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GUN RUNNER RECORDS FINAL BREEZE FOR SATURDAY’S STEPHEN FOSTER ‘CAP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Monday, June 12, 2017) – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm’s Gun Runner, the favorite and 124-pound high weight for Saturday’s 36th running of the $500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (Grade I), completed his final major preparations for the 1 1/8-mile race Monday morning at Churchill Downs with a half-mile breeze in :49.40 for Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen.

“He’s just an impressive horse,” Asmussen said. “He had all of his serious work the last two weeks. Today was just an easy maintenance breeze.”

Gun Runner, with exercise rider Angel Garcia up, breezed through fractions of :13 and :24.80 before galloping out five furlongs in 1:03.40.

“We’re very excited to run him Saturday night,” Asmussen said. “We gave him a break after he ran in Dubai and he’s been training smoothly ever since.”

Regular jockey Florent Geroux once again has the Stephen Foster call to ride Gun Runner, who is rated fourth on the Longines World’s Best Racehorse Rankings.

“Flo has a great level of confidence riding him,” Asmussen said. “He’ll do whatever is best for Gun Runner in the race, regardless of who is on the early pace.”

Overall, the Kentucky-bred son of Candy Ride (ARG) has a 14-7-3-2 record with $4,337,800 in earnings.

The 1 1/8-mile Foster headlines Saturday’s action-packed “Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and el Jimador” nighttime racing program, which features 11 races in prime time and under the lights. Five graded stakes races will be run that evening with total purses in excess of $1.3 million, making it the most lucrative racing day for horsemen at Churchill Downs outside of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks programs.

The other “Downs After Dark” graded stakes races:

• $200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (GII) for fillies and mares at 1 1/8 miles featuring a rematch between $300,000 La Troienne Presented by Spirited Funds (GI) top two Big World (121 pounds) and Romantic Vision (118). Also probable are Matron (GIII) winner Walkabout (120), last year’s Top Flight Invitational Handicap (GIII) winner Ogden Phipps (GI) third Carrumba (117); and last year’s Ashland (GI) winner Weep No More (116). Divine Elegance (116) is possible.

• $200,000 Wise Dan (GI) for 3-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles on turf led by defending champ Pleuven (Fr). Also probable are the Ian Wilkes-trained duo of Bondurant and Thatcher Street, and Maker’s 46 Mile (GI) third Conquest Panthera.

• $100,000 Matt Winn (GIII) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles headlined by three-time graded stakes winner McCraken, who finished eighth in the Kentucky Derby (GI) at odds of 6-1. Also probable are Aquamarine, Excitations and Society Beau. Watch Me Whip is possible.

• $100,000 Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet (GI) for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on grass, which is expected to attract the third and fourth-place finishers in the $150,000 Edgewood Presented by Forcht Bank (GIII) on Kentucky Oaks Day, Sweeping Paddy and Proctor’s Ledge, respectively. Also likely to enter are Anothertequilashot, Chubby Star, Fizzy Friday (GB), La Manta Gris, Like a Hurricane, Sameeha and Savannah Belle.

FOSTER, FLEUR DE LIS PART OF BREEDERS’ CUP ‘WIN AND YOU’RE IN’ SERIES – Both the 36th running of $500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (Grade I) and 42nd running of the $200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (GII) are part of the Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In” Challenge Series. The winners of the Foster and Fleur de Lis will be assured berths in the $6 million Breeders’ Cup Classic (GI) and $2 million Longines Breeders’ Cup Distaff starting gates, respectively, this November at Del Mar. The Foster is the first U.S. “Win and You’re In” for the 1 ¼-mile Classic.

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SAMEEEHA SEeks FIRST STAKES VICTORY IN SATURDAY’S $100,000 REGRET – Shadwell Stable’s homebred Sameeha will try stakes company for the first time as she rides a two-race win streak into Saturday’s $100,000 Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet (Grade III).

“She’s really been training great,” trainer Dan Peitz said. “She hasn’t run since April and we toyed with the idea of running her in another allowance race before the Regret but it would’ve been against older horses. So, we thought it would be fine to train her up to the race.”

Sameeha, a 3-year-old daughter by Street Cry (Ire), recorded her first career win by three lengths on the dirt in March at Oaklawn Park but impressed Peitz after recording a 2 ¼-length turf victory at Keeneland on April 23.

“She turned a few heads that day at Keeneland when she won on the grass,” Peitz said. “That race was a split division for those conditions and I thought overall our race was tougher than the other one. We breezed her in company Sunday (at Churchill Downs) with December Seven (trained by Paul McGee) and she handled everything great. December Seven is an older horse and has a lot of class but she held her own.”

NBCSN, HRRN TO BROADCAST LIVE FROM CHURCHILL DOWNS SATURDAY NIGHT – NBCSN will be onsite live from 8:30-10 p.m. Saturday to launch its 2017 “Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series: Win and You’re In, presented by Lane’s End Farm and America’s Best Racing” television schedule. Also, Horse Racing Radio Network (HRRN) will air live coverage from 8-10 p.m. ET online at www.horseracingradio.net.

This year’s Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series, now in its fourth year on NBC and NBCSN, will showcase 11 live programs featuring 17 qualifying races and other major stakes on the road to the Breeders’ Cup World Championships, which will be held at Del Mar on Nov. 3-4.

“In conjunction with our partners at NBC Sports, we look forward once again showcasing the biggest stars in our sport competing in the highest quality of races throughout the summer and fall leading to the World Championships,” said Craig Fravel, Breeders’ Cup President and CEO. “We greatly appreciate NBC’s expanded commitment and expertise in covering Thoroughbred racing, and express our gratitude for the support of our presenting sponsors of the Challenge series in Lane’s End Farm and America’s Best Racing.”

DOWNS AFTER DARK THEME IS ‘SOUTH BEACH’ – One of Louisville’s biggest summer parties returns in earnest to Churchill Downs on Saturday as the home of the Kentucky Derby welcomes back its wildly-popular “Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and el Jimador” nighttime racing program for Stephen Foster Handicap night. The evening’s theme is “South Beach” and guests are encouraged to dress in Miami-inspired bright colors.

General admission to Churchill Downs is $10 on Saturday. Box seats are $25 and reserved dining packages are $70. New this year is the Guest Chef Series @ Millionaire’s Row, which will showcase Chef Anthony Lamas of Louisville’s popular Latin restaurant Seviche. The $149 tickets include a specially-designed menu by Lamas and a full-bar package featuring specialty cocktails by el Jimador Tequila. All ticket options can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

The evening’s entertainment includes music on the Plaza Stage courtesy of Milenio Salsa Band from 7:30-11 p.m., Salsa dance demonstrations, cocktail demonstrations by el Jimador, a “James Beard Culinary Challenge” and “Bet or No Bet” where four lucky fans can take $100 in cash or place a free $1,000 win bet on a horse in Races 6-9. The party will be elevated to new levels at 11 p.m. when popular DJ A-trak mixes sounds on the turntable until midnight on the Plaza Stage.

Admission gates will open Saturday at 5 p.m. and the first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. The final live race will be 11:14 p.m. but the on-track party will continue in the spacious Plaza area until midnight.

ENGRAVED KENTUCKY DERBY 143 TROPHIES TO BE PRESENTED SATURDAY – Select connections from Team Always Dreaming – owners MeB Racing Stables (Mary Ellen Bonomo), Brooklyn Boyz Stables (Anthony Bonomo), Teresa Viola Racing Stables, St. Elias Stable (Vincent Viola), Siena Farm LLC (Anthony Manganaro) and West Point Thoroughbreds (Terry Finley), breeders Santa Rosa Partners, trainer Todd Pletcher and jockey John Velazquez – will be on hand to accept their newly-engraved Kentucky Derby 143 trophies for the Bodemeister colt’s triumph in America’s greatest race on May 6.

The ceremony in the G.H. MUMM Winner’s Circle, which includes an unveiling of the official event logo for the 2018 Kentucky Derby, is tentatively scheduled to follow Race 5 just after 8 p.m.

Fans in attendance will be able to take pictures with Always Dreaming’s engraved Kentucky Derby 143 trophies as they’ll be on display on the north side of the paddock in the Plaza area from 5-7 p.m.

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BREEDERS’ CUP BETTING CHALLENGE QUALIFIER ON STEPHEN FOSTER HANDICAP NIGHT – Some of the nation’s elite horseplayers will descend upon Churchill Downs on Saturday night and attempt to secure seats at the 2017 Breeders’ Cup Betting Challenge as they pit their handicapping skills against the best Louisville has to offer.

Churchill Downs’ Breeders’ Cup Betting Challenge Live Bankroll Qualifier is a “real money” handicapping tournament with a $2,000 buy-in, of which $1,500 will be used by participants to wager on Saturday night’s 11-race Stephen Foster Handicap card with the other $500 going toward the entry fee and prize pool. Wager types permitted are Win, Place, Show, Exacta, Trifecta and Daily Double only.

The top two finishers in the satellite tournament will receive $10,000 Breeders’ Cup Betting Challenge seats for the Nov. 3-4 event at Del Mar plus a $1,000 travel voucher. The third-place finisher will receive a $2,500 partial BCBC entry and $500 travel voucher.

Saturday’s prize pool is based on 50 entries. All entry fees will be paid back to prize pool should more than 50 entries participate. Horseplayers can register by emailing Gary Palmisano at Gary.Palmisano@KyDerby.com.

Same as the qualifier, the BCBC is a “real money” handicapping challenge. Players will required to deposit $10,000, of which $7,500 will be the players’ bankroll for wagering during the tournament. Of the $10,000 buy-in, $2,500 will be placed in the prize pool. If 400 players enter the tournament, the cash prize pool paid will be $1 million.

ALL-STAKES PICK 5 TO BE OFFERED SATURDAY NIGHT – Churchill Downs will make it a special night for bettors at Saturday’s “Downs After Dark” as the track offers an all-stakes Pick 5 as part of its special wagering menu.

The all-stakes Pick 5 will cover Races 5-9 starting at 8:03 p.m., which will encompass the Regret (Race 5), Matt Winn (Race 6), Fleur de Lis Handicap (Race 7), Stephen Foster Handicap (Race 8) and Wise Dan (Race 9). There also will be an all-stakes Pick 4 on Races 6-9.

All told, there will be three Pick 5s (Races 2-6, Races 5-9 and Races 7-11) and three Pick 4s (Races 1-4, Races 6-9 and Races 8-11) on the night.

Both the Pick 4 and Pick 5 are 50-cent minimum bets.

The 20-cent minimum Single-6 Jackpot will cover Races 4-9. The jackpot carryover for a lone winning ticket was $96,299 for Thursday.

IDEAL WEATHER: MOSTLY SUNNY SKIES, 88 – According to the National Weather Service, Saturday’s forecast calls for Louisville calls for mostly sunny skies with a high near 88 and a minor 20-percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. The low will be 69.

SPECIAL FATHER’S DAY COMBO – Churchill Downs is offering a special $15 Father's Day Combo for Sunday, which includes a reserved box seat, official program and a voucher for a domestic draft beer or souvenir soda and a hot dog. Tickets can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

DOWN THE STRETCH – After dark days Monday-Wednesday, racing at Churchill Downs will return Thursday with a lucrative $96,299 jackpot carryover in the 20-cent minimum Single-6, which covers Races 3-8. The Twilight Thursday abbreviated eight-race program starts at 5 p.m. and is highlighted by $1 beers, food trucks (Red Top Gourmet Hot Dogs, Pollo, 502 Café, Mark’s Feed Store and Zoom Zoom Yum), live music on the Plaza stage by Louisville’s Frederick the Younger and a Wagering 101 tent for betting advice. … Jockey Julien Leparoux needs one victory to become only the eighth jockey in Churchill Downs history to ride 800 career winners beneath the Twin Spires. The 33-year-old Frenchman is named to ride five horses on Thursday: Sir Dudley Digges (8-5 morning line odds in Race 3), Something Bird (6-1 in Race 4), Lady Soul (3-1 in Race 5), Fiesta (9-2 in Race 6) and El Venue (4-1 in Race 7). … Trainer “Buff” Bradley will attempt to win his 100th race at Churchill Downs when 2-year-old Make Mine Neat debuts in Thursday's fourth race. … The hosts of “Inside Churchill Downs” – Churchill Downs Racetrack's John Asher, Darren Rogers and Kevin Kerstein – will preview Saturday’s “Downs After Dark” racing action with special guests on their 10-11 a.m. show that airs every Saturday on ESPN 680/105.7. Those outside the Louisville area can listen live online at http://www.espnlouisville.com/ or download a podcast of the show after its completion. … Churchill Downs has a special Stakes & Eggs brunch in the Stakes Room on Sunday for $45 ($22 for children 12 and under). Tickets can be purchased in advance online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets. …

The “Who's the Champ? Handicapping Contest” returns Sunday. Interested participants can enter for $35 ($30 for TSC Elite members) for a chance to win the $1,000 cash voucher first prize by placing mythical $2 win and place bets on Races 3-8. Second place receives a $500 voucher and third place is worth a $200 voucher. Registration takes place between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the Clubhouse second floor at the top of the Gate 17 escalators.

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