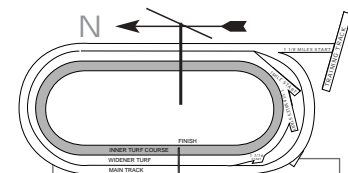




dave LITFIN

BELMONT



track TRENDS

WED., JULY 9

Track condition:
Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener; rails @ 9 ft. Inner)
Wind/Temp:
Cloudy, variable wind, 82°
Comment
Rain prior to 5th race.

THUR., JULY 10

Track condition:
Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener; rails @ 9 ft. Inner)
Wind/Temp:
Cloudy, E 5-15, 72°
Comment
Outside closers did well on the main track.

FRI., JULY 11

Track condition:
Good-wet fast/Yielding (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener; rails @ 9 ft. Inner)
Wind/Temp:
Hazy, W 5-12, 78°
Comment
Harrowed main track was drying out after morning rain.

SAT., JULY 12

Track condition:
Fast/Good (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener & Inner)
Wind/Temp:
Clear, SW 8-15, 82°
Comment
Three of five dirt winners wired. Closers swept six turf races.

SUN., JULY 13

Track condition:
Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Widener & Inner)
Wind/Temp:
Clear, W 5-12, 80°
Comment
Off-the-pace types did well on dirt.

WEDNESDAY

The main track played slow and appeared to have the consistency of a dry, sandy beach for the first three races. Shortly after **Dark Whisper** (4th, \$5) got up on the grass to win a statebred allowance, rain arrived, making for a wet-fast surface for the fifth race. In that contest, **Heavenly Kevin** (\$35.40) prevailed by a nose over favored **Attainable** to help trigger a two-day pick-six carryover of \$202,317. The dirt was then sealed while the sixth and seventh were contested on wet-firm turf, and it was reharrowed for the featured third-level allowance route, by which time the rain had long since ended. **Arabis** (8th, \$12) came from last in a field of five to overtake odds-on **Kitty Knight**, who found the 1 1/16 miles just a bit too long of a row to hoe.

Last Saturday, D. Wayne Lukas added blinkers and Lasix to Overbrook Farm's second-time-starting juvenile Boston Brahmin (\$21.20), and the result was a front-running victory by nearly 10 lengths. The Overbrook-

owned, Lukas-trained second-time 2-year-old **Desert Patrol** (3rd, \$5.30) received the same equipment accessories, but this time fooled nobody en route to a maiden win by a similarly lengthy margin.

Rodeo Spirit (9th, \$30.80) ensured that the pick six would carry over for a second straight card by coming from off the pace to win the spill-marred nightcap. **Midnight Summit** was running on strongly behind the leaders when he clipped heels and fell nearing the stretch, unseating Luis Chavez and setting off a chain reaction that also sent **Valatie** (Javier Castellano) and **A.P. Junior** (Shannon Uske) head over heels. Miraculously, all three horses got up and appeared to escape relatively unscathed. Castellano walked away from the incident, but Uske (sore ribs, expected to miss 3-5 days) and Chavez (broken collarbone, out indefinitely) were taken to North Shore University Hospital for treatment.

THURSDAY

Outside ralliers did well on the main track: **Thesecondwarrior** (2nd, \$54.50), **Midnight Charlie** (5th, \$14.80), and **Receivership** (7th, \$7.10) all came from off the pace, four to five paths off the rail, to win their respective sprint races.

Smoker (1st, \$5) became the second Monmouth shipper to win a maiden claimer here in the past six racing days for Todd Pletcher, who, with 34 winners, is now just two shy of Pancho Martin's record for a Belmont spring/summer meet. **Makarumba** rallied wide and fought it out gamely with the winner, as the duo pulled clear of the rest by a dozen lengths.

She's Zealous (3rd, \$3.40), a half-sister to stakes-winning stablemate Here's Zealous, was finished early in the slop in her first allowance attempt, but she rebounded to the good form shown in her debut win in Florida, handling a weak field while kept well off the inside turning for home. **Casing** set a brisk pace and opened a three-length lead after a half-mile, then came

completely unglued on the inside and faded to last.

Based on several competitive efforts in French stakes last year at age 3, **Totally Cosmic** (4th, \$3.30) had a class edge on maidens in her seasonal debut. It showed, and the Augustin Stable homebred was a romping graduate under confident handling from Richard Migliore – who continues to win at better than a 20 percent clip at the meet. A half-sister to two stakes winners, **Totally Cosmic** should handle preliminary allowance rivals.

When morning-line favorite **Blue Boat** (8th) was scratched due to mucus in his nostrils, it made the task much easier for **Congrats** (\$3.80), who was first-time Lasix and strolled home over four overmatched rivals in an allowance route for nonwinners-of-three lifetime. A 3-year-old homebred by A.P. Indy, **Congrats** has been brought along patiently by Shug McGaughey. Judging from this performance, he may yet become a major player in his division.

FRIDAY

After absorbing some early-morning rain, the main track had dried out sufficiently to be harrowed for the opener and was upgraded to fast (more accurately wet-fast) by the end of the day. No path or running-style biases were apparent. The turf courses were labeled yielding, and the 10th race was taken off the Widener course and switched to the main track.

The 2-year-old filly **Whoopi Cat** (3rd, \$20) paid a big price for her six-length debut victory, considering trainer Patrick Biancone's 7-for-21 record with first-time starters, a field-topping Tomlinson sprint rating of 420, and a bullet three-furlong blowout from the gate just three days earlier. The homebred daughter of Tale of the Cat attacked early leader **Storm Minstrel** three wide on the turn and steadily pulled away as the latter neglected to change leads in the stretch.

Dixie Can Can (5th, \$13.20) was ready for her debut after four consecutive six-furlong workouts at Finger Lakes, and the shipper drew off after putting away **Zat Darn Cat**, who finished second for the third straight time. **Miss Rodeo** was bet to even money for her debut, challenged three wide into the lane, and came up empty to barely hold third.

Jerry Bailey asked the question and gone was **Sixty Seconds** (8th, \$5), who had campaigned in Australia and New Zealand in her first 12 starts. The Christophe Clement-trained import was bet strongly for her first start as a 5-year-old and was the second winner on the card out of a New Zealand-bred mare (along with Whoopi Cat). **Cozzy Corner** prevailed in a three-way photo for second over **Vespers** and **Katzen**. Traffic trouble on the inside turning for home cost fast-finishing **Vespers** the runner-up spot.

SATURDAY

All horseplayers know about horses for courses, but how about horses for races? That seems to be the case with **Whitmore's Conn** (10th, \$25.60), who put in a strong late rally on the far outside to win the Bowling Green Handicap for the second straight year. Indeed, after winning the 11-furlong grass race at a \$31.80 mutuel last July 13, the Randy Schulhofer-trained **Whitmore's Conn** had gone winless in a 364-day span that encompassed seven races – just two of them in-the-money finishes. Nevertheless, the 5-year-old stretch runner closed determinedly under Jean-Luc Samyn to edge past **Quest Star** in the final yards, as even-money favorite **State Shinto** tired late to wind up fifth after setting a slow pace. Closers dominated the five other grass races on the 11-race card as well, but horses with early speed had the best of things in five races on the main track. The most notable performance on dirt was turned in

by **Mike's Classic** (9th, \$3.70), a bulletlike gelding who won his fifth race from nine starts as a 4-year-old for trainer Allen Jerkens. A late-developing sprinter who was still a maiden heading into 2003, **Mike's Classic** ran away from classified allowance rivals by nearly five lengths in a sharp 1:09.22, and left the impression that a stakes start at the Spa could be next.

The only main-track winner to rally from well off the pace was the 2-year-old **Tequesta** (5th, \$14.60), a first-time starter who was one of two double-digit mutuels on the card from John Kimmel's barn. **Tequesta**, who had breezed a bullet half-mile on the Saratoga training track five days earlier, broke slowly but eased out four wide turning for home and steadily drew off after catching odds-on **Malhoof** in midstretch. **Hornshope** raced greenly on the turn, but found his best stride late to take a three-way place photo at 60-1.

SUNDAY

Bettors who backed the Kiaran McLaughlin-trained **State Shinto** in Saturday's Bowling Green showed up at the party a day too early. Twenty-four hours later, the meet's leading percentage trainer saddled **Sharp Impact** (9th, \$10) to a front-running score in the Lexington Stakes.

Benefiting from his role as the lone speed in a field of six 3-year-olds, **Sharp Impact** shook loose from the start and held on for a half-length decision over **Hidden Truth** in the Grade 3 race on the inner turf course at 10 furlongs. **Urban King**, bet to odds-on for his first start since a third-place finish in the La Puente three months earlier, chased the winner to the stretch and was outkicked by the top two in his second U.S. start for Bobby Frankel.

If you're looking for a trainer whose horses offer wagering value, look no further than Kristina Dupps. The low-profile horsewoman sent out **Pattiano** (4th, \$46.20) to light up the tote board off a dirt-to-turf switch – her second grass winner of the week. For the meet, Dupps' five starters have compiled a terrific mark of 3-0-1. Another trainer who gets excellent results with little fanfare is Dan Peitz, whose **Almuhathir** (8th, \$20.40) nosed out favored **Clergy** after a ding-dong stretch duel in a classified allowance mile on the main track. **Almuhathir** won his first start on Belmont dirt back on June 6, when he prevailed by a neck at a \$199.50 mutuel that ranks as the highest win payoff of the year on the NYRA circuit.