FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

McCRAKEN BREEZES HALF-MILE AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Tuesday, April 18, 2017) – Janis Whitham’s Blue Grass (Grade II) third-place finisher McCraken breezed a half-mile in :47.80 Tuesday morning at Churchill Downs for trainer Ian Wilkes in preparation for the Grade I, $2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on Saturday, May 6.

McCraken, who was ridden by jockey Brian Hernandez Jr., breezed over the “fast” track through splits of :12.60, :24.60 and :36.40 before galloping out five furlongs in 1:00 and three-quarters of a mile in 1:13.40.

“He felt great,” Hernandez said. “Once he was a little settled going to the pole, he worked great. His gallop-out was very nice and he’s right back home at Churchill where he likes it.”

“The main thing is I wanted to see him finish but finish without riding himself while doing it,” Wilkes said. “I got everything I wanted to see today.”

Last week, Hernandez chose to ride McCraken in the Kentucky Derby over Louisiana Derby (GII) winner Girvin.

“It was a tough decision,” Hernandez said. “It was like trying to decide which one of your kids to take on vacation and which one to stay at home.”

“We’ve had a lot of success and it’s been fun,” Wilkes said. “Brian is a part of the team and he fits in well. He helps develop horses.”

The 3-year-old son of Ghostzapper has a 5-4-0-1 record that includes victories in Churchill Downs’ Street Sense Stakes and Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) as a juvenile.

Wilkes has two more planned breezes for McCraken prior to the first Saturday in May with the next coming in six or seven days.

DOWN THE STRETCH – The owners of Arkansas Derby (GI) runner-up Conquest Mo Money are scheduled to hold a 3 p.m. EDT news conference at Sunland Park to announce the future plans for the 3-year-old colt. Conquest Mo Money is not nominated to the Triple Crown and his owners Tom and Sandy McKenna of Judge Lanier Racing would have to pay a $200,000 late supplemental nomination to become eligible for the Kentucky Derby. … Following J Boys Echo’s breeze Monday morning, trainer Dale Romans said the Gotham (GIII) winner could breeze again Sunday morning at Churchill Downs. … Gazelle (GII) winner Miss Sky Warrior, trained by Kelly Breen, arrived yesterday afternoon in Barn 43 at Churchill Downs and is expected to train Wednesday around 7 a.m. to begin final preparations for the $1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) on Friday, May 5. … The exclusive training period for Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks contenders at Churchill Downs begins Saturday from 8:30-8:45 a.m., and will be streamed live on KentuckyDerby.com. Kentucky Derby prospects expected to breeze are Girvin for trainer Joe Sharp, and State of Honor for trainer Mark Casse. Kentucky Oaks contenders that could work include Salty for Casse and Farrell for trainer Wayne Catalano. Fast and Accurate is scheduled to breeze Saturday at Trackside Louisville, Churchill Downs’ satellite training center located five miles from the home of the Derby.

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