

Where the Surf Meets the Turf, Down at Del Mar

8/29/2005

Hello to all,

Last Friday Steph and I went to Del Mar for the horse races. It's an annual affair for us, and one that started for Steph over 25 years ago with her parents. We love the setting, the beautifully restored facility sparkling in the southern California sun cooled by the ocean breezes of the Pacific surf rolling in just a few hundred yards away. The track was founded in 1937 by Bing Crosby and in 1938 hosted the famous Seabiscuit - Ligaroti match race. It was a favorite destination of the stars and starlets of the golden age of Hollywood, and is decorated by large format photographs of that era and other shots of the track's rich history.

I always enjoy our visits to the races, but my efforts to make the races pay have not been as successful as the scenery. In past years, I attempted to outsmart my fellow parimutual bettors, pouring over a collection of tout sheets, racing forms and daily newspaper predictions. I studied each horse, and carefully laid my bets based on previous race performance, workout timings, jockey strategy and owner/trainer legacy. After 30 minutes of nervous and intense study, I sprinted to the betting window just prior to the bell. Occasionally, I picked a winner. But usually, those one-day assaults by a rank amateur on the perennial horse racing industry and professional rail birds were an exercise in futility and frustration, tempered only by generous doses of crying in my beer.

This year I chose a relaxed approach. I stuck to simple bets and eschewed the complex schemes that marked my strategies of years past. My day was much less stressed and fretful. The grass seemed greener, the flowers more colorful and the horses even more majestic. The first seven races passed pleasantly.

As the bugler sounded the traditional call of the horses from the paddock for the next race, I opened my program. In the listings for the 8th race I saw a horse of promise. My confidence was rooted not in blood lines or workout timings down the backstretch, not in jockey winning percentage or racing session stable performance. My bet was placed based solely on the name.

I scoffed at a wimpy box bet that would have paid out for any winning position, first through third. I wanted nothing to do with a gutless Show or a flaccid Place. I slapped down my cash, looked the agent directly in the eye and stated firmly, in a voice loud enough for two lines on either side to hear, "Number Four to Win." The agent raised her eyebrows, gave a tight lipped grimace, punched in the numbers, tilted her head down and looked at me over the tops of her eyeglasses. "Four to Win," she repeated evenly as she handed me the ticket.

I walked confidently back to my seat, secure in the knowledge that there was no other smart bet in this race. I watched the tote board as the numbers updated every few seconds. Ah, the tide was turning. The crowd was following my lead. Slowly the odds on #4 decreased as more and more bettors jumped on the bandwagon. I saw this as nothing less than complete endorsement of my vision. "Once again," I thought smugly, "I lead the charge, in the vanguard!"

By then it had become a stampede. With each wave of updates, the odds fell further. The momentum built. "Soon, soon, so very soon," I thought, "I will hear the shouts of the riot behind me as the last minute bettors fail to get their money down on #4. They will wail in anguish as the #4 boat leaves the dock and disappears over the horizon of certain victory."

The horses were loaded into the starting gate, their bodies quivering with pent up energy. Bred, born, selected, fed, and endlessly trained for this singular moment, they were each primed explosions waiting their entire lives only for the match.

The bell rang. "And they're off," intoned the announcer.

The horses exploded out of the gate and immediately accelerated to amazing speed. The leading hoofs pounded into the groomed track and kicked up dirt that peppered the trailing horses and riders. The bodies of the horses rippled with the contraction and release of their muscles, their heads moving up and down, backwards and forwards with every stride. The jockeys floated motionless above the driving rhythm below, their backs perfectly parallel to the ground, their arms and legs flexing perfectly in tune with their mounts.

Around they came to the ¾'s pole, and as I had expected, #4 was in the lead. I didn't shout. I didn't stand. I was confident. I glanced at the tote board. #4 had gone off at 40 to 1. Silently, I calculated my coming fortune.

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I glanced back to the track. Disaster. #4 moved backwards through the field as if anchored to the ground. A gaggle of pretenders crossed the line. My champion had failed me.

My gambling legacy remained unbroken. My wagering fate forever confirmed in the name of my #4 horse.

Mark Bet Slips South Track
\$1 Exacta / \$2 Quinella / \$1 Trifecta
\$1 Superfecta (10-cent min.)



8th
Approx. Post 7:02PM

DEL MAR
Win Place Show

Starlight Society
MAIDEN CLAIMING \$32,000-\$28,000. PURSE \$24,000. FOR MAIDENS, THREE YEAR OLDS AND UPWARD. Three Year Olds, 120 Lbs; Older, 124 Lbs Claiming Price \$32,000, if for \$28,000, allowed 2 lbs. **One Mile.**

Track Record: Precisionist 114 lbs. 7 y.o. 8-1-88 1:33.20

P.P.#	Color	Name	Sex/Age	Trainer	Post	Weight	Time
P.P.1	White	Sid & Jenny Craig	3y.o. Ch, h (KY)	Ronald McAnally	7/2		
1	White	Larry King	3y.o. Ch, h (KY)	Jose Valdivia, Jr.	L 124		
P.P.2	White	Thundering Clouds	3y.o. Dk B/ Br. g (CA)	Garrett Gomez	L 120		
2	White	Thundering Clouds	3y.o. Dk B/ Br. g (CA)	Garrett Gomez	L 120		
P.P.3	Orange	Warren B. Williamson	3y.o. B. g (KY)	Carla Gaines (R. Agarie)	5		
3	Blue	Big Bat	4y.o. B. g (KY)	Patrick Valenzuela	L 124		
P.P.4	Yellow	Nico Nierenberg	3y.o. Gr/ro. g (CA)	Patrick Gallagher	20		
4	Yellow	Thehousealwayswins	3y.o. Gr/ro. g (CA)	Martin Pedroza	L 120		
P.P.5	Green	Del Mar Storm	3y.o. Ch. g (CA)	Alex Solis	L 120		
5	Green	Del Mar Storm	3y.o. Ch. g (CA)	Alex Solis	L 120		
P.P.6	Black	Riley's Life	3y.o. Gr/ro. g (FL)	Kerwin John	L 118		
6	Black	Riley's Life	3y.o. Gr/ro. g (FL)	Kerwin John	L 118		
P.P.7	Orange	Danzonette	3y.o. B. g (KY)	David Flores	L 120		
7	Orange	Danzonette	3y.o. B. g (KY)	David Flores	L 120		
P.P.8	Pink	Abnegate	4y.o. B. g (CA)	Saul Arias	L 112 ¹⁰		
8	Pink	Abnegate	4y.o. B. g (CA)	Saul Arias	L 112 ¹⁰		
P.P.9	Turquoise	Accountable Event	3y.o. Dk B/ Br. c (CA)	R. R. Douglas	L 120		
9	Turquoise	Accountable Event	3y.o. Dk B/ Br. c (CA)	R. R. Douglas	L 120		
P.P.10	Purple	The Fourteenth	3y.o. B. g (KY)	Amir Cedeno	L 120		
10	Purple	The Fourteenth	3y.o. B. g (KY)	Amir Cedeno	L 120		
11	Grey	Danzing Commander					SCRATCHED
12	Lime	Century Man					SCRATCHED
13	Brown	Hayato					SCRATCHED
14	Maroon	Dragon Spirit					SCRATCHED

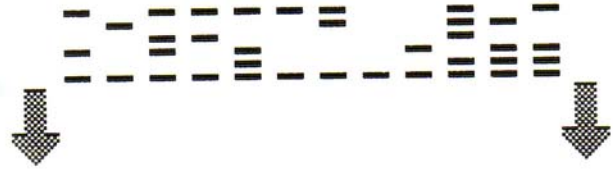
L denotes Lasix. U denotes horses using lasix that did not in their last start. * denotes California bred. Equipment Change: Riley's Life will race with Blinkers Off 08/26/2005 Race 8

DEL MAR
THOROUGHBRED CLUB

D-BE54-2630-4A8B
26-Aug-05 33
Race 8 DEL MAR

\$2 WIN \$2
4

1 BET, TOTAL \$2
TICKET EXPIRES 5/15/06
6004
26Aug05 W000803 18:57:03
D-BE54-2630-4A8B



Be well,
Doug