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Arlington

Lassie winner is anyone's guess

By **MARCUS HERSH**

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, III. - Anyone who regularly has studied form and bet on horse races has engaged in handicapping-in-retrospect. It's the practice of going back through the Racing Form after a race (a miscalculation typically has occurred) to figure out what in the world happened.

Handicappers-in retrospect might look back at Sunday's Arlington-Washington Lassie and say there was an obvious winner. For those forced to look ahead to the race, however, the Lassie seems about as clear as mud.

A Grade 3 for 2-year-old fillies worth \$150,000 and contested at one mile around one turn, the Lassie drew a field of 11. Eight entrants have only won once, two have two wins, and Meadow Skippin is a maiden. One horse, Lizzy's Township, has won an open stakes race; six have made only one start in their lives. In race in which it's difficult to pick a favorite, try finding a winner.

Lizzy's Township would fill the role, if only she had run a little better last time out. Ironically, it was a stakes win that threw Lizzy's Township's form into question. She had closed for third from post 12 in her career debut, won by Party Planner, who had to miss the Lassie because of an illness in August. Second time out, in a July 23 Arlington maiden race, Lizzy's Township was sharp as a tack, winning by more than three lengths in a fast time. Trainer Jim DiVito sent her to Mountaineer Park for the Aug. 15 Mountaineer Juvenile Fillies; Lizzy's Township, favored at 2-5, won by only a neck.

"I thought she'd win easier," DiVito conceded.

But Lizzy's Township was racing close to the pace on an inside path. "All the other horses I saw win that day were on the outside fence," DiVito said. "My opinion, if you weren't on the outside of the racetrack, you weren't going to get anything."

The Lassie will be Lizzy's Township's first race beyond a sprint distance, but "she should be able to get a one-turn mile," DiVito said. "She can lay just off the pace. She's already shown she can do that."

D. Wayne Lukas has sent Ex Caelis in from Kentucky, and with Gary Stevens named to ride, she might attract heavy betting support. Ex Caelis won a Saratoga maiden race, and though she ran somewhat slowly, she beat two fillies that returned to win.

But if you're siding with a once-started maiden winner, why not Arlington-based Original Spin or Coolwind? Both won on Arlington Million Day, and though Original Spin ran faster, she might have too much speed to win against better horses going a mile at this point in her career. Coolwind,

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however, was thoroughly professional, surging to the lead in the final half-furlong after being hopelessly trapped for most of the stretch run.

"She was buried all the way around there," said trainer Greg Geier. "She's been professional from day one. You show her something one time, she knows what to do."

The others in the Lassie are: Lampoon, Gleaming Elegance, Jazzy Okie, Dyna's Gold Legend, American Diva, and More than Pretty.

Nicole's Dream too good for these

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Nicole's Dream is one of the best turf sprinters in the country. At age 5, she has won 15 grass races, and has gone 4 for 7 this season alone. Going five furlongs on firm turf, she has proven to be nearly unbeatable.

The problem is a lack of races befitting her talent. For example, Nicole's Dream is entered Sunday at Arlington in the Taylor's Special Stakes. The purse? A mere \$40,000.

But all that's about to change. Sometime in mid-November, Nicole's Dream will ship to Hong Kong for a \$1.2 million sprint on Dec. 4. No complaints from anyone about the size of that prize.

"We'll leave about two weeks before with her," said trainer Larry Rivelli.

Rivelli has avoided getting bogged down with specific travel plans and the like. "Whenever you look too far ahead, things go wrong," he said

Rivelli said he would scratch Nicole's Dream from Sunday's overnight stakes if the course comes up wet.

And Nicole's Dream could even make one more start before she goes to the Far East.

On Sunday, if the course is to her liking, expect Nicole's Dream to break on top - she almost always does - and head straight to the lead. It is rare that anyone catches her, and there is no obvious candidate to do so in the Taylor's Special.

Catalano: 64 wins . . . and counting

Midway through the Friday card, Wayne Catalano had equaled his own record for wins at an Arlington meet. Steamboat Express was nowhere in the fifth race Friday, but Stormy Seas had won the opener, giving Catalano 64 for the meet. With a slew of horses entered on closing weekend, Catalano is 1-9 to win at least one more.

"You know, it really doesn't mean a whole bunch," Catalano said. "But once

you get close, you want to break it. I had a very good summer - everything went good."

Catalano's main owner, Frank Calabrese, will waltz to the owners' title, while Shaun Bridgmohan will win the riding crown in his first season at Arlington.

Future bright for Therecomesatiger

It was only a weekday second-level allowance race against suspect competition, but it was not hard to imagine Therecomesatiger as a future star in the middle-distance turf division after watching him win the fifth race here Thursday.

Undefeated now after three starts, Therecomesatiger raced from off the pace for the first time Thursday. When jockey Mark Guidry found daylight in midstretch and gave Therecomesatiger his head, he went from third to a three-length lead in a split second.

The race was over, and Therecomesatiger geared down. But there is more to come from this 3-year-old.

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