

WEEK 05
Louisiana Derby & Sunland Park Derby

March 25, 2023

Steve Asmussen has two entered in today's Louisiana Derby (G2), a million dollar race at a mile and three sixteenths at Fair Grounds. One is SHOPPERS REVENGE and the pedigree on this one is to die for. By leading sire Tapit out of multiple grade 1 stakes winning Stopchargingmaria (who cost some 4.4 million \$ in foal to that sire in 2018, that foal going to Japan and currently racing). But, all things considered, I am sure that the trainer wishes there were more time for this start as well as the Kentucky Derby, 42 days

from today. I would have thought they would keep him in Arkansas for next weekend's Arkansas Derby but he's entered and is post 1 in the 12 horse field. He'll be ridden by Ricardo Santana Jr. This will be his first stakes start, having won 1 of 3 lifetime starts. His maiden win came earlier this year (January 14th) in a 8.5 furlong event (at Oaklawn), leading all the way and scoring by over 5 lengths. A month later, he faced the starter in an AOC at the same distance and was off slow and hung in the drive, losing to Airtime by a length and a quarter. The other Asmussen horse is DISARM, which I like a tad better. Pedigree-wise, he is a son of Champion Gun Runner out of the Tapit mare, winner Easy Tap. This one has also had but 3 career starts, none in stakes, and is making only his second start of the year and also comes in from Arkansas. He will be ridden by Joel Rosario. Disarm broke his maiden at Saratoga

last summer, that coming in a 7 furlong maiden race and then he was put away for the rest of the year. This year, he was second in his return, in a one mile AOC event as the favorite. He didn't seem to have any excuses in that one and I hope to see him improve but it is not going to be easy for either of these colts, being as unseasoned as they are.

Brad Cox also has two and he comes in better represented. INSTANT COFFEE will, of course, be the favorite and deservedly so. He has won three of his four starts, the last being in the LA Derby prep, the LeComte Stakes. In that one, he defeated Rebel Stakes winner Confidence Game (so far, my choice for the Kentucky race) who will be the probably favorite in the Arkansas Derby next weekend. Instant Coffee is by Bolt D'Oro out of stakes placed Follow No One (by Uncle Mo). He will be ridden by Luis Saez and I totally expect him to cross the wire in front. JACE'S ROAD is the other to be saddled by Mr Cox who has lost a lot of supporters with a lackluster 5th in the Southwest Stakes (to Arabian Knight, now out of the Derby). That has been his only start this year but at two, he won half of his 4 starts and that included a win in the Gun Runner Stakes at Fair Grounds. That race was at 8.5furlongs. His works have been steady, all at Oaklawn. Jace's Road is by Quality Road who was tossed off the Derby trail in 2009 with injuries. he did go on to be quite the racehorse, winning 5 grades stakes after the Florida Derby (at 3 & 4) and he's turning out to be a good sire (Emblem Road, City of Light, Abel Tasman, etc). Dam of Jace's Road is sprint stakes placed Out Post, by Silver Deputy (Can).

Ken McPeck has a live one in the Louisiana Derby with the colt SUN THUNDER. He has won only once in 4 starts but appears to be getting better with experience. In his last start, he was second in the Risen Star (to Angel of Empire who is not in the starting field). In that one, he came from 12th, gained the lead and lost by just a length. The chart said he was "outkicked" and I love that terminology. Sun Thunder, who is to be ridden by Brian Hernandez Jr, is by Into Mischief and out of the non-winner Medaglia D'Oro mare Greenfield D'Oro. She is the dam of three time winner Rude Awakening.

KINGSBARNs is representing Todd Pletcher's stable and Flavien Prat is in for the ride. Unbeaten and untested (he is two for two), he comes in from Tampa Bay Downs after winning his last start on February 12th over Mikey Bananas (10th in the Tampa Bay Derby) by over 7 lengths at a mile and 40 yards. Once again, Tapit comes into play in a classic race, he being the broodmare sire of Kingsbarns. His daughter, Lady Tapit, was a graded stakes placed racehorse. The jockey makes his first ride on this one, Saez having ridden him in his maiden win. Prat should move him up considerably. Look out!

CURLY JACK is a son of Champion Good Magic and must have alot of frequent flyer miles on him at this young stage of his life. He's made 7 career starts, winning twice. He won the Iroquois Stakes at Churchill last fall (8.5f) and won alot of fans doing that. He made two starts after that, both losing efforts and lots jumped off the bandwagon. This year, he has made just one start, that being in the Risen Star in which he was

8th after experiencing some bumping. Regular rider Edgar Morales will be back aboard. He is trained by Tom Amoss (who trained Kentucky Oaks winner Serengeti Empress. He also had Mo Tom in 2016 and that one was 4th in the Louisiana Derby after winning one of the preps. He went on to be 8th in the Kentucky Derby). The dam of Curly Jack is G1SW Connie and Michael, a granddaughter of 2000 Kentucky Derby winner Fusaichi Pegasus.

CAGLIOSTRO will be saddled by Cherie DeVaux, ridden by Cristian Torres and was entered into the Louisiana Derby off a record of one win in three starts. Back in January, he broke his maiden in his second start, that in a 8.5f event, coming from off the pace to win by 3 1/2 lengths as the favorite. After that effort, he was second by a neck in a February AOC race to Denington. Brian Hernandez rode him that day. Highly regarded Banishing was unplace in that race. Cagliostro is by Upstart (18th in the 2015 Kentucky Derby, and sire of Ky Derby 3rd place finisher Zandon last year). Dam is the non winner A Rosefor Isabelle, who is by Hard Spun.

SINGLE RULER, TAPITS CONQUEST, DENINGTON and BASELINE BEATER complete the Louisiana Derby field.

Sorry to not include more info on that group but I did want to say a few words about a couple other Derby preps this weekend.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks at 9 furlongs will be run at Turfway Park is headed by Pletcher's MAJOR DUDE who switches back to the main track after winning the Kittens Joy Stakes on turf. Irad Ortiz Jr is up. Welsey Ward put in FUNTASTIC AGAIN who won his last two races at Turfway Park for a total of 3 wins in 5 career starts. Nothing that he defeated in his last start, the Leonatus Stakes at a mile, comes back to try their luck. His sire, Funtastic, was a turf specialist. Dam Repeta never raced. Funtastic Again will be ridden by Gerardo Corrales. CONGRUENT is to be ridden by Sonny Leon (of Rich Strike fame). He's a Tapit son, trained by Antonio Sano, whose best seems to be on grass as well. Others in the race are Maker's Candy, Baby Billy, Bluebirds Over, Escapologist, Two Phils (spoke about him a few columns ago), Wadesworth and Point Proven (another Pletcher, to be ridden by Johnny V so deserves some attention.)

Turfway Park also will hold the Rushaway Stakes today, this at 8.5 furlongs. Pletcher has SANTORINI in (also with Irad). He is a winner on turf at Gulfstream Park in January. Considered to be his toughest competition is WORTHINGTON (Mike Maker) but I'd like to see an upset by RARIFIED FLAIR.

And Sunday is the Sunland Park Derby!

By the way, the last Louisiana Derby winners that went on to win the Kentucky Derby was Grindstone in 1996.