

Middleburg Spring Races 4/17/2010

The \$50,000 Grade III Temple Gwathmey hurdle stakes attracted a star studded six horse field at the Middleburg Spring Races on Saturday, April 17 at Glenwood Park. Four of the six starters were stakes winners, and these included last season's Eclipse Award winner, William L. Pape's Mixed Up.

Kenneth and Sarah Ramsey's Slip Away was expected to set the pace under Xavier Aizpuru, but the surprise was that Gregg Ryan's Dynantonia (Carl Rafter) was forcing the pace. With one more time to go around Slip Away finally shook free from Dynantonia and opened a clear lead. Chess Board (Paddy Young) got up to finish second but was 8 3/4 lengths in Slip Away's wake. Dynantonia held on for third, and stakes winners, Spy In The Sky, Mixed Up and Orison followed in that order while never posing a threat. Slip Away extended his winning streak in Virginia hurdle stakes to three. Last year he won the David "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial at Colonial Downs and the Noel Laing Memorial at Montpelier on his way to being honored as the Virginia Steeplechase Association's Steeplechase Horse of the Year.

This was the first of two wins on the card for Aizpuru and trainer Tom Voss. They collaborated later in the card to win the training flat race by 2 1/4 lengths with The Field Stable's Left Unsaid.

The Middleburg Hunt Cup always attracts a top field of timber horses and this year was no exception. The six horse field included Arthur Arundel's Seeyouattheevent, the winner of last fall's International Gold Cup and Magalen O. Bryant's New Zealand bred Erin Go Bragh, the winner of the National Sporting Library Chronicle Cup over this course last October.

In the race Willie Dowling kept Seeyouattheevent off the early pace but started to move to the leaders when they raced down the backside the last time. He took the lead from Erin Go Bragh (Jeff Murphy) two fences from home and was not seriously threatened by Gregory S. Bentley's Rainbows For Luck, who rallied under Paddy Young to take second over Erin Go Bragh. Jack Fisher trained the winner, who won by two lengths.

The Alfred M. Hunt Steeplechase is always a crowd pleaser over one of the sport's most unique courses. Trainer Teddy Mulligan had pointed Karen Eyle's Brands Hatch for this race and as the field approached the last fence everything was going as planned. Brands Hatch had rallied under Jeff Murphy and jumped alongside Tom Foley on Bow Strada for the lead. Brands Hatch had the best of it over the fence and opened a clear lead in the stretch, but Bow Strada was not finished. He closed with a rush and just missed by a half length. Bay Cockburn's I'm Telling was third under Jacob Roberts.

Matt McCarron rated Kinross Farm's Poplar Grove off the early leaders in the Sport of Kings maiden hurdle race but took command as the field raced down the hill with about a mile to run. Trainer Neil Morris had Poplar Grove ready to win over hurdles at first asking under NSA rules, and he was an easy winner by 6 1/4 lengths.

Trainer Julie Gomena put Matt McCarron up on Oakwood Stable's Country Cousin in the Glenwood allowance race and greeted them in the winners' enclosure after the race. McCarron, who is now based in Virginia, reserved Country Cousin in the early stages. He rallied to take the lead over the last fence and romped home alone by 7 1/4 lengths. Fox Ridge Farm's Fogcutter (Xavier Aizpuru) was second and Julia Thieriot's Fantastic Foe (Jacob Roberts) was third.

McCarron was hoping for a hat trick when he rode Kinross Farm's Sky Count in the maiden claiming hurdle race. Unfortunately Jody Petty spoiled McCarron's plans when he won on Stewart Strawbridge's Determined Stand for trainer Sanna Hendriks by 2 3/4 lengths at Sky Count's direct

expense. Determined Stand took the lead when Mrs. S. K. Johnston's Embarrassed fell at the last fence and won easily. Fox Ridge Farm's Canardly (Paddy Young) was third.