

Fighting Seabee, Peace Achieved boast strong credentials in Dueling Grounds Derby

By: Marcus Hersh



Fighting Seabee and Peace Achieved ranked near the top of the 2-year-old turf-route division about this time last year. It's difficult to gauge where either horse ranks right now, but both appear to have a decent chance in a wildly competitive renewal of the \$500,000 Dueling Grounds Derby on Thursday at Kentucky Downs.

Fighting Seabee hasn't raced at all as a 3-year-old and makes his first start since Nov. 30. Peace Achieved has only started once in 2020 after ending his 2-year-old season with a thud, finishing 12th in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf.

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But Peace Achieved has all-important experience over the Kentucky Downs up-and-down, European-style course, having won the \$500,000 Juvenile late last summer, and his comeback race was subtly decent. That came Aug. 12 at Indiana Grand in the Caesars Stakes, where Peace Achieved raced from midpack over a tricky, sticky course and rallied mildly to finish fourth. He was beaten only four lengths by victorious Fancy Liquor, who returned to capture the American Turf last Saturday at Churchill Downs. Peace Achieved has raced effectively on or near the lead, and in a seemingly paceless race, jockey Florent Geroux can place him forwardly on a course that last season frequently promoted front-runners.

Fighting Seabee won the With Anticipation Stakes over turf last summer at Saratoga, but following a fifth-place finish in the Bourbon Stakes at Keeneland, a race won by Peace Achieved, trainer Ken McPeck switched Fighting Seabee to dirt, where he raced somewhat effectively. Turf, however, figures to be Fighting Seabee's calling, and McPeck appears to have gotten plenty of work into his horse for this challenging comeback run.

Bama Breeze has been facing the strongest competition in the field this year, but a slow early and middle pace could hurt his chances if, as has been the case in all his starts, he winds up at the back of the field. Bama Breeze, trained by Rusty Arnold, has won only a maiden race. He's been sixth in two recent stakes starts, the Saratoga Derby and the Grade 3 Transylvania, after finishing second in the Audubon at Churchill in June. Bama Breeze finishes with good energy, and if he can keep the leaders in touch Thursday, his sustained run ought to prove effective over 1 5/16 miles, the longest distance he's tried.

Shamrocket, like Bama Breeze eligible for a first-level allowance, could take some betting since Christophe Clement trains him, Joel Rosario rides him, and he's been running effectively in New York, but he's another horse lacking pace and looks like a lesser version of Bama Breeze.

On the other end of the pace dynamic, Summer Assault could make the early lead if he's sent from an outer draw, but he probably lacks the quality and stamina to press his advantage.

Moon Over Miami only needs one scratch to draw in from the also-eligible list and is a live horse if he

makes the field. He won going 1 1/8 miles in a Churchill allowance race two starts back before finishing an encouraging fourth last out going the same trip in the Grade 2 Hall of Fame at Saratoga.