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KENTUCKY OAKS FOLLOW UP

ABEL TASMAN – An authoritative, last-to-first victory by **China Horse Club** and **Clearsky Farms' Abel Tasman** in Friday's Longines Kentucky Oaks is the latest example of why the world's most prominent owners seek out **Bob Baffert** to care for their most talented horses. Yes, retaining the Hall of Fame trainer of four Kentucky Derby winners and now three Kentucky Oaks heroines gives you access to racing's most recognizable celebrity, as well as one of its sharpest wits, but more important is the effect of a master horseman who time and again uses a heightened intuition to make all the right moves.

Abel Tasman was sent to Baffert two months ago after starting her 3-year-old season with a runner-up finish to Unique Bella in the Santa Ysabel (GIII). In a limited amount of time since, changes made by Baffert have included a rider switch to Hall of Fame jockey Mike Smith, the addition of small-cup blinkers for added focus and the introduction of earplugs to help the filly relax.

"Our barn is used to dealing with high-caliber horses and running them on these big days," said **Jimmy Barnes**, lead assistant to Baffert, who departed Louisville first thing Saturday morning. "Everyone stays calm. Bob knows how to train them up to a big race and I know how to take care of them to get them through the race. **Dana (Barnes, exercise rider)** spends a lot of time with them and has done a phenomenal job with all of them through the years. And Mike is notorious for doing what he does. It's a good team."

The most obvious example of a horse blossoming in short order under Baffert's care is War Emblem, who upset the 2002 Derby at 21-1 odds three weeks after **Prince Ahmed bin Salmen** of Saudi Arabia bought a majority interest in the Illinois Derby winner and changed trainers.

Abel Tasman, though, was coming off a loss as an odds-on favorite in the Santa Anita Oaks (G1) and had to face a talented field that included the filly that won that race by nearly 12 lengths.

"We gave her one run, sort of like a test run," Baffert said of the Santa Anita race. "We came back, made some changes. And she just came in here, was training well. It was nice flying under the radar."

Late-running Abel Tasman was the beneficiary of a fast early pace in the Kentucky Oaks with two of the main win threats dueling themselves out of the race. But the work of the Baffert team helped her to take full advantage when the ideal setup materialized.

"We knew we needed to get blinkers on her before her next start, for sure," Barnes said. "She put on some weight and we just made sure she was happy. Mentally, I couldn't have had her in a better spot. We did add earplugs (removed at the starting gate) because she can be a little aggressive at times. She'll hear noises and want to jump or get a bit nervous; we do anything we can to keep them calm."

Saturday morning Abel Tasman was healthy and energetic. Without a Derby horse to tend to, Baffert and Dana Barnes were already on their way back to California, leaving Jimmy Barnes to fly home with the Oaks winner Monday morning.

"I just jogged her and she was stroking it down the shed," he said. "She ate up last night and I couldn't be happier. She looked awesome."

The Quality Road filly will return to training at Santa Anita Park before her next start is determined.

"I'm not sure what direction we'll go," Barnes said. "Normally we wouldn't go to Baltimore or anything like that. Bob will get together with the owners and decide which direction to go."

DADDYS LIL DARLING (Second) – After a runner-up finish in Friday's Longines Kentucky Oaks, **Daddys Lil Darling** is pointing for big things in her immediate future.

"We have some exciting plans for her next start," assistant trainer **Jeff Hiles** said. "She came out of the race great and **Kenny (McPeek)** is firming up the details for her near future."

"When you watch the replay, **Mike (Smith)** just got the jump on her," Hiles continued. "She ran her race and the winner just got a better trip than us."

Daddy's Lil Darling will stay based at McPeek's Churchill Downs Barn 7.

LOCKDOWN (Third) – As he watched horses on the track, trainer **Bill Mott** reported that **Juddmonte Farms' Lockdown** was doing well after her third-place finish in Friday's Kentucky Oaks at odds of \$36.70-1.

"We're very happy with her," Mott said. "She gave a good effort."

VEXATIOUS (Fourth) – No representatives were available for comment on the fourth-place Kentucky Oaks finisher.

SALTY (Fifth) – Gary Barber, Baccari Racing and Chester Prince's Salty finished fifth in Friday's Kentucky Oaks in trainer Mark Casse's third start in the race.

"She came out of the race well," assistant trainer Norm Casse said. "We don't have any immediate plans on paper for her next start."

Salty will remain in Casse's Churchill Downs Barn 36.

SAILOR'S VALENTINE (Sixth) – Semaphore Racing LLC and Homewrecker Racing LLC's Sailor's Valentine exited her effort in the Kentucky Oaks (GI) in good order, according to trainer Eddie Kenneally.

Despite entering the classic off a GI victory in the Ashland at Keeneland, the daughter of Mizzen Mast was dismissed at 45-1. She made a nice rally into contention at the top of the stretch after what appeared to be an ideal mid-pack trip, but was unable to maintain her momentum and finished sixth of 14, beaten nine lengths.

"I was happy with the race and she came out of it well, it looks, so far," Kenneally said. "It just may have been a little far for her. Around the (far) turn, I was very confident because she was traveling so well and she looked like she could win at about the eighth pole, but then got tired at the sixteenth. Overall, though, I'm very happy."

TEQUILITA (Seventh) – Trainer Michael Matz reported Saturday morning that Tequilita exited her seventh-place finish in Friday's Kentucky Oaks at Churchill Downs well.

"She ate up but she looks awfully tired this morning," Matz said.

Dorothy Alexander Matz's homebred filly rallied in the stretch under Luis Saez after dropping back to 13th in the 14-horse field on the far turn.

"Luis said she got bumped at the start. She bumped with Miss Sky Warrior and down the backside he said a horse was leaning against her the whole time," Matz said. "She took herself back and had one horse beat at the three-eighths pole and then she comes running again. At least she came running again and cooled out fine."

Matz said he had no next-race plans for Tequilita, who had previously won the Forward Gal (GII) and finished second in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII).

"We'll just get her back and see what she wants to do from there," he said.

MISS SKY WARRIOR (Eighth) – Arlene's Sun Star Stable's Kelly Breen-trained Miss Sky Warrior lost a shoe during the running of the Kentucky Oaks, according to her conditioner. After contesting a swift pace, the front-running daughter of First Samurai won the battle — overpowering favorite and front-runner Paradise Woods — but lost the war when ultimately retreating to eighth place in the final eighth of a mile.

"I think she lost it during the start," Breen said. "We have to get (the foot) checked out. The plan was to go to the Black-Eyed Susan (GII) after this, but now I don't know."

EVER SO CLEVER (Ninth) – It was business as usual at the Steve Asmussen barn as he led horses back and forth to the track during the full two hours of training Saturday morning, appearing relaxed and happy.

He reported Ever So Clever was "good" after her troubled ninth-place finish in Friday's Oaks. Later Saturday, he will saddle six horses on the card, including three in the Kentucky Derby – Hence, Lookin At Lee and Untrapped.

MOPOTISM (10th) – The 10th-place finisher in Friday's Kentucky Oaks (GI) was doing OK on Saturday morning at Barn 41.

"She's fine," assistant trainer Leandro Mora said. "She just couldn't handle that bunch yesterday. I don't think she much liked that track, either."

The 143rd edition of the \$1 million Oaks was run on a "sloppy" strip in 1:51.62 for the nine furlongs by winner Abel

Tasman.

Mopotism, a daughter of Uncle Mo who is trained by Doug O'Neill, could have her immediate future dictated by the efforts of stablemate Irap today. That colt is Kentucky Derby bound and a good effort on his part might mean he and several others from the stable's contingent could be headed to Pimlico in Baltimore, according to Mora. If Irap doesn't set himself up for a try in the Preakness on May 20, though, it likely would mean the entire O'Neill group would head west for a return to their Southern California base.

PARADISE WOODS (11th) – The 6-5 Kentucky Oaks favorite Paradise Woods was coming back around to her usual self Saturday morning after her Friday tussle that saw her lead for the majority of the nine furlongs, then retreat late and finish 11th in the 14-horse field.

"She'll get over it," said trainer Richard Mandella at Barn 42 early Saturday morning. Then, calling on his ever-ready sense of humor, he added: "I'm not sure I ever will."

The sizable daughter of Union Rags had come into the 143rd running of Churchill Downs' 3-year-old filly crucible off a smashing score a month earlier in the Santa Anita Oaks (GI). In that race she ran away and hid from rivals, but Friday her rivals -- notably the speedy **Miss Sky Warrior** -- wouldn't let Paradise Woods shake loose, ganging up on her on the far turn and furthering her racing education in only her fourth start.

"She was just a little stiff last night," Mandella said. "There's a chance she might have tied up (a knotting of the muscles, usually caused by stress). But she jogged (at the barn) for us OK this morning and seems all right. I may have her (nuclear) scanned when we get back to California to make sure we're all good. Then she'll get a little break."

The trainer and his assistant, **Alex Bisono**, don't have a runner for today's Kentucky Derby, but will be represented during the afternoon by **Calumet Farm's** Bal A Bali (BRZ) in the \$500,000 Woodford Reserve Turf Classic at nine furlongs in the race right before the Run for the Roses.

"It would pick our heads up for the trip back home if he can get it done," said Bisono of their 7-year-old Brazilian-bred who is listed at 6-1 on the morning line and will have the saddle services of **Javier Castellano**.

JORDAN'S HENNY (12th) – **Erv Woolsey** and **Ralph Kinder's** **Jordan's Henny** came out of her 12th-place finish in the Kentucky Oaks fine according to **D.W. Fries**, assistant to trainer **Mike Tomlinson**.

"A mile is probably her best distance," Fries said. "She will probably get 60 days off and then look for a fall campaign."

WICKED LICK (13th) – "She came back good; it just didn't work out," trainer **Brendan Walsh** said of **Wicked Lick**, who finished 13th in the Oaks.

Owned and bred by **Lee Mauberret**, Wicked Lick never was in contention in the 1 1/8-mile race.

"I've got no idea what I will do with her next," Walsh said.

Although Wicked Lick did not run well, two other Walsh runners did and the trainer has ideas for them.

Honorable Duty, who was second in the Alysheba (GII), has the \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap (GI) at Churchill Downs on June 17 as an option and Proctor's Ledge, fourth in the Edgewood (GIII), has the Regret (GIII) at Churchill Downs on June 17 as a possible next start with the goal being an invitation to the Belmont Oaks (GI) at Belmont Park on July 8.

FARRELL (14th) – **Coffeepot Stables'** homebred filly **Farrell** had a rough go of it in the Kentucky Oaks (GI) for trainer **Wayne Catalano**. Sent to post as the 9-2 second choice in the field of 14, she stalked the vicious pace duel of favorite **Paradise Woods** and Gazelle (GII) winner **Miss Sky Warrior** before backing up rapidly on the far turn and being eased under the wire, far behind the field. According to the Catalano camp, the daughter of Malibu Moon despised the wet going.

"She hated the track," said **Fernando Canteria**, assistant to Catalano. "She didn't like (running on) it and she took so much kickback. She couldn't open her right eye when we got her back to the barn, she had so much mud in it."

Catalano confirmed that **Dr. Larry Bramlage** is going to go over the multiple graded stakes winner.

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