



Iron Maidens Thoroughbreds
Illinois Derby (G-1)
April 3, 2010



East, west and mid-west all meet up on the Hawthorne race track but only one horse will snatch the trophy, and more importantly the earnings to claim the right to a Kentucky Derby berth. Which one will it be?

American Lion (Tiznow - Storm Tide, by Storm Cat) The experiment with blinkers failed in the San Felipe when American Lion couldn't relax while pressing the lead. He regressed to finish a tired fourth. His sire Tiznow gets long winded runners and they are much better over dirt than synthetics, so look out for American Lion to noticeably improve. American Lion's dam is a half sister to two minor stakes winners, but that's about it for the female family. The barn has a 21% win rate with shippers, but the Harty/Flores combo are a dismal 7%.

Stephen's Got Hope (Stephen Got Even – Susan's Hope, by Our Emblem) is still a maiden. He made a half-hearted run in the San Felipe and tests less contentious waters here. His sire is a G-1 winner at 9 furlongs and produced this year's Whirlaway winner Peppi Knows and last year's Derby hopeful I Want Revenge. Our Emblem is best known for siring Kentucky Derby winner War Emblem and Susan's Hope is an unraced half sister to a stakes winner. Stephen's Got Hope's second dam is a stakes winner and that's about it for this distaff family. O'Neil and Garcia team up for 19% wins.

Boulder Creek (Tapit – Granuaile, by Regal Classic) was all over the place in the Sham Stakes and finished fifth. His sire Tapit is #3 on the third crop sire list, but only four of his sons are stakes winners or stakes placed. Canadian champion Regal Classic is a half brother to two champions plus the dam of Smart Strike. He's the broodmare sire of Fatal Bullet and several other graded stakes winners. There are no stakes winners in the first three generations of Boulder Creek's distaff family. The barn is 23% with shippers.

Yawanna Twist (Yonaguska – Twist and Pop, by Olivers Twist) was a strong second in the Gotham Stakes last time out. His sire's offspring are best as sprinters however he does have a few that have won at 9F. Damsire, a Maryland bred from the Never Bend sire line, has been the Colorado leading sire from 2007-2009. He has one stakes winner and two stakes-placed runners. His dam was second in two stakes races in NJ. Yawanna Twist has no inbreeding within 5 generations. Dutrow/Prado are 56% together from limited rides and Dutrow gets 22% stakes winners.

Turf Melody (Maria's Mon - Tricky Bird, by Storm Bird) earned his lifetime best BRIS speed figure last time out finishing fourth in the Gotham. He is the most experienced horse in the race and the most traveled, as every start has come at a different track. By Kentucky Derby sire Maria's Mon (Monarchos) Turf Melody shares the same damsire as Belmont Stakes winners Birdstone and Summer Bird. Further, his second dam won a Grade 3 stakes going 9.5F. His first attempt past a mile on dirt was in the Grade 3 LeComte at the Fairgrounds. Unfortunately he was rank throughout the race and was sixth the whole way around. Turf Melody has had a hard campaign and been running since last June without a break.

Dave in Dixie (Dixie Union – Risk, by Wavering Monarch) appears to have a good race/bad race cycle going. After a strong second place finish in his first start off of a long layoff, Dave regressed badly in the San Felipe. Dixie Union's offspring win up to 1 1/8 miles. Dave's damsire is the grandsire of Kentucky Derby winner Monarchos and the damsire of Preakness winner Prairie Bayou. Dave in Dixie is a half brother to stakes placed Risky Trick and his dam is an unraced half sister to two stakes winners, one of whom is the granddam of the old warrior, Nightmare Affair. Dave in Dixie shows strong works and the barn is 20% with shippers.

Backtalk (Smarty Jones - Apasionata Sonata, by Affirmed) was a precocious juvenile before flattening out in his last two races of the season. After being given time to grow up, the \$200,000 Keeneland September Yearling purchase easily won his first start back. Backtalk can claim a Derby winner as his sire and a Triple Crown hero as his damsire. His dam won or placed in six of nine starts and won the one mile Kentucky Cup Ladies Turf. Backtalk's half sister Bsharpsonata is a (G-2) winner. Backtalk owns two very quick works including a blazing six furlong move last out that likely had his trainer screaming. The barn has a 28% win rate with shippers.

Game Ball (Sky Mesa – Baldo, by Saint Ballado) was impressive in his two starts at Tampa this year against maidens and optional claimers. Sky Mesa was a sprinting son of Pulpit who placed at 1 1/8 miles. His progeny are usually at their best sprinting, although his son General Quarters successfully negotiated 1 1/8 miles once. Game Ball's dam was a stakes winner and in the money nine of 17 tries. While not considered a Formula One breeding (when the sires' distaff family and the dam's female family are descended from the same blue hen, within five generations) Sky Mesa and Baldo both trace back to the foundation mare La Troienne directly through their distaff families. An additional link to this great mare is through Game Ball's second sire, Relaunch. Casse/Martinez have a noticeable 24% win rate.

Selections:

How the track is playing: It seems almost every track lately has a strong speed bias and Hawthorne is no exception. 31% winners have wired the field in route races with 64% winning on the lead or pressing the pace. Horses at the rail this week have won 47% of the time and overall 28% this meet.

So, early pace on the rail, lets see, that would be **American Lion**. He's also a son of Tiznow who should improve significantly over dirt, since Tiznow offspring don't do that great on synthetic tracks. **Yawanna Twist** enters off of a lifetime best BRIS speed figure and should also be pressing the pace. **Boulder Creek** gets a chance to try softer company after playing with the big boys in California. I'm not sure he's up to winning, but he can finish in the money. He had a nice stamina building breeze before heading east. The only times **Turf Melody** has won was either on the lead or pressing the pace. Note that he come in with a bullet five furlong move. He continues his tour of America's race tracks, testing each one, but not finding any to his liking. Either that or he's burned out and needs a break after nine consecutive races at nine different tracks. Can he keep up with American Lion?

Looking at the stalkers, **Stephen's Got Hope**, **Dave in Dixie**, and **Balktalk**, **Dave in Dixie** regressed slightly after posting a lifetime best speed figure in his first race back. In the natural order of things, he should move forward and enjoy a chance to run over the real stuff. **Stephen's Got Hope** should also show a big move forward over dirt. Remember how well I Want Revenge did in the Gotham and Wood Memorial? They share the same sire. Stephen has to show that he has class to run with these and the talent to overcome a speed-oriented track. **Backtalk** has natural speed and class and it doesn't appear that he ran all that hard in his first start back. However, he's an additional furlong off of a sizzling six furlong work that would be an outstanding winning race time at many tracks. Bounce?

American Lion

Yawanna Twist

Backtalk

Longshot selection: Boulder Creek