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BELMONT

Rice is loaded for turf sprint

By DAVE LITFIN

ELMONT, N.Y. — Thursday marks the one-month anniversary of the Mechanicville overnight stakes, in which Linda Rice saddled all four finishers in a \$3,490 superfecta.

Rice won't sweep the top four positions in Thursday's \$75,000 Jack Betta Be Rite for 3-year-old New York-bred fillies, if only because she entered just three: Canadian Ballet, who led to the final strides of the Mechanicville; and the entry of Myakka and Meriwhether Jessica.

The Rice-trained trio, all of whom won turf sprints at Belmont's spring meet, are a potent team. Canadian

Ballet, who kicked off an all-Rice trifecta winning the Fifth Avenue division of the New York Stallion Stakes last fall, is the main speed. Myakka, who chased entrymate Lady Rizzi's course-record run at Saratoga last out, is a stalker. And Meriwhether Jessica, who turns back after posting a new top Beyer Speed Figure at a mile in open company, will be coming on late.

Rice appears to have them coming and going, but three of the five others entered — Exonerated, Megadeed, and Lost Without You — also won six-furlong turf sprints at Belmont's spring meet.

"We've got to stop this — this is getting out of hand, this Linda Rice,"

joked Peter Pugh, who sends out Lost Without You.

Lost Without You has 3 wins and 1 second since switching to turf to begin her 2008 campaign, and raised her game several notches to beat Myakka in both allowance victories, each time with stalk-and-pounce tactics.

"The last two starts she really did step up, particularly the last one," said Pugh. "But this will be the toughest race she's been in. Linda's tough to beat in these races, but my filly should run well. If you were to pick a running style to have, she certainly has it. It gives her a little bit of an edge on horses that come from farther behind."

Also entered is Remarkable Remy,

who pulled off a 7-1 upset against open overnight stakes fillies, as the fifth of seven straight winners for John Kimmel during the last four days at Saratoga — a parlay, by the way, worth \$222,630 for a \$2 wager.

Remarkable Remy cuts back from a mile and hasn't sprinted since winning her debut at Saratoga last year. A two-time stakes winner, she carries top weight of 122 pounds under the allowance conditions.

Exonerated has won 2 of 3 turf starts, the lone defeat a troubled trip from post 12 at the Spa.

Golden Spirits, a last-out maiden winner at Delaware Park, rounds out the field.

Valenzuela hopes to ride back to top

By MARY RAMPPELLINI

At the beginning of the year, there was speculation that jockey Patrick Valenzuela might be out of racing for good. His conditional license in California had been revoked in late December following a drunken driving charge, and he was not riding. He launched a comeback at Louisiana Downs in June and has steadily gained momentum. On Thursday, the California Horse Racing Board is scheduled to consider his request for reinstatement during an executive session, just as Valenzuela opens the race week three wins shy of his 4,000th career victory.

Valenzuela also is preparing to ride Mambo Meister in the Grade 2, \$500,000 Super Derby for trainer Phil Gleaves on Saturday, his first mount in the race since 1996.

He hopes the Super Derby mount will rekindle his career on a national scale, but knows that goal is tied to what happens with his license bid out West.

"I just hope the people of California know how bad I want to ride, not only in California but I want to participate on the top level of racing all across the country," Valenzuela, 45, said. "I've gotten calls to go to Pennsylvania for the Pennsylvania Derby. I've gotten opportunities to go to Delaware. I've gotten opportunities to go everywhere else, but I cannot do so because I have a suspended California license. I just want to be able to be in good standing in California, so I can ride all over the country, participate in all the big races."

Valenzuela may or may not move closer to that

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— Patrick Valenzuela



BENOIT & ASSOCIATES

Smooth Air preps for BC Classic in turf stakes

Trainer Bennie Stutts Jr. is plotting a course to the BC Classic for Smooth Air that begins with the Needles Stakes on the turf Sept. 27 at Calder. **Page 3**

BC BOUND — Spirit One and Casino Drive are the latest foreigners headed to Santa Anita for America's richest prize, the Breeders' Cup Classic. **Page 3**

CAUTIOUS MARKET — A day after the stock market had its worst tumble since 2001, Keeneland's September yearling sale continued Tuesday with signs that buyers were seeking quality, very selectively. **Page 4**

BIG DAY NEARS — On Sept. 27, more fine horses will be running in more graded races at more tracks than on any other afternoon of the season, columnist Jay Hovdey says. **Page 5**

BETTER RESULTS — Trainer Al Stall's first stakes trip to Arlington this summer didn't go well, but he made up for it last weekend with wins in the Arlington-Washington Futurity and the Safely Kept Stakes. **Page 6**

CAREER YEAR — Jockey Carl Defreitas is enjoying his best year ever at Woodbine, thanks to Baywoods's five victories. **Page 7**

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