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FROM MARINES TO TRAINING HORSES, HILES HAS A FIRSTHAND VIEW ON MEMORIAL DAY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, May 28, 2017) – Jeff Hiles, assistant trainer to Kenny McPeek, has a different perspective on Memorial Day weekend after serving five years in the United States Marines.

“I had the greatest job in the world with the Marines,” Hiles said. “I was based in Hawaii for five years and eventually promoted to Sergeant. The Marines taught me a lot of lessons in life – most importantly, to be disciplined. A lot of the lessons cross over to horse racing.”

Hiles, a native of Frankfort, Ky., is the son of veteran horse trainer Rick Hiles.

“I always wanted to get into horse racing; it’s in my blood,” Hiles said. “I worked off and on prior to the Marines with horses but stepped away completely in 2001 to serve our country. Once I finished my service I worked in construction and auto sales but always had the end goal to be in horse racing as my career. I took out my trainer’s license to claim a couple of horses on my own and start things from scratch. But, just like the Marines, I thought I needed to work my way through the ranks. I worked my tail off to begin my career with Kenny. I sort of did anything we needed around the barn – clean stalls, groom, push feed carts and hot walk. I was based at Keeneland for a while and when the opportunity at Churchill came about Kenny trusted me to step up.”

Hiles, 38, oversees McPeek's Churchill Downs string of horses and was in the care of Longines Kentucky Oaks (Grade I) runner-up Daddys Lil Darling over the winter at Payson Park.

“It was a thrill to see her run that well in the Oaks,” Hiles said. “She’s always gives you her best.”

While McPeek is in England with Daddys Lil Darling, who is scheduled to start in the June 2 Epsom Oaks (GI), Hiles will remain at Churchill Downs as the stable gears up for the end of the Spring Meet.

“We have a lot of horses pointing towards races in the next couple of weeks,” Hiles said. “We’re going to run The Truth or Else in the Aristides (GII) next Saturday and we have a lot of horses who are sitting on go.”

McPeek had as 29-2-7-7 record with $332,883 in earnings through the first 17 days of Churchill Downs’ 38-day Spring Meet.

WALSH ENJOYING EARLY SPRING MEET SUCCESS – Trainer Brendan Walsh, who had his six-race win streak snapped on Saturday’s card, is on pace for a career-best meet at Churchill Downs.

Walsh, 44, has nine wins through 22 starters this meet, eclipsing his career-best mark of seven wins during 2015 Spring Meet. Walsh had six wins during the 2016 Spring Meet.

“It’s only my sixth year of training, so I’m still relatively new to the game,” Walsh said. “It’s been great to have some of the nice horses we’ve had over the last couple of years in the barn.”

A native of Ireland, Walsh started training on his own after working with Eddie Kenneally as his assistant trainer.

“I was with Eddie (Kenneally) for four years,” Walsh said. “Prior to working with Eddie I came back and forth to the United States working with Godolphin. Eddie was my first full-time job working in the United States. I had spent a lot of time in Dubai with Goldolphin and was able to travel all around the world.”

Walsh is currently tied for third in the trainer standings with Brad Cox. Steve Asmussen leads the standings through 17 days of the 38-day Spring Meet with 11 wins and J. R. Caldwell is in second with 10 victories.

STAKES PROBABILITIES – Saturday’s 11-race program at Churchill Downs features the 29th running of the $100,000 Aristides (Grade III) for 3-year-olds and up sprinting six furlongs. The probable entrants are Abbaa, Limousine Liberal, Manhattan Mischief, The Truth or Else, and Union Jackson.

Saturday’s card also will feature the $65,000-added Mighty Beau for 3-year-olds and up at five furlongs on the Matt Winn Turf Course. Latent Revenge, the 2016 Mighty Beau winner, is scheduled to defend his title.

WORK TAB – Trainer Ian Wilkes’ Bird Song, the 1 ½-length victor in the Alysheba (Grade II), continued his march toward the Stephen Foster Handicap (GI) with a bullet :59.20 five-furlong move, the fastest of 22 at the distance. … La Troienne (GI) winner Big World breezed a half-mile in :48.60 for trainer Tom Amoss. … In his first move after his 12th-place finish in the Kentucky Derby (GI), Untrapped worked an easy half-mile in :51.60 for trainer Steve Asmussen. … The complete Churchill Downs work tab is available here: churchilldowns.com/horsemen/racing/workouts.
DOWN THE STRETCH – Trainer “Buff” Bradley is one win away from 100 victories at Churchill Downs. … Sunday’s 10-race card features a 1 ¼-mile maiden special weight. The rare 1 ¼-mile race is carded as Race 4 at approximately 2:13 p.m. … In celebration of Memorial Day on Monday, all active and retired members of the United States armed forces will be admitted free of charge. Also, Churchill Downs’ bugler Steve Buttleman will perform patriotic melodies following the “Call to the Post” for each race. … Next Sunday is the first Family Adventure Day of 2017. There will be fun for the entire family including bounce houses, a petting zoo and children can register to participate in a stick horse race on the turf course.

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