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Hawthorne

Promising locals target Illinois Derby

By **MARCUS HERSH**

STICKNEY, III. - Nobody really knows yet which nationally recognized 3-year-olds might ship to Hawthorne for the April 9 Illinois Derby - the names Galloping Grocer and Sort It Out were floated this week - but the locals are getting ready for them.

Raving Rocket, winner of the Flag Officer Stakes here March 12, worked a steady five furlongs on Monday, and Win Me Over, the Flag Officer runner-up, had a five-furlong breeze Tuesday, a solid work that helped cement his status as an Illinois Derby hopeful.

Raving Rocket's win came in his first trip around two turns, and, blessed with natural speed, Raving Rocket is transitioning to a route-racing career. His five-furlong work Monday, timed in 1:06.80, came at the end of a strong two-mile gallop, trainer Larry Rivelli said.

"I'm training him like a marathoner," said Rivelli.

Win Me Over was among the first horses on the racetrack after Tuesday's mid-morning renovation break. Working alone with jockey Chris Emigh, Win Me Over had an uneventful breeze, clocked by his trainer, Brian Williamson, in 1:02 and change. That's actually a quick time, considering Hawthorne's recent track condition. So deep and tiring was the surface during Tuesday's card that a six-furlong race went in an incredible 1:17.33.

"He struggled with the track in the race the other day, but he still tried," Williamson said. "We'll have to wait and see who's coming [to the Illinois Derby], but that's kind of what we're looking at now."

Williamson trains another promising 3-year-old Illinois-bred, Dress for Success, who last Friday made an impressive sweeping turn move in his first route start, beating older horses by more than four lengths in an entry-level allowance race. Dress for Success might next start in an open second-level allowance, or, if that fails to fill, turn back to a sprint in an Illinois-bred stakes in late April.

Meadow Bride's win speaks volumes

Meadow Bride easily won the \$116,000 Pat Whitworth Debutante in her final start last year, but she appears to have come into her 3-year-old season an even better horse than she was at 2.

That, at least, was how things looked Sunday, when Meadow Bride cruised to 5 3/4-length win over a field of second-level Illinois-bred allowance horses in her first start this year.

"I think she's a pretty good filly," said trainer Richard Hazelton. "She won that race pretty well."

Hazelton pointed out that Meadow Bride didn't beat any superstars Sunday. That is true, but anytime an early season 3-year-old outshines a field of

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older horses, as Meadow Bride did, it is a performance worth noting.

Meadow Bride, bred and owned by the Asiel Stable, is being pointed toward the \$100,000-added Lady Hallie Stakes for Illinois-bred 3-year-old fillies here April 30.

There, she might face Cart's Turn, who scored a 2 1/2-length victory last Friday, when she faced open company in the \$42,000 Parts Unknown, an overnight stakes race.

"She came out of that race in good shape," said trainer Hector Magana. "We'll wait and see who's going to run in that race before we decide what to do with her. I don't like to waste starts."

Marley's Revenge loves the track

The young trainer Dale Bennett recently arrived back at Hawthorne after spending his first winter as a head trainer at Oaklawn Park, and Bennett has one of his best horses, Marley's Revenge, entered on Friday's 10-race card here.

Marley's Revenge is one of five horses in the featured first race, a fourth-level sprint allowance with a \$40,000-\$50,000 claiming option under which two of the entrants, Bold Caller and Stratematic, will start.

While Bold Caller looks outclassed, a case can be made for the other four.

Stratematic, who makes his first start of the season, won twice against horses of similar quality here last spring, while Andelegend ran perhaps his best race in years here two weeks ago, easily winning a \$25,000 claiming race in his first start for trainer Roger Brueggemann, already an eight-time winner this meet.

While Andelegend will need an even better performance to win again, his stablemate Lil Thomas Too need only repeat his most recent race to challenge Marley's Revenge. Lil Thomas Too, 7, has won 7 of 21 starts at Hawthorne, and he ran down the speedy Storm the Beach to score a narrow win in a third-level allowance here Feb. 27.

But Marley's Revenge also has a fondness for Hawthorne, with two wins and a second in four races at the track. Bennett brought him back from a winter break three weeks ago in a high-end Oaklawn allowance; Marley's Revenge was 20-1 in the race, and tired to fifth after setting a fast pace. This time, with an outside draw and better early speed than his opponents, Marley's Revenge looks like the one to beat.

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