



MONDAY REPORT

A weekly report from the National Steeplechase Association

Monday, October 28, 2019

Schoodic prevails over Andi'amu in hotly contested International Gold Cup

Stamina and jumping ability are the bulwarks of the timber horse. Add speed, and you have something special.

The current timber season features two horses with stamina, jumping ability, and superior speed: Ballybristol Farm's Andi'amu and Dolly Fisher's Schoodic. Both can run a bit. Trained by Leslie Young, Andi'amu had victories over hurdles and was Grade 1-placed.

Schoodic, the three-year-old champion of 2012, had a Grade 2 victory in the Virginia Gold Cup's 2017 David Semmes Memorial. Bred by Edith Dixon, the Tiznow gelding was enormously talented but his petulance frequently compromised his starts over hurdles.

Mrs. Dixon, who had raced her homebred over hurdles, did not want to continue as the owner for his timber career and gave him as a gift to trainer Jack Fisher's mother, Dolly.

Both horses began their timber careers this year—Andi'amu was undefeated in steeplechases last year—and between them they had one defeat, a neck loss by Schoodic in the Brown Advisory Legacy Chase on Sept. 28. They had been following different paths until they met Saturday in the \$75,000 International Gold Cup at Great Meadow Race Course in The Plains.

Andi'amu led by purses by virtue of his three-length victory in the Virginia Gold Cup on May 4, when his hurdler speed proved decisive in that four-mile race. The French-bred added to his 2019 earnings with an easy-as-can-be victory in Virginia Fall's National Sporting Library and Museum Cup on Oct. 12.

Jack Fisher sent Schoodic on a van ride to the Genesee Valley Hunt Cup in western New York on the same day, and the nine-year-old prevailed by a length in a race that had to be regarded as more tiring than Andi'amu's effortless romp.

They were the marquee horses of the 80th International Gold Cup, and they both showed up for their first head-to-head meeting over timber fences. Both ran well and jumped well, and in the end it was Schoodic's superior speed that won him the \$45,000 first-place purse by 2½ lengths.



Tod Marks

Andi'amu led Schoodic, Super Saturday, and Curve of Stones in the International Gold Cup.

Jack Doyle, Andi'amu's regular jockey, put him on the lead immediately in the 3½-mile International Gold Cup, and he did his very best to slow the pace and allow his mount to marshal his speed for the inevitable sprint to the finish line.

Hadden Frost followed Andi'amu's pace by about two lengths, and Schoodic jumped well with no signs of the moodiness that had compromised his hurdle career. In Frost's hands, he was a perfect gentleman as he kept in touch with the leader.

In bicycle racing, it is known as a breakaway, and the two leaders began to separate themselves from their three opponents before the final turn. After Andi'amu made a slight mistake at the third from last fence, Frost asked Schoodic to make his move.

Schoodic gained the lead before the turn, but the International Gold Cup was by no means over. Andi'amu and Doyle attacked the final two fences, as did Schoodic and Frost. Both jockeys drove their mounts away from the final fence, but it was clear that Andi'amu was not making any headway.

Schoodic reached the line with a 2½-length advantage, and third-place finisher Super

Saturday was 13 lengths behind Andi'amu. Hudson River Farms' Codrington College, who had defeated Schoodic at Shawan, finished fourth, 3½ lengths behind Super Saturday and a neck ahead of Curve of Stones.

Sent to the starter at 3.20-to-1, Schoodic paid \$8.40 to win after running the International Gold Cup's 3½ miles in 7:15 3/5.

The International Gold Cup's \$45,000 first-place purse raised Schoodic's 2019 earnings to \$109,500. Andi'amu remains the division leader with \$115,500 in purses from four starts. He won the Middleburg Hunt Cup in his maiden voyage over timber on April 20.

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Fisher continues his record-breaking run

Jack Fisher is experiencing the finest season of a stellar training career, and he now has exceeded his personal mark for wins with 36. He also has obliterated his prior record for earnings by \$200,000, accumulating \$1,523,050.

He kicked off his three-win splurge at Saturday's International Gold Cup with a stylish win by Gill Johnston's Brianbakescookies in the \$40,000 Sport of Kings maiden hurdle presented by the Virginia Equine Alliance.

Ridden by Willie McCarthy, Brianbakescookies stalked Irv Naylor's pacesetter Royal Drumlee and prevailed by three-quarters of a length over

the front-runner. Armata Stables' You're No Better finished third.

Jonathan Sheppard, the sport's all-time leading trainer by wins and earnings, notched two International Gold Cup victories. His Ebullience cut all the pace under Darren Nagle and won the \$25,000 ratings handicap by a half-length over Petticoats Loose Farm's Gaye Breeze.

Hudson River Farms' Skydiving took the lead early in the \$45,000 Orlando Heart of the District allowance hurdle for maiden winners and held on gamely for a half-length victory over Kinross Farm's Big Bend. Ross Geraghty

rode the four-year-old fo Sheppard.

The Steepleton Stakes, a uniquely Virginia race over a variety of obstacles, went to Donna Rogers' Dapper Dan, who grabbed the lead at the last fence and drew clear to a 5 1/2-length victory over Ballybristol Farm's Mercoeur. Graham Watters rode Dapper Dan for trainer Neil Morris.

Geraghty rode 7-to-2 favorite Accountable to a half-length victory over Vincent Van Gogo in the \$35,000 Old Dominion Turf Championship for Virginia-breds on the flat. Carla Morgan trained the winner.

Naylor's team posts two wins at Aiken Fall

Irv Naylor's diverse stable notched two victories at Saturday's Aiken Fall Steeplechase, including the featured \$30,000 Budweiser Holiday Cup maiden hurdle with Family Tree. The Naylor team also won the \$15,000 maiden claiming hurdle with Mighty Mark.

With Barry Foley in the saddle, Family Tree made a strong late bid and won by two lengths over Daniel Delefrío's Fightinirishabit. Owner-trainer William Wofford's Pappy on the Rocks finished third in a field of eight.

Trained by Neil Morris, Family Tree ran the 2 1/4-mile distance in 4:22 4/5 on turf rated as good.

The Budweiser Holiday Cup kicked off the program at the Aiken Horse Park, and Naylor also took the second race with Mighty Mark, a three-year-old making only his second start over fences for trainer Kathy Neilson and his third career start overall.

Ridden by Alain Cawley, Mighty Mark drew off to an 8 1/2-length score over Diana Gillam's Elmutahid. Marsha Hewitt's Camp Courage finished third. Mighty Mark ran the 2 1/4-mile distance in 4:19.

Aiken Fall's final two races were reminders of steeplechasing's family connections. In the maiden hurdle for fillies and mares, Kieran Norris rode Timber Town Stable's Lela's Gift to an 18 1/2-length victory for his wife, trainer Madison Meyers.

The First Samurai homebred ran the 2 1/4-mile distance in 4:31 4/5. Wofford's Choklitoverdonut finished second.

The nightcap was won by Morning Star Farm's Diplodocus, who prevailed by a half-length over Bite the Bit. McLean Hendriks was in the saddle for his father, owner-trainer Ricky Hendriks. The Sky Mesa gelding ran the same 2 1/4-mile distance in 4:26 3/5.



Tod Marks

Michael Mitchell drove Riverdee Stable's Gibralfaro toward the finish line ahead of Hinterland.

Gibralfaro scores Zeke Ferguson win

A part of Sean Clancy's philosophy with his Riverdee Stable partnership is that he doesn't want to overmatch his horses or run them too often. He's also pretty good at math.

After two tough but successful starts at Saratoga Race Course, Clancy decided to skip Belmont Park's Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1) and the rich Far Hills meet with Gibralfaro and point him toward the International Gold Cup's \$75,000 David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2).

The math came into his calculations when he considered purses. Gibralfaro would have had to finish third in Far Hills' Grand National (Gr. 1) to equal the Ferguson's \$45,000 first-place purse. With the Grand National chockful of overseas and domestic talent, the Ferguson made sense financially as well.

His measured approach paid off handsomely when Gibralfaro overtook front-running

Balance the Budget nearing the final turn and drew clear to win the Ferguson by 3 1/2 lengths.

Trainer Jack Fisher also claimed second money with Sonny Via's ever-reliable Hinterland, who closed well and was 10 3/4 lengths clear of promising new arrival Lethal Steps in third. Eclipse Award winner Zanjabeel, making his first start in more than 13 months, was prominent for two miles but tired to finish fourth.

Bettors allowed Gibralfaro to get away at 10.20-to-1, and the Irish-bred paid \$22.40 to win after running the Ferguson's 2 1/8 miles in 3:57 1/5 on firm ground.

Michael Mitchell rode the winner and remained atop the jockey standings, one race ahead of Jack Doyle, who was blanked at Great Meadow.

Gibralfaro had finished a solid second in Saratoga's New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1) after a fourth-place finish in the A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1).



Looking ahead Action moves to Montpelier, Pa. Hunt Cup

Steeplechase racing will be featured on the coming weekend at the Montpelier Hunt Races in Virginia on Saturday and the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup on Sunday.

The Montpelier races, on the property of President James Madison's restored home, will distribute \$145,000 in purses over its seven scheduled races. First post time is 12:30 p.m.

The Montpelier feature will be the \$40,000 Noel Laing, a 2½-mile handicap over the Montpelier natural brush course.

The Pennsylvania Hunt Cup meet kicks off at 1:30 p.m., and it will feature the year's final timber classic, the \$40,000 Pennsylvania Hunt Cup at four miles.

Frank A. Bonsal Jr.'s Stand Down, decisive winner of last year's Pennsylvania Hunt Cup, has been nominated to defend his victory in the race's 85th renewal over the Unionville countryside.

Stand Down, trained by Joseph G. Davies, would be seeking his first victory since last

year's Pennsylvania Hunt Cup. The Irish-bred began his sanctioned racing career last year at age six, and he capped that season with a 7¾-length score in the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup.

He began this season with a second-place finish in the John D. Schapiro Memorial at My Lady's Manor and then was a distant fifth in the Virginia Gold Cup on May 4. He began the autumn timber-racing season with a fourth-place finish in the Genesee Valley Hunt Cup on Oct. 12 behind International Gold Cup victor Schoodic.

Two other Pennsylvania Hunt Cup nominees also competed in the Upstate New York timber race. It's Nothing, owned by Move-Up Stables and Sally Reed, finished fifth for trainer Kathy Neilson. In his prior start, It's Nothing had defeated a strong field in Shawan Downs' timber allowance on Sept. 28.

Upland Partners' Mystic Strike was pulled up in the Genesee Valley Hunt Cup, his first start since a sixth-place finish in the Virginia Gold

Cup. Trained by Todd McKenna, the Smart Strike 10-year-old had opened the season with a victory in the My Lady's Manor.

Irv Naylor's Super Saturday was nominated to the Pennsylvania classic after finishing second last year. Trained by Neilson, the Any Given Saturday 10-year-old finished third in the International Gold Cup on Saturday.

Nominated from the three-horse National Sporting Library was Blair Wyatt's Witor, who finished seven lengths behind Andi'amu in third place. The German-bred is trained by the owner's husband, Todd Wyatt, and finished second in the My Lady's Manor and fourth in the Willowdale Steeplechase.

Trainer Richard Valentine nominated Kinross Farm's Just Wait And See, who won a very soggy edition of the Willowdale Steeplechase by six lengths on May 12 after third-place finishes in steeplechase races at the Middleburg Spring Races in April and the Virginia Gold Cup in early May.



STEEPLECHASE STANDINGS THROUGH OCT. 28



OWNERS BY EARNINGS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Bruton Street-US	39	9	7	6	\$614,500
Riverdee Stable	22	5	5	2	298,350
Hudson River Farms	18	5	1	4	290,550
Michael Buckley	1	1	0	0	270,000
Mrs. S.K. Johnston Jr.	45	10	5	7	269,550
Irvin S. Naylor	62	6	10	9	222,750
Rosbrian Farm	23	5	4	1	204,550
Ballybristol Farm	17	4	5	1	154,000
Wendy Hendriks	6	1	2	1	140,400
Sharon E. Sheppard	19	4	3	3	138,250

JOCKEYS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Michael Mitchell	76	19	11	9	\$674,450
Jack Doyle	82	18	11	8	545,450
Willie McCarthy	52	10	9	5	411,500
Sean McDermott	70	9	8	11	473,850
Thomas Garner	51	7	5	6	404,750
Ross Geraghty	62	6	7	5	351,250
Barry Foley	59	5	6	9	180,800
Hadden Frost	14	5	3	0	142,050
Richard Boucher	21	5	1	2	96,050
Gerard Galligan	59	4	10	12	250,250

TRAINERS BY WINS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Jack Fisher	132	36	22	14	\$1,523,050
Jonathan Sheppard	89	17	7	14	632,450
Leslie F. Young	57	11	15	6	384,550
Ricky Hendriks	74	9	9	10	439,200
Katherine Neilson	53	8	6	7	198,900
Neil R. Morris	35	6	3	6	149,200
Lilith Boucher	15	5	1	2	92,750
Mark Beecher	29	3	2	2	79,750
Julie Gomena	54	2	8	6	124,700
Doug Fout	48	2	3	7	131,900

HORSES BY EARNINGS

	Sts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
Brain Power (Ire)	1	1	0	0	\$270,000
Winston C	4	2	0	1	197,500
Scorpiancer (Ire)	4	1	1	0	177,000
Snap Decision	6	4	2	0	176,400
Gibralfaro (Ire)	5	2	1	0	144,000
Surprising Soul	4	1	1	0	133,000
Andi'amu (Fr)	4	3	1	0	115,500
Schoodic	6	5	1	0	109,500
Moscato (GB)	4	1	0	2	105,000
Senior Senator	2	2	0	0	90,000