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TIMBER COUNTRY TO TAKE ON

AFTERNOON DEELITES Trainer D. Wayne Lukas made it official Tuesday morning: 1994's Champion Two-Year-Old Colt **Timber Country** (Woodman) will make his next start in the GII San Felipe S. at Santa Anita March 19, just 15 days after running third in his three-year-old debut in the GII San Rafael S. Saturday. "We didn't get anything out of the last race, at least enough to get us where we want to be at this time of the year," said Lukas. "We had the (San Felipe) always in mind, if we needed it, and I think we need it in order to get where we want to be." The presence of undefeated Grade I winner **Afternoon Deelites** (Private Terms) in the San Felipe isn't a factor, according to Lukas. "We don't ever regulate our program to who's entering the race," he said. "It's more how the race might move our horse forward." The San Felipe will be decided at 1 1/16-miles.

VALID WAGER SOLD TO HIS BREEDER

Valid Wager (Valid Appeal), winner of the GII Hutcheson S. at Gulfstream Jan. 28, has been purchased by his breeder, H.T. Mangurian Jr. **Valid Wager** was sold to Robert and Beverly Lewis at last year's Ocala Breeders' Sales Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale for \$95,000. In addition to the Hutcheson, the Florida-bred colt won the GIII California Juvenile S. as a two-year-old and was second to undefeated **Afternoon Deelites** in the GIII Hollywood Prevue Breeders' Cup S. **Valid Wager's** earnings to date are \$201,653. Plans are for him to continue to race through 1995, then in 1996 to stand at stud alongside his sire at Mangurian's Mockingbird Farm in Ocala.

EAST OF THE MOON RETIRED

East of the Moon (Private Account) will leave France this Friday to begin her career as a broodmare in Kentucky. The four-year-old daughter of dual Breeders' Cup Mile heroine **Miesque** had been expected to stay in training in 1995. But following the death of her trainer Francois Boutin, it has been decided that she will instead be retired and bred to Mr. Prospector. **East of the Moon**, owned and bred by Stavros Niarchos, won three Group 1 events in France last year, including the French Oaks, for lifetime earnings of \$695,107. In her career finale, she finished 12th in the Breeders' Cup Mile at Churchill Downs Nov. 5.

Saturday, Santa Anita:

SANTA ANITA H.-GI, \$1,000,000, 4yo/up, 1 1/4m

At first glance, one might wonder why trainer Ron McAnally is planning to run Tadahiro Hotehama's **Johann Quatz (FR)** (Sadler's Wells) in the Big 'Cap. The six-year-old would appear to have several factors working against him: He hasn't raced since finishing 12th in the Nov. 27 Japan Cup. He's raced on dirt only once, finishing an unthreatening sixth in the 1994 San Pasqual H. And he hasn't won a race in 16 months, his last victory coming in the 1993 GII Col. F.W. Koester H. at Oak Tree. A Hall of Fame trainer like McAnally, however, doesn't earn a reputation as one of the game's top conditioners by asking horses to do things they can't. The late-running **Johann Quatz** has held his own against many of the world's top grass runners, including a second-place finish to **Barathea** in the 1994 Breeders' Cup Mile. To prepare for the Big 'Cap, McAnally has put the bay horse through a series of lengthy workouts on Santa Anita's main track, capped by Saturday's 1 1/8-mile drill in 1:54 flat. "It's easy to train a horse up to a race if you've got a horse who is training as well as **Johann Quatz**," McAnally said. "Obviously he's sharp, or we wouldn't consider running him." The probable field for the 58th Santa Anita H.: **Best Pal** (*Habitony), McCarron, 122 pounds; **Dare and Go** (Alydar), Solis, 120; **Dramatic Gold** (Slew o' Gold), Nakatani, 120; **Urgent Request (IRE)** (Rainbow Quest), Stevens, 116; **Johann Quatz**, Delahoussaye, 115; and **Nancy's French Fry** (French Legionaire), F. Valenzuela, 113. **Best Pal** and **Dramatic Gold** will run coupled as a Golden Eagle Farm-owned entry. While **Arcadia H.** winner **College Town** (Snow Chief) remains possible for the Big 'Cap, trainer Paco Gonzalez officially declared **Del Mar Dennis** (Dixieland Band) out of the race.

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Weekend Preview, Continued.

Friday, Gulfstream Park:

GULFSTREAM PARK SPRINT CHAMPIONSHIP, \$100,000, 3yo/up, 7f

Eclipse Award-winning sprinter **Cherokee Run** (Run-away Groom) is scheduled to make his first start Friday since taking the Breeders' Cup Sprint by a head Nov. 5. The five-year-old has been assigned top weight of 122 pounds and will be piloted by regular rider Mike Smith. Second in the weights at 120 is D. Wayne Lukas-trainee **Chimes Band** (Dixieland Band), who will be shooting for his third straight stakes victory since finishing fifth in the Breeders' Cup Sprint. A Group 3 winner in France, Chimes Band will be ridden by Jerry Bailey. **Birdonthewire** (Proud Birdie), who will carry 118 pounds including jockey Craig Perret, finished second to Holy Bull in the seven-furlong Olympic H. in his last outing. Before that, he took the Kenny Noe Jr. H. at Calder by 5 1/4-lengths Dec. 24. Sonny Hine-trainee **Patton** (Lord at War {ARG}) has run the fastest six furlongs (1:08 3/5) of the current Gulfstream meeting when taking a Jan. 5 allowance. The four-year-old, who will tote 115 pounds, will have the services of regular rider Jose Santos. Also scheduled to go postward are **Evil Bear** (Medieval Man), Lopez Sr., 116 pounds; **Waldoboro** (Lyphard), Sellers, 113 pounds; and **Punch Line** (Two Punch), Krone, 113 pounds. Punch Line is slated to become jockey Julie Krone's first stakes mount since suffering injuries to her left hand in a spill Jan. 13.

News Continued.

STEVENS RETURNS TO SANTA ANITA Jockey Gary Stevens was back at Santa Anita Tuesday morning, preparing himself for a ride on **Urgent Request** (IRE) (Rainbow Quest) in Saturday's Santa Anita H. after a month in Hong Kong, where he is under contract to trainer Steve Leung for the next 3 1/2-months. "I got back Sunday morning," said Stevens, who celebrated his 32nd birthday Monday. "It was a long flight over, about 12 1/2 hours. It's good to be back, but I'm real happy with the situation over there. The work schedule is a lot different. The last couple weeks we've only raced one day a week. We work hard in the mornings, but racing only one day a week takes away the wear and tear on your mental attitude. It's just good to get away and freshen up a little bit. I miss the racing here and I miss the people, but by the same token, I'm real happy that I made the move over there."

PURSES RAISED AGAIN AT FAIR GROUNDS

Bryan Krantz, president and general manager of Fair Grounds, has announced the second purse increase of the season at the New Orleans track. Beginning this Saturday, March 11, all overnight purses will be raised from \$500 to \$1,000. Fair Grounds will conclude its 88-day, 1994-95 meet Monday, March 27. Total purse distribution for the season is expected to exceed \$14 million, a new record for the track.

BLUE GRASS DRAWS 129 NOMINATIONS Top three-year-olds **Afternoon Deelites** (Private Terms), **Timber Country** (Woodman), **Thunder Gulch** (Gulch), **Larry the Legend** (Local Talent) and **Jambalaya Jazz** (Dixieland Band) are among 129 horses nominated to Keeneland's \$500,000 Blue Grass Stakes. The 1 1/8-mile, Grade II race for three-year-olds will be run Saturday, April 15, three weeks before the Kentucky Derby. It will be televised live from 3-4 p.m. (Eastern time) on ESPN. Three of the last five Kentucky Derby winners--Sea Hero (1993), Strike the Gold (1991) and Unbridled (1990)--raced in the Blue Grass prior to their victories at Churchill Downs. Last year's Blue Grass winner Holy Bull was voted Horse of the Year. One filly, three-time GI winner **Serena's Song** (Rahy), and a colt based in Japan, Kentucky-bred **Ski Captain** (Storm Bird), also were nominated to the race.



F • L • O • R • I • D • A R E P O R T

Today, Gulfstream Park:

THE HERECOMESTHEBRIDE S., \$50,000, 3yo, f, 1 1/8mT

The field of 12, from the rail out, is as follows: **Rose Law Firm** (Mr. Goldust), Smith; **Flagstone Ferdie** (Ferdinand), Sellers; **Polish Spirit** (Polish Navy), Barton; **Transient Trend** (Time for a Change), Samyn; **Set Me Straight** (Sunshine Forever), Fires; **Shocking Pleasure** (Maudlin), Boulanger; **A Rose For Shannon** (Private Account), Velasquez; **Miss Union Avenue** (Steinlen {GB}), McCauley; **Palliser Bay** (Frosty the Snowman), Davis; **Honolulu Gold** (Alwuhush), Bailey; **Clever Thing** (On to Glory), Perret; **Carterina** (Dr. Carter), Monterrey.



S O U T H E R N C • A • L • I • F • O • R • N • I • A R E P O R T

Today, Santa Anita:

THE SAN MARINO H., \$75,000a, 4yo/up, 1 1/4m

The field of eight, in post position order, is as follows: **Russian Courage** (Nijinsky II), Desormeaux; **Frenesi** (ARG) (Forlitano), Almeida; **River Rhythm** (Riverman), Delahoussaye; **Complot** (FR) (Highest Honor), McCarron; **Regal Rowdy** (Cozzene), Pincay Jr.; **Western Trader** (Herat), Nakatani; **Memento Mori** (Super Moment), Hawley; **Stoller** (El Gran Senor), P. Valenzuela. River Rhythm and Complot will be coupled in the wagering as a Bizsantz & Greenman-owned and Walter Greenman-trained entry.



W • R • I • T • E • R • S U P

SHOOTING STARS

By: Bill Leggett

No major U.S. stakes race in modern times has suffered such hideous luck as that which has been visited upon this Saturday's \$1 million Santa Anita Handicap.

The 58th running of one of racing's truly exceptional events appeared to be "The Race of the Decade" when the New Year began. Seemingly, all the big fish were going to swim in the same lake for a change. Then the defections commenced.

Here are the order of disappearances: Jan. 5, Preakness and Belmont winner **Tabasco Cat** (Storm Cat) grabbed a quarter while Super Derby hero **Soul of the Matter** (Private Terms) was knocked out by tender hooves. Feb. 8, **Strodes Creek** (Halo) was shelved with back muscle problems; two days later Eclipse Champion **The Wicked North** (Far North) broke out with a skin infection.

Feb. 11 saw the star of the show, **Holy Bull** (Great Above), injured in the Donn Handicap and retired on the same day that **Colonel Collins** (El Gran Senor), third in both the English and Irish Derbies and the producer of four bullet works over the dirt at Santa Anita, was retired after a tendon injury. **Wekiva Springs** (Runaway Groom), a blossoming grey star, developed problems with quarter cracks Feb. 22, just about the same time Jack Van Berg declared **Tossofthecoin** (Magesterial) out.

Late in the month, Breeders' Cup Classic winner **Concern** (Broad Brush) changed destinations and decided to run in New Orleans rather than in the Big 'Cap, and five days later '94 Hollywood Gold Cup star **Slew of Damascus** (Slewacide) developed colic. March 5, **Del Mar Dennis** (Dixieland Band) missed a serious work due to bad weather and is now a non-starter.

What we have now are seven possible starters led by **Best Pal** (*Habitony), as well as a ton of sympathy for a race and a racetrack that certainly deserved a better fate. There is also a live ABC-TV show plus simulcasts to virtually every racetrack in the land because most of them signed on when the Big 'Cap looked so promising.

Best Pal will try to become merely the second horse ever to win the Santa Anita Handicap for a second time. John Henry accomplished that in 1981-82, but Perrault was disqualified and John's number went up. A victory by Best Pal would also put him within \$836,087 of Alysheba's record. Alysheba, of course, won one of the greatest runnings of the Big 'Cap when he defeated Ferdinand in '88.

Virtually every spring it seems that racing fans

must deal with that controversy about 20 horses starting in the Kentucky Derby. Heck, the first Santa Anita Handicap had 20 starters and was won by the seven-year-old Azucar, a jumper. That was in 1935 and Azucar got an unheard of \$108,400. The Big 'Cap was on its way to becoming the oldest continuously run \$100,000 race in this country.

Stars? It's almost impossible to count them because owners from every major racing center coveted the Big 'Cap. For the first 32 runnings the race was open to three-year-olds, but nobody really expected anyone to start one in it so early in the year. But in 1938 trainer Earl Sande put Nick Wall up on Stagehand with 100 pounds and defeated Seabiscuit, who carried 130.

That was the second of two nose defeats in the Big 'Cap for Seabiscuit, a horse who had run 35 times as a two-year-old for Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons, breaking his maiden in his 18th start. Californian Charles S. Howard bought The Biscuit for \$7,500. Seabiscuit went lame training up to his third Big 'Cap and was sent to Howard's farm 120 miles north of San Francisco to prepare for the 1940 running.

Jockey Red Pollard, who had quit riding to become a boxer, was reunited with Seabiscuit on the farm after injuring his leg. "Between us," Pollard said, "me and The Biscuit have only four good legs." Seabiscuit won the race with Mrs. Howard, who said she couldn't bear to watch it, sitting atop the water truck on the backstretch.

That race made Seabiscuit the first horse ever to earn \$400,000 and stamped the Santa Anita Handicap as the signature stake of all of California's events. Noor dusted Citation in 1950 to continue a great rivalry, with Noor carrying 110 to Citation's 132. Hill Rise won it in '65 and a fight broke out between Manuel Ycaza and Bill Harmatz after the race because Ycaza, the rider of Gun Bow, thought Harmatz bothered him to set up the victory.

Between 1978-82 Vigors, Affirmed, Spectacular Bid and John Henry (twice) won the Big 'Cap. Certainly the '95 Big 'Cap is not as big a handicap as we all thought it would be not too long ago, but its excellent history indicates it often comes up big at times when racing needs it to. Let's hope Saturday is another of those times.

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