FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

FORMER RODEO STARS TEAM WITH CHIEF CICATRIZ
IN SATURDAY’S $75,000-ADDED KELLY’S LANDING

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, June 28, 2018) – Locally-based trainer Mike Johnson grew up as a child in Arkansas knowing the name Shawn Davis, a former three-time world champion saddle bronc rider and inductee in the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame in 1979. Fast forward nearly 30 years and Johnson is helping Davis oversee his multiple-stakes winning sprinter Chief Cicatriz as he prepares for Saturday’s $75,000-added Kelly’s Landing Overnight Stakes at Churchill Downs.

“All of the guys involved with Chief Cicatriz are so much fun to be around,” Johnson said. “We had a great time with Shawn and Roy Evans, Chief Cicatriz’ owner, a few weeks ago when he won the Aristides (Grade III). Shawn was the real deal on the rodeo circuit. He’s a three-time champion and Roy is a longtime supporter of the NFR (National Finals Rodeo).”

While Johnson isn’t necessarily a household name like Davis on the rodeo circuit, he used to be a professional bull rider and calf roper in college.

“I helped put myself through college riding bulls and roping calves,” said Johnson, who attended the University of Arkansas. “I liked riding bulls a lot more than calf roping. That’s how I really got to know Shawn when I was riding bulls.”

Johnson is the former assistant trainer to Pete Vestal and took out his trainer’s license in 2007. The 42-year-old conditioner is accustomed to being around some of the country’s top horses. He galloped multiple graded stakes winner McCraken as a 2-year-old in 2016 and Triple Crown winner American Pharoah when he was based at Oaklawn Park prior to his triumph in the 2015 Arkansas Derby (GI).

Chief Cicatriz (11-8-0-0—$286,881), a 5-year-old gelding by Munnings launched his career at Zia Park in New Mexico. The homebred has been based with Johnson since April including his romping 6 ¼-length win in the $100,000 Aristides on June 2.

“We’ve helped Shawn oversee Chief Cicatriz for a little while now,” Johnson said. “We had him at Oaklawn last year and, after he returned to training from a minor setback, Shawn sent him back to us at Churchill and we helped prepare him for the Churchill Downs Stakes (GII) and Aristides.

“It’s been exciting having (Chief Cicatriz) in our barn but we’re starting to get some really nice horses of our own for some great clients.”

Chief Cicatriz was made 7-5 on the morning line for Saturday’s seven-furlong Kelly’s Landing and will once again be ridden by jockey James Graham.

The Kelly’s Landing, which attracted a field of 10 sprinters, is one of three stakes races on Churchill Downs’ 12-race closing day card. The seven-furlong contest will go as Race 10 at 5:26 p.m. (all times Eastern).

The field for the Kelly’s Landing from the rail out:

Awesome Saturday (ridden by Brian Hernandez Jr., trained by Bret Calhoun, 121 pounds, 8-1 morning line odds); Lookin for a Kiss (Jon Court, Mike Tomlinson, 121, 20-1); Mr. Crow (Joe Rocco Jr., Ben Colebrook, 121, 7-2); Harmac (Jose Valdivia Jr., Grant Forster, 121, 30-1); Cool Arrow (Adam Beschizza, Joe Sharp, 121, 20-1); Warrior’s Club (Gabriel Saez, D. Wayne Lukas, 123, 7-5); Requite (Julien Leparoux, Ian Wilkes, 121, 20-1); Storm Advisory (Ricardo Santana Jr., Brian Williamson, 121, 20-1); C Z Rocket (Shaun Bridgmohan, Al Stall Jr., 121, 12-1) and Chief Cicatriz (Graham, Davis, 123, 7-5).

General admission to Churchill Downs is $3 on Saturday and admission gates open at 11:30 a.m. Box seats are $10 and reserved dining packages are $39. They can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets. Because it’s closing day, there will be a mandatory payout in Churchill Downs’ 20-cent minimum Single 6 Jackpot.

CASSE SEEKS FIRST STAKES VICTORY WITH TALES OF CHAUCER IN BASHFORD MANOR – Trainer Norm Casse began training on his own in late March but is already attempting to win his first stakes race with 2-year-old maiden winner Tales of Chaucer, who is the 4-1 second choice on the morning line in Saturday’s $100,000 Bashford Manor (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

“If Tales of Chaucer runs back to his maiden win, he could be tough to beat,” Casse said. “I wasn’t expecting him to have to run against 12 other horses, though. He fits in the race but anything can happen in a full field.”

Tales of Chaucer, a half-brother to New York-bred stakes-winning fillies Filibustin and Indy’s Lady, led every step of the way in his June 1 debut and was a strong 3 ½-length winner in the slop at Belmont Park over five furlongs.

-more-
The New York-bred son of Forty Tales, who was purchased for $58,000 at the OBS March Sale, will attempt to give 34-year-old Casse his first stakes win as a first-year trainer. The colt’s ownership group includes Michael and Jules Iavarone, Becky Thomas’ Sequel Racing, Samuel R. Freeman, Dorsey Jackson and Casse’s Cardinal Hill Racing.

“He’s a really good looking horse,” Casse said. “We’ve partnered with some great owners on this horse and he’s shown in his training and debut how talented he is.”

The complete Bashford Manor field from the rail out (with jockeys, trainers and assigned weight): Shanghaied Roo (Gabriel Saez, Bret Calhoun, 120 pounds, 9-2 morning line odds); Weiland (Carlos Villasana, John Ennis, 122, 6-1); Baytown Glory (Jack Gilligan, Paul McEntee, 120, 30-1); Sir Truebador (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 120, 4-1); Mr Chocolate Chip (Euclyn Prentice Jr., Cory Davidson, 120, 30-1); The Song of John (Sonny Leon, Rey Hernandez, 120, 20-1); Eye Cloud (Rogelio Miranda, Tracy Norris, 120, 20-1); Mr. Granite (Nathan Vickers, Wayne Rice, 120, 30-1); Tales of Chaucer (Julien Leparoux, Norm Casse, 120, 4-1); Dalliance (Arienne Cox, Wayne Rice, 122, 20-1); Toothless Wonder (Mario Gutierrez, Doug O’Neill, 120, 7-2); Cat Addiction (C.J. McMahon, Steve Asmussen, 118, 15-1); and Overanalyzer (Andres Ulloa, Michelle Elliott, 120, 20-1).

RIVELLI HOPES TO PLAY CATCH ME IF YOU CAN WITH O’KEEFFE IN DEBUTANTE – Carolyn Wilson’s speedy maiden winner O’Keeffe hopes the 334-mile journey from her home base in Chicago proves successful as the 3-1 co-second choice on the morning line in Saturday’s $100,000 Debutante (Listed) at Churchill Downs.

“She’s really fast so we’re going to be in front,” trainer Larry Rivelli said. “They’re going to have to catch us. It looks like an even race to me. They’re 2-year-olds, so it’s pretty much an allowance race for $100,000. Every horse has only broken their maiden.”

O’Keeffe, a daughter of Munnings, will break on her maiden on May 27 at Arlington Park at odds of 2-5. The runner-up to O’Keeffe, Agi’s Cait, recently returned to break her maiden by 6 ½ lengths.

“That complimented my horse a lot,” Rivelli said. “(Trainer) Mike Campbell’s filly is really nice.”

O’Keeffe drew post 4 and will be ridden by veteran jockey Jose Valdivia Jr.

The six-furlong Debutante will go as Race 7 at 3:50 p.m. (all times Eastern).

The Debutante field from the rail out: Miss Mission (ridden by Nathan Vickers, trained by Kevin Rice, 15-1 morning line odds); My Wynter Rose (Rayan Gazader, Tommy Short, 15-1); Payntermaniac (Carlos Villasana, John Ennis, 30-1); O’Keeffe (Valdivia, Rivelli, 3-1); Restless Rider (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeek, 5-2); War Ballad (Marcelino Pedroza Jr., James Chapman, 15-1); Beach Getaway (Joe Rocco Jr., Ben Colebrook, 8-1); Hay Dilly (James Graham, Kelly Rubley, 6-1) and Shanghai Rain (Gabriel Saez, Bret Calhoun, 3-1). All fillies will carry 120 pounds.

MORALES ENJOYING SUCCESSFUL FIRST SPRING MEET AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – Five-pound apprentice jockey Edgar Morales moved to Kentucky from his native Puerto Rico in 2017 and is already enjoying a successful start in the U.S. with 15 wins at the 2018 Churchill Downs Spring Meet.

“I love it here in Kentucky,” Morales said. “We’re working very hard to keep business strong and look ahead to the future this summer and fall.”

Morales, 19, grew up in Aibonito, Puerto Rico, which is known as the “city of the flowers” in the mountainous region in the south-central part of the main island.

“The only thing Kentucky is really missing are the beaches like Puerto Rico has,” Morales joked. “It’s been great to ride here in Kentucky so far and hopefully we can continue our success.”

Morales, currently tied for seventh in the jockey standings, made his first start in the U.S. on Oct. 6, 2017 at Keeneland and recorded his first win two weeks later on Star Dog for late Hall of Fame trainer Jack Van Berg.

Represented by five-time Churchill Downs leading rider Julio Espinoza, Morales plans to ride the summer at Ellis Park before returning to Churchill for the September Meet.

“He’s been like a son to me,” Espinoza said. “This kid has a great future ahead of him. The one major thing that separates him is how smart he is in the saddle. He makes great decisions during the race and he keeps wanting to learn every day.”

MEET LEADERS – With three days of racing remaining at the Spring Meet, jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. is on his way to his first-career riding title at Churchill Downs with a 40-35 win lead over 15-time leading rider Corey Lanerie, who will not ride the final days of the meet to spend time with family in Louisiana following his wife Shantel’s death on Friday. Florent Geroux was third with 32 wins while Julien Leparoux and Ricardo Santana Jr. were tied for fourth with 24 victories. … Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen had a 24-19 win lead over Brad Cox in the trainer standings as he seeks his record-extending 19th Churchill Downs training title. Ian Wilkes was third with 17 wins while Eddie Kenneally and Kenny McPeek rounded out the Top 5 with 16 and 15 wins, respectively. … For the record-extending 31st time, Ken and Sarah Ramsey have won at least a share of the leading owner title at Churchill Downs with eight victories.

Jim and Susan Hill, Gary and Mary West and Whitham Thoroughbreds were tied for second with four wins. Calumet Farm entered with two wins but could clinch a share of the owner’s title with six entries in the final three days of racing.
DOWN THE STRETCH – The 2018 Spring Meet concludes with live racing Thursday-Saturday. Thursday’s eight race program, billed as Twilight Thursday, includes $1 beer, live music from House Ghost, local food trucks and lawn games in The Plaza. First post is 5 p.m. There is a $55,538 carryover in the 20-cent Single 6 Jackpot which begins in Race 3 at approximately 5:58 p.m. In Race 4, there is a $30,454 carryover in the late 50-cent Pick 5. The sequence, which spans races 4-8, begins at approximately 6:27 p.m. Also, there is a carryover of $5,503 in the $1 Super Hi 5 for the 8:23 p.m. finale. … Friday’s 11-race card will have a first post of 12:45 p.m. and Saturday’s closing-day 12-race program will also get underway at 12:45 p.m. … Should Churchill Downs’ parking lots fill up Saturday, the track will provide free parking and shuttle service from Lot H at the Kentucky Exposition Center (inside Gate 4). Guests also may park in the gray, maroon, lime and Wagner’s Pharmacy lots starting at noon but they will have to park and walk. Parking in the neighborhood also is an option. … Attendees on Saturday are advised to take Taylor Blvd. for a swift exit. There’s a 7 p.m. Taylor Swift concert at nearby Papa John’s Cardinal Stadium and heavy traffic on Central Ave. is expected after the 6:25 p.m. final race. … The hosts of “Inside Churchill Downs” – Churchill Downs Racetrack’s John Asher, Darren Rogers and Kevin Kerstein – will revisit some of the memorable moments of the 2018 Spring Meet and preview Saturday’s three stakes races on their 6-7 p.m. show that airs every Friday 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. … Congratulations to trainer Michelle Lovell for being named Barn of the Week. Lovell and her staff will be honored with a winner’s circle recognition Friday and a pizza party. … There have been a total of 200 horses claimed totaling $4,199,000 compared to 199 totaling $3,709,500 at this stage in 2017. … Trainer Mike Lauer began Thursday with 999 career wins and had one entry today at Finger Lakes. He has no horses entered at Churchill Downs over the final three days.

-END-