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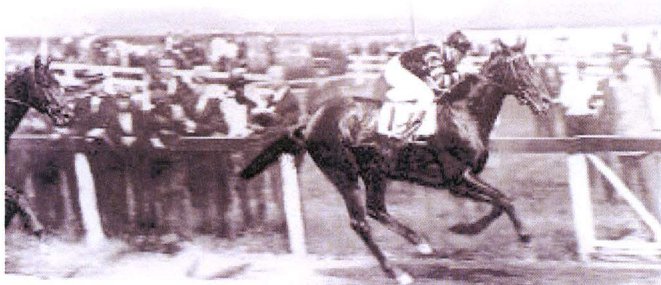
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History challenge: Aqueduct's Withers honors one of racing's early icons

By Ron Hale

Top left position photo:

Photo



This horse is one of two racing immortals to win the Withers, Preakness, and Belmont – but not the Kentucky Derby. Can you name them?

After a one-year hiatus, the Withers Stakes, an event older than the Kentucky Derby for 3-year-olds, will return to the New York racing calendar at Aqueduct on Saturday for the 132nd time.

First run in 1874, this traditional spring fixture will be contested in winter for the first time and will serve as a \$200,000 prep for the \$400,000 Gotham and \$1 million Wood Memorial.

The race is named for David Dunham Withers (1822-1892), one of the most respected horsemen of the 19th century.

In addition to being a founder of Monmouth Park and operator of Brookdale Farm in New Jersey, one of the biggest and most successful breeding establishments in the country in

that era, Withers was known as the best racing authority in America. His library of racing books and literature was without equal.

The fact that he was a New Jersey breeder and racetrack owner but had a major stakes named for him in New York was a testament to the respect he commanded from the racing community.

Test your knowledge of David Withers and the race named in his honor.

1. Alexander Cassatt, president of Monmouth Park, and David Withers, treasurer, were pillars of society and racing.

Yet, on Aug. 15, 1889, the two were arrested on a warrant sworn out by Thomas Cruchen of New York charging them with "running a disorderly house." They were released on \$200 bail. The community was outraged, but the two men welcomed the arrests as a cause celebre.

The real issue involved in the arrests is a familiar one because racing is facing essentially the same battle more than 120 years later. What was it?

2. Following his death, the sporting publication "Spirit of the Times" called David Withers, "Mentor of the American Turf."

Withers spent the Civil War years overseas studying racing and amassing books on rules and regulations of the sport.

Racing in America at that time had no national body to regulate it. Numerous horses raced with the same name, and rules varied from one track to another. Jockeys banned in one state could simply ride in another. Withers played a major role in the effort that resulted in this national body taking charge and organizing the sport in 1891. Name it.

3. Like the Belmont Stakes, the Withers Stakes was run at Jerome Park from its inception through 1889 and at Morris Park from 1890 to 1904, before moving to the new Belmont Park in 1905.

Among the winners of the Withers in the 1800's were three future Hall of Famers: Duke of Magenta (1878), Hanover (1887), and Domino (1894).

But the 19th-century horse whose name is most mentioned today is a chestnut colt with a white star who won the second running of the Withers in 1875. Name him.

4. With most trainers today demanding their horses have four to five weeks rest between races, it may seem hard to believe five of the first eight winners of the Triple Crown did not win the three races in succession. Each had another race before capturing the Belmont Stakes.

One ran in a 1 1/16-mile overnight race at Belmont Park. One ran in the 1 1/4-mile Jersey Stakes at Garden State Park. And three competed in the Withers Stakes. Name the three.

5. In each decade from the 1870's through the 1960's, at least one winner of the Withers Stakes went on to be enshrined in racing's Hall of Fame. Only the Belmont and Travers can match that record over that period. Two Hall of Famers whose names always appear on lists of the top 10 Thoroughbreds of the 20th century did not win the Kentucky Derby

but did capture the Preakness, Withers, and Belmont stakes. Name these two racing immortals.

Get the answers [HERE](#) [1].

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