THE PLAYER TARGETS GRADE I CLARK HANDICAP FOLLOWING FAYETTE STAKES VICTORY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017) – Following a three-length score in Saturday’s $200,000 Fayette Stakes (Grade II) at Keeneland, Carl Hurst and William “Buff” Bradley’s The Player will target the $500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) on Friday, Nov. 24 at Churchill Downs.

“He came out of the race in good shape,” Bradley said. “We’ll target the Clark for our next start.”

The Player, a 4-year-old chestnut colt by Street Hero, rallied from just off the pace in the Fayette and took the lead at the top of the stretch over the Todd Pletcher-trainee Neolitic to win at odds of 8-1.

“Calvin (Borel) rode a great race,” Bradley said. “We thought he would go 1 1/8 miles and he proved it.”

Owned and bred by Bradley in partnership with Hurst and Buff’s late father Fred, The Player comes from a deep-rooted home-grown pedigree from the mare Hour Queen whose mother, Town Queen, was Bradley’s first stakes winner.

Fellow Clark hopeful, Hoppertunity, finished second in his first start off a seven-month layoff in Saturday’s Comma to the Top Stakes at Santa Anita Park. Trainer Bob Baffert reported prior to the Comma to the Top that Hoppertunity could run in the Clark for a fourth time and then possibly test the Dubai World Cup (GI) in late March.

The Clark Handicap is the most lucrative stakes race of Churchill Downs’ Fall Meet. The 143rd running of the 1 1/8-mile test for 3-year-olds and up annually lures some of the top older horses in North America and is one of seven stakes events to be contested over Thanksgiving weekend. Total prize money offered throughout the meet’s 221 scheduled races is a hefty $11.25 million, which averages to more than $535,000 per day.

HALL OF FAME TRAINER VAN BERG RECOVERING FROM SUCCESSFUL THROAT SURGERY – Hall of Fame trainer Jack Van Berg is recovering from successful throat surgery on Friday in Little Rock, Ark.

“Jack had successful throat surgery and is recovering at a hospital in Little Rock,” said Chris Kotulak, spokesman for Van Berg and author of the biography “Jack, From Grit To Glory.” “He is scheduled to be released today. I spoke with Jack earlier and he sounds better but his speech is still slurred at times due to his surgery. He’ll be back at the barn soon and wanted to let everyone know assistant trainer Sammy Almarez is taking good care of the horses. Sammy was the groom for 1984 Preakness Stakes winner Gate Dancer and worked for Jack since the early 1980s.”

Van Berg, 81, returned to training at Churchill Downs in late 2015 and had a full string of horses on the grounds beginning in the Spring Meet of 2016. The Nebraska-native recorded five victories, so far, in 2017 at Churchill Downs.

CHILUKKI STAKES PROBABLES – George and Lori Hall’s Moneysoncharlotte leads the probable entrants for Saturday’s $200,000 Chilukki Stakes (Grade II) at Churchill Downs.

Other probable entrants for the race, according to Assistant Racing Secretary and Stakes Coordinator Dan Bork: Alpine Sky (trainer Todd Quast); Kathballu (Kenny McPeek); Lady Soul (Rudolphe Brisset); Mo D’Amour (Brisset); Moiety (Eoin Hartty); Money’soncharlotte (Kelly Breen), Steel Cut (Wes Hawley); and Tiger Moth (Brad Cox).

Entries will be taken Wednesday for the one-mile contest for fillies and mares 3-year-olds and up.

SPENCER TO FILL IN FOR KRISTUFEK BREEDERS’ CUP WEEK AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – Arlington Park and Fair Grounds’ Racing Analyst Brian W. Spencer will fill in for Joe Kristufek Nov. 1 through Nov. 5, at Churchill Downs.

Kristufek will represent TwinSpires.com on the Breeders’ Cup World Feed simulcast and is scheduled to return to Churchill Downs on Wednesday, Nov. 8.
ROMANS VS. MOTT – Dale Romans, a 51-year-old native of South Louisville, is just one win away from joining Hall of Famer Bill Mott as the all-time leading trainer in races won at Churchill Downs – a record that 64-year-old Mott has held for 31 years. Mott has 701 wins at Churchill Downs, while Romans begins the meet with 700 wins after landing just one victory with a pair of seconds and a trio of thirds from 24 starters during the 11-day September Meet (Mott went 0-for-6).

Romans Entries: Dance Rhythms (Sunday, Race 2); Overdraft (Sunday, Race 2); Seven Trumpets (Sunday, Race 4); Jan One (Sunday, Race 5); Lion’s Share (Sunday, Race 6); Finished (Sunday, Race 6); Jail House (Sunday, Race 11); Paddys Class (Wednesday, Race 5); Miss Subzero (Wednesday, Race 5); and Front Row Debbie (Wednesday, Race 8); Finished (Thursday, Race 8); and Singing Bullet (Thursday, Race 9).

Mott Entries: Fortune Cookie (Sunday, Race 1); Miss Vinegar (Sunday, Race 2); and Border Force (Wednesday, Race 1).

WATCH AND WAGER ON THE BREEDERS’ CUP AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – Churchill Downs will simulcast the Breeders’ Cup World Championships from Southern California’s Del Mar on Friday, Nov. 3 and Saturday, Nov. 4. Churchill Downs will run 10 races those days beginning at 2 p.m. and 2:15 p.m., respectively. A simulcast of the 10-race Championship Friday card from Del Mar will begin at 2:25 p.m. and the Breeders’ Cup will cover Races 6-9 (5:25-7:35 p.m.). Championship Saturday’s 12-race program at Del Mar will commence at 1:10 p.m., cover Races 4-12 (Breeders’ Cup starts at 3 p.m.) and culminate with the Grade I, $6 million Breeders’ Cup Classic at 8:35 p.m. In addition to the simulcasts interspersed between live races, Churchill Downs will present a stakes race on Saturday, Nov. 4: the 32nd edition of the Grade II, $200,000 Chilukki for fillies and mares at one mile. When live racing concludes on Friday at 7:10 p.m. and Saturday at 8:15 p.m., simulcast wagering on the Breeders’ Cup will continue in the ITW area on the second floor of the Clubhouse, as well as reserved dining spaces and the Horsemen’s Services Center. Customers who attend Churchill Downs on Friday will be able to advance wager on the entire Championship Saturday program from Del Mar. There is no advance wagering on-track Thursday for the Championship Friday program.

The first 5,000 fans in attendance on Saturday, Nov. 4 for a simulcast of the Breeders’ Cup receive a free 2018 Churchill Downs Wall Calendar, presented by Humana. The colorful calendar features major event listings and vivid and memorable images from the Kentucky Derby and around the historic racetrack. Admission gates will open at 12:30 p.m. and first race is 2:15 p.m.

MILESTONE WATCH – Along with the heated-battle between Dale Romans and Bill Mott for the all-time leading trainer honors at Churchill Downs (701-700 wins), trainer Greg Foley (398) is two wins away from 400 career-victories beneath the historic Twin Spires while trainer Ian Wilkes is targeting 200 career victories at Churchill Downs (194 wins).

DOWN THE STRETCH – The 50/50 charitable gaming raffle is back for the Fall Meet. Proceeds from the raffle will go towards charitable organizations that benefit from the Churchill Downs Incorporated Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that helps support the critical work of nonprofits in our industry, make a difference in important public health programs and provide meaningful opportunities in art and education. Visit www.derbygives.com to purchase tickets and for more information. … For more information about Churchill Downs’ Fall Meet visit: https://www.churchilldowns.com/racing-wagering/news/40-things-to-know-about-churchill-downs-fall-meet.

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