CLASSIC EMPIRE, J BOYS ECHO TO BREEZE THIS WEEKEND AT CHURCHILL DOWNS FOR BELMONT STAKES

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, June 1, 2017) – Classic Empire, the Preakness Stakes (Grade I) runner-up, and Gotham Stakes (GIII) winner J Boys Echo will put in their final preparations for the June 10 Belmont Stakes (GI) this weekend at Churchill Downs.

Classic Empire, owned by John Oxley and trained by Mark Casse, is scheduled to breeze sometime within the next three days, according to assistant trainer Norm Casse.

The 3-year-old son of Pioneerof the Nile was a troubled fourth-place finisher in the Kentucky Derby (GI) and would be one of only two horses to compete in all three jewels of the Triple Crown this year.

Lookin At Lee, the Derby runner-up who was stabled at Churchill Downs prior to the Preakness, will attempt to rebound from his fourth-place finish in the Preakness in the Belmont Stakes.

Stabled on the opposite side of the Churchill Downs backstretch in trainer Dale Romans’ Barn 4, Albaugh Family Stables’ J Boys Echo is scheduled to breeze Saturday at 8:30 a.m. (all times Eastern) and ship to New York on Tuesday, according to Romans.

J Boys Echo, the 15th-place finisher in the Kentucky Derby, tackled two of New York’s Road to the Kentucky Derby prep races – finishing third in the Feb. 4 Withers (GIII) and winning the March 4 Gotham (GIII).

Romans has yet to confirm a jockey to ride the 3-year-old son of Mineshaft in the Belmont Stakes.

HARTMAN ATTEMPTS THREE STRAIGHT VICTORIES IN ARISTIDES – Trainer Chris Hartman, who saddled Alsvid to victory in the last two editions of the $100,000 Aristides Stakes (Grade III) at Churchill Downs, will attempt to win the race for the third consecutive year on Saturday with impressive allowance winner Wilbo.

Owned by Chris Wilkins, Wilbo seeks his first stakes triumph after prevailing in a long stretch drive with Aristides rival Recount to win a six-furlong allowance/optional claiming event in 1:09.47 at Churchill Downs three weeks ago.

“It certainly came up a tough race this year,” Hartman said. “Limousine Liberal is a very nice horse. We ran well in the allowance race but hopefully Wilbo can improve from there. The field has a lot of horses who have fast speed figures in their last race but we’re right up there with them.”

The six-furlong Aristides, which is named in honor of the inaugural Kentucky Derby winner of 1875, is one of two stakes events on Saturday’s 11-race program. Churchill Downs’ first race is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern). The Aristides goes as Race 10 at approximately 5:21 p.m. and the second running of the $65,000-added Mighty Beau Overnight Stakes, a five-furlong sprint on the Matt Winn Turf Course, is the ninth race at approximately 4:51 p.m.

Hartman squared off against Limousine Liberal in the 2016 edition of the Aristides, where Alsvid prevailed by a head at odds of 3-1. Alsvid was retired in early February and is living in Oklahoma.

Wilbo has won five in five starts beneath the Twin Spires and knocked heads in stakes competition last year, finishing third by three-quarters of a length in the Iowa Sprint at Prairie Meadows and was runner-up in the Senator Robert C. Byrd Memorial Stakes at Mountaineer. The 5-year-old gelded son of Candy Ride (Arg) has a record of 18-6-2-5 with $282,836 in earnings.

The complete Aristides field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Wabel (Ricardo Santana Jr., 15-1), Abbaa (Carlos Marquez Jr., 20-1), Union Jackson (Florent Geroux, 3-1), Wilbo (Albin Jimenez, 5-1), Recount (Chris Landeros, 5-1), The Truth Or Else (Channing Hill, 4-1), Schivarelli (Brian Hernandez Jr., 15-1) and Limousine Liberal (Corey Lanerie, 9-5).

Limousine Liberal will carry 124 pounds, while all others will tote 120.

LATENT REVENGE, RIVERS RUN DEEP REMATCH IN SATURDAYS $65,000-ADDED MIGHTY BEAU – Latent Revenge and Rivers Run Deep, the top-two finishers in the inaugural Mighty Beau Overnight Stakes in 2016, are set to rematch in the 2017 edition Saturday at Churchill Downs.

Latent Revenge, owned by Steve Vanovich, Steve Andriot, Brad Cain and P. J. Herald, has not visited the winner’s circle since the Mighty Beau but was the runner-up in the Twin Spires Turf Sprint (Grade III) on Kentucky Oaks Day.

“He’s been a fun horse to have in the barn,” trainer Greg Foley said. “You always know where he’ll be — in front — but it doesn’t take away the effort he gave a few weeks ago in the Turf Sprint. We’d love to see him follow up that effort with a repeat in the Mighty Beau.”

Latent Revenge has a 21-4-5-1 record with $210,586 in earnings.
Rivers Run Deep, the Ohio-bred earner of $959,940, finished just a half-length behind Latent Revenge in last year’s Mighty Beau. Following his narrow defeat, Rivers Run Deep switched surfaces to the dirt and won five of his last six races including a six-length victory on April 29 in Belterra Park’s $75,000 Edward Pabst/Albert Palacios Memorial Handicap.

“He was visually impressive winning his last start,” trainer Chris Hartman said. “He was proven on the turf last year and always runs a solid race.”

The 6-year-old son of Ready’s Image has a career record of 33-17-8-4.

The Mighty Beau is carded as Race 9 at approximately 4:51 p.m. (all times Eastern). The five-furlong turf dash is the first of two stakes events on Saturday’s program at Churchill Downs. The $100,000 Aristides (GIII) will complete the stakes action as Race 10 at approximately 5:21 p.m.

The complete Mighty Beau field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Expected Ruler (Didiel Osorio, 15-1), Forgive (Joe Rocco Jr., 6-1), Latent Revenge (James Graham, 3-1), Platinum Prince (Florent Geroux, 6-1), Grand Candy (Ricardo Santana Jr., 5-1), Vici (Brian Hernandez Jr., 12-1), A Fashion Affair (Jack Gilligan, 50-1), Partly Mocha (Corey Lanerie, 6-1), Rivers Run Deep (Albin Jimenez, 4-1), and Mayor Mac (Miguel Mena, 10-1).

WORK TAB – Trainer Mark Casse’s Edgewood (GII) runner-up Dream Dancing breezed a half-mile in :48.60 in company with Black-Eyed Susan (GII) third-place finisher Corporate Queen. … The complete Churchill Downs work tab is available here: churchilldowns.com/horsemen/racing/workouts.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Thursday kicks off the first of four days of racing this week beneath the Twin Spires. The Twilight Thursday abbreviated eight-race program starts at 5 p.m. and is highlighted by $1 beers, food trucks (Holy Mole, Red Top Gourmet Hot Dogs, Pollo, 502 Café, Mark’s Feed Store and Zoom Zoom Yum), live music on the Plaza stage by pop band Maximón and a Wagering 101 tent for betting advice. There also is a $9,252 jackpot carryover for the 20-cent minimum Single-6 Jackpot on Races 3-8, and a $4,898 carryover in the $1 Super Hi-5 for the final race of the day. … Sunday’s 10-race card features the year’s first Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger. The day of racing is complimented by plenty of family activities in the Plaza area including pony rides, inflatables, a petting zoo, stick horse races, face painting and more. There also will be a special “meet and greet” with popular “Trolls,” Poppy and Branch. … Thursday officially begins the second half of the 38-day Spring Meet, which concludes Friday, June 30. Twelve-time Churchill Downs champion jockey Corey Lanerie is the leading rider with 32 wins through the first 19 days of the meet, 11 more than runner-up Brian Hernandez Jr. Steve Asmussen, the Hall of Fame horseman who has won a record 17 training titles at Churchill Downs, is tied with Brendan Walsh atop the trainer standings with 11 wins each, one more than J.R. Caldwell and Brad Cox. Six owners share the lead with three wins each: Asmussen, Keene Thoroughbreds LLC, Lothenbach Stables Inc., Maggi Moss, John Oxley and Whitham Thoroughbreds LLC. Perennial leading owners Ken and Sarah Ramsey, seeking their record-extending 29th local owners’ title, have two wins. … Trainer “Buff” Bradley is one win away from 100 victories at Churchill Downs.