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CYBERKNIFE HANGS NOSE ON HOWLING TIME IN MATT WINN THRILLER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, June 12, 2022) – Arkansas Derby (Grade I) winner **Cyberknife** bounced back from his 18th place finish in the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) and put his nose in front of pacesetter **Howling Time** at the wire to narrowly win Sunday's 25th running of the \$225,000 Matt Winn Stakes (Grade III) for 3-year-olds at Churchill Downs.

Cyberknife, owned by **Al Gold's Gold Square LLC**, clocked 1 1/16 miles over a fast track in 1:41.98 under **Florent Geroux**, who rode the winner for trainer **Brad Cox**. Both Geroux and Cox teamed to win last year's Matt Winn with **Fulsome**. Additionally, Geroux won the 2016 Matt Winn aboard Cyberknife's sire **Gun Runner**.

Cyberknife, breaking from post No. 6 of seven, hesitated slightly at the start as last year's Street Sense Stakes winner **Howling Time** broke alertly from the three-stall to lead the field of seven through fractions of :24.19, :47.81, 1:11.51 and 1:35.60. Cyberknife was never more than a length off **Howling Time**'s right hip. Leaving the final turn, the two drew even and brushed each other slightly before engaging in a thrill stretch battle. A photo finish was needed to determine the winner as the two appeared to hit the wire together.

The narrow victory was worth \$136,520 and improved Cyberknife's overall record to 4-2-0 with earnings of \$996,520 in eight starts.

"He broke a little slow but I was able to get him into a good position," Geroux said. "He was traveling well and (**Howling Time**) was really game on my inside. We were battling the whole stretch. I couldn't tell which one of us won but I'm glad it was Cyberknife."

Added **Howling Time**'s jockey **Joe Talamo**, "You can't get a more brutal beat than that."

Cyberknife, the odds-on 1-2 favorite, returned \$3, \$2.60 and \$2.10. **Howling Time** returned \$4 and \$2.80 as the 4-1 second choice and finished six lengths in front of **Rattle N Roll** who paid \$2.60 to show at odds of 4-1 under **Brian Hernandez Jr.**

Droppin G's was another eight lengths back in fourth, and was followed by **Camp David**, **Trafalgar** and **Tough to Tame**.

Cyberknife, out of the six-time stakes-winning Flower Alley mare **Awesome Flower**, was bred in Kentucky by **Ken** and the late **Sarah Ramsey**. The colt is named after **Accuray Inc.**'s robotic radiation therapy that was successfully used to treat 66-year-old Gold's prostate cancer.

"He's still a developing 3-year-old and he gets that experience by running in the afternoon," Cox said. "I think he's making good progress and ran hard today. We got on the right side of a tight photo. (**Howling Time**) ran a really game race. (**Cyberknife**) is a horse that I think we are looking to take the next step. He's a sound, happy horse and he's growing up. We're excited about him as a prospect throughout the rest of the year."

The Matt Winn is named in honor of the famed Churchill Downs president that served as the driving force in the development of the Downs and his beloved Kentucky Derby.

Following dark days on Monday and Tuesday, racing at Churchill Downs is scheduled to resume Wednesday with an eight-race card that begins at 12:45 p.m. ET.

WICKED HALO RUNS DOWN PRETTY BIRDIE IN INAUGURAL LESLIE'S LADY

In a matchup of two graded stakes-winning fillies at Saratoga last summer, **Winchell Thoroughbred's** homebred **Wicked Halo**, winner of the Grade II Adirondack, ran down Grade III Schuylerville winner **Pretty Birdie** in the homestretch to prevail in Sunday's inaugural \$158,700 Leslie's Lady Overnight Stakes at Churchill Downs by 2 ¾ lengths.

Ridden by leading jockey **Tyler Gaffalione** and conditioned by Churchill Downs' all-time leading trainer **Steve Asmussen**, Wicked Halo ran seven furlongs over a fast track in 1:22.61 to collect her second career stakes win.

Pretty Birdie, the 1-2 favorite, broke fastest from the gate in the field of five 3-year-old fillies and dictated the terms through a moderate first quarter mile in :23.07 and a half-mile in :45.41 as Wicked Halo raced just off Pretty Birdie's right hip. Off the turn and into the stretch, Wicked Halo drew even with Pretty Birdie inside the final furlong and inched clear late for the triumph.

"We were able to sit a nice trip right off of Pretty Birdie," Gaffalione said. "My filly was very composed early on into the race and when I asked her to get closer around the turn she stayed right with (Pretty Birdie) and was able to kick clear in the stretch."

Wicked Halo, the 2-1 second betting choice, rewarded her backers with payouts of \$6.20, \$2.20 and \$2.10. Pretty Birdie, ridden by **Florent Geroux**, returned \$2.10 and \$2.10. **Sweet as Pie**, with **Ricardo Santana Jr.** up, was another 6 ½ lengths back in third and paid \$2.10 to show.

Running Happy was fourth and **Baby Blue Eyes** was fifth.

With her victory worth \$97,900 in the Leslie's Lady, Wicked Halo boosted her career earnings to \$313,050 from a record of 3-0-3 in seven starts.

Wicked Halo is a daughter of Gun Runner out of the Tapit mare Just Wicked and was bred in Kentucky by her owner **Ron Winchell**.

The Leslie's Lady honors **Fred and Nancy Mitchell's** breed-shaping broodmare who produced 15 foals, of which nine became racehorses and seven were winners, including top sire **Into Mischief**, four-time champion **Beholder** and Grade I winner and sire **Mendelssohn**. The 2016 Broodmare of the Year passed away peacefully at age 26 on Jan. 24.

MATT WINN QUOTES

Florent Geroux (jockey, Cyberknife, winner) – "He broke a little slow but I was able to get him into a good position. He was traveling well and (Howling Time) was really game on my inside. We were battling the whole stretch. I couldn't tell which one of us won but I'm glad it was Cyberknife."

Brad Cox (trainer, Cyberknife, winner) – "He's still a developing 3-year-old and he gets that experience by running in the afternoon. I think he's making good progress and ran hard today. We got on the right side of a tight photo. (Howling Time) ran a really game race. (Cyberknife) is a horse that I think we are looking to take the next step. He's a sound, happy horse and he's growing up. We're excited about him as a prospect throughout the rest of the year."

Joe Talamo (jockey, Howling Time, runner-up) – "You can't get a more brutal beat than that."

LESLIE'S LADY QUOTES

Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Wicked Halo, winner) – “We were able to sit a nice trip right off of Pretty Birdie. My filly was very composed early on into the race and when I asked her to get closer around the turn she stayed right with (Pretty Birdie) and was able to kick clear in the stretch.”

Norm Casse (trainer, Pretty Birdie, runner-up) – “I thought she was going easy on the front end and maybe the distance was a bit too far for her to run her best race.”

ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

Churchill Downs Racetrack (“CDRT”), the world’s most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The saddling paddock and the stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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