FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CLASSIC EMPIRE BREEZES HALF-MILE AT CHURCHILL DOWNS IN PREPARATION FOR BELMONT STAKES

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, June 2, 2017) – John Oxley’s Classic Empire, runner-up in the Preakness (Grade I) and fourth-place finisher in the Kentucky Derby (GI), breezed a half-mile in :50 at Churchill Downs on Friday morning in preparation for the $1.5 million Belmont Stakes (GI), the third jewel of the Triple Crown.

Classic Empire, ridden by exercise rider Martin Rivera, breezed in company outside of stablemate Airoforce through splits of :24.60 and :37.60 before galloping out five furlongs in 1:04.

“He’s doing real well,” assistant trainer Norm Casse said. “We breezed in company (Airoforce) but wished the workmate could’ve kept up better. I’m still very happy about the work. He was at his full level of fitness for the Preakness. He’ll obviously keep improving with his maturity in each start but his fitness level is great.”

Following the Preakness, trainer Mark Casse said they may remove blinkers for the Belmont.

“We talked about removing blinkers right after the Preakness,” Norm Casse said. “That decision is still up in the air. He’s never breezed with them and didn’t this morning again.”

Fellow Belmont contender J Boys Echo, 15th-place finisher in the Kentucky Derby, is scheduled to breeze at Churchill Downs on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. (all times Eastern) for trainer Dale Romans.

ALBARADO RETURNS TO THE SADDLE THURSDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – Jockey Robby Albarado, who has been sidelined with a fractured leg since April 23 at Keeneland, is named to ride horses on Thursday’s eight-race card at Churchill Downs.

“I’ve been putting myself through a bunch of training on our farm,” Albarado said. “I’ve been doing a lot of physical therapy as well and my leg feels great.”

Albarado, 43, galloped two horses for trainer Dale Romans on Friday morning. It was Albarado’s first time on horseback at Churchill Downs since he fractured his leg nearly six weeks ago.

Romans is scheduled to run Kentucky Derby 15th-place finisher J Boys Echo in the June 10 Belmont Stakes (Grade I).

“It was tough losing Robby (Albarado) for the Derby,” Romans said. “It wouldn’t have mattered anyway after the start but Robby is still part of the team. He’s a good friend and partner in a lot of big races. I’d love to team up with him for the Belmont if he’s ready.”

Albarado started physical therapy shortly after surgery on April 24 when a rod and two pins were inserted in his leg to repair a fractured tibia.

“I was sitting on the couch about five days after surgery and I got a call from (University of Louisville Basketball) Coach (Rick) Pitino,” Albarado said. “He told me I needed to go see the University of Louisville’s basketball trainer and I scheduled an appointment right away. Since the trainer works with a lot of basketball players it was a great fit knowing he helps other athletes back from this sort of injury. We worked on a lot of leg exercises and balancing. I have a better range of motion now than before my injury.”

Entries for Thursday’s eight-race card at Churchill Downs will be drawn Friday afternoon.

COLEBROOK KEEPS LIMOUSINE LIBERAL HOME FOR ARISTIDES – Following a 13-1 upset-victory in the Churchill Downs Stakes (Grade II) on Kentucky Derby Day, Limousine Liberal will tackle Saturday’s $100,000 Aristides (GIII) as the 9-5 morning line favorite.

“We decided it was simple enough to keep him home for the Aristides,” trainer Ben Colebrook said.

The 5-year-old gelded son of Successful Appeal ran in the last two renewals of the Breeders’ Cup Sprint (GI) but the Churchill Downs Stakes was his first graded stakes victory.

“It’s great he’s finally a graded stakes winner,” Colebrook said. “This horse shows up every time he runs.”

Limousine Liberal was the heavy favorite in last year’s Aristides but was narrowly defeated by Alsvid.

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.

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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.

TOMLINSON CONFIDENT PRIOR TO $65,000-ADDED MIGHTY BEAU – Trainer Mike Tomlinson has two horses entered in Saturday’s $65,000-added Mighty Beau but is excited for the comeback of Platinum Prince.

“We still haven’t decided if we’ll run Forgive,” Tomlinson said. “We’re definitely planning on running Platinum Prince who’s been doing very well training.”

Patricia’s Hope LLC’s Platinum Prince, listed at 6-1 on the morning line, has not been seen since finishing eighth on Jan. 28 in the Gulfstream Park Turf Sprint.

“We gave him some time off after his last race, mainly because of how hard he ran early in the race. With a better trip I think we have a great chance.”

Platinum Prince has a career record of 14-3-2-0 with $123,120 in earnings. The 5-year-old gelded son of Leroidesanimaux was a $50,000 claim by Tomlinson in late 2016.

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).

CHURCHILL DOWNS TO BOOST OVERNIGHT PURSES 10 PERCENT – Effective Thursday, June 8, Churchill Downs Racetrack will raise overnight race purse offerings 10 percent thanks to record Kentucky Derby week business levels.

Purses for overnight races – which include overnight stakes, allowance, maiden special weight, claiming and maiden claiming events – will rise by an approximate blended average of $3,209 per race.

Total overnight purses for the meet are projected to be $12.7 million, up from the original forecast of $12.3 million. The daily average purse distribution, not including stakes money, will be approximately $335,000 per day. That number grows to $568,000 when stakes money is included.

The purse boosts were made possible by record all sources wagering on Kentucky Derby week, which covered Opening Night on Saturday, April 29 through Kentucky Derby Day on Saturday, May 6. The six days of racing lured a record-breaking $285.1 million in wagers – up $18.4 million or 7% from last year’s $266.8 million.

“Our record Kentucky Derby Week business levels helped generate $16.1 million in purses that will be paid to horsemen this year,” said Kevin Flanery, President of Churchill Downs Racetrack. “We’re thrilled that our local owners, trainers, jockeys and breeders will benefit from the increased purse offering over the final four weeks of the Spring Meet.”

Monday was the halfway mark of Churchill Downs’ 38-day Spring Meet. Racing continues Thursday-Sunday through Friday, June 30.

WORK TAB – There were 91 horses on the Friday work tab at Churchill Downs which included Classic Empire’s half-mile breeze in :50 for trainer Mark Casse. Other half-mile breezes from Casse’s stable included Churchill Downs Stakes (GII) runner-up Awesome Slew, :47; Twin Spires Turf Sprint (GIII) sixth-place finisher Holding Gold, :51; impressive 2-year-old maiden winner Mo Diddley, :47.60; Eight Belles fifth-place finisher Pretty City Dancer, :48.40; Kentucky Oaks (GI) fifth-place finisher Salty, :48.40; and multiple graded stakes winner World Approval, :48.20. Casse breezed Edgewood (GIII) winner La Coronel five furlongs in :59.60. The 3-year-old daughter of Colonel John is scheduled to run in the Coronation Stakes at Royal Ascot. … The complete Churchill Downs work tab is available here: churchilldowns.com/horsemen/racing/workouts.

DOWN THE STRETCH – There is a $10,337 jackpot carryover for the 20-cent minimum Single-6 Jackpot on Races 4-9 Friday. … 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.