

By DAVE LITFIN

Belmont

JULY 14, 2004 WEDNESDAY

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The harrowed main track was drying out and labeled good, and the eight dirt races were dominated by early-pace types. Five winners led or dueled from the opening bell, and three others were up close within a length of the lead at the first call. No path bias.

Only one of four scheduled grass races remained on turf, and **DELTA SENSATION** (3rd, \$3.60) enjoyed clear sailing along the hedge turning for home as pacesetter **MA FEMME** drifted off the inside. Delta Sensation moved through to quickly take control of the optional claimer with third-level allowance conditions, and notched her fifth win from eight lifetime starts. The versatile 3-year-old filly has won at five distances on turf and dirt for trainer Frank Alexander, and her next logical step is the Lake George at Saratoga on Aug. 2. **DYNAMIC LISA**, ostensibly preparing for a defense of her Yaddo title at the Spa last summer, finished a well-beaten fourth while perhaps disliking the soft footing.

Good-looking debut on dirt for the Jimmy Toner-trained **BLAZING PURSUIT** (5th, \$11), a 3-year-old colt who pressed the pace four wide and edged away from **CLEAR THE BASES** in the lane. Don't be surprised to see him on turf eventually, because he is a half-brother to three grass winners, notably Blazing Fury, a stakes-winning earner of nearly \$500,000 for these connections. **FOG BUSTER**, announced as a gelding for his 4-year-old debut, raced wide and rallied mildly in a useful effort.

JULY 15, 2004 THURSDAY

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Overnight rain led to another drying-out track, and early-pace horses enjoyed another productive afternoon, accounting for seven wins in the eight dirt races. The lone exception was **ICE N' GOLD** (2nd, \$6.30), who rallied from next-to-last in a short field to wear down pacesetter **BUTTERFACE** in a \$20,000 claiming route.

Every other dirt winner set or forced the early issue, beginning with **TIME FOR A GRANDSLAM** (1st, \$3.40), who dropped in price to outduel **STARLIT LAKE** after a long drive. The Rick Violette-trained Starlit Lake broke outward, bumping with Let's Roll Lady, who then clipped heels and unseated Shaun Bridgmohan; Starlit Lake was disqualified and placed last.

The day went from bad to worse for Violette in the stewards' room, when his first-time starter **DR. QUIRK** (4th) was in tight on the rail and bumped repeatedly by the lugging-in **SCHILOH** (\$3.80) to drop a half-length decision in the slower division of a New York-bred baby dash. Schiloh, who had been taken down at 48-1 for similar shenanigans on June 18, survived the inquiry this time.

The faster division went to **BOLD DECISION** (9th, \$11.40), a first-time starter who overcame a five-wide trip for Laurie LaFavers, who continues to get good results while flying under the radar.

One pick six winner of \$31,788 was prescient enough to navigate around awful performances from heavy favorites **MY NAMES NICOLE** (5th) and **SWINGING** (8th), a pair of 3-year-old fillies who backed up to finish dead last at even money and 9-10, respectively.

JULY 16, 2004 FRIDAY

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COGNAY (8th, \$15) began her career with just two wins from 16 starts, but has been on a prolonged upward spiral ever since. Her gutsy front-end win over **TRAVELATOR** in the \$60,000 Scotzanna Stakes was her seventh win since December, and there was nothing phony about the pace – she sizzled a half-mile in 45 seconds and had enough left to run a final quarter in 24.29, as Travelator (who has been in the exacta 12 of 15 career starts) settled for second as the choice.

In his last three starts, **EYE OF THE TIGER** (5th, \$3.10) had given futile chase to Pico Central in the San Carlos, Carter, and Met Mile, so he appreciated the drop to an optional claimer with third-level allowance conditions, and rallied three wide to draw away with good energy over the very sharp **COUNTRY JUDGE**. The latter won his first two allowance conditions in back-to-back starts here last month, and maintained fine form while taking the worst of the weights, giving the prohibitive favorite five pounds.

The pair of mile races for fillies and mares on the Widener turf course were won by wide-rallying closers **RIGHT OUT RO** (4th, \$44.60) and **CUPID'S ARROW** (7th, \$19.40).

Right Out Ro, a tough one to come up with after 15 straight defeats, angled out five wide into the lane and outkicked **SUNCOAST PARKWAY** to finally notch her maiden win. Potentially a negative key race.

Cupid's Arrow, a close second in a pair of high-priced claimers earlier at the meet, got the best of **GREY TRAFFIC** in deep stretch of an entry-level allowance. **LOVE AND KRIS'S** enjoyed a ground-saving trip and a clear shot in the lane, but was outfinished.

JULY 17, 2004 SATURDAY

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KICKEN KRIS (8th, \$4.70) was among the top 3-year-old turf horses in the country last year, but returned in the spring with a pair of off-the-board performances in Grade 1 races. The drop to a softer spot in the 11-furlong, Grade 2 Bowling Green Handicap triggered a turnaround, as the 4-year-old colt edged clear after running his final furlong in a strong 11.87 seconds. **BETTER TALK NOW**, the only other horse in the field to have won a graded stakes race in the United States, rallied for second over **GIGLI**, a two-time group winner in Brazil.

Closers also did well in the two other grass races. **PRIVATE SCANDAL** (5th, \$7.70) was just 1 for 17 going in, but rallied outside pacesetter **CHARLEVOIX** and favored returnee **SAINT STEPHEN** as the second of three winners on the card for Jose Santos. Saint Stephen, making his first start since last November, chased Charlevoix throughout and finished gamely.

BUCKLE DOWN BEN (9th, \$6.30), **AHPO HERE**, and **ATFIRST BLUSH** all rallied wide to make up the trifecta in a \$35,000 mile on the Widener. Buckle Down Ben has now been part of the exacta in eight of his last nine starts.

THEN SHE LAUGHS (6th, \$6) received a perfect trip stalking a torrid early duel between **ORMSBYS TREASURE** and **POLONIA**, and took command three wide into the lane. **GONNABEAPARTOFIT** overtook the tired pacesetters to wind up a nonthreatening second.

FORTY MOVES (7th, \$11.80) improved to 3-2-0 from six starts on Belmont dirt after getting up to nip **WILDCARD CAT** in the final strides. **POP PRINCESS**, bet to 2-5 off a trainer change to Bobby Frankel, hopped at the start, saved ground, and was outfinished in her first start at age 4.

JULY 18, 2004 SUNDAY

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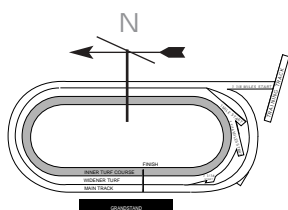
Compared with last year, when he was the leading percentage trainer at 19 for 44 (43 percent), this has been a quiet spring-summer meet at Belmont for Kieran McLaughlin, but he did come away with two turf wins on the session's penultimate Sunday card, with returnee **POLO GROUNDS** (3rd, \$12.20) in a maiden race and with **MUSTANFAR** (8th, \$13.40), who was placed first in the \$100,000-added Lexington Stakes for 3-year-olds.

Mustanfar came out on the short end of a nose decision after a long drive with Jersey Derby winner **ICY ATLANTIC**, but the latter was disqualified after coming out and brushing with Mustanfar in deep stretch.

Polo Grounds, whose only prior start was a fast-closing second at The Meadowlands last October, returned off a series of workouts at Saratoga, and enjoyed a ground-saving trip to outfinish **RECTORY HILL** and long-shot **BARON VON TAP**.

BROADWAY LADY (5th, \$24.20) had been a disappointment on turf, but the half-sister to millionaires Fourstardave and Fourstars Allstar switched back to the main track and was along late from the outside to edge **PROVINCIAL** in an entry-level allowance. Provincial slipped through on the rail turning for home and finished gamely under leading apprentice Fernando Jara. **LOKOYA** set the pace and came up empty at the quarter pole as the choice.

Divisions of a six-furlong maiden race for New York-bred fillies went to second-time starters **TWINKIE ZONE** (1st, \$5.50) in 1:12.60, and **MS STORMING ANGEL** (9th, \$20.20) in 1:12.29. The latter was first-time Lasix after being eased on turf in her June 27 debut.



TRACK TRENDS

DATE	CONDITION	FORECAST	WIND/TEMPERATURE	COMMENT
WED. JULY 14	Good/Soft (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener; 6th, 8th, 9th off)	Cloudy	Light & variable wind, 72°	Early-pace types dominated on drying-out dirt.
THURS. JULY 15	Good-wet fast/Yielding (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener)	Clear	Headwind backstretch, 76°	Another terrific day for early-pace types.
FRI. JULY 16	Fast/Good (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener)	Cloudy	Headwind backstretch, 78°	Outside closers won mile races on the turf.
SAT. JULY 17	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener; rails @ 18 ft. Inner)	Clear	Headwind backstretch, 83°	Closers did very well on both turf courses.
SUN. JULY 18	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener & Inner)	Cloudy	Light tailwind backstretch, 79°	No apparent trends.