



Iron Maidens Thoroughbreds
Wood Memorial (G-1)
April 3, 2009



Two weekends of serious Kentucky Derby prep races remain. This week twenty-four colts will face the starter in three prep races, the Wood Memorial, Illinois and Santa Anita Derbies. At least six and as many as nine colts will earn enough money to make travel arrangements to Louisville. We'll begin our journey in New York.

How can you tell when it is spring in New York? The main track at Aqueduct opens. Instead of a steady diet of six furlong races with a sprinkling of mile and 70 yard and 1 1/8 mile races offered by the inner track, a greater variety of distances and turf racing has once again returned to the Big Apple.

The Wood Memorial had its inaugural running in 1925 and was named for a New York State politician who actually enjoyed horse racing. Yes, that's an oxymoron now, but legend has it they had Triple Crown winners back then, too. Four Triple Crown heroes have won the Wood Memorial before claiming the greatest prize in horse racing. Speaking of the greatest, Secretariat was a shocking third in this Kentucky Derby prep, proving you don't have to win this race to record history a month later. With that thought in mind, let's review this year's Wood Memorial field.



1973 Wood Memorial program

Most Happy Fella (Ecton Park – Doyenne, by Deputy Minister) has won or placed in six of nine lifetime starts in statebred optional claimers or allowance races. His out of the money finishes came when he was denied the lead. His sire was a nine furlong specialist, but did win the Super Derby (G-1) over ten panels Most Happy Fella is a half brother to Grade 3 stakes winner Time's Mistress and their dam won once in ten tries. The second dam, Seewillo is a Grade 3 winner and a half sister to the multiple Grade 1 winning turf router, Golden Pheasant. Bagget/Napravnik combine for 29% wins.



Awesome Act (Awesome Again - Houdini's Honey, by Mr. Prospector) invaded from England to win the Gotham Stakes decisively. He has one of the best and most complex pedigrees in the race. Read his profile here. Awesome Act has produced two slow breezes, which is typical of his English trainer.

AwesomeAct - Photo: Coglianese

Eskendereya (Giant's Causeway - Aldebaran Light, by Seattle Slew) won the Fountain of Youth by 8 ½ lengths emulating Spectacular Bid who also won the race by 8 ½ lengths. He posted a lifetime best BRIS speed figure of 103 in the race and has been working well. Read Eskendereya's profile here.



*Eskendereya-
Photo: Coglianese*

Schoolyard Dreams (Stephen Got Even – Hear this, by Prospectors Music) was on the losing end of a whisker-bob in the Tampa Bay Derby and attracts the nation's leading rider. His sire is a G-1 winner at 9 furlongs and is the sire of this year's Whirlaway winner Peppi Knows. Schoolyard Dreams' dam was in the money in four of five starts sprinting and unplaced once in the mud. There is no blacktype (stakes wins) in his distaff family in three generations. His damsire is equally obscure, having been unplaced in three starts in France. He stood in

Oklahoma and was a half brother to three stakes winners. Schoolyard dreams has posted four consecutive bullet works dating back to early February.

Jackson Bend (Hear No Evil – Sexy Stockings, by Tabasco Cat) ran his little heart out in the Holy Bull and Fountain of Youth, finishing second both times. He has no inbreeding within five generations. Jackson Bend's sire Hear No Evil was a talented favorite on the Florida Stakes circuit and the durable son of Carson City won the five furlong Criterium Stakes at Calder over dirt, the nine furlong Sophomore Turf Stakes at Tampa and he placed in Grade 3 races up to nine furlongs. He should pass versatility and soundness to his offspring. Jackson Bend, a homebred is a half brother to stakes winner Garter Belt and his second dam Lottsia Talc raced for seven years at the Grade 2 level as a sprinter. Incidentally, a sprint race at Aqueduct is run in her honor. Jackson Bend posted a bulled five furlong breeze for this race.

Carnivore (Giant's Causeway – Biogio's Rose, by Polish Numbers) recently broke his maiden in his third attempt at Laurel. He'll be taking a huge step up here. Carnivore has an abundance of Northern Dancer bloodlines, as his sire, damsire and second damsire are all descended from him. Damsire Polish Numbers never lived up to his esteemed Phipps family breeding on the track or in the breeding shed. He produced a fair number of stakes runners but his daughters have produced few stakes winners. Biogio's Rose was a hard-knocking Grade 2 winner up to nine furlongs who seems to be passing her soundness onto her offspring as all have made it to the track and three of the five are winners. This distaff family has produced the Grade 1 winning Florida sire My Gallant and the wonderful hard-running multiple Grade 1 winner Take Charge Lady. While the Delozier/Shephard duo win 25% of their races together, the barn has a dismal 4% win rate when shipping.

Selections:

How the track is playing: The outer track is playing similar to the inner for sprints and races up to a mile, meaning pace setters and pressers are winning the majority of races. Only one horse has stalked and won.

Eskendereya is the overwhelming favorite. Sure he can regress in here, but even if he does, he's lengths the best. The one I expect to regress is **Awesome Act**. After shipping across the pond and having his training compromised, he still wowed them in the Gotham. He's a quality horse and like Eskendereya can regress and finish in the money. So that leaves **Jackson Bend** and **Schoolyard Dreams** as the only other legitimate contenders in here. Jackson Bend was no match for Eskendereya in the FOY, but there's no denying his heart. He gets a jockey change to Calvin Borel. Schoolyard Dreams got the attention of the country's leading rider in Ramon Dominguez. While Borel is an extremely capable jockey, Dominguez has the home court advantage here. **Most Happy Fella** will take them on a happy chase as far as his legs can carry him, but appears to be a cut below the stakes winners in the field. **Carnivore** has a nice pedigree and shouldn't be rushed into this spot, but rather given time to mature into a capable runner so he can earn back his \$280K purchase price.

Eskendereya

Awesome Act

Schoolyard Dreams

Jackson Bend