ASMUSSEN BREEZE GUN RUNNER FOR STEPHEN FOSTER HANDICAP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Monday, May 29, 2017) – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm’s Gun Runner, last fall’s Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (Grade I) winner and runner-up to Arrogate in March’s Dubai World Cup (GI), breezed five furlongs in :59.80 Monday morning at Churchill Downs in preparation for a probable start in the $500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap (GI) on Saturday, June 17.

Gun Runner, with regular rider Florent Geroux aboard, started two-lengths behind workmate Tapsolute and finished about one length in front at the wire, according to Churchill Downs’ official clocker John Nichols. The Steve Asmussen trainee breezed through fractions of :12.20, :24.20, :36 and :47.80 before galloping out six furlongs in 1:12 and seven furlongs in 1:25.20.

“He’s an awesome horse,” Asmussen said.

Asmussen and Geroux both had late nights Sunday as they were traveling back to Louisville for Gun Runner’s breeze. Asmussen was in Grand Prairie, Texas to saddle Neck ‘n Neck (fourth) and Carouse (fifth) in Sunday’s Lone Star Park Handicap (GIII) and arrived back in Kentucky at 10:30 p.m. (all times Eastern). Geroux, who rode Souper Tapit to victory in Sunday’s Marine (GIII) at Woodbine in Ontario, Canada, landed in Kentucky around 12:30 a.m.

Gun Runner has a 14-7-3-2 record with $4,337,800 in earnings. The 4-year-old son of Candy Ride (ARG) has fared well over the Churchill Downs surface including a third-place finish in the 2016 Kentucky Derby (GI) and victories in the Matt Winn (GIII) and Clark Handicap (GI). Gun Runner will attempt to become the third horse to win the Clark Handicap and Stephen Foster Handicap – Churchill Downs’ signature races for older horses. Hopeful Word accomplished the feat in 1985-86 and No Marker completed the double in 1989-90.

The Stephen Foster Handicap is the Breeders’ Cup’s first U.S. “Win and You’re In” for the $6 million Breeders’ Cup Classic (GI), which means the winner will receiving an automatic berth to the 1 ¼-mile race on Nov. 4 at Del Mar. Along with the Stephen Foster, the June 17 Downs After Dark program at Churchill Downs will feature the $200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap (GI), $200,000 Wise Dan (GII), $100,000 Regret (GIII) and $100,000 Matt Winn (GIII).

The Fleur de Lis also is part of the Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In” Series with the victor receiving an automatic berth to the Breeders’ Cup Distaff (GI) on Nov. 3 at Del Mar.

Both the Stephen Foster and Fleur de Lis will be televised on NBCSN from 8:30-10 p.m. as part of the 2017 “Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series: Win and You’re In, presented by Lane’s End Farm and America’s Best Racing” television schedule.

Nominations for all June 17 stakes close Saturday.

THE TRUTH OR ELSE TRIES TO TURN THE TABLES ON LIMOUSINE LIBERAL – Harold Lerner and Magdalena Racing's The Truth or Else is preparing for a rematch against Limousine Liberal in Saturday’s $100,000 Aristides (Grade III), the popular six-furlong sprint at Churchill Downs for 3-year-olds and up.

“He ran a solid race in the Churchill Downs (GII),” Kenny McPeek’s assistant trainer Jeff Hiles said. “We were way out of it early and he closed ground late to only get beat three lengths (by Limousine Liberal).”

The Truth or Else started his 5-year-old campaign with a victory in Gulfstream Park’s Sir Shackleton Stakes. The son of Yes It’s True has a 29-6-3-6 record with $579,556 in earnings.

“It was very promising to see how well he closed ground in the Churchill Downs,” Hiles continued. “He’s trained great out of that race and I think there are some bigger races in his future.”

Limousine Liberal will be the likely favorite in the Aristides off of his Churchill Downs victory. The 2016 Breeders’ Cup Sprint fifth-place finisher is currently putting in his final Aristides preparations at trainer Ben Colebrook’s Keeneland base.

Other probable entrants for the Aristides are Abbaa, Manhattan Mischief, and Union Jackson.

Saturday’s program also will feature the $65,000-added Mighty Beau Overnight Stakes for 3-year-olds and up at five furlongs on turf. Latent Revenge is expected to defend his title.

WORK TAB – Trainer Ian Wilkes breezed Kentucky Derby (Grade I) eighth-place finisher McCraken five furlongs in 1:01.20 on Monday at Churchill Downs with regular jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. aboard. McCraken is preparing for a start in the Matt Winn (GIII), according to Wilkes. … The complete Churchill Downs work tab is available here: churchilldowns.com/horsemen/racing/workouts.

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DOWN THE STRETCH – Trainer “Buff” Bradley is one win away from 100 victories at Churchill Downs. Bradley has one entrant, Stomfield, in Race 4 on Monday at approximately 2:13 p.m. … Monday's Memorial Day card features a $7,746 carryover in the 20-cent Single-6 Jackpot. The sequence starts in Race 6 at approximately 3:15 p.m. … In celebration of Memorial Day, all active and retired members of the United States armed forces were 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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