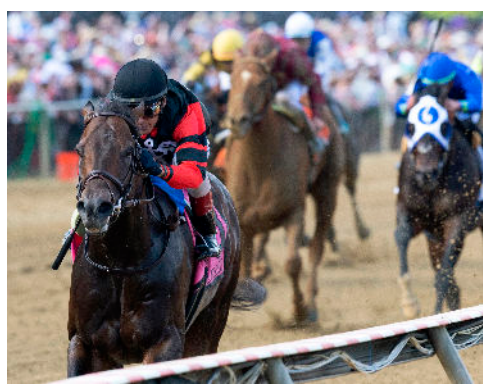




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# Straight No Chaser sets Maryland Sprint Stakes time record

Marcus Hersh May 20, 2023



BALTIMORE – Let’s not get carried away. This was a Grade 3 race with a \$100,000 purse. Elite Power, the best dirt sprinter in the world, was holed up at trainer Bill Mott’s barn in New York. What the heck, let’s get a little carried away: Straight No Chaser looked like one of the best sprinters in the country brilliantly winning the Maryland Sprint Stakes on Saturday at Pimlico.

Breaking like a rocket under John Velazquez, Straight No Chaser (\$5.20) got an early inside challenge from Prevalence, who mustered a strong show of speed racing for the first time in blinkers. Straight No Chaser glided away from Prevalence at the quarter pole and under no more than hand urging from Velazquez drew off

to an exceedingly impressive 7 1/2-length win. His six furlongs in 1:08.27 was the fastest time in the history of a race that was inaugurated in 1987 and it got him a 107 Beyer Speed Figure.

“Like I told my trainer, if they want to go fast, they’re going to have to go really, really fast,” Velazquez said. “As soon as the door opened, he was out first. I just let him do what he wants to do. He makes it feel so easy.”

The trainer is Dan Blacker, a native of England based in California who was running his first horse in Maryland. Straight No Chaser, a 4-year-old by Speightster out of Margarita Friday, by Johannesburg, was here two years ago, selling at Timonium’s 2-year-old in training auction of 2021, purchased May 17 of that year for \$110,000 by My Racerhorse.

Straight No Chaser posted a couple timed workouts in July 2021, breezed twice more in February 2022, but didn’t make the races until last July 24 at Del Mar.

“He was always kind of high energy,” Blacker said. “He came from the 2-year-old sales, where they jazz them up a little bit, and when we first started off, he was always kind of tough to gallop. He wanted to go one pace, flat-out. My assistant who gallops him every day does such a great job; he got him to settle. The last eight months he’s improved a lot mentally. He’s gotten much more mature, much more straightforward to be around.”

Straight No Chaser debuted on turf only because he was ready to run and no dirt race was available. He won first out, threw a clunker back on grass his second start, but since has been on an upward trajectory. A seventh in the Grade 1 Malibu was decent and came over a seven-furlong trip perhaps farther than ideal for the colt. He was a better third going six furlongs in the



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Grade 3 Palos Verdes, after which Blacker sent Straight No Chaser to Oaklawn, where he hit a peak April 1 crushing a field of allowance and high-claiming rivals.

“I thought if he just runs the race he did last time, he’ll be tough,” Blacker said.

Straight No Chaser ran that race and more, clicking off splits 22.44 and 44.66, a robust pace, while seeming to expend little effort.

“The blinkers helped him,” trainer Brendan Walsh said of runner-up Prevalence. “He ran huge. The horse that beat him is a freak.”

Prevalence held second by a nose over late-running Nakatomi, a legitimate graded-stakes class sprinter who provides a useful barometer for Straight No Chaser’s performance.

Straight No Chaser was bred in Kentucky by John Eaton and Stan Laymon. He flies back to California on Tuesday, Blacker and My Racehorse are yet to plot out the rest of his campaign. They should aim high.

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