

Shesjustadelight N seeks to double her pleasure in Blue Chip Matchmaker

by Kim French, USTA Internet News Editor

Columbus, OH --- In this business, it's very rare that even the most carefully constructed strategies actually yield results, but the machinations of Ron Cushing, Kevin Sywyk and Heidi Gibbs have produced an incredible amount of joy and satisfaction with the purchase of the New Zealand-bred mare Shesjustadelight N.

The 7-year-old was in the winner's circle for every one of her 12 trips to the post last year, has defeated males and captured her first \$40,000 leg of the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series at Yonkers Raceway on Friday (March 17).

The trio's fledging plan has certainly come together, as they prepare to contest the second \$40,000 leg of the series on Friday (March 24). Shesjustadelight N will commence her journey from the rail with Cushing at the controls as she seeks to collect another Grand Circuit victory. She is the 8-5 morning line favorite in the first of three Matchmaker divisions.

"I had the best season of my career in 2007 training and driving at Saratoga with more than \$1 million in both categories (\$1.1 million training and \$1.2 million driving) and then we had to leave," said Cushing. "People used to joke there should be an 'N' after my name on my stable sign at Saratoga because we were so successful with horses from New Zealand. After leaving Saratoga, everything just seemed to go bad; like cars breaking down, my dad being diagnosed with leukemia and only several horses in the barn. It actually worked out returning to Maine, where I grew up, so I could spend that time with my dad, which I would never trade for the world, and to work my way back.

"I had worked with an agent before and I spoke with my good friend Peter Tritton about buying a mare from New Zealand to race here. We selected Shesjustadelight and from the first time I jogged her I knew she was talented. To be here in this series with her at Yonkers was a year in the making and we are just fortunate it all worked out as we planned."

A daughter of Bettor's Delight-Love The Look, Shesjustadelight N was not exactly a terror in her home nation, but was a solid performer in stakes company, where she placed in multiple events and earned \$78,215. Since her hooves landed on U.S. soil, however, the mare has been simply superb.



Mike Lizzi photo

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While competing solely in New England, the mare amassed \$81,000 and set her mark of 1:51 on Nov. 17 when defeating her male rivals with authority at Plainridge Park in a \$20,000 Open event. Her first foray into deeper waters resulted in another triumph in a \$45,000 Open Handicap against her own gender at Yonkers Raceway on Dec. 9.

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In three appearances this season, Shesjustadelight N has a record of 3-1-0-1, with all of her performances at Yonkers Raceway. The only occasion she has not hit the board was her first start of 2017 on Feb. 24 after a brief freshening.

"That race just did not work out for her," Cushing said. "She was coming back from a rest and she still closed like she always does; she was just too far back. When she finished third in her next start (\$50,000 Open on March 3) I put her in the passing lane and she was closing again, but just couldn't get there because we had 40-mph headwinds she had to contend with."

Shesjustadelight N's next engagement was a triumph in the first \$40,000 leg of the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series on March 17. Cushing was provided with a perfect pocket trip for the mare, who made the most of her advantage and once again, had her picture taken.

"The race just set up well for us," Cushing said. "I did not have to use her and that is exactly what you want for a win in this series. With six legs and this kind of competition you could not ask for more. I know this week is very tough as well. We are in against Divas Image, (9-2, post two) who raced really well here last week from the eight-hole and the Remmens' mare Sandbetweenurtoes (3-1, post four). Also how can you not respect Mach It A Par and Bedroomconfessions? We will have to meet them in this series and they are both very nice mares; their trainers have done an excellent job with them."

In Cushing's opinion, he is comfortable with where he, his fiancée Gibbs and partner Sywyk are sitting.

"It's like I told Frank (Drucker, publicity director for Empire City at Yonkers Raceway) last week," Cushing said. "She is just so handy; you can do anything with her. She also really enjoys her job; she loves being out there. That is why we decided to not push her, build up her confidence and allow her to transition in New England. We wanted her to like winning and for her attitude to be good. I hate to say it, but it is different with girls. Like with us boys, we can get in a bar fight, be with another man's girlfriend and the next day we shake hands and it's all good. With women it's not like that and their attitude can change in a minute. I guess that's what's good about it, because it can only take five seconds for their mood to move on to something else, but it just is so much different to have a really nice mare with this kind of talent; it means more."

While Cushing, Gibbs and Sywyk definitely have their eyes on the Blue Chip Matchmaker prize, they already have mapped out a plan for Shesjustadelight N following this series.

"We didn't stake her for the Canadian series races like the Roses Are Red," Cushing said. "But we do have her eligible for the Golden Girls and Lady Liberty at the Meadowlands. We are also hoping she receives invitations for other events like the Betsy Ross. We know there are so many excellent older pacing mares out there, but as long as she stays well, we really like our mare for the rest of this year."

For the complete Friday (March 24) evening card at Yonkers Raceway, please click [here](#).