Stevie Wonderboy, the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile winner and probable champion, galloped Wednesday at Hollywood Park with Sae Santiago riding.

SANTA ANITA

Stevie trying to stay on top

Staten’s Augustus is still the lukewarm favorite among seven-year-olds Triple Crown prospects in the Risen Star, one of four stakes worth a collective $1 million on Saturday’s Fair Grounds program at Louisiana Downs. Page 3

STAYING PUT — Trainer Doug McCreary could have shipped La Reina to Louisiana for a bigger purse, but kept her at Gulfstream for the Marilyn’s River. Page 4

WIDE TUNE-UP — Good Reward worked a sharp half-mile in 47.20 seconds Thursday at Gulfstream Park in preparation for next month’s Grade 1 Gulfstream Handicap. Page 6

REBOUND CANDIDATE — Although Crosby’s Galaxy finished seventh in his first start since last year’s Primetime, several trainers consider him the horse to beat in the San Fernando at Santa Anita. Page 10

HOT HAND — Daytime Promise will be favored to give Gary Contessa a Gulfstream leading role, his first stakes win of the inner track meet in Sunday’s Bonsall. Page 12

UNSTOPPABLE — The last seven horses in northern California are 11-15. Oregon, a horse favored Mile Cat in the San Diego Stakes at Hollywood Park. Page 18

By STEVE ANDERSEN

ARCADIA, Calif. — Stevie Wonderboy may have won the 2006 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile, but he is left with something to prove when he makes his 2006 debut in Saturday’s $300,000 San Rafael Stakes at Santa Anita.

The annual questions about whether a colt such as Stevie Wonderboy, the likely champion 2-year-old male of 2006, can replicate that form in the prep for the Kentucky Derby will be asked frequently. Trainer Doug O’Neill welcomes the inquiries, even though Stevie Wonderboy will be the colt every owner is trying to achieve in the buildup. “It’s an honor to have a horse that is considered the best Kentucky Derby prospect,” O’Neill said. “I think there is much more pressure on guys with well-bred 3-year-olds who don’t have Derby prospects.”

The Grade 2 San Rafael has a small field, six entrants, but a formidable rival for Stevie Wonderboy is Brother Derek, who won the Grade 1 Hollywood Futurity last month at Hollywood Park. The speedy Wanna Run, the winner of his last two starts, is making his stakes debut.

The San Rafael is the most prominent graded stakes run for 3-year-olds so far this year, and serves as the beginning of the serious prep races for the Kentucky Derby other prep races such as the $200,000 Santa Catalina Stakes on March 4 and the $250,000 Sunland Stakes on March 18 lead to the $750,000 Santa Anita Derby on April 18.

Saturday’s San Rafael will be televised on ESPN News at approximately 3:30 p.m. Pacific time, via a feed provided by Horseplayer TV. O’Neill insists Stevie Wonderboy is ready, and that there is no added pressure for the colt’s comeback.

“The main goal is the first Saturday in May. Hopefully, this is a winning step in the right direction,” O’Neill said. “We think he’s fit enough to win the race.”

A winner of his last three starts for O’Neill, Stevie Wonderboy is 3-0-2 in five starts. The colt has shown improvement in each of his starts this year. The colt has shown improvement in each of his starts this year and the colt has shown improvement in each of his starts this year.

The field

Pool: $150,000, 1 mile; Grade 2

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<td>1</td>
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<td>6-1</td>
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