



West Virginia

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

January 2021

McKee: Stakes for the Holidays

By Jeff Gilleas

Futurities have a time-honored tradition in Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing. They generate supplemental money via a protracted revenue stream, emanating from conception with installments appointed over the individuals' lifetime.

One of the most enterprising competitions that enriched the sectional racing scene for decades was the Tri-State Futurity. Unfortunately, the race which featured some of the areas finest horses and had historic ramifications for Charles Town and Shenandoah Downs met its untimely conclusion in 2016.

I turned to owner/breeder Tabitha Brady to determine why this formula may have lost some of its once celebrated appeal. Tabitha is the daughter of Vicki Stehr and alongside her uncle Joe and grandmother Betty form a powerful equine clan in Jefferson County.

"For our family, it means we need to dedicate today's money to a program that is built on future hopes and dreams. If we breed an average of 10 mares and say we pay \$200 to make every foal eligible at birth, continue payments throughout the process, you can see this might not be cost effective. And God forbid you skip a payment or just plain forget."

For now the West Virginia Futurity remains a viable option, and on Saturday Oct. 31, the focus was on a talented, though compact group of 2-year-old runners.



Youthinkthatsfunny topped his win on West Virginia Breeders Classics night with a victory in the West Virginia Futurity for owner/breeder/trainer John McKee.

Testing the existing limits of 7-furlong staying power, owner/trainer/breeder John McKee, in the midst of a splendid 2020 training campaign, appeared to hold all the cards. Due to the fiscal nature of a futurity, the \$50,000-added purse was actually worth in excess of \$68,000. McKee's timeless colors sported three entrants, while newly licensed conditioner Kristy Petty ran two and Ollie Figgins III one.

Youthinkthatsfunny, fresh from a dominant win on Breeders Classics

night was a surprising second choice in the wagering to Juba Did It, who decisively captured his debut by a resounding 7-length margin two weeks earlier. As the latch sprung it was Juba Did It bounding away to a controlled advantage with the well-seasoned Youthinkthatsfunny in hot pursuit. The order remained unchanged until the top of the stretch when Juba Did It drifted slightly outward, opening the rail for his closest adversary. The John McKee-bred son of Fiber Sonde, out

of Humored (by Distorted Humor) wrestled the advantage away in midstretch and went on to prevail by 2¼ lengths.

Kristy Petty, seeking her first stakes win as a trainer, shouldn't wait long with her sizable son of Juba out of Landon Did It, a mare she successfully campaigned as owner/breeder.

Throughout the annals of West Virginia racing women have played a major role. Dominant figures like Sylvia Bishop, Ruth Funkhouser, Eleanor Casey, Leslie Condon, Barbara Jo Rubin and dozens more worthy of honorable mention have lent their creative touches to their beloved industry.

Eleanor Casey, the matriarch of the Casey family and architect of Taylor Mountain Farm, was paid homage in the feature race Nov. 28 titled in her remembrance.

Over the last number of years, John McKee's stallion Fiber Sonde has influenced our front page racing news and played a major role in the industry's breeding program. The Eleanor Casey Memorial proved to be another stellar production for Beau Ridge Farm, as they recorded a one-two finish in the \$50,000 stakes for registered accredited West Virginia 2-year-old fillies.

The winner Shutupn'kissme grabbed command from the start, set a humble pace and had plenty in reserve when her trio of challengers mounted their bids. Nearing the wire the race got briefly interesting, when McKee's lesser half of his two-pronged attack, Theladyistruer, delivered a wide rally to cut the deficit to 1¼ lengths.

As racing opportunities lessened towards years end, these gals found themselves in the hunt for divisional honors. John McKee and wife Cyndy are having a banner year, courtesy of their remarkable stallion.

Researching Equibase's trainer's statistics showed John surpassed the \$1 million mark in earnings for the first

time in his career, handily eclipsing last year's \$717,108. He'll also improved his barn win percentage from 12 percent to 21 percent.

Shutupn'kissme was the beneficiary of a race day defection of That Kenney Kid, who probably would have been the favorite after edging the Eleanor Casey Memorial winner on Breeders Classics night.

NEWS AND NOTES

When the racing community recently lost Dr. Feelgood to a training mishap, it raised the question of where does he fit in the hierarchy of all-time legendary Charles Town speed merchants?

A legend leaves behind an unforgettable impression on others. They can be famous, overcome hardships, provide a lesson about life and have admirable characteristics. In sports, we are quick to assign the word "great" to individuals that accomplish extraordinary feats. In horse racing, we often judge a horse's unique qualities by using time as a critical measuring tool.

Dr. Feelgood, a son of Fiber Sonde out of the Polish Numbers mare Happy Numbers, proved his mettle time and again on the racetrack. Under the shedrow, the good doctor ingratiated himself to all fortunate to be in his daily presence.

Owned by Jill Daniel, trained by Crystal Pickett and bred in West Virginia by Francis Daniel III, the "sultan of swayback" compiled an enviable lifetime record of 15 starts with 13 firsts and one second. Panda, as he was referred to at Barn 17, never tasted defeat while competing at 4½ furlongs.

A unique blend of size, speed, desire and personality, in several of his lifetime efforts Dr. Feelgood threatened the track record by registering final times of 50 seconds and change. His relationship with regular jockey Darius Thorpe may be the most compelling aspect

of his transferred inheritance. The bond they formed help formulate Darius' grounded perspective on this business, inflated his infectious smile and placed a natural bounce in his purposeful stride. Like every jockey Thorpe searched for that one big horse who would provide a spark to his career.

Dr. Feelgood was it!

A chance encounter with a peppermint eating machine made him a better rider and instilled in him the confidence needed to succeed at his chosen craft.

NOTES TO MEMBERS

◆ **The 10-10-10 program** is now called the **Supplemental Purse Award Claim**, for which there are new forms. All claims must be submitted to the WV Racing Commission within 15 days from the date the purse is awarded. Claim forms are available on the WV Racing Commission website, racing.wv.gov.

◆ If you are selling or planning to sell your accredited WV-bred and/or sired horse, please contact the WVTBA. The WVTBA has started supplying sellers of **accredited WV-bred and/or sired horses** with **hip stickers and stall-card stickers** to make it easier for buyers to identify these horses. Contact the WVTBA office at (304) 728-6868 or by e-mail at wvbreeders@gmail.com.

◆ **WV Certificates** will be issued seven to 10 days after the WVTBA receives the original registration form application, all required paperwork and payment.

◆ The new WVTBA office is located at 110 South George Street, Suite 4, Charles Town, WV 25414. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. More information may be found at www.wvtba.net.

West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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