

Southwind Tempo headlines Chester Opening Day

Sunday, April 20, 2008

By James Witherite-Rieg, on-course commentator at Harrah's Chester Casino and Racetrack

After being worn down and defeated by My Little Dragon in a Classic Series event at Dover earlier in the month, Jerry Silva's Southwind Tempo (\$3.20) returned to her winning ways, scoring a wire-to-wire 1:50.2 win in her elimination of the Betsy Ross Mares Pace at Harrah's Chester on Sunday's Opening Day card.

The four-year-old Bettor's Delight mare left in tandem with Stylish Solution (Tony Morgan), but had the lead all to herself when Stylish Solution broke stride on the first turn. After reaching the quarter in :26.1, she pulled back the pace considerably, unchallenged through a half of :55.0.

"She was getting out of the gate really well, and I could cross over rather easily," said John Campbell of the Kevin Lare trainee, who scored her 23rd career win in 29 starts. "When she got control of the race, she relaxed very well, and she was actually traveling better than she was at Dover in her last start."

After rating a conservative second quarter of :28.4, Southwind Tempo saw pressure up the backstretch in the form of Darlin's Delight (Yannick Gingras), who came to within three parts of a length of the prohibitive favorite at three-quarters of 1:23.1.

Midway through the far turn, Southwind Tempo dug in, drawing clear of the field at the head of the stretch, repelling a final challenge from Symphony In Motion (Brian Sears) and scoring a 3-1/2 length win. Symphony In Motion narrowly beat Darlin's Delight for the second spot, with Captiva Island (David Miller) a ground-saving fourth.

Looking back at the Dover effort, Campbell commented on the general toughness of the distaff pacing division. "She had a very credible start [in the Classic series], and we lost to a real good mare. It's very difficult to dominate an age group and win every time. I think there's going to be three or four of these mares that take turns winning and beating one another."

My Little Dragon, the mare who wore Southwind Tempo down and beat her in the final strides at Dover earlier in the month, was sent off at

2-5 odds but didn't seem at her best, finishing third to Life of Luxury N (John Campbell), who brushed aggressively to the lead on the far turn on her way to a 1:51.0 score. Illusionist (Ron Pierce) kicked cover in the stretch to be second, overtaking My Little Dragon in deep stretch. Street Dancer (Andy Miller) made an extended first-over bid, holding fourth despite fading back.

Looking ahead to next week's final, Campbell remains wary of his competition, particularly Life of Luxury and My Little Dragon. "Every time you think My Little Dragon's not going to be at her best, she comes up with a very big performance. I've seen her race at various times where she's not been on her game, but she bounces back."

In the sub-featured Fred DiGirolamo Memorial for open pacers, Sharky Osborne (Tim Tetrick) held off a late challenge from Richard Henry N (David Miller) for a 1:50.2 mile. Tetrick had four winning drives on the day, as did Campbell.

Live racing resumes at Harrah's Chester tomorrow afternoon, with first post set for 12:25 p.m. Racing will continue on a four-day schedule, with Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday live racing days.