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CLAPTON LOOKS WONDERFUL TODAY IN GRADE II LUKAS CLASSIC; FLIES DOWN STRETCH TO EDGE TRADEMARK BY A HEAD

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023) – A fast early pace helped set up the closing kick of **Clapton**, who flew down the Churchill Downs stretch to narrowly edge **Trademark** by a head at the wire and win Saturday's 10th running of the \$438,660 Lukas Classic (Grade II) for 3-year-olds and up.

Clapton, ridden by **Cristian Torres** and trained by **Chad Summers**, stopped the teletimer in 1:48.79. Summers won the Lukas Classic five years ago with the popular New York-bred **Mind Your Biscuits**.

"There were three races this weekend we could've ran in: the Woodward in New York, the Awesome Again in California and here in the Lukas Classic," Summers said. "I tried to handicap them and see what race would fit this horse best. I figured there would be the most speed in this race. That benefitted our running style."

A recent private purchase by **Sheikh Rashid Bin Humaid al Nuaimi's RRR Racing**, Clapton was sent to the post as the 8-1 fourth betting choice in the field of eight. In the early stages of the nine-furlong race, he had one horse beat as **Five Star General** and a tracking **Americanrevolution** rattled off swift early fractions of :23.12, :46.66 and 1:10.83. Clapton tipped out six-wide at the top of the stretch and began to close into Trademark, who took over from the tired frontrunners with three-sixteenths of a mile to run. Clapton finally caught Trademark in the final jump.

"I was very happy with the way he was traveling," said Torres, who won three races Saturday at Churchill Downs. "Around the half-mile pole I could tell I had a lot of horse beneath me. I tipped him outside at the quarter-pole and he kept coming with his run. It's been a great day and a great meet here at Churchill. Winning these big races is a great feeling."

Overall, Clapton has won six of 24 starts with four seconds and six thirds. The \$240,560 first prize boosted his career earnings to \$823,450.

This was Clapton's second stakes win this year. In April, he prevailed in the \$150,000 Ghostzapper (GIII) over 1 1/16 miles at Gulfstream Park. He finished fourth in his previous start, the \$1 million Jockey Club Gold Cup (GI) at Saratoga on Sept. 2.

His next target will be discussed by Summers and the owner.

"I'm so grateful to the owner for allowing me the opportunity to train this horse," Summers said. "The goal is getting to the Dubai World Cup. If that means taking us to the Breeders' Cup that would be great. But, the goal is getting him over to Dubai in March."

Clapton returned \$18.32, \$6.90 and \$5.34. Trademark, ridden by **Martin Garcia**, paid \$8.72 and \$6.14 as the 7-1 third betting choice. It was another three-quarters of a length back to **Blue Devil** in third under **Ricardo Santana Jr.** who paid \$7.08 to show.

Rattle N Roll, the 6-5 favorite, was fourth and was followed by **Happy American**, **Americanrevolution**, **Whelen Springs** and **Five Star General**. **Warrant** was scratched.

Clapton, a chestnut son of Brethren out of the Afleet Alex mare Alexandra Rylee, was bred in Florida by **Arindel**.

The Lukas Classic honors the iconic 88-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs' Barn 44 since 1989.

LUKAS CLASSIC QUOTES

Cristian Torres (jockey, Clapton, winner): "I was very happy with the way he was traveling. Around the half-mile pole I could tell I had a lot of horse beneath me. I tipped him outside at the quarter-pole and he kept coming with his run. It's been a great day and a great meet here at Churchill. Winning these big races is a great feeling."

Chad Summers (trainer, Clapton, winner): "There were three races this weekend we could've ran in: the Woodward in New York, the Awesome Again in California and here in the Lukas Classic. I tried to handicap them and see what race would fit this horse best. I figured there would be the most speed in this race. That benefitted our running style. I'm so grateful to the owner for allowing me the opportunity to train this horse. The goal is getting to the Dubai World Cup. If that means taking us to the Breeders' Cup that would be great. But, the goal is getting him over to Dubai in March."

Martin Garcia (jockey, Trademark, runner-up): “He ran his heart out. He tried to go with Clapton. He settled and ran so hard down the lane.”

Jeff Hiles (trainer, Blue Devil, third): “He ran a great race. I thought at the head of the stretch he could win. He made a big run and we’re really proud of him”

ZOZOS LEADS ALL THE WAY IN GRADE III, \$400,000 ACK ACK

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023) – Barry and Joni Butzow’s homebred **Zozos** set a measured early pace and had plenty left down the stretch to turn back late runs from **Stage Raider** and **Three Technique** and win Saturday’s 31st renewal of the \$400,000 Ack Ack (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by one length.

Zozos, a 4-year-old son of Munnings, ran one mile on a fast track in 1:35.32.

Florent Geroux rode the winner for trainer **Brad Cox**, who won the race for the second time in three years. **Plainsman** was victorious for Cox in 2021.

The Ack Ack is a Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In” event for the \$1 million Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile (GI). By winning the race, Zozos will receive an entry-fee berth to the Nov. 4 race at Santa Anita along with a travel stipend.

Even though Zozos is guaranteed a berth in the Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile, a trip to California is not definite.

“I think he’s now a really good one-turn horse,” Cox said. “We’ll see who’s going where in the Breeders’ Cup and make a decision on his next start soon. I don’t know what we’d do if we don’t go to the Breeders’ Cup but we’ll let this horse tell us what’s next. It’s a lot to ask of any horse to make the trip from Kentucky to California against some of the best horses in the world.”

Seven of the last 10 Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013), **Tapiture** (2015), **Tom’s Ready** (2016), **Awesome Slew** (2017), **Seeking the Soul** (2018), **Mr. Money** (2020) and **Senor Buscador** (2022) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile.

Breaking from post 5 in the field of seven older horses, Zozos went straight to the front and was able to set comfortable early fractions of :23.69, :47.10 and 1:11.41 despite being tracked early by **Caddo River**. Stage Raider chased from third along the inside and Three Technique was positioned near the rear.

Zozos kicked away from Caddo River at the head of the stretch as Stage Raider tipped out and Three Technique swung five-wide for their late runs, but Zozos had plenty of energy left to withstand their threats.

“He relaxed well on the front end and we were able to not go too fast early,” Geroux said. “I think he’s a different horse going around one-turn like he did today.”

The first prize was \$242,280 and hiked Zozos’ bankroll to \$882,688 with a record of 7-1-0 from 11 starts. It was his third career stakes win but first against graded stakes company.

Zozos qualified to the 2022 Kentucky Derby where he finished 10th after running second in the Louisiana Derby (GII). Earlier this year, he won the \$175,000 Knicks Go and \$275,000 Hanshin at Ellis Park – both at one mile.

Zozos paid \$3.54, \$2.66 and \$2.22 as the odds-on 3-5 favorite. Stage Raider, the half-brother to 2018 Triple Crown winner **Justify** ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, paid \$5.12 and \$3.18. Three Technique was another length back in third under **Rafael Bejarano** and paid \$2.76 to show.

O Besos was fourth and was followed by Caddo River, **Seize the Night** and **Skyro**.

Zozos, out of the Forestry mare Papa’s Forest, was bred in Kentucky by his owners.

The race is named in honor of **Cain Hoy Stable’s** 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who is enshrined in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. In his only Churchill Downs appearance, Ack Ack won the 1969 Derby Trial in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

ACK ACK QUOTES

Florent Geroux (jockey, Zozos, winner): “He relaxed well on the front end and we were able to not go too fast early. I think he’s a different horse going around one-turn like he did today.”

Brad Cox (trainer, Zozos, winner): “I didn’t think he would get away with that easy of an early lead. I thought Florent did a good job to not let Caddo River get too close on his outside. He’s run well this year and trained well out of his last race at Monmouth. I think he’s now a really good one-turn horse. We’ll see who’s going where in the Breeders’ Cup and make a decision on his next start soon. I don’t know what we’d do if we don’t go to the Breeders’ Cup but we’ll let this horse tell us what’s next. It’s a lot to ask of any horse to make the trip from Kentucky to California against some of the best horses in the world.”

Cherie DeVaux (trainer, Stage Raider, runner-up): “It’s exciting for the owner. He’s improved a lot in his last two starts. Zozos is an accomplished horse but I think he ran a really credible race against him.”

MORE THAN LOOKS RALLIES FROM BEHIND FOR \$200,000 JEFFERSON CUP TRIUMPH

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023) – More Than Looks displayed an impressive closing kick to rally from the back and easily win Saturday’s 43rd running of the \$200,000 Jefferson Cup for 3-year-olds at Churchill Downs by 2 ¾ lengths over **Smokey Mandate**.

Ridden by **Cristian Torres** and trained by **Cherie DeVaux**, More Than Looks had one horse beat in the early stages of the two-turn turf race as **Gaslight Dancer** dictated the pace and led the field of nine through early fractions of :23.77, :47.73 and 1:12.08. As the field left the final turn, More Than Looks still had one horse beat when he was asked for his best run and responded willingly with an impressive run down the center of the stretch to collar Smokey Mandate inside the final sixteenth of a mile.

“He settled well from just off the pace and closed strongly down the lane,” Torres said. “The pace wasn’t too fast but he handled it well and I’m proud of how he ran today.”

More Than Looks clocked one mile on the “firm” Matt Winn Turf Course in 1:36.55 and won for the fourth time in seven career starts for owner **Anthony Bartolo’s Victory Racing Partners**.

The \$119,280 winner’s share jumped the More Than Ready colt’s earnings to \$453,215. Previously, More Than Looks finished third in the \$500,000 Hall of Fame (GII) on Aug. 11 at Saratoga after winning the \$250,000 Manilla (GIII) at Belmont Park in June.

“I thought there would be a little more pace in the race when looking at it on paper,” DeVaux said. “The race ended up unfolding OK and he was able to close well. This was one of the first times he really put his head down and ran through the wire. Sometimes he got a little green and would hang a little bit once he got in front. I’m thrilled for all of the partners involved with this horse.”

More Than Looks paid \$5.26, \$3.12 and \$2.54 as the 8-5 favorite. Smokey Mandate, ridden by **James Graham**, paid \$5.90 and \$4.80. **Worthington** was another 3 ½ lengths back in third under **Julien Leparoux** and paid \$7.64 to show.

Ocean Pointe was fourth and was followed by **Noises Off**, **Ocean Vision (GB)**, **Gaslight Dancer**, **Tiverton (GB)** and **Midnight West**. **Desert Duke** and **Endpoint** were scratched.

Out of the Harlan’s Holiday mare Ladies’ Privilege, More Than Looks was bred in Kentucky by **Hinkle Farms**.

DeVaux said More Than Looks would likely be aimed at the \$300,000 Bryan Station (GIII) at Keeneland on Oct. 28 for his next start and a possible follow-up run in the \$300,000 Hollywood Derby (GI) at Del Mar on Dec. 2.

The Jefferson Cup, which returned to the stakes schedule following a three-year hiatus, is named in honor of Jefferson County, the most populous county in Kentucky which Churchill Downs resides.

JEFFERSON CUP QUOTES

Cristian Torres (jockey, More Than Looks, winner): “He settled well from just off the pace and closed strongly down the lane. The pace wasn’t too fast but he handled it well and I’m proud of how he ran today.”

Cherie DeVaux (trainer, More Than Looks, winner): “I thought there would be a little more pace in the race when looking at it on paper. The race ended up unfolding OK and he was able to close well. This was one of the first times he really put his head down and ran through the wire. Sometimes he got a little green and would hang a little bit once he got in front. I’m thrilled for all of the partners involved with this horse.”

James Graham (jockey, Smokey Mandate, runner-up): “He ran his heart out but ended up being second best.”

MANDATORY CLOSING PAYOUT OF \$150,260 DERBY CITY 6 ON SUNDAY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023) – A Derby City 6 carryover pool of \$150,260 awaits bettors Sunday for closing day of Churchill Downs' 14-day September Meet.

Because Sunday is closing day, there is a mandatory Derby City 6 payout with all monies distributed to ticket holders with the most winners in the six-race series. Sunday's Derby City 6, which only costs 20 cents per combination, is scheduled to cover Races 5-10 starting at approximately 2:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Takeout on the Derby City 6 is just 15 percent, which is one of the lowest multi-race wager takeout rates in American racing.

Fans can wager on the Derby City 6 on track at Churchill Downs; www.TwinSpires.com, the track's official online wagering platform; other online wagering outlets; and select satellite betting centers throughout North America.

The first of 10 races Sunday is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

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 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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