

Year 26

The Saratoga

Saturday, June 7, 2026

Special

Festival 2026

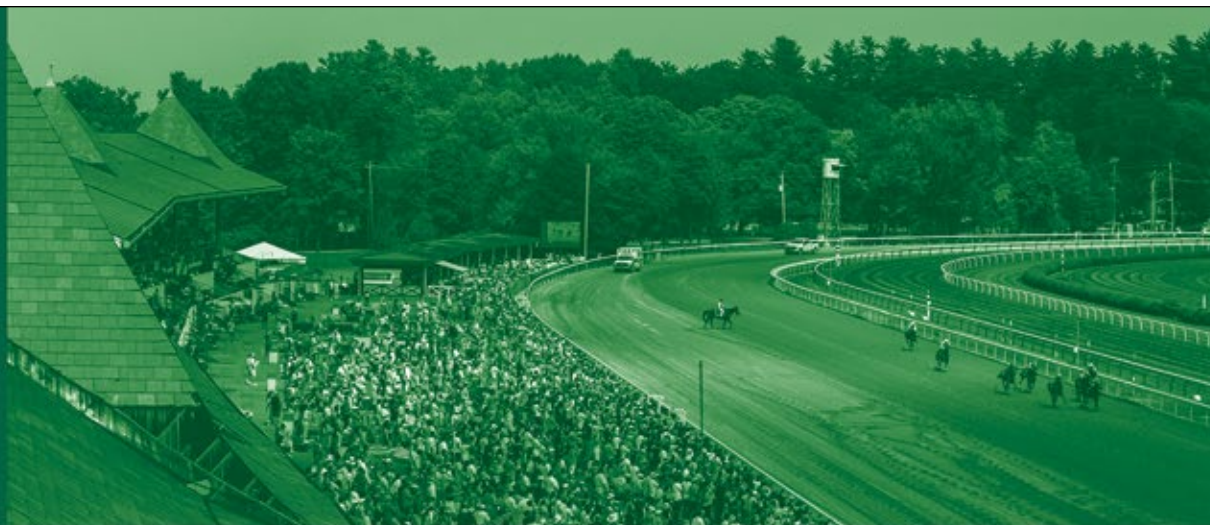


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Golden Tempo rocks the Spa in Belmont score

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Here&There...in Saratoga

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

Names of the Day

Bryant And Cooper, first race. Lakers legends? No, it's a steakhouse in Roslyn, N.Y. where you may have trouble getting a table because the Michael Dubbred filly is out of Wait Your Turn.

Multitask, fourth race. The former Godolphin runner is out of Divided Attention.

Booked, sixth race. The 2-year-old colt, second in his debut at Churchill Downs in April, is out of Fingerprint.

Kingsolver, eighth race. The 3-year-old filly, who races for Storyteller Racing and partners, is out of Famous Writer. A Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, Barbara Kingsolver wrote *Demon Copperhead* and *The Poisonwood Bible* among others works.

Should've, eighth race. Lael Stable homebred 3-year-old filly is by Not This Time out of More'n Likely.

Forgiving Spirit, ninth race. The 7-year-old gelding is by Shaman Ghost out of Apology Accepted. He makes the 40th start of his career today.

Long Distance Flyer

Soaring Softly, the namesake of today's 5 1/2-furlong turf sprint stakes, never ran a distance shorter than 7 furlongs. The 1999 female turf champion closed her career with stakes wins in the 1 1/4-mile Flower Bowl and 1 3/8-mile Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf for Phillips Racing Partnership and trainer Jimmy Toner.

By The Numbers

10: Gallons of water consumed by The Special staff in five days at the office. Stay hydrated people.

6: Former editorial interns from The Special on hand for work or play on Belmont Stakes Day, at least. Making and keeping fans in the game.

2: Forks in the road (literal forks, not choices) on Forest Avenue Saturday morning.

2: Ex-racehorses crowned in the Take2 Thoroughbred Jumper Championship at the Upperville Colt and Horse Show in Virginia. West Virginia-bred Mavis, a daughter of Gattopardo who won once in 14 starts on the track, captured the title with rider Cle Toledano. Cinnamon Bay, a Kentucky-bred Bernardini gelding who made two starts for Godolphin and Brad Cox, won the featured class with rider Jill Smith.



Samantha Decker

Flightline. A skydiver drops in on Belmont Stakes Day at Saratoga Race Course.

1: Pair of lost sunglasses at the Sea Hero statue in the paddock before Saturday's Jaipur.

4,612,696,658: Dollars wagered on United States Thoroughbred races in 2026, through May, according to Equibase figures.

10,921: Thoroughbred races run in the United States in 2026, through May.

Worth Repeating

"They don't know I'm funny."

Special graduate Julia Reedy about her fully virtual co-workers in Chicago

"Sorry I couldn't come up with something funny to include for a third straight day in the Worth Repeating section."

Longtime Daily Racing Form correspondent Steve Andersen, making it three out of four issues during his first trip to Saratoga

"It's like my cooking. What's available? Just throw it in there. It might work, it might not work."

Trainer David Duggan, about the human melting pot of racing at Aqueduct



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Here&There...in Saratoga

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

Worth Repeating

"My ride's here."

Fan walking down East Avenue during the military flyover Saturday

"Eddie F. was pumped. He was so excited talking he knocked my phone right out of my hand."

The Special's Darby O'Brien after interviewing Eddie Fazzone when Buttah won Saturday's sixth at 29-1

"Four legs, two eyes, one tail."

Trainer Miguel Clement, describing Ridari entering today's Grade 3 Poker

"You know me, I like to run."

Trainer Mark Casse, when told he could run Nitrogen in the Shuvee July 24 instead of waiting until Aug. 29 to run in the Personal Ensign

"The upsets are flying!"

Co-owner Bill Bonificio, after Buttah won Saturday

"You'd be proud, out of habit I went around and shifted all the papers in the racks."
Hannah Bonczkowski, a member of The Special's team last summer, on Belmont Stakes Day

"Now we know how the penguins feel in Antarctica."

Belmont Stakes Day patron shuffling toward the Union Avenue crossing, amid a sea of others, Saturday evening

"There's not a lot of people that have Belmont dirt and Derby dirt in their shoes and they never washed them."

Daisy Phipps Pulito, after winning the Belmont

"Let's go. Let's go."

Pulito to a fan who screamed "Jim Dandy" after the Belmont

"We'll be back."

South African jockey Gavin Lerena after finishing third aboard One Stripe in the Manhattan Saturday

"Now we've got to gather all the kids."

Teresa Viola after winning the Belmont Stakes

"Brothers... Johnny V the Boss... Manuelito..."

Fan greeting Irad Ortiz, Jose Ortiz, John Velazquez and Manny Franco after the Manhattan

"Now that was fun."

Lilly (Phipps) Caldwell after the Belmont



Samantha Decker

People Power. Trainer Cherie DeVaux, jockey Jose Ortiz and the rest of Golden Tempo's crew soak it in from the winner's circle after Saturday's score.

"He's top class, they're both top class together. He's a special horse and we're just glad to be part of the ride."

Trainer Miguel Clement on the relationship between Manhattan winner Deterministic and jockey Kendrick Carmouche

By The Numbers

1: Fist bump from valet to paddock judge after Battle of Normandy was saddled on the walk for the Manhattan.

46,128: Attendance on Belmont Stakes Day.

116,077,378: Total dollars wagered on the Belmont Day card.





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Pure Magic

Kentucky Derby hero Golden Tempo delivers again at Spa

BY SEAN CLANCY

Daisy Phipps Pulito leaned over the wooden ledge of her clubhouse box and hugged Cherie DeVaux. An owner-and-trainer cocoon of an embrace amid the bedlam of celebration as Golden Tempo galloped out after winning the Belmont Stakes at Saratoga Saturday evening.

Bred and owned by the Phipps Stable and St Elias Stable and ridden by Jose Ortiz, the 3-year-old son of Curlin posted bookends in this year's Triple Crown. An upset victory after lagging 17 lengths off the pace in the Kentucky Derby and an authoritative win after lurking just 6 lengths back in the Belmont. The first for St Elias and the first for the Phipps Stable since Easy Goer won it in 1989. Thirty-seven years. Nothing's changed, well, other than the celebrations in the bulwark of down-and-to-the-right boxes at the finish line of the grandest stage. Ogden Phipps II turned away from the track and raised his hands to the roof. Kids, grandkids, cousins, friends and family played the same play-book. It looked more like a Rage Against the Machine concert than a Saratoga celebration. Neither Gladys, Ogden or Dinny would have done it. But they would have loved it.

"I'm so proud of my family, so proud of Cherie, so proud of the horse, so happy for St Elias and Phipps Stable, for Claiborne Farm who foaled him," Pulito said on her way down the stairs to the winner's circle. "It's just amazing, it's just incredible, this is what we wake up for every day."

Golden Tempo woke up in the Derby and stayed up for the Belmont, stamping himself as the clear leader of the 3-year-old class this year. Sent off fourth choice in the field of nine, the bay colt finished 1 1/4 miles in 2:03.49. Commandment bounced back from a seventh in the Derby to fin-



Samantha Decker

Golden Tempo (right) battles past Commandment late in the Belmont Stakes.

ish second while Renegade, runner-up in the Derby, finished third.

Without the expected pace of the Derby but in a field nearly half the size, this was going to be a different test for Golden Tempo, a late-running, stamina-laden colt who needed every stride of the Derby's 10 furlongs to get the job done.

From the outside stall, Golden Tempo broke to the right and brushed the door, Ortiz slapped him on the shoulder twice and the miscue was erased in a matter of strides.

"I was able to drop back but in contact with them," Ortiz said. "That was the key for me today with the lack of speed, I thought I could be last but in contact with them, that was my plan."

Tic-tac-toe.

Maiden winner Powershift cleared from post two to lead into the first turn. Peter Pan winner Growth Equity set up to his outside. California longshot Vitruvian Man slid into third on the rail. Emerging Market, 10th in the Derby, slotted into fourth. Second choice Chief Wallabee bumped and bounced before finding a spot in fifth. Blue Grass runner-up Otinho followed him. Favorite Renegade eased back into seventh. Commandment loped along on the outside. Golden Tempo angled to the rail, last but a zip code closer than his first turn position in the Derby.

Powershift took the field through the first quarter mile in :23.96 and a half in :48.29. The field tightened leaving the backside as Growth Equity took over and Chief Wallabee ranged to his outside after three quarters in 1:12.38. Irad Ortiz Jr. waited with Renegade before sliding out. John Velazquez looped Commandment in the clear. Jose Ortiz maneuvered Golden Tempo inside Commandment, following Renegade before splitting those two at the quarter pole. Game on.

"I was just there, traveling good," Ortiz said. "Just asking him to go little by little because it takes a few askings until he gets going."

Growth Equity clawed from the rail. Chief Wallabee looked poised and then hit pause. Renegade shot through a chasm and struggled to finish it off. Commandment and Golden Tempo hooked up widest of all, battling past the sixteenth pole. Golden Tempo gradually, resolutely pulled away, a head, a neck, a half-length and in the end a cool 1 1/4 lengths in front.

"He's showing signs physically and mentally that he's going to take another step forward. It was a lot slower of a pace, but he put himself in a better position. He's just a lot more mature. Jose had to take back and save ground around the turn which

Continued on Page 8

HISTORY DOESN'T REPEAT ITSELF.

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Samantha Decker

The Belmont field rolls through the stretch the first time, winner Golden Tempo at left.

Belmont -

■ Continued from page 6

was the right thing to do,” DeVaux said. “I’m not surprised he won, we are really grateful he did. I’m a little overwhelmed. It’s fun. It’s great. Everyone is excited. Again, it’s going to be one of these things that takes a little while to set in. Surreal as a word is overused but that’s what this is.”

For Pulito, it was way beyond surreal. It was a culmination or at least the continuation of a plan that her great grandmother Gladys Mills Phipps began when she established Wheatley Stable a century ago. Pulito’s grandfather, Ogden Phipps, and her father, Dinny Phipps, continued the legacy, focusing on breeding to race. And race in classic distances on the dirt. Nobody did it better. When Dinny Phipps died in 2016, the stable was left to his widow, Andrea, Pulito and her siblings Ogden II, Lilly and Samantha to keep it going or shut it down. They chose the former while making changes. Adding St Elias as a partner three years ago was one of those changes. Vinnie and Teresa Viola’s stable have partnered on all the Phipps Stable-bred colts ever since.

“Ogden and I, Lilly, Sam and my mom all love it but when you don’t have good horses for a couple of years, it gets hard. It’s hard to get a good horse.

Golden Tempo came at the right time. I would say, he came at the right time,” Pulito said. “We breed classic horses. My great grandmother, my grandfather and father didn’t set this up to breed 6-furlong horses on the turf. That’s what we breed for, to win the classic races. Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn’t. I stay the course. I’ve got to stay the course. It’s in my blood.”

And in Golden Tempo. A sixth-generation homebred and a 57-year odyssey.

Ogden Phipps purchased Lady Pitt privately in 1969. The daughter of Sword Dancer fit the program. Ten wins, 14 seconds, five thirds in 47 starts in those iconic breed-shaping races – Coaching Club American Oaks, Mother Goose, Kentucky Oaks. Joining the Phipps’ broodmare band, she produced Blitey who began her own family tree of brilliance. She won the Test, the Maskette, the Ballerina and

placed in the Imp, the Delaware Handicap. Seven furlongs to 10 furlongs, yeah, that kind of depth. She produced the likes of Home Leave, Dancing All Night, Dancing Spree, Fantastic Find, Oh What a Dance, Sabbatical and Furlough, there’s not enough space on this page to explain their exploits. The limbs expanded from there, breed to race. Colts ran, daughters ran and produced. And here came Golden Tempo, a late-developing, late-running, dirt-on-dirt throwback.

“My dad, my grandfather, my great grandmother, this is what they wanted to do. This is what they bred their horses to do. We got to reap those rewards today. All the hard work, the foundation that they put into those mares, that Claiborne put into those mares,” Pulito said as she and her 14-year-old son Charlie walked to the Carmen Barrera Room to celebrate. “They would be over

the moon to see how this horse was campaigned and how our family can all be together. Everybody lives in different places, everybody has kids, horse racing brings us all back together. We’re rolling 25 strong in just immediate family. I was Charlie’s age when we had murderer’s row over there. Personal Ensign, Seeking The Gold, My Flag, all those horses. That’s what made us love horse racing. Now they get to experience a little bit of that and hopefully carry it on.”

Charlie smiled. A fifth-generation-horse-racing smile.



Dave Harmon

Golden Tempo pulls away from Commandment near the finish of the Belmont.

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Making a Point

Deterministic speeds to fifth consecutive graded stakes score

BY TOM LAW

One year, an emotional win. The next year, a statement win.

Deterministic delivered both in back-to-back renewals of the Grade 1 Manhattan Stakes in 2025 and 2026 at Saratoga Race Course – the first a day later than expected thanks to a weather-related re-scheduling and the second in its proper place on Saturday's Belmont Stakes Day undercard.

The latest victory, the fifth straight for the 5-year-old son of Liam's Map, came by a half-length under Kendrick Carmouche in course-record time for the 1 3/16 miles. Deterministic won the 1 3/16-mile Manhattan in 1:50.50, topping Say The Word's previous mark of 1:51.40 set in an allowance win during the spectator free pandemic meeting in 2020.

"He's different yo, I'm telling you," Carmouche said. "The feeling you get. The whole way, too. Especially when he pins his ears back. He chills in the paddock but when he's out there, he's all about business. All about business. Me, too."

Carmouche saw those ears pin back a few times in the \$1 million Manhattan, previously run at 1



Dave Harmon

Kendrick Carmouche makes a point while winning the Manhattan aboard Deterministic.

1/4 miles downstate at Belmont Park but shortened because of Saratoga's Mellon Turf Course configuration. Deterministic's narrow victory over Integration in last year's Manhattan came at 9 furlongs on the inner turf after the race was moved to that course after heavy rains on Belmont Day.

Different races, different courses but the same determination and outcome.

The 9-2 third choice in the field of nine behind European import and 2-1 favorite Bright Picture and 5-2 second choice and recently crowned New York-bred Horse of the Year Rhetorical, Deterministic expected to be on the lead early in the Manhattan. He broke just a "tick slow," according to Car-

Continued on Page 12



Samantha Decker

Deterministic (second from right) keeps everyone at bay late.

Darley

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Maxfield's extraordinary first-crop son makes his own bid for independence blasting many lengths clear in the G1 Woody Stephens. He stopped the clock in **1:20.4, equalling the Saratoga track record** set back in 1978.

Manhattan -

■ Continued from page 10

mouche and didn't give any trouble sliding behind Rhetorical past the finish the first time and into the first turn.

Deterministic tracked Rhetorical, winner of the Grade 1 Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic on Kentucky Derby Day last time out, through strong early fractions of :22.99 and :47.01. He gave Carmouche most of the same signs he'd given in his run of five graded stakes victories to the delight of his pilot.

"He was standing perfect, he just left a tick slow," Carmouche said of the break. "Once I saw Irad cross over, I just let my horse run a little, just to let the pace go a little quicker. Once we got on the backside I eased him off of Irad and man, he was sitting in my hands so perfect."

Rhetorical continued to lead through 6 furlongs in 1:09.83 with Deterministic just a half-length back to his outside and Make Me King another

length back in third down on the hedge.

"By the time I got to the half mile pole, his ears started going back and he was telling me he wanted to get after him, you know?" Carmouche said. "Then by the time I got the five-sixteenths pole I squeezed him a little and then he really said 'send me home.'"

Deterministic drew alongside Rhetorical approaching the stretch and the two started to separate from the seven others. Rhetorical tried to spurt away approaching the eighth pole and only held a narrow lead past the mark. Deterministic wore him down from there and Carmouche pointed to the crowd a few strides from home with the job just about done.

"I knew the last eighth of a mile, the way he had his ears pinned back, they were never catching him," Carmouche said. "What a sensational job by Miguel Clement and his team. He was 10 times sharper than last race. He was probably a tad short last time and still won. We knew going into this race we'd be even more stronger going in this race. I'm just so pleased."

Clement and the ownership group of St Elias Stable, Ken Langone, Steven Duncker and Vicarage Stable were equally pleased, after celebrating with more than a share of sorrow last year when Deterministic won the Manhattan.

That victory came only about two weeks after trainer Christophe Clement passed away at the age of 59. Emotions flowed that day and again when Deterministic won the Grade 1 Fourstardave during

the proper Saratoga meet.

Tears of joy were present Saturday, mixed with plenty of pride.

"He's a tremendous racehorse," Clement said. "He's a pure athlete. We are very privileged to be part of the ride. He's top class. I've always thought he was the best turf horse in the country. He proved that today. I thought we deserved the Eclipse Award last year, but I'm biased. Hopefully, everyone will understand why I think he's the leader of the division."

Deterministic won three of four starts last season but didn't race after the Fourstardave. He finished fourth in the Eclipse Award voting behind Breeders' Cup runners Notable Speech, Rebel's Romance and Ethical Diamond.

Clement hopes for that Breeders' Cup chance this year, most likely in the Mile when the championship event returns to Keeneland Race Course in late October. The Manhattan didn't offer an automatic bid into the Breeders' Cup like two other races on the Belmont Day card, but there's time with the Fourstardave on tap for the Saratoga meet.

Clement said he'd keep Deterministic, now the winner of nine of 15 starts and \$2,634,765, at shorter trips for a few reasons.

"He's top class," he said. "He's proven at 7 furlongs and he can stay if he wants to. He's very versatile. You can switch him off, you can engage him. ... From here we'll figure it out race by race. He'll be a more attractive stallion prospect if I keep him closer cutting back to a mile."

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Through the gears

Nysos avoids speed trap, rolls to Grade 1 triumph for Baffert

BY JOE CLANCY

Bob Baffert watched the Metropolitan Handicap play out like everyone else at Saratoga Race Course Saturday and had some questions.

"I hope he knows what he's doing," the trainer said to himself as jockey Flavien Prat let Nysos drop away from a four-horse scrum at the front of the Grade 1. "He's either riding a really smart race, or he's not running."

Yes, definitely . . . and, uh no. Not a chance.

Nysos broke running from the Wilson Chute's inside post and built a quick 1-length lead as Vibe dropped back and Antiquarian led Saudi Crown and Knightsbridge into the fray. Nysos led through the first quarter-mile, but right about when the :23.52 flashed on the screen faced a triple team to his outside. Antiquarian struck first. Saudi Crown lapped on to him and Knightsbridge rolled up three wide. Nysos, on the rail, went from first to fourth and was 2 lengths down after a half-mile in :45.61.

Knightsbridge swarmed past Antiquarian on the turn as Saudi Crown backed up and Prat moved Nysos off the rail. In high gear again, the 5-year-old son of Nyquist came off the turn in full flight and made quick work of the two in front of him as Prat



Samantha Decker

Nysos heads to the winner's circle.



Samantha Decker

Nysos (right) leads Knightsbridge and Antiquarian late in the Met Mile.

threw three crosses at the three-sixteenths pole. Nysos handled it from there, drawing off to score by 4 lengths. Knightsbridge hung on for second, three-quarters of a length ahead of Journalism after a mile in 1:34.85. Nysos won for the eighth time (with two seconds) in 10 starts, and pushed his career earnings to \$5,288,500 while making his case for a spot among the top older horses in training.

"I almost brought him up here last year," Baffert said. "I didn't do it, but we had this targeted. It takes a little bit of the sting out of that Saudi Cup. What a talented horse. I've always thought he was one of the best horses older horses in training, and today he showed it."

A few beats later, the Hall of Famer set a lofty goal for the Kentucky-bred owned by Baoma Corp and the Magnier-Tabor-Smith team at Coolmore Stud.

"We're going for the (Breeders' Cup) Classic with him."

Nysos won the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile last year, in a slugfest with stablemate Citizen Bull, and capped 2025 with a victory in the Grade 2 Laffit Pincay Jr. going 1 1/16 miles in December. Next, he took on 2025 Breeders' Cup Classic winner Forever Young in the 1 1/8-mile Saudi Cup in February and came up a length short. That, and a neck loss to Mindframe in last year's Churchill Downs in the slop off a 15-month layoff, are the horse's only losses.

Baffert will take his chance, especially after Nysos gave Prat more revs than a Formula 1 car in the Met Mile.

"It felt like down the backside, the pressure

from the outside never really stopped," said Prat. "I figured I had to give him a chance, knowing he was carrying 126 [pounds] and he hasn't run for months, and it just played out good. When I tipped him out, he gave me a great run."

Baffert credited brains as much as brawn.

"He's really one of the smartest horses I've ever trained," he said. "He's just so cool and quiet. He's just quiet . . . He'll walk to the gate. You can put a kid on his back. That's the way he is."

Bred by Susie Atkins, Nysos had that from the start. Bloodstock agent Donato Lanni signed a \$550,000 ticket at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Company's April 2-year-old sale in 2023 after bringing \$130,000 as a weanling and \$150,000 as a yearling.

"He was just a cool dude, he was so laid back, so cool," said Lanni. "There was something about him. We knew he was fast, he went fast, but he was a real plump horse and to do what he did and have that kind of weight on him was impressive. He kept his weight the whole time at the sale. Mentally, he's just such a cool horse and that helps in races like that."

Nysos, Baffert and Prat took the bows after the win, but Lanni saved some for Baoma's Susan and Charles Chu as well. Nysos follows Grade 1 winners Drefong, Bast, Eda, Tenma, Varda and others to fly the silks.

"She makes her own luck because she loves horses and the most important thing is she doesn't get involved with Bob," said Lanni. "She just trusts Bob. She lets him produce the horse and she shows up to watch at the races."



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Blimey

Englishman avenges Derby Day loss to Crude Velocity

BY ALEC DICONZA

When Englishman first started training for Cherie DeVaux at Keeneland last summer, he didn't immediately tip his hand. It wasn't until the Maxfield colt, a \$400,000 purchase at the 2024 Keeneland September sale by Mayberry Farm, turned in a 5-furlong gate work that DeVaux saw signs of serious talent.

"He came in with high remarks from April Mayberry, who's very good about knowing what they have," DeVaux said. "It's really funny because he's not a horse that's really flashy in the morning. When he worked from the gate, he went :58 in a gallop, eased down. That's when we knew how fast he really was, and then when he ran first time out."

Englishman won his debut by 7 1/4 lengths gate-to-wire at Churchill Downs last September in an emphatic introduction to the racing world. Saturday, the racing world took notice again when he won his first Grade 1 in similar dominance, crushing the field in the 7-furlong Woody Stephens by 5 3/4 lengths while wrapped up in the late stages. He tied Saratoga Race Course's 48-year-old track record of 1:20.40 set by Darby Creek Road, and he surely could've gone a hundredth of a second faster had he been asked to run through the wire.

"It doesn't surprise me," DeVaux said of the colt's performance. "This horse is so fast that we kind of get a glimpse of it when he runs. He runs like that and almost broke the track record at Fair Grounds wrapped up. The sky is the limit for him right now, but I believe that's at 6 and 7 furlongs."

Englishman returned six months after his debut and toyed with an optional claiming field going 6 furlongs at Fair Grounds. He stretched out for his stakes debut in the Pat Day Mile on Kentucky Derby Day and finished second, while breaking from the rail, behind the Bob Baffert-trained Crude Velocity. That foe returned in the Woody Stephens as



Samantha Decker

Englishman speeds down the stretch in the Woody Stephens.

the heavy favorite, but a cutback in distance and a chance to break from the outside appeared to be all Englishman needed to turn the tables.

"I do believe, in the right situation and the right setup, we could run a mile. He's most effective at this distance," DeVaux said. "He just, in his last

race, never got a chance to breathe. That was what really made a difference in the race today."

Owned by C R K Stable, Englishman broke from the seven hole and allowed Solitude Dude to take a half-length lead on his inside. After a quarter in a sharp :21.98, the colt breezed up to lay just a head behind Solitude Dude as Crude Velocity, who broke slow and played catch-up along the backstretch, made a move into third.

Jose Ortiz on Englishman peeked over his right shoulder as the field turned for home and started asking the colt for his run. Florent Geroux took dead aim on Crude Velocity. The pair looked destined for another showdown like the Pat Day Mile, when Crude Velocity rallied by Englishman in the final furlong to win by 3 3/4 lengths. This time was different.

Englishman straightened out and continued to open a 5-length lead at the eighth pole. With 100 yards left, Ortiz stopped asking his colt for run and coasted home a no-doubt winner. Crude Velocity held second by a nose



Samantha Decker

Englishman cools off after the record-tying performance.

Continued on Page 18

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Stephens -

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over the oncoming Obliteration.

“Last time, I had the one hole and it was very uncomfortable for me having him (Crude Velocity) outside every step of the way and he also is a nice horse,” Ortiz said. “But today, cutting back to 7 (furlongs), it was much better for me. ...It was pretty amazing, but obviously the track is fast. It was impressive. Very impressive.”

The Woody Stephens led off a memorable day for DeVaux and Ortiz. The pair teamed up for a last-to-first Belmont Stakes victory later with Kentucky Derby winner Golden Tempo. At least Englishman's winning margin meant DeVaux could save some energy for the big one.

“Down the stretch, when he (Englishman) opened up, I started cheering and I jokingly said, ‘I can hold this off for Golden Tempo because I think he's got this one.’” she said.

Englishman showed a new dimension in winning the Woody Stephens. Up until Saturday, Englishman had

never run behind another horse in a race's opening furlongs.

“We had spoken about that,” DeVaux said. “We were really happy with where we were going to be outside, and that was the horse Jose said that was probably going to be with him. We just said if he wants to go, just try to give yourself some room and just let Englishman – because he's got such a high cruising speed – just try to let him relax outside.”

Englishman may be flashy in the afternoon, and he can be a good actor in the morning. Just last week, he fooled Ortiz in a breeze meant to prep him for the Woody Stephens.

“He's kind of a cheeky horse,” DeVaux said. “Jose breezed him last week and the horse either goes really easy or he goes really fast. He tricked

Jose and went :27 and change for the first quarter. I would much rather have that to have this than the opposite way around. He'll go off in :23 and :24 very well within himself, but he's just kind of a cheeky little horse and he's a little difficult, when you're riding him, to know exactly how fast you're going.”

Born in Saratoga Springs, DeVaux earned her first Grade 1 victory at Saratoga Race Course in last year's New York Stakes with She Feels Pretty. The Woody Stephens marked her second, and of course, the Belmont added another.

“A Grade 1 at Saratoga means a whole lot,” DeVaux said. “It's really hard and it's really competitive. This is a historic track. The Grade 1 here does mean a whole lot.”

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All The Way

Classic Q scores again from the front for strong Casse barn

BY DARBY O'BRIEN

Trainer Mark Casse raised a triumphant fist as he stood along the rail of Saratoga Race Course's winner's circle to watch Classic Q roll home.

Three fillies. Three Grade 1s.

Not a bad two days in the office.

"I've been coming here since I was 10," said Casse in the winner's circle, his newest Grade 1 winner walking to the test barn. "I just wish my dad was here. I used to stand, we didn't have a box, and I would stand for races and races to watch. Saratoga has been my life since I was a little boy. It's been my dream. To be able to accomplish this weekend? Quite amazing."

Casse saddled Acorn winner Counting Stars and Ogden Phipps winner Nitrogen, recipient of the Eclipse Award for champion 3-year-old filly last year, on Friday's card. Saturday was all about Classic Q, winner of the \$500,000 Just A Game Stakes on the turf.

The Classic Empire filly settled herself on the lead early under John Velazquez as the field cruised into the first turn. Favored Segesta settled to her outside, while French-import and second choice Mandanaba tucked into third along the rail with Sandtrap to her outside. After a moderate opening quarter in :23.62, Classic Q showed the way by a length through the backstretch. Velazquez continued to sit patient through the half in :47.17.

"I knew at :47 and 2 that it was going to take something special to beat her," said Casse, who watched the 1-mile stakes alongside his wife Tina. "I kept telling Tina, 'Johnny's waiting, Johnny's waiting.'"

At the top of the stretch, Classic Q and Velazquez were done waiting.

Segesta challenged to the outside, but Classic Q held the lead, staying in front as Mandanaba snuck up the rail in pursuit. Classic Q refused to yield, rolling home by 1 1/4 lengths



Samantha Decker

Classic Q streaks to victory in Saturday's turf stakes.

in 1:32.84. Mandanaba finished second with Segesta third.

"That trip was about what we expected," said Velazquez, "I was expecting that she'd break well, that she'd be on the lead. I tried to save her the best I could, so I'd have something left to ask for. It's nice when it works out that way."

Velazquez rode Classic Q to a similar victory in the Grade 2 Distaff Turf Mile on Kentucky Derby Day at Churchill Downs. She also led throughout and held off Portfolio Duration, winner of Friday's Grade 1 New York Stakes, by a neck.



Dave Harmon

Classic Q takes her people to the winner's circle.

"This one was eventful, too," Casse said, noting the filly's antics in the paddock. "She did her own flyover when the flyover came. When the planes came over she went crazy. Then when she got out on the track she wouldn't move ... She's just extremely ornery. [Velazquez] said she was being so good and when they loaded the last horse she started acting up. Then, when she breaks, you can't rush her or she'll run off. He gets along with her. She wants to show her speed, but when you cluck to her there's no slowing her down. He knows her well."

Velazquez rode Classic Q for the third straight time in the Just A Game, following a second in the Grade 3 Honey Fox in late February at Gulfstream Park and the Distaff Turf Mile. Prior to the Distaff Turf Mile, Classic Q's most recent win came in the Wild Applause Stakes in July at Saratoga. She then suffered six consecutive losses in graded stakes company, placing in all but two of those starts, against the likes of Breeders' Cup winner Shisospicy, Pegasus World Cup Filly and Mare Turf winner Destino D'Oro and multiple graded stakes winner Lush Lips.

"She's always been talented," Casse said. "She's amazing. She had double ankle surgery before she ever made her first start. It's why she was so late in getting started, and she's just been unbelievable."

Originally a \$40,000 yearling at the Keeneland September sale, Classic Q is now owned by Gary Barber, Blue Crevalle Racing and Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners. She picked up \$275,000 for the Just A Game victory to pad her bankroll to \$1,349,865 from a record of 5-3-1 in 15 career starts.

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Direct Route

Reef Runner rallies to turf sprint score

BY TOM LAW

Alex Lieblong hung a left, around some plastic chain link fencing, through a hallway under the clubhouse box seat stairs toward the late afternoon diners noshing their desserts at tables on the porch. He hadn't made the walk in more than a decade and didn't need a map.

"Been there," Lieblong said, walking through a gap in the buffet and some temporary fences separating the Porch from the Jim Dandy Bar.

Lieblong made the walk with his wife JoAnn in 2015 after Embellish The Lace won the Grade 1 Alabama Stakes and the year before when The Big Beast won the Grade 1 King's Bishop. They also earned a trip that way in 2009 and 2010 when Telling won the Grade 1 Sword Dancer. That's a serious Grade 1 haul for the head of an investment firm with bank, gas and oil holdings and the chairman of the Arkansas Racing Commission.

"It's great being back up here," Lieblong said. "I guess I've won six Grade 1s and every one of them has been in New York."

The tally actually improved to seven Saturday thanks to a determined victory by his homebred gelding Reef Runner in the Grade 1 Jaipur Stakes going 5 1/2 furlongs on the turf. A 5-year-old gelding by The Big Beast, Reef Runner won the Jaipur by a half-length over last year's winner Ag Bullet with John The Beer Man third and 3-1 favorite My Boy Prince fifth in the field of 10.

Reef Runner won the Jaipur off a more than two-month freshening after his fourth in the Grade 1 Al Quoz Sprint on the Dubai World Cup card at Meydan Racecourse, which came about a month after he won the Grade 2 1351 Turf Sprint at King Abdulaziz Racecourse in Saudi Arabia. Irad Ortiz Jr. rode the gelding in Saudi and Saturday, nearly guiding Reef Runner to a course-record performance winning in 1:00.02 over the firm turf.

Lieblong praised trainer David Fawkes for the development of Reef Runner, who was gelded last summer after a stretch of seven straight defeats. He's won five of eight since and the Jaipur punched a return ticket to the Breeders' Cup Turf



Dave Harmon

Reef Runner gets home in time to win Saturday's Jaipur Stakes.

Sprint through the Breeders' Cup Challenge and also spoiled the California-based mare Ag Bullet's chances of a repeat win.

"The only thing we could ask for is for the gelding to not be in the race," Ag Bullet's trainer Richard Baltas quipped after the race. "She ran great. I loved the way she was doing all week, a bit of a handful, Johnny rode her perfect. I wanted her up close because the track can be fast and she laid off the speed horse. She had her shot to win it and the other horse ran her down. This horse just got good after they gelded him. That's the one thing about geldings, you can run them forever. Great effort, great horse."

Reef Runner proved that in the Jaipur.

Sent off 5-1 and third choice of 10, Reef Runner set up shop behind John The Beer Man and Ag Bullet in the early stages and just off through the opening quarter in :21.19 over the firm turf.

Ortiz loved the position, especially after a sharp start that came with a slight bump with Works For Me.

"That was great," Ortiz said. "When he broke sharp, I was really happy with that. He put me in a really good position."

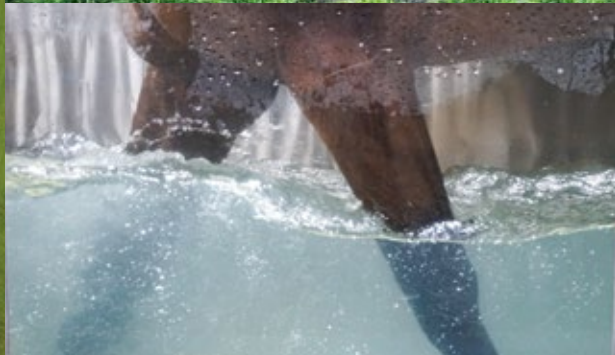
The Beer Man still led through the half in :43.13 with Ag Bullet just off and ready to take command in the stretch. Ag Bullet took the lead from John The Beer Man at the eighth pole and reached for

the finish inside the final sixteenth. Reef Runner came to the top pair in deep stretch and finally took the lead about 40 yards from home. Ag Bullet finished a neck in front of John The Beer Man for the runner-up spot with New York-bred stakes winner Twenty Six Black fourth.

The winning time wasn't far off Cogburn's record :59.80 set winning the 2024 Jaipur, also run at Saratoga during the first Belmont Stakes Racing Festival in upstate New York.

"What do you say but, 'Wow,'" Fawkes said. "He's just a really neat horse. Anything you ask him to do, he does. I was happy with him coming in. He was a little nervous in the paddock which I figured might have been first time back in the States jitters, but I wasn't too worried. Irad said that when he broke, the race was over. He was on the bridle and ready to roll."

Bred in Florida, Reef Runner is a full brother to stakes winner Big Paradise and winner Living In Paradise and a half-brother to the placed Street Sense filly Paradise Street. The Lieblongs purchased Reef Runner's dam, the Blame mare Paradise Bay, for \$350,000 at the 2017 Keeneland September sale. A half-sister to multiple Grade 1 winner and \$1,123,890-earner Paradise Woods, Paradise Bay won once in four starts for the Lieblongs before joining their broodmare band.



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Again

Champion sprinter Book'em Danno improves Spa mark

BY PAUL HALLORAN

The lucky TV on the Porch. The hot walker/groom in from Panama. The night-before dinner at Osteria Danny downtown. The pre-race pictures in the paddock.

The Book'em Danno connections have become creatures of habit when it comes to their champion sprinter running at Saratoga Race Course. And let's not forget the best part of the routine: the raucous takeover of the winner's circle and sipping champagne in the Carmen Barrera Room after another graded stakes win, with bugler Carson Gambaro playing the theme from Hawaii Five-0.

Those sights and sounds were on display again Saturday, when Book'em Danno won his fifth graded stakes at Saratoga in three years, running down 2025 Breeders' Cup Sprint winner Bentornato and pace presser Listenupshance to capture the Grade 3 True North Stakes.

In becoming the first three-time stakes winner on Belmont Stakes Day in at least 35 years, the gelding improved his career earnings to \$2,135,425 – about 60 times what the Atlantic Six ownership group paid for him and in the neighborhood of what they turned down when approached about selling him the day before the H. Allen Jerkens Stakes in 2024.

Paco Lopez, who is 5-for-7 on Book'em Danno, got him away for the gate third in the field that scratched down to six. And though he lost a spot going down the backstretch, he was within 3 1/4 lengths of the lead through a quarter mile in :21.76 and a half mile in :43.44. Bentornato got to the lead, but Listenupshance rushed up the rail and not only did he prevent him from getting separation, he poked his head in front going into the far turn.

Book'em Danno went by Imagination to pull into third off the turn and took aim at the pair in front. Listenupshance was still a neck in front inside the eighth pole, but Book'em Danno was in full flight, urged on by his rooting contingent on the Porch who watched the race just steps away from Bentornato's trainer, Jose D'Angelo.

"C'mon, Paco. C'mon, Paco. Give it to him. Dig in. C'mon, Paco."



Samantha Decker

Book'em Danno (left) draws alongside Bentornato (center) and Listenupshance in the stretch.

Lopez struck the front in the final 20 yards and won by three quarters of a length in a final time of 1:14.79 for the 6 1/2 furlongs.

"That was fun to watch," Jay Briscione, who leads the ownership group, said in the winner's circle. "The crowd loves him. We're just so fortunate to have a horse like this. People try all their lives to get a horse like this, and we really stepped in it. It's like a dream come true."

The good news is that Book'em Danno, the highest earning New Jersey-bred ever, shows no signs of waking them up, with the Breeders' Cup Sprint at Keeneland an end-of-year goal and perhaps another trip next year to Saudi Arabia, where he finished second in the 2024 Saudi Derby.

Trainer Derek Ryan gave Book'em Danno 7 1/2 months off after he completed a Saratoga trifecta by winning the True North, A. G. Vanderbilt and Forego last year. The connections took some jabs for passing on the Breeders' Cup Sprint, and that was reflected in the Eclipse Award voting, with Bentornato garnering 82 first-place votes to Book'em Danno's 115, despite running only twice in 2025.

"I think that Danno's body of work spoke for himself last year," Briscione said. "Those people that didn't want to believe ... the Breeders' Cup is a wonderful race, and some of these Grade 1s are wonderful, but we're not going to have a stud career. I think today Danno showed he was the best sprinter in the country last year and hopefully this

year, too."

Ryan said Book'em Danno may have been one workout short when he ran second in the Grade 2 Carter April 4 at Aqueduct to launch his 5-year-old campaign. Coming into the True North he had one timed work – on the turf – at Ian Brennan's farm in Ocala, followed by three razor-sharp drills at Monmouth Park: 5 furlongs in :59.80 twice and 3 furlongs in :35 seconds flat. Can you say all systems go?

"He's been training better this year than last, if that's possible," said Ryan, wearing his customary Florida State visor.

Briscione was on hand for all three Monmouth works, but he didn't need a stopwatch to tell him how sharp his horse was.

"We talked about how keen he was, how ready to go he was all week," he said. "He's never been this hot going into a race."

Book'em Danno was bred in New Jersey by Gregory Kilka and Bright View Farm. He's the leading runner for his sire Bucchero, currently the lone sire standing at Ironhorse Stallions in nearby Schuylerville. In celebrating Saturday's win with the Book'em Danno connections, Harlan Malter, who bought Bucchero for \$43,000 as a 2-year-old, raced him and now stands him, could not help but think of how close this Cinderella story was to never get-

Continued on Page 26

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True North -

■ Continued from page 24

ting to the first chapter.

Malter, who grew up in Newton, Mass., and graduated from Columbia University, said Karen and Greg Dodd were part of a partnership that sold broodmare Meetmeontime for \$2,200 in foal at the 2008 OBS winter mixed sale. Several months later, Karen Dodd got a disturbing phone call, telling her there were 30 horses found abandoned in a field in Florida,

not too far away from her Southern Chase Farm. Half were dead and the rest, including Meetmeontime, were close to it.

“The type of person Karen is, she hooked the trailer up, drove over there and picked her up,” Malter said. “She brought her back, nursed her back to health, and the second foal she had after that was Bucchero.”

The Indiana-bred Bucchero brought Malter and his partners on a magical ride of their own, winning the Grade 2 Woodford Stakes at Keeneland twice and running in two Breeders’ Cup Turf Sprints and the

King’s Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot. Not bad for a guy who entered horse racing from below the ground floor.

“I tell people all the time, I bought a \$500 share in a \$5,000 claimer in 2007,” said Malter, who lives in Southern California. “I had never gotten past the backside gates. And here we are. We campaigned a Breeders’ Cup runner, stand a stallion and he has a son winning graded stakes races at Saratoga.”

A third in the 2024 Jerkens is the only blemish on Book’em Danno’s Union Avenue record, something that gives unimaginable pleasure to his Jersey Boys. Briscione shares ownership with Mark Rubenstein, the aforementioned imported hotwalker,

Jim Rubenstein, Jeff Resnikoff, Frank Camassa, Jim Scappi and Jeff Rubenstein. Lifelong friends who make every race include Paul Morgano, Steve O’Horo and Steve Capozzi, Briscione’s cousin.

“This was a heavyweight fight,” Briscione said. “Derek’s just done a fantastic job with this horse. I know Derek talked to Paco, and Paco realized how much the track was favoring speed. One thing he’s done that the other jockeys haven’t, he’s gotten him away from there pretty good. He saw who was going to be in front of him, and he knew who he was going to have to run down. And he did it.”

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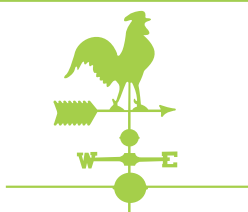
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Local Score

Buttah delivers big for Eddie F's Racing

BY DARBY O'BRIEN

Eddie Fazzone of Eddie F's, a popular seafood restaurant in Saratoga Springs, dressed to the nines for Belmont Stakes Day.

He looked the part in the winner's circle after Buttah stormed home to win Saturday's sixth race going 6 1/2 furlongs on the dirt in his second start for trainer Ilkay Kantarmaci.

"It was a real tough race, I'm looking at Todd's horse, Chad's horse," Fazzone said of trainers Pletcher and Brown. "They're 3-year-olds, but they're good-looking 3-year-olds. The way he won, I knew he was training great, I knew he was feeling great. We ran him three weeks ago and he just got beat off the layoff. This race was the same exact 6 1/2. We knew this horse could sprint."

Buttah won at 29-1 over 35-1 longshot Village Person with the Pletcher-trained Local Knowledge third and Brown-trained Sea Strike fifth.

"He always gives it his all," said Fazzone. "He's got a big heart. That whole family, big hearts. They always run real hard."

Buttah won a maiden race at Saratoga in 2024. He also finished a neck behind George Briggs in the Cab Calloway division of the New York Stallion Series last summer.

"It's great," he said, "I've only had a couple of wins here, but Dream Central in the Suzie O'Cain [in 2022]. That was my first winner here at Saratoga. That was great, too."

• Naive Melody, a \$220,000 purchase out of the 2024 OBS March sale, scored a front-running win in the fourth for trainer Wesley Ward.

"We really liked her at the sale," Ward said after the 6 1/2-furlong optional claimer. "We got a little blacktype there early on in her career, so I was hoping that to eventually get some graded black type and eventually down the road really



Dave Harmon

Buttah charges down the stretch to win Saturday's sixth race.

have some nice babies from her. A wonderful group of people who own her and we're hoping that not only she does this and her progeny goes on to as well."

A half-sister to Grade 1 winner Domestic Product, the 4-year-old daughter of Complexity won on debut at Aqueduct in December 2024. She finished

third in the East View Stakes in early February 2025 in her next start before another win in late April. Off until this April, Native Melody won her comeback at Aqueduct.

"She'll go back to Keeneland, that's where the home base is, but she'll be back," Ward said. "Maybe looking at some New York-bred spots for her."

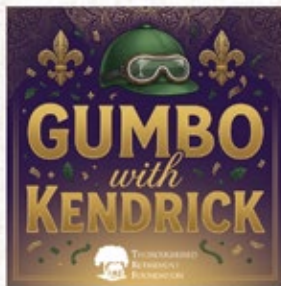


Dave Harmon

Naive Melody wins the fourth race.

• My Gun's Loaded scored in the opener at 18-1 odds for trainer Chad Brown and owner Douglas Scharbauer. Brown celebrated a second win in the fifth, sending out Marketplaceideas for Klaravich Stables. ... The 5-year-old Into Mischief gelding Senior Officer earned his third win in five starts in the second, an optional-claimer going 7 furlongs on the dirt, for trainer Brad Cox and owner Qatar Racing. Senior Officer got up in the final strides to defeat Contrary Thinking. ... Lee Lewis' Bonus Move scored a front-running win for trainer Mark Hennig in the third, a 1 1/16 mile allowance on the turf. Sounds Like A Plan took the nightcap, a 1-mile turf allowance, under Ricardo Santana Jr. for trainer Horacio De Paz and owner Club Sixty Five Racing.

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Cody's Met

Grade 1 triumph at Belmont helped fuel a growing legend

An excerpt from the recently released book "Cody's Wish. A Boy, a Racehorse and a Fight for Life," by The Special's Paul Halloran. Find out more at codyswishbook.com.

BY PAUL HALLORAN

In the thirty-five days between the Churchill Downs Stakes and the Met Mile in 2023, trainer Bill Mott gave Cody's Wish three timed workouts on the Oklahoma Training Track at Saratoga. He was extra sharp in all three, registering the two fastest four-furlong works and the quickest five-furlong breeze of his career, which included sixty-six workouts combined at those two distances. He did this on a track where the workout times are typically slower than most tracks, due to a deeper racing surface.

Who says horses can't talk? The big horse had announced his readiness for the Met Mile, first run in 1891 at Morris Park in the Bronx, a racetrack that hosted the Belmont Stakes from 1890 to 1904.

The original plan was for the entire family to make their first trip to New York, but Cody told his parents he didn't feel up to the trip. Leading up to it, he had several doctors' appointments and between that and school, he said he was tired and didn't feel like going. They asked him a few times just to be sure, but he told them he would watch on TV. Kelly traveled to New York with Danny Mulvihill, who had become a good friend.

In the Met Mile, Cody's Wish didn't scare off anyone, with eight horses lined up to take him on at Belmont Park. The field included Zandon, third in the 2022 Kentucky Derby; White Abarrio, who would go on to win the 2023 Breeders' Cup Classic; Dr. Schivel, second in the 2021 Breeders' Cup Sprint; and Slow Down Andy, third to Cody's Wish in

the 2022 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.

In the eyes of the betting public, however, it was another one-horse race. Cody's Wish was a 3-5 favorite, with the next-closest horse going off at 5-1 odds. Anyone who got a look at him in the paddock could understand why.

When it comes to evaluating Thoroughbreds, appearance matters. As a rule, the horses who look the best run the fastest. And on June 10, 2023, Cody's Wish was the equine male equivalent of a twenty-three-year-old Bo Derek.

"I was walking into the paddock just looking at him," Alvarado said. "He definitely looked the part that day. He looked beautiful."

As they warmed up on the racetrack, the jockey delivered his usual pre-race pep talk to the superstar athlete underneath him.

"Let's do it again. You're the champion. You're faster than these horses. Just do it the right way."

This was the seventh race Alvarado rode Cody's Wish and, while he had always felt he was sitting on a powerful horse, this was different. If he were an airline pilot, he would have been in the cockpit of the Concorde.

Heading to the gate — where he would start from the rail in the No. 1 post, meaning he would be in there the longest — Cody's Wish was pulling hard, giving Alvarado and the lead pony rider all they could handle. They got him in the gate OK, but with eight other horses to load Alvarado knew he was in for a battle.

As assistant starter Miguel Ramirez held onto the reins and struggled to stay on the small ledge inside the gate, Alvarado resisted the temptation to dismount, fearing if his horse broke through the gate — a legitimate concern — he would run off and be scratched. The jockey's goggles fogged up due to the exertion, forcing him to

Cody's Wish

A Boy, a Racehorse, and a Fight for Life



PAUL K. HALLORAN JR.

pull them down to let in some air.

As the final horse loaded, Cody's Wish started to thrash his head back and forth, up and down, but Ramirez managed to get it relatively straight just before the gate opened. "It wasn't perfect," Alvarado said, "but it was perfect enough."

Cody's Wish broke poorly, as usual, and was eighth after a half-mile, less than four lengths behind leader Hoist The Gold. Still second-last going into the turn, Alvarado briefly held back, then swung to the far outside. What happened next was one of the most powerful, electrifying, breathtaking twelve seconds you will

ever see on a racetrack, catching the attention of track announcer John Imbriale:

Cody's Wish is making a big move on the extreme outside. Cody's Wish is picking off horses as they come for the top of the stretch . . . Here comes Cody's Wish on the outside now to grab the lead . . . It is Cody's Wish in front. Cody's Wish is drawing away . . . And this beautiful racing story continues . . .

After running a half-mile, Cody's Wish blazed the next eighth-mile in 11.84 seconds—a third of a second faster than he stormed home to win

Continued on Page 33

Book-

■ Continued from page 32

the Forego at Saratoga. As impressive as it looked on the clock, it was more dazzling on the eyes, simply visually stunning. (Do yourself a favor and Google “2023 Met Mile Replay.”)

After Cody's Wish crossed the finish line a 3¼-length winner, Kelly Dorman fought back tears in the Belmont Park clubhouse as he clutched the bow tie Cody had worn to the Breeders' Cup. Cody may not have made the trip, but his dad wanted to make sure he could feel his presence and the bow tie served that purpose.

At home in Richmond, Cody, who had predicted another win, watched on TV and laughed, his version of a screaming, standing ovation. After the winner's circle picture was taken, Alvarado dismounted and handed Kelly two pairs of goggles. “One pair for Cody and one for your daughter,” he said. “Give them a hug for me.”

Mott landed his elusive Met Mile, and Team Godolphin was thrilled to give it to him, capturing the race steeped in tradition for the second time (Frosted won six years earlier).

“We've been waiting for this day since last fall after the Breeders' Cup,” Michael Banahan said. “This is where we wanted to come. I don't know if there's a bigger race in America that we'd like to win. Everyone wants to win the Derby. I'd rather win this race. You don't get much better than winning the Met Mile.”

After the Met Mile, Cody made another sign, this one for Cody's Wish's faithful groom, Ana Urista Hernandez, and he wrote it in Spanish. “Ana, Gracias Por Cuidar el Cody's Wish. [Thank you for taking care of Cody's Wish.] Love, Cody.”

With the Met Mile trophy on the way to Jonabell Farm, Mott and Godolphin had to decide where to run Cody's Wish next, but there really was only one logical choice: the Whitney Stakes, named for one of Thoroughbred racing's royal families, at Saratoga Race Course in August.

William Collins Whitney was one of the founders of The Jockey Club and started racing horses in 1898. The family racing operation was carried on by his son, Harry Payne Whitney, and grandson, Cornelius Vanderbilt “Sonny” Whitney, who married Ma-

rylou (Schroeder) Hosford in 1958.

Marylou Whitney, who died at age ninety-three in 2019, is arguably one of the most important people in the history of Saratoga Race Course, which dates to 1863. At a time when Saratoga has a total annual attendance of more than one million and fans line up before dawn to get prime backyard spots on big days, it may be hard to conceive that in the 1960s and '70s, it was the least popular of NYRA's three racetracks.

Marylou helped change that by using her status as a socialite and philanthropist to rejuvenate the cultural and social scene in Saratoga Springs and give influential people a reason to visit during the summer racing season. Known as the Grand Dame of Saratoga, she had her share of success as a racehorse owner, with her Birdstone derailing Smarty Jones's Triple Crown bid in the 2004 Belmont Stakes and capturing the Grade 1 Travers Stakes at Saratoga that summer.

Other than the Travers, named for the track's first president, William R. Travers, the Whitney is Saratoga's most important race. The only sticking point for the Cody's Wish connections was the 1 1/8-mile distance around two turns. At that point, the horse had run beyond a mile just twice, both losses. He had won at two turns, in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, but in the Whitney he would have to navigate the distance and configuration against top-class horses.

On the other hand, it was somewhat of a no-lose proposition. If Cody's Wish were to win the Whitney, Godolphin would consider taking a shot at the 1¼-mile Breeders' Cup Classic in November. If he lost, they could go back to the Dirt Mile.

“Look, we've watched him run. There's a good indication he can do it. But you never know until they do it,” Mott said the day before the Whitney, after watching his horse train on a muddy Oklahoma training track. “We've got over twenty-four hours to the race, so now it's just like driving defensively on the turnpike. You just have to be careful.”

There was plenty of traffic around Mott's barn that Friday morning. Word got out that Cody was in town and was going to visit his horse, guaranteeing a crowd, a group that included the Dormans and Kelly's friend Rick Gregory and his wife, Deata.

The Dormans had driven to up-

state New York, stopping at Niagara Falls on the way. They had heard a lot about the magic of Saratoga and were anxious to experience it.

“They told me as great as Belmont was, the intensity up here is off the charts,” Kelly said over dinner one night at Pennell's, a popular Italian restaurant a few miles from the track. “Now I know what they mean.”

On Friday morning, Kelly and Leslie stationed Cody's wheelchair in front of Cody's Wish's stall and, for several minutes, the two friends — one an equine superstar and the other an embodiment of courage and resilience — simply looked at each other.

That night, the Dormans were guests of honor at a barbecue a few miles from the track. Cody was, as always, a rock star, meeting a group of veteran horseplayers genuinely touched to be in his presence. There were deep, lasting relationships born on Beacon Hill Drive August 4, 2023 — bonds that will never be broken.

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Sunday, June 7

1ST (12:05PM). \$105,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 1 1/16M (INNER TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Considerate City.....	D. Davis	.....	J. Ferraro	.....	8-1
2	.....2	.....All of It.....	M. Franco	.....	M. Clement	.....	5-2
3	.....3	.....Tahila.....	S. Gonzalez	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	50-1
4	.....4	.....Boomington.....	J. Velazquez	.....	G. Weaver	.....	7-2
5	.....5	.....Neshika.....	F. Prat	.....	M. Maker	.....	9-2
6	.....6	.....Cosmic Candy Girl.....	K. Carmouche	.....	J. Ryerson	.....	6-1
7	.....7	.....Bertrille.....	D. Rivera	.....	C. Baker	.....	30-1
8	.....8	.....On a Summer Day.....	J. Castellano	.....	J. Pregman, Jr.	.....	15-1
9	.....9	.....Bryant and Cooper.....	J. Lezcano	.....	C. Brown	.....	8-1
10	.....10	.....Tongue Twister.....	C. Elliott	.....	K. Brion	.....	15-1
11	.....11	.....Quick Power Nap.....	R. Silvera	.....	R. Rodriguez	.....	20-1
12	.....AE-MTO	.....Timia.....	J. Castellano	.....	W. Potts	.....	7-2
13	.....AE-MTO	.....Spirit of Esther.....	M. Franco	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	10-1

2ND (12:38PM). \$100,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 1 1/16M (TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Force of Mischief.....	D. Rivera	.....	D. Donk	.....	50-1
2	.....2	.....New York Special.....	E. Zayas	.....	M. Casse	.....	6-1
3	.....3	.....No Tide.....	K. Carmouche	.....	P. Antonacci	.....	20-1
4	.....4	.....Coach of the Year.....	J. Lezcano	.....	G. Weaver	.....	6-1
5	.....5	.....No Need to Panic.....	D. Davis	.....	M. Miceli	.....	20-1
6	.....6	.....Saint Margaret.....	C. Elliott	.....	J. Ryerson	.....	12-1
7	.....7	.....Soaring Spirit.....	M. Franco	.....	M. Clement	.....	7-2
8	.....8	.....Pelican Pride.....	J. Velazquez	.....	C. DeVaux	.....	9-2
9	.....9	.....Factory Setting.....	F. Prat	.....	C. Brown	.....	10-1
10	.....10	.....Amazing Gracer.....	J. Rodriguez	.....	H. Bond	.....	6-1
11	.....11	.....Morning Prayer.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	T. Morley	.....	8-1
12	.....12	.....Zap That Ghost.....	J. Castellano	.....	J. Abreu	.....	20-1
13	.....AE	.....Little Finch.....	J. Alvarado	.....	H. Bond	.....	20-1
14	.....AE	.....Saratoga Daisy.....	D. Davis	.....	D. Donk	.....	15-1
15	.....AE	.....Ticket to Ride.....	S. Civaci	.....	S. Joseph, Jr.	.....	8-1
16	.....AE	.....Athena's Fury.....	F. Prat	.....	A. Green	.....	12-1

3RD (1:11PM). \$125,000, AOC \$80,000, 3 YO'S & UP, F & M, 7F

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

1	.....1	.....Limes Don't Lie.....	D. Davis	.....	C. Brown	.....	6-1
2	.....2	.....Roman Grace.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	L. Rice	.....	6-1
3	.....3	.....Scottish Lassie.....	F. Prat	.....	J. Abreu	.....	4-5
4	.....4	.....Midtown Lights.....	S. Civaci	.....	S. Joseph, Jr.	.....	12-1
5	.....5	.....Filly Freedom.....	M. Franco	.....	C. Brown	.....	4-1
6	.....6	.....Autumn Evening.....	J. Rodriguez	.....	J. D'Angelo	.....	5-1

4TH (1:46PM). \$300,000, STK - THE POKER, 4 YO'S & UP, 1M (INNER TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Tarantino.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	D. Jacobson	.....	30-1
2	.....2	.....Zulu Kingdom (IRE).....	F. Prat	.....	C. Brown	.....	4-5
3	.....3	.....Ridari (FR).....	J. Rodriguez	.....	M. Clement	.....	6-1
4	.....4	.....Capitol Hill.....	J. Alvarado	.....	W. Mott	.....	8-1
5	.....5	.....Pass the Hat.....	J. Velazquez	.....	W. Mott	.....	8-1
6	.....6	.....Multitask.....	J. Castellano	.....	D. Jacobson	.....	20-1
7	.....7	.....Salamis.....	M. Franco	.....	C. Brown	.....	5-2
8	.....AE-MTO	.....Castle Chaos.....	M. Franco	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	8-1
9	.....AE-MTO	.....Over and Ollie.....	Rider TBA	.....	R. Dutrow, Jr.	.....	5-2
10	.....AE-MTO	.....Ignite the Light.....	Rider TBA	.....	R. Dutrow, Jr.	.....	9-5
11	.....AE-MTO	.....Sara's Shaman.....	S. Gonzalez	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	20-1
12	.....AE-MTO	.....Ambition.....	C. Elliott	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	15-1

5TH (2:20PM). \$105,000, ALW, 3 YO'S & UP, 5 1/2F (TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....New York Scrappy.....	S. Gonzalez	.....	I. Kantarmaci	.....	20-1
2	.....2	.....Truman's Commander.....	E. Zayas	.....	M. Casse	.....	10-1
3	.....3	.....Van Vollenhoven.....	J. Castellano	.....	D. Duggan	.....	15-1
4	.....4	.....Three Thirteen.....	S. Bridgmohan	.....	M. Giddings	.....	8-1
5	.....5	.....B Provocateur.....	R. Silvera	.....	R. Rodriguez	.....	30-1
6	.....6	.....Rhyton.....	J. Rodriguez	.....	M. Clement	.....	6-1
7	.....7	.....Moonlight Drive.....	D. Davis	.....	J. Abreu	.....	6-1
8	.....8	.....On the Ledge.....	F. Prat	.....	B. Brown	.....	9-2
9	.....9	.....Diliello.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	T. Morley	.....	12-1
10	.....10	.....Joker On Fire.....	J. Lezcano	.....	B. Levine	.....	7-2
11	.....11	.....Cristobal.....	M. Franco	.....	R. Falcone, Jr.	.....	10-1
12	.....12	.....Punto Forty.....	J. Velazquez	.....	L. Rice	.....	10-1
13	.....AE	.....Stormy Birthday.....	J. Castellano	.....	R. Ribaldo	.....	10-1
14	.....AE	.....Burning Bridges.....	J. Velazquez	.....	M. Casse	.....	6-1
15	.....AE	.....Epitaph.....	C. Elliott	.....	W. Potts	.....	20-1
16	.....AE	.....My Life Story.....	F. Prat	.....	M. Maker	.....	10-1

6TH (2:54PM). \$115,000, MSW, 2 YO, 5 1/2F

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

1	.....1	.....Blackjack.....	E. Zayas	.....	J. Delgado	.....	10-1
2	.....2	.....Jack's Golden Goal.....	D. Rivera	.....	A. Arriaga	.....	30-1
3	.....3	.....Just a Holiday.....	D. Davis	.....	W. Ward	.....	9-2
4	.....4	.....Cut Down the Nets.....	J. Rodriguez	.....	A. Green	.....	12-1
5	.....5	.....Pinpoint.....	F. Prat	.....	T. Pletcher	.....	5-1
6	.....6	.....Beach Sandals.....	J. Velazquez	.....	M. Casse	.....	6-1
7	.....7	.....Uncleshane.....	C. Elliott	.....	M. Giddings	.....	8-1
8	.....8	.....Motawaali.....	J. Alvarado	.....	W. Mott	.....	6-1
9	.....9	.....Booked.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	S. Asmussen	.....	3-1
10	.....10	.....Call Attendant.....	M. Franco	.....	T. Morley	.....	10-1
11	.....AE	.....Georgie's Warrior.....	S. Bridgmohan	.....	M. Giddings	.....	12-1
12	.....AE	.....Johnny Hockey.....	R. Silvera	.....	A. Arriaga	.....	30-1

7TH (3:29PM). \$78,000, SOC \$45,000-\$55,000, 3 YO'S & UP, 1 1/16M (INNER TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Complex Agenda.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	T. Morley	.....	9-2
2	.....2	.....Salt Spartan.....	D. Davis	.....	D. Donk	.....	8-1
3	.....3	.....Gene and Jude.....	F. Prat	.....	M. Maker	.....	7-2
4	.....4	.....Mo Kreesa.....	J. Lezcano	.....	M. Hennig	.....	10-1
5	.....5	.....Three Percent.....	J. Alvarado	.....	K. Demasi	.....	12-1
6	.....6	.....Bridle a Butterfly.....	K. Carmouche	.....	T. Proctor	.....	8-1
7	.....7	.....Final Denile.....	M. Franco	.....	H. De Paz	.....	6-1
8	.....8	.....Swiss Army Knife.....	J. Castellano	.....	F. Abreu	.....	30-1
9	.....9	.....American Grant.....	E. Zayas	.....	B. Brown	.....	20-1
10	.....10	.....Geostoblame.....	J. Velazquez	.....	T. Pletcher	.....	15-1
11	.....11	.....Rabaja.....	R. Silvera	.....	H. Bond	.....	12-1
12	.....12	.....The Paddock Pastor.....	J. Rodriguez	.....	A. Green	.....	6-1
13	.....AE	.....McDiesel.....	E. Zayas	.....	R. Rodriguez	.....	15-1
14	.....AE	.....Willintorskitall.....	M. Franco	.....	R. Dutrow, Jr.	.....	5-1
15	.....AE	.....Vintage Vino.....	R. Silvera	.....	L. Rice	.....	9-2
16	.....AE	.....Chips and Fish.....	J. Lezcano	.....	A. Arriaga	.....	30-1

8TH (4:04PM). \$200,000, STK - THE SOARING SOFTLY, 3 YO, F, 5 1/2F (TURF)

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

1	.....1	.....Hen Party.....	F. Prat	.....	E. Harty	.....	7-2
2	.....2	.....Flowerhead (IRE).....	E. Zayas	.....	C. Clover	.....	12-1
3	.....3	.....Cadenza.....	M. Franco	.....	B. Cox	.....	4-1
4	.....4	.....Slay the Day.....	J. Velazquez	.....	B. Lynch	.....	6-5
5	.....5	.....Kingsolver.....	R. Santana, Jr.	.....	R. Brisset	.....	8-1
66Should've.....	D. Davis	W. Ward	10-1
77Alpenglow.....	J. Rodriguez	J. D'Angelo	8-1
8AE-MTONiche.....	D. Davis	R. Atras	2-1

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SARATOGA ENTRIES

9TH (4:39PM). \$52,000, SOC \$20,000-\$16,000, 4 YO'S & UP, 6 1/2F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta, Pic 3, Daily Double

1	.....1	.....Gatsby	.....M. Franco	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....9-2
2	.....2	.....Quiet Wisdom	.....E. Zayas	.....W. Potts	.....12-1
3	.....3	.....Graywing	.....F. Villa Pino	.....E. Jones	.....50-1
4	.....4	.....Timaeus	.....S. Gonzalez	.....I. Kantarmaci	.....12-1
5	.....5	.....Mr Skylight	.....C. Elliott	.....R. Falcone, Jr.	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Secured Landing	.....K. Carmouche	.....L. Rice	.....6-1
7	.....7	.....Private Desire	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....T. Morley	.....7-2
8	.....8	.....Princip	.....J. Castellano	.....W. Potts	.....20-1
9	.....9	.....Forgiving Spirit	.....R. Silvera	.....R. Rodriguez	.....6-1
10	.....10	.....Stewie	.....D. Davis	.....M. Friedman	.....20-1
11	.....11	.....Olazabal	.....J. Flores	.....R. Sells	.....20-1
12	.....12	.....Shoot the Nickel	.....F. Prat	.....L. Rice	.....4-1

10th (5:14PM). \$105,000, ALW, 3 yo's & up, 7F

EXACTA, TRIFECTA, SUPERFACTA, DAILY DOUBLE

1	.....1	.....Toscano	.....F. Prat	.....M. Maker	.....6-1
2	.....2	.....Fireballin	.....M. Franco	.....M. Maker	.....8-1
3	.....3	.....Hey Toby	.....K. Carmouche	.....J. Englehart	.....15-1
4	.....4	.....You're Lookin Good	.....R. Gutierrez	.....A. Green	.....30-1
5	.....5	.....Anyway	.....J. Rodriguez	.....L. Rice	.....6-1
6	.....6	.....Bold Love	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....C. Summers	.....5-1
7	.....7	.....Leo's Reward	.....D. Rivera	.....D. Donk	.....12-1
8	.....8	.....Mo for the King	.....J. Velazquez	.....R. Falcone, Jr.	.....5-1
9	.....9	.....Sunday Boy	.....C. Elliott	.....J. Ryerson	.....15-1
10	.....10	.....Mozambique	.....R. Silvera	.....R. Rodriguez	.....15-1
11	.....11	.....Solomini's World	.....S. Gonzalez	.....A. Arriaga	.....30-1
12	.....12	.....Long Pour	.....J. Lezcano	.....G. Arnold II	.....4-1
13	.....13	.....Oath of Omerta	.....E. Zayas	.....J. Antonucci	.....20-1

11TH (5:49PM). \$100,000, MSW, 3 YO'S & UP, 6 1/2F

Exacta, Trifecta, Superfecta

1	.....1	.....Ice House	.....J. Velazquez	.....G. Weaver	.....6-1
2	.....2	.....Bold Scholar	.....R. Gutierrez	.....M. Giddings	.....20-1
3	.....3	.....Roadie	.....F. Prat	.....T. Pletcher	.....10-1
4	.....4	.....King Farro	.....K. Carmouche	.....R. Falcone, Jr.	.....4-1
5	.....5	.....Hurricane Kaz	.....J. Rodriguez	.....D. Synnefias	.....10-1
6	.....6	.....Frankie Coffeecake	.....J. Alvarado	.....K. Demasi	.....15-1
7	.....7	.....Aristide Maillol	.....J. Lezcano	.....W. Mott	.....15-1
8	.....8	.....Sultan Hassan	.....R. Santana, Jr.	.....H. De Paz	.....15-1
9	.....9	.....Bossofeverything	.....E. Zayas	.....H. Bond	.....10-1
10	.....10	.....Thundertaker	.....C. Elliott	.....K. McGuire	.....20-1
11	.....11	.....Irish Goodbye	.....M. Franco	.....B. Cox	.....5-2
1212Imperial AnthemJ. CastellanoC. Englehart20-1
1313RuncotR. SilveraH. Bond15-1

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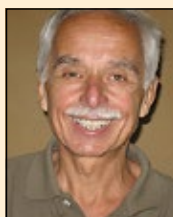
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The **POWER** Grid



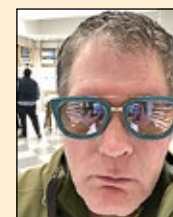
Tom Law



John Shapazian



Charles Bedard



Rob Whitlock



Jessica Paquette

Race	Tom Law	John Shapazian	Charles Bedard	Rob Whitlock	Jessica Paquette
1	Boomington Cosmic Candy Girl All Of It	Timia All Of It Bryant And Cooper	Bryant And Cooper Timia Neshika	Boomington Neshika Considerate City	Boomington All Of It Neshika
2	Soaring Spirit New York Special Pelican Pride	New York Special Soaring Spirit Coach Of The Year	Amazing Gracer Soaring Spirit Pelican Pride	Pelican Pride Morning Prayer Coach Of The Year	Pelican Pride Soaring Spirit Coach Of The Year
3	Scottish Lassie Limes Don't Lie Roman Grace	Scottish Lassie Limes Don't Lie Roman Grace	Limes Don't Lie Scottish Lassie Filly Freedom	Scottish Lassie Midtown Lights Roman Grace	Scottish Lassie Limes Don't Lie Filly Freedom
4	Ignite The Light Zulu Kingdom Salamis	Zulu Kingdom Over And Ollie Ridari	Zulu Kingdom Pass The Hat Salamis	Zulu Kingdom Ridari Pass The Hat	Capitol Hill Zulu Kingdom Salamis
5	Rhyton Three Thirteen Burning Bridges	Rhyton Moonlight Drive On The Ledge	Joker On Fire New York Scrapy On The Ledge	Three Thirteen Diliello Punto Forty	Rhyton Truman's Commander Val Vollenhoven
6	Pinpoint Booked Beach Sandals	Just A Holiday Booked Pinpoint	Uncleshane Booked Beach Sandals	Beach Sandals Just A Holiday Uncleshane	Beach Sandals Pinpoint Motawaali
7	Final Denile Swiss Army Knife Gene And Jude	Final Denile Complex Agenda Salt Spartan	Vintage Vino Final Denile Complex Agenda	Bridle A Butterfly Salt Spartan Gene And Jude	Complex Agenda Geostoblame Mo Kreesa
8	Slay The Day Cadenza Flowerhead	Niche Slay The Day Hen Party	Slay The Day Cadenza Hen Party	Slay The Day Hen Party Cadenza	Cadenza Slay The Day Should've
9	Secured Landing Gatsby Forgiving Spirit	Gatsby Secured Landing Private Desire	Gatsby Secured Landing Quiet Wisdom	Secured Landing Shoot The Nickel Graywing	Gatsby Secured Landing Timaeus
10	Toscano Sunday Boy Fireballin	Fireballin Long Pour Anyway	Mo For The King Leo's Reward Anyway	Anyway Fireballin Toscano	Toscano Mo For The King Anyway
11	Irish Goodbye Sultan Hassan Ice House	Irish Goodbye King Farro Hurricane Kaz	Irish Goodbye Hurricane Kaz King Farro	Irish Goodbye Bold Scholar Roadie	Ice House Irish Goodbye Roadie
2026 Records	8/49, (-\$47.22)	11/49, (-\$28.24)	10/49, (-\$16.96)	6/49, (-\$43.92)	8/49, (-\$19.64)

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

Sense of Place

A racing fan, or a guy at the races anyway, approached Todd Pletcher in the upstairs seating area at Aqueduct Racetrack with a pen, a copy of the Daily Racing Form and a question.

“Will you sign my Form?” the guy asked.

“Sure,” replied Pletcher, who signed his name and handed back the paper. The man took it, ripped it in half, dropped it on the ground and walked away.

“What did I do to you?” Pletcher remembers thinking.

Nothing. Everything. Who really knows when horses, bettors, money, a gritty racetrack and sour grapes are concerned?

That’s an Aqueduct memory the Hall of Fame trainer won’t necessarily look back on fondly, but the New York City racetrack – which closes for good at the end of June – will forever be part of Pletcher’s career. He figures he went for the first time in November 1989, five months after taking a job with trainer Wayne Lukas.

It was an education.

“I remember putting vet wraps on horses and seeing the straw move,” Pletcher said. “There were rats under there.”

First used in 1894, the old track near a conduit of the Brooklyn Waterworks isn’t all insults and vermin, though.

“You think about the Wood Memorial, the spring meet, the historical significance of that,” Pletcher said this week outside his Saratoga Race Course barn. “The races that used to be Thanksgiving Weekend that have now shifted to the beginning of December – the Remsen, Demoiselle, Cigar Mile, all those are always great races.”

Pletcher won them all – seven Woods, three Remsens, 10 Demoiselles and seven Cigar Miles. The Aqueduct fixtures move to the new Belmont Park, along with everything else about downstate Thoroughbred racing and an era ends.

Hopefully autograph guy leaves the attitude behind.

Retired jockey Richard Migliore didn’t necessarily meet that man, but heard plenty – good and bad – from the denizens. Memories come easily for Migliore, who went to Aqueduct as a child and declared on a train ride home with his father, “I am going to be a jockey,” he said. Nicholas Migliore told the youngster if he worked hard and really wanted it that he had a chance at success.

“And then I told him I was going to win the Toboggan Handicap,” Migliore said this week.

THE OUTSIDE RAIL *By Joe Clancy*

He won the winter fixture six times in a 30-year career that included 4,450 wins. His 3,000th win came at Aqueduct, so did his 4,000th. He won the Wood Memorial with Eternal Prince in 1985, ensuring a spot on the wall of photos he’d stared at since he was a child.

“I could tell you every owner, trainer, jockey, horse that won it, and I remember having that realization on the way into the winner’s circle that I was going to be on the wall, and I actually got very emotional about it,” said Migliore, who grew up in the Sheepshead Bay and Bay Shore communities. “Aqueduct was the first place I ever went to the races. It was the portal into the world I wanted to be a part of.”

Like Pletcher, Migliore acknowledged Aqueduct’s “New York personality.” Aqueduct racing fans are as much a part of the show as horses, trainers and jockeys.

“People make a lot of the fans that heckle jockeys and jump on you, but they’re the most knowl-

edgeable fans,” Migliore said. “They may not be nice in how they say it, but usually they’re right in what they say, you know?”

Definitely.

Beyond advice, criticisms and (yes) compliments, Aqueduct’s Jamaican fans even bestowed nicknames on jockeys. As part of a recent television package paying tribute to the track and its people, Migliore recalled a couple of his – “Chicken Soup” and “Stepfather.” The jockey made bettors “healthy” like chicken soup with a timely win or, at the very least, a winning effort. And he bailed bettors out of jams the way a kindly stepfather might.

A regular on NYRA’s Fox Sports broadcasts, Migliore misses the nicknames and he’ll definitely miss the track.

Trainer Dave Duggan probably never got a nickname, but he won’t forget his moments.

“Aqueduct has been an amazing place for me,” said the Irishman. “How would you describe it? It’s been kind of the blue-collar place. It’s got its own unique way. It’s more of a feel that you get from the place.”

Duggan didn’t blink, once, when asked for an Aqueduct moment. His began and ended with Drafted, whose 2022 season included victories in the Toboggan in February and Gravesend in December. In the first one, he rallied from last of five early to take a 4-length lead into the stretch and kept on going.

“I remember saying, ‘What is Jose Ortiz doing?’ and then he just went down and won,” Duggan said. “That was the Toboggan, but I’ve won 12-5 claimers there that I was just as happy about.”

Pletcher, Migliore, Duggan and anyone else practical enough to think about it for a minute understand the racetrack’s end. Everything changes. If the old Yankee Stadium is gone, Aqueduct was probably destined to go too.

“It’s like upgrading the computer, you know?” said Duggan. “You’re going to miss it, even if it’s progress. With Aqueduct it’s hard. It’s more the stories and the people that meshed in together because you’d never put all those people in the same place like that. They made it special.”

•••

Racing returns to Aqueduct June 11 – racing Thursday-Sunday for three weeks. Closing weekend is June 27 and 28.

You should go.



The Wood Memorial wall at Aqueduct.

Susie Raisher/Coglianesse Photo

One Year

Same couch. Same day. Same page.

At least it isn't raining.

There was an easy theme last year. It started with the simplest form of writing. Go with the weather. Set the scene.

Water rolls over the gutters and pools into puddles, a statement of intent, a day of disruption. The Belmont Gold Cup washed away yesterday, the New York and the Just A Game managed to run, putting up asterisks rather than affirmations and the Belmont Stakes card tries to quell the weather gods. At least the jump race was run Wednesday. The Saratoga rain. The biblical, belting Saratoga rain.

About 600 words later, it finished.

And sure, the show goes on. The show always goes on. The Belmont, first run at 1 5/8 miles on a Thursday at Jerome Park in 1867, still looms in the distance, four hours and three minutes to go. Tick tock. Tick tock. At least it stopped raining.

I had almost forgotten about last year.

Races were postponed, canceled, moved to Sunday, post times were adjusted and juggled. Nitrogen showed she could run on the dirt, er, mud. Frankie, on another farewell tour, won the Met Mile. Patch Adams scored in the True North. Book'em Danno began his summer of love. Sovereignty did what Sovereignty does. John Shirreffs, in town with Baeza, brightened our day like he always did. And we had a 13-race belter, topped off with the rescheduled Jaipur and Manhattan, Sunday. It was a blur.

Joe just walked in after a morning walk around the park on Lake Avenue. He almost looks refreshed, revived. The sun's out, although there is a call for rain later today. Which means nothing, I've been here when it's pouring on the main track and sunny on the Oklahoma. We'll see.

"Like a normal Saturday morning out there," Joe said. "People are out walking their dogs."

This is anything but a normal Saturday afternoon. A 14-race behemoth, seven stakes, six Grade



By Sean Clancy

1 stakes, topped by the Belmont Stakes at 7:04 tonight. Book'em Danno and Bentornato clashing in the True North. Ag Bullet trying to defend her title against the boys in the Jaipur. Crude Velocity attempting to stay undefeated in the Woody Stephens. Preakness winner Journalism shortens up and tries to get over from the outside draw in a deep renewal of the Met Mile. More races than writers, we'll throw it all together late through the night and into the morning. The final edition of the Belmont Special this year and forever.

The ultimate host, Saratoga, drew a tough hand for its three editions of the Belmont Racing Festival.

Two years ago, Mystik Dan upset the Derby, but couldn't win the Preakness, he showed up here but was over the top by then.

Last year Sovereignty crushed the Derby but skipped the Preakness, the Belmont Stakes became a layup for two rather than a gavel down for three.

Golden Tempo took the same route this year, win, skip, prepare. Imagine a Triple Crown chance, never mind a winner, at Saratoga. The vibe, the energy, the urgency of this racing town. That's what we envisioned when the idea began to boil a few years back. Didn't happen. Sadly. Horsemen taking care of horses, I get it, but it would have been sweet, one of those moments where you would look back and say, yeah, I was there.

Every once in a while, I say it about American Pharoah and his Triple Crown, a race, a sport, a moment etched in time forever. Instead, we can talk about being here when the Belmont ran at Saratoga. Big horses, big races, but not the biggest. That's cool, a footnote, a sidebar in racing's ever-weaving tale. It's been fun.

Today we usher out the final Belmont Racing Festival at Saratoga. It's worked, despite last year's weather and the deflation of never feeling the chance at a Triple Crown winner. What might have been, right?

In a few weeks we'll say goodbye to Aqueduct. The rogue cousin who you always kind of liked but never knew why. A logical and necessary decision by NYRA but also a bittersweet moment to see another old friend slip away.

And in three months, we'll welcome a new Belmont Park. A much-needed upgrade, four surfaces for 44 weeks and a new era in New York racing. Credit to the visionaries who have made it happen. And, whew, we sure hope it works. A Belmont Racing Festival at the new Belmont Park will be something to look forward to next summer and hopefully forever.

A healthy, vibrant Belmont Park is the only way to take the pressure off Saratoga, which hosts a whopping 51 days of racing this year. Release the pressure valve on the giving tree.

Two hours after his morning walk, Joe, carrying his race clothes on two hangers and a turkey sandwich in a Ziploc, just walked out of our two-bedroom rental to hunker down in the office for one last deadline. He pokes his head back through the door.

"It's raining,"

Of course, it's raining.

See you in July.

IN 2025: OWNER OF ECLIPSE AWARD WINNER COOL JET AND NSA CHAMPION OWNER

508
~~475~~
Winners
BOUGHT, MANAGED, OR OWNED

This Year's Stats:

37 Starts • 11 Wins • 10 Seconds

\$565,996 in Earnings

including wins in the
Grade 1 Iroquois Stakes and
Grade 2 Temple Gwathmey Stakes



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CLASSIC Q *Just a Game S. (G1)*



ENGLISHMAN *Woody Stephens S. (G1)*



DETERMINISTIC *Manhattan S. (G1)*

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NYQUINELLA!

Nyquist colts Nysos and *future Darley stallion* Knightsbridge run one-two in the G1 Met Mile.

Nyquist has five Graded Stakes winners this year. That's the best among all stallions under \$250k.

Darley