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ROMANS THREE WINS AWAY FROM SURPASSING MOTT AS ALL-TIME LEADING TRAINER AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Sept. 14, 2017) – It has been 10,899 days since trainer Dale Romans recorded his first victory at Churchill Downs with a horse named Final Destroyer and, now, the 50-year-old South Louisville native is 24 hours away from possibly becoming the track’s all-time leading trainer.

“As you get older, you reflect a lot more on the past,” Romans said. “I remember just the other day arriving at Barn 4 on the backstretch of Churchill Downs and hoping to be as successful as my father (Jerry). Now, we’re in this position.”

Romans has 16 horses entered on opening weekend at Churchill Downs – three on Friday, nine on Saturday and four on Sunday – and needs three victories to surpass Bill Mott’s mark of 701 wins, a record that has been held for more than 31 years.

“I grew up idolizing Bill,” Romans said. “He was the guy who always wore the most expensive clothes, drove fancy sports cars and won three races a day.

“We had a shot to break his record in the spring but we just didn’t quite get there. But, believe me, we’ve been thinking about this all summer. I ran into Bill this summer at Saratoga. We got to talking and he told me he is going to try his best to be here when we break the mark. It could be a back-and-forth battle for all we know. He still runs horses in Kentucky but I told him to take it easy on me opening weekend and not run any horses. I always joke with him and say, ‘I just want the title for one day and I’ll be happy for the rest of my life.’”

Romans is no stranger to horse racing in Louisville, having grown up around his father’s racing stable on the backstretch of Churchill Downs. A graduate of Butler High School, Romans prides himself with being from Louisville.

“When you are a part of Churchill Downs there is a special bond with the city of Louisville,” Romans said. “There is no other city like this that supports horse racing and Churchill Downs as much as Louisville does. I go all over the country and when I get recognized as being so close to this accomplishment I feel an overwhelming amount of pride. It’s really indescribable. From my time in high school at Butler to watching my kids grow up, I’m so proud to be a part of Churchill Downs and this community. Hopefully, I’ll leave a very memorable legacy.”

Romans’ entries on opening weekend:

- Friday: Leanne N Susan (Race 5), Dance Rhythms (Race 6) and Front Row Debbie (Race 7).
- Saturday: Tiz Mischief (Race 1), Bryzzo (Race 1), Eight Minute Ellie (Race 2), Cucciolo (Race 2), Race Me Home (Race 3), Mr. Freeze (Race 4), Tenkoz (Race 4), Miss Katie Bug (Race 6) and Hollywood Star (Race 10).
- Sunday: Cove Blue (Race 4), Fayettevile (Race 4), Promises Fulfilled (Race 7) and Sportscaster (Race 10).

Mott’s entries on opening weekend:

- Saturday: Own Agenda (Race 1) and Confiscate (Race 7)
- Sunday: Bristol’s Brooke (Race 2).

“I think the most special part about this accomplishment will be celebrating with my family,” Romans said. “I’ll probably take Tammy (Romans’ life partner and mother of his two children) and Jake (son) out with a couple of my close friends from around the track. It will be really special for my mother, too. She’s been there to support me my entire life. She’s been following this journey for a long time now waiting for me to surpass this mark. My father, Jerry, passed away in 2000 when he was only 58. I remember visiting him in the hospital after he had his stroke and I was battling with D. Wayne Lukas for the meet-leading trainer. He told me, ‘Dale, don’t let Lukas pass you.’ He tied me but he never passed me. I can only imagine what my father would think now.”

Romans is splitting his time this week between the Keeneland September Yearling Sale purchasing future prospects and Churchill Downs but is expected to be at the track on Friday and Saturday.

NEW FACES TO START THE SEPTEMBER MEET – Several new names will be appearing in the Churchill Downs program on a daily basis when the September Meet kicks off Friday, including jockeys Alex Canchari, C.J. McMahon and Ty Kennedy and trainer Robertino Diodoro.

“It has always been a goal of mine to ride in Kentucky,” Canchari said. “With riding at Oaklawn in the winter it made sense to come to Kentucky now and try to keep the business.”

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New to the Kentucky-circuit entirely, Canchari, 23, was raised outside of Minnesota near Canterbury Park. Canchari was the second-leading rider at Canterbury and Oaklawn Park in 2016. Canchari comes from a family close-knit to horse racing as his brother Patrick and father Luis are jockeys. Patrick is currently riding at Canterbury and Luis retired in 1991.

“It was really my agent at Oaklawn (Gene Short) who suggested coming to Kentucky so it would help our business at Oaklawn,” Canchari said. “He actually reached out to my agent now (Terry ‘Jaws’ Miller) to get me set up for Kentucky.”

Canchari began his career as a jockey in 2011 and has amassed 654 victories.

McMahon and Kennedy have both spent time at Churchill Downs in the past. McMahon, 22, first rode at Churchill Downs when he was 18 years old. Following his brief-stint in Kentucky, the Louisiana-native ventured to Texas where led all jockeys with 95 wins at 2015 Lone Star Park meet. Most recently, McMahon rode at Gulfstream Park.

Kennedy, 23, rode last fall in Kentucky before moving his tack back to Iowa this spring. The native of Hiawatha, Kan., has 93 victories in his career, which began in 2014.

Diodoro is no stranger to winning races across the country. With strings in California, New York and Minnesota, Diodoro has 160 victories so far in 2017. This will be the first time Diodoro will be stabled at Churchill Downs.

A third generation horseman, Diodoro took over his grandfather Jim Dorman’s stable in 1995. Attributing his early success to his parents Tino and Linda, Diodoro Racing has accumulated more than $26 million in purse earnings in 23 years.

Diodoro is stabled in Barns 32 and 33.

McPEEK DUO SET TO KICK OFF ‘ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY, ’ROAD TO KENTUCKY OAKS’ – Trainer Kenny McPeek was the talk of the town after sweeping the $100,000 Bashford Manor (Grade III) and $100,000 Debutante to close the Spring Meet at Churchill Downs, and his stakes-winning duo of Ten City and Sunny Skies are set to return Saturday beneath the Twin Spires in the $150,000 Iroquois (GIII) and $200,000 Pocahontas (GII), respectively.

“We were very excited about both of our horses following the Bashford Manor and Debutante in the spring,” McPeek said. “We originally targeted the Iroquois and Pocahontas for their return but they were both training so well that we decided to give them a shot to run this summer at Ellis.”

The Iroquois and Pocahontas, two of four stakes events on the first Saturday of the 11-day September Meet at Churchill Downs, are the first scoring races on the 2017-18 “Road to the Kentucky Derby” and “Road to the Kentucky Oaks” – the series of races that will ultimately determine the field for the 144th running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) on Saturday, May 5, 2018 and Longines Kentucky Oaks on Friday, May 4, 2018. Points awarded to the Top 4 finishers will be 10-4-2-1 as part of the “Prep Season” that showcases foundation-building races in advance of the “Championship Series,” which begins in late February.

The Iroquois and Pocahontas are also a part of the Breeders’ Cup “Win & You’re In Juvenile Division” and its winners will earn an automatic berth into the $2 million Sentient Jet Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI) and $2 million Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI). Breeders’ Cup will pay $60,000 in entry fees and provide travel allowances for the connections to compete on Nov. 4 at Del Mar.

The Iroquois is carded as Race 10 at 5:20 p.m. (all times Eastern) on an 11-race card that begins at 12:45 p.m. and the Pocahontas will be the last race on the Saturday racing program and has a scheduled post time of 5:50 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Ten City, a 2-year-old colt by Run Away and Hide listed as the 3-1 second choice on the morning line, broke poorly at the start of the Ellis Park Juvenile but closed ground to finish third, beaten 4 ¾ lengths.

“We broke so poorly that day,” McPeek said. “The crazy part about the race is he actually lost a shoe. I was very proud of him that he could run that well after losing a shoe. He should like the two-turn distance. He has some route pedigree on his bottom side.”

The complete Iroquois field from the rail out (with jockey, assigned weight and morning line odds): Ten City (Jack Gilligan, 122 pounds, 3-1); Hollywood Star (Robby Albarado, 118, 5-2); Pont Du Gard (Florent Geroux, 118, 15-1); Tres Equis (Kendrick Carmouche, 118, 8-1); Ebben (James Graham, 118, 20-1); Smart Remark (Manny Cruz, 118, 15-1); Flameaway (Julien Leparoux, 120, 4-1); Big Gemmy (Brian Hernandez Jr., 118, 15-1); The Tabulator (Jose Valdivia Jr., 120, 6-1); and Mo Diddley (Corey Lanerie, 118, 10-1).

McPeek won the 2001 Iroquois with eventual $3.6 million-earner Harlan’s Holiday.

Sunny Skies, a 2-year-old filly by 2001 Kentucky Derby winner Animal Kingdom, finished third in the Ellis Park Debutante after she swung very wide at the top of the stretch and finished with interest under jockey Robby Albarado.

“Sunny Skies also broke poorly at Ellis,” McPeek said. “She’s been training very well at Keeneland and it will be a good test to try two turns.”

The field for the Pocahontas, in order of post position (with jockey, assigned weight, and morning line odds): Lady Freedom (Geroux, 118, 30-1), Firstmate (Carmouche, 120, 20-1), Snowfire (Leparoux, 118, 6-1), Harbor Lights (Ricardo Santana Jr., 118, 8-1), Primo Extremo (Walter De La Cruz, 118, 8-1), Vision of Justice (Gabriel Saez, 118, 20-1), Take Charge Paula (Graham, 120, 6-1), Sunny Skies (Albarado, 120, 4-1), Sultry (Joe Rocco Jr., 118, 10-1), Upset Brewing (Lanerie, 118, 5-1), Patrona Margarita (Hernandez Jr., 118, 20-1) and Kelly’s Humor (Shaun Bridgmohan, 120, 9-2).

“These races, including the ones in the spring and summer, are just steppingstones for the real goal. If all goes well this weekend we’ll point Sunny Skies to the (Oct. 7) Alcibiades (GI) at Keeneland and Ten City to the (Oct. 7) Breeders’ Futurity (GI) at Keeneland.”

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Casse Juveniles Hope to Round Into Form Returning to Churchill Downs – Last year trainer Mark Casse held the spotlight with outstanding juvenile Classic Empire and the veteran horseman hopes to follow that success in 2017 with a trio of promising 2-year-olds entered Saturday in the $150,000 Iroquois (Grade III) and $200,000 Pocahontas (GII).

“It was a taxing summer on a lot of us at Saratoga,” said Casse, who has been busy scouting and purchasing future prospects at the Keeneland September Yearling Sale. “We’re hoping getting the horses back to Churchill will help them get ready for the second half of 2017 and into next year.”

Casse entered undefeated stakes winner Flameaway and speedy Mo Diddley in the Iroquois while impressive-maiden winner Snowfire is scheduled to return in the Pocahontas.

“Mo Diddley came to Saratoga looking like a boy and has really grown up this summer and turned into a man,” Casse said. “He’s a big, strong colt with a good demeanor. He probably ran one of the fastest half-mile splits in a stakes race at Saratoga (44.60) while dueling on the lead. I would have liked to get a post a little more inside but with his speed I think he’ll be fine getting in position and trying to rate behind if need be.”

Flameaway, a 2-year-old son of Scat Daddy, is undefeated in two starts after a 1 ½-length victory in the Aug. 18 Skidmore Stakes at Saratoga, a race that was originally scheduled to be run on the turf but was taken off due to rain.

“This is really a test for Flameaway,” Casse said. “We wanted to give him a shot again to try the dirt. He trains well over it and was really impressive in the Skidmore.”

Snowfire, a 2-year-old daughter of Tapit, drew away to a four-length maiden score on June 29 at Churchill Downs before a dull performance on July 21 in the Schuyerville (GIII) at Saratoga.

“We actually didn’t think we were going to run her in this spot,” Casse said. “I was there for her last breeze and she really handled things well so we wanted to give her a try in this race.”

The Casse team is loaded in stakes races across the country this weekend including World Approval and Conquest Pantera in the Woodbine Mile (GI) in Canada and La Coronel in the Sands Point (GII) at Belmont Park.

“I don’t know where I’ll be this weekend,” Casse joked. “Typically on a big Saturday like this I like to be hunkered down somewhere to catch all of the action. It’s a very big day for our team plus we have the sale going on. It should be a great weekend.”

Locust Grove, Open Mind Kick Off Competitive Stakes Sequence Saturday – The $100,000 Locust Grove (Grade III) and $100,000 Open Mind (Listed) will kick off a stakes quartet on Saturday’s 11-race card at Churchill Downs.

John Gunther’s Tiger Moth will attempt to pick up her third-consecutive stakes victory as the 3-1 morning line favorite in the Locust Grove.

The Locust Grove, for fillies and mares 3-years-old and up run at 1 1/16 miles, is carded as Race 8 on the 11-race program with a scheduled post time of 4:18 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Trained by Brad Cox, Tiger Moth picked up her first stakes win on July 15 in the Mari Hulman George Memorial at Indiana Grand when she defeated a field of eight rivals by 2 ½ lengths. The 5-year-old mare by Street Sense was victorious nearly a month later in Ellis Park’s Groupie Doll (GIII), narrowly defeating the Ian Wilkes-trained Walkabout.

The Locust Grove field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Brooklynway (Robby Albarado, 10-1); Blue Prize (Arg) (James Graham, 7-2); Mo D’Amour (Florent Geroux, 4-1); Romantic Vision (Brian Hernandez Jr., 4-1); Fuhriously Kissed (Julien Leparoux 5-1); Sweetgrass (Chris Landeros, 6-1); and Tiger Moth (Corey Lanerie, 3-1).

Carl Moore Management LLC and Brad Grady’s Mayla and Brook T. Investment’s Ivy Bell are familiar with seeing the tail-end of multiple graded stakes winner Finley’sluckycharm at Churchill Downs but the two sprinters will get the opportunity to shine themselves in the Open Mind.

The six-furlong Open Mind for fillies and mares is scheduled as Race 9 with a post time of 4:49 p.m. The Open Mind field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): Grace’s Treasure (Jesus Castanon, 5-1); Mayla (Gabriel Saez, 9-5); Profound Moment (C.J. McMahon, 15-1); Ivy Bell (Brian Hernandez Jr., 8-5); Athena (Joe Rocco Jr., 7-2); and Tricky Zippy (Corey Lanerie, 12-1).

The Locust Grove and Open Mind are the first two legs of an all-stakes late Pick 4 that will conclude with the $150,000 Iroquois (GIII) and $200,000 Pocahontas (GII). All four races are a part of the late Pick 5 and Single 6 Jackpot sequence.

Milestone Watch – Along with the heated-battle between Dale Romans and Bill Mott for the all-time leading trainer honors at Churchill Downs (701-699 wins), trainers Greg Foley (397) and Kenny McPeek (394) are approaching 400 career-victories beneath the historic Twin Spires while trainer Ian Wilkes is targeting 200 career victories at Churchill Downs (191 wins).
ALBARADO, ROMANS, RAMSEY DEFEND SEPTEMBER TITLES – Veteran jockey Robby Albarado had the hot hand during last year’s September Meet with 15 wins, three more than Corey Lanerie and Brian Hernandez Jr. Lanerie piloted 58 winners during this year’s Spring Meet to collect his 13th riding title in the last 15 meets at Churchill Downs. Romans, a 14-time local leading trainer, was last year’s September Meet leading trainer with six wins to Asmussen’s five. Asmussen earned his record-extending 18th Churchill Downs training title with 23 wins during the spring. The leading owners last September were Ken and Sarah Ramsey, who have won a record 28 crowns and 469 races at the Downs. This spring’s top owner was Maggi Moss, who won 11 races compared to the Ramsey’s nine.

CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES, VISIT CHURCHILLDOWNS.COM/PARKING FOR RECOMMENDED ROUTES – Parking is free in the Longfield Avenue lot (Gates 10 & 12). Valet parking is $10. Initial work on a construction project will temporarily alter traffic and parking for a segment of guests who plan to attend the Louisville racetrack’s upcoming September Meet. Guests are advised to visit www.ChurchillDowns.com/Parking in advance of attending the historic racetrack to view recommended alternative routes and a complete list of guest-appropriate temporary parking lots.

The construction project, which is designed to enhance transportation ingress and egress at Churchill Downs Racetrack, is in a preliminary stage until final approvals and permits from Louisville Metro Government are realized. The improvements aim to advance the overall traffic and parking flow for guests who visit the historic racetrack throughout the year, including the high-volume crowds of Kentucky Derby and Breeders’ Cup weeks. Additional aspects of the development include a promenade for guests to safely enter and exit the racetrack from and to the parking and loading/drop-off areas, and much-needed landscaping to an area at the facility mostly devoid of trees and plantings.

Parking lots will be reshaped, and the project could include traffic alternatives on the west side of its property. Discussions with neighborhood groups and city agencies and officials are underway to close select side streets in a nearly 50-acre area located within the track’s geographic footprint.

Current project work includes temporary lot closures and detours. Signs, electronic message boards and personnel will be in place to alert guests about the temporary closures and direct them to appropriate parking lots. Each lot will include handicapped parking. Gate 17 drop-offs are still allowed by heading south on 9th St. off of Central Ave.

STARTING GATES SUITES PROJECT PROGRESSES – When guests return to Churchill Downs for the September Meet, they’ll notice significant progress on the track’s $37 million capital project that will deliver more than 1,800 new seats for the 2018 Kentucky Derby through the addition of new luxury suites, interior dining tables and third-floor Grandstand seats.

Steel has been erected for the Starting Gate Suites capital project that encompasses 77,250 square feet of new space on the north end of the racetrack. The structure, which will feature three floors of individual suites along with dining and event space, is being built adjacent to the Jockey Club Suites, which opened in 2003.

The new luxury suites, which will feature indoor lounge seating with a bar and a private tiered balcony that overlooks the start of the Kentucky Derby at the top of the homestretch, will host 1,140 ticketed guests. Up to new 36 individual suites will be able to accommodate groups of various sizes.

Each of the three levels in the new Starting Gate Suites will feature event space with 24 eight-top tables for interior dining for a total of 576 seats. The project also will include the construction of 110 new third-floor Grandstand seats.

The Starting Gate Suites project will be complete prior to the 2018 Kentucky Derby.

'INSIDE CHURCHILL DOWNS' AIRS FRIDAYS AT 6 P.M. EDT ON ESPN 680/105.7 – Inside Churchill Downs,” the weekly horse racing radio show co-hosted by Churchill Downs Racetrack’s John Asher, Darren Rogers and Kevin Kerstein, airs every Friday at 6 p.m. EDT on ESPN 680/105.7.

The one-hour Friday night program will deliver a wide-ranging list of interesting guests, from jockeys, trainers, owners to well-informed handicappers and other industry insiders.

Those outside the Louisville radio market can listen live online at http://www.espnlouisville.com/ or via podcast on the station’s website or https://soundcloud.com/.
DOWN THE STRETCH – Churchill Downs’ 11-day meet will be staged over three weekends through Sunday, Oct. 1 with racing on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The first race will be 12:45 p.m. daily (admission gates open at 11:30 a.m.) with the exception of a pair of 5 p.m. (gates at 4 p.m.) Twilight Thursdays and a 6 p.m. first post (gates at 5 p.m.) on Saturday, Sept. 23. … The Churchill Downs Racing Club is poised for a big September Meet. Party Club is entered in a maiden special weight for 2-year-old fillies at one mile in Friday’s Race 6 at 3:16 p.m. Trained by 82-year-old legend D. Wayne Lukas, Party Club is one of two juvenile fillies – the other is Card Club – that were purchased by the 200-member club earlier this year with earnings accrued by their first horse, 3-year-old Warrior’s Club, who won for the third time on Labor Day weekend at Saratoga to boost his career record to 16-3-3-3—$293,299. Warrior’s Club is expected to run next in the $100,000 Ack Ack on Sept. 30. … Central Avenue will be bustling with activity Saturday. In addition to the live racing at Churchill Downs, ESPN’s College GameDay will be in town in advance of that night’s nationally-televised ACC showdown on ABC between the 14th-ranked University of Louisville football team and third-ranked Clemson at nearby Papa John’s Cardinal Stadium. Kickoff was moved from 3:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., which means visitors can now enjoy the best of both worlds as Churchill Downs’ final race is set for 5:50 p.m. Two years ago, approximately one thousand Clemson fans pre-gamed at Churchill Downs, and their alumni has booked an event for Saturday. Also, WCCP 105.5 FM, the flagship station of Clemson athletics, will broadcast a pre-game show from Churchill Downs that day. … The $100,000 Dogwood Presented by GE Appliances for 3-year-old fillies at seven furlongs and $100,000 President of the UAE Cup (GI) for Arabians 4-years-old and up at 1 1/16 miles will be the featured events on Saturday, Sept. 23 – the lone Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and Woodford Reserve night racing event of the September Meet and last one of the year. The event theme that evening will be Bourbon, Bets and Bow Ties as guests celebrate the best of the south including bourbon, Thoroughbred racing and fashion. … The two Twilight Thursdays will feature $1 beer, live music (James Lindsey on Sept. 21 and Otis Junior and The Jesse Lees on Sept. 28), food trucks (Holy Mole, Red Top Gourmet Hot Dogs, Pollo, 502 Café, Mark’s Feed Store and Zoom Zoom Yum), and Racing 101 tips from resident handicappers in Churchill Downs’ Plaza from 5-8 p.m. … Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger is scheduled for closing day on Sunday, Oct. 1. Families are encouraged to bring the kids to Churchill Downs for a day of racing and family activities including pony rides, inflatables, petting zoo, stick horse races on the turf course, face painting and more. … Tickets for adults and children age 3 and up are just $8 when purchased online in advance at ChurchillDowns.com, and include unlimited access to all kid-friendly activities through 5 p.m. Churchill Downs is also offering a Family Four Pack that includes four Family Adventure Day tickets, four family meals in the Family Adventure Day area and two racing programs for only $44 (a $59 package includes reserved box seats). … The “Who’s the Champ? Handicapping Contest” will be held on Sundays, Sept. 24 and Oct. 1. 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 those days between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the Clubhouse second floor at the top of the Gate 17 escalators. … On Sundays, Churchill Downs is offering a special “Stakes and Eggs” brunch special in the Stakes Room every. The $45 package for adults and $22 package for children includes a seat in the Stakes Room on the fourth floor of the Clubhouse and all-you-can-eat access to the brunch menu that includes an omelet station, scrambled eggs, biscuits and country gravy, French toast, hot brown, carved country ham, crispy bacon, sausage patties, hash brown potatoes with peppers and onions, fresh fruit, garden vegetables, breakfast breads and a chef’s dessert display.

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