

New York-Breds at the Races: April 26 to May 2

By Bill Heller

Marriedtothemusic, Thanks to Velasquez, Wins the Affirmed Success Stakes

In an incredible display of athleticism and horsemanship, veteran jockey Cornelio Velasquez regained the irons he had lost at the start and rallied Dutchess Views Farm's heavily favored **Marriedtothemusic** to a head victory over **Night Maneuver** in the third running of the \$100,000 Affirmed Success Stakes Friday at Belmont Park. **Weekend Hideaway** was just a head behind Night Maneuver in third after Marriedtothemusic won the six-furlong stakes for New York-breds in a final time of 1:10.54.

Marriedtothemusic, who won an open allowance race by nearly five lengths at 4-5 odds in his previous start, was the 3-5 favorite in the field of six in the stakes named for Albert Fried, Jr.'s brilliant homebred New York-bred Affirmed Success. Night Maneuver and his entry-mate, **Be Bullish**, went off at odds of 8-5.

The start could not have been worse for Marriedtothemusic, who jumped up as the gate opened. That caused Velasquez to lose his irons, which may have caused the bettors who pounded Marriedtothemusic to lose their lunch. Marriedtothemusic almost always races on the lead or close to it.

But Velasquez got his feet back in the irons and he never panicked, getting Marriedtothemusic back in the race, though last, after Night Maneuver and 37-1 longshot **Half Nelson** battled on the lead through a :23.23 first quarter. "He jumped at the start, and I lost my stirrup," Velasquez said. "I had no choice but to come from behind horses."

Heading into the far turn, Marriedtothemusic began a strong, wide rally as Night Maneuver began to put Half Nelson away. Weekend Hideaway, sent off at 7-1 odds under Joe Bravo, also gained ground as the field hit the half in: 46.18. Marriedtothemusic reached even terms with Night Maneuver at the sixteenth-pole and Weekend Hideaway, who split the tiring Half Nelson and Night Maneuver, was right there on Night Maneuver's inside.

At the wire, Marriedtothemusic pushed a head in front to win his first stakes in his third try. He's now won two straight and six of his last nine races with three seconds for trainer Linda Rice, who became Marriedtothemusic's trainer following the death of Dominic Galluscio. "Dominic was a good friend of mine," Rice said. "As far as I'm concerned, he's still running for Dominic."

Marriedtothemusic is a four-year-old colt by Disco Rico out of Significant Other by Not For Love, and has now earned more than \$300,000 in just 11 starts. He'll never have another victory like Thursday's. Rice said, "It's very rare for a horse to win after the trouble he had at the start."