FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Publicity Manager
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

GEROUX CONFIDENT PRIOR TO RIDING GUN RUNNER IN SATURDAY’S JAM-PACKED STEPHEN FOSTER ‘CAP PROGRAM

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, June 15, 2017) – Jockey Florent Geroux has won more than 1,100 races in his career, including three victories in the Breeders’ Cup, but Saturday’s $500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (Grade I) could kick start a memorable 2017 campaign.

Geroux, 30, has the mount on 4-5 morning line favorite and No. 4 ranked horse in the world, Gun Runner, in the 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster for 3-year-olds and up.

“I can’t wait for Saturday night,” Geroux said. “The Stephen Foster card is always one of my favorites to ride.”

Gun Runner, who has been ridden by Geroux in his last 11 starts, has been more forwardly placed in the initial stages of his last few starts but his connections aren’t worried about the early pace.

“No matter how the race develops he tries his heart out,” Geroux said. “He was beaten in his last start by one of the best horses in the world (Arrogate), so we really can’t hold that against him.”

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

Geroux has three other stakes mounts Saturday: Aquamarine (4-1 on the morning line in the Matt Winn), Big World (6-1, Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador), and Summer Luck (10-1, Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet).

The Stephen Foster Handicap field from the rail out (with jockeys, assigned weights and morning line odds): Bird Song (Julien Leparoux, 119 pounds, 6-1); Breaking Lucky (Luis Contreras, 117, 8-1); Gun Runner (Geroux, 124, 4-5); Honorable Duty (Javier Castellano, 119, 6-1); Mo Tom (Corey Lanerie, 115, 20-1); Hawaakom (Miguel Mena, 115, 12-1); Texas Chrome (C.J. McMahon, 117, 12-1); and Stanford (John Velazquez, 117, 5-1).

The Stephen Foster Handicap is the centerpiece of an action-packed, prime-time program billed as “Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and el Jimador.” The Stephen Foster Handicap is the richest of five graded stakes races on Saturday’s special 11-race night racing card that begins at 6 p.m. (all times Eastern). Total purses on the evening are $1.358 million, which makes it the most lucrative racing day for horsemen at Churchill Downs outside of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks programs.

The Stephen Foster Handicap has been carded as Race 8 at 9:39 p.m. NBCSN will televise the race from 8:30-10 p.m. 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.

Other stakes events scheduled on the night are the $200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (GI) for fillies and mares at 1 1/8 miles headlined by last year’s Breeders’ Cup Distaff (GI) third Forever Unbridled; the $200,000 Wise Dan (GI) for 3-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles on turf led by defending champ Pleuven (Fr); the $100,000 Matt Winn (GIII) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles featuring three-time graded stakes winner McCraken, who finished eighth in the Kentucky Derby (GI) at odds of 6-1; and a well-matched cast of a dozen 3-year-old fillies in the $100,000 Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet (GIII) at 1 1/8 miles on grass.

Admission gates will open Saturday at 5 p.m. and the first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. (all times Eastern). The final live race will be 11:10 p.m. but the on-track party will continue in the spacious Plaza area until midnight.

ARNOLD DUO ATTEMPT UPSET IN FLEUR DE LIS ‘CAP – Trainer Rusty Arnold II has four stakes entrants on Saturday night’s “Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and el Jimador” program including G. Watts Humphrey Jr.’s Romantic Vision and Ashbrook Farm’s Weep No More in the $200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (Grade II).

“Romantic Vision keeps improving with age,” assistant trainer Jack Bohannon said. “We thought all along that may be the key and she’s proving that to us. I thought she ran such a big race in her last start. Hopefully she can step up a little more Saturday. She’s been training great so all signs are she’ll run a big race.”

In her last start, the 5-year-old mare was a 1 ¼-length runner-up behind Big World in the $300,000 La Troienne Presented by Spirited Funds (GI) on Kentucky Oaks Day.

Arnold’s other hope in the Fleur de Lis is improving filly Weep No More.
“Her last race definitely helped her fitness level,” Bohannon said. “She ran some solid races last year and hopefully she can improve in her second start off of the layoff.”

Weep No More finished seventh in the 2016 Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), part of her 3-year-old campaign that included four starts against Grade I company. The 4-year-old daughter by Mineshaft returned from a 273-day layoff with a fifth-place finish in the $100,000 Matron (GIII) on May 20 at Churchill Downs.

Arnold also has Blofeld (10-1 on the morning line) entered in the $200,000 Wise Dan (GII) and La Manta Gris (15-1) in the $100,000 Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet (GIII).

The Fleur de Lis – which means “Flower of the Lily” and honors the French symbol that is incorporated into the city of Louisville’s flag – will be run as Race 7 at 9:09 p.m. (all times Eastern). It will be televised live by NBCSN as part of the “Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series: Win and You’re In, presented by Lane’s End Farm and America’s Best Racing” broadcast that airs from 8:30-10 p.m.

The Fleur de Lis Handicap field from the rail out (with jockeys, assigned weights and morning line odds): Forever Unbridled (Joel Rosario, 123 pounds, 4-5); Walkabout (Brian Hernandez Jr., 120, 10-1); Carrumba (John Velazquez, 117, 6-1); Crooked Stick (Sophie Doyle, 115, 30-1); Big World (Florent Geroux, 121, 6-1); Romantic Vision (Julien Leparoux, 118, 8-1); Apologynotaccepted (Luis Saez, 117, 15-1); Tiger Moth (Javier Castellano, 114, 12-1); and Weep No More (Corey Lanerie, 116, 10-1).

CASSE HOPE CUT-BACK IN DISTANCE HELPS CONQUEST PANTHERA IN WISE DAN – Gary Barber’s Conquest Panthera was most recently a disappointing eighth-place finisher in the $500,000 Woodford Reserve Turf Classic (Grade I) on the Kentucky Derby undercard but could benefit from cutting back in distance.

“I thought his last race was a bit too far for him,” assistant trainer Norm Casse said. “We think he should improve with cutting back in distance in the Wise Dan.”

The Wise Dan, run at 1 1/16 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course will go as Race 6 at 8:35 p.m.

Two starts back in the Makers 46 Mile (GI) at Keeneland, Conquest Panthera closed from off the pace but was narrowly defeated by American Patriot and Heart to Heart. In the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic, Conquest Panthera was forwardly placed but faltered in the late stages of the race.

“This race is a bit of a class relief from the back-to-back Grade Is he’s been running in,” Casse said. “Along with the distance challenges in the (1 1/8-mile) Woodford, I don’t think he really liked the condition of the (yielding) turf. Hopefully the grass is firm by Saturday night and we’ll see how he takes to it.”

The Wise Dan field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Security Risk (John Velazquez, 5-1); Bondurant (Brian Hernandez Jr., 8-1); Thatcher Street (Julien Leparoux, 4-1); Chocolate Ride (Shaun Bridgmohan, 5-1); Kasaqui (ARG) (James Graham, 6-1); Conquest Panthera (Robby Albarado, 6-1); Pleuven (FR) (Corey Lanerie, 3-1); and Blofeld (Joel Rosario, 10-1).

All horses will carry 121 pounds.

Casse also plans to run Summer Luck in the $100,000 Regret Presented by Cox’s Smokers Outlet (GIII) for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on turf.

“We know Summer Luck is a talented horse,” Casse said. “She’s proven to us in training that she is. We just need to find the right spot to put her. I think everything about this race is perfect: the distance, the turf and the timing.”

The Regret is carded as Race 9 with a post time of approximately 10:15 p.m.

The Regret field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Blame the Law (Joel Rosario, 15-1); Sweeping Paddy (Luis Saez, 4-1); La Manta Gris (Julien Leparoux, 15-1); Proctor’s Ledge (Corey Lanerie, 7-2); Like a Hurricane (Brian Hernandez Jr., 12-1); Anothertequilashot (Gabriel Saez, 30-1); Summer Luck (Florent Geroux, 10-1); Savannah Belle (Declan Cannon, 12-1); Sameeca (Joe Rocco Jr., 8-1); Fizzy Friday (GB) (John Velazquez, 10-1); Starr Bear (Javier Castellano, 8-1); and Chubby Star (Ricardo Santana Jr., 5-1).

EXCITATIONS HOPE TO REBOUND IN $100,000 MATT WINN – Fair Grounds Racing Club’s Excitations will attempt to cross off his disappointing Pat Day Mile (Grade III) effort from his résumé and bounce back to form in Saturday’s $100,000 Matt Winn (Grade III).

“The only off-the-board finish in Excitations’ (5-2-1-1—$82,230) career came in the Pat Day Mile on the Kentucky Derby undercard.

“It’s such a thrill to have the Fair Grounds Racing Club represented in such high quality races,” said Gary Palmisano, the VIP Player Services Manager at Churchill Downs, who manages the Fair Grounds and Churchill Downs Racing Clubs. “We are incredibly grateful to B. Wayne Hughes and Spendthrift Farm for helping make this opportunity possible and we are honored that our horses race to earn money for a tremendous case in the Los Angeles Children’s Cancer Hospital.”

The Fair Grounds Racing Club has two horses in training with Louisiana-native Al Stall Jr. and has attracted more than 100 members from nine states including Arizona, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

The Matt Winn field from rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Excitations (Miguel Mena, 9-2); McCraken (Brian Hernandez Jr., 4-5); Colonelsdarktemper (Jon Court, 4-1); Mo’s Mojo (Julien Leparoux, 10-1); Aquamarine (Florent Geroux, 5-1); and Society Beau (Robby Albarado, 12-1).

-more-
McCraken will carry 123 pounds, while all others tote 118.

The Matt Winn, which honors the famed Churchill Downs president and general manager that served as the driving force in the development of Churchill Downs and Kentucky Derby, will go as Race 5 on Saturday at approximately 8:03 p.m. (all times Eastern). Winn will be elected into the National Museum of Racing’s Hall of Fame as a “Pillar of the Turf” on Aug. 4.

**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](http://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.

**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 (GI) 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.

**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.

**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 Matt Winn (Race 5), Wise Dan (Race 6), Fleur de Lis Handicap (Race 7), Stephen Foster Handicap (Race 8) and Regret (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 entering Thursday’s eight-race program, which is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m.
**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 scheduled for 8:40 p.m. just after the conclusion of Race 6.

Fans in attendance will be able to take pictures with Always Dreaming’s engraved Kentucky Derby 143 trophies as they’ll be on display inside the Gate 17 lobby from 5-7 p.m.

**WEATHER: PARTLY SUNNY SKIES, 91** – According to the National Weather Service, Saturday’s forecast for Louisville calls for partly sunny skies with a high near 91 and a 30-percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. The low will be around 74.

**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.

**MILESTONE WATCH** – 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). … Jockey Miguel Mena is one win away from 400 career victories at Churchill Downs. Mena, 30, is named to ride two horses Thursday: Orbatron (3-1 in Race 2), and Bella Bella (4-1 in Race 8). … 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. … Trainer Dale Romans (688 victories) is 13 wins behind Churchill Downs’ all-time leading trainer Bill Mott (701).

**MEET LEADERS** – Twelve-time Churchill Downs champion jockey Corey Lanerie is the leading rider with 45 wins through the first 28 days of the 38-day Spring Meet – a whopping 15 more than his nearest rival Brian Hernandez Jr. … Steve Asmussen, the Hall of Fame horseman who has won a record 17 training titles at Churchill Downs, is atop the trainer standings with 15 wins. There is a four-way tie for second between Tom Amoss, Brad Cox, Brendan Walsh and Ian Wilkes with 12 wins each. … Three-time leading owner Maggi Moss leads the owner standings with seven victories with Richard Rigney’s Rigney Racing LLC in second with five wins. Three owners are tied for third with four wins each: Asmussen, Janis R. Whitham’s Whitham Thoroughbreds LLC and perennial leading owners Ken and Sarah Ramsey, who seek their record-extending 29th local owners’ title.

**DOWN THE STRETCH** – Racing at Churchill Downs on Thursday will showcase 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. … 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.

-END-