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Coragil Cat pounces in Hanshin

Tafel's Forest Wildcat colt gets away at 11.10-to-1 and draws clear to three-length score as Lovango disappoints

by Neil Milbert

OWNER-BREEDER Jim Tafel describes himself as "a very small operator," but his royal blue and gold colors have been seen in the winner's circle after graded stakes with regularity since he entered racing 25 years ago.

Hanshin Cup H. (G3)

Arlington Park, May 24, \$100,000, 1m, all weather, fast, 1:34.86

- 1—**CORAGIL CAT**, dk. b. or br. c. 4, Forest Wildcat—Coragil, by Metfield.
- 2—**Morada Key**, dk. b. or br. c. 4, Carson City—Dhaka, by Icecapade.
- 3—**Steve's Double**, dk. b. or br. g. 4, Stephen Got Even—Think Double, by Al Nasr (Fr).

Tafel's most accomplished homebred, Street Sense, went to stud in 2008 at Darley in Lexington after his three-year-old season, but another colt from the 2004 foal crop, Coragil Cat, has suddenly come on strong to become his latest graded stakes winner.

Making the 22nd start of his career on May 24 at Arlington Park, Tafel's homebred Forest Wildcat colt out of the Metfield mare Coragil charged to the front in midstretch and drew away to win the \$100,000 Hanshin Cup Handicap (G3) by three lengths.

Sent off at 11.10-to-1, Coragil Cat ran the mile in 1:34.86 three weeks after setting an Arlington Polytrack record with a clocking of 1:33.55 in the Timeless Native Stakes.

Coragil Cat's Hanshin Cup victory was his third straight win in a streak that began in a one-mile optional claiming race at Fair Grounds, where he recorded a pair of thirds and a

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second in his first three starts of the year against allowance horses.

"He turned it around a bit last year [when his best efforts in 12 starts were a second and three thirds], and he really got good during the last month at Fair Grounds, and it has continued up here," trainer Greg Geier said. "He trained excellently since his last race, so we decided to give him a chance [to win a graded stakes race]."

Another stretch runner, 39.10-to-1 longshot Morada Key, finished second, and 8.10-to-1 Steve's Double was third, another two lengths back. The 6-to-5 favorite, Lovango, faded to fourth after leading with a quarter-mile to run, while defending Hanshin winner Spotsgone, the leader for the first half-mile, stopped in upper stretch and finished last in the field of eight.

"They were going very fast up front, so I waited," said Coragil Cat's jockey, Diego Sanchez. "My horse started to run by himself, so I let him go ahead."

Geier runs the Chicago-New Orleans branch of Tafel's stable, while Carl Nafzger races his top horses in Florida during the winter and at the Kentucky tracks and Saratoga Race Course during the rest of the year.

"Greg was Gene Cilio's assistant, and when Gene died a few years ago he took over the horses and has done a superb job," Tafel said. "I have about 15 horses in training. I breed and I buy to race, but the most success we've had is with our two homebreds



Four Footed Fotos

SURFACE SPECIALIST

Indescribable, described by trainer Graham Motion as "night and day" on Polytrack, wins for first time in three starts this season in Arlington Matron

who won Eclipse Awards, Banshee Breeze [1998 champion three-year-old filly] and Street Sense [2006 champion two-year-old male].

"I breed for a two-turn mile or greater, and I get some excellent counseling from Headley Bell of Mill Ridge Farm on the pedigree side and Carl's input from the racetrack. I bred Coragil to Forest Wildcat on Headley's recommendation. We've gone to Forest Wildcat a couple of times, and we're very pleased with him as a sire."

Indescribable Matron

The \$150,000 Arlington Matron Handicap (G3) on May 26 was the last

of the weekend's four stakes, whose purses ranged from \$100,000 to \$200,000, and the race belonged to Indescribable, who can be described as a synthetic-surface specialist.

"She's like night and day on Polytrack," Indescribable's trainer, Graham Motion, said after the four-year-old filly bred and owned by Courtland Farm made a resolute late run to overtake Leah's Secret and win the Matron by a half-length. "Once we got her on it, I thought she'd turn around, but I didn't realize how much she'd turn around."

Taking command at the outset, Tessa Blue, the narrow 2-to-1 favorite

Arlington Matron H. (G3)

Arlington Park, May 26, \$150,000, 1½m, all weather, fast, 1:49.82

- 1—**INDESCRIBABLE**, ch. f. 4, Pleasant Tap—Catnip, by Flying Paster.
- 2—**Leah's Secret**, dk. b. or br. m. 5, Tiger Ridge—Lady Cruella, by Capote.
- 3—**Lady Carlock**, b. f. 4, Chester House—Incha (GB), by Nashwan.

over 2-to-1 Indescribable in the field of seven, set a slow pace, reaching the three-quarter mark in 1:13.13. Then, 2.90-to-1 third choice Leah's Secret came from just off the pace on the inside to take the lead, but Indescribable closed under Jeremy Rose to win the 1½-mile race in 1:49.82.

It was the first victory in three starts this year for the daughter of Pleasant Tap out of Catnip, by Flying Paster. In her previous outings, she had finished fifth in the El Encino Stakes (G2) on Santa Anita Park's Cushion Track and third in the Doubledogdare Stakes (G3) on Polytrack at Keeneland Race Course.

Stakes triple-header

Also on the May 24 program were two ungraded turf stakes for three-year-olds. Much Obligated overcame a bumpy start and took the lead in the final strides to win the inaugural running of the \$200,000 American One Thousand Guineas Stakes for fillies, and Meal Penalty was a front-running winner of the \$150,000 Arlington Classic Stakes. ☎

Neil Milbert is the Turf writer of the Chicago Tribune.