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FIERCENESS INSTALLED AS 5-2 MORNING LINE FAVORITE FOR 150TH RUNNING OF \$5 MILLION KENTUCKY DERBY (GI) PRESENTED BY WOODFORD RESERVE

LOUISVILLE, KY (Saturday, April 27, 2024) – Repole Stable’s homebred **Fierceness**, dominating winner of the Florida Derby (GI) in his most recent start, has been installed as the 5-2 morning line favorite for the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

The Run for the Roses will highlight a 14-race program that begins at 10:30 a.m. (all times Eastern) and featured nine stakes races worth a combined \$10.75 million. The Kentucky Derby, which will reward the winner with \$3.1 million, is the 12th race of the day with a 6:57 p.m. post time.

Trained by two-time Kentucky Derby winner **Todd Pletcher**, Fierceness earned the Eclipse Award as champion 2-year-old in 2023 with a 6 ¼-length victory in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI) at Santa Anita.

Third in his 2024 debut in the Holy Bull (GIII), Fierceness rebounded with a 13 ½-length victory in the Florida Derby. **John Velazquez**, who has been aboard Fierceness for his past three starts, has the mount Saturday from post 17.

Like Pletcher, Velazquez is a multiple Derby winner. Velazquez won on **Animal Kingdom** in 2011 and **Authentic** in 2020 and teamed with Pletcher to win the 2017 running with **Always Dreaming**. Pletcher’s other victory came with **Super Saver** in 2010.

Second choice on the morning line at 3-1 is **Peter Brant, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael Tabor, Derrick Smith, Westerberg** and **Brook Smith’s Sierra Leone**, winner of the Blue Grass Stakes (GI) in his most recent start.

Trained by **Chad Brown**, Sierra Leone is three for four in his career and perfect in 2024 with his debut resulting in a victory in the Risen Star (GII). **Tyler Gaffalione**, who has been aboard for both races this year, has the mount from post 2.

Brown also will saddle **Klaravich Stables’ Domestic Product** (30-1). **Irad Ortiz Jr.** has the mount from post 15.

Third choice on the morning line at 8-1 is **Albaugh Family Stables’** Louisiana Derby (GII) winner **Catching Freedom**. Trained by **Brad Cox**, who saddled 2021 Derby winner **Mandaloun**, Catching Freedom will be ridden by **Flavien Prat** from post 4. Prat won the 2019 Derby on **Country House**.

Cox will have two other entrants in **Qatar Racing, Resolute Racing** and **Marc Detampel’s Just a Touch** (10-1 co-fourth choice) and **Godolphin’s Encino** (20-1).

Just a Touch, runner-up to Sierra Leone in the Blue Grass Stakes, will attempt to give **Florent Geroux** a second Derby victory to go with Mandaloun. Just a Touch will exit post 8.

Encino, winner of the Lexington (GIII) at Keeneland in his most recent start will be ridden by **Axel Concepcion** from post 9.

Also at 10-1 on the morning line is Japanese invader **Forever Young (JPN)**.

Owned by **Susumu Fujita** and trained by **Yoshito Yahagi**, Forever Young is undefeated in five career starts and this year has won the Saudi Derby (GIII) and the UAE Derby (GII).

Ryusei Sakai, who has been aboard Forever Young in all of his starts, will make his Kentucky Derby debut and start from post 11.

In addition to Pletcher and Cox, two other trainers will be trying to boost their victory totals in the Derby.

D. Wayne Lukas, who will send out **BC Stables’ Just Steel** (20-1), has four victories in the Run for the Roses. He first won with **Winning Colors** in 1988, with **Thunder Gulch** (1995), **Grindstone** (1996) and **Charismatic** (1999) following.

Keith Asmussen will make his Derby debut riding Just Steel from post 6.

Bill Mott, who has **Country House’s** 2019 Derby victory on his resume, will saddle **Emily Bushnell and Ric Waldman’s** Wood Memorial (GII) winner **Resilience** (20-1). **Junior Alvarado** has the mount from post 19.

Newly-minted Hall of Famer **Joel Rosario**, who won the 2013 Derby on **Orb**, goes for his second Derby victory on **L and N Racing, Clark Brewster, Jerry Caroom** and **Breeze Easy’s Track Phantom** (20-1).

Trained by **Steve Asmussen**, Track Phantom won the Lecomte (GIII) in January and then was second in the Risen Star to Sierra Leone and fourth in the Louisiana Derby to Catching Freedom. Track Phantom drew post 12.

The field for the Kentucky Derby, will riders and morning line odds from the rail out, is: **Dornoch** (Luis Saez, 20-1), Sierra Leone, Gaffalione, 3-1), **Mystik Dan** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 20-1), Catching Freedom (Prat, 8-1), **Catalytic** (Jose Ortiz, 30-1), Just **Steel** (Asmussen, 20-1), **Honor Marie** (Ben Curtis, 20-1), Just a Touch (Geroux, 10-1), Encino (Concepcion, 20-1), **T O Password (JPN)** (Kazuski Kimura, 30-1), Forever Young (JPN) (Sakai, 10-1), Track Phantom (Rosario, 20-1), **West Saratoga** (Jesus Castanon, 30-1), **Endlessly** (Umberto Rispoli, 30-1), Domestic Product (Ortiz Jr., 30-1), **Grand Mo the First** (Emisael Jaramillo, 50-1), Fierceness (Velasquez, 5-2), **Stronghold** (Antonio Fresu, 20-1), **Resilience** (Junior Alvarado, 20-1), **Society Man** (Frankie Dettori, 50-1). Also-Eligible: **Epic Ride** (Adam Beschizza, 50-1), **Mugatu** (Joe Talamo, 50-1). All starters will carry 126 pounds.

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