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September 15, 2006

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Arlington

September 12, 2006
Tuesday

The front-end was good on closing day, but whaddaya expect? This track was a sea of slop, and horses getting it flung into their face all the way around the track definitely had a right to get discouraged. But unlike a couple of these final-week wet-track days, there was no apparent bias here, since all paths-- not just inside or out -- produced winners. Drop-down front-end winner in race 2, 3yos for \$35k, was Magnus One for trainer Frank "Bobby" Springer, who was unusually slow this Arlington meet. "They" were waiting for dropdowns race race; Magnus One and last-place Liquoreaux both claimed. Wind shift from previous days, when it blew off the lake and into the horses coming down the backstretch. One quickly noted that in this, the day's first dirt race: half-mile split of 44.91 seconds. The track was quick throughout the afternoon. Pooletta beaten chalk in turf sprints first two starts of career, but may have moved up in mud when home by seven lengths in race 3. Trainer Ronny Werner a solid, solid Arlington season, and that with a satellite operation. Once highly-promising Apache Point offered for \$25K sale in N2L claimer -- and taken out of distant third-place finish by trainer Mike Dini. Perhaps no other horse handled the good, but 2yo second-time starter Probation Ready for late-meet surging Scott Blasi stable blew out maidens in race 5, an off-the-turf sprint. One to watch for. Fairmount invader Guccione no secret in race 7, Illinois N1X allowance sprint, bet down to 2-1 favoritism despite S. Illinois rider - and delivered. And what would closing day have been without Catalano-trained winner? Formal Rush in fact not even favored in off-the-turf allowance, race 8, but won a she pleased with wide trip in mile run. Catalano winds up 49-134 at the meet.

September 11, 2006
Monday

Arlington

NINETEEN DIAMONDS came up the rail to win race 1 at an overlaid \$13 for Frank Kirby barn, and favored BUDINI came between horses and from stalking position to win race 4; after that, and between those two races, it was all inside speed. Don't think the rail had been especially good when the track was so wet over the weekend, but that certainly seemed to be the case today. Especially when the day's last five races all went to horses who made the lead and got over to the rail. The list included Fairmount shipper BEABASQUE, who was actually well bet at odds of 3-1 for trainer Steve Manley, the price surely based in part on presence of leading jock Emigh. LIL TREE, a big winner after long layoff for trainer M. Campbell last out was equally sharp this time, taking race 6, off-the-turf sprint in fairly comfortable fashion. MY GIRL SAMI more lightly raced than the Illinois NIX crew in race 7, which was appealing, and daughter of Carson City in mud a further plus; scored for trainer H. Robertson with principal rider F. Torres up. Likely fave Creative Force scratched from off-the-turf John Henry S., but another Illinois-bred, LAMPOON, victorious in this open race. LAMPOON made early lead, and though twice challenged and even passed, he and Emigh clung to rail and eventually prevailed. Trainer B. Williamson swept late double when first-time route PLAY DIXIE ran off-the-turf Illinois maidens off their feet with sizzling 47 and change half-mile split in this nine-furlong race. There were no closers on this track and in this field, and PLAY DIXIE won easily, S. Bridgmohan up.

September 9, 2006

Saturday

I.M. ISABELLE had coughed up a three-length lead in stretch call of career debut, then went from neck and neck for lead at stretch call to six lengths behind at finish in second start; so, when said horse made clear lead and held easily for Illinois-bred MSW win, we should have known something was up. Indeed, the track played to front-runners in almost all the day's dirt races, the lone exception among five dirt races coming in race 7. In race 3, AJ Heals, only an occasional pace player and never on the lead first call in any of his eight starts, sent through to take the lead. He might have lost, but favored Bonus Round appeared to lock a right stifle about 50 yards from the wire, perhaps costing him a win. Christine Janks-trained first-timer Chillin Villain had brilliant break in race 5, 2yo maiden, and led all the way. Pretty nice looking Illinois-bred first-timer. And in race 6, Alaskan Hula pressed and won, La Milagra led and easily held second. And that was all for the speed -- but it was enough, enough to make one think there was at least a mild bias at work. If so,

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Everybody's favorite had little trouble overcoming it. Claimed June 24 for \$50K at Churchill, 3yo gelding is turning into another one of those excellent Amoss claimers. A good second to a sharp winner in his first start off claim, won N1X allowance well last time, and was very sharp taking this N2X allowance. Maybe not a graded stakes horse, but good now. Thought Chaotic Achiever, ace turf sprinter, was past his best, but he rebounded with comfortable win in race 2 over Catalano long-layoff horse The Stalker. Host, off since March 2005, was a smooth and surprising winner of \$40K John Henry for trainer Bill Lazuka. But turf star of the day easily was Vacare, who now is 3-3 after scintillating win in the G3 Pucker Up. Granted, there are better 3yo grass fillies out there -- but Vacare looked awesome.

September 8, 2006 Friday

We've come full circle from this time last week. Then, the rail was dead; now, it's live. I saw what seemed like several jocks who still were riding in the past, guys with horses who looked a little live both on paper and on the board. Sitting chilly in an outside path, figuring they'd swoop four or five wide into the stretch and wear out the inside horses -- a race shape often seen here this meet. Not happening. Prime example that springs to mind was Terrificus in race 5, a \$15K N2L claimer. This horse very sharp winning comeback race last out over \$10K maidens, and bet way down on class rise for high-percentage barn. Granted, he may merely have regressed after big win, but jock seemed to feel at half-mile he was sitting on horse -- under a hold. Speaking of sitting on horse, how about Stella's New Groove in race 6, second division of split 2yo maiden fillies at 6.5 furlongs? Live on board throughout, first-timer from Shannon Ritter barn did not go to front, but nearly pulled strong jock J. Ferrer out of saddle when barely agreeing to sit in behind lead group for a half-mile. Ferrer tipped outside early, at the quarter pole, and filly had to make a sustained run for a firster. Still won by almost two over 4-5 chalk, and 1:16.40 was three lengths quicker than winner of first division of maidens, won by firster Time's Mistress for Lukas barn. In race 8, Illinois-bred N1X turf allowance, favored Now got stuck on the inside while winner Gambling Green sailed clear on the out. Now ought to win at Hawthorne.

September 7, 2006 Thursday

The main track seemed average to slow -- until race 7. When My Calabrese won that \$25K claimer with six furlongs in 1:09.50, and when the place and show

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horses were a half-length and a length and a quarter behind, one realized that the quality of the stock in the earlier main-track heats -- rather than the track itself -- led to slower times. That said, firster Little Star, bet down below even-money, still ran well for an Illinois-bred 2yo. Six furlongs in 1:11.05 it turned out wasn't scintillating, but she won by more than six lengths, and ran almost a full second faster than the second division of this race less than an hour later. Illinois-bred, buy by Forestry. Trainer Chris Block two recent 2yo debut winners. Winner of that second Illinois 2yo filly maiden was Halo at Last, at almost 8-1 a solid price for a firster from trainer Brian Williamson. Odds that high because works frankly did not inspire. Heavily favored firster Cove, from barn of R. Hazelton, raced with Lasix, but ran like a horse that bled or lost her air, stopping badly in the stretch. Turf rail out in lane 3, and no major brewings on fair-playing course. Race 6, for N1X alw. or \$25K claimers, seemed strong. Favored Bridge Game from Proctor barn and well-meant Photo Image from Catalano barn finished up with sub 12-second final furlong. Bridge Game passed in stretch, came again -- game race for second-time starter now 2-2.

September 6, 2006 Wednesday

A couple days of rain, one dark day, and it's a whole new era as we begin the final week (a 7-day racing week at that) of the Arlington season. And there's the rub with this public handicapping thing - made pix for today on Sunday, and last week we had a dead rail followed by mud. So who knew that the outside bias, be it mild or otherwise, would completely vanish? Far from an outside bias, jocks were staying on the rail and making aggressive and successful moves from the fence-- Mark Guidry in particular. He let Storm Rolling In go up to the lead from post 1 in race 4, a statebred N2X allowance, and when she came under pressure from favored Lampoon at the top of the stretch, Storm Rolling in spurted clear. Last week, her tent would surely have folded. Interesting form here, with big win two back, collapse last out, and even bigger win this spot. Turf race in the fifth, then Guidry did the same thing in race 6, then next dirt race. Doc Kate, very well bet early for Tom Dorris barn, had the rail, and Guidry kept her there, going hard for the front at the top of the stretch. Doc Kate won going away by a length and a quarter. Main track was quick enough, though not sizzling. Impressive then was the 1:34.68 mile hung up by Straight Line in the featured eighth. Straight Line had early trouble that cost him position in overnight stakes Arlington Million Day. Here, he seized the early lead, got away with a modest half-mile, and had enough left to hold clear good run from \$100K-tagged Nkosi Reigns, who

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,issed by a neck. Fort Prado an even third prepping for return to turf in Carey Memorial at Hawthorne.

September 4, 2006

Monday

Muddiest day in a couple weeks, though the track could have been upgraded from sloppy to muddy by race 9, had someone wanted to do so. There were outside winners of the sort so prevalent all racing week, but the rain earlier in the day put at least a temporary end to the dead-rail conditions that, to some degree, colored races from Thursday through Sunday. A day when some horses excelled in the goo, and some obviously despised it. HEY CUTIE did not figure more strongly than most of the other eight horses in race 4, an Illinois-bred \$10K maiden claimer, but stalked, pounced, and won by almost eight lengths. Red River Aggie had been showing speed and slowing late in \$17.5K to \$25K claimers, but forgot about the slowing part in race 5 - he sprinted clear and stayed clear, winning by more than three for trainer Tom Tomillo. Four out of the six claimed from this race, the winner not among them. With the meet ending next Tuesday, claiming action has gotten quite brisk in recent weeks. Pretty Jenny, too, might've benefitted from the mud, winning the featured overnight stakes, a decent race with a \$40K base purse, by two lengths for trainer Christine Janks. Pretty Jenny showed more speed than she has all year in going to the front from an inside draw, and like Red River Aggie, she came home fast after setting legit splits. Very troubled trip here for Trippi Storm, who justified trainer Catalano's move to bump her way up in class off N1X allowance score in a short field. Turf was wet, slow, and demanding. Give a grass horse a pass for floundering on this day.

August 20, 2006

Sunday

Time were not quite as quick as on Saturday, but still quick enough. And hints of a speed bias yesterday developed into what might have been at least a mild front-end bias on this card, as deep outside closers had no luck in dirt all day. Neither did chalk players, with favorites going 1 for 9. And barely that, as race 1 winner DEAD OR ALIVE was only narrowly favored after surge of late money. She won off by seven after pressing the pace, and in race 2, a \$4K claimer marred by two breakdowns, 11-1 VIRGIN RUN won from just off the pace. LIL TREE, of since June 2005, dead sent from rail in race 4, a \$25K N2L claimer, and never challenged in win for trainer Mike Campbell and jockey Jesse Campbell, his son. OFFICER ROCKET was a million lengths best in race 5, an overnight stakes prep for Arlington-Washing Futurity, and

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raced from close to the pace. He won by 13 and drew away in the stretch, but everyone else was stopping, and his seven furlongs in 1:23.96 wasn't all that awesome. Canyon's Sister, a 31-1 shot, on the pace and home by a neck in blanket finish to win race 7. And pace-pressing SEA THE JOY, a good value at 5-1, won the overnight stakes prep for Lassie by three-quarters of a length. Her margin of victory far smaller than Officer Rocket, but her seven-furlong time of 1:24.14 in the same range. All my griping finally got me an honest turf pace. Absolute ARROGRANCE, who won with blinkers on and overdue inside draw for Steve Hobby barn, was the beneficiary in race 9, a 1-1/16 mile maiden.

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