

MIDDLEBURG SPRING RACES JUNE 13, 2020

A grand celebration was planned for the 100th Running of the Middleburg Spring Races on Saturday, April 18, but the Coronavirus Pandemic spoiled the party and the races were postponed. For the next two months Race Chairman Doug Fout and the Race Committee struggled to find a date for the races and then how to proceed safely under the restrictions dictated by Virginia's Governor Ralph Northam. Finally, a date (June 13th) was chosen, but spectators would not be allowed. This posed a tremendous obstacle as without an audience there wouldn't be any income. The Friends of the Middleburg Races and the Virginia Equine Alliance answered the call and with their support the races went on. When entries were taken, the horsemen also answered the call and entered 148 horses in 11 races even though the purses had to be reduced.

The featured race was the \$50,000 Temple Gwathmey Hurdle Handicap, which originally was to be run for \$100,000. In spite of this change nearly every top hurdle horse was on hand, and a field of 8 went to the post. Last year's winner Bruton Street-US' Moscato was on hand to defend his title and he did not disappoint. In this year's race he was reserved off the pace, moved closer to the leaders down the backside the last time around, jumped the last with Hudson River Farm's Iranistan (Gerard Galligan) and romped home alone 11 ½ lengths. Belisarius (Bernie Dalton), who was the runner-up to Moscato in this race a year ago was second again. The other half of the Bruton Street-US' entry, Rashaan (Thomas Garner) was third and Iranistan faded to fourth. Last year's leading trainer, Jack Fisher and co-leading jockey, Michael Mitchell handled Moscato.

The favorite in the Middleburg Hunt Cup open timber race was Ballybristol Farm LLC's Andi'amu, who was seeking his third consecutive win in this race. Trainer Leslie Young had to change riders with Thomas Garner getting his first ride on last year's NSA Timber Champion in Jack Doyles' absence. The rider change was seamless as he was on the pace throughout and was in hand and in command winning by 3 ¾ lengths over Charles C. Fenwick, Jr., Michael Hankin & Charles Noell's Doc Cebu (Michael Mitchell). Doc Cebu closed well but on this day was second best losing by 3 ¾ lengths. Hudson River Farm's Codrington College (Darren Nagle) got the show money.

Jonathan Sheppard was the meet's leading trainer with three wins on the card. He started his hat trick with Hudson River Farm's Galway Kid (Darren Nagle) winning the non-winners of two allowance hurdle race. Galway Kid was rated off the pace and rallied to join Mrs. S. K. Johnston, Jr.'s Brianbakescookies for the lead at the last fence. These two battled up the stretch and Galway Kid prevailed by a neck. Another Sheppard trainee, Sherry L. Fenwick's Anticipating (Sean McDermott) was a good third in this 14-horse field.

Sheppard's second win was with Buttonwood Farm's LLC's Zoom Zoomzoe (Gerard Galligan) in the filly and mare maiden hurdle race. Jennifer H. Pitts' Lear Avia (Eric Poretz) set a torrid pace but shortened strides in the latter stages. Zoom Zoomzoe finished strong, took the lead in the stretch and won handily by 5 ¼ lengths. Lear Avia held on for second with KMSN Stable's High Sierra (Michael Mitchell) third.

Sheppard's third winner was in the first division of the waiver maiden claiming hurdle race with West Grove Venture's Hyperlapse (Gerard Galligan), who came from off the pace to absolutely crush the field winning by 15 lengths. Beverly Steinman's Be Somebody (Barry Foley) ran well for second but could not match strides with the winner. Matthew T. Groff's Bobby the Boss finished third. This was Gerard Galligan's third win.

Another of Galligan's three wins was aboard Carrington Holdings LLC's Hot Springs, who was trained by Arch Kingsley, Jr. Hot Springs was kept off the pace, was third over the last fence and came

flying up the stretch to finish first by 1 length. Riverdee Stable's Lonely Weekend (Michael Mitchell) held on for the place, and Irvin S. Naylor's French Light (Darren Nagle) was the show.

The other waiver claiming maiden hurdle winner was PathFinder Racing's My Own Lane (Graham Watters). My Own Lane was third for most of the race and took command approaching the final hurdle. Terry Whittier and Bourke Racing's Georgie Hyphen (Gerard Galligan) made a late rush but lost by $3\frac{3}{4}$ length with Savage Den Stables' Bold Escape (Barry Foley) taking home third money. Local trainer, Neil Morris saddled the winner.

Richard Valentine was another local trainer, who saddled a winner on the card when Runnymede Racing LLC's Critical Data (Kieran Norris) finished first in the four-year-old maiden hurdle race. Riverdee Stable's Twenty Years On (Sean McDermott) made much of the running with Critical Data in his shadow. Upon landing after the last hurdle, Critical Data pulled away and won handily by $2\frac{1}{4}$ lengths. Hudson River Farms' Another Try (Darren Nagle) out finished Twenty Years On for second

Trainer Jack Fisher had a second win on the race card when Storm Team (Sean McDermott) led throughout the maiden timber race. He was never threatened and won easily by $5\frac{3}{5}$ lengths. Ann Jackson's Flash Jackson (Michael Mitchell) and Buttonwood Farm, LLC's The Silent Trainer (Gerard Galligan) closed well to be second and third but were no match for the winner.

The Alfred M. Hunt Steeplechase is always a crowd pleaser, but this year there wasn't a crowd. For us that were there we enjoyed seeing Straylight Racing LLC's Invocation (Sean McDermott) negotiate the varied fence race course. He was never worse than third, led over the last fence and drew away to win by $1\frac{1}{2}$ length over Donna Rogers' Dapper Dan (Graham Watters). Ballybristol Farm LLC's Mercoueur (Thomas Garner) was third.

Sixteen horses went to the start for the training flat race guaranteeing a lot of action – some good and some bad. The good was the impressive performance of Irvin S. Naylor's Chief Justice. Graham Watters allowed Chief Justice to settle until the final three furlongs. At that time, he was moving the best of all. He advanced steadily, took the lead and won as his rider pleased by 9 lengths. Armata Stables' Zanzi Win crossed the line in second, but here is the bad. He and four others went off course the first time around and were disqualified. Riverdee Stable's Include it (Colin Smith) was moved up to second and Mrs. S. K. Johnston, Jr.'s Mutasaawy (Barry Foley) was awarded third.