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

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by Kimberly Rinker, Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund

The \$75,000 Howard B. Noonan Stakes—honoring a former top breeder in the Buckeye State—will be contested on Saturday, April 10 at Mahoning Valley. The six-furlong test for Ohio-registered 3-year-olds has a scheduled post time of 2:34 pm, ET.

The \$75,000 Howard B. Noonan Stakes is named in honor of the former Springfield, Ohio businessman, a Thoroughbred breeder and owner, who established Windy Knoll Farm in 1974 on the northwest side of that agricultural hamlet. Noonan, already heavily involved in the racing business at the time, had shared ownership of 1971 Kentucky Derby winner Canonero II and was a partner with Catesby Clay of Runnymede Farm.

In its heyday, the 500-acre Windy Knoll was home to more than 100 horses, standing eight stallions in the late 1970s, including Shipping Magnate, Peak Value, Sovereignty and others. His top racehorses included Terrible Tiger, Star of Kuwait, Spirit Son and others.

Noonan also bred Angle Light, one of the few horses to best the mighty Triple Crown winning Secretariat, when he did so on April 21, 1973 in the Wood Memorial Stakes at Aqueduct. Sham was second and Secretariat third in the Wood, as Angel Light went wire-to-wire with Jacinto Vasquez riding.

This year's Noonan features a full field of eight sophomores, including seven colts and geldings and one filly vying for first prize.

Morestride, an unaltered son of Midshipman-Smart Stride, by Smart Strike, is a winner of \$56,400 lifetime who hails from the barn of trainer Penny and owner Mike Rone. Bred by Steve DeMaiolo, Morestride won his maiden on Oct. 14, 2020 and followed that up with a second-place finish in the \$100,000 Juvenile Stakes on Oct. 31. He has gotten off to a great start this year by winning a Mahoning Valley allowance on March 22.

Esplanande, the lone filly in the field, comes into the Noonan fresh off a second-place finish in the \$75,000 Southern Park Stakes on March 20. Prior to that finish the daughter of Daredevil-Southern Silence, by Dixie Union was second in the \$250,000 Gr.1 Spinaway at Saratoga on Sept. 6, 2020 after winning the \$100,000 Best of Ohio Cleveland Kindergarten at Thistledown and \$75,000 Hoover Stakes at Belterra last season. Esplanande is trained by Tim Hamm for Winstar Farm, Blazing Meadows Farm and Michael Lewis. This homebred has \$185,460 in career earnings from three wins and two seconds in five starts.

Trainer Robert Gorham will bridle up a pair of Noonan contestants—**Brig** and **Hakman**. Brig is the gelded son of Midshipman-Visual Arrest, by Pollard's Vision and a winner of \$80,020 in his career. Bred and owned by Mast Thoroughbreds, Brig won his last two allowance starts—both at Mahoning Valley—on Nov. 25, 2020 and March 24 of this year. Hakman is a Chilean-bred gelding by Hakassan, out of the Silver Train mare Antique Silver, with \$54,400 in his coffers. A winner of two of nine starts, Hakman captured a Mahoning Valley allowance on Feb. 17 and was third in a similar race on March 24 at this same track. This homebred is owned by Marion Gorham.