

TRAVERS 150

The 2019 Travers Stakes at Saratoga was supposed to be a heavyweight fight between Kentucky Derby winner (before the DQ) Maximum Security and the Bob Baffert trained, 2018 two-year old champion, Game Winner. Neither will be in the gate this Saturday.

Trainer Jason Servis indicated Maximum Security isn't acting as enthusiastically as he wants and scratched him from the race. Baffert said Game Winner came down with a virus.

What's left in the race is a full field of solid three-year olds but none that can be considered spectacular. Tacitus is likely to be the morning line favorite for Bill Mott. He is coming into the race off a runner-up finish in the Grade 2 Jim Dandy. That was a race won by Travers foe Tax. Both should get plenty of attention.

The colt who might be peaking at just the right time is Shug McGaughey's Code of Honor. He looked his best when he dusted an overmatched field in the Grade 3 Dwyer back on July 6th at Belmont. He was bet down to the 6-5 favorite and he never looked a loser in the race. He motored home in 1:35.4 and matched his career best with a 97 Beyer.

Code of Honor was second in the Grade 1 Champagne in just his second start after stumbling badly out of the gate. He was listed as the third choice in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile but scratched the day of the race due to an injury.

In his last four races, Code of Honor has been very sharp. He won the Fountain of Youth and was third in the Florida Derby, a race that was better than it appeared. The top two (Maximum Security and Bodexpress) went slow early and fast late. Code of Honor was trying to close into that slow place and never really had a chance.

He finished third (but moved up to second via DQ) in the Kentucky Derby. That was on a sloppy track and he was in the midst of the trouble that eventually took down the winner Maximum Security.

McGaughey said he would wait until the summer to bring him back with the Travers as the ultimate goal. He used the Grade 3 Dwyer as a prep for the Travers and Code of Honor looked better than ever in that easy win. He is said to have worked perfectly since the Dwyer and is coming into the Travers ready to fire a big race.

TRAVERS UNDERCARD

Horse racing in the last decade or so has really started to highlight "supercards". These are days where many big races are stacked on top of one another to showcase the best on the same day. It used to be that tracks would space out big races over a few days but that has changed.

The Travers undercard is absolutely loaded and really is one of the top three or four days of the year in terms of top to bottom talent. There are seven graded stakes races and six are Grade 1's. Maybe the most anticipated horse to run all day will be the freakishly fast Shancelot for Jorge Navarro. He is undefeated and is coming into the Grade 1 Allen Jerkens off of one of the most impressive performances ever at Saratoga. He destroyed the field in the Grade 2 Amsterdam in track record time of 1:14 flat for 6 and a half furlongs. It will be very interesting to see if that was an aberration or if he is really that fast.

Overall, the Travers card is one that any die-hard fan or weekend warrior should take in. Many of the horses in action on Saturday will be seen in the Breeders' Cup in November.

HORSE RACING PLAY OF THE WEEK

No. 4 WINNING WALK in race 1 at Canterbury Park on Thursday is going to win for fun. She was well-meant in her debut and ran huge to finish second to a Mac Robertson first timer, She Be Addie, who returned to win an allowance race last week at 9-1. The trainer, Brian House, has been on fire this meet and this filly is a half to the \$2M winner, Twilight Eclipse. She is 5-2 on the morning line. First post is 4:10 PT.