

SUFFOLK

Favored Commentator just too good in Mass Cap

By DAVID GRENING

It was as easy as advertised.

Commentator towered over his six rivals in Saturday's Massachusetts Handicap on paper and he towered over them on the track as well, taking over from pacesetter Riversrunrylee at the three-furlong pole then cruising to a 14-length victory over Won Awesome Dude. Cuba finished third.

The victory was the fourth from five starts this year for Commentator, who has now won 13 of 20 starts overall and banked \$1,841,936 for owner Tracy Farmer. The Massachusetts Handicap was part of the Win and You're In Challenge, which means Commentator earned an automatic spot into the \$5 million Breeders' Cup Classic at Santa Anita on Oct. 25. Actually, he had already done that when he won the Whitney Handicap at Saratoga in July.

The question is whether trainer Nick Zito will decide to run Commentator in the Classic. Zito, who won three races on the Suffolk card, didn't give any hints after the race.

"I'm going to go back to the barn and hear what Commentator has to say," said Zito, who dedicated the Mass Cap victory to the late John

Hettinger, a leader in the anti-slaughter movement and a friend of Zito's who died on Sept. 6.

By his actions Saturday, Commentator seemed to indicate he'd like to go to the Classic. Proving Zito's assertion that he could rate, Commentator sat about a length off the speedy Riversrunrylee through fractions of 23.04 seconds, 46.11, and 1:10.04. Down the backside, Velazquez said he put Commentator in the four-path to help him relax.

But at the half-mile pole Velazquez moved Commentator alongside Riversrunrylee, and at the three-furlong marker he asked Commentator to go. Commentator responded by quickly opening up and Velazquez kept the gelding's attention with a couple of right-handed cracks of the whip in the stretch. Commentator, a 7-year-old New York-bred son Distorted Humor, covered the 1 1/8 miles in 1:48.97 and returned \$2.20 as the overwhelming favorite.

"He relaxed very well into the first turn, I was very happy the way he was going into that first turn," Velazquez said. "From then on I was trying to keep him away from that other horse, give him a little rest. At the half-mile pole I put him close to the other horse and he

was ready to go."

The Mass Cap victory capped a perfect 3 for 3 day for Velazquez, who now has 3,997 career victories.

In other stakes action at Suffolk Downs Saturday:

□ Velazquez won the \$100,000 James B. Moseley Sprint Handicap, guiding Real Estate (\$4.60) to a front-running one-length victory over Cavallo Pazzo. It was 5 3/4 lengths back to Southern Rainbow in third. Real Estate, owned by Peter Blum and trained by Bruce Levine, covered six furlongs in 1:08.82.

□ The Zito-trained Thunders Dove (\$3.80) led virtually gate to wire winning the \$50,000 Drumtop Stakes by three lengths over Intentional Fever. Velazquez rode Thunders Dove, who covered six furlongs in 1:09.40 over a fast main track.

□ Hold on Smokey (\$6) made a successful turf debut, leading gate to wire under Jose Lopez to take the \$50,000 Robert M. O'Malley Memorial by three lengths over Rockhurst. Hold on Smokey, owned and trained by Donald Kielty, ran five furlongs in 58.25 seconds over firm turf. The colt is now 6 for 13 lifetime.



King of the Mass Cap

Commentator glides to the finish 14 lengths in front in Saturday's \$500,000 Massachusetts Handicap at Suffolk Downs. Article, page 3.