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It was late in the morning, July 29, 2004 at Del Mar, and Ron Ellis took a colt and a filly to the gate to school. They loaded and broke smoothly. The colt was outside and he left the gate like a shot. The filly was close in tow, but was being asked to keep up. I noticed the colt first, he was a big dark bay or brown colt, that would be later listed as a gelding, with a big star on his face, a white left front ankle, a white left hind pastern (which we call left hind under), and right hind that was half white, and he had a barely visible spot of white on the right front. The filly had a big oval star, a white "snip" on the nose, a white left front under, a spot of white on the left hind heel, and a right front under. Kent Desormeaux was aboard the filly, and he was scrubbing on her to keep up. Before they hit the wire for the first quarter mile, Desormeaux yelled, "Wait for me. Wait for me!" The colt went the quarter in 23 seconds flat, and was just going so easy. He lengthened his stride as the filly got next to him, and went the next eighth in 11.1 for a 34.1 clocking for three furlongs. He galloped out in 47.1 while the filly was ridden out alongside. *Wow! Who was that?*

When the work tab came out, the official timers had omitted the Ellis team. An hour later, the entries for the Saturday, July 31 card became available. Ron Ellis had a Malibu Moon gelding in the third race. He had been working at Hollywood Park, and showed no works at Del Mar. I immediately went to work on my marks.

A match! I had the name of the horse that I saw earlier in the morning. It was Declan's Moon! Ellis also had a filly, Princess Sequoia, entered in the tenth race. I pulled her markings, and sure enough, there was another match. I was able to piece together the gate works from the morning despite the lack of a time or mention in the work tab.

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Del Mar 5¹/₂ Furlongs (1:02.1) **Md Sp Wt 49k** Purse \$49,000 (plus \$14,700 CBOIF - CA Bred Owner Fund) For Maidens, Two Year Olds. Weight, 118 lbs.



1 Declan's Moon Own: Jay Em Ess Stable Rel Blue, Lime Green, Ms' On Back, Blue And FLORES D R (37 4 6 4, 11) 2004: (476 67, 14)	Dr. b or br c. 2 (Feb) EASSEP03 \$125,000	Life	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	D.Fst	0	0	0	0	\$0
	Sire: Malibu Moon (A.P. Indy) \$10,000	2004	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Wet(403)	0	0	0	0	\$0
	Dam: Vee Vee Star(Norquestor)	118	2003	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Turf(294*)	0	0	0	\$0
	Br: Bruce Ridgely (Md)		Dmr	0	0	0	0	\$0	-	Dst(334)	0	0	0	\$0
	Tr: Ellis Ronald W(2 0 0 0 .00) 2004:(85 13, 20)													
WORKS: Jly22 SA 5f ft 1:01 H 3/7 Jly16 SA 4f ft :48 Hg 5/18 Jly10 SA 5f ft 1:14 H 24/20 Jly4 SA 5f ft 1:01 H 29/55 Jun27 SA 5f ft 1:01 H 28/46 Jun20 SA 4f ft :48 H 11/26 Jun13 SA 4f ft :47 H 9/7 Jun7 SA 3f ft :35 H 5/29 May25 SA 3f ft :37 H 6/9 Mar29 EP 3f ft :39 Bg 2/27 Mar8 EP 3f ft :40 Bg 9/8														
TRAINER: 1stStart(24.17 \$161) 1stLast(2.50 \$4.70) 2YO(3.00 \$0.00) Dnt(135.15 \$1.29) Sprm(112.12 \$1.12) MonSp(145.20 \$1.54)														

Declan's Moon going 34.1 and absolutely breezing, and he is racing 5 and one-half furlongs!

Despite being a good-looking, classy animal, Declan's Moon was dead on the board. Not too many people caught the work or put two and two together to figure out who the impressive horse was. We did, and in a recurring theme, the lack of a gate workout over the local track was a trainer's quiet confession of confidence in a first-time starter.

If you read the Saturday Workout Analysis you would have noticed these comments:

BOSTON GLORY	07/26	Dmr/ft	4f	48.4hg
<i>Boston Harbor colt worked with Diamanta and was a bit slow to start and seemed to be ½ behind Diamanta early. Caught stride through the turn and both went well through the turn. Splits of 24.2, 47.4 and finished in 101.2.</i>				
CADILLAC CRUISER	07/26	Dmr/ft	5f	100.4h
<i>Bred to be wickedly fast. In company with Slew's House and Cover Guy. Popped best and showed much the best speed while in front by 5 early in 24.1, finished best in 48 flat and 100.2. Led throughout. Two-year-old outworked older workmates.</i>				
CASH IN THE BANK	07/25	Dmr/ft	5f	101.0h
<i>Cardenas grey went in hand and really didn't do much as he shouldn't as he has a race under his belt.</i>				
CASHMULA	07/21	Dmr/ft	5f	59.2h
<i>Began in front of Roman Ruler and finished OK, but was definitely second best down the lane in this drill. Final ¼ in 23.4. Not a bad drill.</i>				
DECLANS MOON	07/29	Dmr/CLOCKER	COMMENT	
<i>Worked from the gate with Princess Sequoia and showed the best speed and was waiting on workmate here in 23 and 34.1. Kent seemed to be scrubbing inside on Sequoia but both finished in 34.1 and out in 47 and change.</i>				
NEVER AT DUSK	07/24	Dmr/ft	5f	100.0h
<i>Worked with New Rule. Showed off some run through the turn after split of 24 flat. Went in 35 flat, 11 run through the turn and finished in 59.3. Looked decent.</i>				

Declan's Moon faced a field that included promising juveniles Boston Glory, Cadillac Cruiser, and Cash In The Bank. He romped by five, and paid \$31.40! Boston Glory won his maiden in his very next start, and then finished second behind Roman Ruler in the Norfolk Stakes at Oak Tree. Cadillac Cruiser graduated going long at the end of the Del Mar meet while Cash In The Bank scored in his next race. I came right back with Declan's Moon when he took on Southern California's leading two-year-old, Roman Ruler, in the Del Mar Futurity. Declan's Moon prevailed in a thrilling stretch duel, and paid a whopping \$14.40.

He finished off his two-year-old campaign by winning the Grade 3 Prevue, and the Grade 1 Hollywood Futurity, and was named Juvenile Champion for his accomplishments.

Declan's Moon was the early favorite for the 2005 Kentucky Derby, but after winning his fifth straight start in the Santa Catalina at Santa Anita, he suffered a knee injury, and was forced to miss the Derby. A true shame, but at least we could say that we were there when the kid showed he was a potential champion on July 29, 2004 at Del Mar.

We clocked, analyzed, and identified the gelding despite the lack of information or a published workout. There was nothing in the past performances that noted Declan's Moon's impressive gate workout.

Handicappers see the workouts on paper, but rarely know what goes on behind the scenes to take advantage. A time is a time to a handicapper. If the horse worked in 59 flat, then he must have worked well. If he worked in 1:01 flat, they assume it was a bad work. What if there wasn't a workout? Like with Declan's Moon.

What a handicapper doesn't know can't hurt him, right?

What a handicapper doesn't know may hurt his chances to cash a ticket.

Declan's Moon paid \$31.40. If the breezing workout of 34.1 from the gate was published, you can be sure it would have attracted attention to an otherwise average-looking work tab.

The smart handicapper asks:

- "What makes the workout important and why?"
- "Are there more gems like Declan's Moon out there?"
- "Where can I find them?"

All of these are good questions, and they shall be answered in the pages of this book, but let me ask you, the handicapper, the following three questions:

- ❖ Would you bet a horse with a published four-furlong gate work of 52 and change?
- ❖ Would you bet a second time starter that got beat almost 36 lengths in the debut?
- ❖ Can you confidently bet on a horse that has been off for 17 months?

I am a betting man, and I bet you said "No" to all three questions! After you read this book, you will swear "Yes, Yes, Yes" after seeing winning mutuels of 18-1, 7-1, and 6-1 respectively.

What do you do with a European runner? Do you bet off the works? What would you expect from a foreign animal in the morning? Certainly not tea and crumpets.

First time starters. Two-year-olds. Claiming warriors. Three-year-olds and upward. Second time starters. Shippers. First time routers. Medication. Equipment. Pedigree. Trainer. Owner. Jockey. Even the media plays a role in your everyday handicapping.