

Middleburg Hunt Point to Point 4/25/10

A festive crowd was on hand for the Middleburg Hunt Point to Point on Sunday, April 25 at Glenwood Park near Middleburg. There were contests for best hats, ties, etc. and other activities that involved the spectators in the day's action. On the race course side of the rail a good, but smaller than usual, card of races provided the equestrian entertainment. Entries were down from previous years, but the action could have hardly been more exciting.

One of the hardest fought contests on the card was the amateur novice rider hurdle race. This race attracted a five horse field that saw four of the five starters still in contention with a quarter mile to run. At the last fence Jake Dunning on Church Ghost, Sam Cockburn on Harry's Crown and Billy Santoro on Marino Feliz jumped as a team. Upon landing Gary Baker's Marino Feliz found a different gear and drew away to win by six lengths with Church Ghost narrowly second over Harry's Crown. Last year Marino Feliz won the title for this series with Billy Santoro up, and their reunion on Sunday reversed what has been a disappointing season. Mrs. D. M. "Dot" Smithwick saddled the winner and now holds a slight lead in the competition for the circuit's leading trainer. This is a very competitive competition this year as six trainers are within a point and a half of the leader.

Sam Cockburn rode two horses in this series for trainer William "Pete" Aylor during the season, and the results on Sunday gave them the top two spots in the final standings. Aylor Racing Stable's Meshwaar was the winner with Harry's Crown in second place. The results of the Middleburg races also gave Sam Cockburn another championship as the leading novice rider over fences.

There were two maiden hurdle races on the card and both of these provided exciting performances. In the first of these two races, Carl Rafter sent Falcon Racing LLC's Daylight Fire to the lead shortly after the flag dropped. The 5-year-old mare led all the way romping home by ten lengths over Kristall Farm's Magic Moonshine (Matt McCarron) with William Marlow, Jr.'s Sgt. Bart (James Slater), close to follow in third. These two had pressed the pace but were no match for the winner, who was trained by Don Yovanovich.

The restricted maiden hurdle race was exciting in that four of the six starters were within two lengths of the lead at the wire. Mrs. Magalen O. Bryant had two starters in the race, Rippin and Runnin trained by Richard Valentine with Matt McCarron up and Personal Two, who was trained by Doug Fout and ridden by Jeff Murphy. Rippin and Runnin was never far back and assumed the lead with a mile and a half to run. He continued then to set the pace, but with three furlongs to run Personal Two moved to the leader. Briefly at the head of the stretch Personal Two claimed the lead but Rippin and Runnin was not to be denied. He won by a length over Randleston Farm's White Holiday (Liam McVicar), who just got up to catch Personal Two at the wire. James Lechrone's Straighredcard (Jacob Roberts) rallied and was a very close fourth.

The feature race at the Middleburg Point to Point is the prestigious Middleburg Bowl open timber race. This year there were not sufficient entries for the open race and it was cancelled, but there were four maiden timber horse entered and that race was run for the Bowl. On race day three of these entries declined and one lone starter remained. This provided a walkover and the trophy went to Move Up Stable's Template, who was ridden by Jacob Roberts and trained by Alicia Murphy.

The first race on the card was a novice rider race on the flat going a mile and a half. Vika Monroe put her That Dream Cat on the lead but the remainder of the five horse field were close behind. When

the field passed the quarter pole That Dream Cat had faded, and Hayleigh Royston (in her first start) took the lead with Jacob Deane's Class Deputy. Becky Dang was breathing down Class Deputy's collar with Mrs. Calvin Houghland's Chivite and took the lead when they turned for home at the head of the stretch. Class Deputy held on well for second but was no match for the winner who won by a length but very much in hand. F. Bruce Miller was the winning trainer. W. Gary Baker's Justabud was third under Ben Garner, who is this season's leading novice rider on the flat.

A field of ten maidens gave starter Peter Walsh a few problems at the start of the 1 1/4 mile maiden flat race. They finally came to hand and were off and running with Sam Cockburn taking the lead with a mile to run on his father's Whodoyoucallit. They opened a comfortable lead and were able to hold off Betsy Mead's Swell Party, who came flying from far back to be second under Jeff Murphy. The final margin was 3/4 of a length. This was a Cockburn family affair as the winner was not only owned by Bay Cockburn and ridden by his son, but was also trained and bred by the owner.

The finale was a 1 1/4 mile flat race that provided rider Carl Rafter and trainer Don Yovanovich their second wins on the card and Vicki Fuller's Legendary Pacer's second win on the circuit in the past eight days. Simon Hobson took the early lead on his Victory Bound with Rafter assuming a stalking position right behind the leader. When they straightened away down the backside with a little more than a half mile to run, Legendary Pacer had joined Victory Bound. They dueled briefly, but Victory Bound could not match strides with the winner, who steadily drew away to win by 15 lengths handily.