

BREEDERS' CUP

Corinthian draws off in Dirt Mile

By MARTY McGEE

OCEANPORT, N.J. – Corinthian perfectly filled the niche for which the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile was intended when he crushed seven other rivals Friday at Monmouth Park, capping a year during which he also won a definitive miler race, the Metropolitan Mile.

With Kent Desormeaux giving him a textbook ride, Corinthian took command from pace setting Gottcha Gold after turning for home, then pulled away to win by 6 1/2

lengths. Gottcha Gold, the local hero who won the Salvator Mile and Iselin Handicap

over the summer, held second, another 8 1/4 lengths before Discreet Cat, the 3-2 favorite in a field of eight.

Corinthian, owned by the Centennial Farms syndicate and based in New York with trainer Jimmy Jerkens, returned \$9.40 as the second choice after finishing the mile and 70-yard distance in 1:39.06.

"This colt is a fireball," Desormeaux said. "He just dragged me down the stretch."

The BC Dirt Mile was run amid trying conditions, with steady rain leaving the track a sea of mud. Nonetheless, a crowd of 27,803 turned out on the first Friday in Breeders' Cup history, helping with an all-sources handle of \$30,796,414, more than double the previous Monmouth record of \$14.1 million, set in August on Haskell Day.

Wanderin Boy took a brief early lead in the inaugural BC Dirt Mile but was quickly overhauled by Gottcha Gold as the field sped into the first turn. After alternating in third and fourth with Discreet Cat along the inside down the backstretch, Corinthian angled out at the quarter pole and swept past Gottcha Gold.

Desormeaux, who posted the third BC victory of his career but his first in 12 years, said he could have been caught wide early but elected to ease his mount back and get to the rail.

"It turned out to be the perfect position to keep his face clean," he said.

Discreet Cat was up in the final strides to get third from Wanderin Boy. Then came Lewis Michael, Xchanger, Park Avenue



MICHAEL J. MARTEN/HORSEPHOTOS

Corinthian, with jockey Kent Desormeaux up, cruises to a 6 1/2-length win in the inaugural Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile on Friday at Monmouth Park.

Ball, and High Finance. Forefathers was an early scratch from an original field of nine and was scheduled to run Saturday in the BC Sprint.

Corinthian, a 4-year-old Kentucky-bred by Pulpit, has won 6 of 12 career starts. After winning the Grade 1 Met Mile in May,

the colt finished sixth in the Suburban, then fourth in the Woodward. Corinthian subsequently recorded a series of strong works at his Belmont Park home base.

"He's been training great, but his last two races were subpar, so it was hard to get overly confident," said Jerkens, who

also won the 2005 BC Mile with Artie Schiller.

Gottcha Gold, ridden by Chuck Lopez, made no mistakes in controlling the pace but his mount was no match for the winner. "I couldn't be more proud of him," Lopez said.

Miserable weather leaves track waterlogged

By JAY PRIVMAN

OCEANPORT, N.J. – The Breeders' Cup arrived at Monmouth Park on Friday. The rain, regretfully, did not leave.

It was a raw, miserable day for the first day of the inaugural two-day Breeders' Cup, with persistent rain that soaked a main track and a turf course already waterlogged from rain in previous days.

The ongoing wet weather here, coupled with a grim forecast for Saturday morning, led Monmouth Park to announce to trainers on Friday afternoon that the main track would be closed for training on Saturday morning, the second day of the Breeders' Cup.

Preventing training in the morning is designed to put less wear and tear on the track in advance of the day's racing.

"We want to keep the track sealed," said Bob

Juliano, Monmouth Park's superintendent and director of facilities, who left the track sealed for racing on Friday. "We're probably going to get a good inch of rain [Saturday] morning, but it's supposed to clear out by 1 p.m. or 2."

The main track was listed as muddy for racing on Friday, then was changed to sloppy mid-way through the day. It yielded times near normal going two turns, and slightly faster than par in sprints. The day's first race, for 2-year-old maiden fillies going six furlongs, was run in 1:09.62, while the second race, for maiden 2-year-old males, went in 1:09.12 for six furlongs.

Jockeys who returned from races on the main track looked as though they were competing in the Mud Bowl. And while some horses did not appear to care for the mud, the surface was holding up well.

"The footing's fine," jockey Robby Albarado said after the seventh race.

Juliano said the track is sealed overnight every night. "And then if there's no rain, we open it up at 4 a.m.," he said. "If there's rain, we leave it sealed."

At 2 p.m. Friday, Juliano said he thought the turf would be listed as good for the first turf race Friday, the Epitome Breeders' Cup, whose post time was 3:15. "But it'll probably be downgraded to yielding after that," Juliano said.

However, by the time the Epitome was run, the turf already was downgraded to yielding.

The Epitome winner, Sea Chanter, ran one mile in 1:39.21.

"The footing's good," jockey Garrett Gomez said midway through the card. "There's a lot of water on it. They're going into it, but the footing's good."

As opposed to the main track, which can be sealed, Juliano was helpless to do anything with the turf.

"There's nothing we can do for the turf but let nature take its toll," Juliano said.

Nature took its toll on the crowd. Fans understandably huddled under the grandstand. Those who had seats in covered areas were cold yet dry. The thousands of outdoor, temporary seats set up for this event were largely abandoned.

On the apron in front of the grandstand, there were large sections of folding chairs – eight to a row, 12 rows to a section, a total of 96 seats per section. When the fifth race, the Inside Information Breeders' Cup, was being run, just five patrons occupied the four sections, or 384 seats, closest to the finish line.

The temporary bleachers on the clubhouse turn did not have one single soul sitting in them, braving the elements.

Windows offering shelter in enclosed areas fogged up, forcing patrons there to watch races on closed-circuit television.