

OSCAR'S 2007 PREAKNESS GREEN SHEET

"ROAD SCHOLAR!"

Joshua A. Billings



Training:
Harvard University
Univ.

Career Aspirations:
Academia, literary criticism
Professor

Whitney Haring-Smith



Training:
Yale University

Career Aspirations:
Public Service

Jacob E. Lemieux



Training:
Stanford Univ.

Career Aspirations:
Medical Research

Christian C. Sahner



Training:
Princeton

Career Aspirations:
History

The brilliant young men you see above are a representative sample of the 2007 Rhodes Scholars.

What is required to be a Rhodes Scholar? The Encyclopedia of American History states:

- *Rhodes Scholars are expected to demonstrate qualities of character that promise potential service to others.*
- *Rhodes Scholars are further expected to possess physical vigor.*

Now these are certainly young men with great potential, and some may indeed become internationally recognized leaders in their fields, but will any of that "book learning" enable them to run a mile and a quarter in 2:02.1 while being hit in the face by dirt clods? Will their careers, no matter how successful, afford them the opportunity to impregnate million dollar mares and sire sons and daughters worth multi-millions as 2 year-olds?

You don't need an education from Harvard, Yale, Stanford or Princeton to be successful and earn significant sums of money. Calvin Borel has an eighth grade education, but he earned \$124,000 for two minutes and two seconds of work on May 5. The next day he dined with the Queen of England and the President of the United States! Forget college folks, all you need to look brilliant is some:

STREET SENSE





Training: Churchill Downs

Career Aspirations: Triple Crown Winner

So what is required to be a Road Scholar? According to Oscar it's not so different from what is required to be a Rhodes Scholar:

- *Road Scholars are expected to demonstrate qualities of character that promise potential service to others. (Service to others? Street Sense will probably service 80-100 mares a year when he retires).*
- *Road Scholars are further expected to possess physical vigor. (Physical vigor? Is coming from 19th place in a 20-horse field to win by 2 ¼ lengths vigorous enough for you?)*

If you did your homework and were smart enough to bet on this Road Scholar to win the Kentucky Derby you might say that you were rewarded with Road Wage, because even though he went off the favorite, he paid a very generous \$11.80!

Did he figure to win? It was academic! You aced your first test.

Now it's time for your mid-term: the 2007 Preakness Stakes.

Let's take a look at who might be able ace this 1 3/16 mile test:

STREET SENSE – Road Scholar!



If you don't think that this son of Street Cry belongs in MENSA, consider this: Since the first BC was held in 1984, **he is the only horse** smart enough to figure out how to win both the Breeder's Cup Juvenile and the Kentucky Derby!

His Beyer for the Derby was a very impressive 110; and I'll bet his Stanford-Binet score would be about 329!

After a good break, Borel steered this Street machine to the rail as soon as he could. At one point he had only Imawildandcrazy guy beaten out of 19 rivals. Not to worry, the pace up front was swift enough to forecast perfect weather for a closer with this horse's ability.

There has been a lot of talk about "Bo-Rail", and indeed Calvin has spent more time on the rails than Casey Jones! You might say that Calvin's "Bo-Rail" is today's Ussery's Alley. (For those of you old enough to know what that is, I hope you bet your entire pension and Social Security checks on Street Sense.)

At any rate, with Casey Jones at the controls, Street Sense made a strong, sustained move up the rail and closed like a runaway freight train until he encountered a tiring Sedgefield on the track in front of him. He easily moved around him and closed **on the outside** of Hard Spun to win impressively, getting his last quarter in 24 1/5.

Would Hard Spun have won if Street Sense had run into traffic or been temporarily derailed? Some, like Larry Jones would say "absolutely". Steve Haskin said it would have been "likely". Oscar, on the other hand, would say "probably not". It would depend on how much his momentum was interrupted. However, I'm thinking that even if he had encountered trouble, his race would have looked more like Afleet Alex's Preakness, than Circular Quay's Risen Star.

Street Sense had worked impressively twice at Churchill before the Derby, had a route victory at that track by 10 lengths defeating the best of his class in impressive time, had the breeding for the distance, and a trainer who proved he could win the Derby. This horse was a huge overlay at 9-2. He should have been 5-2.

Turning to the Preakness, we now have a track that he is unfamiliar with, some new faces, and a slightly shorter distance. We also have the lightly raced Curlin with another race under his girth, and of course Hard Spun returns for another try at the leader of the class.

You can bet that now there will be several jockeys besides Mario Pino looking to shut down Bo's Rail, so the smart thing for Calvin to do would be to keep the Road Scholar to the outside and in the clear. While I think Street Sense himself prefers the rail (just look at the way he takes the corners during his workouts, and watch the tapes of his BJ Juvenile, and the KY Derby), he has enough ability to be effective on the outside. He is not a one-way Street.

I see him winning this race. I believe it will be a closer finish than the Derby, but he will prevail.

Can he lose? Sure he can. When he does not blow by horses like he did in the Derby, and gains a very slight advantage in deep stretch, he has had a tendency to lose focus a bit and could get caught. (Play your tapes of the Breeder's Futurity and Blue Grass Stakes.)

If he is neck and neck with Hard Spun and gains a slight advantage just before the finish line, he may think that his job is done, throttle down slightly, and be vulnerable to a fast closing Curlin and/or Circular Quay, who he might not see coming fast on his outside (or worse yet – up the rail)!



HARD SPUN – Road Rage!

Flash back to the 1988 Preakness and you might hear this comment: *“I’m going to the lead. I might finish last, but she’ll finish next to last!”*

That comment was made by none other than the Hall of Fame trainer Woody Stephens before the 1988 Preakness following Forty Niner’s narrow defeat to Winning Colors two weeks earlier in the Kentucky Derby.

Carrying out his trainer’s instructions, Pat Day shot to the lead in the middle of the track, keeping Winning Colors outside in the seven path. As they approached the far turn, Day’s spent colt dropped out of contention finishing seventh, while Winning Colors held on to be a game third to Risen Star.

Years later, D. Wayne Lukas would state, *“If Woody didn’t let his emotions get the best of him, he probably would have won the race.”*

Now, jump to May 10, 2007 and this comment: *“Trust me, I’m gonna try everything I can to make sure there’s no Triple Crown winner in 2007! I don’t want to sound like sour grapes, but it is a little more bitter knowing if they hadn’t gotten that trip, I might have had a Derby winner.”*

Some sour grapes? Hell, there are enough sour grapes in those statements made by Hard Spun’s trainer Larry Jones to make an entire cask of Amontillado, and if his instructions to Mario Pino are to bury Street Sense along the Preakness rail, his horse may wind up like Woody’s did in 1988. Two other jockeys who might try to “bury” him on the rail are **EDGAR** Prado (CP West) and **ALAN** Garcia (Mint Slewlep)! My goodness, that makes Edgar Alan Bo – rel!

Folks, you don’t win races by riding another jockey’s horse. Hard Spun is a very good horse and was a serious threat to win the Derby, but he lost because Street Sense was simply the better horse on that day.

Perfect trip or not, Hard Spun offered absolutely no challenge when Street Sense surged along side of him down the stretch. If he had put up some sort of fight to the wire, I might support

the argument that it was the perfect trip that won the race for Street Sense, but the way it looked to me, he could have made a pit stop (like Jim Tafel, Jr's race car), and still have beaten Hard Spun on May 5th.

I believe the reason Hard Spun had no answer to Street Sense's move was due to that blistering workout on April 30 (:57.3). Was that the trainer's fault, jockey's fault, or horse's fault? I don't know. If Hard Spun had worked a few seconds slower, he may have conserved enough energy to have made it a closer finish at the very least.

Larry Jones and his jockey should let Hard Spun do the talking and run his race without worrying about where Calvin Borel and Street Sense are. If he is good enough he will win, if Street Sense is once again the better horse on that day, let's not have Jones offer us any more wine (whine)!

Now I'll get off my soapbox (wine/whine crate?), and review Hard Spun and his chances.

Talk about nice trips, Hard Spun was the speed of the speed in the Derby and was allowed to control the pace, which was honest and maybe just a tad swift. Still, horses who are bred for the Derby distance and can control the pace are very dangerous in the Derby, as opposed to bullets like Spanish Chestnut and Trippi who were fast, but short on stamina.

(If you'll permit me to jump back up on my wine/whine crate one more time, do you think that if Hard Spun had won the Derby, Carl Nafzger would be whining that Street Sense lost because the other jockeys let Mario Pino "steal" the race?) Even if he thought that, I seriously doubt that this classy professional would whine about it.

Having said all that, I have a great deal of respect for Hard Spun. His race in the Lane's End proved that he does not need the lead to win. He stalked Bullara and Starbase and then blew by them on the turn to pull away in the stretch and win impressively by a little over 3 lengths.

If he gets that kind of trip and makes that kind of move in the Preakness, it will be very interesting to see whether Street Sense can run him down.

As I implied previously, Pino has to ride his horse, not Borel's. If he focuses on trying to stop Street Sense instead of concentrating on the 1,000 pounds beneath him, it will cost him the race. In the Derby, Jones gave him instructions not to let Street Sense pass him on the rail, and he made sure that did not happen. So Street Sense simply got off the rail and went around him. Again, I was not impressed with the lack of a fight that Hard Spun put up. We know that Borel's colt is a Street fighter based on his performance in the Tampa Bay Derby and Blue Grass. In the former he won by a nose and in the latter he lost by a nose.

Hard Spun, on the other hand, had won 5 races, but he won them by anywhere from 3 ¼ lengths 8 ¾ lengths. In the two races that he lost, he was beaten by 3 lengths and 2 ¼ lengths, so he's really never had to eyeball a horse in deep stretch.

Can he win? Certainly he can. He has the talent and the pedigree. Whether he has heart is another matter. He hung like yesterday's laundry in the Southwest, (ok, Mr. Jones, I know, "he didn't like the track"), and while he continued on to be a solid 2nd in the Derby, he offered virtually no response when passed by Street Sense.



CURLIN – Bumpy Road

Both Street Sense, breaking from post 7, and Hard Spun, breaking from post 8 enjoyed perfect, albeit different trips. Street Sense, employing his preferred style, dropped back and then came roaring up the rail unimpeded. Hard Spun, employing his preferred style, vied for the lead early, took over after a quarter mile and raced unchallenged down the backstretch, leading by 3 lengths after a mile in 1:37.04. Perfect and preferred trips for both!

Curlin, the undefeated morning line favorite who prefers to stalk, or at least race mid pack, broke from post 2, was steadied during the first 1/8 mile, and got shuffled back to 13th. He was actually running 14th after 6 furlongs and further from the lead than he had ever been at that point in any of his previous races.

From there, he came running, closing to 8th after a mile and to 6th as they entered the stretch. He finished 3rd, eight lengths behind Street Sense, and five and 3/4 lengths behind Hard Spun.

Both Hard Spun and Street Sense actually gained ground on Curlin in the critical last 1/8 of the race.

Curlin's race in the Derby is very important. I don't usually do this, but it's important for you to understand the kind of trip this horse had compared with Street Sense and Hard Spun, so I want to quote Steve Haskin's comments as written on the website Bloodhorse.com:

"Curlin broke well and was in the clear, with no typical bumper car racing going on around him. It looked as if he would have the speed and the position to get up into contention in the first seven or eight. But when Sedgefield, who had broken from the rail, and Storm in May came together directly in front of him, jockey Robby Albarado had to steady ever so slightly, enough for the colt to hesitate and lose several lengths, dropping him well back in the pack.

He remained in traffic for most of the way, while racing in 13th or 14th. Leaving the half-mile pole, he was sandwiched between Zanjero on his inside and Sam P. on his outside. He was able to outrun those two and was beginning to launch his bid just as Street Sense was charging up the rail. This is where his fate was decided.

Curlin and Street Sense were on equal terms, both making up ground. While Street Sense was having a clean, ground-saving trip, Curlin was running up behind a wall of horses. There was one opening available to his inside, between Liquidity, on the rail, and a retreating Teuflesberg. Albarado shot for the hole, making a left-hand turn on Curlin. But no sooner had he done that when David Flores, on Liquidity, came off the rail, obviously afraid that Sedgefield, hugging the rail in front of him, was about to back up in his face.

So not only did Liquidity close up the hole Curlin was shooting for, he let Street Sense come charging through without the slightest hesitation. Albarado, meanwhile, yanked Curlin's head to the right and steered him back to the outside to start looking for another way through. By then Street Sense was gone, while Curlin still was bottled up in the pack.

Turning for home, the field finally fanned out, and Curlin came with his run, drifting out, despite right-handed whipping from Albarado. Curlin still had run lift in him, and he was able to pass Any Given Saturday, Nobiz Like Shobiz, and Sedgefield in the final furlong to get up for third, outfinishing Imawildandcrazyguy and Circular Quay."

Curlin is an enigma, and is the mystery horse in this race. Before the Derby, many were hailing him as a super horse – a horse with the ability of a Barbaro or Bernardini. Instead he performed more like Pulpit and Bellamy Road.

It wasn't Curlin's lack of ability that resulted in what was for him, a sub par performance. Rather it was his lack of bottom. (No I'm not comparing him to a few girls that I dated in college!)

What I mean is by lack of bottom is that he lacked enough stamina-building racing experience, something both Street Sense and Hard Spun had already attained. Curlin did not race as a 2 year-old, and had only three relatively easy races prior to the Derby.

He will be dangerous in the Preakness because now he has had a strong, challenging race at a mile and a quarter, has had dirt kicked in his face, and had to be tacked up in front of a large and boisterous crowd.

I think he made a nice (although not a winning) move during the Derby, but simply hit a brick wall in the last 1/8 mile – again due his lack of bottom.

It's also possible that one could use that tried and true excuse: "he just didn't like the track", although to their credit neither jockey Albarado nor trainer Asmussen used it.

Here's how Albarado described his ride down the bumpy road:

"He shuffled back and checked himself a few times. He really didn't level off. He'd never had that experience before to be behind like that. But turning for home, he came running."

I think that he will offer a much stronger challenge in the Preakness, and is capable of finishing ahead of Hard Spun, especially if the latter gets caught up in a speed duel with Flying First Class and Xchanger.

Can he beat Street Sense? I don't really think so, but I am more worried about him than I am about Hard Spun. With that demanding race in the Derby, coupled with his blistering work 5 days prior to the Derby, Hard Spun is a candidate to bounce a bit.



CIRCULAR QUAY – Road Work (Oscar's Bud Longshot)

This son of Derby winner Thunder Gulch had the best finish of the plethora of Pletchers in the Derby, closing from 19th to finish 6th. He finished just a neck behind the tiring Sedgefield, and a half-length in front of a fast closing Tiago. (By the way, did any of you notice Tiago galloping out ahead or everyone, including Street Sense after the finish?)

Coming into the Derby Circular Quay had never finished worse than 2nd (if you throw out the Risen star where he had to avoid a fallen jockey). He was the type of horse that really excited me. In fact, his finish ahead of Street Sense last fall in the Breeder's Futurity at Keeneland (he finished 2nd, a nose in front of Street Sense in the race won by Great Hunter), and his troubled 2nd to Street Sense in the BC Juvenile at Churchill almost convinced me to include him on my Derby short list. Yes Street Sense beat him by 10 lengths, but he beat 12 others including Great Hunter, Scat Daddy, Teuflesberg, and Stormello, despite being steadied and pinched back at the start. Adding to his allure was the fact that John Velazquez had his pick of 5 Pletcher mounts and this was the horse he selected. Mike Battaglia was impressed enough to set his morning line at only 8-1 for the Derby.

However, he had two major roadblocks that ultimately I could not get around, and I eliminated him. (1) He had never run in a race longer than 1 1/16 miles; and (2) he was coming into the Derby off an 8-week layoff.

Whether it was one or both of these factors, or whether it was his having to race wide while bumping with Stormello that cost him a better showing is anyone's guess, but there were 20 horses in this race and only 5 finished ahead of him. While he finished nowhere near the first two, he was beaten just a little over a length

for show. That accomplishment is only slightly tarnished by the fact that like Street Sense, he was a horse for the course with 2 wins and 1 place in 3 races at Churchill (and the second place finish was to Street Sense)!

It's also noteworthy that **the Beyer he received for finishing 6th (96) is higher than the winning Beyers for Xchanger in the Tesio (95) and Flying First Class in the Derby Trial (92)!**

Turning to pedigree, he is by Thunder Gulch, the Derby, Belmont and Travers winner, and just look at the stamina producing ancestors in his dam's first 4 generations: Danzig, Shadeed, Northern Dancer (twice), Exclusive Native, Nijinski, Alydar, Damascus, and Round Table. Distance will be no problem for this guy.

He comes into the Preakness as a relatively fresh horse. Even though he ran two weeks ago in the Derby, that gives him only 1 race in the 10 weeks preceding the Preakness. Plus now he has gained valuable experience in a race longer than 1 1/16 miles; a race in which he did not disgrace himself. I don't think he is a win bet, but if he has a clean trip and they go fast up front, he has a shot to hit the board at a square price.

If Hard Spun gets caught up in a speed duel, with Flying First Class and/or Xchanger, it will set it up like a banquet table for the closers, and it's not out of the question that you could have a trifecta of Street Sense, Curlin, and Circular Quay, or even Street Sense, Circular Quay and Curlin. He will be the 4th favorite and considering his breeding and experience, he may be the only true overlay. His morning line is 8-1.

On the negative side, he seems to be a Pletcher afterthought in the Preakness, and I generally do not like a horse going into a major stakes race as an afterthought. While you could say he used the Derby as a prep, that was never Pletcher's intention. So there are definitely some pot holes in his road. However, if he can complete the road work without trouble, it should pave the way to an on the board finish.

HOW THE RACE WILL BE RUN – Road Map

Xchanger from post 2 and Flying First Class from post 6 will break inside of Hard Spun and ensure a fast pace, probably somewhere in the :46 / :47 range for the first half mile. They will also ensure that Hard Spun will not have an unchallenged lead like he did in Derby. However, Pino won't be looking for the lead and will take Hard Spun back to maintain a stalking position about 2 lengths behind the dueling leaders, very similar to the tactics he employed in the Lane's End. As he did in that race, he will surge to the lead around the far turn and be in front by about 2 to 3 lengths entering the stretch.

Curlin, will break well from post 4, but will be taken to the rail and rated a length or two behind Hard Spun with Albarado watching Pino's every move. When Pino moves on Hard Spun, Albarado will do the same on Curlin, getting first run on the closers, Street Sense and Circular Quay.

The latter two will be the last car and the caboose on this Preakness Express. As the horses approach the far turn, they will both make their moves. Here's where it will get very interesting. Street Sense will get first run on Circular Quay and should be able to hit any holes first. Whether those holes will be along the rail or between horses a good question, because as stated earlier, Edgar and Alan will be looking to bury Bo along the rail.

The finish will depend on whether either one or both horses can get a clear run to the wire.

In predicting races, you have to assume that each horse will run his race and not get into trouble. I know that's not the way it usually works, but I have to make that assumption or I will become the poster child for the HAP program (Handicapper's Assistance Program – this is



similar to the Employee Assistance Program many of you may have at work.). Hey folks, there are times when I really need this program. Without it I'd be HAPLESS!

So assuming that all horses receive a clean trip, here's what I anticipate:

Street Sense and Circular Quay will be running fastest of all in the last 1/8 mile. Most likely Street Sense will get over to the rail from post 7 as quickly as he can after the start and continue there until the far turn, when he will come out around tiring horses. He may wait to move outside until he hits the stretch, but please note that this is a shorter stretch than Churchill.

Circular Quay breaking from post 3, will drop back to last patiently waiting on cruise control until he is asked to accelerate by Velazquez. He will probably have to go wide unless he gets lucky finding a seam between horses.

By the eighth pole, Hard Spun and Curlin should be battling in a "take no prisoners" mode, but the early pace and the intense stretch drive should be taking its toll on both just as the two closers are beginning to lengthen strides.

I expect that there will be 3 and possibly 4 horses within 2 lengths of each other at the wire. **Street Sense will win because I believe he will get first run on Circular Quay and will have saved more ground. I think that there is a good chance that Circular Quay will get up for the place, just nosing out Curlin. Hard Spun will be a very close 4th. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th horses could actually finish in any order – it will be that close!**

With all due respect to those distinguished young men that we began this Green Sheet with, I will now prove to you that it is not necessary to have a college education to be a winner. I offer this for your consideration:

While Calvin Borel won the \$2 million Kentucky Derby using only his **STREET SENSE, Robby Albarado could finish no better than 7th earlier on the card in the \$500,000 Woodford Reserve Turf Classic despite a close and collaborative partnership with **EINSTEIN!****

So in conclusion, all you really needed to do in order to pick the Derby winner was to employ the theory of relativity. In theory, because of his relatives (Street Cry – Bedazzle, by Dixieland Band), Street Sense figured to have the breeding and the class to win this race!

W=sc²
(Win = Street Cry, squared)

(His sire, Street Cry has **2** strains of Native Dancer **X** **2** strains of the great broodmare, Almahmoud!)

