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BIG INVASION SETS STAKES RECORD IN WILLIAM WALKER VICTORY; TOP GUNNER WINS INAUGURAL ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES

LOUISVILLE, KY (Wednesday, May 4, 2022) – Reeves Thoroughbred Racing's **Big Invasion** swept to the front with a three-wide move in the stretch and then held off a late run from **B D Valeski** by 2 lengths to win the seventh running of the \$200,000 William Walker (Listed) for 3-year-olds Wednesday afternoon at Churchill Downs.

In the race prior to the William Walker, **4 G Racing's Top Gunner** won the inaugural running of the \$160,000 St. Matthews Overnight Stakes for 4-year-olds and up.

In the William Walker, Big Invasion saved ground in the run down the backstretch as **Candy Landing** and **Run Curtis Run** dueled through a :22.93 opening quarter.

On the far turn, jockey **Joel Rosario** tipped Big Invasion off the rail and came with a three-wide move that propelled him to the front at midstretch and provided enough of a cushion to hold off B D Valeski, who rallied from last in the field of seven.

Trained by **Christophe Clement**, Big Invasion completed the 5 ½ furlongs on a renovated Matt Winn Turf Course labeled as firm in 1:03.73 to shatter the stakes record of 1:05.63 established last year by **Field Day**.

Big Invasion is a Kentucky-bred son of **Declaration of War** out of the **Curlin** mare **Curls in Place**. Now owning a 4-3-1-0 record, Big Invasion has earned \$210,295 with \$121,330 coming from Wednesday's check.

Big Invasion returned \$3, \$2.40 and \$2.40. B D Valeski, ridden by **James Graham**, returned \$13.80 and \$7.20 with Run Curtis Run finishing third under **Ricardo Santana Jr.** and paying \$5.20 to show.

Candy Landing was fourth and followed in order by **Sooley**, **Lucci** and **Millennial Moon (GB)**.

In the St. Matthews, **Top Gunner** surged past longtime leader **Quick Tempo** at the three-sixteenths pole and held off a bid from favored **Tulane Tryst** to win by 2 lengths.

Trained by **John Ortiz** and ridden by **Rey Gutierrez** for his third winner of the afternoon, Top Gunner completed the six furlongs on a fast main track in 1:08.88.

Quick Tempo was quickest out of the gate and led the field of six through an opening quarter-mile in :21.56 with Top Gunner tracking in second.

On the far turn, Top Gunner began to close in and drew on even terms at the head of the stretch before pushing past shortly thereafter.

Top Gunner is a 5-year-old Kentucky-bred son of **Into Mischief** out of the **Pioneerof the Nile** mare **Downton My Lady**. The victory was worth \$97,311 and improved his career earnings to \$344,993 with a record of 15-5-3-3.

Top Gunner returned \$12.60, \$4.60 and \$3. Tulane Tryst, ridden by Brian Hernandez Jr., returned \$2.80 and \$2.20 with Quick Tempo holding third under Luis Saez and paying \$3.60 to show.

Bango finished fourth and was followed in order by **Manny Wah** and **Tiger Dad**.

Racing continues on Thurby with an 11-race program that begins at 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern) and features three stakes.

WILLIAM WALKER QUOTES

Joel Rosario (Jockey, Big Invasion, winner) – "I was in tight on the turn, but he got out and then he finished really well. He's a nice horse. I think he'd probably be good running farther, too."

Dean Reeves (Owner, Big Invasion, winner) – "He's really coming on. He looked very focused today and I was really happy with the way he came into the race. (Trainer) Christophe (Clement) had him ready to go. He shipped in well. We feel really good about his run today."

James Graham (Jockey, B D Valeski, runner-up) – “I had to check just a little bit around the turn. I knew with him you just have to sit as long as possible and make one run. He ran a great race. He’s still not quite there mentally but is going to be a really fun horse down the road.”

ST. MATTHEWS QUOTES

Rey Gutierrez (Jockey, Top Gunner, winner) – “We got out to a good break, and I knew [Quick Tempo] had early speed, especially from handicapping jockeys. Really who is stronger on the front end in this country than Luis Saez — a horse that has a little bit of speed with him has more speed. Also, I wanted to keep [Top Gunner] wide with the way the rail has seemed today — I didn't want to get sunk in there.”

John Ortiz (Trainer, Top Gunner, winner) – “I told the rider, get to the front with him at some point in the race. He’s the kind of horse that wants to be in the race. He runs better that way. We claimed him for \$30,000 last year and we had to learn what he was about. I don’t train all my horses the same; I’ve got to learn what each one is about. I’ve been working with this one and I think I’ve got him figured out. He’s running good now.”

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