

MID-ATLANTIC REPORT

—PENSIONERS ON PARADE—

MAGIC WEISNER

It had all the earmarks of a classic Cinderella story. Salt-of-the-earth Maryland horsewoman Nancy Alberts bred Jazema, a daughter of Bold Forbes whom she had acquired for one dollar, to the tough local stakes winner Ameri Valay based entirely on the fact that the two horses had “made eyes at each other” while stabled side-by-side in a Laurel Park test barn one afternoon. The resulting foal, named Magic Weisner in honor of the veterinarian who brought him back from serious illness as a foal, developed into a gutsy rocket ship of a runner who became the best horse Alberts has ever bred, owned or trained.

The bay gelding made six starts as a 2-year-old in 2001, ending his campaign with a win in the Maryland Juvenile Championship Stakes. But it was as a sophomore in 2002 that Magic Weisner thrust himself, rider Phil Teator, and a somewhat reluctant Alberts into the national spotlight. He reeled off consecutive victories in the Goss L. Stryker, Deputed Testimony and Private Terms Stakes. In the Federico Tesio Stakes at Pimlico that April, he finished a game second after a wide trip. Shortly thereafter, Alberts was contacted by the agent of jockey Richard Migliore, who had ridden runner-up Smoked Em. Migliore was so impressed with Magic’s effort in the Tesio that he pursued the opportunity to ride him.

Alberts had wisely nominated her stable star to the Triple Crown, although the Kentucky Derby-G1 was not part of the plan.

“I didn’t want to go to the Derby,” she said, “because the fields are always too crowded. I didn’t think he had enough earnings anyway, but that didn’t matter. I really never wanted to go.”

Bob Baffert-trained War Emblem, a nearly black stealth



LINDA A. WILLIAMS

bomber, ran away with the 2002 Run for the Roses and was favored to capture the Preakness Stakes-G1 as well.

When Magic Weisner powered down the Preakness stretch under new rider Migliore and missed War Emblem by just three-quarters of a length, the Pimlico crowd went berserk.

Alberts’s homebred earned his career-high speed figure of 108 in that duel, leaving Migliore anxious to pilot him again in the Belmont Stakes-G1 three weeks later. Bumped at the break and forced wide, Magic Weisner still held on for fourth behind Sarava, Medaglia d’Oro and Sunday Break (Jpn), but ahead of War Emblem, who finished fifth after going to his knees when the gate opened.

The media blitz that followed the Triple Crown was something for which the obses-

sively hard-working Alberts had no point of reference.

“Every day I’d go home and my recorder was full. I would call back as many as I could, but there were 10 or 11 calls from the media every day.” After diligently trying to answer all letters and e-mails from fans, she pointed Magic Weisner toward Thistledown’s Ohio Derby-G2 on July 20. Never farther back than second, he bested Wiseman’s Ferry and The Judge Sez Who with Migliore again in the irons.

With his stellar season earning him a berth in Monmouth Park’s summer classic, the Haskell Invitational-G1, Magic and Alberts rode the wave to the Jersey shore. Guided this time by Mike Luzzi, Magic fought hard but crossed the wire three and a half lengths behind nemesis War Emblem for the place spot.

His next planned engagement was the Pennsylvania Derby-G2 at Philadelphia Park on Labor Day, but Magic became strangely ill the Friday before, ending up at New Bolton Center. The alarming diagnosis was West Nile virus.

“They just couldn’t find another case of West Nile anywhere,” Alberts said. “And they looked very seriously. He was at New Bolton for a month,” she went on, “and he looked terrible. My sister Linda [Hickman Meister] lives close by, so she went to see him every day, and I went up as much as I could. But when I saw him I would say ‘Oh my God. . .’”

“He just looked so bad. They never thought I was going to lose him, but he went through so much. When he came back, we gave him a long time off. And I put him back in training but shouldn’t have. But when I did run him, he just trailed the field, so that was it. I was not going to embarrass that horse.”

Magic Weisner’s record of 15-7-4-0 and \$888,830 was far from embarrassing, enabling Alberts to purchase the Sykesville farm she has today.

“I took him home for a while, but then Linda really wanted him up there, so he went. And it’s perfect for him,” Alberts said.

“Up there” is 132-acre Tarad Hill Farm in West Chester, Pa., home of Linda and her husband, Carl J. (Bunny) Meister. Turned out with pasture mates Melting, a former steeplechaser by Waquoit, and Boomer, Meister’s field hunter, Magic affirms his status as the resident top dog.

“He’s being a horse, is what he’s doing now,” laughed Bunny Meister. “He’s healthy, he looks great, and the competitiveness has never gone away. Even when hacking, he’d work his way to the front. After all, you know, he is Magic Weisner.”

/Maggie Kimmitt