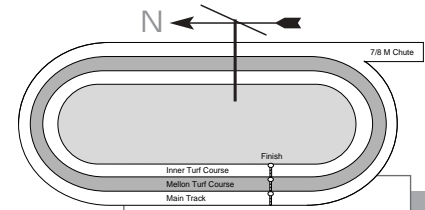


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# SARATOGA



## track TRENDS

### WED., JULY 23

**Track condition:**  
Sloppy races 1-2, muddy races 3-6, good race 7, sloppy races 8-10/Off turf  
**Wind/Temp:**  
Showery, S 5-10, 77°

#### Comment

If you don't like the weather at Saratoga, just wait a minute.

### THURS., JULY 24

**Track condition:**  
Sloppy/Soft (steeplechase only)  
**Wind/Temp:**  
Rainy-cloudy-rainy, variable wind 5-15, 78°

#### Comment

It's raining...it's not raining...it's raining...

### FRI., JULY 25

**Track condition:**  
Fast (wet fast early)/Good to yielding (stake only - rails @ 9 ft. Inner)  
**Wind/Temp:**  
Clear, W 10-15, 82°  
**Comment**  
No apparent trends.

### SAT., JULY 26

**Track condition:**  
Fast/Good to firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; rails @ 9 ft. Inner)  
**Wind/Temp:**  
Cloudy, W 10-15, 83°  
**Comment**  
No apparent trends.

### SUN., JULY 27

**Track condition:**  
Fast/Firm (Rails @ 0 ft. Mellon; rails @ 9 ft. Inner)  
**Wind/Temp:**  
Cloudy, W- 10-20, 77°  
**Comment**  
Outside ralliers did well on dirt.

WEDNESDAY

Good luck to figure-makers attempting to get a handle on the track variant for opening day. After overnight rain, the heavens opened up again two hours before first post, and after a brief respite another round of heavy rain arrived 10 minutes before the eighth race.

Four turf races were washed away, triggering 37 scratches off the program. The main track was sloppy for the first two races, upgraded to muddy as it dried out a bit for races 3 through 6, and harrowed and listed as "good" for the seventh. The surface was still harrowed when the rain hit before the eighth, which quickly turned the surface closer to muddy. The Schuylerville and the last race were run over an extremely sloppy strip that featured huge puddles of water on the inside in upper stretch.

Defending Saratoga training champ Todd Pletcher sent out three straight 6-5 shots who went down to defeat, but won the Schuylerville for the second consecutive year with a daughter of Saint Ballado, as **Ashado** (9th, \$7.10) stalked

her uncoupled stablemate, **Hermione's Magic**, and drove clear in the stretch to give Edgar Prado his fourth winner on the card. Ashado had won her debut in the slop at Belmont and in her stakes debut she was positioned three wide in what seemed like the best footing, given the small lake that collected near the rail for the last two races. **Be Gentle** broke slowly from the rail, rushed up, and steadied sharply approaching the turn in a very tough trip.

Prado, off to a great start in defense of his 2002 Spa riding title, earlier won with **Carrier** (3rd, \$10) for D. Wayne Lukas, **El Prado Rob** (4th, \$24.20) for Nick Zito, and **Evening Attire** (8th, \$3.90) for Pat Kelly in an off-the-turf classified allowance.

**Evening Attire**, dull in two comeback starts vs. graded stakes company, caught his preferred wet track, thanks to the late-afternoon storm, and had a useful confidence-builder in preparation for the Saratoga Breeders' Cup on Aug. 16 - a Grade 2 he won last year on a "good" track.

THURSDAY

In the Sanford, the unbeaten **Chapel Royal** (8th, \$4) cemented his status as the East's top 2-year-old after swinging out from behind the leaders at the quarter pole to win his third straight start by open lengths. Though he jumped some puddles in the stretch, the issue had already been settled.

If you're scoring at home, that's two stakes at the young meet, and two wins by Pletcher-trained favorites. Pletcher won at 45 percent with favorites here the past two years, but at only 9 percent with non-favorites. The post-time choice in stakes won at 40 percent here last year (14 for 35), and one of the top three betting choices won 91 percent of the time (32 for 35).

The stewards have been busy. After disqualifying **Light Night** (Jose Santos) from first in Wednesday's fifth, they took down two more numbers on this card: **Paris Adventure** (7th, Eibar Coa) was disqualified from second and placed fifth after drifting in and then out through the stretch and bothering **Hogan's Spirit** and **Paris Sunrise**. **A.P. Aspen** (9th, Cornelio Velasquez) was disqualified from first and placed fourth after bearing out under left-handed whipping and forcing **Baby Shaq** to check between horses. All three riders appealed 10-day suspensions and will presumably serve the time when it's convenient for them, say around Christmas week.

FRIDAY

A beautiful day of breezy sunshine made for excellent drying conditions. The main track was harrowed throughout while a bit moist early. The Bernard Baruch Handicap was switched to the inner turf course, which, amazingly, was good to yielding in the wake of four days of rain. The turf courses have a different blend of grasses this year, and they appear to be quite resilient.

The hot streak continues for Kieran McLaughlin, the leading percentage trainer at Belmont with a record of 19 for 44 (43 percent), as **Trademark** (8th, \$15.20) wiped the floor with six rivals in the Baruch. The 7-year-old Trademark, who had been a close second in the one-mile Poker Handicap in his U.S. debut three weeks earlier, saved ground on both turns under Richard Migliore, found a seam outside pacesetter and defending Baruch champ **Del Mar Show** in the upper stretch and left the field for dead. **Rouvres** brushed with **Tap the Admiral** while swinging out for room at

the quarter pole and necked **Slew Valley** for second. **Patrol** was rank three wide just off the leaders and stopped badly.

**Gygistar** (\$3.30, 3rd), last year's King's Bishop winner, made his first start back from knee-chip surgery and drew away from classified allowance rivals with complete authority. Mark Hennig is targeting the Forego Handicap (Aug. 31) for Gygistar, a multiple graded stakes winner.

**Alchemist** (\$3.20, 7th) improved to 3 for 3 for Shug McGaughey. After an explosive entry-level allowance win at Belmont, this second-level effort, her first start around two turns, could best be described as workmanlike. After a fast early tempo that featured a second quarter in 23.21 seconds, the last three-eighths required a slow 41.14 to complete.

**Danceinthestreets** (\$3, 9th) won her fifth straight race covering a span of four months, after rocketing through blazing fractions and widening in the lane. She was claimed for \$60,000.

SATURDAY

Sweet revenge for **Voodoo Dancer** (8th, \$7.20), who last year lost a head-bob in the Diana Handicap to the Juddmonte-owned, Bobby Frankel-trained **Tates Creek**. A year later, Voodoo Dancer swung five wide into the stretch and outkicked the Juddmonte-Frankel filly **Heat Haze** through a blistering last three-eighths in 34.83 seconds. Heat Haze's entymate, **Pertuisane**, was blocked in upper stretch and finished gamely for third after shaking clear. No excuse for **Wonder Again**, who was right off pacesetter **Delta Princess** through easy early fractions but empty late.

There was no You vs. Carson Hollow-like drama in the Test this time around, as **Lady Tak** (9th, \$6) pressed the pace inside and drew off from **Bird Town** in stakes-record time of 1:20.83 that was just a tick off Darby Creek Road's 25-year-old track mark for seven furlongs. The winner will probably go next in the Gazelle at Belmont on Sept. 6. Bird Town was a clear second-best in her prep for the Alabama in three weeks.

**Value Plus** (3rd, \$3.10) was a universal good thing, and looks like an exciting juvenile prospect from Pletcher, after manhandling maidens by a pole in his debut. A strapping gray colt by Unbridled's Song, Value Plus ran 6 1/2 furlongs in 1:16.88. The second division, won by second-time starter **Notorious Rogue** (5th, \$17.60), went in 1:17.22.

The King's Bishop (Travers Day, Aug. 23) may have picked up a starter in **Ghostzapper** (7th, \$3.20), a Frankel-trained 3-year-old from Stronach Stable who improved to 3 for 4 lifetime in a well-run second-level allowance. **Clock Stopper** missed the break, came through inside the winner in the stretch, and dropped a hard-fought decision in a huge effort. **Savoy Special** reared up in the gate and was scratched, delaying the start nine minutes, and triggering \$577,000 in refunds.

Earlier on the card, **Tennessee Burbin** (1st) was in the hands of an assistant starter when the gate opened, and was ruled a non-starter; \$478,000 in refunds.

SUNDAY

Pick fours don't pay much lower than \$31, but that's what you got after **Hidden Ransom** (7th, \$5.90) and **Dazzling Spirit** (10th, \$7.50) surrounded Frankel-Bailey layovers **Zenda** (8th, \$2.80), and **Sightseek** (9th, \$2.30).

Zenda, making her first start since a troubled trip in the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf, had a useful prep after securing good early position from post 10 in a second-level turf allowance.

Sightseek also laid over her field in the Grade 1 Go for Wand, and drew off well within herself after taking over from pacesetter **Miss Linda** approaching the stretch. The bridge-jumpers who bet nearly \$900,000 to show never had an anxious moment. She was the fourth straight winner on

the card for Bailey, who vaulted to the top of the standings.

**Daydreaming** (5th, \$39.40) debuted off slowish workouts for Ogden Mills Phipps and Shug McGaughey, and was dismissed at the windows. Nevertheless, she drew off powerfully after catching favored pacesetter **Forty Moves** and **Sisti's Pride**, and looks like a good possibility for the Spinaway Stakes Aug. 29.

The chalk won six races on the program, raising the public choice's batting average to .500 (24 for 48) through the first five days. Graveyard of Favorites, huh?