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ANNAPOLIS RETURNS WITH VICTORY IN OPENING VERSE; YOUALMOSTHADME CRUISES IN KENTUCKY JUVENILE; BANGO CAPTURES ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES

LOUISVILLE, KY (Thursday, May 4, 2023) – Bass Racing's Annapolis wore down **Churchtown** in deep stretch to win the 18th running of the \$300,000 Opening Verse (Listed) for 4-year-olds and up by a head Thursday afternoon at Churchill Downs before a record Thurby crowd of 50,958.

Earlier in the Thursday program, **Youalmosthadme** won the 29th running of the \$200,000 Kentucky Juvenile for 2-year-olds and **Bango** took the second running of the \$175,000 St. Matthews Overnight Stakes for 4-year-olds and up.

Trained by **Todd Pletcher** and ridden by **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, Annapolis completed the mile on a firm Matt Winn Turf Course in 1:35.73.

Get Smokin led the field through uncontested fractions of :24.29 and :49.33 as Annapolis received a ground-saving trip in fifth.

On the far turn, Churchtown went after Get Smokin while Annapolis split horses to move into third. Get Smokin maintained the lead until midstretch when Churchtown and Annapolis roared past in tandem with Annapolis drawing clear in the final yards.

In his first start since the November's Breeders' Cup Mile (GI) at Keeneland, Annapolis improved his record to 9-6-2-0 and boosted his earnings to \$1,341,370 with Thursday's \$175,270 check.

Annapolis is a 4-year-old homebred son of War Front out of the Unbridled's Song mare My Miss Sophia.

Annapolis returned \$3.66, \$2.94 and \$2.42. Churchtown, ridden by **Luis Saez**, returned \$5.28 and \$3.38 and finished 2 lengths in front of **Set Piece (GB)**, who paid \$2.76 to show under **Florent Geroux**.

It was another head back to **English Bee** with **Stitched**, Get Smokin, **Kentucky Ghost**, **Time to Party**, **Gray's Fable**, **Camp Hope** and **Native Thunder** following in order.

In the Kentucky Juvenile, **Qatar Racing**, **Swinback Stables**, **Steve Adkisson** and **Black Type Thoroughbreds'** Youalmosthadme grabbed the lead out of the gate and cruised to an 8 ³/₄-length victory.

Trained by **Brad Cox** and ridden by **Tyler Gaffalione**, Youalmosthadme covered the five furlongs over a fast track in :57.49.

A debut winner by 8 ¹/₂ lengths at Keeneland on April 19, Youalmosthadme dismissed a bid from Tranche on the far turn and ran unopposed to the finish.

Youalmosthadme is a Kentucky-bred daughter of Oxbow out of the Good and Tough mare Good Gator. Now undefeated in two starts, Youalmosthadme increased her bankroll to \$170,000 with Thursday's \$123,500 check.

Youalmosthadme returned \$2.54, \$2.18 and \$2.10. **Lou's Legacy** rallied for second under **Yarmarie Correa** and paid \$3.98 and \$2.66 and finished a length in front of **Tranche**, who paid \$3.20 to show under **Edwin Maldonado**.

Lil Anthony and **Who's Snow Trouble** completed the field in order.

In the St. Matthews, Bango coasted past **Pirate Rick** on the far turn and drew off for a 5-length victory, his 10th at Churchill Downs.

Trained by **Greg Foley** and ridden by Tyler Gaffalione, Bango completed the six furlongs on a fast main track in a stakes-record 1:08.75.

Pirate Rick led the field of seven through an opening quarter-mile in :21.56 with Bango right on his flank. On the far turn, Gaffalione moved on the leader and hit the top of the stretch in the clear.

Bango shook off a challenge from **Surveillance** in the upper stretch and drew off.

With the victory, Bango added \$105,836 to his career bankroll and earned millionaire status at \$1,093,551 with a record of 30-12-3-2.

Bango is a 6-year-old Kentucky-bred son of Congrats out of the Smart Strike mare Josaka.

Bango returned \$6.56, \$3.88 and \$2.56 as the favorite. **Miles Ahead** rallied to get second under **Joe Talamo**, returning \$4.12 and \$2.72 and finishing three-quarters of a length in front of Surveillance, who paid \$3.26 to show under **James Graham**.

It was another 3 ¹/₄ lengths back to **Bagboss**, who was followed in order by **Heart Rhythm**, **Collaborate** and Pirate Rick.

OPENING VERSE QUOTES

Irad Ortiz Jr., jockey, Annapolis, winner: “He got the job done today. Luis (Saez) was riding, and I was riding, and coming to the wire, he got his head in front. In the Breeders’ Cup Mile (GI), he stumbled at the break, but I kept asking, and he kept trying. And he was facing some very good horses. It’s nice to see him back and in great condition. Hopefully, he’ll have another great year.”

KENTUCKY JUVENILE QUOTES

Tyler Gaffalione, jockey, Youalmosthadme, winner: “It was very exciting to get her second win, especially in a stake on Thurby. Congrats to the owners and the connections. Brad had her ready, so it was really easy. She’s always been a very mature filly. In her first time out (a win at Keeneland), she handled everything great. She did the same thing today. I was a little worried with the crowd, but she handled it fine.”

Brad Cox, trainer, Youalmosthadme, winner: “We’ve only had her in the barn for a little bit, but we were able to gallop her and stand her in the gates. We’ve liked what we’ve seen so far. She ran really well today and we’re excited to learn more. The connections who had her before us did a great job with her.”

Yarmarie Correa, jockey, Lou’s Legacy, runner-up: “It was impossible to catch the winner. My horse kept trying. He never gave up. He’ll need long distance.”

ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES QUOTES

Tyler Gaffalione, jockey, Bango, winner: “Riding a classy old horse like him is just fun. He’s so cool; just totally cool. He’s special, especially here (at Churchill Downs). I love to get up on him. In the paddock he was on the muscle; he bucked me off. I knew then that he was ready. He’s one of my favorite horses of all time.”

Greg Foley, trainer, Bango, winner: “He loves Churchill. That was special. He’s a homebred, which makes it even more special. I raced his mother (Josaka). He has the best owners. Fred and Debbie Schwartz have been with me a long time. They’ve been loyal owners and good to me. I’m so glad they could be here with me today. We’re one away from tying the record for most wins at Churchill and we’ll have some shots to break the record this meet.”