

Chasing

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

Optimus Prime tops ratings as jump racing heads for tracks

Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime, the easiest of winners in his only jumps start this spring, heads the National Steeplechase Association's official ratings as the summer racing season begins.

After jump racing at Monmouth Park on June 21 and flat racing for hurdlers at Parx Racing on July 1, steeplechase races will be conducted regularly at Saratoga Race Course and Colonial Downs through the remainder of the summer.

The NSA ratings, instituted in 2015, are the expert evaluations of all winners over fences who are currently in training. From the start, the expert panel has comprised Equibase chart caller Martin Chamberlin, *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred* Editor Joe Clancy, and race-meet official and announcer Will O'Keefe, under the supervision of NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr.

Optimus Prime, a Grade 1 winner in his first U.S. appearance last summer, earned his current rating of 161 with a *tour-de-force* victory in the Virginia Gold Cup's \$75,000 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) on May 4.

Ridden confidently by Ross Geraghty, the French-bred Optimus Prime stalked the pace of Irv Naylor's *Sempre Medici* for the first 1¼ miles of the 2 1/8-mile Semmes, took the lead at the second to last fence, opened a length lead over the last, and widened to the finish line with no urging from his rider.

He won by 6¼ lengths over *Sempre Medici*, who in turn was 18 lengths clear of *Invocation* in third.

Trainer Ricky Hendriks said the most likely next jump start for Optimus Prime will be Saratoga's \$150,000 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) on July 25. Optimus Prime opened the U.S. phase of his racing career with a win in



Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime jumped the last fence in his Semmes Memorial victory.

TOD MARKS PHOTO

Saratoga's New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1) last August. This year's running of Saratoga's signature steeplechase race, also with a \$150,000 purse, is scheduled for Aug. 22.

Second in the ratings at 157 is Naylor's *Bedrock*, who has yet to start this year after being exported from Scotland. For trainer Iain Jardine, he won two stakes races in Ireland last fall, both at long odds. Imported horses carry their most recent overseas rating onto the NSA list before being evaluated on their U.S. form.

Third on the list at 154 is Bruton Street-US's *Scorpiancer*, who scored a gutty one-length victory in the \$150,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) on May 11. Winner of the 2017 Iroquois and that year's Eclipse Award, *Scorpiancer* missed the 2018 season and was pulled up in Middleburg Spring's Temple Gwathmey Handicap (Gr. 2) on April 20.

Finishing third in the three-mile Nashville hurdle was Bruton Street-US's *Moscato*, the Gwathmey winner who was rated at 144.



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STEEPLECHASE STANDINGS THROUGH JUNE 20



OWNERS BY EARNINGS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Bruton Street-US	25	4	6	5	\$267,250
Mrs. S.K. Johnston Jr.	24	6	4	5	160,000
Riverdee Stable	9	2	2	2	144,200
Irvin S. Naylor	33	4	5	5	123,150
Rosbrian Farm	13	3	3	0	108,350
Irvin L. Crawford II	2	2	0	0	90,000
Ballybristol Farm	7	2	2	0	88,250
DASH Stable	5	2	2	1	65,900
KMSN Stable	6	2	0	1	50,750
Woodslane Farm	9	2	2	0	43,350

JOCKEYS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Michael Mitchell	41	15	5	5	\$406,450
Sean McDermott	42	9	4	9	342,000
Jack Doyle	42	7	4	5	245,150
Richard Boucher	12	4	1	1	68,700
Ross Geraghty	27	3	6	3	152,450
Hadden Frost	10	3	2	0	72,550
Eddie Keating	15	3	1	5	74,100
Aaron Sinnott	13	3	1	0	52,000
Eric Poretz	11	2	3	1	113,850
Willie McCarthy	28	2	7	3	105,400

TRAINERS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Jack Fisher	72	22	13	8	\$766,950
Jonathan Sheppard	33	7	1	7	184,100
Katherine Neilson	35	6	5	5	155,500
Ricky Hendriks	40	5	5	6	171,150
Leslie F. Young	20	4	4	3	126,500
Lilith Boucher	8	4	1	1	66,400
Joseph G. Davies	16	2	2	1	114,700
Neil R. Morris	20	2	2	4	58,450
Mark Beecher	16	2	1	1	58,700
Julie Gomena	31	1	6	3	73,950

HORSES BY EARNINGS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Senior Senator	2	2	0	0	\$90,000
Scorpiancer (Ire)	2	1	0	0	90,000
Andi'amu (Fr)	2	2	0	0	78,000
City Dreamer (Ire)	2	1	0	0	78,000
Gibralfaro (Ire)	2	1	0	0	64,500
Moscato (Fr)	2	1	0	1	60,000
Sportswear (GB)	2	2	0	0	48,000
Corky Lemon	3	2	0	0	45,600
Optimus Prime (Fr)	1	1	0	0	45,000
Schoodic	3	3	0	0	42,000

Senior Senator, Scorpiancer top spring earnings list

For the first time in recent memory, a timber horse stands atop the earnings list at the conclusion of the National Steeplechase Association spring season. Skip Crawford's Senior Senator, winner of the Grand National and Maryland Hunt Cup for the second straight

year, shares the top spot with Bruton Street-US's Scorpiancer, the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) winner, at \$90,000.

Leading trainer Jack Fisher is on path for a record-setting year after accumulating 22 wins during the spring season, more than three times

as many as second-place Jonathan Sheppard. Fisher also has a sizable lead in the earnings column, with \$766,950.

Michael Mitchell won three races on Fair Hill's two cards and opened a six-win lead in the jockey standings. He also leads by purses.

National Steeplechase Association

400 Fair Hill Drive
Elkton, Md. 21921

Phone: (410) 392-0700
Fax: (410) 392-0706

Website: www.nationalsteeplechase.com
E-mail: info@nationalsteeplechase.com

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