



Lookin At Lee headed to Schaefer Memorial at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Jennie Rees, Eclipse Award winning freelance racing writer
Photos by Coady Photography

SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; - July 10, 2018 - The connections of Lookin At Lee are hoping the 4-year-old colt can carry over his First Saturday in May form to the second Saturday in July in the \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial on Indiana Grand's showcase Indiana Derby card.

Lookin At Lee was a fast-flying second in last year's Kentucky Derby won by Always Dreaming. This past Derby Day, Lee won an allowance race at Churchill Downs, his first victory since taking the Ellis Park Juvenile at age 2.

In between, however, he's been steady and consistent enough to collect checks contributing to a \$1.13 million bank account. That includes second in Keeneland's Grade 1 Breeders' Futurity, third in the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby and fourth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and Preakness Stakes. So off his allowance victory May 5, which made Hall of Famer Steve Asmussen only the second trainer to win 8,000 races, there was optimism that Lookin At Lee would start turning those on-the-board finishes into winner's circle appearances.

Instead he was an uncharacteristically lethargic eighth in Churchill Downs' Grade 1 Stephen Foster Handicap. The Schaefer is a reset.

"He didn't get away at all; didn't run at all. Bad race," Asmussen said at Churchill Downs, where Lookin At Lee is stabled. "He's trained fine since. Hopefully we can get a good run out of him. The mile and 70 yards is probably a little short for him. But the timing is good. It's impossible to gauge his last race. Too bad to be true. It was freakishly humid that night. The day wasn't formful for anybody."

Lookin At Lee was the first stakes horse — let alone stakes winner — for Tulsa, Okla., attorney Levinson, his sons Andy and Michael and Tulsa-area prosecutor Don Nelson.

"It's been unbelievable," Levinson said by phone. "He's given us a good run. I still think he's got a lot left in him. I think he's getting to be stronger. He just didn't run very well in the Foster. You hate to make excuses, but I think the heat just got him. Ricardo Santana said he just didn't want to run, and that's unusual. The two or three bad races we've had have all been really, really hot. Hopefully it will be a little cooler, and we'll be able to run better."

"But he's got a lot of heart. You just hope he's in a position to win and not too far behind. The race we won at Churchill before last, we almost got on the lead. That was the first time. The problem with having a horse that comes from behind, you not only have to get a good spot, you have to have a lane to run in and just have a lot of luck. That's why it's hard to come-from-behinders to win on a consistent basis. Because if you don't get a hole, you're not going to win. We'd like to have a longer race, but Steve thought that was spot for him. We'll just hope he runs well and can win another one, I hope, and get back on the road again to winning."

Asmussen also is running Title Ready, fourth in the Ohio Derby by a total of 1 1/2 lengths in his last start, in the \$500,000, Grade 3 Indiana Derby and Harbor Lights in the \$200,000, Grade 3 Indiana Oaks.

It was Title Ready's third fourth in a stakes, along with a second in Pimlico's restricted Sir Barton for horses who haven't won a stakes race. Harbor Lights, a daughter of 2011 Preakness winner and Indiana Derby runner-up Shackleford, has a win in an entry-level allowance race at Oaklawn Park, after which she was sixth in that track's Grade 3 Fantasy. Asmussen is hoping that the three-month layoff since works in their favor.

"Harbor Lights runs well fresh," he said. "We're trying to run her off a layoff because she won first-time out and she won first time back this year. Obviously she wants to be as fresh as possible to fire."

Ricardo Santana rides all three Asmussen horses.

G1 winner Seeking the Soul returns in Schaefer

Seeking the Soul, who runs in Saturday evening's \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial, is from the same female family as Title Ready, with Title Ready's mom (the unraced Title Seeker) having produced the dam (Seeking the Title) of Seeking the Soul. Both Seeking the Soul and Title Ready are owned by breeder Charles Fipke, who obviously enjoys creating horse names that utilize the parents' names. Title Seeker, purchased at auction by Fipke for \$1.7 million in 2006, herself is a daughter of the great racehorse and broodmare Personal Ensign.

Seeking the Soul is a son of Fipke's stallion Perfect Soul. Seeking the Soul won Churchill Downs' Grade 1 Clark Handicap last fall, then finished fifth in the \$16 million Pegasus World Cup in his last start, Jan. 27. But the \$850,000 payday pushed his earnings into seven figures at \$1.4 million.

Seeking the Soul tuned up for the Schaefer by working five-eighths of a mile in a minute flat last Saturday at Churchill.

"He's doing real well," said trainer Dallas Stewart, who trained 2017 female handicap champion and Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Forever Unbridled for Fipke (not to be confused with the Fipke-owned, Stewart-trained Grade 1 winner Unbridled Forever). "We gave him some time. He had a good year, obviously a strong campaign, including when he broke the track record at Keeneland. He came back and won a Grade 1 and went on and ran in the Pegasus. We just jogged him a lot this winter. Kind of what we did with Forever Unbridled. We've just been training him. He loves to train, so he hasn't missed a day. I mean, he's a real nice horse. He worked in a minute, galloped out in 1:13."

After Forever Unbridled finished third in the 2016 Breeders' Cup Distaff, Stewart didn't run her again until Churchill's Grade 2 Fleur de Lis in mid-June of last year. She won that, then gutted out a narrow victory over champion Songbird in Saratoga's Personal Ensign, then trained up to the Distaff, this time coming away with the victory. She made her final start with a fifth in the \$10 million Dubai World Cup.

Brian Hernandez Jr. will ride Seeking the Soul in the Schaefer. Hernandez was aboard the horse in the nine-length romp last October in a 1 1/16-mile allowance race that Seeking the Soul blistered in 1:41.36 for the Keeneland record.

Stewart also is considering running Valene Farms' Givemeaminit in the \$500,000, Grade 3 Indiana Derby, with the trainer still trying to decide if the colt's forte is racing around one turn or running two turns but at shorter distances such as the Indiana Derby's 1 1/16 miles.

"That's what I'm trying to figure out," Stewart said Tuesday at Churchill Downs. "Because they've got the Amsterdam at 6 1/2 furlongs at Saratoga."

Givemeaminit was fourth in the Louisiana Derby and third in Churchill's Grade 3 Pat Day Mile won by Indiana Derby contender Funny Duck. Stewart put him back sprinting in the Grade 2, \$400,000 Woody Stephens at seven-eighths of a mile on New York's Belmont Stakes undercard.

That day, the Louisiana-bred son of Star Guitar brushed the gate and spotted the field double-digit lengths before finishing sixth out of 11 horses, coming in 6 3/4 lengths behind victorious Still Having Fun.

Stewart said that last start doesn't give a clear read.

"He had troubles in the gate and it turned out bad," he said. "He was 18 lengths out of it and got beat four."

Entries will be taken Wednesday morning for Saturday's races.

Notes: Trainer Tom Amoss said in a text that Grade 2 Fair Grounds Oaks winner Chocolate Martini, his \$25,000 claim who most recently was third in Santa Anita's Grade 2 Summertime Oaks, will be entered and is 50-50 to run in the Indiana Oaks. Amoss said Lone Sailor, second by a nose in the Ohio Derby and earlier second in the Louisiana Derby, will not run in the Indiana Derby.

Promise of Spring returns to stakes company in the \$100,000 Mari Hulman George at 1 1/16 miles.

"She's a hard-trying filly," said trainer Steve Margolis. "She ran two big thirds in optional 'three other than' (allowance) races here, maybe the one time didn't get a great trip and went wide at a mile. She was stakes-placed in that race they run the day after Christmas at the Fair Grounds. Then we went over for the Houston Ladies Classic and it was just too tough for her. She came back and won a 'two other than,' then was fifth in Keeneland's Doubledogdare. We're going to give her a break after this. She's run hard."

The 16th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. 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 19 and Sept. 6 at 2:05 p.m. EST.

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