

Middleburg Spring Races 4-23-2011

The \$50,000 Temple Gwathmey Hurdle Stakes attracted a strong field to Glenwood Park near Middleburg on Saturday, April 23, but at the finish one horse stood above the others. Irvin S. Naylor purchased and imported Decoy Daddy last year. He disappointed in the Grand National at Far Hills but romped home alone in the Noel Laing at Montpelier last November under Jeff Murphy. His lone start this year was a good second behind Country Cousin in the hurdle stake at Aiken, and at Glenwood Park he found Virginia turf to his liking once again. Darren Nagle sent him to the front but allowed him to settle behind former Eclipse Award winner, Mixed Up (Danielle Hodsdon) the first time under the wire. He regained the lead down the backside, was never seriously challenged and coasted home by 3 1/2 lengths over Riverdee Stable's Dictina's Boy (Paddy Young), who ran evenly but was second best. Mrs. Calvin Houghland's Pierrot Luneire (Xavier Aizpuru) was third. The winning trainer Tom Foley gave all the credit to Desmond Fogarty, who had trained Decoy daddy until the week prior to the race.

The Middleburg Hunt Cup open timber race is Virginia's most important prep for the Virginia Gold Cup, and at least two of the starters were looking ahead to the first Saturday in May. EMO Stable's He's A Conniver (Jody Petty) won last fall's International Gold Cup, and Arcadia Stable's Delta Park (Xavier Aizpuru) is a 2010 timber stakes winner at Shawan Downs, who is trained by the Virginia Gold Cup's leading all time trainer Jack Fisher.

In the race Alicia Murphy's Major Price (Jacob Roberts) set the pace with He's A Conniver in his shadow. With two fences to go He's A Conniver assumed command and opened what seemed a sufficient advantage entering the stretch. Delta Park had launched a rally in the final quarter that had placed him second but with what seemed an insurmountable amount of ground to make up in the stretch. He came flying and not only caught He's A Conniver but was drawing away to win by 2 1/2 lengths. This was Xavier Aizpuru's 100th win in the United States.

Indian Run Farm's Swimming River (Jeff Murphy) found the uniquely circuitous course of the Alfred M. Hunt Steeplechase to his liking as he had in the steeplethon at Great Meadow last fall. He finished first but was disqualified for going off course there but fared better here. In the race he stalked Perry Bolton's Scuba Steve (Ross Geraghty) until the final three furlongs where he raced to the front and won going away by 9 1/2 lengths. This was the second year in a row that Jeff Murphy has won this race and the fourth time in five years.

The Sport of Kings maiden hurdle race went to Michael Wharton's Grinding Speed. Jacob Roberts kept Grinding Speed off the early paced, started to make a move with three furlongs to run and split Hickory Tree Stables' Gustavian (Paddy Young) and Mrs. Henry Stern's Peace Fire (Xavier Aizpuru) at the head of the stretch. He won going away by 2 1/4 lengths.

In the maiden claiming hurdle race, Matt McCarron put Bertram Firestone's Lake Placid on the lead when the flag dropped. He opened a commanding lead and as the field became strung out behind him there was no doubt who would win. The final margin was more than 16 lengths, but could have been more as Lake Placid was not hurried to the end. Neil Morris trained the winner and the runner up, Noble Stable's Last Noble (Jacob Roberts). Lake Placid was claimed by trainer Ricky Hendriks and owner Debra Kachel.

NSA leading rider Paddy Young had two winners on the card with horses trained by Tom Voss. His first win was a hard earned score in the optional allowance claiming hurdle race on Trillium Stable's

Mischief. When Mischief rallied to join the pacesetter, Irvin S. Naylor's Chess Board (Darren Nagle) entering the stretch, a furious stretch duel ensued. Mischief won by a head.

In the training flat race The Fields Stable's Left Unsaid Paddy Young saved ground while racing within striking distance. He came from off the pace in the final quarter mile to win going away by 1 1/2 lengths over Mrs. Calvin Houghland's Nationbuilder (Danielle Hodsdon) and Mike Dalton, LLC's Isabel Harp (Melanie Williams)..