

# NEWS RELEASE

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### **MARIN HOPING TO USE MOMENTUM FROM TAMPA BAY RIDING TITLE TO MAKE A RUN AT PACO LOPEZ'S DOMINANCE AT MONMOUTH PARK**

OCEANPORT, N.J. – In the midst of a breakout year, jockey Samuel Marin keeps challenging himself to reach for new goals. The next one: Unseating perennial Monmouth Park riding champion Paco Lopez when the Jersey Shore track's 80<sup>th</sup> season gets underway on Saturday, May 10.

Lopez, seeking his 12<sup>th</sup> Monmouth Park riding title – Joe Bravo holds the track record with 13 – has finished atop the track standings each of the past six summers. Plenty of other riders have tried making a run at Lopez but no jockey has finished ahead of him since Jose Ferrer in 2018.

Marin, 23, is hoping the momentum he has built will make the difference. After earning his first career riding title during the abbreviated Monmouth-at-Meadowlands meet last fall, Marin followed that by capturing the Tampa Bay Downs riding title with 117 winners.

"It's a career highlight for sure," Marin said of the Tampa title. "My goal is to keep adding accomplishments that are bigger and better. Winning the Tampa Downs title means a lot to me. It's an incredible feeling. We've been working hard for it. It's a dream and an honor."

But unseating Lopez atop the Monmouth Park jockey standings has proven to be a daunting challenge through the years.

"I know it's not going to be easy beating Paco," said Marin. "But I really want to try to do everything I can to make it happen."

Mike Moran, the agent for both Marin and Samy Camacho (they finished 1-2 in the Tampa Bay Downs rider standings), said beating Paco "is a realistic goal" for both of his riders.

"We're not handing anything to Paco," he said. "We're going to make sure he has to work for it. It's all about things falling into place. That's my job. I want to be 1-2 in the rider standings at Monmouth Park, not 2-3. If Paco beats us, I'll be the first to congratulate him because I know he will have earned it."

Marin, who was atop the Tampa jockey standings for most of the meet, was able to relax the final week at the Florida track with his title clinched after a close battle because Camacho served a suspension the last four race days.

Camacho will also be back at Monmouth Park this summer.

Marin, a native of Venezuela who has been riding in the United States since 2022, is confident he can improve dramatically over his win total of 40 at Monmouth Park last year. That was good for third place in the standings.

A year ago, he entered the Monmouth Park meet off a six-week layoff due to a broken collarbone. He also added Moran as his agent a month into the meet.

“Last year I had a slow start at Monmouth. I was coming off the broken collarbone and lost some business early because of that,” said Marin. “But with the momentum I have now I’m hoping it will be different.”

Marin added to his breakout year by riding Statesman for Shug McGaughey in the Grade 2 Wood Memorial. It’s another step, he said, toward someday riding in a Triple Crown race.

“Every jockey’s dream is to ride in the Triple Crown races,” he said. “It’s all any of us want. Hopefully it will happen soon for me.”

For now, though, the focus is on the Monmouth Park riding title, something Lopez will not relinquish easily.

“I don’t know how it’s going to work out this year. It’s going to be a little different for me with a new agent,” said Lopez, who will be represented by Jose Garcia. “I know one thing: I will be there every day and trying 100 percent to win another title. When you win a lot people are going to come after you. But I am used to it. It doesn’t bother me. I like the competition.”

Among the other returnees are 13-time leading rider Joe Bravo, Isaac Castillo, Melissa Iorio, Fernando Jara, Madison Olver, Jomar Torres and Jorge A. Vargas, Jr.

Sonny Leon, who won the 2022 Kentucky Derby with Rich Strike, is among the newcomers to the jockey colony, along with Jeiron Barbosa, who is moving his tack from Maryland, Sara Hess, Dexter Haddock and apprentice Melvis Gonzalez. Chantal Sutherland, who was scheduled to ride at Monmouth Park in 2023 before suffering horrific injuries in a mishap just before the meet started, is scheduled to try again.

Popular veteran Jose Ferrer will also return following a one-year hiatus along with Hector Diaz, Jr.

The 2025 Monmouth Park meet will feature 51 stakes races worth \$7.8 million.

First race post time on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays is 12:50 p.m. Post time for Friday racing, which begins June 20, is 2 p.m.