

## OPTIMUS PRIME TOPS FERGUSON NOMINEES

Rosbrian Farm's Optimus Prime, a Grade 1 winner in his first U.S. start, has been nominated to the \$75,000 David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2), the featured hurdle race of the 35th annual International Gold Cup on Saturday, Oct. 27.

The 2 1/8-mile Ferguson Memorial attracted a strong list of nominees and will be the co-feature with the \$75,000 International Gold Cup over timber fences. First post time is noon at Great Meadow Race Course in The Plains, Va. Purses for the program will total almost \$400,000, and pari-mutuel wagering will be available on all races.

Trainer Ricky Hendriks took over the training of Optimus Prime in May and made every day count prior to Saratoga Race Course's New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1) on Aug. 23. The French-bred eight-year-old won Saratoga's signature jump race by 1 1/4 lengths and subsequently finished third to stablemate Zanjabeel in Belmont Park's Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1) on Sept. 20.

Hendriks, who was tied with Jack Fisher atop the trainer rankings in mid-October, also will saddle Rosbrian's The Game Changer, who finished eighth in the New York Turf Writers for Irish trainer Gordon Elliott.

Mark W. Buyck's Show Court, winner of Saratoga's A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) on July 30, was nominated by trainer Arch Kingsley Jr. Fourth in the New York Turf Writers, Show Court fell in the Lonesome Glory.

Fisher nominated Edith Dixon's homebred Schoodic and Woodslane Farm's Overwhelming to the Ferguson. Talented by erratic, Schoodic has had success on the Great Meadow course. He won the 2017 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) and was fourth in the Ferguson. Overwhelming most recently finished fifth in the New York Turf Writers.

Prominent owner Irv Naylor nominated Sempre Medici and Bobabout to the Ferguson. Sempre Medici had two fifth-place finishes in the spring, in the Semmes Memorial and the Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1).

In his only 2018 start, Bobabout finished second in Radnor Hunt Races' National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3) on May 19. Both Naylor nominees are trained by Cyril Murphy.

The Plains-based trainer Richard Valentine nominated Magalen O. Bryant's Personal Start, who won this spring's Semmes Memorial by eight lengths. The Jump Start seven-year-old most recently was unplaced in the Lonesome Glory.

Here are the nominees to the \$75,000 David L. "Zeke" Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2).

**Bobabout (Ire).** 2013 b. g., Big Bad Bob—Chaperoned (Ire), by High Chaparral (Ire). Owner: Irvin S. Naylor. Trainer: Cyril Murphy. Breeder: John Harrington (Ire). 2018 record: 1-0-1-0, \$9,000. 2017 NSA 1-0-0-0, \$0. Finished second in 2018 National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3). In first U.S. start, finished seventh in Saratoga's 2017 Michael G. Walsh Novice Stakes. Won Punchestown handicap in April 2017 for breeder-trainer and then had two seconds before sixth at Tipperary in late June. (122)

**Curve of Stones** 2011 gr. or ro. g., Arch—Exceptionally, by El Prado (Ire). Owner: Sarah Rebecca Shepherd. Trainer: David M. Bourke. Breeder: Audley Farm (Va.) 2018 record: 2-0-0-0, \$600. 2017 record: 8-0-0-1, \$18,100. 2016 NSA record: 3-2-0-0, \$56,400. Began 2018 with

fifth in Shawan Downs rating handicap and was eighth in Virginia Fall ratings handicap. Finished third in 2017 David L. “Zeke” Ferguson Memorial (Gr. 2) after fourth in Far Hills’ Appleton ratings handicap. (104)

**No Wunder (GB).** 2011 b. g., Rock of Gibraltar (Ire)—Iwunder, by King’s Best. Owner: Robert A. Kinsley. Trainer: Elizabeth Voss. Breeder: Executors of the late J. Ellis (GB). 2018 NSA record: 5-0-2-0, \$42,500. 2017 NSA record: 8-2-1-1, \$67,150. Finished fourth in Belmont Park’s William Entenmann Memorial Novice Stakes. Finished close second in Saratoga’s Michael G. Walsh Novice Stakes after similar close second in Fair Hill’s Valentine Memorial ratings handicap. Opened 2018 campaign with second in Carolina Cup for novices, then was fifth in Queen’s Cup MPC ‘Chase. Drew away impressively to win 2017 Saratoga handicap after good second in similar race. Finished seventh in Far Hills’ Foxbrook Champion Hurdle. (126)

**Optimus Prime (Fr).** 2012 b. g., Deportivo—Diluvienne, by Kaldoun. Owner: Rosbrian Farm. Trainer: Ricky Hendriks. Breeder: Haras de Plasence (Fr). 2018 NSA record: 2-1-0-1, \$120,000. In his U.S. debut, won Saratoga Race Course’s 2018 New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1), then was third in Belmont Park’s Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1). In final overseas start, finished fourth in Pertemps Swindon Hurdle Handicap at Haydock in May. Began 2018 with an allowance steeplechase win and then was second at 25-to-1 in €115,000 Ryanair Novice Steeplechase at Ireland’s Punchestown Racecourse in April. Previously trained by Dan Skelton. (148)

**Overwhelming.** 2010 b. g., Hard Spun—Oh What a Windfall, by Seeking the Gold. Owner: Woodslane Farm. Trainer: Jack Fisher. Breeder: Phipps Stable (Ky.) 2018 NSA record: 4-1-0-1, \$41,000. Finished third in Saratoga’s 2018 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1), then was fifth in New York Turf Writers Cup (Gr. 1). Returned to the races after missing 2017 season and won Tryon Block House allowance hurdle before sixth in Fair Hill’s Valentine Memorial ratings handicap. Finished fifth in Saratoga’s 2016 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1). Won Steeplechase at Callaway’s 2015 AFLAC Supreme Hurdle and Belmont’s William Entenmann Memorial Novice Stakes. (123)

**Personal Start.** 2011 dk. b. or br. g., Jump Start—Personal Doreen, by Personal Flag. Owner: Magalen O. Bryant. Trainer: Richard Valentine. Breeder: Magalen O. Bryant (Ky.) 2018 record: 4-2-0-0, \$98,750. 2017 record: 6-1-1-2, \$46,750. Finished fourth in Saratoga’s 2018 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1), then was seventh in New York Turf Writers Cup (Gr. 1). Won Virginia Gold Cup’s 2018 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) by eight lengths after victory in Carolina Cup novice stakes. Won 2017 International Gold Cup allowance hurdle by eight lengths. (130)

**Schoodic.** 2010 b. g., Tiznow—Aunt Henny, by Hennessy. Owner: Edith R. Dixon. Trainer: Jack Fisher. Breeder: Edith R. Dixon (Ky.) 2018 record: 4-0-1-1, \$28,300. 2017 record: 5-1-0-0, \$50,750. Finished fifth in Belmont Park’s 2018 Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1). Just missed when second by a neck in 2018 Iroquois Steeplechase ratings handicap. Opened 2018 campaign with closing third in Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup (Gr. 1), then was ninth in Temple Gwathmey Handicap (Gr. 2). Won 2017 David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2) at Virginia Gold Cup, then was a dull fifth in Radnor’s National Hunt Cup (Gr. 3), a race he won in 2016. (130)

**Sempre Medici (Fr).** 2010 b. g., Medicean—Sambala, by Danehill Dancer. Owner: Irvin S. Naylor. Trainer: Cyril Murphy. Breeders: Myriam Bollack, Noel Forgeard, and E.A.R.L. du

Haras de Pierrepont (Fr). 2018 record: 3-0-0-0, \$11,000. 2017 NSA record: No starts. Finished fifth in 2018 Calvin Houghland Iroquois (Gr. 1) and David Semmes Memorial (Gr. 2). Tired and was pulled up in 2018 Temple Gwathmey Handicap (Gr. 2), his first U.S. start. Competed at top level in England and Ireland for trainer Willie Mullins before being imported. Female-line descendant of foundation mare Best in Show, by Traffic Judge. (137)

**Show Court (Ire).** 2009 b. g., Vinnie Roe—Sparking Gem, by Revoque. Owner: Mark W. Buyck Jr. Trainer: Arch Kingsley Jr. Breeder: Grange Stud (Ire). 2018 record: 4-1-0-0, \$118,250. 2017 NSA record: 5-2-1-0, \$112,000. Won Saratoga's 2018 A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) by a length, then was fourth in New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1) and fell in Lonesome Glory Handicap (Gr. 1). Finished sixth in Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup (Gr. 1). Won 2017 Carolina Cup by seven lengths. (133)

**The Game Changer (Ire).** 2009 b. g., Arcadio—Gilt Ridden, by Heron Island. Owner: Gigginstown House Stud. Trainer: Ricky Hendriks. Breeder: Arctic Tack Stud and Crossogue Stud (Ire). 2018 NSA record: 1-0-0-0, \$0. For former trainer Gordon Elliott, finished eighth in 2018 New York Turf Writers Cup (Gr. 1). In early August 2018, unseated jockey in Lord Hemphill Memorial Handicap Steeplechase and pulled up early in €300,000 Guinness Galway Handicap Hurdle. Won an Irish allowance hurdle in June and finished second in a steeplechase allowance in July. (139)

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