



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)
Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com

CURLY JACK TALLIES 10 POINTS ON ‘ROAD TO DERBY’ WITH IROQUOIS WIN; FAVORITES ECHO AGAIN, DAMON’S MOUND FINISH OFF THE BOARD

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022) – Michael McLoughlin’s **Curly Jack** is the early points leader on the 2023 “Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve” after the Good Magic colt won Saturday’s 41st running of the \$299,250 Iroquois (Grade III) for 2-year-olds by one length over **Honed** at Churchill Downs. **Jace’s Road** was another half-length back in third and betting favorites **Damon’s Mound** and **Echo Again** faltered around two turns to finish sixth and seventh, respectively.

Sent to post at odds of 10-1, the **Tom Amoss**-trained **Curly Jack** ran 1 1/16 miles in 1:45.62 to give jockey **Edgar Morales** his first graded stakes victory.

“It’s very special to win my first graded stakes race for Tom,” Morales said. “He’s done a great job with this horse and I can’t be more thankful to him, his entire staff and the owners for allowing me to ride these really nice horses.”

Curly Jack banked the \$178,920 first prize and 10 points on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” point system that will determine the field for next year’s 149th running of the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on May 6, 2023 at Churchill Downs. The Iroquois was the first in a series of 37 select races on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” and the top five finishing positions earned points on a sliding scale of 10-4-3-2-1, respectively.

“I thought going into this race it was a really good field,” Amoss said. “I was able to watch **Echo Again** this summer at Saratoga and he was very impressive when he won up there. I have a ton of respect for **Michelle Lovell**’s horse (**Damon’s Mound**). I thought maybe going two turns is going to help our chances.”

Damon’s Mound, the Saratoga Special (GIII) winner who was 2-1 second betting choice, emerged as the early leader from post 3 after hesitating at the start of the two-turn affair. He led the field of nine colts down the stretch through a first quarter mile in :23.53 and the half in :47.48 as impressive Saratoga maiden debut winner **Echo Again**, the odds-on 3-5 favorite for Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen**, tracked wide in second.

Entering the far turn, **Damon’s Mound** and **Echo Again** kicked clear from the chasing **Jace’s Road**, **Confidence Game** and **Hayes Strike** with **Curly Jack** just behind. After six furlongs in 1:11.66, **Echo Again** briefly took over from **Damon’s Mound** at the top of the stretch but it was apparent that the two leaders were weary and had nothing left for the final quarter mile. **Curly Jack** tipped out wide, grabbed the lead with a furlong to run and held off 54-1 **Honed**, who closed from last for second-place honors.

“It was a great ride by Edgar Morales,” Amoss said. “I think he is, now was, the best kept secret in the jocks room. The secret is going to be out with him. He really rode him great. I’m super proud of my horse. The owner Michael McLaughlin is at the Notre Dame game this afternoon but I know he’s watching. I don’t have an issue with running horses off a layoff so it won’t be a big deal going straight to the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile. We’ll see how he comes out of things and make a decision in the coming days.”

Curly Jack paid \$23.66, \$8.48 and \$4.88. **Honed**, under **Julien Leparoux**, returned \$31.08 and \$12.72. **Jace’s Road**, a half-length back of the runner-up with **Florent Geroux** up, paid \$3.74.

Hayes Strike was another four lengths back in fourth and was followed by **Confidence Game**, **Damon’s Mound**, **Echo Again**, **Jin Tong** and **Zaici**.

This was the fourth career start for **Curly Jack**, who broke his maiden at first asking at Churchill Downs in June and then finished fifth in the Sanford (GIII) and a close second in the Ellis Park Juvenile. His career earnings now total \$280,180.

“In the Ellis Park Juvenile he showed me he can relax well off of horses and come with one run,” Morales said. “We were able to do that today. He handled the extra distance well and when I was able to get him outside he showed his best run.”

A \$180,000 yearling purchase at the 2021 Keeneland September Sale, **Curly Jack** was bred in Kentucky and the son of Good Magic is out of the Roman Ruler mare **Connie** and **Michael**.

IROQUOIS QUOTES

Edgar Morales, (jockey, Curly Jack, winner) – “In the Ellis Park Juvenile he showed me he can relax well off of horses and come with one run. We were able to do that today. He handled the extra distance well and when I was able to get him outside he showed his best run. It’s very special to win my first graded stakes race for (trainer) Tom (Amoss). He’s done a great job with this horse and I can’t be more thankful to him, his entire staff and the owners for allowing me to ride these really nice horses.”

Tom Amoss, (trainer, Curly Jack, winner) – “I thought going into this race it was a really good field. I was able to watch Echo Again this summer at Saratoga and he was very impressive when he won up there. I have a ton of respect for Michelle Lovell’s horse (Damon’s Mound). I thought maybe going two turns is going to help our chances. It was a great ride by Edgar Morales. I think he is, now was, the best kept secret in the jocks room. The secret is going to be out with him. He really rode him great. I’m super proud of my horse. The owner Michael McLaughlin is at the Notre Dame game this afternoon but I know he’s watching. I don’t have an issue with running horses off a layoff so it won’t be a big deal going straight to the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI). We’ll see how he comes out of things and make a decision in the coming days.”

Julien Leparoux, (jockey, Honed, runner-up) – “He was a little quirky going into the first turn but once I got him to settle he really came with a nice run. I thought we had a big shot in the stretch but we’ll get them next time.”

Florent Geroux, (jockey, Jace’s Road, third) – “I saw the speed duel developing in front of me so I wanted to take my horse back from the leaders so he didn’t get too aggressive too early. On the backside I got him in a better spot and the leaders sort of got away from me around the turn. When I tipped him out in the stretch he came running again. It was his first time going two turns so I think this race is going to be really key for him moving forward with his fitness. He’s still young and learning.”

Michelle Lovell, (trainer, Damon’s Mound, sixth) – “I wasn’t expecting him to be on the lead but (jockey) Gabe (Saez) said he was pretty aggressive out of the gate. We were drawn inside so he didn’t have many options where to go. We’ll regroup from here. He’s a big horse so I think fitness wise he’ll get a lot out of this race.”

FUN AND FEISTY POWERS HOME TO WIN GRADE III, \$300,000 POCAHONTAS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022) – Fun and Feisty, owned by Michael Mackin’s Lucky Seven Stable of Louisville, displayed a powerful late kick down the stretch and comfortably won Saturday’s 54th running of the \$300,000 Pocahontas (Grade III) for 2-year-old fillies by 3 ½ lengths over Shoplifter at Churchill Downs.

Fun and Feisty ran 1 1/16 miles in 1:45.86 to give jockey **Julien Leparoux** and trainer **Kenny McPeck** their third wins in the race.

Fun and Feisty, a Kentucky-bred daughter of Midshipman out of the First Samurai mare Grouse Grind, banked \$174,735 for the win. She also is the early points-leader on the “Road to the Kentucky Oaks” after collecting 10 points. The Pocahontas was the first of 32 qualifying races to the Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to be run next May, and points were awarded to the Top 5 finishers on a 10-4-3-2-1 scale.

“She’s trained like a good horse all along and acts like a good one at the barn,” McPeck said. “When she won going three-quarters of a mile I told the Mackins that we are going to have some fun with her and this was just the start. She’s going to stretch out and go longer. She’s good minded, sound and healthy. I think you’ll see her around here for a couple of seasons. The (Oct. 7) Alcibiades (GI) will be the next spot for her at Keeneland.”

Breaking from post 10 in the field of a dozen 2-year-old fillies, Fun and Feisty settled far off the pace set by even-money favorite **Grand Love**, a fast debut winner at Saratoga who rattled off fractions of :23.74, :48.07 and 1:12.76. Fun and Feisty launched her wide rally around the far turn, sustained her charge outside of foes to bid for the lead at the final furlong and readily drew away thereafter.

“She relaxed from off the pace but she was running at a comfortable pace,” Leparoux said. “She started making up ground without me even asking her around the turn and when I finally asked her she had more left in the tank. She handled the extra distance very well and I don’t think we got to the bottom of her either.”

Fun and Feisty (4-2-1-0—\$257,311) paid \$14.46, \$6.50 and \$3.74 as the 6-1 third betting choice. Shoplifter, who got up for second under **Rafael Bejarano**, returned \$14.02 and \$6.64 at odds of 14-1. Grand Love, with **Joel Rosario** up, was another 1 ¾ lengths back in third and paid \$2.94 to show.

Boss Lady Bailey, Friendlypersuasion, Jet Setting, Southlawn, Outofnothingatall, Need Some Money, Kiss Me On Oconee, Justa Warrior and Naughty Gal completed the order of finish.

The winner was bred by **J. Stephen McDonald**.

Leparoux previously won the Pocahontas aboard **Pure Clan** (2007) and **Dancinginherdreams** (2010). McPeck's prior Pocahontas triumphs came in 2015-16 with **Dothraki Queen** and **Daddys Lil Darling**, respectively.

POCAHONTAS QUOTES

Julien Leparoux, (jockey, Fun and Feisty, winner) – “She relaxed from off the pace but she was running at a comfortable pace. She started making up ground without me even asking her around the turn and when I finally asked her she had more left in the tank. She handled the extra distance very well and I don't think we got to the bottom of her either.”

Kenny McPeck, (trainer, Fun and Feisty, winner) – “She's trained like a good horse all along and acts like a good one at the barn. When she won going three-quarters of a mile I told the Mackins that we are going to have some fun with her and this was just the start. She's going to stretch out and go longer. She's good minded, sound and healthy. I think you'll see her around here for a couple of seasons. The (Oct. 7) Alcibiades (GI) will be the next spot for her at Keeneland.”

Rafael Bejarano, (jockey, Shoplifter, runner-up) – “The entire way around the racetrack she was relaxing nicely. I think that's why she was able to fight so hard in the stretch when I asked her for her best run. I'm really proud of her. In deep stretch the horses on the lead were tiring and I had to take her down to the inside but she kept running.”

PLAYED HARD GIVES RIGNEY, BAUER FIRST CHURCHILL DOWNS STAKES WINS WITH TRIUMPH IN GRADE III, \$393,000 LOCUST GROVE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022) – **Played Hard** grabbed the lead from pacesetter **Crazy Beautiful** midway around the final turn and kicked home for a comfortable 5 ¾-length win over that rival in Saturday's 38th running of the \$393,000 Locust Grove (Grade III) for fillies and mares to give owner **Richard Rigney** and trainer **Phil Bauer** their first career stakes wins at Churchill Downs.

Ridden by **Joel Rosario**, **Played Hard** sat just behind **Crazy Beautiful**, who led the compact field of five distaffers through comfortable early fractions of :24.16, :48.27 and 1:12.46. Rosario asked **Play Hard** to challenge for the lead while leaving the turn and **Li'l Tootsie** followed suit from the outside. **Played Hard** kicked away from the field in upper stretch as **Li'l Tootsie** attempted to keep up and **Crazy Beautiful** was able to sustain her run and re-rallied for the place honors.

“I can't really put into words how special this win is for our entire team,” Bauer said. “It's so special to have my family here, (owner) Richard (Rigney) and his wife (**Tammy**) here as well. This is our home track and it's my first graded stakes win here. This horse is getting really good at the right time. We'll see how she comes out of things in the morning and we'll leave it up to Richard to see where she takes us next.”

Played Hard's clocking for 1 1/16 miles over a fast track was 1:43.50.

“I just let her settle out of the gate,” Rosario said. “I was confident in her most of the way around there with how well she was travelling. When I asked her to go she just really responded like I thought she would. This was the first time I've been on her but I saw her form and looked at some of her previous races. It looked like she was coming into this race in really good form and showed it.”

Played Hard, a 4-year-old Kentucky-bred daughter of Into Mischief out of the Tiznow mare **Well Lived**, returned \$6.24, \$2.80 and \$2.24 as the 2-1 second betting choice. **Crazy Beautiful**, ridden by **Julien Leparoux**, returned \$3.34 and \$2.18 with **Li'l Tootsie** another 1 ½ lengths back in third under **Edgar Morales** and paying \$3.08 to show.

Comebacker **Gold Spirit (CHI)** was fourth and 9-5 favorite **Envoutante** was fifth. **Princess of Cairo** was scratched.

The victory was worth \$246,000 to **Played Hard** and increased her earnings to \$612,870 with a record of 4-5-1 from 12 starts. This was her first stakes win.

The Locust Grove is named after the 1790 Georgian mansion in Louisville that played home to ancestors of Churchill Downs founder **Col. M. Lewis Clark**.

LOCUST GROVE QUOTES

Joel Rosario, (jockey, Played Hard, winner) – “I just let her settle out of the gate. I was confident in her most of the way around there with how well she was travelling. When I asked her to go she just really responded like I thought she would. This was the first time I’ve been on her but I saw her form and looked at some of her previous races. It looked like she was coming into this race in really good form and showed it.”

Phil Bauer, (trainer, Played Hard, winner) – “I can’t really put into words how special this win is for our entire team. It’s so special to have my family here, (owner) Richard (Rigney) and his wife (Tammy) here as well. This is our home track and it’s my first graded stakes win here. This horse is getting really good at the right time. We’ll see how she comes out of things in the morning and we’ll leave it up to Richard to see where she takes us next.”

Julien Leparoux, (jockey, Crazy Beautiful, runner-up) – “She was second best today. We traveled pretty comfortably on the lead but the winner was best today.”

Edgar Morales, (jockey, Li’l Tootsie, third) – “We were a little wide into the first turn but sat in a good spot. It may have been a little bit too far for her.”

BELL’S THE ONE BECOMES MULTI-MILLIONAIRE WITH OPEN MIND VICTORY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022) – Lothenbach Stables Inc.’s **Bell’s the One** collared pacesetter **Joyful Cadence** and longtime rival **Sconsin** in deep stretch to win Saturday’s 13th running of the \$295,000 Open Mind (Listed) at Churchill Downs by one length.

The victory marked Bell’s the One’s 11th career stakes win and sixth overall at Churchill Downs, which is the most by any horse dating back to 1991 (note: statistics prior to 1991 are incomplete). Previously, Bell’s the One prevailed in the \$200,000 Lady Tak at Churchill Downs in August.

Ridden by **Corey Lanerie** for trainer **Neil Pessin**, Bell’s the One ran six furlongs over a fast track in 1:09.43.

As expected, Joyful Cadence dictated the pace in the compact field of three fillies and mares as she dashed down the backstretch through a first quarter mile in :22.17 with Sconsin two lengths back and Bell’s the One another three behind.

Sconsin began to engage the leader on the turn for home and drew even with Joyful Cadence at the top of the stretch as the two clocked a half-mile in :45.16.

Bell’s the One spotted the leaders multiple lengths but began to hit her best stride when she tipped outside in upper stretch. She responded readily at the three-sixteenths pole when she was shaken up by Lanerie, and ranged up to Joyful Cadence and Sconsin in the final furlong with a good kick and relentlessly drove past the duo in the final sixteenth of mile.

“She always gives it her all and I was very confident with her today,” Lanerie said. “It was a short field but we were still able to play into her tactics of running from off the pace. I gave her a few reminders late to keep going but she knew where the wire was and got the job done.”

Bell’s the One banked the \$205,000 first prize and improved her record to 13 wins, five seconds and a trio of thirds in 27 starts. Her career earnings total \$2,000,675.

She is now 6-for-12 at Churchill Downs and 9-of-10 at the six-furlong distance.

“Originally I wasn’t planning on running in this spot but (Bell’s the One) told me she needed to run,” Pessin said. “So, we ran. She’s run well wherever she goes but always likes to run here at Churchill. If she tells me she wants to run in three weeks, we’ll go to the (Oct. 8) Thoroughbred Club of America (GII) at Keeneland and if she’s ready to run after that, we’ll look at the Breeders’ Cup.”

Bell’s the One returned \$3.08 to win. There was no place or show betting after the field was reduced to three following the scratches of **Cheetara (CHI)** and **Club Car**. Joyful Cadence finished three-quarters of a length of Sconsin for the runner-up honors.

Bell’s the One is a 6-year-old daughter of Majesticperfection out of the Street Cry (IRE) mare Street Mate and was bred in Kentucky by **Bret Jones**.

With six Churchill Downs’ stakes wins since 1991, Bell’s the One separated herself from five-time winners **Limousine Liberal**, **Mr. Misunderstood** and **Wise Dan**.

Saturday’s race saluted the late **Eugene Klein**’s Hall of Fame filly **Open Mind**, the **D. Wayne Lukas**-trained winner of the 1988 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) at Churchill Downs who returned to the Louisville track the following spring to win the Kentucky Oaks. The New Jersey-bred filly was an Eclipse Award champion at ages two and three. A winner of 12 races and \$1,844,372 in 19 starts, the daughter of Deputy Minister was enshrined in Racing’s Hall of Fame in 2011.

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OPEN MIND QUOTES

Corey Lanerie, (jockey, Bell's the One, winner) – “She always gives it her all and I was very confident with her today. It was a short field but we were still able to play into her tactics of running from off the pace. I gave her a few reminders late to keep going but she knew where the wire was and got the job done.”

Neil Pessin, (trainer, Bell's the One, winner) – “Originally I wasn't planning on running in this spot but (Bell's the One) told me she needed to run. So, we ran. She's run well wherever she goes but always likes to run here at Churchill. If she tells me she wants to run in three weeks, we'll go to the (Oct. 8) Thoroughbred Club of America (GII) at Keeneland and if she's ready to run after that, we'll look at the Breeders' Cup.”

John Ortiz, (trainer, Joyful Cadence, runner-up) – “She tried so hard and ran a really good effort for just a three-horse field. She got away with an easy lead and was pressured around the turn and still dug in at the end.”

Tyler Gaffalione, (jockey, Sconsin, third) – “We had a good trip but she just didn't quite have enough punch to finish things today.”

MILES AHEAD FINISHES INCHES IN FRONT OF ISOLATE, NECKER ISLAND IN \$265,000 LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022) – Jay Em Ess Stable's **Miles Ahead** finished inches in front of pacesetter **Isolate** and closer **Necker Island** to prevail in a three-horse photo for the win in Saturday's second running of the \$265,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society at Churchill Downs.

Miles Ahead ran six furlongs in 1:09.02 under jockey **Martin Garcia**, who piloted the winner for trainer **Paul McGee** and owner **Samantha Siegel**.

Isolate was a tough-luck runner-up as he made all of the running early on. He led the field of eight older horses through fast fractions of :21.34 and :44.15 as Miles Ahead tracked from fourth and relaxed from sixth.

Miles Ahead was urged throughout but was able to sustain his grinding charge. After attempting a bid along the inside, he altered his course to the outside of Isolate as they approached the sixteenth pole and surged in the final yards to prevail in a tight three-way head bob.

“The more I asked of him late the more he found,” Garcia said. “The race set up really well for us and in deep stretch (Isolate) kind of came in front of us but I was able to draw alongside and he dug in to hold him off.”

Miles Ahead won for the 12th time in 25 starts and the \$165,315 payday jumped the Kentucky-bred's career earnings to \$644,503. It was his third career stakes win and first outside of Gulfstream Park. A year ago, he won the Smile Sprint (GIII). In February, he defeated **Drain the Clock** by a neck to win the \$150,000 Gulfstream Park Sprint. Previously, Miles Ahead finished a hard-luck second in the July 2 Kelly's Landing at Churchill Downs.

“We gave him a break after the Kelly's Landing and aimed for this spot all summer,” McGee said. “He was training well coming into this race and fired a big effort off the break.”

Miles Ahead paid \$7.46, \$3.52 and \$2.84 as the 5-2 third betting choice. Isolate, the 8-5 favorite ridden by **Joel Rosario**, returned \$3.20 and \$2.52. Necker Island, with **Francisco Arrieta** in the saddle at 5-2, paid \$2.40.

After the three noses, it was another 1 ³/₄ lengths back to **Manny Wah** in fourth, who was followed by **Top Gunner**, **Baytown Bear**, **Robo Man** and **A C Expressway**.

The race is named for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society, which opened for regular hours of operation in March 2021. The **Louisville Thoroughbred Society** is Louisville's only on-site wagering by Churchill Downs in the heart of Louisville's metropolitan scene. The premier club for Thoroughbred enthusiasts is open for private membership applications, and reservations for special events are being accepted. For more information, visit www.thelouisvillethoroughbredsociety.com.

LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY QUOTES

Martin Garcia, (jockey, Miles Ahead, winner) – “The more I asked of him late the more he found. The race set up really well for us and in deep stretch (Isolate) kind of came in front of us but I was able to draw alongside and he dug in to hold him off.”

Paul McGee, (trainer, Miles Ahead, winner) – “We gave him a break after the Kelly’s Landing and aimed for this spot all summer. He was training well coming into this race and fired a big effort off the break.”

Joel Rosario, (jockey, Isolate, runner-up) – “We got some pressure down the backside and that hurt his chances to have enough energy left in deep stretch.”

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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