



MONDAY REPORT

A weekly report from the National Steeplechase Association

Monday, July 15, 2019

Saratoga opens its steeplechase schedule with competitive \$65,000 allowance hurdle

A competitive \$65,000 allowance hurdle on Wednesday kicks off Saratoga Race Course's schedule of nine steeplechase races, and Rosbrian Farm's talented newcomer Markhan will be the horse to watch.

The 2 1/16-mile race over National Fences will be Saratoga's first race, with a special 12:50 p.m. post time for the days featuring jump races.

Markhan made his U.S. debut at the Iroquois Steeplechase on May 11 and won a maiden hurdle by 4 1/2 lengths for top Irish trainer Gordon Elliott. The six-year-old Kentucky-bred previously had had considerable success on the flat, with three handicap victories over the 2018-2019 Irish season.

Turned over to trainer Ricky Hendriks, Markhan showed off his flat credentials at Parx Racing on July 1 when he easily won a 1 1/2-mile turf flat race for hurdlers. Davy Russell, the Irish champion jockey who rode Markhan at the Iroquois meet in Nashville, has the mount on Wednesday.

Jack Fisher, who is running away with the year's trainer championships, will take two shots at the allowance hurdle with Whitman's Poetry and Cite.

Whitman's Poetry, owned by DASH Stable, has been knocking at the door of an allowance win through the spring, with a third at the Carolina Cup in March and second-place finishes at the Queen's Cup in April and Iroquois in May.

In the Nashville race, Whitman's Poetry finished strongly to take the place spot, a half-length behind highly regarded Sportswear.

The Tiznow gelding set the pace in the first division of Parx's flat races for hurdlers and finished second to Rosbrian's Optimus Prime, currently the sport's top-rated hurdler. That division went three seconds faster than the heat won by Markhan.

Michael Mitchell, who has ridden several of Fisher's 24 winners in the current season and comfortably leads the jockey standings, has the mount on Whitman's Poetry.

Willie McCarthy will be aboard Gill Johnston's Cite, who had fourth-place finishes in his first two jump starts this year before a last-fence fall in Iroquois' allowance hurdle.



Tod Marks

Rosbrian Farm's Markhan and Davy Russell jumped the last fence in Iroquois' maiden hurdle.

Also coming out of that race are Repeat Repeat and Renown. Bon Nouvel Chasers' Repeat Repeat finished third after a bad stumble two fences from the finish line. Trainer Julie Gomena named Kieran Norris to ride.

Merrielle Stable's Renown also stumbled in the Iroquois race and dislodged jockey Jack Doyle, who returns in the saddle on Wednesday for trainer Elizabeth Voss.

Meriwether Morris will saddle lightly raced Gaye Breeze, who carries the silks of her Petticoats Loose Farm. The Irish-bred six-year-old has made all four of his sanctioned starts this year and won a Fair Hill maiden hurdle on May 25. Thomas Garner has the mount.

Trainer Jonathan Sheppard's and Vince Bonanni's Zeppelin Ride will be seeking his first placing of the year after a maiden win at last fall's Montpelier Hunt Races in Virginia. The Tiznow five-year-old was pulled up at the

Carolina Cup on March 30 and fell in a Foxfield Spring ratings handicap in April. Gerard Galligan will ride.

Lee Potoik's homebred Roller Rolls On finished third in a Radnor Hunt Races allowance hurdle on May 18. Trainer Doug Fout named Sean McDermott to ride the four-year-old Lemon Drop Kid gelding.

On the inside

Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime, an easy winner of his two starts this year and the current top-rated hurdler, heads a crowded list of 15 nominees to Saratoga's A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) on Thursday, July 25.....2

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Looking ahead

Optimus Prime tops 15 Smithwick nominees

Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime, an easy winner of his two starts this year and the National Steeplechase Association's top-rated hurdler, heads a crowded list of 15 nominees to Saratoga Race Course's \$150,000 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) on Thursday, July 25.

Trained by Ricky Hendriks, the French-bred is no stranger to Saratoga. He made his U.S. debut there last August and won the New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1). He has been beaten only once since then, a third to Eclipse champion Zanjabeel in Belmont Park's Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1).

He opened his 2019 campaign with an easy 8¾-length victory in the Virginia Gold Cup's David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) on May 4, a performance that earned him an NSA rating of 161. He signaled his readiness for Saratoga with a three-length win in a Parx Racing flat race for hurdlers on July 1.

Second in the ratings at 157 is Irv Naylor's Bedrock, who arrived in the U.S. after two victories last fall in midlevel hurdle stakes races in Ireland. Now trained by Leslie Young, he would be making his first U.S. start.

The Maryland-based owner also nominated Sempre Medici, who set the pace in the Semmes and finished second. The French-bred, rated at 140, is trained by Cyril Murphy.

Jack Fisher, the runaway leader in the NSA's trainer standings this year, nominated four to the 2 1/16-mile Smithwick. Two of them, Fox-trot NH Racing Partnership's Vosne Romanee and Gill Johnston's Peppay Le Pugh, would be making their American debuts after successful overseas careers.

Vosne Romanee, rated at 151, had three wins last year, most recently in an Ascot hurdle handicap in November. Peppay Le Pugh departed Ireland with a handicap win and a second in


April.

Fisher also nominated Riverdee Stable's Gibralfaro, winner of the Queen's Cup MPC Chase for novices in April, and Sonny Via's Hinterland, second in Fair Hill's Valentine Memorial Handicap on May 25.

The Valentine winner, Robert A. Kinsley's No Wunder, was nominated by Elizabeth Voss along with Kinsley's Modem, who most recent start over fences was a sixth in last year's Smithwick.


Also among the nominees was last year's upset Smithwick winner, Mark W. Buyck Jr.'s Show Court, most recently finished fourth in the Valentine.

Rosbrian's Swansea Mile, also trained by Hendriks, won the 2017 Smithwick at 28.50-to-1. He opened his 2019 campaign with a listless seventh under trying weather conditions at the Willowdale Steeplechase on May 12.



STEEPLECHASE STANDINGS

THROUGH JULY 16



OWNERS BY EARNINGS						JOCKEYS BY WINS					
	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings		Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Bruton Street-US	26	5	6	5	\$285,250	Michael Mitchell	43	16	5	5	\$425,950
Mrs. S.K. Johnston Jr.	26	6	4	6	163,000	Sean McDermott	44	9	5	9	347,400
Riverdee Stable	10	2	2	2	145,700	Jack Doyle	43	7	4	5	245,150
Irvin S. Naylor	33	4	5	5	123,150	Richard Boucher	13	4	1	1	70,200
Rosbrian Farm	13	3	3	0	108,350	Ross Geraghty	28	3	6	3	152,450
Ballybristol Farm	8	2	2	1	91,250	Willie McCarthy	30	3	7	3	123,400
Irvin L. Crawford II	2	2	0	0	90,000	Hadden Frost	10	3	2	0	72,550
DASH Stable	5	2	2	1	65,900	Eddie Keating	16	3	1	5	74,100
KMSN Stable	7	2	0	1	51,950	Aaron Sinnott	13	3	1	0	52,000
Jonathan Sheppard	10	1	2	2	45,950	Gerard Galligan	26	2	5	3	106,350

TRAINERS BY WINS						HORSES BY EARNINGS					
	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings		Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Jack Fisher	76	24	13	8	\$804,450	Senior Senator	2	2	0	0	\$90,000
Jonathan Sheppard	37	7	2	7	192,800	Scorpiancer (Ire)	2	1	0	0	90,000
Katherine Neilson	35	6	5	5	155,500	Andi'amu (Fr)	2	2	0	0	78,000
Ricky Hendriks	41	5	5	6	171,150	City Dreamer (Ire)	2	1	0	0	78,000
Leslie F. Young	21	4	4	4	129,500	Gibralfaro (Ire)	2	1	0	0	64,500
Lilith Boucher	9	4	1	1	67,900	Moscato (Fr)	2	1	0	1	60,000
Joseph G. Davies	16	2	2	1	114,700	Sportswear (GB)	2	2	0	0	48,000
Neil R. Morris	21	2	2	5	61,450	Corky Lemon	3	2	0	0	45,600
Mark Beecher	17	2	1	1	58,700	Optimus Prime (Fr)	1	1	0	0	45,000
Julie Gomena	32	1	6	3	73,950	Schoodic	3	3	0	0	42,000