



MONDAY REPORT

A weekly report from the National Steeplechase Association

Monday, July 8, 2019

Hendriks sweeps Parx flat races; Fisher dominates in Monmouth maiden hurdles

Steeplechase racing took center stage at Parx Racing and Monmouth Park in the first week of July, with an eye toward Saratoga Race Course's summer jumps program beginning on Wednesday, July 17, and to the Colonial Downs season starting on Saturday, Aug. 10.

After the Fourth of July program at Monmouth, trainers Jack Fisher and Ricky Hendriks clearly are holding hot hands as the summer season begins in earnest. Hendriks won Parx's two flat races for hurdlers with Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime and Markhan on July 1. Ross Geraghty rode both easy winners.

Leading trainer Fisher answered three days later with a sweep of Monmouth's two maiden hurdles, with Sheila Williams' and Northwoods Stable's Not in Charge in the first division and Bruton Street-US's Snap Decision in the second heat. Current leading jockey Michael Mitchell rode Not in Charge, and Willie McCarthy was aboard Snap Decision.

Flat races do not count in the National Steeplechase Association standings, although Mandy and George Mahoney's Rosbrian and trainer Hendriks claimed a total of \$30,000 from the two scores in the two 1 1/2-mile turf races, each of which carried a \$25,000 purse at the suburban Philadelphia track.

The Monmouth maiden hurdles, each worth \$30,000, counted in the standings, and Fisher added his 23rd and 24th victories of the year, which exceed his championship total of 22 last season. Mitchell sits atop the jockey standings with his 16th win and added to his margin over Sean McDermott, who had nine wins.

In addition to their purses, the Parx and Monmouth races have benefits heading into the heart of the summer season. Optimus Prime, the sport's top-rated hurdler, is shooting for Saratoga's Grade 1 races, the \$150,000 A. P. Smithwick Memorial on Thursday, July 25, and the \$150,000 New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap on Thursday, Aug. 22.

The French-bred seven-year-old opened the U.S. phase of his career with a victory in last year's New York Turf Writers. Geraghty has been aboard for all of his American starts. Optimus Prime won the Virginia Gold Cup's



Tod Manks

Davy Russell drove Markhan to a maiden hurdle victory at the Iroquois Steeplechase.

David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) by 8 3/4 lengths on May 4 and carries the NSA's top 161 rating.

Drawn on the outside of Parx's first division, Optimus Prime came away in good order, answered Geraghty's call on the final turn, easily turned back a challenge by Belisarius in the stretch, and won by a geared-down three lengths over Whitman's Poetry, owned by DASH Stable.

Irv Naylor's Elucidation finished third in an effort that marked the return of reigning champion jockey Darren Nagle to competition after a work-related injury.

Optimus Prime was favored at 2.10-to-1, but Markhan went off at shorter odds, 9-to-5, in his division based on his most respectable flat record (five wins) while trained by Gordon Elliott in Ireland. In his U.S. debut on May 11, Markhan won an Iroquois Steeplechase maiden hurdle by 4 1/2 lengths over Snap Decision.

Hendriks took over Markhan's training

after the Nashville race, and the six-year-old Kentucky-bred by Birdstone has not missed a beat at Morning Star Farm in eastern Pennsylvania. Well back early, he showed a burst of acceleration on the final turn, opened two lengths at the furlong pole, and was ridden out to a 3 1/2-length victory.

Rated at 116 as a maiden hurdle winner, Markhan will be pointed toward Saratoga's opening steeplechase race, a \$65,000 allowance hurdle at 2 1/16 miles, on July 17.

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Go Jump Racing!





Hendriks, Fisher dominate in early July races

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The Monmouth victories made Not in Charge and Snap Decision eligible to race at Saratoga. Both followed a similar script on firm turf at the Jersey Shore track, going to the lead early and never looking back.

Not in Charge, favored at 11-to-10, took charge at the second fence under Mitchell and raced with an uncontested lead ahead of Silver Crescent and Hepcat into the stretch the final time. Ballybristol Farm's Silver Crescent launched a challenge at the last fence but could not sustain his bid.

Owner-trainer Jonathan Sheppard's Hepcat continued to run through the stretch and finished second, 1½ lengths behind Not in Charge and 2½ lengths ahead of third finisher Silver Crescent. Not in Charge, a five-year-old Lemon Drop Kid gelding, had finished fourth in his previous start, a maiden hurdle at the Fair Hill Races on May 25. He ran the 2 1/16-mile distance in 3:51.32.

Snap Decision snapped to the front end at the start in the second division, with Richard




Don Clippinger

Optimus Prime went to the winner's circle after winning Parx's \$25,000 flat race for hurdlers.


C. Colton Jr.'s 19.30-to-1 Seeking Albert close behind him and forcing a stiff pace. Immediately behind the top two were Hudson River Farms' Snuggling and Gill Johnston's Master Plan.

Snap Decision pulled clear on the final turn, led by five lengths at the final fence, and came home

to a 4½-length victory in 3:41.41. Snap Decision went off as the 2.90-to-1 second betting choice. Seeking Albert, ridden by McDermott, finished second, 6¾ lengths clear of Master Plan in third. Riverdee Stable's Gostisberehere, the 2.60-to-1 favorite, finished fourth.



STEEPLECHASE STANDINGS THROUGH JULY 5



OWNERS BY EARNINGS					
	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Bruton Street-US	26	5	6	5	\$285,250
Mrs. S.K. Johnston Jr.	26	6	4	6	163,000
Riverdee Stable	10	2	2	2	145,700
Irvin S. Naylor	33	4	5	5	123,150
Rosbrian Farm	13	3	3	0	108,350
Ballybristol Farm	8	2	2	1	91,250
Irvin L. Crawford II	2	2	0	0	90,000
DASH Stable	5	2	2	1	65,900
KMSN Stable	7	2	0	1	51,950
Jonathan Sheppard	10	1	2	2	45,950

JOCKEYS BY WINS					
	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Michael Mitchell	43	16	5	5	\$425,950
Sean McDermott	44	9	5	9	347,400
Jack Doyle	43	7	4	5	245,150
Richard Boucher	13	4	1	1	70,200
Ross Geraghty	28	3	6	3	152,450
Willie McCarthy	30	3	7	3	123,400
Hadden Frost	10	3	2	0	72,550
Eddie Keating	16	3	1	5	74,100
Aaron Sinnott	13	3	1	0	52,000
Gerard Galligan	26	2	5	3	106,350

TRAINERS BY WINS					
	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Jack Fisher	76	24	13	8	\$804,450
Jonathan Sheppard	37	7	2	7	192,800
Katherine Neilson	35	6	5	5	155,500
Ricky Hendriks	41	5	5	6	171,150
Leslie F. Young	21	4	4	4	129,500
Lilith Boucher	9	4	1	1	67,900
Joseph G. Davies	16	2	2	1	114,700
Neil R. Morris	21	2	2	5	61,450
Mark Beecher	17	2	1	1	58,700
Julie Gomena	32	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
And'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