

WEEK 03
Tampa Bay Derby & more

March 10, 2023

Rain must be wrecking havoc on the trainers who are attempting to get horses ready for the Derby prep races. Rains continue in California and Arkansas. Just yesterday, watched the day's program at Oaklawn and could only equate the track condition to it looking like chocolate pudding. And speaking of yesterday's program at Oaklawn, a lot of folks had their eyes on a three year old colt named HEROIC MOVE, including myself. I had mentioned him to you in my first installment for this year's US Triple Crown. He had won his first effort, a maiden event at Oaklawn on a fast track at 1 mile. On the 9th of March, he made his second start for trainer Brad Cox (who had 2 entered) and I fully expected him to canter home to his second win. Not. Tho he looked really good until the top of the stretch in this 8.5 furlong Optional Claiming race, he fell apart with no issue to blame. He just fell apart. He ended up 6th in the field of 8. Winner was MENDELSSOHN'S MARCH, a son of Mendelssohn out of the Galileo (Ire) mare, Unappeased. Was ever so disappointed. He ended up going off as favorite in the event. Will be looking for any articles about him to explain this disheartening effort.

And speaking of maiden winners, another I mentioned you, is scheduled to make his next start on the 16th at Gulfstream Park. GOLD MAGIC is entered in an Optional Claiming race, this time at 7 furlongs (his first start/win was at 6 furlongs). This could be a step in the direction of the Florida Derby and eventually the Kentucky Derby...or for the King's Plate in Canada. Will watch this race with interest!

I mentioned that this is the 50th anniversary of SECRETARIAT'S Triple Crown and that got me on memory lane. Who can tell me who finished FOURTH in that year's Kentucky Derby? The level of the competition you beat tells what kind of horse you have... And Secretariat defeated not only second place Sham and third placed Our Native, but in the beaten field was the future Horse of the Year, FOREGO. In 1973, Secretariat would go on to Horse of the Year honors but in 1974 that honor went to Forego which also was the Champion Sprinter and Handicap Horse of the Year. A gelding, he continued to race in 1975 & 1976 and earned the Horse of the Year title in those years as well. One of my all time favorites and on my list of all time great in American racing, Forego also was named Champion Handicap horse in those years. Just so you know...

Back to 2023. This weekend is the Tampa Bay Derby and this race has a dozen entries, topped by Todd Pletcher's TAPIT TRICE. As the name suggests, he is a son of Tapit & he's co-owned by Mandy Pope's Whisper Hill Farm and Gainesway. He has run 3 times, winning 2. He was 3rd in his first start in November at Aqueduct, the winner of that race being CASCAIS who has worked out just once since this race, that being in January at Belmont Park. Second in that race was Summer Cause which broke his maiden in his next start, which was on February 26th at Gulfstream Park. TAPIT TRICE then broke his maiden, that being December 17th at Aqueduct at a mile and Summer Cause was 3rd. Tapit Trice appeared on the racetrack for this third start in an allowance event on February 4th at Gulfstream and won the mile event, ridden out by over 8 lengths under Luis Saez (his third jockey and the one who has the mount on Saturday). Looking more at the pedigree, his dam is Danzatrice (by Dunkirk), a Grade 3 Stakes winner. She won the 8.5 listed Iowa Distaff at 5 and the 8.32f Parx Oaks at 3. Her first foal was a gelding by Union Rags and was winless in a dozen attempts. (By the way, Pletcher has won this race 5 times).

Probably second choice in the Tampa Bay Derby will be SHESTERKIN which broke his maiden in his first start, which was on the last day of last year, at Gulfstream Park. That was a 7 furlong event. He came back on February 4th and was second to Tapit Trice. No match for the winner that day, he was much the best of the others. Pedigree: he is by Violence (by Medaglia D'Oro) out of Freedom Star, a daughter of Street Cry (Ire). Freedom Star was a G3SW at 8.5 furlongs and is the dam of winner Rahway (won at the Derby distance of 10 furlongs during her career) and good winner Upandcomingstar, a two time winner at 6 furlongs. She is also dam of Brookys Star, a SW on turf and winning gelding Starzip. Todd Pletcher trains Shesterkin and he will be ridden by Edgard Zayas. Pedigree fits this race.

Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr has LORD MILES entered on Saturday. This son of Curlin has won 1 of 3 starts thusfar and that win came in his first start which was in November at Gulfstream Park. That was at 6 furlongs and the jockey that day was Edgard. In his next start, he was third in the Mucho Macho Man Stakes, a listed event at a mile. Winner that was was Dreaming of Kona on the disqualification of Legacy Isle. Lord Miles is out of the Majestic Warrior mare, Lady Esme, who never raced. This is her first foal. Jockey on Saturday is scheduled to be Paco Lopez.

Mark Casse is the trainer of CLASSIC CAR WASH (I hate the name too!). This is a gelded son of Noble Bird, a G1SW. Noble Bird is a son of Belmont winner Birdstone (the only horse to defeat Derby winner Smarty Jones). And Birdstone is a son of Kentucky Derby winner Grindstone, by Kentucky Derby winner Unbridled. The dam is East Lake Classic, a non winner, who is by champion Sprinter Orientate. Other foals include the ill-fated sprinting SW Trev, Treves (who will be making her 46th career start next week. She's won 10), and 6 other winners. Emisael Jaramillo is scheduled to ride.

Bill Mott saddles CLASSIC LEGACY on Saturday. This son of Into Mischief has won one of 4 starts, that being last year at Aqueduct at 7 furlongs. Shipped to Florida, his next start was in the Grade 3 Sam Davis Stakes, won by Pletcher's Litigate. Classic Legacy is out of Distorted Legacy who is a daughter of Distorted Humor (sire of Derby winner Funny Cide). Distorted Legacy was a stakes winner who preferred the turf. Her biggest claim to fame, and the sparkle in this pedigree, is that she is the dam of Pegasus Invitational winner Art Collector. Classic Legacy has a full brother as well and that is the winner Legionnaire. The jockey to ride is Irad Ortiz Jr which moves him up considerably in my mind.

Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense's son GROVELAND will face the starter on Saturday as well. His trainer is Eoin Harty and he will be ridden by Daniel Centeno. Groveland has started 5 times with one win. He's never been out of the money for the Godolphin team who owns him. He has the home court advantage in that his last 4 starts were at Tampa Bay Downs. His single win came December 24th at a mile and 40 yards. Two races later, he was entered in the Sam Davis and was beaten by Litigate. Lucknow, by Medaglia D'oro, is the dam and she won at 7.5 furlongs on turf in her only win in her 7 career racing life. Groveland is her only foal to win thusfar.

MIKEY BANANAS will have the services of Pablo Morales. He is trained by Tim Hamm and comes into the race with one win in 7 starts. Last June, at Presque Isle Downs, he found the winners circle in a 4 1/2 furlong Maiden Special Weight race. He has started 3 times this year (all at Tampa Bay Downs) and was second in his last start, a Optional Claiming race at a mile and 40 yards. He lost to a Todd Pletcher colt, Kingsbarns, in that one. Kingsbarns is two for two and I really expected him to start in the Tampa Bay Derby but he was not entered. Back to "Mikey", he is by Constitution, a Tapit son. Small world...he was trained by Todd Pletcher and won the Florida Derby but missed all of the Triple Crown that year due to a leg fracture but did come back to race again. He won the Donn Handicap at 4. As a sire, he has already gotten a Belmont winner in Tiz the Law. The dam is Music and Lyrics who is by Fed Biz. Music and Lyrics had won once in 10 starts, that being at a mile at Presque Isle Downs. Fed Biz (by Giants Causeway) was a G2SW. Mikey Bananas is her only foal.

DREAMING OF KONA comes into the Tampa Bay Derby having won half of his 4 starts (one as previously mentioned via a DQ). He is trained by Aldana Spieth and will be ridden by her husband, Scott. I'm betting that will be the color story of the TV presentation of this weekends feature race. He was 7th of 11 in the Sam Davis, after having been rewarded with a win in the Mucho Macho Man Stakes. Aldana has been training since 2004 and Dreaming of Kona is her best to date. Scott's been riding since the late 1980s and has won minor stakes. Sire of Dreaming of Kona is a son of stakes winning sprinter Fast Anna out of unraced Pliant by Champion Maria's Mon. She's the dam of two other winners.

Triple Crown winner Justify is the sire of entrant CHAMPIONS DREAM and he is trained by Mark Casse. He won 2 of 3 as a two year old last year, including his first start and this year was second in the 7 furlong Paso Stakes at Tampa Bay in January. He was then eased in his last start, the Sam Davis. Antonio Gallardo will ride. Sorry, but this one appears to be taking steps backwards in his training. Tapit is the sire of the dam, G2SW Dancinginherdreams. This is her only foal to win.

FREEDOM ROAD is trained by Greg Sacco and will be ridden by Hector Diaz. Prior to Saturday, he has run 5 times with two wins. He won his first and his last. In his first start, he won a Maiden Special Weight event at Monmouth Park in New Jersey at 5.5furlongs. Then he started in the 1 mile Sapling Stakes and was 6th. He followed that with a 3rd place finish in the Laurel Futurity (scheduled for turf but put on the main track when rained out). At the end of October at Delaware Park, he was 2cd in all allowance race and that was that for his 2 year old season. This year, he has made one start, that being an allowance event at Tampa Bay Downs which he won. He came from last in this 6 furlong event and won by a length and a half. Since then, he has been working well. Freedom Road's sire is the deceased Malibu Moon, sire of Kentucky Derby winner Orb. The dam is the deceased Loveable Lady, a sprinting stakes winning daughter of Not For Love. This is her only foal to race.

ZYDECEAUX comes into this race as a rank outsider with a record of 6 starts, 3 wins, 1 second and a third. His first race resulted in a victory in a maiden claiming event (for \$16,000 at 5.5furlongs at Gulfstream Park). He then started in 7 furlong optional claiming race at the same track, finishing second as favorite. In December, he was third in an allowance event at the same track, this one being at 6 furlongs. He started his three year old career out at the same track, winning an optional claiming event which was at 7 furlongs as favorite by 3 3/4 lengths. He followed that front running win by winning the Pasco Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs over Champions Dream, again leading all the way and hanging on to win by a neck. About a month later, he entered the Sam Davis Stakes with 4 horses entered in Saturday's race finishing ahead of him. He had set a good pace before giving way. Ramon Minquet is the trainer, Samuel Marin will ride.

Saffie Joseph Jr has a second entry in this race and that would be PRAIRIE HAWK. Curlin is the sire of this colt which has won half of his 4 starts. On the occasion of his second start, he won his first race (at Tampa Bay Downs) and that was a mile and 40 yard maiden race as favorite by 2 3/4 lengths. That was in December. In January, he was entered in an Optional Claiming race, same distance, and lead all the way to win by a length over Groveland. In his next start, his last before Saturdays Grade 3 Tampa Bay Derby, was in the Sam Davis. He was bumped at the start and pinched back and never really got in the running, winding up finishing 9th in the 11 horse field. The dam of this colt is Princess Ash who won one race during her career (7 starts), that being in her last start which was at 6 furlongs. She lead all the way as the favorite. She is the dam of a millionaire and his name is Quip and that one won the Tampa Bay Derby in 2018. Broodmare sire is Indian Charlie. Booked to ride Prairie Hawk in this year's edition of the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) is Samy Camacho.

By the way, entered in the Challenger Stakes which is on the day's supporting program is the 2022 winner of the Tampa Bay Derby and that is Classic Causeway (he would later finish 11th in the Kentucky Derby). Prior winners of the Tampa Bay Derby include Tacitius, eventual winner of 3.7 million dollars (2019); Tapwrit (2017, eventual winner of the Belmont Stakes, trained by Todd Pletcher); and 2007 Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense. Todd Pletcher also won this race with Destin (2016), Carpe Diem (2015), Verrazano (2013) and Limehouse (2004).

Off to the races!