

By DAVE LITFIN

Saratoga

AUGUST 23, 2004

MONDAY

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SPOTLIGHT (8th, \$5.10) lit up the Mellon turf course to win the Grade 2 Lake Placid Stakes under Jerry Bailey, stalking pacesetter **FORTUNATE DAMSEL** and widening through the stretch over second choice **MAMBO SLEW**. Spotlight, who beat multiple Group 1 winner Ouija Board at Newmarket as a 2-year-old, is now 2 for 2 since coming to the U.S. for trainer Christophe Clement.

Bailey swept both ends of the late daily double, coming from off the pace with the Augustin Stable homebred **SPRING SEASON** (9th, \$25) to win a second-level allowance going away. Trainer Jonathan Sheppard has four meet wins – two over the jumps, and now two upsetters over the flat.

HIGH PEAKS (7th, \$7.20) freaked to win a preliminary allowance sprint with a 96 Beyer opening weekend. She confirmed her affinity for this track with a six-length score over favored **HURRICANE HANNAH** first time in with second-level competition. **JUST GABI** missed second by a nose in her return from a layoff. Follow.

CARMINOOCH (6th, \$3.90), listed as a \$5,000 purchase as a yearling last fall, was bet strongly for his debut and romped over New York-bred juvenile maiden sprinters. **FREDDY THE CAP** was in traffic on the turn and overtook pacesetter **HOTTOTHE TOUCH** for second.

AUGUST 25, 2004

WEDNESDAY

★★★

MIDAS EYES (7th, \$2.80) was being targeted to the Carter

Handicap back in the spring, but was sidelined by sore ankles. Idle since a wide trip in the Strub at Santa Anita on Feb. 7, he returned in a third-level allowance for Bobby Frankel and blazed 6 1/2 furlongs in 1:14.82 to win decisively under moderate urging over **MR. NANCHO**. The time was just .40 off the track record. Mr. Nancho, an import from Argentina and a full brother to Spinster winner Miss Linda, bested the rest in his U.S. debut and is worth following.

WEST VIRGINIA (8th, \$4) caught a break when Chowder's First, who had beaten him in the recent New York Stallion Stakes, was scratched from the Albany Stakes due to a lung infection. West Virginia received a perfect trip stalking a fast pace set by **COINED FOR SUCCESS**, angled off the inside turning for home and wore down 47-1 shot **EVERYDAYISSATURDAY**.

The Kieran McLaughlin-trained **CLOSING ARGUMENT** (2nd, \$13.20) turned in a good-looking debut effort to win a five-furlong maiden dash by three lengths over **PRIME**. Closing Argument, a colt by the stakes sprinter Successful Appeal, quickly caught **SWISSE STICK** approaching the stretch and drew off despite drifting out a bit greenly. Prime, a half-brother to West Va. Derby winner Soto, was off a step slowly.

AUGUST 26, 2004

THURSDAY

★★★

Here's a good system for playing steeplechase races: Bet the longest shot on the toteboard. That strategy caught **PARADISE'S BOSS** (\$32.20) in the first 'chase of the meet, and was good for another big ticket when the newly blinkered **IMPERIAL GOLD** (1st, \$45) necked **FORETOLD**.

Idle since June 5, **ELEGANT MERCEDES** (3rd, \$5.60) came off a fast pace from next-to-last to catch **WILD STORM** in the final strides of an optional claiming sprint with third-level allowance conditions, reprising a similar layoff win at Saratoga last summer. Elegant Mercedes was the day's only dirt winner that didn't set or force the early pace, and her cause was aided when **VIBS** set wicked fractions and stopped badly in the stretch.

SUGAR PUNCH (8th, \$5.10), a 3-year-old filly meeting older New York-bred mares in the first running of the \$65,000 Union Avenue, stepped up in class and notched her fourth straight win after turning back a stretch bid from **BEAUTIFUL AMERICA**. Beautiful America stumbled at the start, saved ground throughout, and narrowly missed.

AUGUST 27, 2004

FRIDAY

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The "pace makes the race" factor was the key to the Personal Ensign Handicap. A 4-year-old granddaughter of Personal Ensign, **STORM FLAG FLYING** (9th, \$6.30) got a perfect set-up stalking blazing fractions contested by **AZERI** and **ROAR EMOTION**, attacked three wide into the stretch, and wore down a game Azeri to edge clear in the final yards of the 10-furlong Grade 1, which included a slow final quarter mile in 27.69 seconds. Azeri, who gave the winner six pounds, saved the place over rank outsider **NEVERMORE**.

Storm Flag Flying may also have benefited from being well out from the rail, because four of the day's other five dirt winners also rallied from off the pace on the outside. The lone exception was **KARAKORUM KEEPSAKE** (7th, \$16.60), who slipped through on the fence as

BOND ARBITRAGE and **RUNNINGFORPRESIDENT** drifted out a bit at the quarter pole, and drove clear to win a statebred allowance sprint with first-time Lasix.

AUGUST 28, 2004

SATURDAY

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A light rain began after the King's Bishop, and darkness descended on the Spa a race later as **BIRDSTONE** (11th, \$11.60) returned for his first start since the Belmont Stakes, and drove clear from stablemate **THE CLIFF'S EDGE** to win the Travers for Nick Zito off a 12-week layoff. Birdstone rallied three wide on the far turn, went clear in mid-stretch, and was pulling away from The Cliff's Edge with every stride, while farther back **EDDINGTON** necked **PURGE** for third. **LION HEART**, the 5-2 favorite, set a slow pace and gave way, and later was found to have sustained a broken bone in his right front foot, and has been retired. Birdstone capped a five-win day for Edgar Prado.

Other Travers casualties: The Cliff's Edge came out of the race with "stinging feet," trainer Nick Zito said. Purge sustained a bruised foot. **SIR SHACKLETON** bled.

No sooner had the Travers field crossed the wire, than the heavens opened up. Wind-driven torrential rain along with frequent lightning necessitated the cancellation of the 12th race.

POMEROY (10th, \$11.40), blinkers off, got a perfect trip under Prado, slipping through inside bearing-out pacesetter **MEDALLIST** at the quarter pole, and outkicking **WEIGELIA** in the King's Bishop Stakes. **FIRE SLAM** stumbled badly at the start to lose all chance.

NOTHING TO LOSE (9th, \$5.80) saved ground, eased outside,

angled back to the inside, and edged a four-wide **SILVER TREE** in the Fourstardave Handicap. **ROYAL REGALIA** set a moderate pace and held gamely for third.

AUGUST 29, 2004

SUNDAY

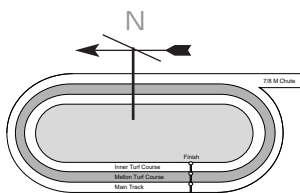
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The main track was sealed and muddy for the first five dirt races, and then harrowed and upgraded to good for the last three. Six of the seven dirt sprints were won in wire-to-wire fashion, highlighted by **LADY TAK** (9th, \$3.70), who sped clear early and had just enough left to stave off **MY TRUSTY CAT** and **HARMONY LODGE** while coming out slightly in the final strides. Lady Tak, winner of the Test Stakes here last year, survived a stewards' inquiry, and went over the \$1 million mark in earnings.

COMMENTATOR (1st, \$2.60) may be the most talented New York-bred 3-year-old male in training, after encoring his 10-length debut score with a seven-length demolition of entry-level allowance sprinters.

SUMMER RAVEN (4th, \$5.30) was an against-the-bias second to Spinaway repeater Sense of Style four weeks ago, but nevertheless did not go off favored for her front-running maiden triumph. That honor went to first-time starter **MAJESTICALLY**, who chased Summer Raven and gave way badly. **PEPPERMINT LILLY**, also coming out of the Sense of Style maiden race, was rapidly getting to Summer Raven at the wire, and it was 14 lengths back to the rest.

Good-looking debut win on turf for the Bill Mott-trained **MY TYPHOON** (6th, \$4.40), a half-sister to \$2 million earner and multiple Group 1 winner Galileo. Follow in stakes.



TRACK TRENDS

DATE	CONDITION	FORECAST	WIND/TEMPERATURE	COMMENT
MON. AUG. 23	Fast/Good (Rails @ 12 ft. Mellon; 0 ft. Inner)	Clear	Light tailwind backstretch, 75°	No apparent trends.
WED. AUG. 25	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Cloudy	Negligible wind, 72°	No apparent trends.
THURS. AUG. 26	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Clear	Light crosswind backstretch, 76°	Outside pace-pressers did well on dirt.
FRI. AUG. 27	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Cloudy	Light crosswind backstretch, 78°	Outside ralliers won five of six dirt races.
SAT. AUG. 28	Fast-wet fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Cloudy-rainy	Tailwind backstretch, 81°	Torrential rain cancels 12th race.
SUN. AUG. 29	Muddy-good/Good, 3rd off (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Clear	Variable wind, 83°	Front-runners won 6 of 7 dirt sprints.