

# Jittery nerves derail Imperial Council

By David Grening

OZONE PARK, N.Y. - Imperial Council may have proven to be his own worst enemy in Saturday's Grade 1 Wood Memorial at Aqueduct, acting up terribly before the race, in part leading to his fifth-place finish that left him off the Kentucky Derby trail.

Imperial Council, second to I Want Revenge in the Gotham, was sent off the second choice in the Wood behind 1-2 shot I Want Revenge. Imperial Council arrived in the paddock Saturday with his nostrils flaring and proved difficult for trainer Shug McGaughey and his crew to saddle. The colt reared up twice and then fell down on his rear end, causing some in the paddock to gasp.

As far as the race itself went, Imperial Council stalked the pace of Lord Justice, took a slight lead in upper stretch, but faded to fifth, beaten nine lengths by I Want Revenge.

McGaughey said he's not sure exactly what set off Imperial Council, but he knew "when I saw him in the paddock I was going to have my hands full."

Imperial Council was tough to saddle in his debut at Saratoga, but McGaughey said the horse had been fine in his three starts leading up to the Wood.

"We walked him on the racetrack coming from the holding barn, he got all fired up," McGaughey said. "I don't know if it was walking him on the racetrack or the fact there were a lot of people standing around there. I don't think he ever got over it."

McGaughey said jockey Edgar Prado told him he was out of horse at the three-eighths pole.

McGaughey said Imperial Council came out of the race in good shape and that he would watch the horse train for a while before coming up with a game plan.

"It's not going to entail the Kentucky Derby," McGaughey said.

Speaking of the Derby, McGaughey said he believes I Want Revenge established himself as the horse to beat with his performance in the Wood, which included overcoming a troubled start and significant traffic in the stretch.

"I think they'll have him to beat in the Kentucky Derby," McGaughey said. "That horse, he never had clear sailing whatsoever."

He added that he was impressed with jockey Joe Talamo. "To be that young, to have that happen to him with a horse that short a price and for him to sit still and not panic - my hat's off to him," McGaughey said.

## **Carter rematch at Churchill possible**

Kodiak Kowboy finally got his Grade 1 victory in Saturday's Carter Handicap and now will be pointed to significant races run at seven furlongs, trainer Larry Jones said. The first of those spots will be the Grade2, \$250,000 Churchill Downs Stakes on Derby Day, where he could very well face Fabulous Strike, the horse he beat by a head in the Carter.

"We'll try to go find as many of those seven-furlong races as we can," Jones said Monday. "I think that's his very best distance. That's not to say we won't shoot for the Cigar Mile at the end of the season."

Jones said he watched the Carter from Oaklawn Park and said he was riding the horse even harder than his jockey, John Velazquez. Kodiak Kowboy got up in the final two strides.

"I was sure wishing he'd hurry up and hit him left-handed," Jones said when asked what he was thinking about in the stretch. "I was riding hard, I was sticking him left-handed. But it was a really good race."

Kodiak Kowboy was getting five pounds from Fabulous Strike, who was part of the early pace and squirted away in the stretch only to be run down late.

"You run that good and get beat, you're happy to have run good and disappointed to have gotten beat," trainer Todd Beattie said. "I was real proud how he ran."

Beattie said he's considering the Churchill Downs Handicap as well, pending a look at the weights.

"I don't see me traveling very far to give away weight again," he said. "We should get a weight shift there."

Both Kodiak Kowboy (\$1,035,558) and Fabulous Strike (\$1,029,412) earned enough money in the Carter to surpass the million-dollar mark in earnings.

## **Giant Moon to Brooklyn, but how?**

Trainer Richard Schosberg knows he would like to run Grade 3 Excelsior Stakes winner Giant Moon in the Grade 2 Brooklyn at Belmont Park on June 5, but where and when he runs beforehand is still a mystery.

"He came out of it in good order; my biggest problem is what do I do with him now," said Schosberg, who was lamenting the elimination of the Pimlico Special, a Grade 1 usually run in mid-May at Pimlico.

Pimlico will run the Grade 3, \$100,000 William Donald Schaefer on Preakness Day (May 16), or there is the \$150,000 Alysheba Stakes at Churchill Downs on May 1. There is also the likelihood of an overnight stakes at Belmont in early May that would serve as a prep for the Brooklyn.

Giant Moon, who dealt with severe foot issues for most of last year, is owned by Al Fried. Fried won the 1979 Excelsior with Special Tiger, a colt trained by Doc Schmitt and ridden by George Martens. Back then, the Excelsior was a Grade 2, \$100,000 race run at 1 1/4 miles.

\* Capt. Candyman Can, winner of the Grade 3 Bay Shore Stakes, shipped back to Churchill Downs on Monday and will most likely make his next start in the \$100,000 Matt Winn Stakes at that track on May 16, trainer Ian Wilkes said.

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