



MONDAY REPORT

A weekly report from the National Steeplechase Association

Monday, May 13, 2019

Scorpiancer wins second Iroquois

A race is rarely, if ever, easy. The finish may be easy, though. Bruton Street-US's Scorpiancer was geared down through Percy Warner Park's stretch to win the 2017 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) by 16 lengths.

The victory, combined with a win in the Temple Gwathmey Handicap (Gr. 3) earlier that spring, earned him the 2017 Eclipse Award as North America's champion steeplechase horse.

The Nashville victory was Scorpiancer's last start in 2017, and he didn't race in 2018. Trainer Jack Fisher sent him into this year's Temple Gwathmey (Gr. 2), and the 10-year-old Irish-bred was pulled up after tiring on the soft turf in Middleburg, Va.

Some races are as hard as they can be, requiring both horse and jockey to find another gear and get to the finish line in front. Scorpiancer and jockey Sean McDermott found that extra something on Saturday and prevailed by one gritty length over Wendy Hendriks' dead-game Surprising Soul in the 78th edition of the \$150,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois.

Two years earlier, Scorpiancer had simply outclassed his competition in the Iroquois Steeplechase's premier race. On Saturday, he showed the courage, heart, and class that earned him a second win in the National Steeplechase Association's richest spring race.

Scorpiancer carried the highest NSA rating into the Calvin Houghland Iroquois and was the only starter to have proved himself at the race's testing three miles, America's longest hurdle distance.

The final half-mile, and especially the uphill climb on the final turn, help to explain why the winner of the last six editions of the Calvin Iroquois have been won by an Eclipse winner, either before or after the Nashville classic.

Still, the Temple Gwathmey raised some nagging questions about Scorpiancer. The Temple Gwathmey had answered a question about one of Fisher's three other starters, Bruton Street-US's Moscato. He too had missed the 2018 season, but he roared back with an impressive victory in the 2½-mile Temple Gwathmey.

Michael Mitchell, who is setting a torrid pace in the jockey standings while riding some of Fisher's top horses this spring, had the mount on Moscato, who legitimately was the horse



Tod Marks

Scorpiancer battled past Surprising Soul in the stretch of the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1).

to watch when the field of six went to starter Sterling Young.

Bruton Street's third starter, Jaleo, went out to an early lead at the break, but Buttonwood Farm's Grade 1 winner All the Way Jose wanted the lead more under Thomas Garner and seized the front end after the first few fences. All the Way Jose led by as many as six lengths as the field passed under the finish line for the first time, with Surprising Soul and jockey Ross Geraghty shadowing him.

Scorpiancer and Moscato were at the back as the field turned into the backstretch run the final time, and McDermott moved his mount to the outside while reducing All the Way Jose's advantage slightly.

The serious running began on the uphill turn to the stretch. As All the Way Jose began to tire ever so slightly, Surprising Soul gained the lead in the stretch, and Geraghty pressed him over the last two fences. Scorpiancer advanced on the outside, came into close contention two out, and was on even terms with Surprising Soul over the last.

They battled for several strides, with

McDermott and Geraghty vigorously asking their mounts for their very best, until Scorpiancer began to inch away from his game opponent and proved that he was back to the top level of jump racing.

Moscato came running late and finished third, a head behind Surprising Soul, who is trained by Ricky Hendriks. All the Way Jose took fourth money, 13½ lengths farther back. Scorpiancer ran the Calvin Houghland Iroquois' three miles in 5:43 3/5 on turf rated as good.

On the inside

Jack Fisher collected a quartet of victories at the Iroquois Steeplechase, including the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) and the Marcellus Frost Champion Hurdle2

Just Wait and See won the 28th Willowdale Steeplechase3

Go Jump Racing!



Iroquois Steeplechase undercard



Tod Marks

Four abreast at the last fence of the \$100,000 Marcellus Frost Champion Hurdle were, from left, Riverdee Stable's City Dreamer, the winner; Winston C, third; Help From Heaven, second; and Barnacle Bill, fifth. Chief Justice closed ground to be fourth.

Fisher's four victories include Marcellus Frost

Jack Fisher has had some tremendously successful days at the races, and the 2017 Far Hills meet comes to mind immediately. Fisher won the Grand National (Gr. 1), then worth \$400,000, with Mr. Hot Stuff, and another race to take home nearly \$300,000.

The reigning champion trainer had a comparable day on Saturday, when he won four Iroquois Steeplechase races and had total purses of \$230,200. That's more than half of the total Iroquois purses, the largest of the National Steeplechase Association's spring season.

The Maryland-based trainer won the big one, the \$150,000 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) with Bruton Street-US's Scorpiancer. He also won the day's second-biggest purse, the \$100,000 Marcellus Frost Champion Hurdle, with Riverdee Stable's City Dreamer.

His other victories were with Bruton Street-US's Lord Justice in the \$35,000 Bright Hour, a three-mile ratings handicap hurdle, and his mother Dolly Fisher's Schoodic in the \$25,000 Mason Houghland Memorial timber race.

City Dreamer made a huge run through Iroquois' stretch to nail Help From Heaven on the money and win the Marcellus Frost by a neck. New arrivals in America, Hudson River Farms' Winston C and Irv Naylor's Chief Justice finished third and fourth, respectively, in a field of nine novices, or horses in their first seasons of racing over fences.

Carrington Holdings' Boss Man went to the lead immediately after the start and led The Fields Stable's Barnacle Bill for the first two miles of the 2 1/4-mile Marcellus Frost. City

Dreamer, ridden by Sean McDermott, was in midfield and somewhat rank into the first run down Percy Warner's backstretch.

The running began in earnest on the final turn, with Nashville resident Virginia Lazenby's Help From Heaven making progress under Ross Geraghty and Winston C making his move on the outside.

Barnacle Bill moved to the front two fences out, but Help From Heaven took the lead over the last as four horses jumped the fence in unison. McDermott went to work on City Dreamer after the last, and they closed relentlessly on the far outside to grab the second win of the day for Fisher.

Sheppard's Wigwam Baby takes Henley

Racing Hall of Fame trainer Jonathan Sheppard jumped into second position in the trainer standings by wins and purses with two Iroquois Steeplechase victories.

His Wigwam Baby, always full of run under Aaron Sinnott, seized the lead five fences from the finish in the \$50,000 Margaret Currey Henley for fillies and mares and easily turned back a challenge from Joseph Fowler Jr.'s Down Royal to win by 1 1/4 lengths.

The Fields Stable's Sarah Joyce, seeking a third straight Henley win, went to the lead at the break and held on well for third, three-quarters of a length behind Down Royal. Owner-trainer-jockey Bethany Baumgardner's Mavourneen finished fourth in a field of 11. Wigwam Baby ran the 2 1/4-mile distance in 4:23 4/5.

Winston C, ridden by Thomas Garner, finished a half-length farther back in third, and Chief Justice was another half-length back in fourth with Davy Russell riding for trainer leading Irish trainer Gordon Elliott.

Fisher's first win on an occasionally rainy afternoon came a race earlier in the Bright Hour when Bruton Street-US's Lord Justice made a powerful move two out under Michael Mitchell, led by two lengths at the last, and won by 4 1/2 lengths. Lord Justice ran the race's three miles in 5:50 3/5.

Schoodic, a graded winner over hurdles, won the Mason Houghland by 16 3/4 lengths over Ballybristol Farm's Mercoeur.

The Henley was the second victory of the afternoon for Sheppard, who was represented at Iroquois by assistant trainer Keri Brion. In the afternoon's first race, KMSN Stable's Sportswear won a \$50,000 allowance hurdle by a half-length with a strong late run under Gerard Galligan. Whitman's Poetry was second.

One of the first horses by undefeated Frankel to race over fences in the United States, Sportswear remained unbeaten over hurdles after a Middleburg Spring win on April 20.

Top Irish trainer Gordon Elliott picked up his first Iroquois victory with Markham in a \$40,000 maiden hurdle. Always well placed under Davy Russell, Markham took the lead at the second-to-last fence and drew clear in the stretch to a 4 1/2-length victory.



Willowdale Steeplechase

Just Wait and See wires Willowdale 'Chase

Kinross Farm's Just Wait and See didn't wait and see in Sunday's \$35,000 Willowdale Steeplechase.

The 10-year-old Irish-bred broke on top in the 3½-mile race over a mixture of timber fences and natural brush fences on the Kennett Square, Pa., course, was never close to being headed or even tested, and carried jockey Mark Beecher to the winner's circle with only a few specks of mud on Kinross' beige-and-blue silks.

His opponents ate dirt in the wake of his modest pace. Bruton Street-US's Lemony Bay finished second, six lengths behind the winner, and Sycamore Run Farm's and Move Up Stable's Pured It finished third, 1¼ lengths farther back.

Blair Wyatt's Witor finished fourth, another head back. Black and Blue Stable's Monstaleur finished fifth.

Trained by Richard Valentine, Just Wait and See ran the 3½ miles in 8:13 4/5 on soft turf.

Staying in front over a long distance such as the Willowdale Steeplechase is difficult under any circumstances, and the soft turf, soaked by heavy overnight rains that continued through the day, posed an additional challenge.

But Beecher is an accomplished timber jockey and a master of pace at marathon distances. After the break, he put Just Wait and See on an easy lead, approximately 2½ or three lengths ahead of Lemony Bay and Pured It, who took turns in the second position before Lemony Bay established a clear advantage in the final mile.

After the climb to the ridge portion of the Willowdale course, Just Wait and See was moving smoothly and jumping well. On the descent to the final fence, Beecher allowed Just Wait and See to open a larger advantage.

Lemony Bay then took up the chase and drew within a few lengths at the final fence under pressure from Hadden Frost. Just Wait and See had a ready answer. After he knocked down the top rail of the final fence, Beecher asked him for some acceleration, and he easily drew away from his tiring opponents.

Just Wait and See was coming off three straight third-place finishes in Virginia steeplethons over mixed obstacles, a combination similar to Willowdale's course of timber and natural brush fences. In his first American start last fall, he finished fifth in Virginia Fall's Steeplethon.

The horse who had defeated him at Virginia Fall and two weeks later in the International Gold Cup's Steepleton, Kiplin Hall's Katnap, scored a confidence-building victory in Willowdale's three-mile allowance timber race for amateur apprentice jockeys.

Trained by William Dowling and ridden by Paul Cawley, Katnap won by 43¾ lengths.



Tod Marks

Kinross Farm's Just Wait and See, with jockey Mark Beecher in firm control of the Willowdale Steeplechase, jumped the water fence on his way to a dominant victory. Immediately behind Just Wait and See are Lemony Bay, right, and Pured It, the respective second and third finishers.

McDermott hurdles to top spot in jockey standings by earnings

With a weekend haul that included two victories at the Iroquois Steeplechase and one win at the Willowdale Steeplechase, Sean McDermott hurdled to the lead in the 2019 National Steeplechase Association standings by purses, and he closed the gap on Michael Mitchell, who leads by wins.

McDermott, the NSA's leading jockey by purse winnings in 2016 and 2017, more than doubled his purse earnings, climbing to \$302,300 with a \$165,600 haul on Saturday and Sunday.

His three wins, two at Iroquois and one at Willowdale, raised his season total to eight victories, one behind Mitchell, who had one win at Iroquois. Mitchell is second by purses with \$288,900.

McDermott's Willowdale score was aboard David Belt Jr.'s Artic North in a \$15,000 maiden claiming hurdle for trainer Mark Beecher, who two races later rode Kinross Farm's Just Wait and See to victory in the featured Willowdale

Steeplechase.

Artic North made a late charge to the lead and held off Sharon Sheppard's Mr. Fine Threads to win by a neck. Morning Star Farm's Shoreline finished third in a full field of 10.

Trainer Ricky Hendriks' Morning Star had struck in the first race, the Liam Magee SOTA amateur apprentice hurdle, with Indigo Heart, who won by 3¼ lengths under Paul O'Neill. Owner-trainer Kathy Neilson's Soluble was second under daughter Skylar McKenna.

Neilson, currently third in the trainer ranks by wins, struck in the Landhope Cup maiden hurdle when Nancy Reed's Awesome Adrian cut the pace under Eddie Keating and won by 17¼ lengths.

Jonathan Sheppard solidified his position in the trainer rankings behind Jack Fisher when Take the Lead Racing's Lead Investor won the Rose Tree Cup claiming hurdle by 7¼ lengths. Thomas Garner rode the winner.



Next Up Radnor Hunt Cup headlines Malvern meet

The 89th running of the Radnor Hunt Races will be staged next Saturday in Malvern, Pa., as the National Steeplechase Association's spring season nears its conclusion. The Fair Hill Races will celebrate its 85th anniversary with a Friday twilight and Saturday afternoon programs on May 24 and 25.

Radnor's marquee race will be the \$35,000 Radnor Hunt Cup, a 3¼-mile timber race.

The popular race meet also will feature the \$35,000 National Hunt Cup, which is an allowance hurdle this year, and the \$30,000 Thompson Memorial, a ratings handicap for horses ranked at 120 or lower.

First post time is 1:30 p.m. at Radnor's W. Burling Cocks Memorial Race Course. Proceeds benefit the Brandywine Conservancy.

The Radnor Hunt Cup attracted six nominees, and heading the list is Michael A. Smith's Le Chevalier, who finished second in the Virginia

Gold Cup on May 4.

Trained by Julie Gomena, Le Chevalier went off as the Virginia Gold Cup's 2.70-1 favorite after finishing second in the Middleburg Hunt Cup and again finished behind winner Andi'amu. The 10-year-old Broken Vow gelding had won Virginia Fall's National Sporting Library & Museum Cup last October.

Also nominated to the Radnor Hunt Cup from the Virginia Gold Cup was Irv Naylor's Super Saturday, who finished third after a fifth-place finish in the Middleburg Hunt Cup for trainer Kathy Neilson.

Stewart Strawbridge's Kings Apollo missed an opportunity to defend his 2018 Winterthur Bowl victory when the Delaware meet was canceled on May 5. Trained by Sanna Neilson, the 10-year-old finished fourth in the Middleburg Hunt Cup on April 20.

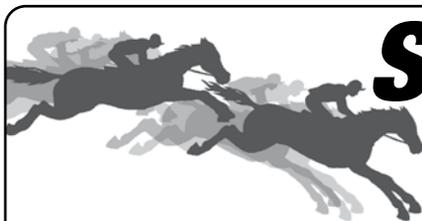
Trainer Elizabeth Voss nominated Arma-

ta Stables' Wildcatter, who went off course in the Grand National in Butler, Md., on April 20. The 11-year-old was unplaced in his two 1918 starts. In 2015, he was elevated to the top spot in the Radnor Hunt Cup when he finished second while encountering interference in the stretch.

Sarah R. Shepherd's Curve of Stones has transferred to timber racing from hurdles, and he finished fourth in the Virginia Gold Cup's Steeplechase Stakes over a course of mixed obstacles. The 8-year-old Arch gelding is trained by David M. Bourke.

Completing the nominees is owner-trainer Billy Meister's Dr. K'eogh, who finished eighth in a Willowdale maiden timber race on Sunday.

The Radnor Hunt Cup was first run in 1928 and acquired NSA stakes status in 1993. Among its winners have been Saluter, who was the NSA's timber champion four times. Ann Stern's Saluter won in 1995 and 1996.



STEEPLECHASE STANDINGS THROUGH MAY 13



OWNERS BY EARNINGS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Bruton Street-US	22	4	6	4	\$262,000
Riverdee Stable	7	2	0	3	137,500
Mrs. S.K. Johnston Jr.	15	5	1	3	105,700
Irvin S. Naylor	24	3	4	3	97,400
Rosbrian Farm	12	2	3	0	90,350
Irvin L. Crawford II	2	2	0	0	90,000
Ballybristol Farm	5	2	2	0	86,100
KMSN Stable	6	2	0	1	50,750
DASH Stable	4	1	2	1	47,900
Kinross Farm	9	2	0	3	39,550

TRAINERS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Jack Fisher	55	17	9	6	\$645,650
Jonathan Sheppard	32	7	1	6	181,100
Katherine Neilson	27	5	4	5	126,400
Leslie F. Young	14	4	3	2	115,800
Ricky Hendriks	34	3	5	5	139,650
Lilith Boucher	6	3	1	0	45,400
Joseph G. Davies	15	2	2	1	113,500
Neil R. Morris	15	2	2	3	52,150
Julie Gomena	22	1	5	2	63,050
Richard Valentine	20	1	2	4	55,100

JOCKEYS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Michael Mitchell	29	9	4	5	\$288,900
Sean McDermott	31	8	2	8	302,300
Jack Doyle	31	6	3	3	204,400
Hadden Frost	8	3	2	0	70,800
Richard Boucher	10	3	1	0	47,700
Aaron Sinnott	10	3	1	0	49,950
Eric Poretz	10	2	3	1	112,650
Thomas Garner	27	2	3	4	88,100
Gerard Galligan	20	2	3	3	95,550
Eddie Keating	14	2	1	5	53,100

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
Optimus Prime (Fr)	1	1	0	0	45,000
Days of Heaven (Fr)	2	2	0	0	36,000
Mystic Strike	1	2	0	0	33,000