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Doc Cebu wins first-ever spectator-free Gold Cup

PHOTOS BY BETSY BURKE PARKER

At Saturday's rescheduled Virginia Gold Cup races, Ballybristol Farm's Mercoeur -- the gray horse with yellow silks -- won the cross-country Steeplethon with rider Tom Garner. Here, the Pennsylvania-based Mercoeur leads over the one-of-a-kind steeplechase bank-and-drop obstacle.

Masks were mandatory for all but the horses

By Betsy Burke Parker
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Doc Cebu took command late in Saturday's \$40,000 Virginia Gold Cup and drew away with authority in the signature timber stake at the 95th annual Virginia Gold Cup races at Great Meadow in The Plains.

Ridden by Michael Mitchell, 2019's co-champion jockey, Doc Cebu jumped strongly throughout the Cup's 4 miles and delivered a dominant victory for owners Charlie Fenwick, Mike Hankin and Charles Noell.

Hudson River Farms' Codrington College led from the seventh to the second last but faded in the stretch, second by 12 lengths, with Irv Naylor's Super Saturday third.

Just a few hundred active participants were at the field events center at the first spectator-free Gold Cup. Virginia Gold Cup Association executive director Diane Jones said, "It was weird to be here with just a skeleton crew. It's so quiet out here."

The featured timber classic was the second straight stakes victory for the ownership team, which races other horses in the name of Bruton Street-US, 2019's champion owner. A race earlier, Bruton Street's Snap Decision scored a similarly dominant victory in the David Semmes Memorial hurdle stake.

Both winners were saddled by champion trainer Jack Fisher.

Doc Cebu was second to Ballybristol Farm's Andi'amu in Middleburg Spring's Middleburg Hunt Cup two weeks ago at Glenwood Park, and Saturday shaped up as a battle between the two champions. Trained in Pennsylvania by Leslie Young, Andi'amu had won last year's Gold Cup and went on to secure the 2019 timber title.

Andi'amu had proved that he could stay 4 miles. Doc Cebu, who was pulled up in his only 2019 start in the Gold Cup, had yet to win at that distance. Yet he's no stranger to Great Meadow. Doc Cebu won the International Gold Cup at Great Meadow to lock up 2017 and 2018 timber titles.

Fisher-trained Storm Team went



Social distancing was practiced at the spectator-free 95th Virginia Gold Cup, seen at the jockey meeting, above left. Above right, Doc Cebu, coasts to 12-length victory in the \$40,000 feature event. Michael Mitchell was aboard.



to the lead at the break, Andi'amu settled behind by rider Tom Garner. Doc Cebu trailed, Mitchell allowing the veteran to settle into stride across the long Great Meadow backside.

The race's complexion changed at the seventh.

Confused by what he called an "inviting route" off the dowling poles marking the north rail turn, Sean McDermott guided Storm Team to the 19th fence up the outside of the racecourse rather than to the eighth fence up the inner. Garner followed with Andi'amu over the incorrect jump.

Both veteran pros quickly realized their mistake when they saw the rest of the field 50 feet to their left, following the correct route.

Both pulled up -- off-course horses are not allowed to continue in a race, as Codrington College took command. Doc Cebu jumped strongly through the last mile, moving to lead at the second-last.

Doc Cebu powered home, the 10-year-old running the 4 miles in 8:15 2/5 on turf rated as good.

Reigning novice champion Snap Decision, like stablemate Doc Cebu sired by Hard Spun, surged late to win the Semmes by 4 1/2 lengths.

Somewhat softening the blow of "losing" the Gold Cup, Ballybristol's Mercoeur (Tom Garner) fought off a late challenge from Invocation and McDermott to win the \$20,000 cross-country Steeplethon.

Complete results are at nationalsteeplechase.com. Find more photos on the Temple Gwathmey Steeplechase Foundation Facebook page.

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SPORTS ACTIVITIES STILL NOT CLEARED

Prince William County high school sports teams are still awaiting county guidelines to resume on-campus conditioning. Fauquier County's high schools began Monday with strict guidelines, such as 10 feet spacing and pods of no more than 10 people.

Prince William Times | July 8, 2020

SPORTS

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'RYLAND FEELS THE LOVE'

Brentsville three-sport athlete undergoes treatments for brain cancer

By Peter Brewington
TIMES STAFF WRITER

There is a plan in place for the fight, now all Ryland Harris has to do is beat brain cancer.

A three-sport athlete at Brentsville District High, Harris was diagnosed with a tumor in late April.

The Brentsville and Gainesville community have enveloped the Harris family in a warm embrace as the rising junior is treated with surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. He's currently in a clinical trial.

"Ryland feels the love. There's so much good in the world. We're blown away by everyone being so gracious," said his mother, Melissa Harris.

Although he faces a journey, Ryland and his family are remaining upbeat and active. Other than some hair loss and fatigue, he has had no side effects to the chemo and radiation and is even attending travel baseball practice.

"I know it will be all right in the end. Whenever I end up getting over this and back to normal and going to school, it will have made me stronger," said Ryland.

Harris had his first seizure on April 27 while running an errand with his girlfriend. He was taken to Prince William Medical Center, where a CT scan came up abnormal, then on to Inova Fairfax Hospital. They later did an MRI and discovered he had a tumor.

He was transferred to Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., where they removed the portion of the growth that could be removed safely. Harris is undergoing radiation five days a week, as well as chemotherapy everyday, at the Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax, to slow the tumor's growth. "Once he's done we'll get a break," said his mother. "Then in four weeks he will start another round at a higher dose of chemo."

At the end of September, he'll start a clinical trial through the University of Florida designed to attack the tumor. He'll receive vaccines in three series of three alternating with chemotherapy (21-day cycle) for a total of 10 vaccines made up of his own white blood cells, ending in late January.

"We sent part of his tumor (after surgery) along with his white blood cells (a couple weeks later) to the University of Florida where they are teaching his white blood cells to attack the tumor. Then they'll put them back into Ryland in the form of a vaccine," said Melissa. "This is one of the most aggressive and personalized treatments available to fight the tumor."



PHOTOS BY JULIO FLORES

Brentsville High rising junior Ryland Harris is optimistic the treatments he's receiving for brain cancer will be successful. He's practicing with his travel baseball team while receiving chemotherapy and radiation. Starting in September, he'll receive vaccines as part of a clinical trial with the University of Florida.

In a best-case scenario, the treatments stop the growth of the tumor or kill it.

Harris was a running back and linebacker on the Tigers' JV football team last season as a sophomore. He was a varsity wrestler the last two seasons, and posted a winning record at 160 pounds last winter. He was set to play JV baseball this spring until COVID-19 wiped out spring sports.

His mother said news of Ryland's hospitalization triggered an outpouring of love.

"My husband Gabe and I are both locals and Ryland has lots of friends. The word started to get out. People started calling to check in with us. So we decided to make

a private Facebook group and we went from there," she said.

His seizure in late April was the warning sign. His left arm straightened out, his eyes rolled back, then slanted to the left, and his eyebrows twitched. The hope is that they removed the part of the tumor that caused seizures. He remains on anti-seizure medication.

"Right now, I feel a little tired every day and run down from the chemo. Other than that, I feel pretty normal. I go to baseball practice and fishing with my friends," he said.

Ryland says he likes his doctors. "They're all nice people and explain things well enough. I understand it well," he said.

Of his treatments, he said, "Che-

Harris golf tournament

A golf tournament – "Benefitting the Harris Family" – is Friday, July 17 at Bristow Manor Golf Club. Sign up by July 10. The cost is \$100 per person or \$400 per team. For questions contact Mike Logan at loganmj@comcast.net.



Ryland Harris is a varsity wrestler for the Tigers, lettered in football and played JV baseball.

"Ryland feels the love. There's so much good in the world. We're blown away by everyone being so gracious."

MELISSA HARRIS

mother and radiation is way easier than wrestling practice."

Harris has no restrictions, so he's been working out with his travel team, the Snyder Baseball Academy Bucks, where he hits, takes infield and runs. He is being careful to avoid infections, so he doesn't slide or dive.

That also means football and wrestling are out for his upcoming junior year.

The day before Ryland started chemo, Melissa said about 70 kids stood in the family's front yard and sang John Denver's "Country Roads," which is Brentsville's traditional victory song.

"The biggest thing is the community coming together out of something so negative. It's overwhelming to see this support," she said.

Harris said they are setting up a foundation to pay some expenses and help other families. They're sponsoring a golf tournament on Friday, July 17 at Bristow Manor Golf Course, and hosted a virtual 5K online.

Asked if he has a message to get out, Ryland said, "Just to say thanks for all your support to everyone that has done anything for me during this time or before this."

NO SPORTS IN MARYLAND UNTIL 2021

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) announced last month that all high school athletic competitions will be postponed until the second semester, which begins in late January. Previously, MPSSAA had left the decision up to each country and local school system.

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SPORTS

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No mascot or coaches, but Gainesville High has fields and a new AD



COURTESY PHOTO

Gainesville High will open in 2021 with an estimated 1,675 students in grades 9-11 for the first year. It will have a turf football field and turf on practice fields for football, baseball and softball. Students will come mostly from Battlefield, Patriot and Unity Reed high schools.

Q&A with new school's director of student activities Jason Eldredge

By Peter Brewington
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Jason Eldredge shows up at work each day to witness a miracle growing in at his job site.

The director of student activities at Gainesville High is part of a small team of full-time employees setting up for the school's grand launch in the fall of 2021.

Much of the campus located near Jiffy Lube Live arena is completed, but much work has to be done. The former activities director at Woodbridge High and a state champion-winning coach took questions last week.

Hi Jason, you were just activities director at Woodbridge High. What was your biggest accomplishment there?

"We were able to build capacity and enrollment in our programs as well as expand program opportunities for kids. An example is the re-establishment of the gymnastics program and providing expansion in the lower level competition areas like a variety of JV teams. It really speaks to the students, staff and surrounding community in how well they came together to not only perform at a high level and demonstrate success but also how willing everyone was to work to look after one another for a common goal of making Woodbridge Senior High School a much more collaborative environment."

It's got to be exciting to be part of a new school opening. Tell me some of the things you're doing right now.

"Right now the team is working through construction and building design in conjunction with putting together a master list of equipment and necessities to outfit the school to be ready for the fall of 2021. Those items include anything from furniture, to technology to program oper-



COURTESY PHOTO

Jason Eldredge is Gainesville High's director of student activities. The Haymarket resident left Woodbridge High where he held the same position.

ation necessities that will be needed while working within our allocated budget for purchasing."

The new school consists of 80 acres. How are the sports fields looking right now? What else has to be constructed?

"The footprint for the outdoor campus is in place. The stadium facility is about 50% completed with the turf going in as we speak. The surrounding fields do not yet have infrastructure in place, but are cleared for the beginning stages of implementation, including baseball, softball, practice field, tennis courts, miscellaneous field spaces. Grading of the grounds is the stage currently underway."

What is the timeline for selecting a mascot? Any names being considered you can share?

"We sent out a survey in early August. The data on that came back with Cardinals, Red Fox, Wolves, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Gators, Gorillas. Those are the big ones. We also received a handful of other suggestions like the Griffin, and the Gladiator."

The Gainesville Gorillas? Gators? Black Bears?

A list of some mascot names Gainesville High officials are seeking feedback on:

Cardinals	Grizzly Bear
Red Fox	Gators
Wolves	Gorillas
Black Bear	

You've got to hire some sports coaches. What is the timetable for that and what are you looking for in your coaches? When will the jobs be posted?

"We will begin the HR hiring process for program heads around January, 2021. I am looking for individuals that are passionate about working with young people, committed, and dedicated to their craft, and want to be a part of our community. Establishing a positive culture in the beginning stages of operation is priority number one."

You've got a coaching background, winning two state titles as girls basketball coach at Freedom-South Riding, and also coaching football and boys basketball at West Springfield. Will that help hiring coaches?

"I believe my experience over the last 18 years will provide a great deal of benefit to my role. I have coached in this area for 17 of those years, 14 as a head coach in two different counties (Loudoun and Fairfax), and have the experience of running programs for boys, and girls in multiple high profile settings (girls basketball, boys basketball and football). Additionally, I have had the experience of opening a new school (Freedom-South Riding) as a teacher, head coach and varsity assistant coach, which will play a key role in mentoring program heads while starting programs from the ground up."

This pandemic has been hard on everyone. How do you feel high school athletes are handling things?

"I think this is a case-by-case scenario given the variety of factors that each athlete is working through. I do believe, athletes and coaches really want to get back to work, as it presents a sense of normalcy that we are all trying to work to get back to."

Hopefully the pandemic will be over by the time you open.

"I would never hope for anything else. So yes, we plan for a normal opening in the fall of 2021."

Do you have any thoughts on what it will be like to integrate athletes from Patriot, Battlefield and Unity Reed onto your teams?

"Establishing a team environment where everyone feels like they matter and are a part of a bigger community is the first step to creating this culture in our school. It's exciting to have such an eclectic group of students and community come together and the biggest piece to this is having strong foundations in our relationships with all of our students, no matter what they wish to accomplish and be involved in."

All Gainesville High sports will play a varsity schedule the first year except for football. What are your goals for the first year? History has shown that it's possible to be competitive pretty fast.

"Success early stems from the fortune of having talented students from the jump. We may or may not have the luxury of that kind of fortune, but either way, winning and losing will not be the priority of our programming. Doing things the right way, setting up norms for the programs, work ethic, year to year program operations, community collaboration and support for one another, as well as a passion for being dedicated to the school and its community, are the priority."