

By DAVE LITFIN

Saratoga

AUGUST 30, 2004

MONDAY

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After a 0-for-10 Travers Day that included a disappointing fourth-place finish in the Travers by Purge and a photo-finish loss in Sunday's Ballerina with defending champ Harmony Lodge, the Todd Pletcher-John Velazquez team dominated the final day of week 5 with five winners.

The coup de grace was delivered by favored **OCEAN DRIVE** (8th, \$6.20), who raced closest to pacesetter **SAND SPRINGS** to upper stretch, took the lead a furlong from home and outkicked second choice **PERSONAL LEGEND** to win the \$200,000 Ballston Spa Breeders' Cup Handicap on the inner turf.

The Pletcher-Velazquez blitzkrieg began with four straight wins, by **FORTY FIVE** (2nd, \$5.40), **NAVESINK RIVER** (3rd, \$13), **TIFFANY TOUCH** (4th, \$6.30), and **READY'S GAL** (5th, \$9.40).

There was no bias on the drying-out main track, which was labeled good and harrowed throughout the day, but times averaged several ticks faster than par in sprints and routes.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2004

WEDNESDAY

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After winning with five of seven mounts Monday, Velazquez opened week 6 with a 3-for-4 afternoon. The "Johnny V pick three" of **TIZZI RIZZI** (4th, \$7.70), **PROUD ACCOLADE** (5th, \$2.30), and **ATFIRST BLUSH** (6th, \$11.60) was worth \$80, and he narrowly missed with his only remaining mount, **LEEDLE DEE** (8th), who dueled early with **CAT'S ROAR** and opened a clear lead in midstretch only to be run down by **FAIT ACCOMPLI** (\$14)

in the final strides of the Saratoga Dew Stakes.

PROUD ACCOLADE ran Pletcher's streak to six consecutive winners after pressing the pace set by **STORM CREEK RISING** and drawing away through the stretch of an entry-level allowance sprint. Now 2 for 2 by a combined 13 lengths, Proud Accolade will be targeted toward the Champagne Stakes at Belmont on Oct. 9.

Pletcher's win streak was snapped when **COTTAGE** (7th) finished willingly for second without seriously menacing **KING'S DRAMA** (\$3.10), a European import who has now won both of his turf routes since a trainer change to Bobby Frankel.

Though the grass courses were officially labeled good, they may have been closer to yielding based on final times. King's Drama, a Group 3 winner in France last year, ran 1 3/16 miles in 1:55.90, more than four seconds off the Mellon course record. **PETER'S PUDDLES** (9th, \$12.40), a debut winner for James Bond, required 1:50.57 to win a 1 1/8-mile route, more than five seconds off the record.

The lone inner-turf race was a 2 3/8-mile steeplechase won by **MOTEL AFFAIR** (1st, \$11.80) in 4:29.43, more than 17 seconds off the course record.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2004

THURSDAY

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The day got off to a chalky start when **FABULOUS PEAK** (1st, \$3.10) wired a \$20,000 claiming route as the 59th meet win for Velazquez, but favorites were blanked through the rest of a card that included five turf races - one of them the New York Turf Writers Handicap at 2 3/8 miles over the jumps.

TRES TOUCHE (3rd, \$17.20), runner-up in last year's Turf Writers, quickly reached the

front and led all the way. **PRAISE THE PRINCE**, odds-on to defend his title, regressed sharply off a hard-fought win in the A.P. Smithwick three weeks earlier and checked in a tired fifth.

After having his first two scheduled turf starts with Lasix switched to the main track, the Paul Fout-trained **FITNESS** (6th, \$61.50) lit up the tote board after running down pacesetter **FRENCH HORN** in the first division of a 1 3/8-mile maiden marathon. French Horn held gamely as the 11th runner-up finisher at the meet for trainer Phil Serpe.

The Serpe-trained **ROUSING VICTORY** (8th, \$33.20) caught a break winning an entry-level allowance, after **OLD FORESTER** was caught behind tiring speed **FOG BUSTER** and forced to take up sharply at the quarter pole. Rousing Victory opened a five-length lead in midstretch and held on as Old Forester finished strongly to be slicing into the margin late. **SETTLE UP**, bet to lukewarm favoritism off a horror trip on Aug. 7, had a clear shot through the lane but came up empty.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2004

FRIDAY

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Velazquez wasted little time in pursuit of his own record, winning three races on this card, aboard **MIGHTY DAVID** (3rd, \$5.70) for Bobby Barbara and the Pletcher-trained pair of **CANDYBEDANDY** (5th, \$9.10) and **WILLARD STRAIGHT** (8th, \$11), to establish a record total of 62.

Mighty David, claimed for \$25,000 out of a win during the opening week, came back to win for \$35,000 in mid-August and became a three-time winner at the meet after drawing away from \$50,000 sprinters.

Candybedandy's only two lifetime victories had come on the turf at Aqueduct, but she was

aided by a sharp drop in class to the basement level and handled perfect-trip runner-up **TAKEITEASYEDYE**.

Willard Straight had been idle since a seventh-place finish in a Grade 2 stakes at Fair Grounds back in March, but showed three prior wins off layoffs, and made it four after circling widest from the back of the pack to outkick **LITTLE JIM** in the \$65,000 Troy Stakes, a restricted event for nonwinners of an open stakes on grass in 2003-04. Now 3 for 3 at a mile, Willard Straight was Pletcher's 34th meet win. **GOLDEN COMMANDER**, coming off a win in the 1 1/8-mile West Point Handicap, finished strongly to just miss second, at a distance well short of his best.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2004

SATURDAY

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Outside pace-pressers had a field day, accounting for the seven dirt races, all of them sprints, starting with a 12-12 daily double of **MEGATREND** (1st, \$20.60) and **LASIK** (2nd, \$6.80).

Lasik was the first of two winners for Velazquez, his 63rd and 64th, along with second-time starter **REMUNERATION** (6th, \$5.10), a record-tying 35th meet winner for Pletcher.

Remuneration ran seven furlongs in 1:24.87 after putting away **SPANISH MISSION** in the second division of a maiden special weight out of the chute. **ALL TRUMPS** (4th, \$8.10) caught pacesetter **SILENT BID** to win the first heat in 1:24.92.

Velazquez is running away with the title in terms of wins, but Edgar Prado has dominated the stakes action at Saratoga. He notched yet another Grade 1 when he won aboard **MIDAS EYES** (8th, \$9.20), who came back 10 days after a comeback win in a third-level allowance to prove

much the best in the Forego Handicap.

Midas Eyes pressed **YESSIRGENERALSIR** and 9-5 favorite **STRONG HOPE** through the opening half-mile, wrested command from Strong Hope approaching midstretch, and drove clear over a late-rallying **CLOCK STOPPER**. Strong Hope tired noticeably in the final yards and lost third at the wire to **GYGISTAR**.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2004

SUNDAY

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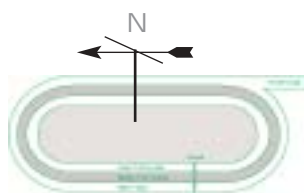
The second of three straight 11-race cards featured six turf races, topped by divisions of the 1 3/8-mile Glens Falls Handicap won by the Graham Motion-trained **HUMAITA** (7th, \$13.40) from off the pace in 2:15.25, and the Bobby Frankel-trained **ARVADA** (10th, \$8.50), who led all the way in the faster 2:14.12 division.

Humaita, freshened since running on soft turf behind multiple Grade 1 winner Wonder Again at Belmont two months earlier, was put to a drive three wide on the third and final turn and outkicked rail-skimming chalk **WHERE WE LEFT OFF**.

Arvada set up shop on the lead soon after the start beneath Velazquez, opened up into the stretch, and had enough left to hold off late charges from **SPICE ISLAND** and **FILM MAKER**.

Jose Santos, on the mend after injuring his right arm at Belmont, snapped a 0-for-27 losing streak when **NURSE CULKIN** (4th, \$5.50) rallied wide and held on by a nose over **URBANE HUSTLE** in a New York-bred maiden route on the turf.

Good-looking return for **VISION OF BEAUTY** (8th, \$3.40), who sped to the lead and shook off early challengers to win an entry-level allowance sprint.



TRACK TRENDS

DATE	CONDITION	FORECAST	WIND/TEMPERATURE	COMMENT
MON. AUG. 30	Good/Yielding, 4th off (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; 9 ft. Inner)	Cloudy	Negligible wind, 78°	Drying-out main track played extremely fast.
WED. SEPT. 1	Fast/Yielding (Rails @ 12 ft. Mellon; 0 ft. Inner)	Clear	Light tailwind backstretch, 73°	Pace pressers and closers won all the dirt races.
THURS. SEPT. 2	Fast/Good-to-firm (Rails @ 12 ft. Mellon; 0 ft. Inner)	Clear	Light crosswind backstretch, 72°	Main track played slower than recent days.
FRI. SEPT. 3	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 12 ft. Mellon; 0 ft. Inner)	Clear	Tailwind backstretch, 76°	No apparent trends.
SAT. SEPT. 4	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 12 ft. Mellon; 0 ft. Inner)	Cloudy	Negligible wind, 81°	Outside pace-pressers fared well on the main.
SUN. SEPT. 5	Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon & Inner)	Cloudy	Negligible wind, 70°	No apparent trends.