

Year 26

Friday, June 5, 2026

The *aratoga*

Special

Belmont Stakes Racing Festival 2026



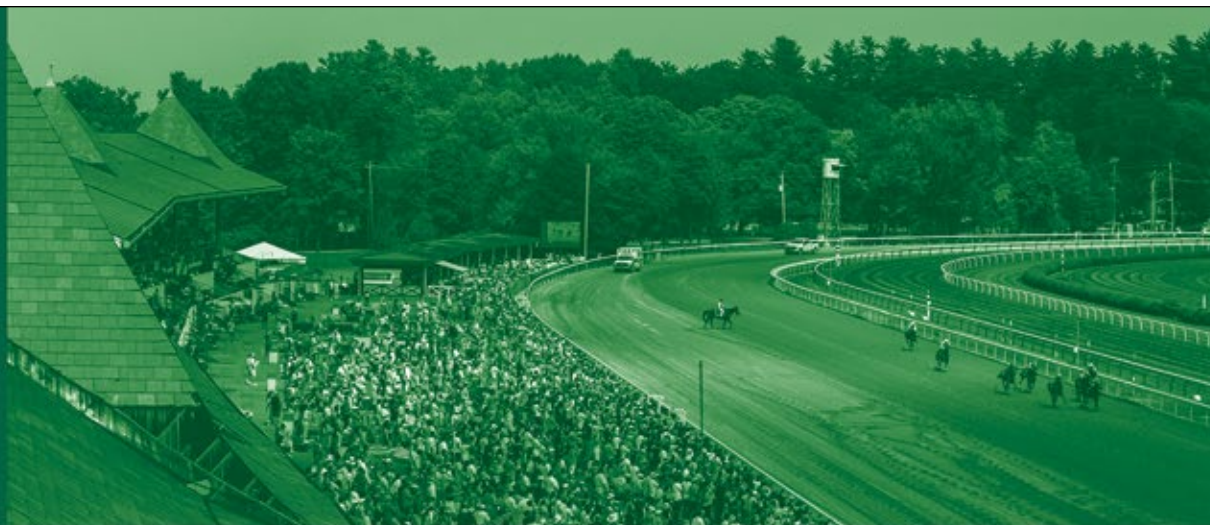
Tree of Life

*Healthy, unbeaten Always A Runner
looks to add Acorn in Friday headliner*

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Here&There...in Saratoga

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

Worth Repeating

"That was a helmet thrower."

Retired jockey Nick Santagata about Rocket One's tough beat in the Wednesday opener

"That quote makes it sound like my GPA is 1.30 or something."

Miles Clancy after reading a quote about his GPA in Thursday's Special (let's just say it's higher than that)

"Best cover photo. Ever."

Rich Cristiano, who's seen every cover of The Special, about Thursday's cover photo by Sam Decker

"Why have you been saving that picture for 25 years?"

Allan Lavin, who's also seen every cover of The Special, about Thursday's cover

"Oh my God, I was like if we hang on for third, I'll be happy."

Trainer Keri Brion after watching Jimmy P rally late to win the Beverly R. Steinman

"For me, I would never say he would win here. He doesn't look like a horse who is fast, if he was in the U.K., he would be a three-mile chaser."

Jockey Stephen Mulqueen, about three-time Saratoga Grade 1 winner Jimmy P

"Just browsing The Special this morning. Mickey Millson in the Here & There section... I think I know that guy."

Longtime reader Phil Santandrea Thursday morning

"You have to brace yourself."

Sadie Wellman, with advice on how to ride in a rear-facing golf-cart seat

"How about me being in Barn 81, Shug's barn, like old times?"

Kentucky-based trainer and former Shug McGaughey assistant Robbie Medina, bedded down in the Oklahoma with Bed o' Roses runner Praying

"What, did you get lost on the way to Europe or something?"

Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners' Aron Wellman to the Daily Racing Form's Steve Andersen, making his first trip to Saratoga

"Corruption is going to be a little bit different pace dynamic."

Wellman about the difference between the 5 ½ furlongs of the Intercontinental and the 16 furlongs of the Belmont Gold Cup



Scott Serio/Eclipse Sportswire

Free Solo. Steeplechaser McTigue flashes perfect form - after losing jockey Harry Beswick at the first fence - in Wednesday's steeplechase race.

Quote of the Day



Judge Ron presiding

Breeders' Cup-winning trainer Ron Moquett will judge the 92nd annual Maryland Horse Breeders Association Yearling Show Sunday, June 28 at the Maryland State Fairgrounds' horse show ring in Timonium. The show is open to all yearlings eligible for Maryland-bred registration. Entries for this year's show closed June 1 but late entries will be accepted for \$50 per yearling. Contact Maryland Horse Breeders at (410) 252-2100 for more details.

Moquett, trainer of 2020 champion male sprinter and Breeders' Cup Sprint winner Whitmore, joins a star-studded list of past MHBA yearling show judges, which include 27 Hall of Famers, dozens of classic-winning trainers and notable bloodstock agents.

Maryland-breds to compete in the show include Hall of Famer Safely Kept, Eclipse Award-winning juveniles Declan's Moon and Smart Angle, and millionaire Urbane. Over the past decade, Kentucky Oaks winner Cathryn Sophia and Breeders' Cup winners Sharing and Aloha West were also participants.

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Call us about your editorial needs.

Trainers help TRF with Belmont pledges

Trainers Michael McCarthy, George Weaver, Whit Beckman, Amelia Green, Cherie DeVaux, Tom Morley and Graham Motion joined the Belmont Pledge, committing a portion of their Belmont Festival earnings to benefit the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation and the hundreds of retired Thoroughbreds in its care.

The decisions reflect a growing movement within the industry to support horses beyond their racing careers.

"Thoroughbred aftercare is a cause that is incredibly important to me," said DeVaux. "These horses have blessed my life in countless ways, and we have a responsibility to ensure they are cared for long after their racing careers are over. I'm proud to pledge a portion of my Belmont Festival earnings to support Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation and help provide these amazing athletes with the futures they deserve."

TRF executive director Maggie Sweet welcomed the support, and the impact it will make.

"I am heartened by the support from Michael, George, Whit and Amelia," said Sweet after the first sign-ups. "They were all eager to take this pledge for the second year in a row, which shows their awareness of aftercare as a natural part of a racehorse's lifecycle. We hope other forward-thinking trainers, owners, and jockeys will join our pledge."

The Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, the nation's oldest and largest Thoroughbred retirement organization, provides dignified lifetime care for hundreds of retired racehorses, many of whom live two decades or more beyond their racing careers.

There is still time for trainers, owners and jockeys to join the Belmont Pledge. To become part of the Belmont Pledge, reach out to Sweet at (516) 902-5659.



Samantha Decker

Chairwoman. Ways And Means puts in some work on the Oklahoma training track. She's the morning-line favorite for today's Bed O' Roses Stakes.



Samantha Decker

Bendude. Bendoog, a player in today's seventh race, has earned more than \$1 million. The 7-year-old exits a win at Oaklawn Park in April.

Names of the Day

Commerce, first race. Pin Oak Stud's 3-year-old colt is out of Valuable Package.

Dark Assault, first race. Phipps Stable's 3-year-old colt is by Violence out of Power Move.

On The Hill, second race. Bond Racing Stable and Dutchess Views Farm's 7-year-old is by Fed Biz out of Lavender Hill.

Deference, sixth race. The 3-year-old filly, who races for Dahman, is out of More Respect.

Spiced Up, eighth race. Juddmonte's homebred 4-year-old colt is out of Cardamon.

Maximum Offer, 10th race. The 3-year-old filly, an Acorn entrant for Baccari Racing Stable, Alfred Riccio and Robert Cotrone, is out of No Better Terms.

Drop Shot, 14th race. BBN Racing's 3-year-old gelding is out of Centre Court, whose other foals include Navratilova and Laver.





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Rally Girl

Always A Runner
overcomes sickness
on way to 3-0 start

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Before there was a memorable May Day, there was a distressing mayday.

As the connections of Always A Runner basked in Kentucky Oaks glory at Churchill Downs May 1, it seemed implausible that eight months earlier they were worried about her surviving.

Dr. Rodney Belgrave vividly remembers the phone call he made to trainer Chad Brown last September to deliver the bad news. Always A Runner, who had shown flashes of brilliance over the course of 10 timed workouts at Belmont Park but had yet to start, had pleuropneumonia.

“The difference between pleuropneumonia and pneumonia is they develop a fluid buildup in the chest around the lungs,” Belgrave said. “Because the infection’s so severe, it extends from the lungs into the chest cavity.”

It is serious and it can be fatal.

“They can die,” said Belgrave, director of internal medicine at the Mid-Atlantic Equine Medical Center in Ringoes, N.J. “Obviously there are gradations of it, but it can be a fatal condition, depending on the severity, depending on how much fluid buildup there is.”

Getting bad news from a veterinarian is nothing new for a Thoroughbred trainer, but Belgrave was struck by how hard Brown took it.

“When I talked to Chad and broke the news to him, he was despondent,” Belgrave said. “When I gave him the diagnosis and told him what we had to do, he said, ‘This was my Oaks filly.’ For him to know what he had even before she stepped foot on the track in an afternoon, it just blows my mind. He called it. And you couldn’t have scripted it any better for it to come to fruition. It’s just a remarkable story, remarkable filly.”

That Brown was able to get Always A Runner into the Oaks starting gate after two career starts was a significant achievement, considering the medical obstacles the daughter of Gun Runner faced.

“We would have never thought we’d be here today when I got that phone call,” Brown said after the Oaks. “The filly took us here. No one pushed me to run the horse. It was probably a surprise to the owners that I ended up putting her on this track



Samantha Decker

Always A Runner bends into a turn on the Oklahoma training track last month.

to get here. Good horses take you here. I put stuff in front of her that I thought she could do.”

She did it, winning her debut at Tampa Bay Downs in February, the Gazelle at Aqueduct in April and the Oaks for owners Douglas Scharbauer and Three Chimneys Farm. The dark bay looks to make it four in a row as the 4-5 favorite in today’s Grade 1 Acorn, the 10th of 14 races on the card with a post time of 5:08 p.m. Jose Ortiz rides from the outside post in a field of five that includes the second (Meaning), third (Counting Stars) and fifth (Prom Queen) Oaks finishers.

All of this was the furthest thing from anyone’s mind at Mid-Atlantic Equine, a 24-hour emergency hospital with a staff of 50, including 15 vets. Asked to rate the severity of Always a Runner’s illness on a scale of 1-10, Belgrave put it at a 7.

“Anytime you have fluid in the chest, it’s severe,” he said, providing details of the intensive treatment it required.

“It was kind of a three-pronged approach,” said Belgrave, who came to the clinic as an intern in 1997, returned in 2003 and has been there since. “She had an IV catheter and received intravenous antibiotics. We also nebulized her with antibiotics, to treat the airway directly. And then when we had the tube in place, we would lavage the chest out with fluids and put antibiotics directly into the chest, to try and get at the infection from every angle possible.”

Always A Runner was a few weeks into a month-long stay at Mid-Atlantic Equine, which opened in 1986, before Belgrave felt confident.

“I would say about halfway through her stay, I could breathe a little more easily,” he said. “Be-

cause once we determined that she wasn’t continuing to build up fluid in her chest, and that it was safe to take the tube out, at that point you feel like you have a good grasp on the infection, and then it’s just a matter of giving her the time and continued treatment to bring this to a full resolution.”

After leaving Mid-Atlantic Equine, Always A Runner went to Fair Hill Equine Therapy Center in Elkton, Md., where she received therapy in a hyperbaric chamber.

From there it was on to Brown’s winter base at Payson Park in Florida, arriving about three months after her medical ordeal began. The trainer gave her seven timed workouts, and found a two-turn Tampa maiden race Feb. 6. He would do the same the following day with Emerging Market, who made the Kentucky Derby field.

“I wanted to at least give myself a chance,” Brown said. “I wasn’t pushing the horses that way. I hardly ever run a horse two turns on dirt first time out. I did it with both horses because I thought they had the ability to do it. At least it would put them in position to get into a points race. Whether we ended up in the Oaks or Derby with either of them, there was no pushing.”

With time for only one serious Oaks prep, Always A Runner went to the Gazelle – after getting sick again and not registering a workout for five weeks – a race for which Brown said she was “only 70 percent.” She won to earn a berth in the Oaks, but Brown still had to be convinced.

“It’s a fine line you walk on how far you push for this,” said Brown, who trained Always A Runner’s

Continued on Page 8

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Oaks foes look to make amends vs. Always a Runner in Acorn

Kentucky Oaks runner-up Meaning returns in the Acorn while aiming to reverse the exacta with Always A Runner in that Grade 1.

The bay filly owned by Bridlewood Farm and Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners made the lead at the eighth pole in the Oaks, but couldn't hold off her fellow daughter of Gun Runner in the late stages. The Michael McCarthy trainee is 3-for-5 with her only loss besides the Oaks coming in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies, where she finished fourth in just her second start. Her wins include a 3 1/2-length debut at Los Alamitos last fall and two stakes victories on Santa Anita's Kentucky Oaks trail.

"I thought it was a fantastic effort," McCarthy said about Meaning's Oaks performance. "She ran into a buzzsaw that day . . . Five weeks between races and obviously coming to a spot that's new to her, but the filly has trained well and has had a great interim at Churchill Downs. It seems like she's getting over the racetrack very well."

A \$440,000 Keeneland September purchase, Meaning breaks from post three under Juan Hernandez.

West Point Thoroughbreds' Counting Stars finished third in the Oaks for trainer Mark Casse. She previously won the Grade 2 Fantasy at Oaklawn by 5 1/2 lengths.

"She's doing great," Casse said. "She ran well in the Oaks. I thought Francisco (Arrieta) gave her a great trip. She saved ground. Maybe a little intimidated down inside, didn't get out until late, and when she did, she

did come running a little bit."

A 1-2-3 rematch of the Kentucky Oaks, the Acorn is certainly not going to be an easy fight, Casse acknowledges.

"It's a small field, but it's a good field and you're seeing the best of the best," he said.

Gary and Mary West's Prom Queen finished a closing fifth in the Kentucky Oaks, but trainer Brad Cox is confident that the filly by Quality Road can be more effective if she's closer to the pace. Of the four Acorn entrants who ran in the Oaks, she settled well off the leaders in the early stages.

"Good effort," Cox said. "Probably not quite where we thought we would be early in the race. Finished up well. She has done well since and obviously not nearly as many horses here. We're looking for her to be a bit more involved early in the game. Hopefully, she'll stay on well. I think a mile-and-an-eighth is something she'll like."

Prior to the Oaks, Prom Queen earned her spot among the country's top 3-year-old fillies with a 2 3/4-length score in the Grade 2 Gulfstream Park Oaks and an even easier 8-length win in her maiden at second asking. Prom Queen will be ridden by Flavien Prat from the rail.

Maximum Offer, trained by Kenny McPeck, completes the field from post four off an allowance score on the Oaks undercard. Florent Geroux rides the daughter of Maxfield at 15-1 on the morning line.

- Alec DiConza



Samantha Decker

Counting Stars finished third in the Kentucky Oaks.

Acorn -

■ Continued from page 6

dam Always Carina. "Because if you swing and you miss and you've really trained them hard to do it and you don't win, you can compromise your season. I've had it happen and learned from it. So it's a balance. When you have the right horse and you have the right team, things have a way of working themselves out."

Belgrave and the staff at Mid-Atlantic Equine are key members of that team, though they had no reasonable expectation that the filly would complete an Oaks-Derby double for the clinic, 34 years after colic surgery patient Lil E. Tee won the Run for the Roses.

"Generally, their prognosis is more guarded once they've developed fluid in the chest," Belgrave said. "In terms of how it's going to affect their future performance, a lot of that's dictated by how the lung itself actually recovers. It's also dictated by how much lung tissue was affected to begin with, because if a larger amount of lung is affected, then that could mean a larger residual impact on their lung capacity in the future."

Brown knew he had a talented 2-year-old who overcame a serious ill-

ness. That's a long way from winning on the first Friday in May.

"Her career was really up in the air. She could have easily never run," he said. "I've had it happen with several horses. The fact that not only did she overcome it and ended up as an undefeated horse in the Oaks is remarkable. I have a lot of nice horses in my care, and I have seen a lot of different setbacks with horses. But this is way up at the top of the list of perseverance for a horse to overcome things. It's at the top."

Belgrave monitored Always A Runner's career from afar, though since he hadn't spoken to Brown since the filly started running, he wasn't about to change that for the Oaks.

"I follow all of them," said Belgrave. "They go into my virtual stable and I follow all of them, because it's important for the staff to see how these horses perform. They work so hard. I didn't want to jinx the filly. I literally did not reach out to Chad until she crossed the finish line."

That was undoubtedly a much more pleasant phone call than the one last fall.

Edited from a feature in the June edition of Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred magazine's. For more content like this, see midatlantictb.com.

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Melting Pot

International flavor percolates for Grade 1 turf filly/mare stakes

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Today's \$750,000 New York Stakes at Saratoga Race Course features a decided international flair, with at least six countries represented in the ownership, training and breeding of the nine fillies and mares in the Grade 1 turf event.

The most distant outpost is South Africa, the home country of Jessica and Steven Jell, who own Laurelin, an Irish-bred filly by a French sire, trained by a native of England. And she's run well in America.

"Racing over here is a whole new thing for us, and it's been so exciting and so lovely with Graham and Anita (Motion)," said Jessica Jell, speaking from Virginia, where she and her husband own Newstead Stables. "They just couldn't be nicer people. We've had such a wonderful time. Laurelin has kind of been the surprise package and has given us all such a wonderful thrill."

Purchased for \$169,488 in 2023 at the Goffs Orby yearling sale in Ireland, Laurelin comes in off three straight losses after winning five in a row to start her career. Today she returns to the scene of her greatest triumph, a win in the Grade 2 Saratoga Oaks last summer.

That prompted Motion to run her in the Grade 1 Queen Elizabeth at Keeneland, where she was second to Lush Lips, followed by a second in the Grade 2 Jockey Club Oaks at Aqueduct and a third in the Grade 3 Beaugay, also in Ozone Park.

"I feel like I've been a little bit hard on her," Motion said by phone en route to Saratoga Thursday, arriving in time to run 1-2 in the Grade 2 Intercontinental Stakes. "She did nothing wrong for five starts, and then as we kept stepping her up obviously the water got deeper, but she's never finished out of the money in her career. So it's pretty hard to fault her. You know, when a filly's undefeated,

NEW YORK STAKES PREVIEW

you set a very high standard for them, don't you?"

You do indeed, and Laurelin has lived up to that standard and has a chance to enhance her resume by getting that initial Grade 1 win. She is not the only one looking for that breakthrough.

The nine horses in the New York are a combined 2-for-10 in Grade 1s, with both wins belonging to Gezora, the 2025 Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf winner.

"It's a really good race," said Motion, who will give a leg up to Kendrick Carmouche. "The European horse (Cankoura) is a little bit of an unknown. Obviously, the Breeders' Cup winner (Gezora). Going into the Modesty (at Churchill Downs), you would have thought she was unbeatable. It remains to be seen if she's back to her form. There's no reason she wouldn't be. It's a very well-matched group."

The Jells will watch from Virginia, where their 4-year-old daughter is competing in the Upperville Horse Show Saturday. They bought the farm in 2020 and spent most of 2024 and 2025 there before returning to South Africa in January.

Jessica (Slack) Jell was introduced to racing reluctantly, needing to be convinced to go to the races with her grandmother. She owned her first horse with her father when she was about 18 and her mother, Mary Slack, is a longtime breeder in South Africa.

"I remember thinking, 'This is probably going to be a bore,' and I actually tried to get out of it," she said of that first trip to the track. "Mom said, 'Dry your eyes and go, you might actually have fun.' And I had the best time ever, and the rest was history."

Jell credits bloodstock agent Jehan



Maggie Kimmitt

Laurelin and Will Humphrey gallop at Fair Hill in Maryland.

Malherbe with picking out Laurelin.

"And then she went straight from there over to Graham," Jell said. "Everything else is all thanks to Graham and his team. So I can take no credit except that I love shouting for her and feel very proud to be able to be part of her."

Newstead ran South African-bred Gimme A Nother on yielding turf in the New York last year, and despite the seventh, they were quite enamored with Saratoga.

"I have never seen a more beautiful racetrack," Jell said. "That was just spectacular. I'm longing to come on a day when it isn't quite so wet."

Gezora, moved to Bill Mott's barn as part of the Peter Brant-Chad Brown split, figures to take some beating, after running second in the Modesty at Churchill Downs May 1 to Brown's Kathynmarissa, the 5-2 morning line favorite in the New York.

Mott has given her three works on the Oklahoma Training Track dirt course and hopes she improves second off the layoff and first in his barn.

"We gave her three easy works and she seems to be fine," said Mott, who has not previously trained for Brant. "She's a very nice-moving filly, very uncomplicated, very straightforward. She may possibly prefer a little more distance than what we have Friday, but it looks like she could still be effective at a mile-and-three-sixteenths."

Gezora certainly looked good at a mile-and-three-eighths in the Breeders' Cup at Del Mar, storming home to win by a length for French trainer Francis-Henri Graffard, who runs Group 1-placed Cankoura in the New York. Gezora was transferred to Brown, who had her for just the one start in the Modesty.

"We've been pretty fortunate over the years," Mott said, about having a Breeders' Cup winner sent to him. "We've had some good add-ons and she's one of them. Good to have her in the barn."

Kathynmarissa is one of the fillies and mares looking for her first Grade 1 win, after running second in the Grade 1 American Oaks at Santa Anita Park last year. She came into the Modesty off an eight-month layoff and closed from sixth at the stretch call to capture the Grade 3 stakes.

"She missed the break last time," Brown said. "I thought she would be on the lead in the race, that was the plan. She was still able to win. We'll see if she can use that race off a layoff and move forward."

Brown, who has won the New York five times, has three other starters, including Portfolio Duration, coming off a second in the Distaff Turf Mile at Churchill, Beaugay winner City Girl and Pretty Picture. Bellezza and Speed Shopper round out the field.

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Grand Slam

Praying returns after memorable 2025 at Spa for Newtown Anner

BY TOM LAW

The text pinged at 6:41 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 30, about three hours after the 2025 Prioress Stakes on closing weekend at Saratoga Race Course.

Newtown Anner has run 4, won 4 at Saratoga.

Unreasonable

Belgian

Teleport

Praying

Possible story there?

Definitely a story. Unfortunately, nowhere to print it, with The Saratoga Special's 2025 publishing season complete that morning. Now with the Belmont Stakes Racing Festival back in Saratoga and another season of The Special underway, there's an outlet willing to pick it up more than nine months later.

The text came from Hanzly Albina, racing manager for the Regan family's Newtown Anner Stud, after Praying upset the 6-furlong Prioress as the longest shot in the field at 21-1. She gave Newtown Anner that fourth victory of the 2025 meet and looks to kick things off for 2026 in today's Grade 2 Bed o' Roses Stakes in the first of five stakes on the 14-race card at Saratoga.

"That was a great day," Albina said of the Prioress, while also looking back at the other winners. "Three



Samantha Decker

Senza Parole looks for her first stakes win.

BED O' ROSES STAKES PREVIEW

of them were wholly owned and the other in partnership with Repole Stable, a horse we bred and stayed in on with a piece," Albina said of Teleport. "Of course, Praying was huge . . . We couldn't believe it. We're looking back and how we got there, realizing we were 3-for-3 going into the race."

The Irish-bred Unreasonable started it with a victory July 19 for trainer Miguel Clement. Belgian, a 2-year-old son of Beau Liam, won his debut for George Weaver Aug. 14, and three days later the Irish-bred Lope de Vega gelding Teleport won for Todd Pletcher. Praying, a daughter of Vekoma purchased by Newtown Anner for \$410,000 at the 2024 OBS April sale, put the exclamation point on the season in the Grade 3 Prioress.

"Before the race I remember thinking, 'Man I'd probably trade those other three for this one,'" Albina said. "Then you win and you're like, 'Oh, we'll take it.' We thought we were going to have a pretty good Saratoga, but you think that every year and things happen and horses fall by the wayside and you get disappointed. It can be such a demoralizing place in the sense that you think you have good horses. You go up there and maybe you don't have as good horses as you think. Just the process to get there. When things go right, you've got to take it and try and enjoy it. It was a lot of fun."

Praying topped four opponents in last year's 6-furlong Prioress, a race trainer Robbie Medina called her best from a dozen starts. She meets five in today's 7-furlong Bed o' Roses and also reunites with John Velazquez, aboard for a Grade 2 win after the Prioress last year.

"The best race of her life was at Saratoga," Medina said Thursday from Kentucky. "It'll be interesting to see how she



Samantha Decker

Praying ships in from Kentucky while looking to duplicate her win in last year's Prioress.

does the second time. She's been touting herself."

Praying gave Newtown Anner and Medina another victory in her next start after the Prioress, taking Keeneland's Grade 2 Thoroughbred Club of America in similar stalking style to earn a spot in the field for the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint at Del Mar. She finished seventh and Medina gave her the winter off.

Knowing Praying's affinity for Saratoga and aversion to Churchill Downs – where she threw in the worst races of her first two seasons – Medina mapped out a loose campaign working back from the 2026 Filly and Mare Sprint at Keeneland. Stakes in New York figured prominently, including the Grade 1 Ballerina in August, the Grade 2 Honorable Miss in July and the Bed o' Roses.

Praying started 2026 in the Grade 1 Madison at Keeneland, where she finished fourth behind Eclatant, fellow Bed o' Roses entrant Grand Job and eventual Grade 1 Derby City Distaff winner R Disaster. She followed with a troubled third in the Grade 3 Vagrancy last month at Aqueduct.

"The first race was good; those fillies all had races under their belts," Medina said. "At Aqueduct she checked at the three-eighths pole and got shuffled back to last. Then she came running, finished third. With a clean trip I might have had the best horse there, but we'll never know."

Praying takes on five rivals including last year's winner and 2024

Grade 1 Test Stakes winner Ways And Means, the 4-5 favorite on the morning line for trainer Chad Brown. Grand Job, the 6-5 second choice, finished a nose back in the Madison for trainer Bill Mott. Medina hopes those two play off each other tactically to benefit his filly.

"It's going to be a weird race," Medina said. "Mott's filly has speed but she's got the 1 post so he's going to leave. Chad's filly, she wants to be up close. My filly can probably outbreak all of them, I'll tell you that. She's fast. I'm going to tell Johnny, 'You're outside of them, catch a flyer and dictate it. If not, let them go out there and kill themselves.'

"She's training almost the same way as she was when she went to Saratoga last year. Really touting herself, really sharp. Obviously Chad and Mott's fillies are very good. It's not going to surprise me if she goes over there and chops a tree down."

The field includes Scalable, who tries to return to the form that landed her back-to-back stakes wins going long at Aqueduct before a poor outing in the Grade 1 La Troienne on Kentucky Oaks Day. Senza Parole returns to graded stakes company after a second going 1 1/16 miles in optional claiming company in mid-April at Keeneland. Vincey Girl also sports graded stakes experience and looks for her second win in three starts after a troubled sixth in the Roxelana Stakes in late April at Churchill Downs.

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Back to Work

Nitrogen returns to Spa in search of another Grade 1 win for Casse

BY ALEC DICONZA

OGDEN PHIPPS STAKES PREVIEW

Many considered D J Stable's Nitrogen the best turf filly in her crop heading into last year's Belmont Stakes Day.

At the beginning of her 3-year-old season, she strung together three graded turf stakes and appeared on her way to several more. Those days feel like the distant past.

On the Belmont Day undercard, the daughter of Medaglia d'Oro completed an unplanned surface switch and decimated the off-the-turf Wonder Again by 17 lengths. One year, a Grade 1 Alabama Stakes win and an Eclipse Award later, Nitrogen is poised to tackle another stakes on Belmont weekend when she runs in today's Grade 1, \$500,000 Ogden Phipps going 9 furlongs on the main track.

Nitrogen has the chance to complete an unsurprisingly unprecedented Wonder Again-Ogden Phipps double. Since her initial main track blowout, she's raced six times on the dirt compared to just one turf try.

"Right now, we're going to give her another try on the dirt," trainer Mark Casse said. "She's 2-for-2 here (on Saratoga's main track) and we never questioned where we were going to go. We'll see what Friday brings and we'll go from there, but I think they have to beat her."



Samantha Decker

Bless The Broken exits a third in the Grade 1 La Troienne.

Nitrogen defeated 2025 Kentucky Oaks winner Good Cheer in the Alabama before a second in the Grade 1 Spinster against older fillies and mares at Keeneland, where she finished ahead of eventual Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Scylla and 2024 Horse of the Year Thorpedo Anna. Another second in the Distaff cemented Nitrogen's Eclipse Award as champion 3-year-old filly of 2025.

"I felt after the Alabama that she had a good shot to be a champion, and that was kind of what we were trying to accomplish," Casse said. "Very proud of that."

Nitrogen and regular jockey Jose Ortiz returned to the winner's circle with an easy win in the Grade 3 Bayakoa at Oaklawn in February, but suffered two losses at odds-on when third in the Grade 2 Azeri over a sloppy track and second to Claret Beret in the Grade 1 Apple Blossom.

"She ran great in the Bayakoa, then she struggled in the Azeri with the racetrack," Casse said. "She was exhausted after the race. I've never seen her so tired. I thought her last race was very good, the other filly was just better. Jose said after the race that he could've been on Rachel Alexandra and not run her down. He felt that

Nitrogen brought her A game and ran well. The other horse was just better."

With 55 days between the Apple Blossom and the Phipps, Casse is confident Nitrogen will return to the form that made her the 7-5 morning-line favorite in the field of six.

"She's very happy," he said. "She looks great and has trained well. We come in with no ex-



Samantha Decker

Nitrogen is 2-for-2 on Saratoga dirt and eyes her eighth lifetime win in the Ogden Phipps.

cuses. ...When you train her, she kind of goes around until you give her something to chase. She'll get a little fired up some days and she'll start feeling good, kicking in the stall. But, all in all, she's a sweetie."

Ortiz will ride Nitrogen for the 15th straight time from post five.

Regale finished just a half-length behind Nitrogen in the Distaff when third at 30-1 for trainer Whit Beckman. She'll face Nitrogen for the third time this year in the Phipps after finishing second in the Azeri and fourth in the Apple Blossom. Beckman believes the distance will play more to the daughter of Mohaymen's strengths after racing 1 1/16 miles in her last two starts. Joseph Ramos takes the return call.

"She was fourth, but she didn't get a great trip," Beckman said of the Apple Blossom. "For a filly like her that launches from the back and needs clear running room, he (Ramos) kind of took her inside and just found himself in too much traffic where he wasn't able to give her the drive and stretch her out. ... A mile-and-an-eighth is going to be her best distance, so we're hoping that with the added distance that she can finally put her nose in front there."

Beckman will look to earn his first Grade 1 in the Phipps.

"Doing it in New York, a place where I spent a long time, would be incredible," he said. "This is the toughest racing in the world, so it'd be massive."

Trainer Brad Cox sends out a pair in search of his first Phipps victory,

led by 5-year-old mare Alpine Princess. The daughter of Classic Empire had been thwarted in her first seven attempts at graded stakes, but broke through last fall with a win in the Grade 3 Falls City at Churchill. Less than five months later, she fought for a neck victory in the Grade 2 Double-dogdare at Keeneland.

"I'm hoping that she'll get a good trip," Cox said. "On paper, it looks like she should be forward and it's about getting the right trip and getting her into a good, comfortable rhythm. She can handle the mile-and-an-eighth."

Bless The Broken joined the Cox barn for 2026 and has cashed sizable checks with a second in the Grade 1 Beholder Mile and a third in the Grade 1 La Troienne.

"It was a good run," Cox said about the daughter of Laoban's La Troienne. "Somewhat of a moderate pace up front, she tracked the top two or three around there and finished up well. Just wasn't quite good enough. With this being a Grade 1 back in five weeks, it makes sense to give her another shot. We've made three starts with her and they've all been good runs. Maybe she can break through and get the job done."

Irad Ortiz Jr. returns on Alpine Princess while Florent Geroux takes the call on Bless The Broken.

Fully Subscribed, the 5-2 second choice off a second in the Grade 1 La Troienne for trainer Chad Brown; and Cassiar, second in the Grade 2 Ruffian for Shug McGaughey, complete the field.

2025-'26 STAKES-WINNING JUNE SALE GRADUATES



BREEZED IN
:20 ¹/₆

CRUDE VELOCITY

Pat Day Mile (G2)



BREEZED IN
:21

SULTANA

Orchid S. (G3)
Maple Leaf S. (G3)



BREEZED IN
:09 ⁴/₅

SOLITUDE DUDE

Bay Shore Stakes



BREEZED IN
:20 ³/₆

QUEEN MAXIMA

Las Cienegas S. (G3)
Unbridled Sidney S. (G3)
Monrovia S. (G3)



BREEZED IN
:10 ¹/₆

EL POTENTE

'25 & '26 Thunder Road S. (G3)



BREEZED IN
:10

ROLL ON BIG JOE

Kelly's Landing S. (G3)
Palos Verdes S. (G3)



BREEZED IN
:21 ³/₆

ELYSIAN FIELD

Seaway S. (G3)

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Hooper

Turf filly Coach Mazzula looks to extend consistent career run

BY DARBY O'BRIEN

The Boston Celtics found themselves in a precarious position after the suspension of head coach Ime Udoka in 2022. But assistant coach Joe Mazzula found himself unexpectedly promoted.

Mazzula was considered an over-achiever during his playing career at West Virginia University and later served as the head coach of an unremarkable Division II college team before taking an assistant coaching position with the Celtics. Despite the pressure and chaos he inherited, Coach Mazzula handled the unexpected with professionalism, being made the permanent head coach in 2023 before becoming the youngest head coach to lead his team to an NBA championship.

Coach Mazzula, the 3-year-old Thoroughbred daughter of Authentic, is not as much of an underdog as the 6-1 fourth choice in today's Grade 2 Wonder Again Stakes. But she still needs to take a step forward to best seven opponents in the 1 1/16-mile turf stakes.

"Coach Mazzula has been great," said Brittany Russell, who trains the filly for Boston native Sol Kumin's Madaket Stables. "She's a real straightforward filly. She's always

WONDER AGAIN STAKES PREVIEW

been a good energy type filly in the morning. She's a filly that doesn't carry a whole lot of weight to her, but she trains good and her energy is good and she does everything right. That's been her all along.

Coach Mazzula finished second in a 1-mile turf maiden in her debut at Laurel Park last September, finished third a month later and won her third start.

She traveled south to the Fair Grounds for the winter and ran twice – a second and a third – before returning to Maryland ready to roll. Coach Mazzula cruised to a 2 1/4-length victory in allowance company back at Laurel, an effort that gave her connections the confidence to move into stakes company a few weeks later Preakness Weekend.

"Things just started clicking with this filly," Russell said. "She was a little quirky as a 2-year-old. Honestly, I felt like she could have gotten herself beat a few times. She'd get to wandering. We added blinkers, and she's kind of forward so we questioned doing that early on. I feel like she's done well with racing. She's figured things out."

Coach Mazzula won the Hilltop



Jim Duley/Maryland Jockey Club

Coach Mazzula ships in from Maryland after winning the Hilltop Stakes at Laurel Park May 15.

Stakes on Black-Eyed Susan Day in frontrunning style, fighting on to best favorite and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf runner Ultimate Love.

"She's had a really solid spring campaign," said Dom Boccia, Russell's assistant who made the trip from Maryland early Thursday morning alongside the filly. "Ever since she came in, we've always liked her. She really seems to be continuing to improve every time she runs and really coming into form. Every time we throw something at her, the waters seem to get a little bit deeper and she's handling it. We figured we would bring her up here and see how she'll handle this group of horses."

Russell agreed.

"She's done everything we needed her to do," she said. "Things have clicked mentally with her. This is quite a test for her, but honestly if we just see her take another step forward and run well, we'll be really pleased with her."

Madaket purchased the Kentucky-bred for \$125,000 at the 2024 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga sale of selected yearlings. She's compiled a record of 3-2-2 in seven starts and earned \$163,750. Manny Franco takes the call from post three.

Coach Mazzula's seven opponents entered for the grass include the Irish-

bred 8-5 morning-line favorite Lion Lake, who journeys north from Kentucky for trainer Brendan Walsh.

The Dark Angel filly most recently finished third in the Grade 2 Edgewood on Kentucky Oaks Day and won the Grade 3 Herecomesthebride Stakes in February at Gulfstream Park.

Fitz Right and Quiet Street, the 1-3 finishers in the Memories of Silver Stakes April 26 at Aqueduct, are also in the field for the \$300,000 stakes.

Trainer Bill Mott hopes for a better effort on more favorable ground for Godolphin's Quiet Street.

"My only excuse would have been that maybe the ground was a little soggy for her," Mott said. "Hopefully we get firm ground and maybe that will give her a better chance."

Quiet Street won her debut last year on the turf at Saratoga before winning the Untapable Stakes at Kentucky Downs.

Chad Brown sends out Fitz Right and Tax Holiday, who broke her maiden in her second lifetime start in April. Time To Dream, winner of last year's P.G. Johnson for trainer Todd Pletcher, Soloist and Call On Me are also entered for the grass, while Pashmina is entered for the main track.



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Steven Wood served as Del Mar's facilities and track manager until May 2025 when he relocated to Florida with his family to become Oak Ridge Training Center's Track Superintendent.

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

Friday, June 5.

1ST (11:45AM). \$115,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 1 1/8M

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

1	.....1	.....Storming	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....D. Gargan	.....6-1
2	.....2	.....Luz de Guia	.....K. Davis	.....N. Zito	.....30-1
3	.....3	.....Commerce	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....9-2
4	.....4	.....Battle	.....K. Carmouche	.....D. Gargan	.....12-1
5	.....5	.....Sorrentino	.....J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....8-1
6	.....6	.....Copious	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....L. Rice	.....10-1
7	.....7	.....Mr. William	.....J. Ortiz	.....J. D'Angelo	.....10-1
8	.....8	.....Hadrian's Wall	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....7-5
9	.....9	.....Dark Assault	.....M. Franco	.....C. McGaughey III	.....6-1

2ND (12:19PM). \$110,000, AOC \$45,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 6F

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

1	.....1	.....Jackson Heights	.....S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....10-1
2	.....2	.....Elysian Meadows	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....9-2
3	.....3	.....Hit the Post	.....C. Elliott	.....M. Giddings	.....7-2
4	.....4	.....Kenny Be	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....D. Duggan	.....3-1
5	.....5	.....Factually Correct	.....R. Silvera	.....F. Abreu	.....4-1
6	.....6	.....Projectability	.....J. Rodriguez	.....L. Rice	.....5-1
7	.....7	.....Russi	.....L. Saez	.....H. Bond	.....12-1
8	.....8	.....On the Hill	.....E. Zayas	.....H. Bond	.....10-1

3RD (12:54PM). \$115,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 6 1/2F

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

1	.....1	.....Hero Declared	.....L. Saez	.....D. Beckman	.....4-1
2	.....2	.....Onepac	.....R. Gutierrez	.....J. Terranova II	.....15-1
3	.....3	.....Tab At Zanzibar	.....M. Franco	.....B. Cox	.....5-1
4	.....4	.....Presidential Power	.....K. Carmouche	.....T. Pletcher	.....12-1
5	.....5	.....Holding Power	.....J. Rodriguez	.....M. Clement	.....15-1
6	.....6	.....Criteria	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....7-2
7	.....7	.....Noble Edition	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....B. Cox	.....6-1
8	.....8	.....Accost	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
9	.....9	.....Puteketeke	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....M. Maker	.....10-1
10	.....10	.....Dark Moon	.....J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....8-1
11	.....11	.....Party Animal	.....J. Morelos	.....J. Antonucci	.....20-1

4TH (1:29PM). \$300,000, STK - THE BED O' ROSES PRESENTED BY BOLDYN NETWORKS, 4&UP, F&M , 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Grand Job	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....6-5
2	.....2	.....Scalable	.....K. Carmouche	.....T. Pletcher	.....10-1
3	.....3	.....Ways and Means	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....1-1
4	.....4	.....Senza Parole	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
5	.....5	.....Praying	.....J. Velazquez	.....R. Medina	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Vincey Girl	.....L. Saez	.....J. D'Angelo	.....30-1

5TH (2:04PM). \$120,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 5 1/2F (TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5

1	.....1	.....Emblaze	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Clement	.....9-2
2	.....2	.....Shore War	.....J. Velazquez	.....A. Green	.....10-1
3	.....3	.....Princess Andi	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....10-1
4	.....4	.....Prayforthewicked	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. DeVaux	.....10-1
5	.....5	.....Ratu Jawa	.....S. Bridgmohan	.....D. Seyler	.....50-1
6	.....6	.....Pillar of Beauty	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....12-1
7	.....7	.....Di Natale (CHI)	.....J. Castellano	.....W. Ward	.....2-1
8	.....8	.....Mischievous Lady	.....S. Civaci	.....E. Barker	.....30-1
9	.....9	.....Triskelion	.....J. Lezcano	.....G. Arnold II	.....8-1
10	.....10	.....Paula's a Star	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....T. Morley	.....15-1
11	.....11	.....Silsbee	.....M. Franco	.....G. Weaver	.....4-1
12	.....AE-MTO	.....Coach Albert Lady	.....F. Prat	.....R. Brisset	.....7-2
13	.....AE-MTO	.....Mila Candy	.....S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....15-1
14	.....AE-MTO	.....Kadena	.....Rider TBA	.....F. Abreu	.....6-1
15	.....AE-MTO	.....Sheer Will	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....L. Rice	.....5-2

6TH (2:40PM). \$115,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M , 1 1/16M (INNER TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Isadora Duncan (IRE)	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....10-1
2	.....2	.....Madeline's Agenda	.....E. Zayas	.....J. Abreu	.....20-1
3	.....3	.....Deference	.....J. Rodriguez	.....M. Clement	.....6-1
4	.....4	.....Secretly Delighted	.....J. Castellano	.....M. Casse	.....7-2
5	.....5	.....Home Wrecker	.....K. Carmouche	.....D. Gargan	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Lisa Joy (GB)	.....J. Velazquez	.....C. McGaughey III	.....12-1
7	.....7	.....Icecreamforevryone	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....T. Pletcher	.....8-1
8	.....8	.....Shelzawa (FR)	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....5-2
9	.....9	.....Reconnected	.....M. Franco	.....A. Dutrow	.....20-1
10	.....10	.....New Rose	.....J. Morelos	.....J. Antonucci	.....20-1
11	.....11	.....River Empress	.....L. Saez	.....M. Giddings	.....15-1
12	.....12	.....Jordan's Love	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....T. Morley	.....12-1
13	.....AE	.....Sweet Little Lila (IRE)	.....D. Davis	.....B. Russell	.....6-1
14	.....AE	.....Fango Creek	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....15-1
15	.....AE	.....Amicable Farce	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
16	.....AE	.....Majestic Moonlight	.....J. Ortiz	.....J. Abreu	.....12-1

7TH (3:16PM). \$130,000, AOC \$110,000, 4 YO'S & UP, 1 1/8M

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

1	.....1	.....Full Screen	.....M. Franco	.....B. Cox	.....3-1
2	.....2	.....Bramito	.....J. Velazquez	.....S. Schauer	.....6-1
3	.....3	.....Bourbon Day	.....J. Lezcano	.....L. Rice	.....12-1
4	.....4	.....Warp Nine	.....F. Pennington	.....H. Wyner	.....20-1
5	.....5	.....Cooke Creek	.....J. Ortiz	.....M. Maker	.....8-1
6	.....6	.....Kinetic	.....C. Elliott	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....30-1
7	.....7	.....Bendoog	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....7-2
8	.....8	.....Money Game	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....B. Cox	.....9-2
9	.....9	.....Gould's Gold	.....F. Prat	.....K. McPeek	.....6-1
10	.....10	.....Brotha Keny	.....L. Saez	.....J. D'Angelo	.....15-1

8TH (3:52PM). \$125,000, AOC \$80,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 5 1/2F (TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Mischievous Angel	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....J. Abreu	.....6-1
2	.....2	.....Whatchatalkinabout	.....J. Ortiz	.....W. Ward	.....12-1
3	.....3	.....Final Verdict	.....F. Prat	.....E. Barker	.....9-2
4	.....4	.....Spiced Up	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
5	.....5	.....Straight Arrow	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....M. Dini	.....15-1
6	.....6	.....Gold Trust	.....D. Davis	.....M. Dini	.....30-1
7	.....7	.....Boltage	.....P. Lopez	.....D. Jacobson	.....12-1
8	.....8	.....Vacation Dance	.....J. Rodriguez	.....B. Cox	.....12-1
9	.....9	.....Twisted Filigree	.....M. Franco	.....G. Weaver	.....12-1
10	.....10	.....Mentee	.....J. Velazquez	.....T. Pletcher	.....7-2
11	.....11	.....Antisocial	.....J. Lezcano	.....J. Duarte, Jr.	.....8-1
12	.....12	.....Determined Kingdom	.....L. Saez	.....M. Trombetta	.....8-1
13	.....AE-MTO	.....Commuted	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....L. Rice	.....2-1
14	.....AE-MTO	.....Paradise Valley	.....S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....10-1
15	.....AE-MTO	.....Mischievous M	.....M. Franco	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....12-1

9TH (4:28PM). \$300,000, STK - THE WONDER AGAIN PRESENTED BY SHIFT4, 3 YO, F, 1 1/16M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double, Pic 5, Pic 6

1	.....1	.....Quiet Street	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
2	.....2	.....Fitz Right	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....4-1
3	.....3	.....Coach Mazzula	.....M. Franco	.....B. Russell	.....6-1
4	.....4	.....Tax Holiday (GB)	.....D. Davis	.....C. Brown	.....12-1
5	.....5	.....Time to Dream	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....T. Pletcher	.....9-2
6	.....6	.....Soloist	.....J. Ortiz	.....K. McPeek	.....12-1
7	.....7	.....Call On Me	.....L. Saez	.....G. Arnold II	.....8-1
88Lion Lake (IRE)J. VelazquezB. Walsh8-5
9AE-MTOPashminaI. Ortiz, Jr.R. Atras1-1

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

10TH (5:08PM). \$500,000, STK - THE DRAFTKINGS ACORN, 3 YO, F, 11/8M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Pic 5

1	.....1	Prom Queen	.....F. Prat	.....B. Cox	.....7-2
2	.....2	Counting Stars	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Casse	.....9-2
3	.....3	Meaning	.....J. Hernandez	.....M. McCarthy	.....3-1
4	.....4	Maximum Offer	.....F. Geroux	.....K. McPeck	.....15-1
5	.....5	Always a Runner	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....4-5

11TH (5:46PM). \$750,000, STK - THE NEW YORK, 4 YO'S & UP, F & M, 1 3/16M (TURF)

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

1	.....1	Portfolio Duration (GB)	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....9-2
2	.....2	Bellezza (IRE)	.....J. Rodriguez	.....M. Clement	.....12-1
3	.....3	Speed Shopper	.....M. Franco	.....W. Walden	.....8-1
4	.....4	Laurelin (IRE)	.....K. Carmouche	.....H. Motion	.....8-1
5	.....5	Pretty Picture	.....D. Davis	.....C. Brown	.....15-1
6	.....6	Cankoura (FR)	.....C. Lecoeuvre	.....F. Graffard	.....10-1
7	.....7	City Girl (FR)	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....C. Brown	.....8-1
8	.....8	Kathynmarissa	.....J. Ortiz	.....C. Brown	.....5-2
9	.....9	Gezora (FR)	.....J. Velazquez	.....W. Mott	.....3-1

12TH (6:25PM). \$500,000, STK - THE OGDEN PHIPPS PRESENTED BY FORD, 4 YO'S & UP, F & M, 11/8M

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double, Pic 3

1	.....1	Fully Subscribed	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....5-2
2	.....2	Regaled	.....J. Ramos	.....D. Beckman	.....5-1
3	.....3	Alpine Princess	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....B. Cox	.....4-1
4	.....4	Cassiar	.....D. Davis	.....C. McGaughey III	.....15-1
5	.....5	Nitrogen	.....J. Ortiz	.....M. Casse	.....7-5
6	.....6	Bless the Broken	.....F. Geroux	.....B. Cox	.....6-1

13TH (7:04PM). \$105,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 7F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Daily Double

1	.....1	Angel Gift	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....T. Pletcher	.....6-1
2	.....2	Cloudy Chance	.....J. Lezcano	.....C. Englehart	.....15-1
3	.....3	Princess Wadadli	.....F. Prat	.....R. Falcone, Jr.	.....8-1
4	.....4	Graceful Rose	.....M. Franco	.....M. Gorham	.....12-1
5	.....5	Irish Fortune	.....L. Saez	.....T. Morley	.....12-1
6	.....6	Grace and Grit	.....J. Rodriguez	.....A. Green	.....5-2
7	.....7	Karley B	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....D. Duggan	.....3-1
8	.....8	Floy Joy	.....D. Davis	.....D. Donk	.....10-1
9	.....9	Sabby Sunset	.....S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....30-1
10	.....10	Margarita Molly	.....K. Carmouche	.....K. Brion	.....12-1
11	.....11	Top of the Table	.....S. Civaci	.....L. Rice	.....10-1

14TH (7:43PM). \$115,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 1M (INNER TURF)

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

1	.....1	Mount Sopris	.....K. Carmouche	.....T. Proctor	.....10-1
2	.....2	Drop Shot	.....J. Lezcano	.....G. Arnold II	.....10-1
3	.....3	Blazing Tiger	.....I. Ortiz, Jr.	.....M. Clement	.....9-2
4	.....4	Okefenokee	.....M. Franco	.....T. Morley	.....15-1
5	.....5	Silent Impact	.....J. Alvarado	.....W. Mott	.....8-1
6	.....6	Limited Edition	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....P. Antonacci	.....7-2
7	.....7	Bull Shoals	.....J. Morelos	.....J. Antonucci	.....20-1
8	.....8	Daunting (FR)	.....J. Ortiz	.....T. Pletcher	.....15-1
9	.....9	No Rain No Flowers	.....P. Lopez	.....C. Summers	.....20-1
10	.....10	Harry O	.....J. Velazquez	.....C. McGaughey III	.....6-1
11	.....11	Knowledge Sharing	.....F. Prat	.....C. Brown	.....5-1
12	.....12	He's a Piper	.....E. Zayas	.....M. Casse	.....15-1
13	.....AE	Alley Oop	.....J. Castellano	.....T. Morley	.....15-1
14	.....AE	Quiet Power	.....K. Carmouche	.....C. McGaughey III	.....5-1
15AE	Franklin DelanoJ. VelazquezT. Pletcher8-1
16AE	C J StarJ. CastellanoM. Casse6-1

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 ARLINGTON MILLION (G1), \$500,000 BEVERLY D. (G2)
 \$500,000 SECRETARIAT (G2), \$150,000 VAN CLIEF (LISTED)
 \$150,000 ANDY GUEST, \$100,000 TYSON GILPIN
 \$100,000 PETRAMALO MILE, \$100,000 REIGH COUNT

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22
 CLAIMING CROWN PREVIEW

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
 \$500,000 OLD DOMINION DERBY (G3)
 \$250,000 OLD DOMINION OAKS (LISTED)
 \$150,000 DA HOSS
 \$150,000 COLONIAL CUP
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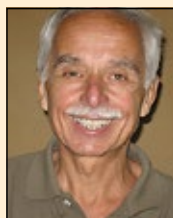


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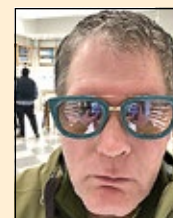
Tom Law



John Shapazian



Charles Bedard



Rob Whitlock



Jessica Paquette

Race	Tom Law	John Shapazian	Charles Bedard	Rob Whitlock	Jessica Paquette
1	Hadrian's Wall Commerce Storming	Hadrian's Wall Commerce Mr. Willian	Hadrian's Wall Dark Assault Mr. Willian	Battle Dark Assault Hadrian's Wall	Commerce Dark Assault Hadrian's Wall
2	Factually Correct Hit The Post Elysian Meadows	Kenny Be Elysian Meadows Hit The Post	Hit The Post Kenny Be Elysian Meadows	Kenny Be Factually Correct Elysian Meadows	Jackson Heights Elysian Meadows Kenny B
3	Hero Declared Noble Edition Tab At Zanzibar	Hero Declared Tab At Zanzibar Criteria	Onepac Criteria Party Animal	Tab At Zanzibar Holding Power Presidential Power	Noble Edition Dark Moon Criteria
4	Praying Ways And Means Grand Job	Grand Job Ways And Means Senza Parole	Grand Job Ways And Means Vincey Girl	Grand Job Ways And Means Praying	Ways And Means Senza Parole Scalable
5	Emblaze Di Natale Silsbee	Di Natale Emblaze Triskelion	Sheer Will Di Natale Emblaze	Prayforthewicked Emblaze Di Natale	Triskelion Emblaze Silsbee
6	Shelzawa Secretly Delighted Lisa Joy	Shelzawa Secretly Delighted Icecreamforeveryone	Sweet Little Lila Isadora Duncan Home Wrecker	Isadora Duncan Jordan's Love Deference	Secretly Delighted Deference Jordan's Love
7	Bendoog Full Screen Money Game	Bendoog Bramitao Full Screen	Full Screen Bendoog Warp Nine	Full Screen Bendoog Cooke Creek	Full Screen Money Game Warp Nine
8	Spiced Up Determined Kingdom Final Verdict	Final Verdict Mentee Antisocial	Paradise Valley Watchatalkinabout Gold Trust	Mentee Twisted Filigree Vacation Dance	Spiced Up Twisted Filigree Determined Kingdom
9	Call On Me Lion Lake Time To Dream	Time To Dream Fitz Right Lion Lake	Coach Mazzula Lion Lake Time To Dream	Fitz Right Time To Dream Call On Me	Call On Me Quiet Street Lion Lake
10	Always A Runner Prom Queen Meaning	Always A Runner Meaning Prom Queen	Always A Runner Counting Stars Maximum Offer	Meaning Always A Runner Prom Queen	Counting Stars Prom Queen Always A Runner
11	Cankoura Portfolio Duration Gezora	Kathrynmarissa Portfolio Duration Speed Shopper	Gezora Laurelin Portfolio Duration	Speed Shopper City Girl Cankoura	Gezora Laurelin City Girl
12	Nitrogen Alpine Princess Fully Subscribed	Nitrogen Fully Subscribed Regaled	Fully Subscribed Nitrogen Regaled	Alpine Princess Nitrogen Fully Subscribed	Cassiar Nitrogen Bless The Broken
13	Karley B Grace And Grit Cloudy Chance	Karley B Grace And Grit Princess Wadadli	Grace And Grit Karley B Floy Joy	Grace And Grit Irish Fortune Margarita Molly	Karley B Floy Joy Angel Gift
14	Silent Impact Blazing Tiger Drop Shot	Blazing Tiger Limited Edition Silent Impact	C J Star Limited Edition Blazing Tiger	Drop Shot Okefenokee No Rain No Flowers	Harry O Blazing Tiger Silent Impact
2026 Records	4/21 (-\$22.06)	6/21 (+\$0.34)	6/21 (+\$1.24)	4/21 (-\$13.08)	5/21 (+\$13.22)

Figure in parentheses is the total return on a \$2 win bet on each top selection. Race totals vary if all three selections scratch.

Coming Soon

Racing plans come together for fall meet at new Belmont Park

BY PAUL HALLORAN

If you're reading this in Saratoga Springs – or anywhere else for that matter – you are almost certainly aware that the Belmont Stakes will be held for the third and final time Saturday at venerable Saratoga Race Course. The Belmont is back for a second encore on Union Avenue, as the new Belmont Park nears completion.

When the third leg of the Triple Crown heads back downstate next year, the new Belmont will be fully operational – and by all accounts, spectacular. A five-story, 275,000-square-foot building will welcome fans, and four new racing surfaces, representing a \$100 million investment by the

New York Racing Association, await the equine athletes.

That is in addition to the \$455 million loan New York State provided NYRA to construct a modern grandstand featuring a variety of hospitality offerings and amenities.

The new Belmont – which replaces a building more than three times the size that was built in 1905 and renovated in 1968 – will open Friday, Sept. 18, kicking off a fall meet with 32 graded stakes and 72 overall, worth \$17.7 million in purses. There will be a series of major Saturday cards, from September through Dec. 5.

NYRA is coming out of the gate hot with the Jockey Club Gold Cup – which comes with a free pass to the Breeders' Cup Classic – scheduled



Coglianesse Photo

The new Belmont Park racing surfaces will be in use in September.

for Opening Day. The Jockey Club, established in 1919, has been run at Saratoga the last five years.

“There was definitely intentionality in terms of how we built out the stakes schedule,” said Andrew Offerman, NYRA senior vice president of racing and operations. “Kicking off the new facility on September 18 with that race felt like an important thing

to do, and hopefully it's a race that can serve as the key Breeders' Cup prep not only this year but also next year when it returns to Belmont.”

The Breeders' Cup will indeed return, after what will be a 22-year absence. NYRA is intent on Belmont returning to prominence as a logical

Continued On Page 22

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Belmont Park -

■ Continued from page 21

spot for horses to make their final preps, with six automatic qualifiers among the 10 graded stakes on the first two Saturdays of the fall meet. They include the Flower Bowl (also back from Saratoga and a qualifier for the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf), Vosburgh (Sprint), Champagne (Juvenile), Pilgrim (Juvenile Turf), Miss Grillo (Juvenile Filles Turf) and Futurity (Juvenile Turf Sprint). Throw in the Grade 1 Joe Hirsch Turf Classic and Grade 1 Frizette and you have Super Saturday squared.

"Bringing the Jockey Club back home, and as we built out the schedule, our intention was to try to promote big Saturdays coming out of Saratoga and continuing through the fall meet," Offerman said. "Bringing the Flower Bowl back to Belmont and bringing that race back to a mile and a quarter also reflected the commitment to return some of those historic races from Saratoga to Belmont Park."

With three years to plan, NYRA had ample time to incentivize con-

nections to run at the new Belmont – and not only those with an eye on the Breeders' Cup. In the interest of attracting more horse flesh, NYRA will institute the Big Apple Bonus, offering \$3,000 to \$6,000 to horses shipping or relocating to Belmont from other jurisdictions.

Beginning Sept. 18, horses relocating or shipping from racetracks less than 400 miles from Belmont Park will qualify for a \$3,000 bonus for their first start at the fall meet, shared by the owner (\$2,000) and trainer (\$1,000).

Horses relocating or shipping from racetracks more than 400 miles from Belmont will qualify for a \$6,000 bonus for their first start of the fall meet, with \$4,000 paid to the owner and \$2,000 to the trainer.

Horses will qualify for an additional owner incentive of \$2,500 for making three consecutive starts at Belmont Park.

"This was an attempt to put a single branded bonus program together to attract people to return to racing downstate at Belmont Park that have not participated in New York over the course of the prior year," Offerman said. "And it was really an effort to



Coglianesse Photo

Andrew Offerman.

incentivize and motivate people within not only the region but throughout the country to take another look at Belmont Park, at NYRA, and at downstate racing and what it can offer."

Another new initiative is the Empire Trillium Series, 14 races on Tapeta at Belmont and Woodbine in Canada worth \$3.2 million, open to New York- and Canadian-breds. There will be eight races at Belmont starting Dec. 26 and six at Woodbine concluding July 31. The signature events will be the \$300,000 Long Island Derby and \$300,000 Long Island Oaks Jan. 23 at Belmont.

The races at Belmont will be for 2- and 3-year-olds, while the Woodbine races will be for 3-year-olds and up.

"We were searching for a partnership opportunity with a jurisdiction that ran primarily on Tapeta, which obviously Woodbine fits," Offerman said of the synthetic surface. "Building out a stakes program that gives an

opportunity for New York-breds and Canadian-foaled horses to compete together seemed logical."

Perhaps the best news for horsemen is an increase in overnight purses from last year ranging from 16 to 32 percent. New York-breds will run for the same purses as open-company horses in maiden special weight (\$100,000), first-level allowances (\$105,000) and second-level allowances (\$108,000).

"We've been talking for an extended period of time about how to further develop the New York foal crop because of its importance to the number of race days and the number of races that we run," Offerman said. "The increase in those purses for the fall reflects that commitment to the New York-bred horse, and hopefully the ability for that foal crop to continue to buck national trends, where across the country we've seen foal crop decreases and the New York-bred population remains relatively steady or has even ticked up marginally."

The fall meet will start strong and end strong, with several signature turf races scheduled for Nov. 28, including the Jockey Club Derby, Jockey Club Oaks, Man 'o War and the Long Island.

Closing weekend will be highlighted by Cigar Mile Day Dec. 5, a card that will also include the Brooklyn, Demoiselle, Elite Power and Remsen stakes.

"I think our racing team believes this is a generational opportunity to reinvigorate downstate racing in New York and to serve as a stage for some of the most important and best racing in the country throughout the entirety of the year, whether that be Belmont Stakes week, Breeders' Cup week, anything in between," Offerman said.

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Samantha Decker

Tawny Port strides for home in the Belmont Gold Cup Thursday.

Road to Oz

Tawny Port earns Melbourne bid with marathon score for Clement

BY ALEC DICONZA

“We’re going to Australia!”

The average fan wouldn’t have been able to count the number of times this exclamation was shouted near the winner’s circle in the 15 minutes following Thursday’s \$250,000 Belmont Gold Cup at Saratoga Race Course. As Peachtree Stable’s Tawny Port rallied to a 2 1/2-length score in the 2-mile Grade 2 turf stakes for older horses, trainer Miguel Clement’s family started celebrating early. In addition to ending a 17-race losing streak that included more than a few close calls, Tawny Port guaranteed himself a spot in Australia’s Melbourne Cup, to be run Tuesday, Nov. 3 at Flemington Racecourse. And yes,

BELMONT GOLD CUP RECAP

there’s a great chance that the 7-year-old will participate.

“I was there for six months. I went to the Melbourne Cup,” said Clement, who ventured to Australia as part of his enrollment in the Darley Flying Start program before becoming a trainer. “I thought it’d be one of the most neat races to win. All of us have a bucket list – that would very much be on my bucket list. I didn’t think it’d ever be feasible, but now there may be an opportunity to do so. We just have to consider it because he won well.”

The term ‘bucket list’ was also

Continued On Page 24

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Gold Cup -

■ Continued from page 23

used by his wife, Acacia, to describe the Melbourne Cup. Several days before the race, Clement said his wife had been “dying to go to Australia.”

“It’s so exciting,” Acacia Clement said in the winner’s circle. “Obviously, the idea of going to the Melbourne Cup would be really special and totally thrilling. It’s a race known around the world and unlike any other and just kind of one of those bucket list types of races, as well.”

Tawny Port’s win Thursday didn’t come out of nowhere. The 2-1 second choice in the field of eight, Tawny Port ran second in a stakes race going 2 1/16 miles last year at Kentucky Downs and his most recent win — the 1 5/8-mile John’s Call, nearly three years ago — came at Saratoga, too. In the 1,016 days since that victory, he finished second in five stakes that included a nose defeat in the Grade 1 Canadian International last October, and finished third in four graded stakes. In 2025, Tawny Port entered the Belmont Gold Cup as a top con-



Samantha Decker

Worthington (right) shows the way early in the Belmont Gold Cup. Winner Tawny Port is hidden along the rail toward the back.

tender before the race was moved off the turf.

“It was devastating,” Miguel Clement said. “We had La Mehana and Tawny Port on the grass. I thought we had a 1-2 punch there. It was rained off, so that was gutting. He likes these long turf marathons. ... And today he was just getting going, I thought.”

Tawny Port entered the Gold Cup

and fourth races on the card. “I got myself to the fence. We got to the backside for the first time, I felt like we were going a decent clip for two miles,” Prat said. “I thought, ‘I’m going to take my time,’ and keep him where he was. Just had to pass that horse that was on the lead for the first time that was slowing down just to avoid that horse, then I went right back to the rail. After that, I felt like I was traveling well, and he gave me a good run.”

Now with a clear end-of-year target, Clement said Tawny Port — once upon a time the seventh-place finisher in the 2022 Kentucky Derby — could become the first Kentucky Derby runner to compete in the Melbourne Cup. The \$430,000 yearling purchase will most likely make an appearance in the Grade 1 Christophe Clement Turf, formerly the Sword Dancer but renamed for Clement’s late father after his passing last year, August 15 before making a return trip to Kentucky Downs. Christophe Clement just missed making the Melbourne Cup two years ago when Champagne Juan came up short in the Gold Cup. Tawny Port’s win provided redemption.

“Dad missed the Belmont Gold Cup by a head a few years ago with Champagne Juan and he always thought it would be fun to go for it, so yes, I am seriously considering it,” Miguel Clement said. “I know, timing-wise, it’s not great with the Breeders’ Cup right around the corner, but you only live once, so I think we should really entertain the idea of going.”

Now a six-time winner in 32 starts, with six seconds and five thirds, Tawny Port broke from post three under Flavien Prat and relaxed toward the back of the field through the first of two laps. After the mile-and-a-quarter mark, he made a backstretch move to put himself within 3 lengths of the lead heading into the final turn. Prat waited patiently as he became sandwiched between the fading Corruption and the rallying Navy Seal, but found a hole between the two at the top of the stretch and burst through to take the lead with a furlong to go.

Tawny Port appeared to love every bit of the 2 miles as he extended his margin through the lane and finished in a course-record time of 3:17.75 over the rarely run distance. Navy Seal held second ahead of Miztertonic, Flashiest and Corruption. The Gold Cup capped a four-win day for Prat, who also won the first, second

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Red on Green

Roja wires eight rivals in Grade 2 turf sprint

BY SEAN CLANCY

The question isn't asked often.

Is she the fastest horse you've ever trained? Graham Motion thought about it.

"I can't think of one faster," Motion said.

It was minutes after Roja and Irad Ortiz Jr. had led every step of Thursday's Grade 2 Intercontinental Stakes at Saratoga. The daughter of Karakontie hurtled out of the outside stall, cleared eight rivals and launched again to draw off by 1 ¼ lengths over stablemate Italian Soiree. Favorite Shoot It True finished third after 5 ½ furlongs on the turf in 1:00.44. Owned by Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners and Madaket Stable, the 4-year-old filly improved her turf record to four wins and a second from five tries.

Motion has campaigned plenty of fast horses – Animal Kingdom, Better Talk Now, Main Sequence, Film Maker and the list goes on and on and so did the distance for those and all the others.

"This is very unusual for me," Motion said.



Dave Harmon

Roja scores in Thursday's Intercontinental to lead a 1-2 finish for trainer Graham Motion.

"Another Confessional," Motion said, repeating a text he received from former Pin Oak Stud manager Clifford Barry minutes after the Intercontinental. The daughter of Holy Bull won 12 races and five in a row to finish her career back in 2001.

"She was pretty fast," Motion said, thinking back to wins in the Royal North, The Very One and A.P. Indy Stakes.

Not this fast.

Roja made her first two starts on the dirt last spring, finishing third and seventh and prompting Ortiz to make a suggestion to the turf-leaning Motion.

"She didn't show a whole lot, typical Karakontie, not flashy looking at all. The last time I worked her before she ran, she worked from the gate and was like a rocket. I was like, 'Where did that come from?' She handled the dirt fine, so we tried the dirt," Motion said of her debut. "Irad rode her the second time and he said she's got to be grass. The only reason I thought dirt was because I had been breezing her on the grass and she hadn't shown much at all. Watching her now, you'd be thinking precocious, and she was not at all."

Switched to the turf for her third start, Roja and jockey Jaime Rodriguez thrashed maidens going 5 ½ furlongs at Laurel Park. She came back to finish second by a nose in the Stormy Blues Stakes at Monmouth Park and then won the Blue Sparkler at Monmouth in July. After that she wasn't training forwardly so Motion stopped, kept her at Fair Hill all winter and pointed to a 4-year-old campaign. She reunited with Ortiz and returned with a wire-to-wire win over allowance foes at Churchill Downs April 29. The five-time Eclipse Award winner had another suggestion.

"The reason I did this is because I ran into Irad



Samantha Decker

Roja (right) digs in to hold off the stretch runners in the turf sprint.

Continued on Page 26

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Roja -

■ Continued from page 25

on Derby Day and he was like, 'That filly is very fast.' He wanted to ride her," Motion said. "I called (agent) Steve Rushing and he said he had to ride Shisospicy. Then he called and said he was open. Poor J-Rod, he was going to ride her. He's the same, he freaking loved this filly. She must give them some feel."

Sent off fourth choice in the \$250,000 stakes, Roja launched from the gate as third choice Gratefully bobbled and bumped into Time To Dazzle and second choice In Our Time bumbled from stall two.

As rivals were clogging to his inside, Ortiz glanced over his left shoulder three times as Roja cleared with ease.

Roja rolled through the first quarter mile in :21.35 as Gratefully made up for her stumble and set up to the outside. Favorite Shoot It True stalked from third. After a half mile in :43.13, Roja kicked off the turn and opened up with ease. Passing the eighth pole, she switched to her left lead, continued to open up before swapping back to her right lead and cruising to a comfortable win.

"She cleared everyone in the first few jumps," Ortiz said. "She broke like a shot. She did that last time, too. She broke sharp again. I was expecting to let her break and then see if anyone goes ahead of her, but nobody did because she broke like a shot out of there. After that I just tried to get her to relax, to have something at the end. She was still going quick. She still quickened so that was nice."

And had everyone thinking about

future targets.

"This is what we live for, big wins on big days. To think where she was 18 months ago to where she is today. It's quite an achievement," Eclipse's Aron Wellman said. "Irad loves her. He doesn't say a lot. You know I'm the master of managing expectations, but he said, 'Work your way back from the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint.'"

Motion hadn't done the math on that. Not yet.

"I haven't even looked. I didn't look beyond today. That's what Irad said, and I don't think he's (exaggerating)," Motion said. "Irad is very positive about horses. I don't ride him quite enough to read between the lines, but I know what he thinks of her."

Eclipse's Sean Tugel thought enough of Roja to purchase her for \$70,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July Sale in 2023. Bred by Dr. Charles "Chuck" Kidder, the dark bay filly is out of the stakes-placed Redmeansgo. At sales time, the daughter of Red Ransom had produced nine foals to race, seven winners, including stakes-placed, stakes-producing Pappascot.

"Class. She was athletic. Just a really well put together, well balanced filly. We have a little special soft spot for the sire," Tugel said as he walked out of the Carmen Barrera Room. "That sale, a lot of times, people like to concentrate on the first-year freshman sires. Some of those proven sires can become value and she became that. She just had that class and that look. First and foremost, athletic, right? And had the pedigree to go with it."

How often does that happen?

"Once in a blue moon," Tugel said. "That's why you have to enjoy it."

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Rise Up

West End Kid extends winning streak to three for Walden barn

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Ron Mawaka grew up about 115 miles from Saratoga Springs in blue-collar Chicopee, Mass. in a rough section of the city called the West End. So, when his son Scott gave him the opportunity to name a horse, he didn't hesitate: West End Kid.

"I'm a West End Kid," Mawaka said in the Carmen Barrera Horsemen's Lounge, after his namesake made it three wins in a row in Thursday's Grade 3, \$300,000 Pennine Ridge Stakes at Saratoga Race Course. "I lived on Front Street, down by the river. It was a hardworking, Polish neighborhood."

The equine West End Kid was a

PENNINE RIDGE STAKES RECAP

bit fractious in the gate, befitting his name, but once it was opened he kept to the task at hand. Tyler Gaffalione sat just outside of longshot pacesetter Chips And Fish around the turn and onto the backstretch through a quarter-mile in :24.28. Blackmail and Blinging It Back followed, with Bottas on the rail.

Chips And Fish maintained the lead into the far turn, but Gaffalione had a stranglehold on West End Kid. When Gaffalione asked, the son of Twirling Candy answered with con-

Continued On Page 28



Dave Harmon

West End Kid scores in Thursday's Pennine Ridge for trainer Will Walden.

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Pennine Ridge -

■ Continued from page 27

viction, taking the lead around the turn and holding off all comers in the stretch to win by 1 1/4 lengths in a time of 1:40.94.

"We've always thought very highly of this horse," Gaffalione said. "We're very impressed with his progression throughout his racing. He's starting to relax more. He's really just developing into a racehorse. Honestly, I don't think we've gotten to the bottom of him yet."

That bodes well for the future, which could include a start in the Grade 1 Belmont Derby July 4 at Saratoga.

"It's possible for sure, but we'll let the horse tell us," winning trainer Will Walden said. "That has gotten us this far. (Thursday) he was a little green when he hit the front turning for home. Past couple races, he's had a target to sweep by. I thought he relaxed well down the backside, considering the pace they were going. His past couple races, they went a lot quicker. I just can't speak highly enough of this horse. He's super talented."

Walden's recovery from drug and alcohol use has been well documented and is the reason he is training West End Kid. Scott Mawaka, Ron's son, who races as Mo Speed Racing, is a recovering alcoholic. When he bought West End Kid for \$350,000 at the 2025 OBS April 2-year-old sale, he told his bloodstock agent, Murette Farrell, he wanted to give Walden a shot.

"We share that battle in common," Scott Mawaka said. "So, this was the horse we decided to work with. Things happen for a reason. This horse had talent. Who's got better statistics than Will right now, right? I mean, numbers are through the

board. This is one of a number of really good horses he's doing the right things with. So, it's an exciting run and I'm really enjoying working with Will. There'll be more to come."

Scott Mawaka credited Farrell with helping him improve his stock over the last five years. Now the guy who started out going to the races at Belterra Park not far from where he lives in Ohio is a graded-stakes-winning owner – at Saratoga on Belmont Stakes weekend, no less.

"About five years ago, I started to step up my participation," said Mawaka, who shared ownership in New York-bred stakes winner Fingal's Cave. "All credit to Murette Farrell. She's really helped me build the portfolio of racers and broodmares I have now. Murette picked out a beauty, and my job is to enjoy the races."

That's not unlike how his father felt Thursday, watching the race with his wife, Fran.

"I am totally honored, grateful, and glad to be alive at age 84," Ron Mawaka said, "It was thrilling. He went off as a favorite, so it wasn't much of a surprise to a lot of people. But he ran a beautiful race. And Tyler is a wonderful jockey."

It was not lost on him that the room reserved for stakes-winning connections at Saratoga seems like a world away from Chicopee.

"I'm from the dregs of Western Massachusetts, the factories and mills," he said. "If you were lucky as a 15-year-old, 16-year-old, you could work in what they called the 'Rag Shop,' which was Johnson & Johnson's. Cheesecloth is what they made, and you'd breathe in all that stuff. I never worked there. I spent five years, eight months in the Army and met that beautiful lady (Fran) in Pittsburgh."

*Additional reporting
by Alec DiConza*



Dave Harmon

Goodall floats to victory in Thursday's Jersey Girl Stakes.

Party Time

Connections toast second stakes win with 3-year-old filly Goodall

BY DARBY O'BRIEN

JERSEY GIRL STAKES RECAP

Goodall's people showed up en masse Thursday at Saratoga Race Course – and thank goodness they did.

They gathered in the winner's circle after her triumph in the \$175,000 Jersey Girl Stakes and the Yaupon filly found herself surrounded by all the folks who have known and loved her throughout her life.

"It's incredible," said co-breeder Mark Toothaker. "I was a groom here in '86 for Joe Cantey. I lived in a tack room at the three-eighths pole. Standing in the winner's circle with a filly we bred, with some great friends, it's a dream come true."

Goodall broke sharp and settled just off the pace under Flavien Prat as Carmel Coast and Tyler Gaffalione surged up the rail to take the lead. The frontrunner led by a length, zipping through the opening quarter in

:21.92, while Goodall stayed patient in second. Carmel Coast held the lead as the field turned for home, with Mythical inching up from third to match strides with Goodall. Goodall shook that foe off and took command from a fading Carmel Coast inside the final eighth.

Goodall won by 2 3/4 lengths over Carmel Coast in 1:08.78 with Mythical third.

The group gathered just outside the winner's circle exploded as Goodall hit the finish. They practically danced their way into the winner's circle, full of smiles and cheers as the filly made her way back with her third win in five starts.

"We've felt like she was a really talented filly all along," said Ned Tof-

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fey, general manager of winning owner Spendthrift Farm. “Her first couple starts were OK, and she really stepped up in a stake two starts back. We were all scratching our heads Derby weekend when she threw in a clunker. We were hoping she was ready to bounce back, and all indications were that she was. And she sure did it.”

Spendthrift purchased the Kentucky-bred filly for \$525,000 at last year’s April OBS 2-year-old sale. She originally sold for \$62,000 at the 2024 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July yearling sale.

Goodall finished second in her January debut then won back-to-back starts a Fair Grounds maiden and the \$150,000 Purple Martin Stakes at Oaklawn Park. She earned a spot in the Grade 2 Eight Belles off that win and finished fifth, beaten 9 lengths as the 2-1 second choice.

“Honestly, I would just draw a line through her race at Churchill Downs,” Prat said. “I thought it was just too poor to be true. She broke well today and obviously if someone was faster than me, I was okay to sit, so that’s what we did. She was acting super today and she showed herself.”

While the cutback to 6 furlongs off the 7-furlong Eight Belles might have helped a little, Toffey believes that the reason for Goodall’s performance is more the result of her figuring things out. She could continue the progression in the Grade 3 Victory Ride at 6 1/2 furlongs July 10 at Saratoga, but the winning connections will defer to trainer Steve Asmussen to make the call.

Also the stallion sales manager at Spendthrift, Toothaker bred the filly in Kentucky along with longtime Asmussen clients Bill and Corrine Heiligbrodt. He purchased her dam, Moon Over Mag Bay, for \$20,000 in foal to The Factor at the Keeneland November breeding stock sale in 2021. Goodall came about through a foal share offer from the Heiligbrodts, who campaigned Grade 1 winner Yaupon.

“Life doesn’t get much better,” Toothaker said. “These horses have been very good to me in my life.”

- Luminous Beauty improved off her debut with a gate-to-wire score in Thursday’s opener at Saratoga Race Course.

The Jena Antonucci trainee rocketed out of the gate, opening up by 2 lengths as Dinner Party tried to keep up in second in the 5 1/2-furlong maiden race for 2-year-old fillies. Luminous Beauty showed the way through



Luminous Beauty wins Thursday’s opener..

Dave Harmon

an opening quarter-mile in :22.20 and turned for home with no signs of slowing down. The Flameaway filly drew off at the top of the stretch under Flavien Prat and won by 6 1/4 lengths over Margie’s Girl with Mel Went Home third.

“She had a really great start at Churchill [Downs],” said Antonucci, “She did so much of the dirty work and got beat late at the wire. We were hoping, obviously, that she would take that forward to this race and she did. Flavien did a great job just letting her run her race.”

Luminous Beauty finished 1 3/4 lengths behind Pierette in her May 15 debut.

“Honestly, she’s a very smart filly,” she said. “Just a classy filly. I’ll do my best to stay out of her way.”



Careless Whisper triumphs in the sixth race for trainer George Weaver.

Dave Harmon

Owned by horseOlogy Racing, Fred Rosen, Steve Dervenis and Cliff Racing, the Kentucky-bred sold for \$40,000 at last year’s Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July sale.

- Darby O'Brien

- Careless Whisper didn’t inspire confidence in her early training.

“As a 2-year-old, she was kind of a mediocre work horse,” said George Weaver, who trains the Instagrind filly for West Point Thoroughbreds and James Politano. “We kept waiting for her to work well enough for us to be excited about her.”

That certainly isn’t the case anymore. After a long break late last summer into the early part of winter, the New York-bred filly returned with more focus. She debuted April 30 at Aqueduct and just missed, finishing a head behind Wednesday’s Bouwerie Stakes winner Venetta. In Thursday’s sixth, she returned with an emphatic 10 1/2-length score under Manny Franco.

The victory was Franco’s second of four on the day.

“West Point has been very patient and hats off to them,” Weaver said. “She came back a bigger and stronger filly, and we’re really looking forward to the rest of the year with her. ... She has always been kind of a big, nice physical. She has filled out some, but her breezes are a lot better, her gallops are a lot better, everything is a lot better. It just goes to show you, if they need a little time, you give it to them. They’ll pay you back.”

- Alec DiConza

- Juddmonte’s odds-on favorite Directive scored in the fourth, a 1 1/8-mile optional claimer on the dirt. Trained by Chad Brown, the 3-year-old daughter of Gun Runner seized command in the final three-sixteenths to win by a length over late-running Measure . . . Prior to his triumph in the Belmont Gold Cup, Miguel Clement celebrated a victory in the fifth, a 5 1/2-furlong turf sprint, with Medici Road. The Quality Road filly defeated favored Florida Patriot by a half-length for owner-breeders Edward and Beverly Seltzer and owner Reeves Thoroughbred Racing . . . Klaravich Stables’ Right To Vote won the seventh for Brown. The Vino Rosso gelding covered 1 3/4 miles on the turf in 2:13.81 for his second win in six starts . . . Franco’s other three wins came aboard Medici Road in the fifth, Right To Vote in the seventh and Magnanimous Max in the ninth . . . Mo Complex took the nightcap, 1 1/16 mile starter-optional, for trainer Lindsay Schultz and owner Choctaw Racing Stables at 8-1.

Fans

“What’s your name?”

The question came from the clouds. Like Big Brother.

Walking through the front gate Thursday afternoon, a retired agent stopped, a retired jockey stopped, a writer stopped. The agent and the writer backed up quietly, sliding out of the conversation.

The question came booming down again. More like a demand.

“What. Is. Your. Name?”

The 71-year-old retired jockey, who looked like he was on his way to play an easy 18 at Sagamore, had just been talking about how he wished he had spent one summer riding in Saratoga. He hesitated the first time he heard the question. The second time, there wasn’t a choice. He answered, slowly, tentatively, fearfully.

“Chris...McCarron.”

The woman shrieked.

“That’s what I’m talking about,” she said. “That’s what I’m talking about.”

McCarron fielded a hug from a racetrack lifer that lasted minutes and wound up in a conversation that was still going as Bob Frieze and I walked toward the paddock for the seventh. For all we know, the Hall of Fame jockey and his singular fan club are still talking. John Henry, Flawlessly, Alysheba, Sunday Silence, Tiznow, Paseana, Came Home...

“You’ve got to love the racetrack,” Frieze said.

“You’ve got to love this racetrack,” I said.

Saratoga. Whether it’s the Belmont Festival at Saratoga or the August Place to Be Saratoga, it’s always the same. The fans’ festival. The purist’s place. Racing’s rock.

As the allowance turf horses warmed up for the seventh, Alison McGaughey walked up to the TV in the clubhouse. You know the one, the horsemen’s spot, smack in the middle of the walk from the paddock to the winner’s circle. I still call it the big screen from days gone by. There were no questions, no hugs, but the same theme.



By Sean Clancy

“Look at what some guy just gave me,” she said, turning her hand and showing me a sticker or a magnet or something that could have come out of a gumball machine.

There was a photo of her Hall of Fame husband with a cursive message. “We Heart Shug.” The picture looked like it was from the Vanlandingham days. Maybe Easy Goer.

We laughed. Surely it was going on the fridge at home.

“You’ve got to love the racetrack,” she said.

“You’ve got to love this racetrack,” I said.

Eight horses banged from the gate in the seventh, McGaughey’s Likeness showed speed, before backing up. Right To Vote rallied to overhaul Operation Overlord by a hard-earned half length. Fair Hill’s Bruce Jackson, standing next to me, felt good about that one, uttering a just-audible note of satisfaction. Three teenagers leapt in the air, high fived and fist bumped, and rushed to the windows. Second choice over the favorite never felt so good. I still like the ricochet of sound, from the winners and losers, from my favorite TV. Like the kitchen at your favorite restaurant. Watching the Travers between Jimmy and Shirley Jerkens, the sweet sound of Wicked Strong and the sudden silence of V. E. Day. Rachel Alexandra staving off Macho Again in the Woodward, the loudest it’s ever been, the speed

of sound stamped into your soul. Christophe Clement thumping leather-soled loafers off the concrete floor, boy, I miss that. Dave and Lara Duggan yelling so loudly for a winner that their children cried. All those shared moments of watching races at Saratoga. The rough trips, the tough beats, the bad breaks, the lost photos and the ever so elusive win. The one thing that keeps us coming back for more, every summer of every year.

They say nobody watches the jumpers. Trust me, they watch the jumpers. When Rocket One got passed in the final strides of the Beverly R. Steinman Wednesday, people were watching.

Trainer Dave Donk commiserated in front of the big screen a few races later. “Oh buddy, that was rough.”

Valet Nick Santagata was nearly as gutted as I was, “That was a helmet thrower. A helmet thrower.”

Agent Ron Anderson watched it. “If you could have bet 10 strides before the wire, you would have bet your life.”

Yeah, I know.

That’s Saratoga, that’s the racetrack, one man’s pain is everyone’s pain. Because we’ve all felt it. The final strides of the Steinman wasn’t a jump race, it was a race. For Paul Willis, Keri Brion, Stephen Mulqueen and the rest of the Jimmy P team, the winners, it was joyous. We felt that, too. Well, I have to admit it, I didn’t feel it this time, but the rest of the world did. Just like they felt my pain.

That’s the racetrack. This racetrack.

After watching Roja provide that perfect moment for Graham Motion, Aron Wellman and their teams in the Intercontinental, I walked toward Union Avenue, back to the office to somehow put words onto pages about her win and my mood. A man walking into the track looked up and nodded.

“Welcome back.”

I thanked him.

I didn’t see McCarron. But in a way I did.

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