

## OSCAR'S 2007 TRAVERS GREEN SHEET

### ***"SARATOGA'S GOT TALENT!"***

Got the Summer Doldrums? No folks, I don't mean the 3 year-colt by Street Cry who won the Colonial Turf Cup and the Whirlaway. You *wish* you had *that* Summer Doldrums!

I'm talking about the stagnation that always hits TV land during the summer months. Summer Television was no T V Lark this year!

However, there was one bright spot, a show called "America's Got Talent". It was a very entertaining show on NBC where people who thought that they had talent (some actually did), competed to win \$1 million. (Hey, that's the same purse as the Travers!) The contestants were rated by a panel of 3 judges shown below:



***David Hasslehoff***



***Sharon Osbourne***



***Piers Morgan***

Well Oscar wanted to do something similar to lift his horseracing friends out of their summer doldrums, and so I've rounded up three well-qualified judges to help me pick the talent who will win the \$1 million Travers Stakes on Saturday.

Let's meet them:



***David Hasslehoof***



***Sharon Exbourne***



***Beers Morgan***

***David Hasslehoof*** - "The Hoof", a 17-hand son of David Junior out of a Hasslefree mare is best known for starring on Bay Watch. The popular TV show unfortunately was cancelled after the producers received thousands of letters from Thoroughbreds of color claiming racehorse discrimination. Their complaint was why is there a Bay Watch and not a Chestnut Watch, a Roan Watch, a Brown Watch, a Black Watch, etc? The final straw was when they received a discrimination complaint from Pachen Beauty, one of only 31 registered white thoroughbreds. They had to agree that constituted true minority discrimination, and the show was immediately canceled! (They also received complaints that there was too much gratuitous sex what with all those Palomino fillies running around in full-cupped blinkers!)

***Sharon Exbourne*** – Her grandsire, Exbourne, won nearly \$1 million, and her dam, Sharon Brown, dropped none other than Holy Bull. I'd say that qualifies this mare to be one of our judges! Sharon has just completed filming an equine version of a movie classic. There is an interesting twist to this version, however, as she plays the part of Ozzie's wife in *The Wizard, Ozzie*. The rising star Any Given Black Sabbath portrays Ozzie, and there is an outstanding supporting cast including Judy's Red Shoes as Dorothy and the world's smallest horse, Thumbelina, as Toto. Also starring in this film are the stakes winners The Tin Man, Lion Heart, and Fred Astaire, as well as the \$16 million baby, The Green Monkey. End Sweep Productions

is a horse shoe-in to receive an Oscar nomination in the special effects category for designing a broom upon which the Wicked Witch of the Gone West actually appeared to be flying! This film may be a bit too intense for the youngsters, however, especially the part where the Wicked Witch of the Gone West turns one of the

Munchkins into a Krispy Kreme. The theme song, Somewhere Over the Rainbow, is sung beautifully by America's Got Talent finalist Julianne Irwin who actually performed that song during her competition.

**Beers Morgan** – By Milwaukee Brew out of Justine Morgan, Beers adds the stabilizing influence of some Morgan blood to a panel of Thoroughbreds who can be a little hot-blooded at times. Many of the contestants, several of whom were reduced to tears, found Beers to be the most critical of the three judges. Beer's reaction? *"Common guys, this isn't the fifth race on a Wednesday at Suffolk Downs, this is the Travers Stakes for a million dollars!"*



America's Got Talent was hosted by Jerry Springer.



Not to be outdone, I've spared no expense in hiring Geri Springer as our host.

He's by Theatrical's multiple graded stakes winning son Geri. On his bottom line, our host's second dam is Hopespringseternal, the dam of Miswaki. Geri Springer may have a few gray hairs, but there is still a spring in his step. You should see him dance! (Oops, that was another show!)

OK, let's introduce the contestants now. Feel free to chant: GERI, GERI, GERI, GERI, GERI...



### STREET SENSE

I'll keep the information on Street Sense brief because if you don't know who this guy is you should not be wasting your time reading this Green Sheet, you should be out on a golf course somewhere rooting for Proud Birdie! (Hey, what do you mean you *do* know who this guy is and reading this Green Sheet is still a waste of time?)

Street Sense will undoubtedly go to the post as one of the lowest priced favorites in the history of the Travers. His victory in the Jim Dandy, coupled with Curlin's losses in the Belmont and Haskell have vaulted him back to the position of the most talented 3 year-old male. While his victory in the Jim Dandy was somewhat workmanlike, you have to allow for the fact that he was coming off a layoff and using this race as a Travers prep. You can rest assured that Nafzger did not have all the screws tightened down for this one. (Now that I think about it, I'm certain that that I must be prepping for something because people have been telling me for years that I have a few screws loose!)

The other thing to take away from his Jim Dandy performance is that you may have noticed that although he was drawing away in the final 16<sup>th</sup>, Calvin Borel was keeping after him; trying to teach him that his job is not finished once he has passed all the horses. He needs to keep his focus until he is past the finish line.

This field is a notch or two below the best that he's faced. In fact, this year's Travers look more like a G3 than a G1 (except for the presence of Street Sense). Before you mortgage your house and go to the betting window to put your life savings on Street Sense, just remember that this is Saratoga, the same track where Onion made us cry when he defeated Secretariat, where Upset did just that in handing Man O' War his only defeat in his 21 race career, and where 100-1 Jim Dandy defeated the "sure thing" Gallant Fox. So anything can happen.

Still I think that there is a greater likelihood that the Dixie Chicks will be the entertainment at Jenna Bush's wedding or that Rosie O'Donnell will be Donald Trump's next Apprentice than there is of Street Sense losing this race, and those are the operant words, folks, *losing this race*. None of these horses are capable of beating Street Sense if he is even 90%; however, he is capable of losing it if he throttles down too quickly like he did in the Blue Grass and Preakness.

Nafzger states that he expects his colt to improve by "three to five lengths" in this race, and if he does that, it will make the Ranger's 30-3 drubbing of the Orioles look like a pitcher's duel!

The other thing to note regarding his chances to win is that with the possible exception of Neil Drysdale, there is no trainer better than Carl Nafzger in pointing a horse toward a particular race. His work on Tuesday certainly indicates that he is getting the "point". Only 10 horses have nailed the Derby / Travers double with the last being Thunder Gulch in 1995. Nafzger has zeroed in on the Derby, the Travers, and the Breeder's Cup Classic.

Just listen to this quote from Mr. Nafzger: *"If he is going to be Horse of the Year, he better win on Saturday and in the Breeders' Cup."*

In game 3 of the 1932 World Series Babe Ruth called his shot. According to the version told by Ruth in a 1945 interview, he took the first two strikes, holding up one finger after the first ("That's one") and two after the second ("That's two"). He then said he pointed toward the outfield fence, and then hit the next pitch into the stands.

Carl Nafzger has been pointing his star to the Derby / Travers / BC Classic since early this year. I don't know if he can hit one out of the park, but he sure has one hell of a fastball!



### SIGHTSEEING

Sightseeing should love the added distance of the Travers. He is a horse with a lot of potential who has yet to fully live up to it, winning only twice in eleven tries. (However, in two of those races he faced the monsters Street Sense and Any Given Saturday on days when they would have proved invincible against anyone.) He was all out to beat a very mediocre field in the Peter Pan, and while it was clear that this was just a prep for him, I was disappointed that he wasn't more impressive. He usually makes a big move around the far turn and it looks like he is going to blow past everyone down the lane. Then for some reason he seems to idle in neutral for a few steps in the stretch before kicking in again late. He did that in the Peter Pan, and also in the Jim Dandy. Although he won the former, he actually ran a better, albeit a losing race in the Jim Dandy, where he galloped out beyond both Street Sense and C P West after the finish. Of course we

know that Street Sense shuts down pretty quickly when his job is done. Unless Sightseeing really steps up big time, I don't see him passing Street Sense before the wire in this one, even with the additional distance. Street Sense has beaten better horses and he's already defeated Sightseeing. However, Shug's charge still has a solid shot to complete the bottom of what

would certainly be an exacta that would pay only slightly more than their combined ages. This is the horse that Nafzger has stated that he is most worried about, and he's probably right.



### C P WEST

Zito's C P West ran a winning race in the Jim Dandy. After lunging in the air at the start, he roared to the lead and then settled to stalk Flashstorm through very honest fractions, taking over the lead entering the stretch. That kind of move very often wins races, and would have won this one except for Street Sense. While the Derby winner was clearly the better horse, C P West showed a lot of courage battling with him for as long as he did and still being able to hold Sightseeing safe. If he doesn't bounce off that huge effort, he could certainly finish 2<sup>nd</sup> once again. Please note, however, that he was getting 8 pounds from Street Sense and 6 pounds from Sightseeing. All horses will carry 126 on Saturday.

### HELSINKI

Zito's other horse will have no trouble crossing the Finnish line first, but it's the Finish line that will give him a little more trouble. He finally found it in the Dwyer but it took him quite a while to cross it. Like Sightseeing, he is a closer, and has the breeding to get the distance, but he is more of grinder and that style will not win this race.

## LOOSE LEAF

This son of Notebook won the Lemon Drop Kid Stakes impressively, but the water gets much deeper here, both in terms of competition and distance. With Notebook as a sire and Carson City as a broodmare sire, this horse will be somewhat stamina challenged at a mile and a quarter, especially with his running style. A speed horse with some class can sometimes overcome his pedigree (i.e. Balto Star), if he can get loose on the lead, but you definitely want stamina breeding for a closer (i.e. Sightseeing). I doubt he will be a factor in this race.



## GRASSHOPPER

Ok, let's quell those rumors right away. Neil Howard did not have this guy stabled in a secret location in Nepal being trained by David Carradine! I have to admit that I would much rather be kicked full force by Bruce Lee than by receive a glancing blow from this up and coming son of Dixie Union. Talk about a kung

fu kick! (And while we're at it, wouldn't **Kung Fu Saichi** be a great name for a son of the 2000 Derby winner?)

On a much more serious note, I think someday you are going to hear a lot more from this horse. I'm just not sure that Grasshopper is prepared to jump this far at this time. He's had only 5 starts and he has hit the board all 5 times despite having more trouble lines than Lindsay Lohan. Just read the DRF comments: "hopped at the start, stumbled, broke in air, bobbed, in tight". (A couple of those are pretty funny when you think about it – "Grasshopper hopped at the start and broke in the air".)

## HOW THE RACE WILL BE RUN

If you take Street Sense out of the picture, this is a very competitive race. I absolutely don't expect any of these horses to beat him, but picking the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> finishers is indeed a handicapping challenge.

C P West will go to the lead from post 2 in a race that looks to be completely devoid of speed. Helsinki, For You Reppo, Loose Leaf and Sightseeing are all one run closers who need a very strong pace .

Street Sense can be placed just about anywhere although he seems to run his best races when he is running in mid pack or even a little further back. Borel will give him his customary rail trip. Although the other jockeys know this and would love to box him in, the fact is that they just don't have the mounts to do that. Calvin's one worry should be that C P West could actually get loose on a very relaxed lead and be difficult to run down. The pace in this race will resemble the Blue Grass, not one of Street Sense's better efforts. Was it was the all weather surface? Was it the extraordinarily slow pace? Whatever it was, he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> on class alone in that one.

So we have C P West who will probably go to the lead, Street Sense who could be anywhere, but most likely in his favorite position, along the rail and 7 or 8 lengths back, and Helsinki, Loose Leaf, For You Reppo, and Sightseeing who are all committed closers.

That leaves **Grasshopper, Oscar's Bud Longshot** – not to win, but to hit the board. He has not raced in a stake, much less won one, but he has been on the board in all 5 starts, winning 3. His two most impressive races were wins, both run at route distances (1 1/16 and 1 1/8 miles). In the first (his maiden win), he came from far back, while in the other (on July 30 at Saratoga), he stalked, pounced, and drew off with authority. That was only an allowance / optional claiming race, but he devoured a field of older horses like a swarm of locusts. I like the versatility that he's shown, and I love his trainer, Neil Howard who is having a sneakily good meet.

### **HOW TO BET THE TRAVERS**

Street Sense will win and pay less than a Starbuck's coffee. Hell, he'll pay less than a Seven-Eleven coffee! Even the trifectas will be very small. However, if you insist on some action, the trifecta is your best bet.

### **Play STREET SENSE in the WIN position over a BOX of:**

**C P WEST –** He may get loose on the lead and last for a piece. He was very courageous in his last race.

A repeat of that race gets him the place.

**GRASSHOPPER -** If he can handle the class jump, his running style should enable him to be 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**SIGHTSEEING –** His running style will not help him against this field, but he certainly has the breeding and the class and if C P West bounces and/or Grasshopper can't handle the class jump, he will be on the board.

In conclusion, I have to say that America's Got Talent was an outstanding show this summer and certainly kept me out of the Summer Doldrums. By the way fans, I never brag about my equine handicapping, but I have to take kudos for nailing a cold exacta in the America's Got Talent race by picking the ventriloquist Terry Fator over the singer Cas Haley. (I just couldn't find anywhere to bet it!)

And you know, come to think about it, Oscar's Saratoga's Got Talent's choice has a lot in common with America's Got Talent's winner. Both Terry Fator and Carl Nafzger are very similar. They are class acts, quiet, humble, modest, hard working, and above all, talented.

Oh yes, they have one more thing in common: they might be pulling all the right strings, but when its showtime, they let their animals do the talking for them!

### **Street Sense is going to have a lot to say on Saturday!**

