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Commentator the talk of Suffolk

Gelding favorite to win MassCap

By Nancy Marrapese-Burrell
GLOBE STAFF

When the 66th Massachusetts Handicap goes off late Saturday afternoon at Suffolk Downs, all eyes will be on one of the top horses in the country — Commentator — the 3-5 morning-line favorite in the seven-horse field, who will contend from the No. 2 post.

Commentator, a 7-year-old gelding, is coming off a convincing gate-to-wire victory in the Whitney Handicap (in which he repeated as champion) at Saratoga July 26. His owner, Tracy Farmer, said he respects the MassCap's history and is pleased with the post position, as is Commentator's Hall of Fame trainer, Nick Zito.

"Zito loves Boston," said Farmer. "We love the way the track has come back to life. The MassCap is a historic race, so it seemed like the perfect place for us to take Commentator. He's been training spectacular. He's been biting Nick, which is always a good sign."

Commentator isn't the only one Farmer believes will be a winner. Farmer hosted a fundraiser for Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama recently in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., during the Spa's racing meet.

"I think the campaign is going along great," said Farmer.

Massachusetts Handicap field

Purse: \$500,000. Distance: 1 1/8 miles.

PP	Horse	Jockey	Odds
1	Beck and Call	Tammi Piermarini	20-1
2	Commentator	John Velazquez	3-5
3	Won Awesome Dude	Casey Lambert	8-1
4	Cuba	Pedro Cotto Jr.	6-1
5	Volcanic Force	Clifford Dooley	20-1
6	Dr. Pleasure	Cornelio Velasquez	7-2
7	Riversrunrylee	Pedro Gonzalez	15-1

Farmer said he hasn't yet had Obama at a racetrack as his guest, but hopes to host him at the Kentucky Derby if Obama is elected.

"He is a big horse fan and I think he'll be good for our sport," said Farmer. "I just personally like him. He's a great person, a great human being."

One of the reasons Commentator is the favorite (Dr. Pleasure is the second choice at 7-2 in the No. 6 post) is because he has won three of his last four starts. The other start was a second-place finish at Belmont May 26. Zito has compared the horse to George Foreman, saying he is timeless and has gotten better with age. Farmer said it's hard to put a finger on why Commentator is so special.

"I wish I knew," he said. "I've had a great number of horses in my life, and he just has a little bit of Seabiscuit. He just has that determination. He understands what he is supposed to do. It's just like business as usual. As

long as he's in good health, which he is now, he is a special horse."

Farmer said if another horse were to challenge Commentator out of the gate, jockey John Velazquez would allow it and sit off the pace.

"Yes, we've done that before," said Farmer. "Sometimes he just wants to go on, though. Sometimes he takes control and sometimes the jockey can control him, but when he takes control, it's over."

Farmer, who is based in Kentucky, said it's difficult to gauge where Commentator fits in the owner's long thoroughbred history, but said he considers him a family member who will retire to the farm whenever he is ready.

"I've had him longer and it's almost like he's my child or something," said Farmer. "I've had several great horses that I've loved, but Commentator is someone that just keeps coming back and keeps running. I hope

he races until he's 10 or 12, who knows?"

Commentator has been slowed in the past by a series of injuries, including cannon-bone fractures, but has come back strong. Farmer said he didn't expect him to regain the form he has.

"In fact, I would say at this time he feels the best and looks the best and works the best that he ever has in his entire career," said Farmer. "I never would have believed it."

Farmer said one of the reasons he and Zito opted to have Commentator run in the MassCap was because of the track's commitment to zero tolerance with regard to sending animals to slaughterhouses.

Suffolk principal owner Richard Fields has taken a strong stance against the odious practice.

"We appreciate the stand the track has taken," Farmer said. "We want to be very supportive. We discussed that and that was one of the things that entered into it."

In addition to Commentator and Dr. Pleasure, who finished third in last year's MassCap, the field by post position: 1. Beck and Call (20-1); 3. Won Awesome Dude (8-1); 4. Cuba (6-1); 5. Volcanic Force (20-1); and 7. Riversrunrylee (15-1).

Nancy Marrapese-Burrell can be reached at marrapese@globe.com.