

MONBA

When Jack and Laurie Wolf's Starlight Stable burst on the racing scene in 2002, they had instant success with Harlan's Holiday. When Starlight went into partnership with Paul Saylor and Johns Martin, they had instant success with dual champion Ashado and other top-class horses. When Starlight teamed up with Donald Lucarelli, you guessed it, instant success with Octave and a slew of other major stakes winners.

This year, Starlight, Saylor (who branched out on his own with champion Fleet Indian in 2006), and Lucarelli have joined together in partnership and find themselves hot on the Triple Crown trail with their \$200,000 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga yearling purchase Monba. If only a fraction of the positive energy generated by Starlight and partners transfers over to Monba, then the son of Maria's Mon should be on his way to a prosperous career.

After breaking his maiden by 4¼ lengths on Keeneland's Polytrack in his debut last October, Monba scored a gutsy victory in a one-mile allowance race at Churchill Downs five weeks later. Sent to Hollywood Park for the grade I CashCall Futurity, Monba, who had stalked the pace in his first two starts, didn't have the best of luck, breaking awkwardly, getting bumped, and dropping well back in the pack in a 12-horse field. Nearing the top of the stretch, he still was back in 10th and looked to be going nowhere on the Cushion Track.

Unless you were at Hollywood Park, that was the last you saw of him, as he swung to the far outside and disappeared off the TV screen. Then, as Into Mischief, Colonel John, and Massive Drama approached the wire, a blur appeared on the screen, directly behind them. That blur was Monba, who somehow had managed to close to within 2¼ lengths of the victorious Into Mischief. And he was just getting started.

Everything is now in place for a big spring. The talent is there, the breeding is there, and, of course, the Starlight magic won't hurt. 🐾

On the surface, Monba's race record may not appear to put him high on anyone's list of Triple Crown hopefuls. Appearances, however, can be deceiving. The colt's stakes effort was in the CashCall Futurity (gr. I), in which he lost all chance when slammed hard at the break and still finished a fast-closing fourth, beaten only 2¼ lengths for it all.

Monba is a son of the late Maria's Mon, who was euthanized due to illness in September 2007. Champion juvenile male in 1995, Maria's Mon is the sire of 34 stakes winners including 2006 champion 3-year-old filly Wait a While, 2001 Kentucky Derby (gr. I) winner Monarchos, and 2006 Malibu Stakes (gr. I) winner Latent Heat.

Injury prevented Maria's Mon from getting the chance to show his ability over distances longer than 1¼ miles, but he was bred to go longer. His sire, Wavering Monarch, was a two-time grade I winner over nine furlongs and was by the staying Majestic Light out of a Buckpasser mare. The dam of Maria's Mon, Carlotta Maria, never won but is by Caro, a French group I winner at 2,100 meters (approx. 10.5 furlongs).

Hamba, the dam of Monba, is a daughter of 1989 Belmont Stakes (gr. I) Easy Goer. She is a half-sister to 1985 Alcibiades (gr. II) winner Silent Account (by Private Account), 1988 Cornwallis (Eng-III) winner Hadif (by Clever Trick), 1989 Arlington-Washington Futurity (gr. I) winner Secret Hello (by Private Account), and 1993 Anne Arundel winner By Your Leave (by Private Account), all produced from 1976 Pocahontas Stakes winner Ciao.

None of Ciao's progeny won in stakes company at more than nine furlongs, but Monba may receive a boost from his 4x4 inbreeding to Buckpasser, the broodmare sire of both Wavering Monarch and Easy Goer. The colt is also inbred 5x4 to Raise a Native through Majestic Prince and Alydar. 🐾

MONBA
Gray/roan colt, foaled March 16, 2005;
bred in Ky. by Mill Ridge Farm
and Jamm

Maria's Mon	Wavering Monarch Carlotta Maria
Hamba	Easy Goer Ciao

Haskin's Derby Dozen

	HORSE/TRAINER	PEDIGREE	COMMENT
1	PYRO Steve Asmussen	Pulpit—Wild Vision, by Wild Again	Hard to evaluate Risen Star because of the slow pace and final time compared to the other stakes. But for him to rally from last, meander his way out of traffic, and then come home in :23 and final sixteenth in under :06 was impressive.
2	COURT VISION Bill Mott	Gulch—Weekend Storm, by Storm Bird	Up to five-eighths in his works; easy 1:02½ breeze should have him about ready for his debut. He doesn't need to win, just show his usual stretch kick. A big effort against a quality field likely would put him back on top.
3	MONBA Todd Pletcher	Maria's Mon—Hamba, by Easy Goer	Breezed five panels in 1:02 for possible debut in Fountain of Youth. He still has a lot to prove, but he's run well over different surfaces; he's shipped to California, and looks to be a tough, hard-knocking horse who will stay.
4	WAR PASS Nick Zito	Cherokee Run—Vue, by Mr. Prospector	He's been sharpened with three straight half-mile works, the last two in :46% and :47% breezing. He appears ready for a good five-eighths work to give him some bottom. Looks even better after Pyro's powerful victory.
5	COLONEL JOHN Eoin Harty	Tiznow—Sweet Damsel, by Turkoman	Followed up his 1:10½ work with a five-eighths drill in :58% at Hollywood Park. Headed for 1½-mile Sham Stakes, where he could face Crown the Thorns. He hasn't done anything wrong yet, and looks to be top-class.
6	TALE OF EKATI Barclay Tagg	Tale of the Cat—Silence Beauty, by Sunday Silence	Tagg's been a bit low-key and hasn't announced any plans yet, but that's not unusual. He breezed a solid five furlongs in 1:01 and should be ready for a big effort first time out. Some question his stamina; just needs to keep improving.
7	CROWN OF THORNS Dick Mandella	Repent—Crowning Touch, by Thunder Gulch	The more I see of this colt the more impressive he looks. We don't know yet how good a field he beat in the Bob Lewis, but runner-up Coast Guard could be any kind. Has a classy way about him and love the way he moves.
8	EL GATO MALO Craig Dollase	El Corredor—One Bad Cat, by Mountain Cat	He could run next in Sham, El Camino Real Derby, or wait for the San Felipe. West Point has a rocket on the East Coast named Saratoga Russell, so they could have a two-pronged attack if both these colts can stretch out.
9	Z FORTUNE Steve Asmussen	Siphon—Fortunate Faith, by Fortunate Prospect	Appeared to be running a winning race in the Risen Star until stablemate Pyro blew right by him in the final furlong. It was his first career defeat, and you have to wonder how he'll stack up against Pyro going longer.
10	ANAK NAKAL Nick Zito	Victory Gallop—Misk, by Quiet American	Turned in a solid six-furlong work in 1:14%. Kentucky Jockey Club field may be suspect, so it'll be interesting to see how he's developed from two to three. With his pedigree, there is a lot of room for improvement.
11	INTO MISCHIEF Dick Mandella	Harlan's Holiday— Leslie's Lady, by Tricky Creek	Ran into a tiger in Georgie Boy in San Vicente. Seven furlongs is not his game, especially dropping back from two turns. Shied from whip and jumped over to left lead at crucial point. Should improve stretching back out.
12	MAJESTIC WARRIOR Bill Mott	A.P. Indy—Dream Supreme, by Seeking the Gold	Breezed five furlongs in 1:02%. Horses get fit in a hurry over the Payson Park track, so his much-awaited debut shouldn't be too far off. How he returns and how he does stretching out to two turns will tell us a lot about him.

For more horses on the Triple Crown Trail, go to tcm.bloodhorse.com

MONBA

Jack Wolf has been the owner of record for three Kentucky Derby (gr. I) starters. None have reached the Derby winner's circle thus far, but that doesn't mean their owner hasn't been there—albeit erroneously.

"I was in college, and buddy of mine and I went to Churchill Downs for the Derby," Wolf recently recalled. "I can't remember the name of the horse or the exact year, but when the big race was over we bolted across the track to have our picture taken in the winner's circle. Of course, we weren't invited, but that didn't stop us."

The fact another runner from Wolf's Starlight Racing syndicate may reach the Derby this year is due largely to the enthusiasm he has shown for the racing game. Along with wife Laurie, majority partners Donald and Barbara Lucarelli, and regular partner Paul Saylor, the Louisville native is determined to get into that Derby picture with a winner of his own.

Longtime racing fans, the Wolfs founded Starlight Stables in 2000 with the purchase of six yearlings at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July sale. Best of that group was the multiple grade I-winning Harlan's Holiday. Conditioned by Ken McPeck early in his career, the Harlan colt won the 2002 editions of the Florida Derby (gr. I) and Blue Grass Stakes (gr. I) en route to a seventh-place finish in the Derby. He scored his third grade I win in the Donn Handicap the next year, after moving

In 2007, Wolf and his partners recommitted to the pursuit of racing's highest trophies, opening their syndicate to a few select individuals. Seeking quality over quantity, they plan to continue their method of purchasing yearlings to sell and race. The added capital should boost their competitive edge.

"The game plan is to have four or five entities instead of 25-50," Wolf explained. "Last year we attracted two new partners, and what we're trying to do is find one more entity, and that would pretty much complete it. We're keeping it small, but at the same time we're diversifying our capital."

Of course, maintaining a profile in classic competition is a high priority for the small operation that gets big results.

"Competing in races like the Derby, that's why I do this stuff," Wolf said. "If we were ever lucky enough to win, that would be the ultimate dream come true. Sometimes we do the wrong thing, but we maintain the same philosophy on how to train and run our horses."

Now, heading into the 2008 Triple Crown season, Wolf is hoping Monba will shine bright for Starlight.

"People were making a fuss over this horse, so I said 'Let me go look at his races again,'" he said. "Forget about whether he won or lost; when he gallops out he's really finishing up, and that's what impresses me. I think he can get the distance and will be more involved in the pace than he's showed. Hopefully, he'll prove me right." 🍀



REED PALMER



ANNE M. EBENHARDT

Jack Wolf, owner of Monba

to the barn of Todd Pletcher.

Supporting his operation with a team of quality horsemen, Wolf has enlisted the skills of Pletcher, who trains the majority of the Starlight runners, and bloodstock agent Barry Berkelhammer, who selects their yearlings at the sales and supervises breaking at his AbraCadabra Farms in Ocala, Fla.

"We're doing the same thing we've been doing for the last eight or nine years," said Wolf. "We go to Fasig-Tipton in July and August, and Keeneland in September, with the idea of buying 15-20 yearlings. I've been to every one of those sales with Barry and my wife, buying with or without partners."

With a master's degree in economics from Murray State University and a background as a teacher and hedge fund manager for Columbus Partners in Atlanta, Ga., Wolf combines his knowledge of the investment world with his love for racing. Successful purchases by his stable include dual champion Ashado, Purge, Octave, and Keyed Entry.

"I think there's a lot of correlation between my background (in investing) and the racing industry, especially when it comes to buying horses at the sales," the owner remarked. "There are a lot of similarities, like how to bid, how much to bid, and sticking to your limits."

Triple Crown Preps

RACE	DATE	TRACK	PURSE	DIST.	TIME	FIRST THREE FINISHERS
Risen Star Stakes (gr. III)	2-9	FG	\$300g	8.5	1:44.68	Pyro, Z Fortune, Visionaire
Turf Paradise Derby	2-9	TuP	\$100g	8.5	1:42.81	Nikki'sgoldensteed, Ez Dreamer, Meer Kat
San Vicente Stakes (gr. II)	2-10	SA	\$150g	7	1:20.01	Georgie Boy, Into Mischief, Massive Drama
Darley OBS Ch'ship Stakes (R)	2-11	OTC	\$100g	8.5		
Sam F. Davis Stakes	2-16	Tam	\$200g	8.5		
Borderland Derby	2-16	Sun	\$100g	8.5		
Hallandale Beach Stakes	2-16	GP	\$100g	8.5T		
Jim's Orbit Stakes	2-16	Hou	\$125g	8		
Southwest Stakes (gr. III)	2-18	Aqu	\$250g	8		
Fred "Cappy" Capossela Stakes	2-18	Aqu	\$75a	6		
Fountain of Youth Stakes (gr. II)	2-24	GP	\$350g	9		
Sham Stakes (gr. III)	3-1	SA	\$200g	9		
John Battaglia Memorial Stakes	3-1	TP	\$100g	8.5		
Sportsman's Paradise	3-1	DeD	\$75g	8		
Baldwin Stakes (gr. III T)	3-2	SA	\$100a	6.5T		
Louisiana Derby (gr. II)	3-8	FG	\$600g	8.5		
El Camino Real Derby (gr. III)	3-8	BM	\$150g	8.5		
Gotham BC Stakes (gr. II)	3-8	Aqu	\$200/50	8.5		
Rebel Stakes (gr. II)	3-15	OP	\$300g	8.5		
San Felipe Stakes (gr. II)	3-15	SA	\$200g	8.5		
Tampa Bay Derby (gr. III)	3-15	Tam	\$300g	8.5		
Pasadena Stakes	3-15	SA	\$75a	8T		
New Mexico Breeders' Derby	3-15	Sun	\$100g	8		
WinStar Derby	3-16	Sun	\$600g	9		
Lane's End Stakes (gr. II)	3-22	TP	\$500g	9		
Private Terms Stakes	3-22	Lrl	\$80g	8		
Rushaway Stakes	3-22	TP	\$100g	8.5		
Florida Derby (gr. I)	3-29	GP	\$1000g	9		
Palm Beach Stakes (gr. III T)	3-29	GP	\$150g	9T		
Transylvania Stakes (gr. III T)	4-4	Kee	\$150g	8.5T		
Santa Anita Derby (gr. I)	4-5	SA	\$750g	9		

BENOIT & ASSOCIATES



Georgie Boy

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