	.....4	.....Magical Ways.....	J. Alvarado	.....R. Rodriguez	.....15-1
6	.....6	.....Daunt.....	J. Castellano	.....R. Ribaldo	.....15-1
7	.....7	.....Redistricting (GB).....	F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....6-5
8	.....8	.....Wonderful Justice (GB).....	J. Rosario	.....J. Sharp	.....30-1
9	.....9	.....Atlant (FR).....	J. Velazquez	.....H. Motion	.....20-1
10	.....10	.....Fuerteventura.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....M. Maker	.....30-1
11	.....12	.....Catch a Wave.....	M. Franco	.....C. Brown	.....10-1
12	.....AE-MTO	.....Certified Loverboy.....	Rider TBA	.....F. Abreu	.....5-2
13	.....AE-MTO	.....Wynstock.....	K. Carmouche	.....L. Rice	.....12-1
14	.....AE-MTO	.....Alternate Reality.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....W. Potts	.....8-1

4TH (12:35PM). \$115,000, AOC \$75,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Radio Red.....	L. Saez	.....D. Gargan	.....5-1
2	.....2	.....Echo Again.....	J. Alvarado	.....N. Casse	.....10-1
3	.....3	.....Magnolia Midnight.....	M. Franco	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....15-1
4	.....4	.....Quick to Accuse.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Giangiulio	.....9-2
5	.....5	.....Into Pleasure.....	C. Torres	.....B. Lynch	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Victory Way.....	J. Lezcano	.....W. Mott	.....12-1
7	.....7	.....Eliminate.....	K. Carmouche	.....T. Pletcher	.....9-2
8	.....8	.....Hades.....	J. Ortiz	.....J. Orseno	.....6-1
9	.....9	.....General Partner.....	F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....7-2
10	.....10	.....Maker's Candy.....	J. Rosario	.....M. Maker	.....15-1

5TH (1:15PM). \$110,000, AOC \$50,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Unlimitedpotential.....	S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....9-2
2	.....2	.....Silver Slugger.....	J. Alvarado	.....J. Avila	.....5-2
3	.....3	.....Rocketeer.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....S. Joseph, Jr.	.....12-1
4	.....4	.....Joey Muscles.....	U. Rispoli	.....J. Antonucci	.....30-1
5	.....5	.....Hot Spun.....	J. Lezcano	.....C. Bhigroog	.....30-1
6	.....6	.....Antonio of Venice.....	J. Rosario	.....R. Rodriguez	.....8-1
7	.....7	.....Pentathlon.....	J. Ortiz	.....C. McGaughey III	.....12-1

8	.....8	.....Re Markably.....	F. Prat	.....W. Mott	.....6-1
9	.....9	.....Aggelos the Great.....	M. Franco	.....G. Weaver	.....6-1
10	.....10	.....Rookie Card.....	L. Saez	.....D. Gargan	.....6-1
11	.....11	.....Ridgewood Runner.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....C. Martin	.....15-1

6TH (1:55PM). \$300,000, STK - THE WONDER AGAIN, 3 YO, F, 11/16M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 4

1	.....1	.....Al Jafara (GB).....	F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....6-1
2	.....2	.....May Day Ready.....	L. Dettori	.....J. Lee	.....9-2
3	.....3	.....Bessie Abbott (IRE).....	D. Davis	.....M. Casse	.....20-1
4	.....4	.....Virgin Colada.....	J. Rosario	.....C. Brown	.....10-1
5	.....5	.....Opulent Restraint (IRE).....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
6	.....6	.....Nitrogen.....	J. Ortiz	.....M. Casse	.....1-1
7	.....7	.....Love You Anyway.....	L. Saez	.....G. Arnold II	.....20-1
8	.....8	.....Laurelin (IRE).....	K. Carmouche	.....H. Motion	.....5-1

7TH (2:37PM). \$400,000, STK - THE TRUE NORTH, 4 YO'S & UP, 6 1/2F

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

1	.....1	.....Concrete Glory.....	L. Saez	.....S. Joseph, Jr.	.....8-1
2	.....2	.....Crazy Mason.....	M. Franco	.....G. Sacco	.....9-2
3	.....3	.....Surveillance.....	K. Carmouche	.....L. Rice	.....15-1
4	.....4	.....Nakatomi.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....W. Ward	.....4-1
5	.....5	.....Book'em Danno.....	P. Lopez	.....D. Ryan	.....5-2
6	.....6	.....Mullikin.....	F. Prat	.....R. Brisset	.....2-1
7	.....7	.....Full Moon Madness.....	J. Velazquez	.....M. Nevin	.....20-1
8	.....8	.....Nutella Fella.....	J. Alvarado	.....G. Contessa	.....20-1

8TH (3:17PM). \$1,000,000, STK - THE HILL 'N' DALE METROPOLITAN HANDICAP, 3 YO'S & UP, 1M

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

1	.....1	.....Fierceness.....	J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....1-1
2	.....2	.....White Abarrio.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....S. Joseph, Jr.	.....9-5
3	.....3	.....Castle Chaos.....	F. Prat	.....R. Falcone, Jr.	.....20-1
4	.....4	.....Just a Touch.....	F. Geroux	.....B. Cox	.....4-1
5	.....5	.....Raging Torrent.....	L. Dettori	.....D. O'Neill	.....5-1

9TH (4:08PM). \$500,000, STK - THE JAIPUR, 3 YO'S & UP, 5 1/2F (TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Extendo.....	J. Castellano	.....J. Orseno	.....20-1
2	.....2	.....Think Big.....	B. Curtis	.....M. Stidham	.....6-5
3	.....3	.....Our Shot.....	L. Saez	.....J. Terranova II	.....8-1
4	.....4	.....My Boy Prince.....	J. Lezcano	.....M. Casse	.....10-1
5	.....5	.....Arzak.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Trombetta	.....8-1
6	.....6	.....Vinsanity.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....A. Arriaga	.....50-1
7	.....7	.....Bold Journey.....	E. Cancel	.....W. Mott	.....20-1
8	.....8	.....Alogon.....	J. Ortiz	.....E. Allard	.....10-1
9	.....9	.....Ag Bullet.....	F. Prat	.....R. Baltas	.....7-2
10	.....10	.....Coppola.....	U. Rispoli	.....D. Romans	.....12-1

10TH (4:47PM). \$300,000, STK - THE PENNINE RIDGE, 3 YO, 11/16M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5, Daily Double, Pic 4

1	.....1	.....Zulu Kingdom (IRE).....	F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....6-5
2	.....2	.....A. P. Kid.....	J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....10-1
3	.....3	.....States' Rights.....	J. Ortiz	.....C. DeVaux	.....6-1
4	.....4	.....Flying Mohawk.....	L. Dettori	.....D. Beckman	.....9-2
5	.....5	.....Tom's Magic.....	B. Curtis	.....M. Stidham	.....15-1
6	.....6	.....Bulldoze.....	L. Saez	.....T. Pletcher	.....30-1
7	.....7	.....Mi Bago.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Casse	.....6-1
8	.....8	.....Golden Channel.....	M. Franco	.....G. Weaver	.....20-1
9	.....9	.....Noble Confessor.....	D. Davis	.....T. Pletcher	.....12-1
10	.....10	.....Thirteen Colonies.....	U. Rispoli	.....P. Antonacci	.....20-1

11TH (5:28PM). \$500,000, STK - THE WOODY STEPHENS PRESENTED BY MOHEGAN SUN, 3 YO, 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Big Truzz.....	J. Rosario	.....B. Lynch	.....10-1
2	.....2	.....Madaket Road.....	J. Velazquez	.....B. Baffert	.....10-1
3	.....3	.....Macho Music.....	J. Castellano	.....R. Crichton	.....8-1
4	.....4	.....Patch Adams.....	L. Saez	.....B. Cox	.....5-1
5	.....5	.....Citizen Bull.....	M. Smith	.....B. Baffert	.....5-1
6	.....6	.....T Kraft.....	J. Lezcano	.....W. Mott	.....30-1

Continued on Page 32

Lawn Party

Flying Mohawk back on turf after Derby defeat for Beckman

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Whit Beckman knows Flying Mohawk is a turf horse. He knew it before he entered him in the Kentucky Derby and he certainly knew it after he finished 18th. So, yes, it was obvious that the colt's next start would be back on the grass, which comes in today's Grade 3 \$300,000 Pennine Ridge Stakes for 3-year-olds at Saratoga Race Course.

"I mean, the Derby is the Derby. We take our shot," Beckman said Friday, before he was scheduled to fly to Saratoga. "That's enough said. We take our shot. But yeah, his turf form, his previous two turf races prior to the Derby were exceptional."

Owned in partnership by former Major League Baseball player Jayson Werth's Two Eight Racing, Berry Family Racing and Kaleta Racing, Flying Mohawk earned his way into the Derby with a second in the Grade 3 Jeff Ruby Steaks on the Turfway synthetic. He went off at 28-1 on the first Saturday in May and was beaten by 42 1/4 lengths.



Samantha Decker

Maiden Noble Confessor finished second in the Grade 2 Pilgrim last year.

PENNINE RIDGE STAKES PREVIEW

"Obviously, his performance in the Derby left a little to be desired," Beckman said. "People say we should have kept him on turf all along, but you know what? It's like I said, the experience and what we got to do in those couple of weeks with the Derby is a priceless situation. He came back in great shape. I don't think we took anything out of him by trying that. And he's training very forwardly since."

Beckman, who liked the placement on the calendar of the Pennine Ridge, is plotting a two-race Saratoga engagement for Flying Mohawk, who breaks from post four at 9-2 on the morning line.

"The Pennine Ridge, timing-wise, is a good prep for the Belmont Derby (July 4)," Beckman said. "We would love to have a prep here, but the timing of everything settled on this weekend. It was an easy ship and sounds like he's doing great up there. We just entered to see how it looked, and it doesn't look like the toughest Grade 3 ever assembled, but still, he'll have to go up and absolutely do his running."

A \$72,000 Keeneland September yearling in 2023, the Karantie colt broke his maiden at Churchill Downs last October after running fifth in the Grade 2 Pilgrim at Aqueduct. He opened his 3-year-old campaign with a come-from-behind win in a Fair



Olivia Witkowski

Flying Mohawk heads to the turf in Saturday's Pennine Ridge Stakes.

Grounds allowance, prompting Beckman to take a shot in the Jeff Ruby.

Beckman knows an up-the-track finish in the Derby can take a toll on a horse's mental well-being.

"That's always a concern because I've seen it over the years, plenty of times," he said. "But this horse, part of why he's always good, he's just very, very even-keeled mentally. He's not going to be shook by much. Even with the Derby, his effort was one that he knew he was out of it and he didn't over-exert himself. He didn't come back beat up, tired or less than he was going into it. So, I'm not too worried. The way he's been training, the way he's been acting, he's mentally sharp, focused and ready to compete again."

They will all have to be sharp in taking on 6-5 morning like favorite Zulu Kingdom, who breaks from the rail under Flavien Prat. The Chad Brown trainee is 5-for-6 lifetime, his only loss coming in last year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf. The Irish-bred comes in off a win in the Grade 1 American Turf on the Derby undercard.

"Obviously, that's a really nice horse that we're going to have to work out a good trip to be competitive with, but I think this horse is more than capable of getting the job

done," said Beckman, who goes back to Frankie Dettori in the Pennine Ridge.

"Frankie's ridden him a couple of times very well. He knows the horse. He was highly complimentary of him the first couple of times," Beckman said. "It just worked out. It wasn't necessarily we needed to make a change, but he's Frankie Dettori. If he can't figure it out, nobody can."

Zulu Kingdom will try to give Chad Brown a record fourth victory in the Pennine Ridge.

"He's doing good," Brown said. "He did get a quarter crack a few weeks ago, but it's come together quicker than I anticipated, which is good. His last work went very well, so he's a go (a half in :49.22 on the Oklahoma Turf). He's always seemed like a Grade 1 horse and I was surprised he got beat in the Breeders' Cup. I shipped him out West as one of my best chances of the weekend – that's how much I liked the horse. He has come back this year and kind of picked up right where he left off."

Todd Pletcher runs two in the Pennine Ridge – Noble Confessor and Bulldoze – and Cherie DeVaux sends out States' Rights. The field of 10 also includes A. P. Kid, Tom's Magic, Mi Bago, Golden Channel and Thirteen Colonies.



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SARATOGA ENTRIES

77Colloquial.....	M. Franco.....	G. Weaver.....	6-1
88Gunmetal.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.....	B. Cox.....	8-1
9	.....9	.....Neoequos.....	J. Ortiz.....	S. Joseph, Jr.....	10-1
10	.....10	.....Chancer McPatrick.....	F. Prat.....	C. Brown.....	4-1
11	.....11	.....Gate to Wire.....	D. Davis.....	T. Pletcher.....	12-1

12TH (6:09PM). \$1,000,000, STK - THE RESORTS WORLD CASINO MANHATTAN, 4 YO'S & UP, 1 3/16M (TURF)
Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

1	.....1	.....Endlessly.....	U. Rispoli.....	M. McCarthy.....	20-1
2	.....2	.....Integration.....	F. Prat.....	C. McGaughey III.....	9-2
3	.....3	.....Highway Robber.....	C. Torres.....	B. Lynch.....	6-1
4	.....4	.....Carson's Run.....	D. Davis.....	M. Clement.....	12-1
5	.....5	.....Deterministic.....	K. Carmouche.....	M. Clement.....	9-2
6	.....6	.....Spirit of St Louis.....	M. Franco.....	C. Brown.....	5-2
7	.....7	.....Tucson.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.....	T. Pletcher.....	20-1
8	.....8	.....Corruption.....	J. Ortiz.....	M. Casse.....	15-1
9	.....9	.....Far Bridge.....	J. Rosario.....	M. Clement.....	3-1

13TH (7:04PM). \$2,000,000, STK - THE BELMONT STAKES PRESENTED BY NYRA BETS, 3 YO, 11/4M
Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double

1	.....1	.....Hill Road.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.....	C. Brown.....	10-1
2	.....2	.....Sovereignty.....	J. Alvarado.....	W. Mott.....	2-1
3	.....3	.....Rodriguez.....	M. Smith.....	B. Baffert.....	6-1
4	.....4	.....Uncaged.....	L. Saez.....	T. Pletcher.....	30-1
5	.....5	.....Crudo.....	J. Velazquez.....	T. Pletcher.....	15-1
6	.....6	.....Baeza.....	F. Prat.....	J. Shirreffs.....	4-1
7	.....7	.....Journalism.....	U. Rispoli.....	M. McCarthy.....	8-5
8	.....8	.....Heart of Honor (GB).....	S. Osborne.....	J. Osborne.....	30-1

14TH (8:02PM). \$110,000, AOC \$50,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 1 1/16M (TURF)
Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

1	.....1	.....Ramblin' Wreck.....	K. Carmouche.....	D. Gargan.....	8-1
2	.....2	.....Taraj (IRE).....	J. Alvarado.....	W. Mott.....	7-2
3	.....3	.....Tiz Dashing.....	D. Davis.....	B. Tagg.....	10-1
4	.....4	.....Deuteronomy.....	L. Dettori.....	C. McGaughey III.....	5-1
5	.....5	.....Then.....	M. Franco.....	P. Antonacci.....	8-1
6	.....6	.....Jurisprudence.....	F. Prat.....	C. Brown.....	6-1
7	.....7	.....Landman Friday.....	L. Saez.....	D. Gargan.....	15-1
8	.....8	.....Smooth Breeze.....	U. Rispoli.....	J. Abreu.....	9-2
9	.....9	.....Simulate.....	J. Lezcano.....	W. Mott.....	15-1
10	.....10	.....Equivoque.....	I. Ortiz, Jr.....	T. Pletcher.....	15-1
11	.....11	.....Gene and Jude.....	K. Coa.....	T. Proctor.....	30-1
12	.....12	.....Classic Creation.....	R. Santana, Jr.....	J. Terranova II.....	30-1
13	.....AE	.....Rothschild.....	L. Saez.....	J. Toner.....	15-1
14	.....AE-MTO	.....Top Gun Rocket.....	Rider TBA.....	P. Synneffias.....	2-1
15AE-MTOStreet Swagg.....	M. Franco.....	R. Atlas.....	6-1
16AE-MTOWhittington Park.....	Rider TBA.....	F. Abreu.....	5-2

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Andrew J. Mollica Attorney at Law

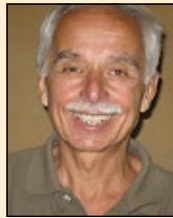
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John Shapazian



Tom Law



Charles Bedard



Rob Whitlock



Jessica Paquette

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1	Save Us Melania Will Be Famous Majestic Return	Save Us Melania Will Be Famous Proud Foot	Rice entry Roswell Will Be Famous	Maggy's Place Roswell Rice entry	Maggy's Palace Roswell Will Be Famous
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3	Certified Loverboy Redistricting El Rezeen	Certified Loverboy Redistricting Atlant	Alternate Reality Redistricting Atlant	Redistricting Daunt Atlant	Atlant Crystal Quest El Rezeen
4	General Partner Eliminate Radio Red	Radio Red Quick To Accuse General Partner	General Partner Quick To Accuse Echo Again	General Partner Radio Red Echo Again	Magnolia Midnight Hades Eliminate
5	Silver Slugger Antonio Of Venice Pentathlon	Re Markably Silver Slugger Antonio Of Venice	Silver Slugger Unlimitedpotential Antonio Of Venice	Rocketeer Aggelos The Great Silver Slugger	Re Markably Pentathlon Rocketeer
6	Nitrogen Al Jafara May Day Ready	Nitrogen May Day Ready Laurelin	Nitrogen May Day Ready Love You Anyway	Opulent Restraint Nitrogen Laurelin	Laurelin Nitrogen Opulent Restraint
7	Nakatomi Book'em Danno Mullikin	Book'em Danno Mullikin Concrete Glory	Surveillance Crazy Mason Book'em Danno	Concrete Glory Nakatomi Book'em Danno	Book'em Danno Surveillance Mullikin
8	Fierceness White Abarrio Raging Torrent	Fierceness White Abarrio Just A Touch	Fierceness Just A Touch White Abarrio	White Abarrio Raging Torrent Fierceness	White Abarrio Fierceness Just A Touch
9	Ag Bullet Think Big Our Shot	Ag Bullet Think Big My Boy Prince	My Boy Prince Think Big Ag Bullet	Think Big Ag Bullet My Boy Prince	Alogon Arzak Think Big
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12	Spirit Of St Louis Far Bridge Deterministic	Far Bridge Spirit Of St Louis Carson's Run	Spirit Of St Louis Integration Highway Robber	Integration Spirit Of St Louis Deterministic	Carson's Run Integration Far Bridge
13	Sovereignty Journalism Baeza	Sovereignty Baeza Journalism	Rodriguez Journalism Sovereignty	Journalism Baeza Uncaged	Sovereignty Journalism Baeza
14	Whittington Park Then Taraj	Whittington Park Deuteronomy Smooth Breeze	Rothschild Equivoque Smooth Breeze	Gene And Jude Taraj Ramblin Wreck	Deuteronomy Tiz Dashing Simulate
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Revenge

La Cara hands Good Cheer first loss

BY SEAN CLANCY

Tracy Farmer summed up the Acorn in four words.

“Well, you never know.”

Farmer's homebred La Cara had just splashed over a sloppy track to upset the previously undefeated Good Cheer and four others in the Grade 1 stakes for 3-year-old fillies Friday afternoon. Ridden by Dylan Davis and trained by Mark Casse, La Cara led every step to stamp a 3-length win over Look Forward and Scottish Lassie. Good Cheer failed to contend, winding up fifth. La Cara finished 1 1/8 miles in 1:49.20.

The Acorn provided a rematch for four fillies from the Kentucky Oaks. That day, Good Cheer dominated to win for the seventh time. Bless The Broken closed to be third. Quickkick finished seventh. La Cara led early before fading to ninth.

Casse put a line through it.

“I was willing to throw the last one out,” Casse said. “That’s the problem with muddy racetracks. They’re different and we ran into the same issue with Sandman in the Derby. It’s so frustrating, you come all this way to run in the big races and you catch the weather.”

Five weeks later, it was the same weather and a different story.

“You’ve got to run the race. It was La Cara’s day to shine,” Davis said. “We got a big scratch with Shred The Gnar. After that, I knew we were going to get the pace we wanted without the pressure. We weren’t walking the dog, but she was able to get comfortable. After that, it’s all her.”



Samantha Decker

Trainer Mark Casse greets the Acorn winner.



Dave Harmon

La Cara storms to an upset victory in Friday's Grade 1 Acorn.

La Cara broke sharply from post three and Davis threw four left crosses to urge her to the front clearing Scottish Lassie inside her. Look Forward, Bless The Broken and Quickkick tried to stay close while Good Cheer slid to the back. La Cara loped uncontested through the first quarter mile in :23.40 and the half-mile in :47.08. She stretched her lead to a 1 1/2 lengths after three quarters of a mile in 1:10.74. Davis knew the check was signed.

“Oh, when I hit the six-furlong I said, ‘They’re in trouble.’ She was giving the same feeling she gave me in her first win at Tampa. She was pulling me,” Davis said. “In the Oaks, she dropped the bridle halfway down the backside. Once she hit the second turn today, she jumped on the bridle again. I wasn’t even going to look back, I could hear them, but I knew I had them. She ran incredible.”

La Cara turned for home, stretched again and piled it on with every efficient stride.

“Sometimes it works for you and sometimes it doesn’t,” Casse said. “She was bouncing over it. They went a half in 47 and I was like, ‘OK, that’s good.’ Then about the half-mile pole I could see he was still sitting and I could see the others riding. I said, ‘This could get interesting.’ Maybe about the three-sixteenths pole I did I give out my first ‘Go get ‘em Dylan.’”

He didn’t need to say a word.

For Davis it all goes back to a decision made at Tampa Bay Downs February 8 when La Cara led every step in the Suncoast Stakes. Davis had nothing to do with it. Casse had nothing to do it. La Cara had everything to do with it.

“It was her idea. That day Mark said play it how breaks. She jumped like that,” Davis said smacking his hands together. “Really quick the first jump. She found herself on the lead and enjoyed it. She thrived on it. Romped.”

The daughter of Street Sense pulled Davis to the lead and drew off to win by 6 1/4 lengths that day and has been a frontrunner ever since

“Mark’s like, ‘Just keep going with her. That’s what she wants to do,’ ” Davis said. “Today, Mark said, ‘Come out running.’ She jumps right into it.”

La Cara jumped her earnings to \$1,156,083. A winner of two races, including the Pocahontas Stakes, as a juvenile, La Cara won the Suncoast in her 3-year-old debut, finished second in the Grade 2 Davona Dale, wired seven rivals in the Grade 1 Ashland at Keeneland in April before flopping on a wet track in the Kentucky Oaks.

For Farmer, who bought La Cara’s dam Cara Caterina for \$500,000 as a yearling, the Acorn win was as big as it gets.

“You dream about it. I’ve won the Whitney twice, several Grade 1 races here. But this is the best. Today is the best. I’m here and I won the race. It gets more endearing,” Farmer said. “Saratoga is such a wonderful place, we love it here, we own a home here. You have to be here and be in the community to understand what a special place it is. For me, it’s been 25 years or something, a long time ago and before I came, I always wanted to be here. I appreciate everything, especially Saratoga. It’s a special place. I owe it a great deal.”



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*Left: George Stubbs (British, 1724-1806)
A Dark Bay Horse belonging to the Duke of Marlborough, c. 1764*

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Name Game

Dorth Vader upsets big names in Grade 1

BY PAUL HALLORAN

There is always extra pressure when you name a horse after a person, especially on the one who chooses the name. That said, it's a good thing Dorth Vader turned out to be a runner.

"She's named after me," Dorothy Harden said in a soaked Saratoga Race Course winner's circle, after watching her namesake roll to a 4 3/4-length victory in the Grade 1, \$500,000 Ogden Phipps Stakes. "And I believed in her since Day 1."

Harden is the life partner of winning owner and breeder John Ropes, who has been in horse racing for 45 years and will be bringing a horse to the Breeders' Cup for the first time, with the Phipps a automatic qualifier for the Breeders' Cup Distaff.

Dazzling Move went to the lead in the 1 1/8-mile Ogden Phipps, with Randomized, Leslie's Rose and Dorth Vader in pursuit down the backstretch through a quarter mile in :22.90 and a half in :46.41. Jose Ortiz extended the lead on the far turn, but by that point Dorth Vader had established herself as the main threat and she made a powerful



Samantha Decker (2)

Dorth Vader skips to an upset in the Ogden Phipps.

three-wide move under John Velazquez to take the lead at the stretch call. From there, it was a walk in the slop on the way to an easy win in a final time of 1:49.10. Dazzling Move hung on for second, followed by favorite Raging Sea, beaten by 6 1/2 lengths.

"I still wasn't sure she wanted to go that far," said George Weaver, who has trained Dorth Vader in six of her 15 starts, taking over for Michael Yates. "When I first got her, I was like, 'Man, this filly does not need blinkers.' I thought that from the beginning. I never took them off until this year, and it's paying dividends. She's a high-strung filly, but she's like fine wine. She's getting better with age."

The Florida-bred 5-year-old daughter of Girvin has been a force throughout her career, running well enough to earn a start in the 2023 Kentucky Oaks, where she finished fifth to Pretty Mischievous. Prior to that race, Lopes was approached by a buyer with a big check.

"He turned down a very big offer for her before the Oaks," Harden said, Lopes confirming she had something to that decision.

"She looked at me and said, 'You can't sell my horse,'" Ropes said.

That's looking like a more prescient move all the time, especially after Friday's win, which increased her career earnings to \$893,218. Not bad for a homebred.

"It is very sweet," Ropes said. "All my horses are homebreds. I won't buy a horse to race. I'll race

a horse that I breed. I have a farm in Ocala. She was bred at Ocala Stud, David O'Farrell. And then they sent her up to Brad Jones' farm in Kentucky (EBB Farms)."

Dorth Vader ran only once last year, a fourth in the Grade 1 La Troienne at Churchill Downs. She was second in a Gulfstream allowance to start her 5-year-old campaign, followed by a troubled fourth in a return trip to the La Troienne, a race won by Raging Sea, with 2024 Horse of the Year Thorpedo Anna finishing last.

"Well, she should have won the last race," Ropes said. "They did not take (Randomized, who finished third) down. She was getting ready to roll and we got cut off. That was the problem. We knew we could win."

The Ogden Phipps was the fifth Grade 1 try for Dorth Vader, who had three seconds and a fourth prior to Friday. There was a feeling in her camp that it would be her turn.

"Absolutely. That's all we talked about," Ropes said. "And plus, George thought she's probably in the best shape she's ever been in. This was her time. Plus, we had to have the jockey to pull it off. There are not many better than Johnny."

According to Equibase statistics, the Phipps was Ropes' 40th win with him listed as sole owner. The other 39 can debate which had the second-biggest victory.

"Number one," he said about Friday's win. "Pure joy."

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Rain Queen

She Feels Pretty adds another Gr. 1 victory

BY JOE CLANCY

When the rain arrived Friday afternoon, Cherie DeVaux thought long and hard about what to do with star filly She Feels Pretty, the 3-5 favorite for the Grade 1 New York Stakes set for 6:25 p.m.

Once NYRA committed to running the \$750,000 race on the turf, DeVaux really went to work – checking in with owners Roy and Gretchen Jackson, NYRA vice president Glen Kozak and jockey John Velazquez.

“I called the Jacksons, I called Glen, I talked to Johnny, I made all my calls and it’s still stressing me out,” DeVaux said on the way out of the paddock.

In the end, the trainer had no reason to worry.

She Feels Pretty handled the wet turf, the rain and six rivals – stalking outside early, advancing on the final turn and wearing down a stubborn Beach Bomb in the stretch to score by a half-length. Bellezza was four lengths back in third. Labeled yielding, the turf kept the pace slow as Edict made the lead through a quarter-mile in :24.27 and a half in :51.30. Six furlongs went by in a tepid 1:17.56. Second throughout, Beach Bomb cranked up the pressure on the turn but She Feels Pretty covered the move while three wide and prevailed in a long drive after 1 3/16 miles in 2:00.76.

“I could have done with it being a little faster because I didn’t take a breath the entire freaking time,” said DeVaux, who picked up her first graded stakes win at Saratoga.



Samantha Decker

She Feels Pretty meets the team in the winner's circle.



Samantha Decker

She Feels Pretty prevails over Beach Bomb in Friday's New York.

She Feels Pretty would have been happier on drier conditions, but found a way to win anyway.

“Knowing her helps, knowing what she likes to do, what she doesn’t like to do,” said Velazquez. “She was not loving this track at all. I tried to put her behind some horses, she always gets aggressive behind somebody.”

Velazquez found a spot behind Beach Bomb (Luis Saez) on the first turn and She Feels Pretty found a brief comfort zone. By the backstretch, she was pulling herself into the race.

“Passing the half-mile pole, the three-eighths pole, I put her in the clear, ‘nice and easy, nice and easy,’ let Luis put on the pace in front of me,” Velazquez said. “As soon as he felt me, he went on, perfect, I didn’t have to do anything. When I went for him at the quarter pole, three-sixteenths pole, she went and she waited. She didn’t have time to get a really good hold of the track, but good horses overcome it. She would stumble, get up and run, bobble, get up and run.”

“Good horses make the difference.”

She Feels Pretty collected \$412,500 to get to \$1,784,957 for her career. She’s never finished worse than third and is undefeated in four starts since DeVaux added blinkers last fall.

“She’s such a professional, and she just did it,” DeVaux said. “It’s just so special, and I’m so privileged to be able to train a filly like this and to share it with the Jacksons.”

The Jacksons spent \$240,000 to buy the yearling She Feels Pretty for their Lael Stable at Keeneland September in 2022 and watched her win a Grade 1 in her second start and place in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf as a 2-year-old.

Last year, she won two more Grade 1 stakes, placed in another and came up a neck short of a Saratoga win when second in the Grade 2 Lake Placid.

The chestnut daughter of Karakontie crossed that off Friday, though her connections thought about scratching.

The Jacksons had one question when DeVaux called – “Do you think it’s safe?” The trainer had done her homework.

“From being in New York for so long, I have a great rapport with many people here at NYRA and they’re great communicators so Glen and I had been talking,” DeVaux said. “We definitely got more rain than what anyone was expecting. I really admire Gretchen and Roy because they put the horse first unequivocally.”

DeVaux watched an earlier turf race, got input from Kozak and Velazquez and ultimately made the decision to run.

“Johnny said he thought the surface was safe, and then it was if he thought she could handle it,” said DeVaux. “We’re building a campaign for the Breeders’ Cup, so even if she didn’t win, we would have been happy if she just ran a good race.”

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House Rules

Ways And Means handles foes in Gr. 2

BY ALEC DICONZA

Seth Klarman experienced a 30-minute roller coaster ride Friday afternoon. In the fifth, Klaravich Stable's lightly raced colt Strategic Focus improved to 2-for-2 in a 9-furlong allowance against older horses. Or so Klarman thought. The son of Gun Runner trained by Chad Brown was disqualified to second after interfering with Malarchuk, another Chad Brown runner, in the stretch.

Fortunately for Klarman, his afternoon turned around quickly. In the next race, his star filly Ways And Means dusted six rivals by 7 3/4 lengths in the Grade 2 Bed o' Roses Stakes.

"She's very special," Klarman said. "We bred her, she's only 4 and 5-for-10 now with just under a million dollars in winnings. She loves it here at Saratoga. The first thing is realizing she's special in the first place. Her debut was so great. You're still nervous with a lot of great fillies in that race. There was a lone speed on the rail who didn't break great, but still got the lead. You sort of felt like the jockey was inching up and under control and that's where we knew she was going to get this done."

Ways And Means is 4-for-5 at Saratoga with her only loss being the Grade 1 Spinaway two years ago when she clipped heels on the backstretch and lost position. Prior to that, she won her debut by 12 3/4 lengths. She experienced a setback after the Spinaway but returned to the races in time to finish second in the Gulfstream Park Oaks and fourth in the Kentucky Oaks the next spring. After that, she cut back to sprints, winning an allowance during the 2024 Belmont Stakes Racing Festival at Saratoga and the Grade 1 Test during the summer meet.

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Samantha Decker

Ways And Means heads for home in the Bed O' Roses.

This year, Klarman thinks the daughter of Practical Joke could be better than ever.

"We might have seen her run her best race yet, today," he said.

Ways And Means entered the Bed o' Roses off a third in the Grade 1 Derby City Distaff at Churchill. She came into that race off a six-month layoff, after which Brown believes she needed a race to get back into form.

"She ran into a couple good horses over there (in the Derby City Distaff), and now that she had a race under her belt and she's on a track that she loves, and a dry racetrack, she's back on top of her game again," Brown said.

Ways And Means rated in second behind the speedy Irish Maxima early in Bed o' Roses, a 7-furlong stakes event for fillies and mares. After a half-mile in :45.16, Ways And Means ran up alongside that rival and went by in a flash. Scylla rallied along the rail to try to make a race of it, but Ways And Means was long gone. Dashing through 6 furlongs in 1:08.63, the ultra-talented filly extended her margin all the way to the wire under Flavien Prat. Ways And Means completed the 7 furlongs in 1:21.11, three-tenths of a second off the stakes record, as the 1-2 favorite.

"I was confident she was training really well, but entering that final turn there she was catching a lot of pressure between horses, and Scylla is a really nice horse and was closer today and getting a nice ground-saving trip," Brown said. "I thought may-

be it would be quite a showdown in the middle of the stretch there but she did burst away from there, which was impressive."

Prat was pleased with the trip he had aboard Ways And Means.

"She got herself into a good place right away," he said. "I felt like she was traveling good all the way around. She gave me a good run when I asked her to get going."

Brown enjoyed a banner day Friday, sure to boost his confidence heading into Belmont Stakes Day. In addition to Ways And Means, he won with Malarchuk, Asbury Park in the eighth and Dynamic Pricing in the Grade 1 Just A Game. Prat also enjoyed a strong day with four wins on the card.

"It's nice to get the momentum going now," Brown said. "We've had a quiet couple days, but we really didn't have any strong entries or many entries at all Wednesday and Thursday. We really liked our entries today and tomorrow, and a little bit into Sunday. I felt very good when I entered those horses about what races they're in and how they're doing, so I don't think this will be the last win of the weekend."

As far as what comes next for Ways And Means, the Grade 1 Ballerina on Travers Day appears to be the long-term goal. Brown did not indicate a specific target for the filly between now and then.

"The Ballerina is very late into the season and I'm going to try to figure out what to do with her before then," he said.

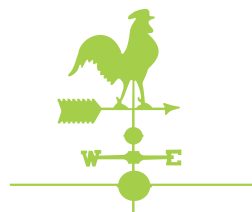
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Super Soaker

Midday rain moves Gold Cup off grass

BY TOM LAW

Bill Mott didn't take the bait.

Cajoled – albeit light-heartedly – by a few Australian broadcasters after he sent out Parchment Party to victory in Friday's off-the-turf Belmont Gold Cup Stakes, Mott wouldn't commit to the offer.

Parchment Party, a son of Constitution who improved to 3-for-10 in the shortened 1 3/4-mile Belmont Gold Cup, earned an automatic spot in Australia's prestigious Melbourne Cup in November through the continued partnership between the New York Racing Association and Victoria Racing Club. Parchment Party's 8 1/2-length victory over Yo Daddy earned a spot in the "race that stops a nation," but he'll stay close to home for now.

"I know they close down the entire country the whole day. I know it's a major deal over that, like a national holiday," Mott said. "One day I'd like to have a horse good enough to participate."

Prodded once more, maybe to add some shine to an already glistening resume that also includes a second Kentucky Derby win this year with Sovereignty, Mott stayed in his lane.

"We've got to find the right horse," Mott said, not even taking an offer for a free flight.



Samantha Decker

Parchment Party and John Velazquez took on plenty of mud.



Samantha Decker

Parchment Party splashes home with an easy win in the off-the-turf Belmont Gold Cup.

Mott wound up with the right horse in the \$250,000 Belmont Gold Cup, originally a Grade 2 stakes carded for 2 miles on the inner turf.

NYRA moved the race to the main track about an hour before the scheduled 5:08 p.m. post time and Parchment Party drew into the race off the main track only list, along with stablemate and eventual 5-2 favorite Timeout and the Linda Rice-trained Yo Daddy.

European shipper Flatten The Curve, Padiddle, Curbstone, Grand Sonata and Tawny Port also stayed in to test their stamina over the sloppy and sealed surface.

Mott didn't name a rider at entry time and picked up John Velazquez when New York-bred hurdler Lord Flintshire came out.

"Right here (under the awning between the grandstand and the paddock) the clerk of scales was running by telling me I was picking up a horse if I wanted to for Mr. Mott," Velazquez said. "I said, 'Man, I can't say no to Mr. Mott, I'll ride him.' I didn't know anything about the horse. I hadn't even seen him in the race because I had studied the race for the turf not the dirt.

"At least I had plenty of time to study it and I talked to Mr. Mott, he told me he always liked the horse and he will suit the distance because he always runs the last part of the race and always gallops

out really good. He thought it would suit him really well."

Yo Daddy, coming off a third in the Grade 3 Westchester on a muddy track going 1 mile May 4 at Aqueduct, dictated terms for much of the trip. He and Kendrick Carmouche set strong early fractions that included the opening 6 furlongs in 1:12.87 and a mile in 1:38.56. Yo Daddy led Curbstone by 2 lengths through the latter split onto the backstretch before opening up by 3 1/2 lengths past 1 1/4 miles in 2:04.75. Velazquez made steady progress on Parchment Party to that point and moved into second heading into the far turn the final time.

"The first part of the race I didn't do anything, just drop him in there and let him do his own thing until he started to take a little hold of me," Velazquez said. "I told him I was going to follow his other horse because I thought he was the horse to beat. At the three-quarter pole I seen Junior (Alvarado aboard Timeout) riding, I said, 'Oh man, I've got to go around him.' And that was it."

Parchment Party, several paths off the rail, continued his steady run around the far turn and took the lead heading into the stretch. He drew off from there, winning in 2:57.86. Yo Daddy held second, 14 1/2 lengths ahead of Padiddle with Flatten The Curve fourth.

"I'll take it," Velazquez said. "It wasn't that easy. I had to work for it."

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Friday -

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• Four years ago, on Belmont Stakes Eve, Junior Alvarado rode a Godolphin homebred first-time starter for trainer Bill Mott and it did not work out that well. Cody's Wish finished third, but it was a troubled trip and Alvarado lost the mount for almost a year.

When he got back aboard, he and the horse were virtually flawless, winning seven of eight races, two Breeders' Cup Dirt Miles and a Horse of the Year Award.

Friday at Saratoga, Mott gave Alvarado a leg up on Ragtime, another Godolphin homebred first-timer. The result was appreciably better.

Breaking from post two in the 7-furlong maiden special weight, Alvarado guided the 3-year-old daughter of Union Rags off the rail midway down the backstretch, made a sharp between-horses move on the turn and ran off to a 3 3/4-length win.

"I thought she was very sharp," Alvarado said. "I have to make sure I give her a good experience to begin with. That's the main key for us. But then while I was doing all that, I'm thinking, 'oh, boy, I think I got a little more underneath me than I thought.' And you're just like, 'Let's go with it.' She responded to every task I asked. She went between horses like an old pro, and she exploded at the end."

Ragtime's mother, the Storm Cat mare Burmilla, broke her maiden on debut, won her next three races including the Honorable Miss Stakes as a 4-year-old for Godolphin (racing under the Darley brand) in 2007.

- Paul Halloran



Dave Harmon

Ragtime pulls away late to win Friday's second race for Godolphin and trainer Bill Mott.

• Friday's card belonged to three jockeys – Dylan Davis, John Velazquez and Flavien Prat.

Davis earned the fifth and sixth Grade 1 victories of his career when he rode La Cara to an upset win in the Acorn and Dynamic Pricing to a fast-closing triumph in the Just A Game.

Velazquez took down four races on the card, starting with Bellacose on the opener. Making her first start for trainer Wesley Ward, the New York-bred filly led every step in the 6-furlong allowance on the dirt. Velazquez earned his next three wins in stakes, aboard Dorth Vader in the Ogden Phipps, Parchment Party in the off-the-turf Belmont Gold Cup and She Feels Pretty in the New York.

Prat also won four races, highlighted by the tour-de-force from Ways And Means in the Bed o' Roses. He rode Works For Me to a half-length score in an allowance-optional turf sprint, and guided Asbury Park to a victory in the rain to break his maiden.

His other win came with some drama.

Prat originally finished second in the fifth aboard Malarchuk, trained by Chad Brown, who also trained the horse who crossed the wire first, Strategic Focus. However, after the stewards looked into the stretch run, they disqualified Strategic Focus and placed him second, elevating Malarchuk to first. In a stretch battle between the two colts, Strategic Focus

took the lead on the outside nearing the eighth pole, switched to his left lead, came in a couple paths and caused Malarchuk and Prat to check. Malarchuk switched outside and came with a final run, but it was not quite enough to catch Strategic Focus. After the race became official, Brown could not recall another race in which he was disqualified while retaining his 1-2 finish.

Also on the card, Vehemente extended her winning streak to three in the fourth for trainer Joe Sharp, Storm Miami won an allowance-optional for Brendan Walsh and Hit The Post won the finale as a first-time gelding under apprentice jockey Christopher Elliott for trainer Melanie Giddings.

- Alec DiConza

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Exacta Man

Brown finishes 1-2 in Grade 1 turf stakes

BY TOM LAW

Don't stop if you've read this before.

Chad Brown sent out three contenders, including the post-time favorite, for one of Friday's major Grade 1 turf stakes at Saratoga Race Course and came away with the victory and the runner-up. Sound familiar?

The scenario did to what few remaining fans braved the hard rain, light ran and eventually misty conditions for most of the Belmont Stakes eve 14-race marathon card. Brown sent out the 1-2 finishers in the Grade 1 Just A Game Stakes, winning with Klaravich Stable's Irish-bred filly Dynamic Pricing and finishing second with Resolute Racing 8-5 second choice Excellent Truth. He also sent out the 1-2 finishers in the fifth and eighth races on the card.

Dynamic Pricing's victory, a three-quarter-length score under Dylan Davis in 1:38.77 for the mile over the yielding inner turf course, also gave Brown a record-extending ninth win in the Just A Game. He's won those nine in the last 10 years, with only Charlie Appleby spoiling the chance for a 10-pack in 2021 with Godolphin's Althiqua.



Samantha Decker

Dynamic Pricing returns after the Grade 1 win.



Dave Harmon

Dynamic Pricing surges to victory in Friday's Just A Game Stakes.

And it almost didn't happen, at least for Dynamic Pricing.

"Seth and I kicked it around and it was sort of a last-minute entry that I had marked and I was kind of in and out," Brown said of Klaravich's Seth Klarman. "When the skies opened and it rained, she does move up on softer turf. It didn't help Randomized earlier, who hated it, but it goes to show you when the weather comes you just have to hope you have the right horse. For her, she is looking for soft turf."

Dismissed as the 10-1 sixth choice in the field of nine, Dynamic Pricing improved to 4-for-9 and picked up \$275,000 to pad her bankroll to \$772,125. A \$204,442 purchase out of the 2022 Tattersalls October yearling sale, Dynamic Pricing added the Just A Game to her victory in the Grade 3 Beaugay May 4 at Aqueduct.

Dynamic Pricing won the Beaugay via a wide trip in her first start since mid-September. Brown sent the Night Of Thunder filly to the sidelines after she lost three straight stakes – the Grade 1 Belmont Oaks at Aqueduct, Grade 2 Lake Placid at Saratoga and Winter Memories at Aqueduct. The time off proved beneficial, in multiple ways.

"She was doing so well coming into this race," Brown said. "Last year, you could tell if you looked at her, she just was burnt out mentally and just didn't look good. She was just a bit over the whole

season and needed a freshening and I have wonderful owners in Seth and Beth Klarman who allowed me to run the show. If I suggest something, especially when it's in the best interest of the horse, they always say yes. We turned her out last year and she has come back and totally improved mentally and physically."

Davis allowed Dynamic Pricing to race toward the back of the pack while saving ground as Kehoe Beach set the pace under Irad Ortiz Jr. Kehoe Beach clicked off opening splits of :24.25 and :48.82 on a 3-length lead over Do Gooder, Brown's other runner Segesta and Grade 1 Jenny Wiley winner Choisy.

Davis said Dynamic Pricing "thrived" over the soft ground and she inched up to sixth and less than 3 lengths back through 6 furlongs in 1:13.78. He angled Dynamic Pricing toward the middle of the course in the lane and took control from Kehoe Beach at the sixteenth pole with Excellent Truth, Special Wan and Simply In Front also making late runs. Dynamic Pricing made the best of those runs and edged away late for her third stakes win.

"At the quarter-pole, I was working my way between horses, banked in the middle of the turn and found a seam that was very nice for me," Davis said. "It opened up right to the top of the lane and she kicked on. She loved the soft ground. ... She was best."

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Ballet Act

John Shirreffs stood under a tree in the Saratoga paddock Thursday morning and watched a choreography. His choreography. Exercise rider Frankie Herrarte and 3-year-old colt Baeza walked into each saddling stall, paused, circled and walked out. Then they slalomed around each pole of the long saddling enclosure. Left shoulder, right shoulder, left shoulder, right shoulder. Mikaela Shiffrin couldn't have done it better.

Shirreffs, arms folded, watched, nodded, approved and eventually followed Baeza back to D. Wayne Lukas' barn on the Oklahoma side of the Saratoga backstretch.

"It's always about giving a horse a job," Shirreffs said. "You're sitting on a horse going over there to that field and the horse is going to (wander) over there, if you focus on that tree, he's going to walk straight. Your focus and his focus are together now. Doing the poles, the rider and the horse are focused together. He's not thinking, 'Oh, I'm in the paddock.' He's got a job now."

Baeza has done his job all the way, breaking his maiden in his third start, finishing second in the Santa Anita Derby in his fourth start and rallying to be third in the Kentucky Derby in his fifth start. The son of McKinzie rolls into today's Belmont Stakes as the 4-1 third choice. Another slow masterpiece by the artist who designed a 19-for-20 campaign with Zenyatta, a Kentucky Derby with Giacomo and so many big wins from his small stable.

"I always like the idea of horse's feet, I tell those guys, make sure they put their feet down right and they don't cheat and get in a hurry," Shirreffs said. "Take your time. Some of these horses I call flatlander horses, they don't know how to pick up their feet. At the barn, I put down a pole cavaletti and let them stumble over that, and all of a sudden, they know what to do with their feet. It doesn't take much."

All this was going through Shirreffs' mind as he designed and watched Baeza's schooling session



By Sean Clancy

Thursday morning. A horse's job, a horse's foot, a horse's focus.

"We obviously want him to stand but I told Frankie we're not going to let him stand," Shirreffs said. "We'll keep him moving, even though he wants to stand we're not going to let him stand today. We'll let him stand tomorrow. Today he doesn't get to stand. When he finally does get to stand, he's going to say, 'Thank you.'"

Sometimes you don't know you're beginning an education until after you're educated.

Born in Kansas, Shirreffs grew up on Long Island and learned to groom and ride his dad's horses, never really thinking beyond the moment. A stint in Vietnam, a dream to be a surfer and a couple of chance encounters with Thoroughbred horsemen changed everything.

"I was never into horse racing. Not at all. I never thought about becoming a horse trainer. That was the last thing on my mind," Shirreffs said. "My father liked to ride. I just hung around the horses. Horses for a kid growing up are just great. It's just you and the horse, you don't have all this chatter, 'You should do this, you should do that, you haven't done your homework, clean up your room.' None of that is going on with a horse. It was you and your horse."

Shirreffs tries to keep it that way. Baeza walked into his barn with a reputation, a \$1.2 million sales ring reputation, and a high head carriage. Something that sticks with the 80-year-old trainer ever since a rail-side conversation with trainer Ray Bell as the unraced Zenyatta galloped past at Hollywood Park in 2007.

"She carries her head way too high," Bell said. "She's not going to turn out."

Shirreffs couldn't decide if he should scoff or scowl, argue or agree.

"I didn't know," Shirreffs said. "You could see with her, the farther she went the more she dropped her head and leveled off. That was in the back of my head when I saw Baeza."

Shirreffs went to work, preaching a long rein, a light touch and a few cavaletti rails in there too.

"That length of stride is so important in the beginning of their development because if they get too far along you can't teach them. You've got to get it early," Shirreffs said. "Every day, over and over and over again. Long rein, long rein, long rein. Do it again, do it again, do it again. The horse is most comfortable if they can drop their head down and stick their nose out so you can't restrict that."

Baeza soaked up the lessons, learning to lower rather than heighten, stretch rather than stilt. His gallops became stronger, his breezes easier, his races better and better.

"He was very good with it," Shirreffs said. "His attitude was really good. Like a colt, a little rambunctious but once he figures things out, 'OK, I get it, I can do that. This is easy, this is easy.' Once he started dropping his head, his whole stride changed."

And if that stride were to win a Belmont Stakes...

"In racing, all you hear is Belmont, Belmont, Belmont. Sure, the Kentucky Derby is the premier race, but the Belmont is something special," Shirreffs said. "A lot of dreams we have in life, right? This would be one of the big ones."

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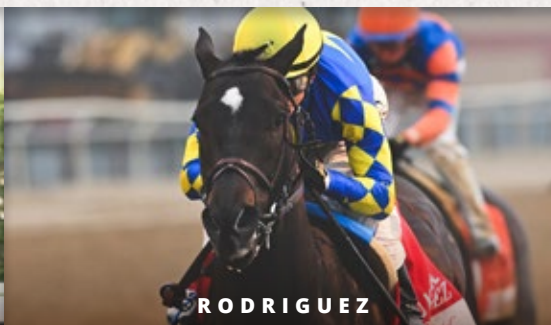
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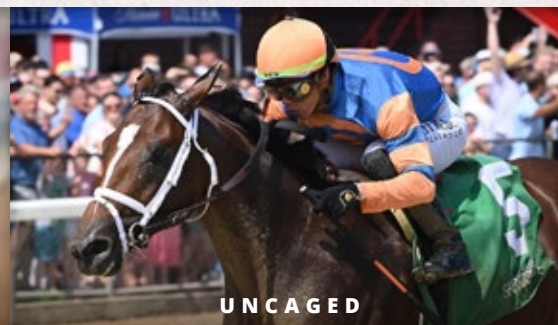
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