FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, Sept. 17, 2017) – The 35-race “Road to the Kentucky Derby” point series kicked off Saturday at Churchill Downs with Chicago-invader The Tabulator remaining perfect through three career starts by winning the $150,000 Iroquois (Grade III).

“IT’s so special to get a victory with a young horse over this racetrack,” jockey Jose Valdivia Jr. said. “We still have a long way to go and The Tabulator has some maturing to come but to be in this position is a great feeling.”

Trained by Larry Rivelli, The Tabulator held off fast-closing Hollywood Star by a diminishing three-quarters of a length to earn 10 points on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” point system that will determine the field for next year’s 144th running of the $2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) on May 5, 2018 at Churchill Downs.

“You can tell he was still very green,” Valdivia said. “It was almost like he was looking up at the crowd and saw all of the fans cheering and wanted to go join them. Those are the little adjustments we’ll need to make moving forward but I wouldn’t trade this position with anyone right now. He’ll learn. The possibilities are endless when you have a colt like this because we really haven’t reached deep into the tank yet.”

The 3-year-old son of Dialed In covered the 1 1/16-mile distance in 1:45.50 and paid $10.40 to win as the 4-1 third choice. The Iroquois also is part of the Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In Juvenile Division” Challenge and the win by The Tabulator earned the Kentucky-bred son of Dialed In a guaranteed spot in the starting gate for the $2 million Sentient Jet Breeders’ Cup Juvenile at Del Mar on Nov. 4. The Tabulator’s $60,000 entry fees will be paid by Breeders’ Cup Ltd. and his connections will receive a travel stipend for his possible trip to California.

The next race on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” is the Sept. 30 FrontRunner (GI) at Santa Anita. In the 2016 edition, Gormley stamped his name as an early Kentucky Derby favorite by winning the 1 1/16-mile contest by three lengths. The son of Malibu Moon finished ninth in Kentucky Derby 143.

CALHOUN, HERNANDEZ ROLLERCOASTER DAY LEADS TO TOP-SPOT ON OAKS LEADERBOARD – Trainer Bret Calhoun and jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. had a memorable Saturday at Churchill Downs that ultimately led the duo to the winner’s circle with longshot Patrona Margarita in the $200,000 Pocahontas (Grade II), securing the top spot on the early “Road to the Kentucky Oaks” leaderboard.

Hernandez’ day started out with three victories in Races 5, 6 and 8. However, in Race 9, the $100,000 Open Mind, Hernandez’ mount Ivy Bell attempted to squeeze though an opening at the rail to challenge the Calhoun-trained Mayla for the lead. As the two crossed the quarter pole after a half-mile in :45.81, Mayla, ridden by Gabriel Saez, came in near the eighth pole and put Ivy Bell in tight along the rail as she clipped heels and dropped Hernandez. Both horse and jockey appeared fine after the incident. Ivy Bell was caught by an outrider and Hernandez walked back to the jockey’s room after a quick visit by EMT’s. The spill did not hurt the confidence of the Louisiana-born jockey as he guided 23-1 longshot Patrona Margarita to a 3 ¾-length victory in Pocahontas, the final race of the afternoon.

“That was a memorable day at the office,” said Hernandez walking back to the jockey’s room following the race. “I'll probably be sore tomorrow but right now I'm thankful everything ended as well as it did.”

After Mayla crossed the wire in front, Calhoun made a left turn away from the winner’s circle to check on Hernandez’ condition.

“It just goes to show you how classy Bret and his team are,” Hernandez said. “That’s why I love riding for him.”

“You hate to think back on what the day could have been with two stakes victories,” Calhoun said. “I’m just so thankful Brian was okay. We ended things on a high note but this was quite the rollercoaster day.”

Patrona Margarita, a Texas-bred daughter of Special Rate out of the Naevus mare Margarita Mistress, banked $115,320 for the win and is the early points-leader on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks after collecting 10 points. The Pocahontas was the first of 30 qualifying races to the $1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to be run next May, and points were awarded to the Top 4 runners on a 10-4-2-1 scale.

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Patrona Margarita also guaranteed herself a starting spot in the $2 million 14 Hands Winery Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) on Nov. 4 at Del Mar. The Pocahontas is part of the Breeders’ Cup “Win and You're In” Juvenile Fillies Challenge Division, which means the winner will also will have her entry fees and a travel allowance paid by Breeders’ Cup. However, Patrona Margarita is not currently Breeders’ Cup eligible to receive those perks.

“Right now we'll aim to the (Oct. 7) Alcibiades at Keeneland,” Calhoun said. “She trained phenomenal into this race and really was proven at a distance of ground.”

ROMANS VS. MOTT – Trainer Dale Romans came guns blazing to start the September Meet at Churchill Downs, but has gone winless in nine starts in his attempt to break Bill Mott’s all-time leading trainer mark at Churchill Downs, trailing 701-699 wins.

Romans’ entries:
- Sunday: Cove Blue (Race 4), Fayetteville (Race 4), Promises Fulfilled (Race 7) and Sportscaster (Race 10).
- Thursday: Laughing Levi (Race 8).

Mott’s entries:
- Sunday: Bristol's Brooke (Race 2).
- Thursday: Mosca (Race 3).

Romans’ schedule remains fluid for the next few days as he continues to split his time between Churchill Downs and the Keeneland September Yearling Sale.

GUN RUNNER HEADLINES WORK TAB AFTER :49.60 HALF-MILE BREEZE – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm’s Gun Runner breezed a half-mile in :49.60 early Sunday morning at Churchill Downs in preparation for his next scheduled start in the $6 million Breeders’ Cup Classic (Grade I) at Del Mar. … Following his third-place effort in the Smarty Jones (GIII) at Parx, Colonelsdarktemper recorded a bullet five-furlong move in :59.60, the fastest of 41 at the distance for trainer William “Jinx” Fires. … On the comeback trail, 2016 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies runner-up Valadorna breezed a half-mile in :49.40 for trainer Mark Casse. … La Troienne (GI) victor Big World tabbed an easy half-mile maintenance move in :50.60 for trainer Tom Amoss. … Graded stakes placed Petrov, most recently a four-length winner in an allowance race at Saratoga, recorded a half-mile work in :49 for trainer Ron Moquett. … Precocious Kentucky Downs Juvenile Stakes winner Snapper Sinclair breezed four furlongs in an easy :51.20 for trainer Steve Asmussen. … For the full list of workouts visit: https://www.churchilldowns.com/horsemen/racing/workouts

STAKES PROBABLES – Saturday’s program will be the last Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and Woodford Reserve program of 2017 which will be headlined by the 42nd running of the $100,000 Dogwood (Listed) and the President of the United Arab Emirates Cup (GI) for Arabian-bred horses.

The probable entrants for the Dogwood, according to Churchill Downs stakes coordinator Dan Bork: Cara Blythe, Champagne Problems, Covenant, Jordan's Henny, Minnie Blip, Nineteenth Street, No More Babies, Pinch Hit, Student Body, and Too Much Tip.

Entries for Saturday’s card will be taken Wednesday.

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 (397) are approaching 400 career-victories beneath the historic Twin Spires while trainer Ian Wilkes is targeting 200 career victories at Churchill Downs (192 wins). … Trainer Mike Tomlinson is just one win away from 500-career victories. The Oklahoma native has 499 victories so far in his 28-year career.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Racing returns Thursday beneath the Twin Spires with the first of two Twilight Thursday cards of the September Meet. Fans will enjoy $1 draft beer, live music by James Lindsay, food trucks and receive wagering advice at the Racing 101 booth. Admission starts at $3 with the first of eight races kicking off at 5 p.m. … 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.

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