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SANTA ANITA

Stevie trying to stay on top



Stevie Wonderboy, the Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner and probable champion, gallops Wednesday at Hollywood Park with Sai Santiago riding.

By STEVE ANDERSEN

ARCADIA, Calif. — Stevie Wonderboy may have won the 2005 Breeders' Cup Juvenile, but he is left with something to prove when he makes his 2006 debut in Saturday's \$150,000 San Rafael Stakes at Santa Anita.

The annual questions about whether a colt such as Stevie Wonderboy, the likely champion 3-year-old male of 2005, 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 everyone is trying to follow 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 in Brother Derek, who won the Grade 1 Hollywood Futurity last month at Hollywood Park. The speedy Wanna Runner, the winner of his last two starts, is making his stakes debut.

The San Rafael is the most prominent graded stakes run on dirt for 3-year-olds so far this year, and serves as the beginning of the serious prep races to the Kentucky Derby.

other prep races such as the \$200,000 Santa Catalina Stakes on March 4 and the \$350,000 San Felipe Stakes on March 18 lead to the \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby on April 8.

Saturday's San Rafael will be televised on ESPN News at approximately 3:18 p.m. Pacific time, via a feed provided by HorseRacingTV.

O'Neill trains 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

The field

San Rafael Stakes

Purse: \$150,000; 1 mile, Grade 2

PP	HOSE	JOCKEY	WT.
1	Wishy Be Quick	C. Acosta	116 20-1
2	Brother Derek	A. Solis	120 7-5
3	M. J. Fly	L. Esquivel	118 10-1
4	Wanna Runner	V. Espinoza	119 6-1
5	Stevie Wonderboy	G. Gurnea	120 4-1
6	Search Sunset	J. Court	116 20-1

Chart by Mike Hernandez

Stevie Wonderboy: Saturday 6:30 p.m. Eastern JPN News

Road to the Derby
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Saturday

SANTA ANITA

BAY MEADOWS

LOS ALAMITOS

(RACES 1-4)

GULFSTREAM

(RACES 3-10)

FG/LAD

(RACES 3-11)

AQUEDUCT

(RACES 4-9)

Risen Star tops \$1M worth of stakes in Louisiana

Saint Augustus is the lukewarm favorite among seven 3-year-old 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 Shug McGaughey could have shipped La Reins to Louisiana for a bigger purse, but kept her at Gulfstream for the Marshon's River. **Page 4**

NICE 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 4**

REBOUND CANDIDATE — Although Grovel's Galaxy finished seventh in his first start since last year's Prokness, several trainers consider him the horse to fear most in the San Fernando at Santa Anita. **Page 10**

HOT HAND — Daytime Promise will be favored to give Gary Cordova, Aqueduct's leading trainer, his first stakes win of the year track meet in Sunday's Bismarck. **Page 12**

UNSTOPPABLE — The last seven stakes in northern California have all been won by trainer Jerry Hollendorfer, who saddles favored Hake Cal at the San Carlos Handicap at Bay Meadows. **Page 18**

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