

By DAVE LITFIN

Saratoga

JULY 28, 2004

WEDNESDAY

Two inches of rain on Tuesday rendered the track muddy (sealed) for opening day, and wiped out three scheduled turf races – the third straight year some or all of the opening-day grass races have been taken off.

RIGHT THIS WAY (1st, \$8.70) outdueled **CONTAGIOUS** despite jumping tire tracks in deep stretch, and it was a long way back to the rest. **HONEY FRITTERS** bolted to the outside fence around the clubhouse turn and unseated Mike Luzzi, who suffered a broken right leg and will be out of action for at least eight weeks.

Delaware Park shipper **TOSCANI** (2nd, \$6.80) quickly sprinted clear from Trounce to set fast fractions of 21.87 and 44.58 seconds and maintained a safe margin over **NOSUPEFORYOU** to notch his third win without a loss this year.

UPTURN (4th) outgamed **ADMIRALTY ARCH** (\$5.50) in an off-the-turf allowance route, but after a stewards' inquiry, was disqualified on a phantom call for brushing that rival in the stretch. **SEEK GOLD** was reluctant to load and raced wide throughout.

ROYAL MOMENT (5th, \$7.40) sped clear of **SHARK** through the opening half-mile, opened a clear lead, and held on over wide-rallying **MALHEUR** in a 2-year-old maiden dash. The winner had recently tipped his hand with a bullet gate work in the mud here.

Announced as a gelding, the no-longer **LUSTY LATIN** (6th, \$26.40) took an unorthodox route to victory in a second-level allowance route, pressing a slow but contested early pace along the inside, dropping back, and then circling the field approaching the stretch.

JULY 29, 2004

THURSDAY

The first steeplechase race of the meet went to the longest shot on the tote board, as **PARADISE'S BOSS** (1st, \$32.20) opened a lengthy lead and remained clear despite a slight bobble over the last fence.

Longshots were a recurring theme on the main track as well. **PLAY WITH FIRE** (4th, \$99) and **THE CHELSEA COMET** (5th, \$35) kicked off a pick six sequence that went unhit for a second straight day, resulting in a \$186,000 carry-over into Friday.

Play With Fire and The Chelsea Comet each rallied wide from the rear half of their fields, and such moves continued to play well through the remainder of the card, highlighted by **AFFLEET ALEX** (8th, \$8), who circled five wide and drew off to pulverize 10 rivals in the \$150,000 Sanford Stakes for 2 year-olds. Affleet Alex, a Delaware shipper who is now 3 for 3 by a combined 28 lengths, ran the six furlongs in 1:09.32 (stakes-record time at the distance), on a glib track that was playing roughly a full second faster than par.

The Michael Gill-Mark Shuman outfit struck with Lusty Latin opening day, and came right back with **AMBITION UNBRIDLED** (6th, \$17.40), who wired a second-level allowance sprint as the only front-running winner on the card. **DANCE TUNE** outfinished **QUIES** for second. The one-dimensional speedball **UNBRIDLED SIDNEY** was outsprinted from the gate by the winner, then checked in tight on the rail nearing the turn at odds-on.

JULY 30, 2004

FRIDAY

All five sprint winners led or raced within a length of the early lead, but the two routes on the main track were won by off-the-pace favorites. Paths were honest.

Some time in the future, the Bernard Baruch Handicap will be renamed the Bill Mott Handicap. Mott won the 1 1/8-mile turf stakes for the fifth time in the last seven years, saddling **SILVER TREE** (8th, \$7.50) for a gritty neck score over even-money favorite **NOTHING TO LOSE**. Nothing to Lose was bumped hard into the clubhouse turn when **MR. LIGHT**'s rider lost an iron, causing the horse to veer out sharply.

CREDIT GAL (1st, \$6.40) was the third winner in as many days for Gill and Shuman and the fourth winning Delaware Park shipper at the young meet. Credit Gal stalked from close range on the rail, tipped outside **MARQUET RENT** in the lane, and won by a measured length.

Divisions of a juvenile dash for New York-breds were light years apart in terms of strength, each heat won by a favored first-time starter. **BIG APPLE DADDY** (2nd, \$4.30) had a trip identical to that of Credit Gal, stalking from the rail and easing outside to run down pace-setting second choice **HOTTOTHE TOUCH** after 5 1/2 five furlongs in 1:06.35. **SORT IT OUT** was 3-1 on the board when scratched a few minutes before the start.

The much stronger division went to **CARIBBEAN CRUISER** (4th, \$6.30), a leggy gray colt who ran to his strong workout line at Finger Lakes to outsprint the strongly bet **ON THE RIVER** in 1:04.51. **PRECISION PERFECT**, who had chased Sanford winner Affleet Alex at Delaware a month earlier, pressed the winner from the inside and held for third.

JULY 31, 2004

SATURDAY

Light rain arrived just after the fifth race and intensified into a full-fledged downpour right after the sixth race, which rendered the turf yielding to soft for the Grade 1 Diana.

The conditions were just fine with **WONDER AGAIN** (7th, \$8.20), who slipped through on the hedge as pacesetter **SAND SPRINGS** drifted off the inside in the upper stretch. Wonder Again quickly drew off beneath Edgar Prado, as **RISKVERSE** rallied three wide to outfinish **OCEAN DRIVE** for second. **INTER-CONTINENTAL**, stretching out to nine furlongs after winning her first three U.S. starts, including the Just a Game, was very rank around the clubhouse turn and checked in a thoroughly beaten fifth as the 4-5 choice.

Prado swept the day's Grade 1 races, taking the seven-furlong Test with **SOCIETY SELECTION** (8th, \$8.70), who circled five wide rallying from next to last on a sealed muddy track. Society Selection was first-time Lasix following a dull effort in the Mother Goose. **BENDING STRINGS** trailed in 12th early, also began moving very wide approaching the stretch, and overtook pacesetter **FOREST MUSIC** to finish a clear second. **FRIENDLY MICHELLE** ducked out on the backstretch and raced wide to wind up a non-impact fourth as the chalk.

Todd Pletcher unveiled **PROUD ACCOLADE** (4th, \$5.80), who set a pressured pace through the opening half-mile and widened to a debut score over wide-rallying stablemate **MORE THAN SOMEWHAT**.

AUG. 1, 2004

SUNDAY

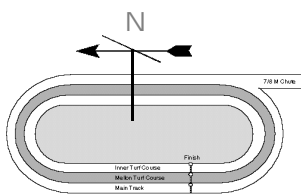
The drying-out main track strongly favored outside ralliers in the day's five sprints. Speed held better going two turns, but there, too, most winners raced well away from the rail. The notable exception was **CLASSIC ENDEAVOR** (3rd, \$4.60), who wired a \$50,000 claiming route from the inside. Overall, five winners on the card broke from the extreme outside post, including upsetters **MISS PARK PLACE** (2nd, \$23) and **TEN CENTS A SHINE** (6th, \$20.80).

Also breaking from the outside was **AZERI** (9th, \$7.90), who was kept well off the rail by Pat Day to turn back Sightseek in the Go for Wand. Azeri, back in a two-turn race for the first time since winning the Apple Blossom with a 112 Beyer in her 6-year-old bow, shattered the stakes record. Her time of 1:47.86 for the 1 1/8 miles was just four-fifths of a second off the track mark.

The claiming game is alive and well: No fewer than a dozen horses changed hands for a total of \$405,000, and only one among them (Classic Endeavor) won.

Five winners returned double-digit mutuels, topped by Calder shipper **CHEETAH SPEED** (10th, \$27.60) for trainer Eddie Plesa Jr. Cheetah Speed, idle since mid-June, was dropping back to a claimer for the first time since a maiden win for an \$80,000 claiming price, and getting a switch to Prado. After a 0 for 19 start at the meet, Prado has regained his momentum from downstate.

Favorites went 2 for 10 and are struggling along at 12 for 48 (25 percent) through the first five racing days.



TRACK TRENDS

DATE	CONDITION	FORECAST	WIND/TEMPERATURE	COMMENT
WED. JULY 28	Muddy/Off turf	Cloudy	Light crosswind backstretch, 73°	Main track sealed opening day card.
THURS. JULY 29	Good-fast/Soft (Steeplechase only)	Clear	Light crosswind backstretch, 83°	Wide ralliers won five of the last six.
FRI. JULY 30	Fast/Yielding (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; @ 9 ft. Inner)	Clear	Light crosswind backstretch, 83°	Up-close types dominated sprints.
SAT. JULY 31	Fast-muddy/Good-yielding (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; @ 9 ft. Inner)	Rainy	Variable wind, 82°	Rain after the fifth race.
SUN. AUG. 1	Fast/Off turf	Clear	Negligible wind, 83°	Outside ralliers dominated sprints