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In This Issue

Book'em Danno comes back running but no Dubai trip

Rutgers Equine Science Center reminds you to check your pastures for poisonous plants

Rutgers Equine Science Center's Equine Pasture Management: "A Year-Round Approach"

TBANJ Membership Application

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Book'em Danno comes back running but no Dubai trip

by Bill Finley



The latter part of 2024 was not kind to New Jersey-bred star Book'em Danno. The winner of the Grade 1 Woody Stephens, he lost his final three races, which included a fifth-place finish, beaten 5½ lengths, in the Cigar Mile-G2 at Aqueduct. That was one of the worst races of his career.

Ninety-seven days after the Cigar he made his return in the \$100,000 Boston Handicap at Colonial Downs, where he looked like the old Danno. Even though the race, which was restricted to Virginia-bred or Virginia certified horses, scratched down to three horses, the two that were left as competitors to Book'em Danno



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had solid credentials. Repo Rocks is a Grade 3 winner who came into the race with \$994,246 in earnings, and Celtic Contender is a multiple restricted stakes winner at Laurel.

For the opening half-mile, the race was a battle as the three were never separated by more than a length. Book'em Danno held the lead at the eighth-pole, which is where he went into high gear, winning by 2½ lengths under Paco Lopez. Repo Rocks was second. He earned a 96 Beyer figure.

"I know it scratched down to a small field but they were the three main players entered in the race," trainer Derek Ryan said. "We got what we wanted out of it. They ran fast but good horses will do that. The other two were both stakes winners, legitimate hard-knocking horses. I got more out of it than I was looking for. We got a perfect trip, a perfect everything. After his last couple of races I wanted to get a win."

Prior to the Boston, Ryan had said he was using the race as a prep for the April 5 races in Dubai. They were considering the \$2 million Group 1 Dubai Golden Shaheen at 6 furlongs and the \$1 million Godolphin Mile-G2. But Ryan decided that he didn't want to come back with just three weeks of rest.

"He's up here in Ocala, rolling around in a round pen right now," he said in March. "We're not going to Dubai. It's too close. I'd have to ship next Sunday. It's three weeks and I don't like to run back in three weeks. Then you miss the early summer races here. Right now, it just doesn't fit in."

The hope is that by skipping the races in Dubai, Book'em Danno will be set up for a strong 2025 U.S. campaign and, unlike last year, finish up while on the top of his game.

"Even in the Cigar Mile, we thought he didn't run his race, but if you look at his Thoro-Graph numbers, he was running 1s in most of his races. The Cigar was probably a little slower than his other races but I think it was more a function of it being at the end of hard

campaign," co-owner Jay Briscione said. "He was also down on the rail and had traffic issues. He lost to Locked, one of the best handicap horses in the country. So maybe it was more a function of the competition than his wearing down."

The Boston served its purpose. He got the win, he got back on track and he should be ready for tougher assignments ahead.

"I picked out the Virginia race early on because it looked like a good jumping off point," Briscione said. "Before they put out the condition book I called and asked if they were going to write any restricted races and they said that they were. That ticked up our antenna and we decided on that race for his comeback. The race worked out for very well."

Briscione said that Book'em Danno's races this year will likely be five or six weeks apart. If they follow that schedule, the Grade 1 Churchill Downs Stakes on Derby Day could be where the son of Bucchero makes his next start.

"The goal is to be back at Saratoga for the True North and for the Forego," he said. "If there's something in between we'll see. It just depends on his conditioning and how he comes out of his races. And then we'll probably run in New York in the fall, maybe in the Vosburgh. Derek seems to think he wants to go longer. Whether he gets back to a mile I don't know."

Briscione, one of six partners who race under the name of Atlantic Six Racing LLC, said that his group has received several offers to purchase Book'em Danno. But they are not interested.

"You never want to get ahead of yourself in this sport," he said. "We know we have a once-in-a-lifetime chance with this horse. We've turned down offers for him. We said, 'What are we going to do, take the money and try to buy another him?' Most likely that's not going to happen. We are enjoying this immensely. We realize we have caught lightning in a bottle."

And all signs point to a productive 2025.

"You don't know what he's going to be from 2 to 3 and 3 to 4, but the way he came around, it looks like we are in a good position," Briscione said. "Derek has done a tremendous job with this horse. Just to be as consistent on the sheets as he has, that's been pretty incredible. If he moves forward even a little but that would put him in every race. But we don't have to bang heads every time. There's a lot of low hanging fruit out there. You have to weigh the risks and the rewards."

The win was the seventh from 12 starts for Book'em Danno, whose career earnings stand at \$1,098,125. A two-time stakes winner at 2 and three-time stakes winner at 3, the gelding is just 4 and has not had a hard campaign. Could it be that we have yet to see his best?

Rutgers Equine Science Center reminds you to check your pastures for poisonous plants

There's hope that spring is right around the corner! Maybe it's wishful thinking, but horses are shedding out their winter coats which means the days are getting longer. Spring will bring fresh green grass along with it. Lurking among these juicy shoots may be some plants that are harmful to your horse. It's never a bad idea to review poisonous plants and check your pasture for them.

Good pasture management is one of your best defenses against those lurking plants. Despite all your best efforts, you



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might still end up with some unwanted plants in your pasture. Because of this, it can be a good idea to take a walk through your pasture to check for these plants. There are some plants that only grow in certain regions of the world. Because of this you'll want to be familiar with and find resources that are specific to your geographic location to help you in identifying any potentially dangerous plants in your pasture. After doing some browsing through extension publications, it looks like there are some plants that are fairly common across a number of geographic locations, especially within the United States.

There's not just one substance that makes a plant poisonous. There are a number of different chemical compounds that make plants toxic to animals. For

an example, a class of compounds called alkaloids are what makes plants in the nightshade family toxic, while its glycosides that make wild cherries toxic.

The symptoms associated with poisoning vary because there are so many different compounds which could be causing the problem. These symptoms can range all the way from mild irritation or sickness to death. The symptoms and severity of the symptoms are also dependent on how much of the plant an animal consumed and what part of the plant the animal consumed. Some plants concentrate the poisonous compounds in their seeds while other will have higher concentrations in their leaves or stems.

If you suspect your horse has eaten a poisonous plant, you need to contact your veterinarian immediately. They will

be able to provide supportive care and recommend the best course of action.

You should also save the plant that you think your horse nibbled on as this can be used in helping to diagnose the problem. Don't forget that these poisonous plants can also be found in your horse's hay. If you're not finding anything in the pasture, you may want to take a look at the hay.

The next time you're out walking through the pasture to fetch your horse, take a few minutes to notice the plants growing under your feet. It's also a good idea to routinely walk your pasture with the purpose of checking for poisonous plants. You'll want to be sure you check those fence lines as well! There are plenty of plants that like to lurk along the edges of the pasture and escape your notice.

Rutgers Equine Science Center's Equine Pasture Management: "A Year-Round Approach"

Robert Mickel, Regional Livestock Agent

Reviewed by Carey Williams, Ph.D., Extension Specialist in Equine Management

Introduction

Pasture management is an evolving dynamic system requiring care and supervision year-round. Equine practitioners often expect their pastures to provide areas for exercise, training, and forage production, without providing adequate levels of plant management to obtain these goals and expectations. Pasture management is not a one-shot deal, but should be regarded as a system in constant fluctuation. Equine practitioners need to assess pasture management much as they do horse management, relationship to nutrition, grooming, eventing, breed selection, health care, rest/recuperation, and overall general equine common sense.

Nutrition

Pastures, much like horses, need a balanced diet if they are to attain optimal

growth and performance. Unfortunately though, pastures quite often are left to fend for themselves until such time as they either become an eyesore or have little or no stand utility. When meeting their horses' nutritional demands, producers go all out in balancing horses' diets by using prescribed rations and feeds. Reaching the same level of management for the pasture should be a goal of equine practitioners. To achieve the same level for their pastures, growers need to begin by taking a soil test at least every other year, if not every year, to monitor nutritional needs. Nutrition requirements for pH and plant growth are essential if optimal growth and performance are desired. Much like the ration for a horse, a balanced diet for pastures goes very far in assisting in overall performance and forage

production. Pastures with an average pH of 6.5 (or a range of 6.0-7.0) will allow for maximum nutrient utilization for optimal pasture growth and production. Fertilize pastures according to the seasons and expected performance demands. Apply fertilizer based upon soil test results to maximize pasture potentials. Applications split throughout the pasture season encourage initial spring growth, regenerative summer growth, and, most important, fall root strengthening and subsequent winter protection.

Grooming

Grooming pastures is another essential criterion of successful pasture management and subsequent plant and forage growth. Once pastures are grazed to adequate levels (3-4 inches), remove horses and then clip or mow,



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simultaneously drag, and fertilize. The mowing will cut off uneaten vegetation (forages and weeds) and will be extremely beneficial for regenerating new plant growth. This new growth will be more palatable and nutritious for successive pasturing in an applied rotation practice.

Dragging pastures with commercial tine or chain drags, or even with home-made drag designs, will help break up manure deposits and aerate the sod or thatch cover. Depending on each grower's situation, the rotation of use should be done on a four- to five-week schedule.

The size of the pasture and the related stocking needs will determine the rotational schedule in conjunction with weather conditions, nutrient practices, and the pasture quality. Stocking rates will have a tremendous impact on pastures, as will the eventing use of that pasture.

One horse per acre should be a common goal for pasturing success in much of New Jersey. When combined with larger equine numbers, intensive grazing of one or more horses per acre can be achieved in an integrated pasture-rotation system. If the pasture is used for other reasons, i.e., turnout, exercise, and for various eventing/training, the relative success of the pasture will be impeded accordingly.

Seed Variety

Pasture forage species and blend selections should be analyzed, much like matching equine breeds to the task or specific job you want the horse to do. You wouldn't generally pick a standardbred for dressage, so in parallel you would not plant alfalfa in high-traffic exercise paddocks. For general purposes it is best to select a mix of grasses and legumes that provide pasturing needs throughout the growing season.

Cool-season species, such as timothy, perennial ryegrass, bromegrass, bluegrass, reed canary grass, and orchard grass provide early grazing in spring and early summer. They will also provide

grazing when cooler temperatures arrive in fall. These grasses perform adequately when managed properly and provide partial pasture during the summer months. Cool-season grasses in our area generally flower or bloom by mid-May and continue into early June. At this time they tend to mature and go to seed, producing coarse stalky forage that horses generally will not eat. Mowing at this time is critical, but generally should be done before the plants reach this stage of maturity.

Warm-season species will continue to grow and bloom during the hotter, drier summer months if properly grazed, fertilized, and clipped. Within this grouping are legumes (clovers, trefoils, and vetches) that mature with the cool-season varieties, but offer continued regrowth during summer and into early fall under proper management.

Rest-Rotation-Recuperation

Pastures, not unlike horses, need rest and recuperation if they are to maximize production goals. Rest for a pasture will reduce the stress from equine traffic and allow the forages to recuperate and establish new growth. Rotational goals should allow plants to reestablish new leaf growth for photosynthesis. Without rest the pasture's regenerative process will not respond well to fertilization and water efficiently. Proper pasture health care, not unlike equine health care, is essential for maximum production. Pastures may also need insect, disease, and/or weed controls based on diagnosis by a specialist. If left untreated, infested pastures will be less productive and possibly may even die out. The higher the stress factor placed upon the pasture, the greater the chance for poor performance and production.

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

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NAME _____ SS#/FEDERAL I.D.# _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____ COUNTY _____
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- Breeder A breeder member shall be a person who owns the required interest in a broodmare or registered stallion domiciled in New Jersey; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. A breeder member shall have voting rights.
- Owner An owner member shall be a person who owns a registered New Jersey- bred; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. An owner member will not have voting rights.
- Associate An associate member is a person who is interested in owning, breeding, or racing horses in the State of New Jersey or in fostering economic activity through the breeding, ownership and/or racing of horses in the State of New Jersey. An associate member will not have voting rights.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Membership Dues

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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