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McBurney's New Jersey-breds just keep on rolling

By Bill Finley



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Two months and one day is not a long time in horse racing, but that's all it took for trainer Pat McBurney to win four stakes races with New Jersey-breds, including three in open company. It's among the best runs any trainer has had with Jersey-breds in years.

The latest win came with Liz's Cable Girl in the Sept. 15 \$100,000 Roamin Rachael Stakes at Parx. The Colonial Farm's bred filly by

the late New Jersey sire Cable Boy put in the best performance of her career, winning by 4 lengths over a solid field. McBurney's streak began when he won the Grade 3 Kent Stakes at Delaware Park July 14 with Golden Brown. Next came a win by the 2-year-old Mooji Moo Jr. in the Aug. 8 Tyro, which was followed by Liz's Cable Girl's win in the Eleven North Handicap for Jersey-breds Aug. 26.



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They are McBurney's only four stakes wins on the year.

"I guess I just got lucky that I have a bunch of Jersey-breds that can run and they're all peaking at the right time," McBurney said. "Everything has been working out quite well." Liz's Cable Girl looked like a future star when she began her career by winning a maiden special weight at Parx by 10¾ lengths Nov. 28, 2016. But she came right back at Aqueduct in starter race and was a badly beaten third at 3-5. That repeated a pattern where her form was relatively spotty until recently.

"She didn't make her 2-year-old start until late in November and she ran a five on the Thoro-Graph sheets that day," McBurney said. "But she never surpassed that number during her whole 3-year-old year. That was still her best number. Then in the race when she won the Jersey-bred stakes (the Eleven North) she got down to a two. That was tremendous, the best number of her life."

McBurney believes that Liz's Cable Girl, now 4, just needed some time to grow and mature.

"It's probably just been a natural progression," he said. "She does look bigger and stronger. She's been running this season but also putting on weight and muscle. She's turned into a big, pretty girl."

Another factor could be Jose Ferrer, who is known as one of the best gate riders in the sport. Liz's Cable Girl is riding a four-race winning streak and showing more early speed in her races. Ferrer took over when the streak began, in an August open company allowance at Monmouth.

"His riding style fits her," McBurney said. "Last year, we started working to take her back. Even a length or two was all we could get her back. But now, she almost seems like she's more relaxed than ever coming out of the gate, even though she's been going to the front. Jose has been riding her perfect. He gets that first eighth or quarter under her belt and then uses her speed on the turn to kind of put them away."

Now that his filly has won two stakes, McBurney would like to find a way to add a graded stakes win to her resume. He was taking a look at the Grade 2 Thoroughbred Club of America on Oct. 6 at Keeneland, but worries that might be aiming a little too high.

"I've been looking around for a stakes race and there aren't many sprints left for the girls," he said. "It's probably a reach but there is one at Keeneland. That would probably be tough but I haven't been paying much attention to the graded sprinters and will need to take a look and see what they look like." McBurney instead chose a Parx allowance Oct. 8, which she won easily by 3¼ lengths with Jairo Rendon in the irons.

Liz's Cable Girl is owned by John Cocce, Liz Dodd, Peter Donnelly and Gerard Melley. McBurney said Colonial added Liz's Cable Girl into a package deal as a weanling when the owners purchased Boomerang Miss from Colonial in 2014.

McBurney has been as loyal to the Jersey-bred program as anyone and is always looking to find ones to add to his barn. Golden Brown was bought for \$22,000 at the 2016 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Fall yearling sale. Mooji Moo Jr. is a Robert Deckert homebred.

"I train for some breeders and that's where most of my Jersey-breds come from," he said. "Any time I go to Timonium I always look at the index and see if there are any Jersey-breds. Usually, you don't see many in the sales any more. But I'm always keeping an eye out for them. Between Bright View and Colonial, you can usually find some yearlings in the fall that they're willing to sell to you."

Since taking over for John Forbes, McBurney's personal record for number of stakes winners in a year is four, set in 2014. With more than three months to go in 2018 and with both Liz's Cable Girl and Golden Brown in good form, he very well could set a new career high. If so, he'll have the New Jersey breeding program to thank.

New Jersey-breds earn bonus money in MATCH Series

New Jersey-bred Oak Bluffs came out on top in the point standings in the 3-year-old and up turf sprint division in the MATCH series. An 8-year-old by longtime leading New Jersey sire Defrere, Oak Bluffs picked up most of his points when winning the Pennsylvania Governor's Cup at Penn National for trainer Mary Eppler in June. Eppler earned a \$35,000 bonus thanks to Oak Bluffs, \$20,000 for being the owner and \$15,000 for being the trainer.

Patricia Generazio, breeder of Oak Bluffs, will receive a \$5,000 bonus for the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of

New Jersey as the top point-earning New Jersey-bred colt and gelding in the series.

Liz's Cable Girl competed in three MATCH division races and finished up with 18 points. She is the leading New Jersey-bred filly or mare in the series, and thus earned her breeder, Colonial Farms, a \$5,000 bonus from the Thoroughbred Breeders Association of New Jersey.

The filly's owners, John Cocce, Liz Dodd, Peter Donnelly and Gerard Melley, and trainer Pat McBurney will receive \$15,000 and \$10,000, respectively, for her second-place finish in the Filly and Mare Sprint—Dirt Division



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Isabelle de Tomaso honored as National Small Breeder of the Year

Isabelle de Tomaso has been named by the Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association (TOBA) as the 2017 National Small Breeder of the Year. Mrs. de Tomaso was honored during TOBA's 33rd Annual National Awards Dinner Sept. 8 at the Woodford Reserve Club at Kroger Field in Lexington.

Horses bred by Isabelle de Tomaso won seven of 28 starts and earned \$1,212,320 in 2017. Among the horses bred were Irish War Cry, winner of the Holy Bull Stakes-G2 and Wood Memorial Stakes-G2 and runner up in the Belmont Stakes-G1. Irish Strait, the older half-brother to Irish War Cry, won the Red Bank Stakes-G3 and finished second in the Monmouth Stakes-G2.

Irish War Cry was honored by the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of New Jersey as champion 3-year-old male and Horse of the Year in 2017. Irish Strait was named champion turf runner. The dam of both champions, Irish Sovereign, was named Broodmare of the Year.



COGLIANESE

Liz's Cable Girl wins Roamin Rachael Stakes

By Tom LaMarra

Liz's Cable Girl needed to start in the Roamin Rachael Stakes at Parx Racing to qualify for MATCH Series bonus money, but she did one better by winning the \$100,000 event for owner John Cocce, Liz Dodd, Peter Donnelly and Gerard Melley and trainer Pat McBurney.

Liz's Cable Girl, a 4-year-old New Jersey-bred filly by Cable Boy, was widest in a four-horse scramble for the lead in the 6-furlong Roamin Rachael but cleared after the first quarter-mile and increased her advantage on the far turn. That gave Jessica Krupnick, who didn't have the best of starts and early in the race was sixth and last, a bit too much to do in the stretch.

Ridden by Jose Ferrer, Liz's Cable Girl won by 4 lengths over Jessica Krupnick and paid \$3.20 to win as the heavy favorite.

Yorkiepool Princess finished third. The time on a track rated fast was 1:11.73.

"Once she got to the front, she kept going," McBurney said of Liz's Cable Girl, who increased her record to 3-for-3 at Parx. "For sure, Jessica Krupnick has been tough - she beat our filly both times she faced her - but we got the jump on her today."

"I'd like to thank Pat for giving me the ride," said Ferrer, who has ridden Liz's Cable Girl to victory in her last three starts. "We had good position on the outside. You don't want to be near the inside fence here because it can be deep."

Liz's Cable Girl was bred by Colonial Farms.



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Valedictorian picks up first open company stakes win

By Bill Finley



JIM MCCUE

Maybe he was being pessimistic, maybe he was being realistic, but when Kelly Breen sent New Jersey-bred Valedictorian to Laurel for the Sept. 22 \$150,000 All Along Stakes on the grass he was not at all confident.

“When we went down there we were keeping our fingers crossed that she would hit board,” he said.

He’s right about one thing: this was not an easy spot. The field of 11 included several horses capable of running Beyer figures in the 90s. On the turf, Valedictorian had never run better than an 80.

But she picked a good day to run the race of her life and got a big boost from jockey J.D. Acosta, who rode a masterful race. There was virtually no early speed in the race and Valedictorian is more of a stalker type, but Acosta realized she had enough early gas to steal the race. He cleared the field and slowed the fractions down to :23.84 and :48.08. She was 5½ lengths in front at the eighth-pole and began to tire, but by then it was too late. She had opened up enough daylight that she was able to hang on for a 1½-length win.

“For her to run as well as she did we were ecstatic,” Breen said. “From a Beyer standpoint, it was the race of her life. She ran an 86. Honestly, I didn’t see any signs that she was about to run a race like that. She always trains well, is always a good

horse in the feed tub all over. I didn’t see anything different with her.”

Valedictorian, who was bred by John Bowers Jr., has now won nine of 21 starts. She had more success on the dirt earlier in her career but has now won three straight grass races, including the Jersey Girl Handicap for Jersey-breds.

“Up until this summer her best race was on the dirt at Philadelphia Park,” Breen said.

“Now that she’s running better on the turf, maybe it’s maturity. I don’t know. What makes this horse fun is that she has nine wins from 21 starts. She just likes to win.”

Breen isn’t sure what will be next for Valedictorian, but his plans include running her back in the Claiming Crown at Gulfstream.

Even though Valedictorian, a daughter of Temple City, will turn 5 next year and is now a winner of an open stakes, her value as a broodmare may never be higher. But Breen said the plan is to have her have a full campaign next year.

She is owned by Epic Racing, an interesting newcomer to the New Jersey racing scene. Epic Racing is the stable name for Harriet Sawyer, a New York City-based artist. Sawyer originally had Valedictorian based in Florida with trainer Michelle Nihei, but realized it would make more sense to send her to a New Jersey-based trainer, and chose Breen.

Sawyer is in the process of building her stable and went to this year’s Spring 2-Year-Old Sale at Ocala and bought a Kitten’s Joy colt for \$100,000 and an Orb colt for \$185,000. Named Epic Dreamer, the Orb colt ran Sept. 23 in a maiden special weight race at Belmont and was a sharp second in a race that went in 1:08.93. The horse is a Kentucky bred.

“They ran extremely fast in Epic Dreamer’s race and we were pleased with way he ran and are hoping for good things from him,” Breen said.

“It’s always nice to have new blood,” Breen added. “It’s also nice to have somebody where you start with a clean slate rather than someone who’s been with other trainers. I try to keep her as knowledgeable as possible. She came to the sale with me, helped with the selection on horses and was very much part of picking them out. This horse by Orb really caught her eye. She was there to give final thumbs up. I’ve come to her at a sale and said I really like this horse and she says this one isn’t for me. She’s someone I’m trying to teach, but it is the owner’s money and she has final say. When the hammer fell we were lucky to get that horse.”



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