



# Grass IS Greener

With the Maker's 46 Mile as a centerpiece and two new stakes on the grass, Keeneland offers unrivaled spring opportunities for turf horses

By Tom Pedulla

Keeneland, already renowned for offering some of the finest turf racing anywhere, is kicking it up a notch.

The inaugural running of the \$100,000 Palisades Turf Sprint, for 3-year-olds going 5½ furlongs on the grass, on Thursday, April 4, will begin an expanded opening weekend to a spring meet that will distribute a season-record \$4.6 million in purse money. Another new event, the \$100,000 Limestone Turf Sprint for 3-year-old fillies at the same distance, will pre-

cede the highly anticipated \$300,000 Maker's 46 Mile (G1) on Friday, April 12.

The additions mean that 10 of the 18 stakes presented will be held on Keeneland's lush lawn.

Bob Elliston, vice president of racing and sales, salutes that development. "I think it continues a commitment Keeneland has been making over the past several years to really build up the turf program," he said.

Management constantly seeks to balance interests of owners and trainers

with those of fans. In this case, those interests intersect.

Ben Huffman, Keeneland's racing secretary, noted the landscape turned greener for young speedsters with the introduction last year of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint. The Palisades and Limestone answer the questions of when and where to start colts and fillies born to run short on turf.

"There is a need," Huffman said. "This is something we did not offer for 3-year-old turf sprinters. Now we're able to. And



Heart to Heart wins a thrilling 2018 edition of the Maker's 46 Mile.





Full and competitive fields distinguish Keeneland turf races.

we're happy about it."

The move is a win-win for horseplayers. Elliston noted that Keeneland averages more than 12 runners per turf start.

"Handicappers want full fields, and they also love to bet turf races," Elliston said. "You have multiple horses that can jump up out of those fields. If you are able to handicap the race successfully, you can get a nice return on that investment."

Another factor is that American connections are being drawn to England's Royal Ascot meet in ever-increasing numbers. Keeneland-based trainer Wesley

Ward said the addition of the two turf races are ideally placed "to springboard you into Royal Ascot."

Ward showed domestic counterparts what could be accomplished on Royal Ascot's grand international stage with 10 victories there. Royal Ascot extends from June 18-22 this year.

Trainer Graham Motion joined Ward in saluting Keeneland for ideal timing as a lead-in to an international showcase fit for a queen. "If I were taking a 3-year-old sprinter over," he said, "I doubt if I would run it again because you want to have some freshness to take your best shot."



Trainer Wesley Ward uses Keeneland spring turf races as preps for Royal Ascot in June.



Kentucky's vital breeding industry also stands to benefit from Keeneland's loaded turf program.

"We're excited to see what's going on in the breeding community in Central Kentucky," Elliston said. "Historically, the American-bred was oriented to dirt and oriented to speed. Who was the No. 1 sire in the past year? It was Kitten's Joy, a tremendous, proven turf sire. That's exciting."

The progeny of Kitten's Joy generated earnings of \$19,108,593, making him the overall leading U.S. sire for the second time in six years. He raced on behalf of Ken and Sarah Ramsey. Kitten's Joy stands at Hill 'n' Dale Farms in Lexington for a stud fee of \$75,000.

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—KEENELAND'S BOB ELLISTON



KEVIN THOMPSON

Champion Wise Dan relished the Keeneland turf, winning back-to-back runnings of the Maker's 46 Mile.



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ANNE M. EBERHARDT

Miss Temple City became the first filly to win the Maker's 46 Mile, beating the boys in 2016.

Major turf races will appear throughout Keeneland's spring calendar. The \$150,000 Kentucky Utilities Transylvania (G3), for 3-year-olds, will be contested at 1 $\frac{1}{16}$  miles on April 5. The \$200,000 Shakertown (G2, 3-year-olds and up, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  furlongs) on April 6 and, a day later, the \$200,000 Appalachian Presented by Japan Racing Association (G2, 3-year-old fillies, one mile) help to conclude the blockbuster opening weekend.

Turf will dominate the second weekend with the Maker's 46 Mile for older horses, one day ahead of the \$350,000 Coolmore Jenny Wiley (G1, fillies and mares, 1 $\frac{1}{16}$  miles) on April 13. The \$250,000 Dixiana Elkhorn (G2, 4-year-olds and up, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles)

highlights the April 20 card. Turf has the last word on April 26, closing day, with the \$150,000 Bewitch (G3, fillies and mares, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles).

Few races, though, create the buzz that annually surrounds the race known as the Maker's 46 Mile since 2012 and as the Maker's Mark Mile (1997-2011) and Fort Harrod Stakes (1989-96) in earlier incarnations. "The horses that compete in there, the quality, it's second to none," said trainer Charlie LoPresti, whose Wise Dan opened his 2013 and 2014 campaigns with popular victories in the Maker's 46 Mile. Wise Dan was honored as Horse of the Year in 2012 and 2013.



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The gelded son of Wiseman's Ferry, bred and owned by Morton Fink, overcame a five-month layoff to topple Data Link, the previous year's winner, in the Maker's 46 Mile in 2013. Despite missing significant training time due to challenging weather in Kentucky, Wise Dan easily turned back longshot Kaigun the following spring as a vibrant 7-year-old.

He was sent off as an overwhelming 2-5 favorite each time, a reflection of the massive following the Kentucky-bred had built while capturing a record seven stakes at Keeneland. Kip Deville (2007-08) is the only other repeat winner in Maker's history.

Only now can LoPresti truly appreciate those triumphs.

"The whole Wise Dan ride was so overwhelming. Everybody said, 'You really won't appreciate it until it's over,' " the trainer said. "When I was right in the middle of it, I guess I was overwhelmed by it and consumed with it. I didn't understand the magnitude of it until I sat back and looked at his whole racing career, winning the Maker's and the Shadwell [Turf Mile] and on and on and on. When it was happening, it was just a blur, I guess."

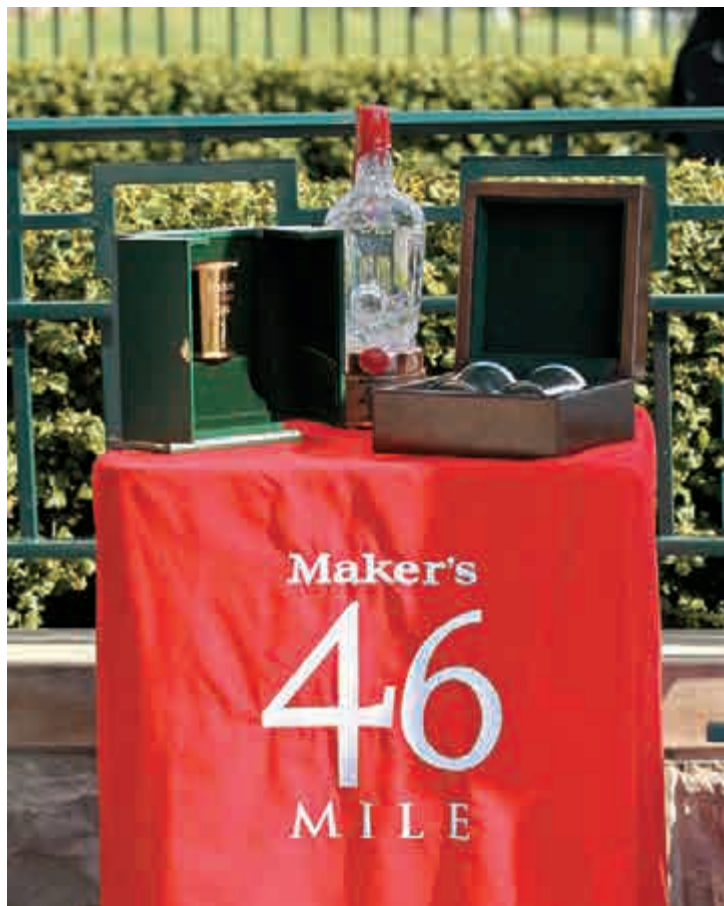
Wise Dan was retired in September 2015. He and his half brother, Successful Dan, relish life at LoPresti's 200-acre Forest Lane Farm, near Lexington.

Miss Temple City wrote another major chapter in Maker's 46 Mile history in 2016, when she became the first filly to prevail. The then 4-year-old daughter of Temple City made a gallant charge to tackle pacesetter Heart to Heart in midstretch and outslug him to the wire by a length and a quarter. It was the first graded-stakes victory for the Keeneland sales graduate and the first at Keeneland for promising young jockey Drayden Van Dyke.

Trainer Graham Motion still basks in



Maker's Mark colors festoon the Keeneland grounds on Maker's 46 Mile Day.



Specially commissioned trophies go to the winning connections.





Keeneland President and CEO Bill Thomason, left, joins Charlie and Amy LoPresti during Wise Dan's retirement parade.



Heart to Heart's trainer, Brian Lynch, shows his appreciation to rider Julien Leparoux.



Elaine and Morton Fink make their way to the winner's circle after Wise Dan's win in the 2014 Maker's 46 Mile.

the glow of that outcome. "It was such an accomplishment for her to beat males in a grade 1 at Keeneland in a race with that kind of prestige," Motion said. "It was a huge deal for me."

Motion, always appreciated for his candor, admitted that the bold stroke of sending Miss Temple City into the Maker's 46 Mile stemmed from less-than-brave strategy.

"Normally, there is no reason to do it," he said. "The reason we did it was that Tepin was such a formidable force [in the Coolmore Jenny Wiley] that you'd rather run against the boys than run against her." Indeed, Tepin flexed her muscle when she journeyed to Royal Ascot that year and returned with a win in the group 1 Queen Anne Stakes. Four races after the Maker's 46 Mile, Miss Temple City took it to the boys again, this time in the \$1 million Shadwell Turf Mile (G1).

"She was an amazing mare, certainly one of the best I've had," said the accomplished Motion.

Miss Temple City's ability to defeat Heart to Heart became all the more special when he rebounded from a pair of agonizing runner-up finishes in the Maker's 46 Mile to win the 30th edition of the race last spring before a record Friday crowd of 28,307 spectators.

Heart to Heart had missed by a neck to American Patriot the year before. This time, the Canadian-bred son of English Channel would not be denied, leading every step for trainer Brian Lynch and jockey Julien Leparoux.

"We really felt like he was the best we've had him," Lynch said.

Maker's Mark prides itself on quality and therefore prizes its sponsorship of the race and its association with Keeneland. Rob Samuels, chief operating officer,





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KEENELAND PHOTO

Trainer Graham Motion still basks in the glow of Miss Temple City's Maker's 46 Mile victory. Top, WinStar Farm's American Patriot (blaze face, black blinkers) wins the 2017 edition of the storied race.

noted that Keeneland was Maker's Mark's first ever customer, in 1959.

"Were it not for Keeneland and the Thoroughbred community throughout Central Kentucky, I don't think Maker's Mark would have survived," he said. "That community from the very beginning celebrated this elevated bourbon called Maker's Mark and kept us in business for a number of years before customers outside Kentucky became interested."

Samuels emphasized all of the good emanating from the commitment his company made.

"Our race sponsorship with Keeneland is so much more than a race sponsorship," he said. "What I love is that our

kindred partnership with Keeneland stands for giving back. Through our relationship together, we've raised many millions of dollars for organizations and causes throughout Central Kentucky."

He cited the Maker's Mark Secretariat Center at the Kentucky Horse Park and the Markey Cancer Center as two worthwhile beneficiaries.

Samuels noted his company uses the occasion of the Maker's 46 Mile to invite its best customers from throughout the country to enjoy racing at Keeneland followed by a visit to the distillery for a toast or two to an action-packed day of racing.

This year's Maker's 46 Mile day promises to be even more special. **KM**