

LAUREL PARK

Laurel Park's Opening Now Scheduled For January 22



LAUREL, 12-14-04---At today's Maryland Racing Commission meeting, the Maryland Jockey Club announced its intention to reopen Laurel Park on Saturday, January 22, 2005 because workers rebuilding the racing surfaces have run into weather delays, problems with ground-water drainage and other issues with the new surface's foundation. The most recent tentative date for reopening had been December 26. The Laurel dirt track is now anticipated to open for training the day after Christmas. Racing will continue at Pimlico Race Course through Monday, January 17.

"We are just days way from finishing this project in regards to the dirt track," said Jim Gagliano, Executive Vice President of Racing Operations for the Maryland Jockey Club. "We remain convinced that the short term inconveniences, while considerably burdensome, will be outweighed by the greater good in the long run. The number one goal has always been and will always be building the best racetrack possible."

The backstretch and racing surfaces at Laurel Park have been closed since mid-June as Magna Entertainment Corp. began a \$16 million renovation, which includes the widening of both racing surfaces. The turf course will be expanded from 75 to 142 feet, while the dirt course will be increased from 75 to 95 feet.

Pimlico will now play host to the final three stakes races of the calendar year: Squan Song (December 26), Maryland Juvenile Filly Championship (December 30) and Maryland Juvenile Championship (December 31). This Saturday's Jennings Handicap was to be the final added money race of the year at Old Hilltop. The 2005 winter stakes schedule will be announced later this week.

General George & Barbara Fritchie Headline 2005 Winter Stakes



BALTIMORE, 12-15-04---Laurel Park's Winter SprintFest to be run on President's Day weekend (February 19-21) headlines the Maryland 2005 winter stakes schedule. The feature offerings that weekend include the Barbara Fritchie Handicap (Grade II) and General George Handicap (Grade II), a pair of \$200,000 sprints. The 16-week stand begins at Pimlico Race Course on January 1 and ends at Laurel Park on April 17.

Three of the 18 added money races will be run at Old Hilltop before racing is expected to shift to the renovated Laurel Park on Saturday, January 22.

SANTANA BACK AFTER LEG SURGERY

It started out as a simple spider bite on the inside of his left leg, near the ankle, but turned into a life threatening situation for Jozbin Santana. But after nearly a month of battling, the 25-year old rider has returned.

"I feel better now," said Santana, who ranks fifth in the colony with 114 victories at the major Maryland tracks this year. "The bite got infected and the bacteria was hard to kill. They had to watch it very closely and had to dig the abscess out. I spent four days in the hospital after the surgery."

Santana was having a career-year before the setback with 127 wins and earnings of \$2.5 million. Last year he ranked in the top 100 nationally when he set career-highs in victories (128 victories) and earnings (\$2.7 million).

"I was doing well and all of a sudden this happened out of the blue, not even at the track," added Santana, who rides first call for Richard Small. "But thank God everything is fine."

Santana began riding in Maryland as an apprentice in 1998 and has been a top ten rider since 2002.

OUT OF TOWN TRAINERS HELP FILL STALLS AND RACES

A dozen out-of-town trainers from New England and Delaware have relocated to Maryland for the winter bringing an additional 120 horses to Pimlico, Laurel Park and the Bowie Training Center. Included in the mix is John Rigattieri, who won the seven-month Suffolk Downs meet with 93 victories. Based in Maryland last winter, the 54-year old conditioner saddled 28 winners in the first four months of the year at Laurel Park and Pimlico.

"Those Suffolk trainers love to run so it has already helped our entries," said Maryland Jockey Club racing secretary Georganne Hale. "We needed the boost. A lot of our trainers have been running all year and are sending them to the farm for winter. Some of the babies aren't ready yet because of the Laurel situation. We've been way behind on horse flesh and are glad to see these trainers."

Hale indicated there are now about 1,750 horses at the three tracks, about 250 less than a year ago.

Laurel Park To Open For Training Next Week

BALTIMORE, 12-31-04---In a letter to the Maryland Racing Commission and Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, the Maryland Jockey Club today announced its intention to open Laurel Park for training by early next week, weather permitting. Training hours will be the normal 6:00 to 10:00, with a harrow break at 8:00. Live racing will continue at Pimlico Race Course through Monday, January 17 and is



expected to return to Laurel on Saturday, January 22.

“At long last the renovation to the racing surfaces at Laurel Park is nearly complete,” said Jim Gagliano, Executive Vice President of Maryland Racing Operations. “As we have stated in the past, we want to thank the horsemen for their patience and continued support of racing in Maryland.”

Track designer Ted Molloy and his crew, which includes Maryland Jockey Club’s Glen Kozak and Ken Brown, have proof rolled the entire racing surface and now believe that the strength and durability of the base are now 100%. Over the next few days the base will be rolled and the track will be topped with the final layer of cushion.

“While the project has taken many unexpected turns and the delays were disappointing and a major inconvenience, we believe the end result will provide hope for the future of Maryland racing and a testament to Magna Entertainment’s commitment to racing at Laurel Park,” added Gagliano.

The backstretch and racing surfaces at Laurel Park have been closed since mid-June as Magna Entertainment Corp. began a multi-million renovation, which includes the widening of both racing surfaces. The dirt course has been increased from 75 to 95 feet, while the turf course will be expanded from 75 to 142 feet.

Workers moved 500,000 cubic yards of dirt, trucked in 15,000 tons of limestone, 20,000 tons of topsoil, 25,000 tons of sand and 71,000 tons of stone mixed with crushed stone. They brought in 15,000 linear feet of fiber-optic cable and 15 miles of electrical wiring.

PIMLICO

Legal Control Goes On Cruise Control In Maryland Juvenile Championship



BALTIMORE, 12-31-04---Legal Control was overlooked in the betting but proved to be much the best in today’s \$100,000 Maryland Juvenile Championship at Pimlico.

Sent to post at 7-1, the Richard Small trainee left no doubt as to who was best as he tracked lone speedster Busy Prospect down the backstretch and into the turn, then wrested command at the top of the lane and powered to victory by 2-1/2 widening lengths over Monster Chaser.

Post time favorite Prideland muscled his way between horses but could not pass Monster Chaser and finished third. Lisaized, the only filly in the field of seven, had a hard time finding her place among the colts and geldings early but rallied to take fourth.

"I knew the speed was holding so I just let him take over through the first turn to see what was happening," said Jozbin Santana, who rode the colt. "I was laying in a perfect spot. Then at the top of the lane I asked him and he was really strong. He seems like he's going to be a nice horse."

Legal Control completed the 1-1/16 mile distance in 1:46.21. He paid \$17.20 and was the top part of a \$74.60 exacta and a \$216.40 trifecta. The win was the sixth stakes victory of the year for Small.

"This is a really nice horse. I knew he had some fight in him after his last race," said the conditioner, who won races at a 27% clip at Pimlico and Laurel Park this year (35-of-129). "He was toast at the eighth pole and came back to win. That's when you know you have one who has a chance to move forward. They have to have that fight to compete at the top level."

Legal Control's dam, Miss Legality won the 1992 Black-Eyed Susan, while his sire, Thunder Gulch, was victorious in the 1995 Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes and was third in the Preakness Stakes.

"I'll probably take him to North Carolina and freshen him up a little, then try to pick a spot for him sometime in early spring," added Small. "I'm not sure he's good enough to go chasing after the Derby preps at this point, but we'll see. I don't want to commit at this point in time. He's really maturing and he's as nice a mover as I have in my barn."

Santana, who rides first call for Small, picked up the mount when Ryan Fogelsonger took off because of soreness from a fall earlier in the week. The 25-year old won a career-best 131 races this year, including eight added money races at the major Maryland tracks, despite missing two months with a hairline fracture of his left leg and an infected spider bite.

"We thought Ryan was going to take off today and it worked out well," added Santana, who has ridden in the colony since his apprentice year (1999). "Earlier in my career I didn't work too much. Now I have kids and I have dedicated my life to this. I enjoy doing it and am looking forward to a great year."

Monster Chaser finished in the money in seven of eight races in his two-year old campaign. The Eddie Gaudet trainee won the Rollicking Stakes and was runner-up in the Maryland Million Nursery and H. Steward Mitchell Stakes earlier in the Pimlico fall meeting.

"He ran pretty well for his first time going long," said Richard Monterrey, who was aboard the runner-up. "He tried his best, but we were second best today."

Fogelsonger, Capuano And Gill Capture Individual Titles For 2004

BALTIMORE, 12-31-04---Ryan Fogelsonger, Dale Capuano and Michael Gill captured the titles for top jockey, trainer and owner in the state as the 2004 campaign came to a conclusion this afternoon.

After finishing second in the standings the last two years, Fogelsonger earned top honors this year with 160 first place finishes, 11 more than Ramon Dominguez. The 2002 Eclipse Award winning apprentice won the ninth meet of his young career by winning 83 races during the fall stand, 30 more than runner-up Eric Camacho, including a career-best six on September 18. Dominguez topped the standings in winning percentage, winning races at a 27.4% clip (149-of-543).



"It is a great feeling to be the top rider," said Fogelsonger, who relocated back to Maryland in mid-February after a six-month stint on the Southern California circuit. "I got a late start and statistically this wasn't my best year overall (217 wins & 4.5 million in purses), but I feel like I have improved as a rider after going to Southern California. It also helped that Ramon spent half the year at Delaware. It gave us all a chance for the top spot."

Steve Hamilton (138), Abel Castellano (125) and Jozbin Santana (108) round out the top five. Mario Pino, who spent six months riding at Delaware Park, had 50 victories in Maryland, the first time he has finished out of the top five in his 26-year career.

Capuano won the training title for the seventh time in the last eight years by visiting the winners' circle 94 times at the major Maryland tracks, easily defeating Jerry Robb (53) and Mark Shuman (52). The 42-year old won three of the four meets this year, including all three at Pimlico. Capuano captured his 10th straight meet at Old Hilltop, dating back to 2000, saddling 30 winners during the fall stand, five more than Scott Lake. He also finished the year with the best winning percentage in Maryland, based on at least 150 starts, saddling winners at a 23.7% clip (94-of-396).

"We didn't have as many horses so we didn't win as much but percentage-wise we did well," said Capuano, who finished 17th nationally with 136 wins. "That is the first time we have won that title and for an outfit like ours who runs a lot of horses it can be difficult to win at a high rate. Overall I am very happy with the year."

Chris Grove (41) and Ben Feliciano Jr. (40) round out the top five. Feliciano was second in the percentage race winning at a 22.9% rate. Seven other conditioners had victory totals in the 30's.

Gill dominated the owner standings by winning 153 races for the year for purses exceeding \$3 million, including 49 during the Pimlico fall meet. The familiar blue colors also topped the national standings with 487 wins, seven fewer than the record set by Dan Lasater in 1974. Since arriving

on the state scene in late 2001, Team Gill has recorded 422 victories at Pimlico and Laurel Park. John Alecci Stable was a distant second in the local standings with 27 wins.

Gill, Capuano, Fogelsonger and Dominguez will be honored in a ceremony on Saturday, January 8 at Pimlico.

The Maryland Jockey Club also honored the trainers with the highest starts per stall ratio with a \$500 bonus. The winners for the fall meeting were Eddie Gaudet (36 or more stalls), Scott Lake (26-35 stalls), Ann Merryman (16-25 stalls), Donald Souder (8-15 stalls) and John Friedman (3-7 stalls).

Final handle numbers for the year will be announced next week.