

REVOLTING FINISHES 5TH, AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS BELMONT, 2013



“Thanks George. I literally bet the ranch on Revolutionary so my wife and son and I will be moving in with you...Eggs Benedict for breakfast please.” Tony Hewett



The Tony Hewett Family, arriving at my home this morning. Others expected soon after unfortunate Belmont venture.

Memo to Revolutionary: the race is 1 & ½ miles.

With just ¼ mile to go, Revolutionary looked like a winner. But he couldn't pass horses in the stretch and faded to fifth place. His nemesis, Orb, to whom he was third in the Derby, finished two placings ahead of Revolutionary, and never contended for the win. Two of the front runners exchanged position, but stayed brave for the entire orbit. That is a rare occurrence, and there is a reason why horses whose style is to rally from behind – Revolutionary, Orb, Golden Soul and others - had a tough time on Saturday.

Excuses, excuses

Losers always have them. Adam's attempted plea bargain has always been my favorite:

“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”

Eve had nothing to do with this Belmont, but the Big Boss, who dumped 4 inches of rain on Long Island in the previous 48 hours, bears some responsibility. When it rains on a racetrack, the greatest fear is that it turns into a quagmire. The response of the maintenance team is to drag heavy rollers behind its tractors to “seal” the track. This packs down the dirt so that the rain does

not seep through. However, all this compression makes the track extra firm and, even though you might see puddles, believe me, it is firm underneath.

For some reason, when a track is in that condition, horses who go to the front tend to stay there. Astute handicappers on Saturday, as they saw one front runner after another win the earlier races, took note. Peter D., an English guy I know who studied physics and now paints houses because the money is better, called me 4 minutes before the race: ***Bet Palace Malice.***

Palace Malice, my ethical dilemma, and another lesson

Having led all of you down the wrong path, I could not possibly switch at that late date. We sank together, good friends. But everything Peter D. said made sense.

Palace Malice is a beautiful and very speedy horse, not known for rallying in long races. In the Kentucky Derby, he'd gained notoriety by running away with jockey Mike Smith for the first half mile, and then finishing 12th. How could he possibly win at 1 & ½ miles if he flunked the 1 & ¼ mile Derby so badly ?

Answer? Come on. It's obvious. **Blinkers**, or the absence thereof.



Being herbivores, horses are blessed with extraordinary peripheral vision. Without it, primeval lions and such would have eaten up their smaller ancestors, and we wouldn't have horses at all. With all this nervous eye power, racehorses sometimes pay more attention to what's beside them than what's in front. An accepted remedy is to put blinkers on the horse, blocking out the port and starboard distractions.

Trainer Todd Pletcher tried blinkers on Palace Malice in the Derby, and he got more than bargained for when Palace Malice ran away. After the unsuccessful experiment with blinkers, Pletcher took them off for the Belmont. Voila. There is sometimes a marvelous transformation when trainers do this. The racehorse is more focused, yet not as spooked by the tunnel effect he felt with the blinkers in the previous race.

“Blinkers Off” is a key trainer angle, and Peter D. astutely picked it, earning \$29.60 for each \$2 wagered.

The best losing game in the world



Are you having fun yet? It would be more fun, of course, to cash a ticket, but a bad day at the races is better than a good day just about anywhere else.

My head hangs heavy, as I think of more smashed hopes and dreams among my friends and colleagues. However, that won't stop me from trying again.

Best,

George Chimento
June 9, 2013