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A look at the undercard on Indiana Derby Night at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

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Photo courtesy of Indiana Grand



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Friday, July 14, 2017) — Big World's rivals in Saturday night's \$100,000 Mari Hulman George at Indiana Grand probably wish the filly would go back home. Like to her native Louisiana.

Instead, Maggi Moss' 4-year-old filly is a rare recent Grade 1 winner to show up so soon afterward in a \$100,000 listed stakes, having captured Churchill Downs' La Troienne on the Kentucky Oaks undercard two races back. In between, Big World was fourth in the Grade 2 Fleur De Lis, whose winner (the classy Forever Unbridled) received an entry fees-paid berth in the Breeders' Cup Distaff at Del Mar.

Big World is the 2-1 favorite in the field of nine fillies and mares, which include Brooklynsway, winner of last year's Mari Hulman George by eight lengths but then was off for a year, returning to finish last in last week's Iowa Distaff.

"She certainly has some distance limitations, and that probably has to do with her race going a mile and an eighth," trainer Tom Amoss said of Big World's Fleur De Lis. "We come into this race looking to get back on track. We feel like we can in this spot. Maggi and I were weighing our options. It's got a great purse. We're running over a track that we know is safe. So there are a lot of positives.

"It's a tough race to figure how it's going to unfold on paper. I do see some speed in the race. Obviously our tactical speed will come into play. But we'll leave it in Ricardo Santana's hands where he wants to position her."

Speaking of the rider, Amoss stresses that the decision to run was made too late to get a commitment from Big World's regular rider, Florent Geroux, who will ride Tiger Moth for Brad Cox in the 1 1/16-mile race.

Big World has won seven of 12 starts, with four thirds and the fourth in the Fleur De Lis. She isn't like some horses who have Kentucky breeding and are sired by a Kentucky stallion but just happen to be born in another state. Big World is by the Louisiana stallion Custom for Carlos, though that stud being a son of the prominent Kentucky stallion More Than Ready certainly doesn't hurt her. Big World last fall and winter feasted on Louisiana-bred company. But she started out with expectations of being a top-class horse, winning her debut at Saratoga and then taking Aqueduct's Grade 3 Tempted Stakes at age 2 before being sidelined for 11 months.

"Tony was able to show that this is a very, very nice filly," Amoss said of Big World's first trainer, Tony Dutrow. "We just really picked up where Tony left off."

Very few Louisiana-born horses even run in Grade 1 races, with Big World joining Happy Ticket and Free Spirit's Joy among even fewer to win a Grade 1, those rated the best races historically in North America.

"Any time you have a filly or a mare and see an opportunity to get graded 'black type' (for the sales catalogue), you've got to start thinking about the residual value of these horses when their racing career is over and how that helps," Amoss said of tackling the La Troienne. "As far as the Grade 1, a lot of it was how she was training, which was very well. Her confidence level, and she was coming off a pretty good winning streak, and we felt like if you're going to take a chance, now is the time."

Amoss, perennially among Indiana Grand's leading trainers, also dropped Mo Tom into the \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial at a mile and 70 yards. Mo Tom seeks to end a five-race losing streak since taking last year's Ohio Derby. During that skein, his best finish was second in a Churchill Downs at a one-turn mile in the slop.

"I wish there was more speed in this race, to set it up for a closer like Mo Tom," Amoss said. "We're left with what we have. That's not going to change what we're doing. Tom has had a funny year. If you'd asked me about his 4-year-old career before it started, I'd have told you it would be his best year. He's bigger, he's stronger, he's trained well. He's done all the things that I thought would make the year his best. Don't forget that he's a May foal, so during his 3-year-old campaign, he really was catching up a lot.

"His first start was what he needed, and we knew that. But after that, we thought he'd be right on track. He wasn't in the New Orleans Handicap. He ran a very, very good race Derby week in the one-turn mile against a slow pace; he was the only horse who made up ground. I really thought his next start, against Gun Runner in the Stephen Foster, would be a significant one for him. Turning out the backside, he clipped heels with another horse. Corey waited probably another quarter-mile to make sure he was OK alright before he let him run (finishing seventh). It's been a frustrating year for him."

Amoss is using the Schaefer as reset, saying, "I'm waiting for that breakthrough race that justifies what I'm thinking."

Majestic Quality among favorites in Indiana Oaks

Doug O'Neill has the favorite in both the \$500,000 Indiana Derby (8-5 Irap) and \$200,000 Indiana Oaks (7-5 Mopotism). But the 3-1 second choice in the Oaks also is a California-based filly in the Keith Desormeaux-trained Majestic Quality, who in her last start was a very close fourth — placed third upon a disqualification — in Santa Anita's Grade 2 Summertime Oaks in which Mopotism was second by a head.

"I think she has a ton of talent; she's run against some pretty good horses," said Julie Clark, the Desormeaux assistant trainer at Indiana Grand with Majestic Quality. "She just broke her maiden two races back, which hopefully gives her some confidence. She's a hard-tryer, a nice big filly. I think she belongs in this group. Hopefully we can prove that right."

California has a bumper crop of 3-year-old fillies that includes Kentucky Oaks winner Abel Tasman. Beyond that stiff competition, Clark said, "It's hard out there, that speed-favoring (track). She's more of a closer and she ships all right. So we'll move around a little bit and see if we can't find a good spot for her."

Majestic Quality flew Thursday from California to Louisville, from where the filly vanned up to Indiana Grand. That gave her one day to train at the track, with well-known Midwest exercise rider Bryan Beccia aboard. Beccia, among other things, was the exercise rider for 2001 Kentucky Derby winner Monarchos.

"She can be a little bit strong, but Bryan got along with her great," Clark said. "So she galloped nice in spite of this humidity, which she's not used to, either. But she's on her toes. He does a great job. She relaxed with him, so that was nice."

Stonetacular, the 7-2 third choice, makes her first stakes appearance in the Indiana Oaks for Churchill Downs-based trainer Neil Howard and owner Stoneway Farm. After winning an allowance race, Stonetacular was most recently third in another allowance race against older fillies.

"I think she learned a lot coming out of that race," said Terri Burch, Stoneway's racing manager. "Her wins (both by four lengths) were so easy for her, and when she turned for home and had such a lead, I think she was goofing off and lost concentrating on having to run to the wire. Those older fillies zipped on by her. I think that caught her by surprise. I hope she learned a good lesson. We're pretty excited about getting her to stakes company. Because we've taken our time with her and let her develop in her own time."

Twenty in One makes first start since 2016 at Indiana Grand

Twenty in One was claimed for \$30,000 1 1/2 years ago by trainer Mike Tomlinson for owners Dianna and Mark Farrar's Diamond F. Racing. She went on to win three nice allowances and finish fourth in two stakes last year, but could enhance her value with a top-three finish in the \$100,000 Mari Hulman George. It's a big assignment, as it's the 6-year-old mare's first start in 11 months, since winning an allowance race at Indiana Grand.

But it's worth the gamble. Since Twenty in One was claimed, her mom (Twenty One A.C.) has produced No Mo Dough, a stakes-winner who has won three of four starts. Not far back in their female family is \$1.5 million-earner and Grade 1 winner Wekiva Springs.

"We had no idea of the pedigree; we were just claiming her to race at the time," Tomlinson said at Churchill Downs. "This filly started training really forward, and we were pleased. She's very sound and after a race or two, it looked like we sure might have a better horse than a \$30,000 claimer.

"She ran hard for us last year. She came up just a touch sore in the suspensory (ligament), so we gave her the winter off. Hopefully if we can get a little black type on her, she'll do real well at the sales this fall or winter. If we can get black type, it triples her value. Because she's got a very live family right now, being a half-sister to No Mo Dough, who is pointing toward some big races at Saratoga."

Of Saturday's race, Tomlinson said, "I'm looking for her to come running late and pick up the pieces."

The 15th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Saturday, Oct. 28. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. Thursday racing will be held July 6 – Aug. 24 at 2:05 p.m. EST.

About Indiana Grand Racing & Casino: Indiana Grand Racing & Casino holds multiple awards from industry publications for customer service, entertainment, gaming and dining. Located in Shelbyville, Ind., Indiana Grand features 2,200 of the latest slots and electronic table games in addition to a one-mile dirt race course and a seven-eighths mile turf course offering live Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing each year. Simulcast wagering is also offered year-round at Winner's Circle Brewpub & OTB located on the casino floor as well as an off-track betting facility located in Clarksville, Ind. For more information, please visit www.IndianaGrand.com.

