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Happy Offering scores in Charles Hesse III Handicap

Happy Offering earned his first stakes victory during the New Jersey Thoroughbred Festival at Monmouth Park Aug. 23, taking the \$100,000 Charles Hesse III Handicap in impressive fashion as the even-money favorite. The gelding is owned by Prancing Horse Farm and trained by Chuck Spina. He was ridden by Paco Lopez.

Bred by Carmine Spinella, the 4-year-old son of Qurbaan and the Hard Spun mare Afraah has been in excellent form, winning three of his last four starts at Monmouth Park.

Happy Offering pressed the pace behind early leader J J Zo Zo before making his move on the far turn, sweeping to the front and drawing clear. J J Zo Zo held on gamely to edge Forever Chocolate by a length for second.

"I really liked him today," Spina said. "He ran great sprinting, but he's better around two turns, and the last time he ran around two turns, Paco rode him and he won. I was lucky enough to get him back and it was all good."

Happy Offering has four wins from 14 starts (through Aug. 23), with earnings of \$187,893.

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J J Zo Zo takes Irish War Cry Handicap

Courtesy of Monmouth Park, July 12

There was a time when J J Zo Zo could flash dazzling speed. But that was as a 2-year-old in 2024 and on the dirt.

The 4-year-old gelding was able to reach into his past, and on the turf this time, surviving a seemingly-taxing speed duel before drawing off to a convincing 3¼-length victory in \$75,000 Irish War Cry Handicap at Monmouth Park July 12 for breeder/owner Jose A. Garcia.

It marked the first career stakes win for Cesar Alcala, who took over the training from Jose Sanchez two starts ago.

"It's a great feeling getting my first stakes win," said Alcala, who oversees a five-horse stable at Monmouth Park. "I can't say I was surprised. He has been training really well. He ran like he has been training. I thought he would show speed on the grass. I did not know it would be speed like the way he ran. Horses, when they are feeling good, they run good. He has been feeling good lately."

It was Alcala's first training win since June 24, 2023.

Ridden by Charlie Marquez, J J Zo Zo hooked up with Gold Trust through early fractions of :22.71 and :45.87 to the half of the 1-mile turf feature. Even after reaching 6 furlongs in 1:10.17, the son of Sea Wizard had plenty in reserve.

"He was coming from sprints so I knew he would have some early speed," said Marquez, riding J J Zo Zo for the first time. "I didn't anticipate being on the front, let alone going :22.71 and :45.87. I thought Gold Trust had speed, There Are No Words had speed and Happy Offering had speed. I thought it was going to be a fast tempo up front and that I would sit behind it and get what I could get.

"But he broke so sharply we went on with it and stole it. At first my intention was not to be on the lead. I wanted to get out of there and not go as fast as we did early. He was just so locked in and wanted to be there so I said 'if that's what you want we're going to stay here.'"

There Are No Words, off at 3-2 in the wagering, rallied for second, three-quarters of a length ahead of longshot Spiritinthenight. Gold Trust, let go at 8-5, finished a tiring fourth.

The victory was the fourth in 13 career starts for J J Zo Zo, who won the Smoke Glacken Stakes sprinting on the dirt as a 2-year-old. This was his first race around two turns.

"I was not worried about the speed duel even though they were going fast," said Alcala. "I know my horse. We gelded him after his 3-year-old season. I think that has helped him settled down."

J J Zo Zo had made two previous grass starts, finishing second in the 5-furlong Joey P. Handicap for state-breds in 2025. He was seventh in his only other grass try.

"When I asked him to run at the three-eighths he really took off," said Marquez. "He never stopped running, which was surprising given how fast we were going."



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La Resolana earns first stakes win in Eleven North Handicap

Gerardo Franco's homebred La Resolana broke through for her first stakes victory Aug. 23, taking the \$76,500 Eleven North Handicap at Monmouth Park in her stakes debut.

The daughter of Engage, one of two 3-year-olds in the field of seven, entered the race riding a three-race winning streak and boasting a record of four wins from five career starts at Monmouth Park. She broke from the rail in the seven-horse field and settled into third early, tracking pacesetter Lidia Rose while awaiting her cue from jockey Paco Lopez. Sent on a two-wide bid around the turn, La Resolana asserted herself in the stretch and drew off to a decisive $\frac{4}{4}$ -length victory over favored Summer's Comin.

Out of the Drosselmeyer mare Sweetest Yet, herself a stakes-placed performer, La Resolana improved her career record to 5-for-7 with the win, pushing her earnings to \$174,031.



Cairo Surprise pulls away to win New Jersey Breeders Handicap

Cairo Surprise lived up to the hype in the \$75,000 New Jersey Breeders Handicap Aug. 23, going off as the heavy favorite for breeder/owner Hope Haskell Jones and trainer Cal Lynch. The victory marked his third win in his last four starts, two of them New Jersey-bred stakes.

Cairo Surprise and jockey Paco Lopez sat content in third, tracking Wildncrazynight and Speaking through a quick opening quarter-mile in 21.97 seconds and a half-mile in :44.55. On the far turn, Cairo Surprise swept past the leaders and took command at the top of the stretch before drawing away for a three-quarter-length victory over Boardwalk Jack, who finished $\frac{2}{4}$ lengths clear of third-place Speaking.

The win was the fifth of Cairo Surprise's career from 10 starts, to go along with four runner-up finishes and a third. The son of Cairo Prince out of the multiple stakes-winning Giant Surprise mare Groovy Surprise has career earnings of \$240,600.



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A check or money order for \$100.00 must accompany this form. Spouses are encouraged to join the **TBANJ** under joint membership status. This fee would total \$150.00 per couple. Each spouse must fill out a separate form to accompany the payment. Membership will be effective upon receipt and will be in force each calendar year and must be renewed annually.

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