

Just a rookie,
Mauk already
winning like a vet

By **BYRON KING**

Fletcher Mauk is one of the winningest trainers at Turfway Park this winter. He also happens to be one of the youngest.

Mauk, 26, is in his first year as a trainer. But since Turfway began racing in late November, he has won with four of seven starters while

Turfway Notes

managing a seven-horse stable. His latest winner came Thursday night, when Mauk Place won the seventh

race following a nine-month layoff, paying \$53.80.

Mauk said he has learned by keeping his eyes and ears open.

"I try to pay extremely close attention to others," he said. "There is still so much I don't know."

What he lacks in experience, he makes up for with ambition. He hopes to eventually become an agent for a globally based breeding and racing operation like Coolmore. His experience in training horses, he said, is a means to acquire some of the knowledge necessary to pursue that path.

Mauk's father, Bill, operates Mauk Equine Brokerage and is in the business of buying and selling horses. The horses that Mauk trains – investments owned by his family and him – are an extension of that business.

He and his father acquire yearlings – sometimes with minor physical faults – who, if able to race successfully, can be sold for a profit.

Mauk said that buyers of racehorses, unlike many who buy yearlings, are willing to overlook conformational defects. They are looking for racing ability more than they are the perfect individual.

Mauk Place provides an example of how the Mauk family operates. When the Mauks purchased her as a year-

ling in 2002, they initially hoped to resell her for a profit in last April's 2-year-olds in training sale at Keeneland.

Feeling she needed more time to peak, however, the Mauks scratched Mauk Place from the sale and settled on developing her as a racehorse. She started once for trainer Dale Romans in the spring at Keeneland, finishing eighth, and then returned to win at Turfway Thursday night in her first start being trained by Mauk. She raced five furlongs in 59.26 seconds, winning by 1 1/2 lengths over favored Toy Tigress.

Mauk has no dreams of training her throughout her career. "If someone were to make the right offer today, she'd have a new owner," he said.

To increase the exposure of their pinhooking business, the Mauks include their name in the name of all of their horses.

Some of the many examples include Mauk Me, Mauk Hawk, and Tap Dancing Mauk, who is trained by Romans in Florida and was entered in Saturday's Holy Bull Stakes at Gulfstream Park.

Mauk's numbers have also been rewarding for horseplayers. With little-known jockey Jose Delgado riding for him, his horses have often started at overlaid prices.

Mauk began utilizing Delgado out of frustration from dealing with jockey agents. Training a small stable and being a relative newcomer, Mauk found it difficult to acquire the services of leading riders, and when he did get them, he felt the riders were reluctant to give 100 percent on horses with whom they were unfamiliar.

When Delgado began working his horses at The Thoroughbred Center in Lexington, it was the commitment he needed. "He's happy and I'm happy," Mauk said.