



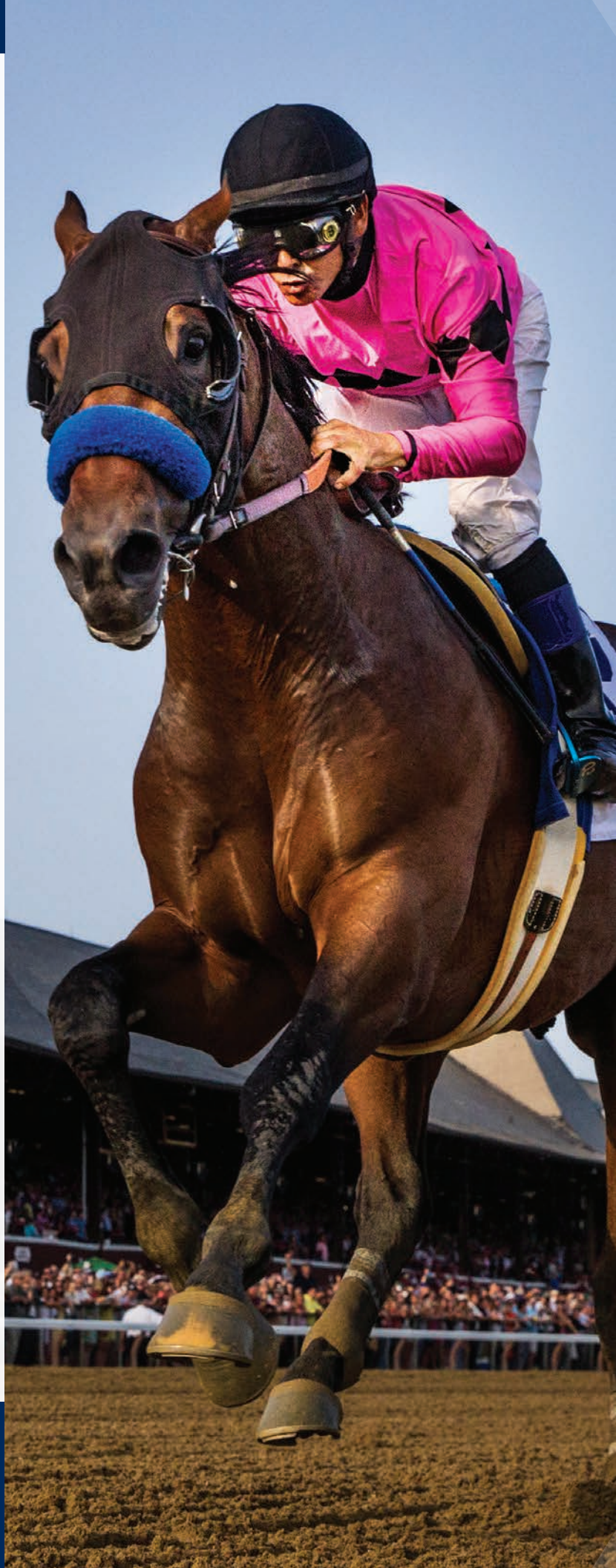
Travers Stakes

xb wager guide

August 25, 2018
Saratoga Race Course

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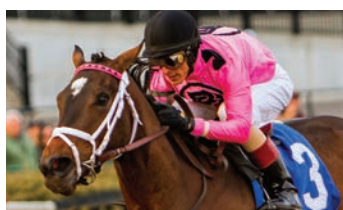
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Meet the Travers Contenders

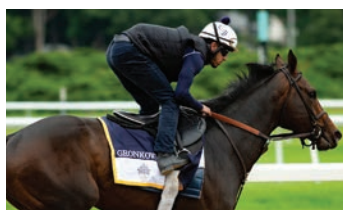
By Dustin Fabian, Xpressbet.com



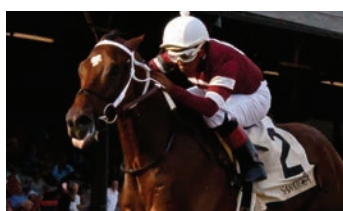
Good Magic: The deserving Travers favorite, Good Magic has finished first or second in 6-of-8 career starts including victories in the Haskell, Blue Grass and Breeders' Cup Juvenile. Justify dueled him into submission in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness, but now that he's retired, the throne atop this division appears up for grabs and Good Magic is the leading candidate to stake his claim.



Wonder Gadot: No filly has won the Travers in over a century, but that could change in 2018 as Wonder Gadot becomes the first female since 1979 to run in Saratoga's signature race. Wonder Gadot's impressive resume includes victories in the first two legs of Canada's Triple Crown – the Queen's Plate and Prince Of Wales – as well as a runner-up performance in the Kentucky Oaks.



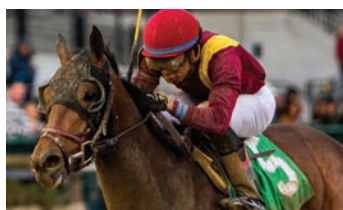
Gronkowski: He ran big in the Belmont Stakes, finishing second behind Justify at odds of 24/1. A minor setback knocked him out of the Jim Dandy, but that shouldn't be cause for concern. An injury knocked him out of the Kentucky Derby and he still ran great in the Belmont. He's a horse that runs well fresh and if his Belmont run is any indication, he's got plenty of talent. Joel Rosario will ride him in the Travers.



Tenfold: Third in the Preakness and fifth in the Belmont, Tenfold broke through with a victory in the G2 Jim Dandy Stakes on July 28. After appearing to have the race well in hand, he drifted out several paths and allowed both Flameaway and Vino Rosso to close ground, ultimately decreasing Tenfold's win margin to 3/4-length. He'll need to be more professional if he's to win the Travers. Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen is seeking his first Travers victory.



Vino Rosso: The Todd Pletcher-trained, John Velazquez-ridden son of Curlin appeared hopelessly beaten in the Jim Dandy, but closed valiantly to make up nearly 6-lengths down the stretch and was only beaten 3/4-length by Tenfold at the wire. He'll appreciate the added distance in the Travers. A fast track seems to be a must for this horse as he hated the mud on Kentucky Derby Day. Pletcher and Velazquez teamed to win this race with Flower Alley in 2005.



Catholic Boy: Turf or dirt, it doesn't matter to Catholic Boy. He won the G2 Remsen last December on the dirt and the G1 Belmont Derby on turf on July 7. His only poor performance came on the dirt at Gulfstream in the G1 Xpressbet Florida Derby, and that's a dirt track that simply proves unfavorable to some horses. If he can translate his turf form back to the dirt he's going to run a big one.

H. Allen Jerkens Stakes

Grade 1 - \$500,000

Race 6 (Post Time: 2:23PM ET)

3YO, 7 Furlongs on the Dirt



Fire Ignites Another Furious Finish

Analysis: In last week's Pacific Classic Wager Guide, we successfully navigated Del Mar's signature race, turning \$100 in suggested wagers into a \$424 payday. Not bad for a free handicapping tool. The Travers Day stakes action kicks off with the H. Allen Jerkens Stakes and this looks like a two-horse race. PROMISES FULFILLED won the G3 Amsterdam Stakes here on July 28 by 3 1/4-lengths, but was a bit unlucky to draw inside. The other speed – GIDU and TELEKINESIS – should keep him company. That could pave the way for FIRENZE FIRE to make a big run. He's been virtually impossible to beat in one-turn races (4-for-5 in his career) and just won the G3 Dwyer at Belmont by 9-lengths. He may not run quite that big, but he's sure to come with his rally. He's our top pick by a slim margin. ENGAGE always runs well but has lacked closing punch this year. He's never been worse than second in seven starts.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$10 Trifecta: FIRENZE FIRE, PROMISES FULFILLED with FIRENZE FIRE, PROMISES FULFILLED, ENGAGE with FIRENZE FIRE, PROMISES FULFILLED, ENGAGE (\$40)
- \$5 Exacta Box: FIRENZE FIRE and PROMISES FULFILLED (\$10)

? Know This

Speed Holds: The pacesetter has finished in the Exacta of the H. Allen Jerkens in each of the last 5 years, including wins by Drefong ('16) and Runhappy ('15).

Beware the Cutbacks: Saratoga has run 31 Grade 1 stakes at 7 furlongs since 2013, and only Practical Joke's victory in this race last year came following a prep longer than 1 mile.

Our Picks

1. FIRENZE FIRE

2. PROMISES FULFILLED

3. ENGAGE

4. STILL HAVING FUN

Personal Ensign Stakes

Grade 1 - \$700,000

Race 7 (Post Time: 2:59PM ET)

3YO+ Fillies & Mares, 1 1/8 Miles on the Dirt



Another Superstar Showdown

Analysis: It's hard to believe the showdown between Promises Fulfilled and Firenze Fire could be an undercard bout, but the same is even truer for the showdown between ELATE and ABEL TASMAN in the Personal Ensign. These four-year-old fillies are for real. ABEL TASMAN has won 7-of-13 races, including five G1 events. ELATE is 5-for-11 and two of her wins came at racing's highest level. It's tough to give a nod to one or the other, but ABEL TASMAN has finished ahead in two head-to-head races and gets the nod from us to make it three-for-three. She's proven to be the quicker filly and her win in the Ogden Phipps at Belmont on June 9 was more impressive than ELATE's win in the G2 Delaware Handicap on July 14. WOW CAT chased a loose-on-the-lead FARRELL in the G3 Shuvee here on July 29 and the Chilean G1 performer should put up a fight. It isn't every day the competition includes fillies this good.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$40 Exacta: ABEL TASMAN over ELATE (\$40)
- \$10 Exacta: ABEL TASMAN over WOW CAT (\$10)

? Know This

Graveyard of Favorites: Since 2002, several massive favorites have fallen victim at the 'Graveyard of Favorites' in the Personal Ensign. That list includes Wild Spirit (.20/1), Azeri (.60/1), Ashado (.45/1), Rachel Alexandra (.45/1) and Songbird (.45/1).

No Rust Here: Three times in the last five years, the Personal Ensign winner was coming off a layoff of 70 days or more – the other two winners in that span were exiting the Delaware Handicap.

Our Picks

1. ABEL TASMAN

2. ELATE

3. WOW CAT

4. FARRELL

Ballerina Stakes

Grade 1 - \$500,000

Race 8 (Post Time: 3:35PM ET)

3YO+ Fillies & Mares, 7 Furlongs on the Dirt



Baffert Has Another Banner Travers Day

Analysis: Bob Baffert isn't represented by an entrant in the Midsummer Derby, but that doesn't mean he can't have a big Travers Day at Saratoga. Between Abel Tasman in the Personal Ensign and MARLEY'S FREEDOM in the Ballerina, he's well poised to win multiple races. MARLEY'S FREEDOM has become one of the top sprinting females in the nation, by virtue of wins in the G2 Great Lady M Stakes at Los Alamitos and the G3 Desert Stormer at Santa Anita. She'll need some pace help, but that's where FINLEY'SLUCKYCHARM and LEWIS BAY come in. Both prefer to race on – or near – the lead and could help set this race up for a filly coming from just behind. With 'Big Money' Mike Smith in the irons, we'll tab MARLEY'S FREEDOM for a very slight upset.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$25 Exacta: MARLEY'S FREEDOM with FINLEY'SLUCKYCHARM and LEWIS BAY (\$50)

? Know This

Believe in Johnny V: John Velazquez has won three of the last six editions of the Ballerina and has captured this race four times overall, most of any jockey.

Experience Preferred: Five straight Ballerina winners were making their second starts of the Saratoga meet, with three of the five winners coming out of the 6-furlong Honorable Miss Handicap.

Our Picks

1. MARLEY'S FREEDOM
2. FINLEY'SLUCKYCHARM
3. LEWIS BAY
4. IVY BELL

Forego Stakes

Grade 1 - \$600,000

Race 9 (Post Time: 4:12PM ET)

3YO, 7 Furlongs on the Dirt



City of Light is Day's Best Bet

Analysis: In order to beat CITY OF LIGHT in this year's Forego Stakes, they'll have to catch him. And frankly, on paper, nobody is fast enough to do that. CITY OF LIGHT handed consensus Breeders' Cup Classic favorite Accelerate his only loss of the year in the G2 Oaklawn Handicap on April 14 and won his last two races at this distance with both coming against G1 horses. He's been working up a storm at Del Mar – five straight bullet works – and has the chance to take this field gate-to-wire from an outside post if he chooses. He's 'best bet of the day' material. C Z ROCKET got a solid Beyer (103) winning the Kelly's Landing Stakes at Churchill and LIMOUSINE LIBERAL and WHITMORE are as honest as they get, but both have struggled when facing elite-level talent.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$15 Exacta: CITY OF LIGHT with LIMOUSINE LIBERAL, WARRIOR'S CLUB and WHITMORE (\$45)
- \$5 Exacta: CITY OF LIGHT with AWESOME SLEW (\$5)

? Know This

Paging Mr. Pletcher: The Forego is the only of today's stakes races that Todd Pletcher has yet to win. He is 0-for-15 in the race, with his best finish coming with Left Bank (2nd, 2001).

Longshot Alley: In each of the last six years, at least one horse has finished in the Forego Trifecta at odds of 15/1 or higher. Last year, Tom's Ready (44/1) rounded out a Trifecta that paid \$778 for a \$2 bet, despite the heavy favorite (Drefong) finishing first.

Our Picks

1. CITY OF LIGHT
2. LIMOUSINE LIBERAL
3. WARRIOR'S CLUB
4. WHITMORE

Sword Dancer Stakes

Grade 1 - \$1,000,000

Race 10 (Post Time: 4:49PM ET)

3YO+, 1 1/2 Miles on the Turf



A Sword Dancer Repeat Performance

Analysis: SADLER'S JOY is one of the most frustrating horses in racing. He always brings his run, but he often gets there just too late. Getting there too early is a problem too. He starts looking around and stops trying. Don't believe us? Watch the last few seconds of the G1 Manhattan on June 9 when he grasps defeat from the hands of victory. He had no pace to run at in the G2 Bowling Green on July 28, but even then he came within 1/2-length of winning. But this could be his day. FUNTASTIC, GLORIOUS EMPIRE and HI HAPPY should ensure a decent pace. CHANNEL MAKER ran well to dead heat with GLORIOUS EMPIRE for the win in the Bowling Green, but that was on a soft turf course. BIGGER PICTURE has rounded back into form, while HI HAPPY really struggled on the soft turf last out and deserves another shot.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$30 Win, \$20 Place: Sadler's Joy (\$50)

? Know This

Start of a New Streak?: Last year's winner, Sadler's Joy, paid off at 7/1 odds. His victory snapped a six-year run of Sword Dancer victors who were 5/2 or less on the toteboard.

Castellano's Playground: Jockey Javier Castellano has five Saratoga turf wins at 1-1/2 miles since 2013. No other rider has more than two (Irad Ortiz Jr., Cornelio Velasquez).

Our Picks

1. SADLER'S JOY

2. BIGGER PICTURE

3. HI HAPPY (ARG)

4. CHANNEL MAKER

Ballston Spa Stakes

Grade 2 - \$400,000

Race 12 (Post Time: 6:20PM ET)

3YO+ Fillies & Mares, 1 1/16 Miles on the Turf



A 'Beauty' of a Ballston Spa

Analysis: If you believe in trip handicapping at all, go back and watch A RAVING BEAUTY'S rough trip in the G1 Diana here on July 21. And consider the filly that beat her that day – Sistercharlie – went on to win the G1 Beverly D. Stakes at Arlington. A RAVING BEAUTY got stuck in traffic and checked hard, eliminating any chance she had to win, she still finished third, beaten less than a length. Hopefully she gets a better trip and stays out of trouble. PROCTOR'S LEDGE has been solid and is 2-for-3 at Saratoga, so she definitely isn't impossible. She won the G2 Distaff Turf Mile with John Velazquez in the irons on Kentucky Derby Day. OFF LIMITS was actually favored in the G1 Just a Game on Belmont Day (a race A RAVING BEAUTY won) but hasn't shown nearly enough in three starts this year. She hasn't regained her G1 winning form of 2017.

\$50 Betting Strategy:

- \$20 Exacta: A RAVING BEAUTY with PROCTOR'S LEDGE, OFF LIMITS (\$40)
- \$5 Exacta: PROCTOR'S LEDGE, OFF LIMITS with A RAVING BEAUTY (\$10)

? Know This

A Common Theme: Five of the last six Ballston Spa winners race exited the Diana earlier in the Saratoga meet. Dacita was the exception, having won this race in 2015 after previously racing in her native Chile.

Chad Brown: Ballston Spa Star: Trainer Chad Brown has three wins and two seconds in his last 5 Ballston Spa appearances. He scored his third victory a year ago via Lady Eli, adding to Dacita in 2015 and Zagora in 2012.

Our Picks

1. A RAVING BEAUTY (GER)

2. PROCTOR'S LEDGE

3. INDIAN BLESSING (GB)

4. OFF LIMITS (IRE)

Travers Stakes Stats and Trends



All-Time Travers Record – Today's Trainers

Post	Trainer	Horse	Starts	Win	Place	Show	Win ROI	AVG Odds
1	Mike Rone	Trigger Warning	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Mark Casse	Wonder Gadot	1	0	0	0	\$0.00	23.20/1
3	Chad Brown	Gronkowski	6	0	0	0	\$0.00	15.88/1
4	D. Wayne Lukas	Bravazo	19	3	0	5	\$2.17	15.81/1
5	Todd Pletcher	Vino Rosso	15	2	1	2	\$0.99	6.56/1
6	Steve Asmussen	Meistermind	5	0	0	2	\$0.00	10.88/1
7	Dale Romans	King Zachary	3	1	0	1	\$11.33	8.80/1
8	Aidan O'Brien	Mendelssohn	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Chad Brown	Good Magic	6	0	0	0	\$0.00	15.88/1
10	Steve Asmussen	Tenfold	5	0	0	2	\$0.00	10.88/1
11	Jonathan Thomas	Catholic Boy	-	-	-	-	-	-

All-Time Travers Record – Today's Jockeys

Post	Jockey	Horse	Starts	Win	Place	Show	Win ROI	AVG Odds
1	Irwin Rosendo	Trigger Warning	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Irad Ortiz Jr.	Wonder Gadot	5	0	0	0	\$0.00	20.66/1
3	Joel Rosario	Gronkowski	3	0	0	1	\$0.00	5.00/1
4	Luis Saez	Bravazo	3	1	0	0	\$7.07	21.20/1
5	John Velazquez	Vino Rosso	17	1	2	2	\$0.47	12.19/1
6	Manny Franco	Meistermind	2	0	0	0	\$0.00	58.38/1
7	Robby Albarado	King Zachary	4	0	2	0	\$0.00	13.03/1
8	Ryan Moore	Mendelssohn	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Jose Ortiz	Good Magic	4	0	1	0	\$0.00	34.11/1
10	Ricardo Santana Jr.	Tenfold	1	0	0	0	\$0.00	27.75/1
11	Javier Castellano	Catholic Boy	10	5	1	0	\$10.05	12.80/1

Travers Stakes

Grade 1 - \$1,250,000

Race 11 (Post Time: 5:44PM ET)

3YO, 1 1/4 Miles on the Dirt



No Justify? No Problem in this Year's Travers

Analysis: This year's Midsummer Derby has it all. The Haskell and Blue Grass winner – and Kentucky Derby runner-up (GOOD MAGIC) is here. The Belmont Stakes runner-up (GRONKOWSKI) is here. The Queen's Plate winner (WONDER GADOT) is here. The Jim Dandy winner (TENFOLD) is here. The Wood Memorial winner (VINO ROSSO) is here. The Preakness runner-up (BRAVAZO) is here. Oh, and the UAE Derby winner (MENDELSSOHN) is back from Europe and the Belmont Derby winner (CATHOLIC BOY) is also in town. It truly is a case of 'no Justify, no problem.'

Main Contenders: Conversation about the Travers has to start with GOOD MAGIC, who has done nothing wrong in eight starts. He had the misfortune of chasing Justify in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness, but he bookended those performances with wins in the Blue Grass and Haskell. He drew a great outside post (#9) and he'll be able to stalk to early pace. Jeremy Plonk points out that no horse has completed the Haskell/Travers Double since 2001 (Point Given), so that is cause for concern. WONDER GADOT is a serious filly that seems to get better with every race. Her dominating performances in the first two legs of Canada's Triple Crown were tipped off by her nearly winning run in the Kentucky Oaks when beaten a head by Monomoy Girl. CATHOLIC BOY is a wild card. If he runs back to his turf form, he could win this. Don't forget, this horse won the G2 Remsen by more than 4-lengths, so there's dirt talent there. TENFOLD and VINO ROSSO exit a lackluster edition of the G2 Jim Dandy and we're going to take a stand against those horses. GRONKOWSKI missed a scheduled start in the Jim Dandy, but his strong run in the G1 Belmont to finish second proves anything is possible.

Value Plays: What to make of MENDELSSOHN? He won the G2 UAE Derby by 18 1/2-lengths, but couldn't have been more unimpressive in the G2 Dwyer at Belmont. It's worth noting that Ryan Moore again travels to ride, and so long as Coolmore's top jock is endorsing him, he's got our eye.

\$100 Wagering Strategy:

- \$2 Trifecta: GOOD MAGIC, CATHOLIC BOY with GOOD MAGIC, CATHOLIC BOY, WONDER GADOT, GRONKOWSKI, KING ZACHARY (\$48)
- \$2 Win: Catholic Boy (\$2)

Our Picks

1. CATHOLIC BOY
2. GOOD MAGIC
3. GRONKOWSKI
4. WONDER GADOT

Stats & Trends

Last 5 Travers Winners:

Year	Horse	Jockey
2017	West Coast	M. Smith
2016	Arrogate	M. Smith
2015	Keen Ice	J. Castellano
2014	V.E. Day	J. Castellano
2013	Will Take Charge	L. Saez

Travers Snapshot: (Since 1991)

Stakes Record:	1:59.36 (Arrogate, 2016)
Largest Win Margin:	22 Lengths (Damascus, 1967)
Winning Favorites:	8 (30%)
Wire-to-Wire Winners:	4 (15%)
Average Win Odds:	6.11/1
Average Exacta (\$2):	\$94.05
Average Trifecta (\$1):	\$410.21

? Know This

Steer Clear of Haskell Winners: Point Given in 2001 is the last horse to sweep the Haskell and the Travers.

Faltering Favorites: Favorites have struggled the past decade in the Travers with only 1 outright victory (Stay Thirsty in 2011) and a dead-heat shared score (Alpha in 2012).

Alluring Longshots: In the last six years, four editions of the Travers have been won by longshots – Golden Ticket (33/1) in 2012, V.E. Day (19/1) in 2014, Keen Ice (16/1) in 2015 and Arrogate (11/1) in 2016.

Recency is Key: Eight of the ten 1 1/4-mile stakes winners at Saratoga the past five years were coming off of four-week layoffs or less.

Non-Traditional Preps: Three of the last four Travers winners did not compete in Jim Dandy or Haskell. West Coast and Arrogate came from Los Alamitos and Del Mar, while V.E. Day's upset followed the Curlin Stakes.

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Ticket Time!

Recommended Picks for the Day's Biggest Bets



15% Takeout Pick 5

Saratoga's Pick 5 covers the first five races on the card and is the best way to put more cash in your account to bet the day's biggest races. And with just 15% takeout, more money is paid back to bettors than with just about any other bet in racing!



Race 1: 1, 6
Race 2: 2, 4, 5, 7
Race 3: 1, 4, 7
Race 4: 3, 8
Race 5: 4, 5

Total Ticket Cost (\$.50 Base): \$48.00

\$1 Million Guaranteed All-Stakes Pick 4

Saturday's biggest bet is probably the \$1 Million Guaranteed All-Stakes Pick 4, which covers Races 8 – 11 and wraps up with the Grade 1 Travers. Last year's Pick 4, with two winning favorites, paid \$925 for \$2!



Race 8: 5, 6, 7
Race 9: 8
Race 10: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10
Race 11: 2, 3, 9, 11

Total Ticket Cost (\$.20 Base): \$36.00