

SARATOGA

Tape not an issue for Wise Dan

By Mike Welsch

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — The colorful strips of tape Wise Dan wore on his hindquarters during training hours Tuesday and Wednesday may have looked alarming but were no cause for concern to the man they would matter to most, the two-time reigning Horse of the Year's trainer, Charlie LoPresti.

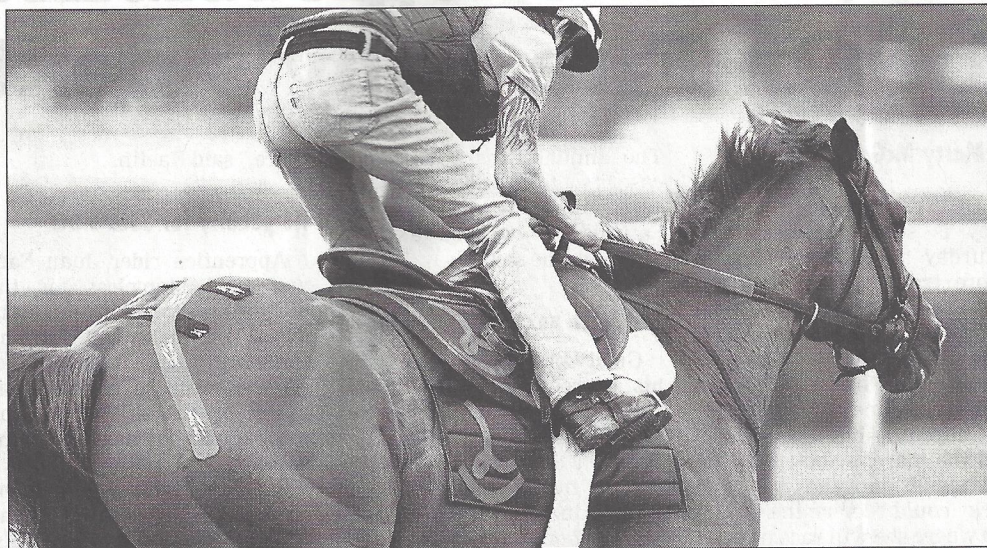
"He has a little soreness in his sacrum, and all the tape does is hold the muscle to keep the sacrum from shifting out," LoPresti said. "It's not a magnet. It's not medicated. It's basically the equine brand of Kinesio tape that human athletes have been using more and more lately. The therapists call it preventive maintenance."

Wise Dan did look a little stiff when he came out to gallop Monday. But he's given exercise rider Damien Rock all he could handle the last two mornings, galloping at almost a two-minute clip Wednesday while adorned in a criss-cross pattern of black and red tape.

"He gets a little sore because he's long-backed," said LoPresti. "He was a little stiff on Monday because he was coming off a walk day after having worked last Friday. The equine therapists put the tape on him at night and advised it would really be good if he could train in it. I really didn't want to do that because I was afraid people would start thinking there was something wrong with him, which there's not. And the girls said, 'What do you care?' Now I'm starting to think, 'What the heck is this tape deal? Have you seen that son of a gun train the last two days?'"

LoPresti said Wise Dan will work over the Oklahoma training track again Friday, as scheduled, after which he believes he'll have a better handle on whether he can make the Grade 2 Fourstardave Handicap here Aug. 9. Wise Dan has won the Fourstardave in each of the last two summers.

"I'd like to try to make the



BARBARA D. LIVINGSTON

Wise Dan, under exercise rider Damien Rock, trains with tape Wednesday at Saratoga.

Fourstardave if I can, but I really don't want to run him with 129 or 130 pounds or if I have to give 10 pounds or more to everybody coming off colic surgery just a couple of months ago," LoPresti said. "I could always wait for the Bernard Baruch or take him up to Woodbine for the Woodbine Mile."

Prayer for Relief targets Whitney

The well-traveled Prayer for Relief, who finished third in the Grade 2 Suburban Handicap when taking his game to New York for the first time on Belmont Stakes Day, will take on an even tougher assignment when wheeling back in the Grade 1 Whitney Handicap here Aug. 2.

Prayer for Relief, who banked the bulk of his \$1.7 million in earnings as a 3-year-old with Grade 2 victories in the West Virginia Derby and Super Derby, was transferred to trainer Dale Romans's barn early this spring. He got his first feel for the local strip Wednesday, breezing a half-mile in 48.28 seconds and galloping out five furlongs in 1:01.29.

"It was nothing more than an easy maintenance work just to let him get a feel for the racetrack," said Romans. "He's

an old professional. He doesn't need a lot. Just keep him happy. Obviously, it's going to be a very strong field, but a Grade 1 for a million and a half dollars, it's always going to be strong. He's a classy-enough horse who on his best day can run with the best. You just have to give him a chance."

On Sunday, Romans will be at Monmouth Park to run Medal Count in the Grade 1 Haskell Invitational. He also is eyeing the Fourstardave with his Grade 1-winning turf specialist Silver Max, who launched his 2014 campaign with a popular wire-to-wire victory June 28 in Churchill Downs's Grade 2 Firecracker Handicap.

Zito starts Spot in Curlin

Trainer Nick Zito got the meet off to a good start Monday, saddling back-to-back winners Another Incident and Tony B. He's hoping his good fortune will continue here Friday, when he sends out his Grade 2 winner Spot in the wide-open Curlin Stakes.

Spot, the winner of Gulfstream Park's Swale Stakes going seven furlongs in March, exits a fourth-place finish behind the red-hot Kid Cruz in the Grade 3 Dwyer.

"He had a tough trip in the

Dwyer. It is hard to believe in a small field those things happen," Zito said. "If we'd have just stayed and followed Kid Cruz, things might have been a little different. I'm just happy we have another opportunity. We noticed in his training it looked like this horse wanted to go long, especially the way he gallops out at the end of his works. So, he has it in him to go the distance, and that was a good barometer when he went a mile and one-sixteenth in the Dwyer. Like everybody else, I wish it was four, five weeks out, but I have to take it while I can."

Taketheodds has lung infection

Taketheodds, who finished next to last in Sunday's Grade 1 Coaching Club American Oaks, came out of the race with a lung infection, according to trainer Ian Wilkes.

An endoscopic examination revealed mucus in her lungs, "four on a scale of five," said Wilkes.

"I need to get that cleaned up," Wilkes said. "I was really shocked with how she ran. I thought she'd run better than that."

**— additional reporting
by Dave Grening**