

Forego

by Kathleen Jones

Forego was one of the last of the "old guard" racehorses - the gelding warriors that seem to get better with age. The weight-carriers. Forego was a member of an elite and highly respected group which included Roseben, Exterminator, Phar Lap, Kelso, John Henry, and a handful of others.



Forego's sire, Forli, was an undefeated Triple Crown winner in his native Argentina. His dam, Lady Golconda was a stakes winner of the Miss Illinois Stakes. Her sire, Hasty Road had won several Futurities, the Derby Trial, the Preakness Stakes, and the Widener. The breeding seemed to indicate distance and much was expected of Forego. However, being such a large horse, he was still growing at age two, and did not take to the track until January in his 3yo year. There was not much time to prep for the classics.

Forego began his first race at Hialeah on January 17, 1973. It was a 7f maiden event. He closed well from ninth to finish fourth behind Buffalo Lark who would go on to be a highly respectable stakes horse in his own right.

His next start 12 days later was in a 6f maiden at Hialeah, and he drew off convincingly to win by 8 lengths. He won his next start, a 6f allowance, and was then ready for his first stakes effort - the Hutcheson Stakes at Gulfstream Park. Second favorite behind Shecky Greene, that's exactly where he finished. But his effort was a very good one because Shecky Greene had to equal the track record to defeat him.

Forego dropped back down to a 7f allowance, won that, then entered the Florida Derby - this time favored to win. But he could not catch pacesetter Royal And Regal, and again finished second. However, the field he beat included such stellar names as Restless Jet, Our Native, My Gallant, Twice a Prince, and Buffalo Lark. So, although not a stakes winner yet, connection were buoyed that he might yet make a decent runner. His final prep before the Derby was the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland. Again favored to win - again he disappointed, running evenly in 5th place.

Owner, Lazy F Ranch, kept their Derby obligation nonetheless. Perhaps only because so much money was flowing through the ticket windows on Secretariat, did Forego's final odds top out at over 28-to-1. Those were certainly the greatest odds anyone could ever have received on Forego. However, they would not have returned anything, since Forego hit the rail entering the far turn and finished an unnoticed 4th behind Big Red.

Trainer, Sherrill Ward, knew when he was beat, and did not ask Forego to go into the remainder of the 1973 Triple Crown. He skipped in and out of stakes races and

allowances the remainder of the year, winning most, and running as the highweight almost always. His 5 length victory in the Roamer Handicap in late November, in which he conceded from 2 to 15 lbs all around, earned him a weight of 127 for the December 8th Discovery Handicap. In that one, he was giving away up to 19 lbs, but he still won. It was a great finish to a year that had begun rather lack-luster, but still entirely unnoticed in a year when the only racehorse name the public spoke was "Secretariat."

But the handicappers had noticed him. He began in the Gulfstream Park Handicap at age 4 already toting 127 lbs. Having won that, they boosted him to 129 for the Widener, which he also won. His third start that year was the 7 furlong Carter Handicap in which he would meet the highly regarded Mr Prospector who would carry 5 lbs less than Forego. He came out of the gate slowly, settled into last place, then moved boldly around horses on the turn to go after Mr Prospector in the stretch. He quickly caught the leader (who had set fractions of :23 1/5, :45, 1:09 2/5), passed without much effort and drew off with speed to spare.

This fine finish penalized Forego greatly in his next start, the Metropolitan Handicap, in which he was assigned 134 lbs, and it was still early in the year. For this race, we was co-favored with Prove Out (who carried 8 lbs less.) Also in this race was Timeless Moment, who carried 25 lbs less than Forego. As before, Forego caught the leader in the stretch, but this time, a light weight 60-to-1 longshot named Arbee's Boy flew past him in deep stretch to win the race.

In late June came the Nassau County Handicap at 7 furlongs, but the weight had not improved much. Still carrying 132, Forego ran second to Timeless Moment, to whom he conceded 20 lbs. The Brooklyn Handicap came just eight days later, and for that 1 3/16th miles event, he carried 129, conceding 13 to 18 lbs all around. It was a winning effort this time, but as before, that could only mean more weight in the next race.

And so it did - highweighted at 131 in the Suburban Handicap, the best he could manage was third, but still defeated Halo by 2 1/2 lengths. On October 19th, Forego started in the 7f Vosburgh Handicap, and was highly favored despite carrying 131 lbs. That was 21 lbs more than some in this field! But he rallied from far back, and won by 3 1/2 lengths over Stop The Music.

His very next start came in the 2-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup which was a weight- for-age event. This meant he could not be made to carry more than any other runner in his age group. So, hauling a feather-weight of 124, he charged from last to first to win by 2 1/2 lengths. With that he collected his Horse of the Year title and went to Florida for the winter. He had also been named champion sprinter and champion handicap horse. His was a remarkable accomplishment. Can you think of any other American champion sprinter who also won, in the same year, at the Grade-1 level going 2 miles? Neither can I.

His first start at 5 was the 9f Seminole Handicap at Hialeah. He began the year assigned 129 lbs, and won easily, thus signaling to all that he would be tougher than ever before. Increased to 131 for the Widener, he won that. Increased to 134 for the Carter, he won

that. Increased to 136 for the Metropolitan, he - well, you can't win them all - he finished third, beaten less than a length by the winner, Gold and Myrrh (121 lbs.)

Dropped slightly to 132 lbs for the Brooklyn Handicap, he rallied to out-finish Monetary Principle (109 lbs.) and won by a good length and a half, setting a new track record of 1:59 4/5 for the 10 furlongs.

This brought him back to the 1 1/2 mile Suburban, which had eluded him the previous year when he had been forced to carry 131 lbs. With revenge on his mind, and 134 lbs on his back, Forego stormed home to narrowly defeat his pesky shadow, Arbees Boy (118 lbs.)

The Marlboro Cup that year drew a stellar field of sophomores including Derby winner Foolish Pleasure, Belmont winner Avatar, and Travers winner Wajima. Still highweighted, Forego ran his usual brilliant race, charging from the back into the homestretch. Wajima charged with him, and the two were inseparable for the final furlong. At the wire, Wajima (carrying 10 lbs less) prevailed by a head.

But Forego got his revenge on Wajima in their next race, the Woodward. With only 7 lbs separating them this time, Forego drew off to an almost 2 length victory. This was the last time trainer Sherrill Ward would saddle Forego. Ward retired on the highest possible note. His charge, Forego, was named champion handicapper and Horse Of The Year once again.

Frank Whitely took over the training of the now 6yo Forego and the new team won a Belmont allowance in their first outing together. The weights stayed consistently high. His second effort at 6 was the Metropolitan Handicap and he was assigned 130, conceding up to 24 lbs to rivals. But he won by a head. Advanced to 132 for the Nassau County, he drew away with authority from a field of four light-weighted contenders.

Only four began that year in the Suburban Handicap, and Forego (at 134) was greatly favored over Foolish Pleasure (at 125), and in the end, Foolish Pleasure won by a nose. Defeat never did visit Forego for very long. If a horse beat him, he'd be sure to turn the tables, weight or no weight, in their next meeting. Foolish Pleasure faced him again in the mile and a quarter Brooklyn Handicap 19 days later. Forego's impost was still a whopping 134, while the Derby winner toted Derby weight of 126. Forego drew clear to win by two over Lord Rebeau (114 lbs) with Foolish Pleasure in third.

As nice as the win was, victories for Forego were nothing but a "weight-magnet" and he found himself assigned 136 for the Haskell, conceding as much as 27 lbs to rivals. He might have won it too except that Hatchet Man (112 lbs) bore out in the stretch under left-handed whipping and interfered with Forego. Hatchet Man's jockey switched to a right-handed whip and in the process struck 2nd place horse Intrepid Hero (119 lbs) across the nose. Jockeys on Forego and Intrepid Hero both claimed foul against Bracciale on Hatchet Man, but the claims were dismissed. If the weight didn't stop him, sometimes fate did.

Forego met Hatchet Man again in the Woodward and defeated him soundly despite carrying 135 lbs (21 more than Hatchet Man). Also, this marked the first time that Bill Shoemaker rode Forego. The pairing worked well, and would continue to do so. Now weighted 137 lbs for the Marlboro Cup, a race which he failed to win in two previous attempts, Forego found himself in the unenviable position of conceding up to 28 lbs to rivals. Few horses could give their rivals such an advantage and still win a 1 1/4 mile race, but Forego was no average animal. He got out of the gate quickly, but Shoemaker eased him back and took him out to the middle of the track to keep him clear of trouble. They continued very wide into the stretch and charged home boldly to wear down Honest Pleasure and win by a head.

That was the end of his six year old year, and as before, he earned the titles of champion handicapper and Horse of the Year.

At seven, he began in a Belmont allowance and sailed easily home under 122 lbs. But the impost was hoisted immediately to 133 a week later when he won the Metropolitan by 2 easy lengths. His next start was a victory in the Nassau County Handicap hauling 136. The weight-magnet went into overdrive and loaded 138 onto Forego for the Suburban. The pair of Shoemaker and Forego had the race timed almost perfectly but could not quite catch Quiet Little Table (114 lbs) who was all out to hold off the "rumbling train" that was bearing down on him. Forego was 2nd by just a neck.

The loss made little difference to the weight-assignors. Backed off to 137 for the Suburban, conceding now 30 full lbs to some rivals, Forego caught leader Great Contractor in the homestretch but couldn't keep up. Great Contractor (112 lbs) cruised to an easy win that day. It was evident that Forego would have to carry such weights for the rest of his career.

Saratoga - the house of upsets - saw a huge one in the Whitney that year. Forego put in an understandably poor effort toting 136 lbs. The winner, Nearly On Time, carried 33 lbs less. Forego was back to his old self in his next race, the Woodward, a race he had won for the three previous years. Despite the 133 impost, the public could see no other in the ten-horse field, and Forego let no one down. Shoemaker drove him to a length and a half victory over Silver Series and Great Contractor. And that was the end of his 7yo year. And he had won yet another championship title.

He ran only twice at age 8, winning a 7f Belmont allowance, then running unplaced in the Suburban under 132 lbs. The decision was made to retire the great horse. He had done enough. He had done more than enough. His earnings of \$1,938,957 was the second highest total in history at that time, behind Kelso.

Forego was moved to the Kentucky Horse Park the following year, 1979, and remained there as a fan favorite until his death in 1997. He was euthanized after breaking his left hind leg in a paddock accident. He was 27 years old.

Pedigree:

Forego br.g. born 1970	*Forli, 1963	Aristophanes (GB), 1948	Hyperion (GB)
			Commotion (Fr)
	Lady Golconda, 1958	Trevisa (Arg), 1951	Advocate (GB)
			Veneta (Arg)
		Hasty Road, 1951	Roman
			Traffic Court
Girlea, 1951	Bull Lea		
	Whirling Girl		

(female family # 9)

Born: April 30, 1970, bred in Kentucky by Lazy F Ranch.

Died: August 27, 1997 (age 27) at the Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, KY, and buried there.

Racing Record:

Year	Age	Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	unp.	earnings
1973	3	18	9	3	3	3	\$188,909
1974	4	13	8	2	2	1	545,086
1975	5	9	6	1	1	1	429,521
1976	6	8	6	1	1	0	491,701
1977	7	7	4	2	0	1	268,740
1978	8	2	1	0	0	1	15,000
total		57	34	9	7	7	\$1,938,957

Stakes Record:

at 3:

- won - Discovery Handicap [G3]
- won - Roamer Handicap [G2]
- 2nd - Florida Derby [G1]
- 2nd - Jerome Handicap [G2]
- 2nd - Hutcheson Stakes [G3]
- 3rd - Withers Stakes [G2]

at 4:

- won - Widener Handicap [G1]
- won - Woodward Stakes [G1]
- won - Gulfstream Park Handicap [G2]
- won - Brooklyn Handicap [G1]
- won - Jockey Club Gold Cup Stakes [G1]
- won - Vosburgh [G2]
- won - Donn Handicap [G3]
- won - Carter Handicap [G2]
- 2nd - Metropolitan Handicap [G1]
- 2nd - Nassau County Handicap [G3]
- 3rd - Marlboro Handicap
- 3rd - Suburban Handicap [G1]
- **Champion Handicap Horse**
- Champion Sprinter
- Horse Of The Year

at 5:

- won - Brooklyn Handicap [G1] (new track record)
- won - Suburban Handicap [G1]
- won - Widener Handicap [G1]
- won - Woodward Stakes [G1]
- won - Carter Handicap [G2]
- won - Seminole Handicap [G2]
- 2nd - Marlboro Cup [G1]
- 3rd - Metropolitan Handicap [G1]
- **Champion Handicap Horse**
- Horse Of The Year

at 6:

- won - Marlboro Cup [G1]
- won - Woodward Handicap [G1]
- won - Metropolitan Handicap [G1]
- won - Brooklyn Handicap [G1]
- won - Nassau County Handicap [G3]
- 2nd - Suburban Handicap [G1]
- 3rd - Amory L Haskell Handicap [G1]
- **Champion Handicap Horse**
- Horse Of The Year

at 7:

- won - Woodward Handicap [G1]
- won - Metropolitan Handicap [G1]
- won - Nassau County Handicap [G3]
- 2nd - Suburban Handicap [G1]
- 2nd - Brooklyn Handicap [G1]
- **Champion Handicap Horse**