

ALAGNA THE LAST GUY TO SHOOT THE MESSENGER
BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Wednesday, August 28, 2019—Of the dozen 3-year-olds who entered this season's Messenger Stakes, four were trained by Tony Alagna.

Students of history should not have been surprised, as Alagna has come within a dirty nose of winning Yonkers Raceway's second jewel of the Pacing Triple Crown four years in a row.

In 2015, Revenge Shark (Yannick Gingras) won a three-horse photo, upsetting in the Messenger at odds of 9-1.

By contrast, in 2016, Racing Hill (Brett Miller), in the midst of a \$1.5 million season, fooled no one (we checked), winning this race at five-cents-on-the-dollar.

In 2017, 22-1 Art Scene (Jordan Stratton) closed inside, running out of racetrack against another 1-20 winner in Downbytheseaside.

Last season, Stay Hungry (Doug McNair) outgamed Jimmy Freight in what was essentially a match race.

“(The Messenger) is a race that's very important to us,” Alagna said from Lexington, KY. “Obviously, you have to be lucky, but also versatile and quick off the gate.”

Of Alagna's barbershop quartet for this season's 64th edition, three advanced to Saturday night's (Aug. 31st) half-million-dollar final...though not necessarily the one the trainer figured.

“I thought Captain Trevor was our best chance, but he didn't race well (last in his elim),” Alagna said. He scoped sick and we're not sure why—maybe the shipping—but that's horse racing. We just move on.”

Alagna is 'moving on' with U S Captain (Jason Bartlett, post 4), Waterway (Joe Bongiorno, post 6) and Escapetothebeach (Corey Callahan, post 7).

The trainer opined about the trio.

“U S Captain raced very last week (second to Aflame Hanover). It looked to me as if he lost some momentum getting jammed up behind the leader (eventual winner).

“Waterway (third to Aflame Hanover) seemed to be doing his pacing at the wire, which is all you can ask. Last season, he paced in (1):50 and 1 and won the consolation of the Kentucky Sire Stakes (Red Mile), so we thought he'd come back a bit better, but he gets around Yonkers very well.

“Escapetothebeach came first-up against Bettor’s Wish (finishing third), and that’s been the story of his season. He’s had some bad posts and bad trips, but I think he’s had a really good season.”

U S Captain and Waterway both entered the Messenger off local overnight wins, a fact that wasn’t lost on Alagna.

“We wanted to try them there with the Messenger in mind,” Alagna said.

As for the three-head monster looking to take down pole-sitting behemoth Bettor’s Wish, “They came out of last week well and are coming into the final training well.

“I’m looking forward to it.”

The Messenger goes as the seventh of Yonkers’ dozen Saturday races, the card also featuring the 65th Yonkers Trot (\$500,000) as the sixth race, \$124,334 Hudson Filly Trot (4th race) and \$122,224 Lady Maud (5th race). First post is the usual 6:50 PM.

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(FFI...Frank Drucker, Yonkers Raceway Publicity Director, 914-968-4200)