



West Virginia

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

November 2021

Runco's Midsummer Night's Dream

When you've won close to 4,500 races and amassed career earnings approaching \$60 million, it's hard to imagine that you could get excited over another day at the office, but trainer Jeff Runco hit it out of the park on Friday, Aug. 27, winning five of the 13 races on the rich Charles Town Classic program.

Track announcer Paul Espinosa must have thought his race-calls redundant, as the name Runco repeatedly crossed his lips, informing the expansive crowd in attendance of this uncommon achievement.

The blockbuster evening, featuring purses in excess of \$2 million, sported an array of entertainment options, the return of a former Classic winner (Duke of Mischief), leading the \$800,000 post parade, an all-time record handle (\$7.19 million) and an inside speed partiality that prompted celebrated racing analysts Caton Bredar and Larry Collmus to incorporate it into their handicapping segments.

With dusk rapidly approaching, the avalanche of success kicked off in Race 3, a first-level allowance contest, where O'Sullivan Farms **Heretodaygonmanana** imposed her presence, though coming off the shelf after last being seen Nov. 26, 2020. The hardy daughter of Creative Cause let others slug out the

taxing early fractions before slipping through along the rail and widening over fatigued adversaries. A full-sister to multiple stakes-placed runner See Ya Manana, earner of \$274,993, Heretodaygonmanana was handled by Arnaldo Bocachica.

The winner is owned by O'Sullivan Farms and Huntertown Farm LLC.

The fourth race was the Sadie Hawkins Stakes and featured the anticipated rematch between Charles Town Races 2020 Horse of the Year **Star of Night** and her nemesis, Bridging the Gap.

With the entire state focused on these two Thoroughbred's of above-average talent, the match-up didn't disappoint expectations. A slight shower preceded the \$75,000-added restricted stakes for West Virginia bred fillies and mares and heavy favoritism (1-5) landed on the balanced frame of Star of Night.

It was a tall order for Bridging the Gap returning from a seven-month layoff, but the daughter of Fiber Sonde gave a penultimate effort and only yielded to the Jeff Runco trainee in the closing yards. Star of Night is by Creative Cause out of Slendiferious Moon, and was bred by her owner, Heinz Steinmann's Huntertown Farm.

It was hoped both horses come out of the race in good order and would point towards

the flagship distaff event of the year (Cavada Stakes), on Breeders Classics night. Star of Night's willingness to partner with the only rider she has ever known (Arnaldo Bocachica) is a prime example of her trainers consummate goal of teamwork.

Aaron's Tap, a son of Northern Afleet (out of the Pleasant Tap mare Tapforaly) hadn't graced the winner's circle since January 2020, however it wasn't due to lack of effort. A winning machine earlier in his career (15 wins in 38 starts), the A & B Bloodstock-bred runner faced a topsy turvy spell where every imaginable traffic circumstance plagued his itinerary.

A stellar group of 4½-furlong specialists were led by pacesetter and lone 3-year-old in the field, Golden Key, until room on the propitious rail materialized for Aaron's Tap. In deep stretch, the seasoned veteran wrestled command and added the victor's share of the allowance purse (\$20,886) to his already sizable bankroll.

Runco and Bocachica's campaign towards flawlessness and West Virginia circuit superiority was suddenly three-quarters of a way home.

The \$75,000 Robert G. Leavitt was the sixth race on the record-setting night of action and favorably reacquainted **Social Chic** with his own age group. The Jeff Runco pupil

followed the lead of his stable predecessors, by crafting a stellar trip and workmanlike response to the coaxing of rider Arnaldo Bocachica. Owned by Smart Angle LLP, the newly minted stakes performer was sharply roused in mid-stretch and held his key rival, No Change, safe. The gelded son of Upstart and Tres Chic, by Harlan's Holiday, was bred by extremely popular horseman, James F Miller.

Mr. Miller, an avid supporter of the Mountain State breeding program, is also president of the Charles Town Horseman's Benevolent and Protective Association and dedicates much of his energies to see that both concerns flourish.

The final race of the evening, the Frank Gall Memorial Stakes, was considered by many, if taken in totality, to be one of the best collections of older West Virginia male runners ever assembled. From the rail out was North Atlantic (\$674,444), Penguin Power (\$312,804), V. I. P. Ticket

(\$300,665), Fancy Concho (\$156,499), Hero's Man (\$219,404), Final Say (\$147,443), Bubba Grump (\$105,809) and Chief Randel (\$275,815). And the undefeated **Muad'dib** who, with laser-like precision, had dissected his opposition while assembling a perfect record of 6-for-6. But never had the John McKee-bred faced such depth.

This unique compilation of talent created a minor parcel of intrigue for the lanky gray/roan gelded son of Fiber Sonde (out of Holy Pow Wow, by Indian Charlie). As the field was dispatched from the gate, Penguin Power accelerated to a sizable advantage, while the public's 2-1 selection (Muad'dib), following his herd instincts, was content to track in fifth place. Once straightened away in the run up the backside, Penguin Power, a chestnut son of Fiber Sonde who had regressed a step in 2021, maintained the point and appeared to be toying with his opposition.

After a grueling half mile in :46.01, Penguin Power rumbled through three-quarters in 1:11.20 as the cavalry charge commenced to close in. Hero's Man, North Atlantic and Muad'dib formed a potent trio that embarked on their upward trajectory towards the leader. Tipping two-wide in mid-stretch, Muad'dib was up in time to defeat North Atlantic, with Hero's Man third and Penguin Power fourth – the first, second and fourth-place finishers all trained by Jeff Runco.

Exhibiting the fight inherent in his sire line, David Raim's 4-year-old now has proven courageous at the highest level of local competition. From day one, great things have been expected of Muad'dib, a full brother to Late Night Pow Wow, a Grade 3 winner of \$700,400.

Classics night was prime-time action complete with transparency of performance, enhancement of tradition and a significant pathway to riches.

Benefits of Owning a WV-Bred and/or -Sired racehorse Some of the best incentives in the nation:

- A minimum of three accredited races are written every day at Charles Town exclusively for registered WV-bred and/or -sired horses.
- West Virginia has the only program in the country that permits horses to win state-bred races that do not count against the horse's lifetime open conditions.
- The WV Thoroughbred Development Fund distributes almost \$5 million to breeders, owners, and stallion owners of accredited WV-bred and/or -sired horses based the horse's annual earnings at Charles Town and Mountaineer Park racetracks.
- The West Virginia Breeders Classics pays out almost \$1 million in purses for WV-bred and/or -sired horses. It is held annually on the second Saturday in October.
- \$800,000 in purses are allocated for up to 16 WV accredited stakes races during the year.
- Supplemental Purse Awards of up to 10% of the winner's share of the purse to the owner, breeder, and/or sire owner of the accredited WV-bred and/or -sired winner.
- West Virginia offers year-round racing with approximately 300 race days per year.

West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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