

How Wide the Duelers Wall? Colonel Bradley Draws Stack of Turf Speedsters

Those who don't make the lead will be looking for light behind early showdown

Seven of the formidable twelve older horses entered in the \$100,000 Colonel Bradley Stakes won their last race as the pacesetter or vying in second. Not your typical dynamic for a turf race going 1 1/16 miles, but one that will surely get the attention of pace handicappers. Race design is no simple art, and likely those horseplayers who look a few races back will find many in the field have tactical options, including the Mr. D (G1) winner, 3-1 morning line favorite Two Emmys.

Wolfe Racing and Hugh Robertson's Two Emmys made headlines going wire-to-wire winning Arlington Park's final Mr. D—the stakes race formerly known as the Arlington Million. Previously second to Colonel Liam, Bizzee Channel, and Spooky Channel, connections knew they had a quality stakes horse, but his first graded stakes win came at 27.10-1. After setting glacial early fractions and quickening as the race unfolded, 6-year-old by English Channel gelding gave favorite Domestic Spending too much to do while jockey James Graham had all the horse he needed to finish the job, racking up Two Emmys' third pace-setting score. But he's also shown an ability to make up ground, specifically over the Fair Grounds Stall-Wilson turf course.

"He doesn't need to be in front," Robertson said. "If he's in front that's fine, if he's back a few lengths that's fine. He ran well here coming from dead last one time going one mile, wove his way through horses. I think he'll run wherever he gets light. We'll just have to let Jimmy (jockey Graham) decide what to do and see how the pace turns out."

Finishing second last out going 1 ½ miles in Keeneland's Sycamore (G3), Two Emmys last three races have been at 1 3/16 miles or longer. Making his first start in three months, James Graham will guide him out of post six, with two forward-type horses to his inside, and four others drawn to his outside.

"I think he's as good now as he's ever been," Robertson said. "I would think he'd run well, hopefully the layoff won't hurt him. He's basically run well for a year or two. He's a little horse, coming off a mile and a half I think he should keep plenty of fitness. I don't think it will

help him shorten up but it won't hurt him. I would think 1 ½ miles or more would be a better distance.”

Coming into his own for trainer Dallas Stewart in 2021, West Point Thoroughbreds and William Sandbrook's Cavalry Charge moved through his allowance levels winning three of his four starts. He employed forward-minded tactics in all three wins, including leading at all calls going 1 1/16 miles in a first-level allowance at Churchill Downs on June 24. More than three months since his third-level allowance win going 1 1/16 miles on Keeneland's yielding turf course, he will break from post three with Brian Hernandez, Jr. aboard (8-1 ML).

“We wanted to run him in the Diliberto but he had a little temperature,” Stewart said. “He's doing well now. Back on track. Had two good works and we're excited about giving him a chance against stakes competition. Let's see where we are at.”

Trainer Bret Calhoun has been winning left and right on the turf, including two consecutive scores for William Reed's Excess Magic. The \$75,000 Woodchopper winner pressed through the first half mile, then drew off to win by 1 ½ lengths. Making his first start as a 4-year old, Reylu Gutierrez gets back up to make it three in a row (post seven, 8-1 ML).

“I'm a little bit hesitant because he is going to have to run against the old horses,” Calhoun said. “Sometimes I prefer to wait until later in the year to run these newly turned 4-year-olds against the older horses, the difference with this is the next couple races are at 1 mile ⅛ and I think the 1 mile 1/16th or shorter will be a little better for him. If this race was a mile 1/8th I probably would not be running.”

Trainer Cherie DeVaux's patience and persistence with Own Agenda paid off, scoring the two-length win last out in December going 1 1/16 miles over Fair Grounds firm turf.

“We bought him in 2019 (Keeneland January mixed sale for \$140,000) and had a really good year with him on the dirt,” Devaux told Chad Schexnayder on the Fair Grounds Racing Podcast. “We just couldn't get him to the wire first against some tough competition. He's a really good horse with a great attitude. He loves to train. We gave him 30-day freshening and the first day he galloped back he had the beginning of a condylar fracture. That was the start of a series of little setbacks, none of which were a big deal, but it took us 19 months to get him back to the races.”

Beating second-level allowance company that day, David Ingordo and Gmack Racing's 7-year-old jumps in against his toughest company since 2019's Fayette (G2). Jockey Colby Hernandez will lead Own Agenda from post four (10-1 ML)

The remainder of the field with post position, jockey/trainer and morning line odds is as follows: JPS Racing's Logical Myth (post one, Adam Beschizza/Joe Sharp, 12-1 ML), a seven-time turf winner who finished 6th last out in the Diliberto; Winchell Thoroughbreds & Willis Horton Racing's Halo Again (post two, Joel Rosario/Steve Asmussen, 6-1 ML) wire-to-wire Diliberto winner of his first turf try; Lloyd Madison Farms IV's Major Fed (post five, Florent Geroux/Greg Foley, 10-1 ML) will make his first start on the turf after finishing fifth in the Tenacious; Michael M Hui and WSS Racing's Monarchs Glen (post eight, Joe Bravo/Mike Maker, 8-1 ML), a deep closer finishing a game third in the Diliberto and the Wright; Darryl Abramowitz' Bodecream (post nine, Deshawn Parker/Jeffrey Englehart, 8-1 ML), wire-to-wire winner of a third-level allowance at Aqueduct in December; Gary Barber's Lucky Curlin (post ten, Marcelino Pedroza Jr./Mark Casse, 12-1 ML) finished fifth in December's Scherer turf sprint; Brad Allshouse's Dyn O Mite (post 11, Corey Lanerie/Keith Desormeaux, 12-1 ML) pace-setting winner of his last two including the Caesars at Indiana Downs; Three Diamonds Farm's Forty Under (post 12, Mitchell Murrill/Mike Maker, 12-1 ML) dueling and fading to fourth in both the Diliberto and the Wright.

Additional quotes:

Cherie DeVaux on Own Agenda, as told to Chad Schexnayder on the Fair Grounds Racing Podcast

"I had always wanted to run the horse on the turf," Devaux said. "He's bred for it. When he was running so well on the dirt, we really couldn't make an excuse to switch surfaces. So in June when I finally had him ready to run, there was a turf race that he fit and I secretly knew it was my opportunity to prove myself right. He ran a huge race (second to Monarchs Glen) and I was really proud of him. The entire time, David (husband Ingordo) and I struggled, wondering if we were doing right by the horse. He's older and we don't need the horse to run for money, we want to do what's right for the horse, but every time we've brought him back into training, he's forward, he loves to train and he breezes really well, just some minor physical ailments. He came out of the June race and popped a curve, again, just a minor thing that took some time to get him back from. He's lightly raced for a seven-year-old and

he's just happy to be there. He's sound, he moves well. We're only going to run him if he wants to do it, and if there's a day he shows he doesn't want to, it's an easy decision (to retire him)."