

Chasing

NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE ASSOCIATION | 400 FAIR HILL DRIVE, ELKTON, MD 21921

Making The Cup Runneth Over

The time-worn aphorism is that necessity is the mother of invention. How true. The necessity arose, and the invention was The Cup Runneth Over, an innovative and highly successful improvisation at Springdale Race Course in Camden, S.C., on April 6.

Without a doubt, the National Steeplechase Association was up against a necessity. In early March, the Tryon Block House races scheduled for April 13 were postponed to October because of rain-soaked course conditions.

Then, the Georgia Steeplechase scheduled for April 6 abruptly canceled its meet in mid-March. The prospect was daunting. With only timber races scheduled for My Lady's Manor on April 13, NSA horsemen were confronting two weekends without hurdle racing.

Moreover, carefully planned campaigns for horses aimed at Tryon and Georgia would be blown up. The situation was regrettable, and no clear alternative presented itself.

In the moments after the Georgia Steeplechase canceled, NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr. had a brainstorm. How about having a race meet largely for horsemen at Springdale Race Course one week after the Carolina Cup?

The NSA would put up the purse money and pay other expenses, and the Carolina Cup Racing Association would make Springdale available for the races. NSA President Guy J. Torsilieri conceded that he was a bit skeptical at first. But the more he thought about it, the more it made sense. He took the idea to the NSA Board of Directors' executive committee, and they signed on. Then the entire board approved.

Simultaneously, Torsilieri and Gallo approached John Cushman, the Carolina Cup Racing Association's vice chairman and executive director. He readily agreed and gave a name to the event, The Cup Runneth Over.

In phone calls and emails spanning 18 hours,



Orchestra Leader led over the last in The Cup Runneth Over's ratings handicap.

CATHERINE FRENCH PHOTO

The Cup Runneth Over was transformed from Gallo's idea into a realistic business plan. The NSA put up the \$90,000 in purses, and the conditions closely mirrored both the Georgia Steeplechase and Tryon. Camden's steeplechase fans were welcomed at \$40 per carload.

To be sure, the Carolina Cup's experience in putting on race meets for 87 years was a huge advantage, and the day went off like clockwork.

The entry box was filled beyond capacity on April 1. Three of the afternoon's four hurdle races had also-eligible lists, and the other hurdle race had a capacity crowd of 10 entries for the \$15,000 maiden claiming hurdle.

The afternoon's race for winners, the \$25,000 ratings handicap for horses ranked 115 or lower, had 14 starters, the maximum on the spacious Springdale course. In all, 52 horses took the opportunity to run on April 6.

The ratings handicap marked the comeback

of Orchestra Leader, a multiple feature-race winner in years past. He had been winless for his new ownership group, Team Ollie, a partnership headed by Keri Brion, assistant trainer to Jonathan Sheppard.

Through those 18 months of drought, Brion and her partners never lost faith in Orchestra Leader, known as Ollie around the barn, and their steadfast support paid off in The Cup Runneth Over's ratings handicap.

Ridden confidently by Brion, the 10-year-old veteran always was where he needed to be, jumped well, opened up in the stretch, and easily turned back a late charge by Pik Em to win by three-quarters of a length.

As the sun began to settle over Springdale's clubhouse turn, a race meet that had been conceived and announced within 18 hours three weeks earlier had proved to be a success—for the NSA, for its horsemen, and for jump racing.



Go Jump Racing!





Virginia Gold Cup and Iroquois highlight a busy May schedule

The National Steeplechase Association wraps up its spring 2019 season in May with several rich race meets, including the Virginia Gold Cup and the Iroquois Steeplechase on successive Saturdays, and three graded stakes races in addition to the timber classic Virginia Gold Cup.

In Thoroughbred racing, the first Saturday in May means the Kentucky Derby (Gr. 1) and the Virginia Gold Cup, the four-mile classic over the rolling Great Meadow course in The Plains.

The Virginia Gold Cup meet on May 4 will offer \$420,000 in purses for an eight-race program and pari-mutuel wagering on all races.

In addition to the Virginia Gold Cup over timber, the meet will feature the \$75,000 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) for hurdle horses and the \$40,000 Steeplethon Stakes over a course of mixed obstacles. Three flat races with purses totaling \$115,000 also are on the program.

First post time is 12:30 p.m. for the popular meet, which annually attracts the largest crowd in American Steeplechasing.

The following day, the racing emphasis is all timber at the Winterthur Races in Delaware, where the feature will be the \$41,000 Winterthur Bowl, marking the meet's 41st anniversary. First post time on the grounds of the Winterthur Museum and Country Estate is 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 5.

The spring's richest meet, the Iroquois Steeplechase, will kick off at Nashville's Percy Warner Park at 1 p.m. CDT on May 11. The 78th annual Iroquois will offer \$450,000 in purses, plus \$10,000 amateur bonus. Highlighting the program will be the \$150,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) for the sport's top hurdle horses.



Zanjabeel, left, won last year's Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) and went on to be voted the 2018 Eclipse Award winner as champion steeplechase horse.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

Also on the seven-race card are the \$100,000 Marcellus Frost Champion Hurdle for novices, the \$50,000 Margaret Currey Henley for fillies and mares, and the \$25,000 Mason Houghland Memorial over timber.

The action heads to Eastern Pennsylvania's horse country on Mother's Day, May 12, for the 27th annual Willowdale Steeplechase in Kennett Square. The feature will be the \$35,000 Willowdale Steeplechase over timber fences for amateur riders.

The following Saturday, May 18, the racing shifts to the Radnor Hunt Races in nearby Malvern. Radnor will offer \$170,000 in purses

and will feature the \$40,000 National Hunt Cup, an allowance hurdle, and the \$35,000 Radnor Hunt Cup.

The traditional wrap-up of the spring season is the historic Fair Hill Races, which will mark its 85th anniversary with two days of racing on May 24 and 25. A Friday twilight session will offer two flat training races and two timber races. One flat training race and one timber race will be limited to amateurs.

Saturday's seven-race pari-mutuel program will feature the \$50,000 Iris Coggins Memorial for fillies and mares and the \$40,000 Valentine Memorial Handicap.

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