

Courtly Choice, Guardian Angel AS to face familiar foes in Scioto stakes

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Hightstown, NJ — Courtly Choice and Guardian Angel AS head to Scioto Downs off big wins this past weekend in Canada and both will see familiar faces when they line up behind the starting gate for their respective stakes events Saturday (Sept. 7) at the central Ohio racetrack.

Courtly Choice won the Canadian Pacing Derby on Aug. 31 at Woodbine Mohawk Park and will meet six rivals from that race in Saturday's \$440,000 Jim Ewart Memorial for older pacers. The group includes the horses that finished in positions two through six in the CPD — Lather Up, Western Fame, This Is The Plan, Jimmy Freight, and McWicked — as well as eighth-place Filibuster Hanover.

Guardian Angel AS won the Maple Leaf Trot at Mohawk and will see two foes from that event in Saturday's \$220,000 Charlie Hill Memorial for older trotters, runner-up Atlanta and third-place finisher Marion Marauder.

The Charlie Hill is the 13th race on Scioto's 16-race card, with an approximate post time of 10:30 p.m., and will be followed by the Ewart. Post time is 6:30 p.m. for the evening's first race.



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Courtly Choice is making his second trip to the Buckeye State and will look to make it as successful as the first. Last year, he won the Little Brown Jug at the Delaware County Fairgrounds, one of 10 victories he posted in 2018. Among his other triumphs was the Meadowlands Pace.

This year, the 4-year-old son of Art Major-Lady Ashlee Ann has won four of 12 starts and earned \$321,100, pushing his career total to \$1.28 million. In addition to the Canadian Pacing Derby, he won the Commodore Barry Invitational on May 26 and a preliminary round of the Graduate Series on May 4. Following the Commodore Barry, Courtly Choice was winless in six races but has rebounded and won two of his last three starts.

“During the summer, he was sort of fading coming for home and bearing out and not finishing his miles off as much as we would have liked,” trainer Blake MacIntosh said. “Even (in the Commodore Barry) he wasn't as strong as I would have liked. He wasn't himself. I know he's had an OK year, but he just hasn't had the year we expected him to have.”

MacIntosh hopes two factors could help Courtly Choice enjoy success the remainder of the season. First, the horse battled a low white blood cell count earlier this summer, but it has returned to normal. Second, an equipment adjustment seems to have made the horse more comfortable on the racetrack and improved his ability to better finish races. His final quarter mile in the CPD was :25.3, which was the best in the race.

“Hopefully he’s peaking at the right time and we can get back in the running for aged horse of the year and go from there,” MacIntosh said. “Lather Up has been massive all year. You’ve got McWicked, Jimmy (Freight), This Is The Plan; it’s a tough year. It’s a stellar bunch. I bet this is one of the toughest aged groups in a long time.”

Lather Up, who is the 9-5 morning-line favorite in the Ewart Memorial, saw a four-race win streak ended by Courtly Choice’s upset at odds of 34-1 in the Canadian Pacing Derby. The streak began with a victory in the Graduate Series championship in 1:46 to equal the fastest mile in history and continued with the William R. Haughton Memorial, Sam McKee Memorial, and Dan Patch Stakes.

McWicked, the 2018 Horse of the Year, and 2017 Ewart winner, has two stakes victories this season and is the 9-2 second choice followed by Courtly Choice at 5-1.

“You look at those horses (in the Ewart) and there’s not one horse in that race that couldn’t win it,” MacIntosh said. “There are 10 horses and 10 could win it. It comes down to whoever gets the right trip and has the most horse on the end of it.”



Guardian Angel AS won the Maple Leaf Trot at Mohawk and will see two foes from that event in Saturday's \$220,000 Charlie Hill Memorial for older trotters. New Image Media photo.

In the Charlie Hill Memorial, Guardian Angel AS is the 8-5 morning-line favorite despite drawing post eight in the nine-horse field. Atlanta, who will start from post seven, is the 5-2 second choice.

"It's a tough spot, but I've got a good horse," said Tim Tetrick, who drives Guardian Angel AS. "If I can get him close turning for home, I think I've got a good shot to win. He's so versatile. He can get off the (starting gate) really fast and he likes his work.

"His gait is amazing. He's got so much athletic ability and covers so much ground. He feels as good as any trotter you'll ever sit behind. He's very pretty on the racetrack. When you watch from the side, he's definitely going to catch your eye. He's gorgeous."

Guardian Angel AS, a 5-year-old son of [Archangel](#)-Provide AS, has won seven of 10 races this season and earned \$619,434. In addition to the Maple Leaf Trot, the stallion has captured the Spirit of Massachusetts, Cleveland Trotting Classic, and Maxie Lee Memorial Invitational.

For his career, Guardian Angel AS has won 23 of 50 races and earned \$1.13 million for trainer Anette Lorentzon.

"He's done everything we've asked him to do and he's having a great 5-year-old season, that's for sure," Tetrick said. "Anette and (her sister) Anna have done a great job with him. They haven't over-raced him and raced him where they needed to. They've given him every opportunity to come back at (ages) 5, 6, and 7 to be a great horse."

Tetrick has driven Guardian Angel AS in nine of his 10 races this season and 19 times overall, sitting behind the horse at least once every year.

“He’s grown so much, it’s amazing,” Tetrick said. “At 2 and 3, he wouldn’t always fight a horse. He had tons of ability, but if they got to his number he’d let them beat him. Now, if they get to him, he just takes off more. He’s really grown that way.

“He’s gotten a lot tougher and more mentally stable. It’s pretty cool to see a horse grow that much.”

The Charlie Hill Memorial includes three horses to have been named Trotter of the Year: Atlanta, who received the honor in 2018; Marion Marauder, in 2016; and Pinkman, in 2015.

Following is the field for the Charlie Hill Memorial.

PP-Horse-Driver-Trainer-M/L

- 1-Bridge To Jesse’s-Trace Tetrick-Roger Welch-20/1
- 2-I Know My Chip-Ronnie Wrenn Jr.-Walter Haynes Jr.-25/1
- 3-Marion Marauder-Scott Zeron-Paula Wellwood-9/2
- 4-Plunge Blue Chip-Ake Svanstedt-Ake Svanstedt-6/1
- 5-Mission Accepted-Chris Page-Ron Burke-8/1
- 6-Pinkman-Brett Miller-Per Engblom-10/1
- 7-Atlanta-Yannick Gingras-Ron Burke-5/2
- 8-Guardian Angel AS-Tim Tetrick-Anette Lorentzon-8/5
- 9-Top Flight Angel-Andy Miller-Julie Miller-20/1

Following is the field for the Jim Ewart Memorial.

PP-Horse-Driver-Trainer-M/L

- 1-Jimmy Freight-Scott Zeron-Andrew Harris-6/1
- 2-McWicked-Brian Sears-Casie Coleman-9/2
- 3-Donttellmeagain-Tim Tetrick-Jim King Jr.-15/1
- 4-Western Fame-Dan Noble-Dan Noble-8/1
- 5-This Is The Plan-Yannick Gingras-Ron Burke-6/1
- 6-Filibuster Hanover-Chris Page-Ron Burke-15/1
- 7-Courtly Choice-James MacDonald-Blake MacIntosh-5/1
- 8-Lather Up-Montrell Teague-Clyde Francis-9/5
- 9-Always A Prince-David Miller-Tyler George-20/1
- 10-Hitman Hill-Aaron Merriman-Chris Oakes-20/1

Note: Hitman Hill starts from the second tier.

