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Fifteen Rounds formidable

By **MARCUS HERSH**

STICKNEY, III. - Home first in 12 of his 21 career starts, and a game victor last summer of the Arlington Sprint Handicap, Fifteen Rounds may be the most accomplished horse stabled right now at Hawthorne Race Course. With two fast workouts since recently shipping north for another season of racing, Fifteen Rounds may be ready to pick up in 2006 where he left off in 2005.

After spending the dead of winter cavorting at a Florida farm with a pair of stakes-class stablemates, Nkosi Reigns and High Expectations, Fifteen Rounds swings back into action in a high-end sprint allowance here Friday.

"Those three have a good time hanging time out in the paddock over the winter," trainer Christine Janks said. "They'll get to going pretty fast in a big circle out there, the fences are flying up to them, and you'll go, 'Oh my gosh,' but they stop quick."

There may be nothing stopping [Fifteen Rounds](#) on Friday, though this six-horse field packs a decent punch. Entered against him are former Illinois-bred champion sprinter Silver Bid, as well as the mercurial Raving Rocket, who makes his first start since last July.

Fifteen Rounds's final start last year was kind of a dud, a fifth in the Grade 3 Phoenix Breeders' Cup at Keeneland, but you can't really hold it against him. He was mired behind horses down on the fence for much of the race, and many horses found Keeneland's track surface difficult to handle last fall. Fifteen Rounds wasn't at his best in his first start after a winter break last season, but he looks tough to beat on Friday.

"I wasn't looking to go toe-to-toe with Fifteen Rounds right away," deadpanned Silver Bid's trainer, Joel Berndt.

The graying [Silver Bid](#) finally showed signs of age last year at 7, winning only once in eight races, but he finished the season with a close second in the statebred-restricted Lightning Jet Handicap, and according to Berndt does not take a great amount of work to ready for a comeback start.

"His weight stays about the same all the time," Berndt said. "He just gets a little whiter."

[Raving Rocket](#), a winner in 5 of 11 starts, has flashed brilliance on occasion, and beat the fast horse Semaphore Man in a stakes race last summer at Prairie Meadows. Raving Rocket went to the sidelines to have bone chips removed from his knees, but has looked good training, trainer Larry Rivelli said.

"We haven't turned him loose yet in the morning," Rivelli said. "I have to say

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I'm really happy with the way he's come back."

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