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\$75,000 Howard B. Noonan Stakes at Mahoning Valley Saturday

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by Kimberly Rinker

Ohio's top 3-year-olds will step onto the Mahoning Valley dirt Saturday afternoon, April 15, to vie in the **\$75,000 Howard B. Noonan Stakes**.

The co-featured six-furlong test—sporting nine runners from 17 nominations—has been carded as the seventh event on the program, with a 3:02 pm, ET, scheduled post.

The co-featured **\$75,000 Austintown Filly Sprint** has been carded as the eighth race and features a field of 11 sophomore distaffs traveling six furlongs. Forty-nine were nominated to this event.

The Howard B. Noonan is named in memory of the prominent Buckeye breeder, a Northwestern University graduate who served on the OTBO Board of Directors beginning in 1978 until his death in December 1983. He owned and operated Windy Knoll Farm in Springfield, OH, breeding such standouts as Execution's Reason and Angle Light. However, Noonan is best known as the breeder of Air Forbes Won, the 1982 Kentucky Derby winner who went on to sire more than 100 stakes winners of \$29.4 million.

Fireupthejet makes his first start over the Mahoning surface for his new trainer Charles Dickey. Bred by the Langsem Farm, the son of City Zip—Floral Park, by Forest Wildcat brings both a solid pedigree and serious racing chops to the Noonan. With just two starts under his belt, Fireupthejet was a winner last time out at Oaklawn Park on Feb. 17, sprinting to victory over six furlongs in 1:10.3 easily.

The dark bay colt was a \$70,000 purchase at the Ocala Breeders April 2016 2-Year-Olds in Training Sale by his owner Doyle Williams, and is a half-brother to Ohio stakes victress **Floral Sky** (*by Sky Mesa*), a winner of \$201,122 in her career. Flora Sky was a \$230,000 purchase at the 2011 Keeneland September Sale. Fireupthejet also has a half-sister in **My Girl Cassie** (*by Northern Afleet*), a \$120,000 yearling who earned \$72,960 with a 3-4-1 record in all eight of her career starts at Thistledown.

Coincidentally is another who appears well-poised for a top effort in the Noonan. This Super Saver gelding has \$60,225 in his coffers; having won his last two allowance tests and the first two races (*on March 13 & 29*) of his sophomore campaign at this same distance at Mahoning. Owned by his breeders WinStar Farm and Blazing Meadows Farm, Coincidentally is conditioned by Tim Hamm and has a trio of wins and one second in six lifetime starts.

The richest contestant in the Noonan—with \$103,490 in career earnings—is the striking chestnut colt **Cake Pop**, who vies for owner/breeder Penny S. Lauer and co-owner/trainer Michael Lauer. The son of Notional—Hey There Cupcake, by Prized has one win, one second and one third in three starts this season, including an impressive 2½ length victory in a six-furlong Mahoning Allowance on Feb. 14.

Lifetime, Cake Pop has a trio of wins in eight trips postward, including a victory in last year's \$75,000 Hoover Stakes on July 9 at Belterra. He also finished second by a head in the \$75,000 Cleveland-Kindergarten Stakes on Aug. 6, 2016 to **Jocker Justice**.

Justice Farm's aforementioned son of Stay Thirsty-Erica's Melody, by Unbridle's Son will be trying for his third career win and second stakes triumph. Bred and owned by the Justice Farm and trained by Aaron West, the dark bay colt was second in his 2017 debut at Mahoning on March 18 in a six-furlong Allowance race. A winner of \$93,570 in his career, Jocker Justice has two wins, two seconds and a third in seven career starts.

The homebred **Nuttin' Faster** carries the green and white colors of the Greenhill family postward in the Noonan. Trainer Jeff Greenhill will tighten the girth on the son of Roman Ruler, who has \$52,320 from three wins and one second in six lifetime starts, including Allowance victories on Feb. 15 and March 18 at Mahoning Valley.

Hansenation will be trying for win number three in his sixth career start for trainer Michael Maker and owner Kendall Hansen. The grey Hansen colt, out of the Successful Appeal mare Reversed On Appeal was bred by the Moneylane Farm and has \$25,189 in his bankroll. He won a Mahoning allowance race on Feb. 25 by nearly 11 lengths before finishing fourth in the Rushaway B Stakes at Turfway on March 15.

Cataphract, Visual Mission and **Mr Giggles** round out the field of nine runners in the Howard B. Noonan.

Southern Park Stake winner **Nikki My Darling** headlines the \$75,000 Austintown Filly Sprint for owner Looch Racing Stable and trainer Jeff Radosevich. The daughter of Creative Cause will be trying for her third consecutive victory and second straight stake triumph in the Sprint.