

Twill Do wins Hunt Cup

Across The Sky leads early, refuses the 20th fence

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By Jeff Seidel

The story of Twill Do's victory in Saturday's 114th Hunt Cup at Worthington Farms sounds more like a made-for-TV movie than a \$75,000 steeplechase race.

Across The Sky ran away from the field early and had a huge 30-length lead when the horse suddenly refused the 20th of the 22 fences on the four-mile course. That opened the door for Twill Do and jockey James Stierhoff, and they out-dueled Private Attack and pulled away for a four-length victory.

This was Stierhoff's first victory, and getting it in a race of this magnitude delighted the 24-year old Towson native. But he had a few nervous moments when a foul claim was lodged after the race.

However, the stewards eventually disallowed it, and Twill Do got the win in a time of 8:48.

Stierhoff was an economics major at Towson University and now works in compliance at Brown Advisory in Fells Point during the week. But he'll ride races on weekends. In college, Stierhoff galloped horses in the morning and went to school at night and also rode races on the weekends to stay involved with the sport.

"This is a great one to win," Stierhoff said. "I [guess] you just never know what's going to happen in a race."

Lucy A. Goelet is the owner, and trainer William Meister, who has won the race three times as a jockey – in 1988, 1990 and 1996 -- had to watch because of a broken pelvis suffered while riding in the Grand National last week. But Meister liked how Stierhoff handled the horse.

Meister said he told the jockey not to worry about the horse in front of him and just ride the race.

"He rode the horse exactly like I told him to," Meister said. "The horse jumped up and ran the biggest race of his life today. I don't ever cry, but I was crying today."

The race had 14 horses scheduled to start, but three were scratched before it began. Mr. Liberator and Make Your Own got scratched earlier in the afternoon, and Coal Dust was scratched in the paddock just before the start of the race. Six horses actually finished the race.

Also, Askim broke down during the race but was able to finish. Jockey Charlie Fenwick III said the horse will be fine but just won't be able to race any more.

At first, it didn't look there'd be much of a race on this day as Across The Sky took off early and opened up that big lead. Jockey Fritz Boniface's advantage grew bigger as the race went on, and he looked to have no worries heading to that 20th fence.

But the horse just stopped and wouldn't go over that fence, forcing Boniface to turn him away and off the course. Across The Sky didn't finish the race, and Boniface still wasn't sure what happened when talking about it after the race.

"I never expected it," Boniface said. "I think he was just a little tired. He just kind of slowed down and stopped."

That left the race to Twill Do and Private Attack. The two horses were neck-and-neck over the final two fences before Stierhoff got Twill Do to take over while running for the finish line.