

FIERCENESS, THORPEDO ANNA EARLY DERBY, OAKS FAVORITES

LOUISVILLE, KY (Wednesday, May 1, 2024) – Tick tock, tick tock, it's almost Derby o'clock.

Just three days remain until the first Saturday in May and the contenders for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) are completing their final training sessions.

As of Wednesday morning, **Fierceness** was the 3-1 favorite for the Kentucky Derby and **Thorpedo Anna** was the 5-2 favorite for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI)

CATALYTIC – **Tami Bobo, Julie Davies** and **George Isaacs' Catalytic** was back on the track Wednesday at 7:30 a.m., with regular exercise rider **Olaf Hernandez** aboard.

Trainer **Saffie Joseph Jr.** had the Florida Derby (GI) runner-up gallop a mile-and-a-half. Later Wednesday, "He's going to school in the paddock during race two this afternoon," Joseph said. "Tomorrow, he'll gallop again, and maybe school in the paddock, depending on how today goes."

"All is well with him," said Joseph, who will give a leg up to **Jose Ortiz** in the Derby. He'll leave the post 5. "He's been handling everything very well so far."

CATCHING FREEDOM/JUST A TOUCH – It was a lively morning at **Brad Cox's** Barn 22 with several ownership interests from **Catching Freedom** and **Just a Touch** watching their Derby contenders train.

The duo is scheduled to school in the paddock during the races Thursday.

DOMESTIC PRODUCT/SIERRA LEONE -- It was another routine morning for the **Chad Brown**-trained duo of Blue Grass Stakes (GI) winner **Sierra Leone** and **Klaravich Stables' Domestic Product**. Sierra Leone came out at his customary time during the 7:30 a.m. training period, galloping twice around over the Churchill Downs track.

Tampa Bay Derby (GIII) winner Domestic Product put in his training just after 8 a.m., galloping with good energy and even giving Brown an anxious moment when he reared coming off the track.

"The horses look super," Brown said. "(Domestic Product) actually came off on his hind legs and had me a little scared. He seems to conserve his energy so much. He's really coming into the race the right way."

Among the many onlookers at the Brown barn Wednesday morning was **Brook Smith**, whose happy visage has been a constant presence whenever Sierra Leone, whom he co-owns, goes to the track. The Louisville resident has been a popular spokesperson for the son of Gun Runner he owns 16 percent of in partnership with **Peter Brant, Mrs. John**

Magnier, Michael Tabor, Derrick Smith and **Westerberg** as he enjoys his first venture as a Kentucky Derby owner.

Through a business investment with a sports entertainment insurance company in London, England, Smith was able to connect with the principles of Coolmore Stud.

That relationship grew to the point where Smith was asked if he would be willing to partner with the group on a couple of purchases. He was on a plane when the bidding for Sierra Leone was taking place during the 2022 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga Select Yearling Sale and when the final price hammered down at \$2.3 million, the entrepreneur had no idea how massive the dividends would be coming at him.

"I got to know the (Coolmore) folks here in Kentucky and then I went to Ireland and had a lunch and spent a day at the farm there, which was unbelievable," Smith said. "They asked if I wanted to partner with them on some high-end yearlings and I wasn't going to miss that opportunity. They've been incredible, just lots of fun.

"I'm just kind of soaking it in still. I know waking up on Derby Day and heading to the track will be a lot different than it's ever been before. I'm excited. I'm anxious but at the same time I'm more excited because if he runs his race, it's going to be exciting."

Quick with a grin and welcoming word, Smith has had his already ebullient nature cranked into overdrive since Sierra Leone cemented himself among the Derby favorites on the strength of his victory in the Blue Grass Stakes. He is determined to share the moment literally and figuratively as he has pledged 10 percent of the colt's earnings to Churchill Downs' Backside Learning Center with plans to contribute an additional \$100,000 to BLC should Sierra Leone prevail.

"You have horses who are winning and if you just give a small percentage of the purse to the backside, it's that simple," Smith said. "A little bit moves the needle significantly."

Smith has been generous with both his intentions and his time in the lead up to the 150th Kentucky Derby. He admits to being awestruck by the entire experience, one that already ranks among his significant involvements personally and professionally.

"I don't know what's going to happen next week. I guess if (Sierra Leone) gets there, the high will continue," Smith said. "And even if it doesn't, if he runs a big race and doesn't win it's still going to be one of the most memorable things of my life."

DORNOCH/SOCIETY MAN – Fountain of Youth Stakes (GII) winner **Dornoch** and Wood Memorial Stakes (GII) runner-up **Society Man** switched things up Wednesday morning with Dornoch coming out before 6 o'clock to train this time while his stablemate hit the track for a gallop and gate schooling during the 7:30-7:45 training window for Derby and Oaks horses.

"I wanted to school at the gate and I only have one rider so one will train early," trainer **Danny Gargan** said. "Society Man did the gate today and I don't know if I'll take him again tomorrow. He trained really well today at that time and Dornoch looked good. I'm pleased with how my horses are doing. I think I have two super sound horses and they're both training good. Just have to take it day by day."

Gargan has often given Dornoch two walk days leading into some of his races, saying it hones the son of Good Magic's early speed. That may be the plan again heading into Saturday's Kentucky Derby, although Gargan said he is still deciding whether to send the bay colt to the track Thursday.

"Dornoch sometimes walks a couple days going into a race. It makes him sharper out of the gate," Gargan explained. "I don't know exactly what I'm doing with him. He could walk and he could train. I'll think about it tonight. But all the races that he's broke good and come out of the gate on the lead, we've walked him two days into it. So there is a big chance he'll walk. Society Man we want to break and settle, so he'll train every day. He'll train through Friday."

ENDLESSLY – Trainer **Michael McCarthy** will be saddling "his" first Kentucky Derby starter this Saturday in **Amerman Racing's Endlessly**.

But, as the phrase goes, this won't be his first rodeo.

For nearly 10 years, the California native came east to work as the chief assistant to Hall of Famer **Todd Pletcher** and was on board for the barn's extensive run of Kentucky Derby starters. Between 2006 and 2012, McCarthy helped Pletcher saddle no fewer than 19 runners for the Run for the Roses, including the stable's first score in the big one with **Super Saver** in 2010.

In 2014, with a want to be with his wife and young daughter back in California, McCarthy took a huge gamble and stepped away from the Pletcher gravy train to condition two horses of his own on the West Coast.

Through a lot of hard work "and a bit of luck," he now oversees a stable of some 100 horses, including more than a few stakes types, and will have his own Derby runner in Endlessly.

Wednesday morning at Churchill Downs he was trackside at 7:30 to watch his Oscar Performance colt go through a mile and three-eighths gallop with **Walter Davila** in the tack.

"He looks good," a fan offered as the four-time stakes winner cruised by.

"That's him," McCarthy offered back. "If he didn't look good, I'd be worried. But he's looking good."

West Coast rider **Umberto Rispoli** will get a leg up from McCarthy Saturday, then break from post 14 in the 20-horse Derby lineup.

EPIC RIDE – **Welch Racing's Epic Ride** visited the starting gate and then jogged in the mile chute under **Sophie Doyle** for trainer **John Ennis**.

"We will probably do all of our work down there the rest of the week," Ennis said. "He's sharp now and he stood in the gate quiet as a church mouse this morning."

Epic Ride drew into the main body of the race Tuesday when **Encino** was scratched from the Derby. Epic Ride will exit post 20, the same spot **Rich Strike** came out of when he registered his 80-1 shocker two years ago.

Adam Beschizza, who has ridden Epic Ride in all five of his starts, has the mount in Derby 150. It will be the second Derby ride for Beschizza, who piloted **Enforceable** to a seventh-place finish in the 2020 Run for the Roses.

"He will get him to where he is comfortable," Ennis said of coming out of the 20 hole.

Epic Ride is scheduled to school in the paddock this afternoon with horses in the third race.

FIERCENESS – Trainer **Todd Pletcher**, he of the eight Eclipse Awards as the nation's top trainer, the Hall of Fame credentials and the two Kentucky Derby winners, will be saddling Kentucky Derby 150's favorite Saturday in **Repole Stable's Fierceness**.

The man has been down this road before – has he ever.

Fierceness, 2023's 2-year-old champion, will be the record-extending 65th starter for the 56-year-old native of Dallas. Since he saddled his first Derby starters in 2000, the champion trainer has missed only one year (2003) in which he hasn't had a least one starter in the world's most famous horse race.

Twice (2007, 2013) he has started five runners in the field. Four other times (2000, 2015, 2018, 2021) he had four entered. On four additional occasions (2005, 2015, 2017, 2022) he sent out three entrants.

So this year he has only the one possibility in the City of Light colt he'll tack up for a mile and a quarter journey under veteran **John Velazquez**. But it's a very good possibility, as his 5-2 morning line favoritism in the field of 20 tells you.

Wednesday morning Pletcher had Fierceness on the Churchill oval at 7:30 under **Danny Wright** for a mile-and-a-quarter tour of the oval, followed by a jog down to the starting gate in the mile chute where the dark bay youngster practiced entering a version of the 20-hole gate he'll see Saturday. Pletcher was nearby to make sure all went well. It did and a return to Barn 39 followed shortly thereafter.

FOREVER YOUNG (JPN) – **Susumu Fujita's Forever Young (JPN)** walked in the mile chute for 15 minutes and then had a paddock schooling session in which training assistant **Yusaku Oka** was replaced in the saddle for two laps around by trainer **Yoshito Yahagi**.

"I'm very proud to represent Japan at Kentucky Derby 150," Yahagi said. "American horse racing is very tough. I always have so much respect for American horses. My horse had a great morning yesterday for his breeze and I'm very pleased with how he did it. We did many things to prepare for kickback but that's all secret."

Forever Young had worked five furlongs in 1:03 over a “good” track Tuesday morning. He completed his Wednesday morning activity by walking back to the Quarantine Barn.

GRAND MO THE FIRST – Granpollo Stables’ Grand Mo the First spent part of the walking in the grassy area behind Barn 41 and giving fans on their way into the track for Dawn at the Downs a real up-close look at a Kentucky Derby runner.

“No grass at Gulfstream Park (in the barn area),” trainer **Victor Barboza Jr.** said.

Once on the track, exercise rider **Amel Macias** took Grand Mo the First to the starting gate where he stood to the satisfaction of Barboza and then galloped a mile and a half.

Emisael Jaramillo, who has ridden Grand Mo the First in four of his six starts including his two victories, has the Derby mount. Jaramillo is scheduled to arrive in Louisville Friday night after riding at Gulfstream Park.

HONOR MARIE – Ribble Farms, Michael Eiserman, Earl Silver, Kenneth and Dave Fishbein’s Honor Marie galloped 1 ½ miles at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday under regular rider **Maurilio Garcia**.

Jockey **Ben Curtis** was on hand to watch his Derby contender train.

“It’s a fun week being involved with the Kentucky Derby,” Curtis said. “I’m excited to get to Saturday, though.”

This will be the first mount in the Derby for Curtis.

JUST STEEL – About 10 minutes after the track opened at 5:15 a.m., **D. Wayne Lukas** and his distinctive pony were on the scene leading **Just Steel** out for his routine gallop. Lukas stated he has been watching the energy level of the colt since his half-mile breeze in :50.40 on April 28 and has been encouraged by what he has seen since.

“Everything went smooth, he had good energy,” Lukas said. “We’re now in the keep-them-happy stage. And I’m happy.”

At this stage of his illustrious career, Lukas says his biggest satisfaction when it comes to the Derby is being able to bring his clients to Thoroughbred’s biggest stage. The latest success story in that respect is **Brian Coelho**, who co-owns **Just Steel** in partnership with his friend **John Bellinger**.

Coelho, who is based in California and is president and CEO of Central Valley Meat Company, only got involved in the Thoroughbred industry three years ago. Bellinger had a mutual friend with Lukas and after some discussion, they decided to get their feet wet in the game by buying some yearlings at the 2022 Keeneland September sale.

Among the youngsters that caught their eye was a big-framed son of **Justify** out of the Eaton Sales consignment. The colt who would become **Just Steel** was hammered down for \$500,000 by BC Stables -- the nom de course of Coelho and Bellinger’s operation. With Lukas giving both his equine protege and his new clients an education along the way, **Just Steel** ran himself into the upper ranks of the sophomore division with runner-up finishes in the Southwest Stakes (GII) and Arkansas Derby (GI).

“Being able to be here, it’s a dream come true and in such a short period of time,” Coelho said. “We searched out some good horses. We identified (**Just Steel**) at the Keeneland September sale and he had great structure and a great pedigree to start with. Just a good sound horse, good body, big frame and he’s really developed well. We feel very fortunate and are just trying to enjoy the moment.”

Joking that he does nothing halfway, Coelho says that he now owns 21-22 horses. He recognizes how fortune he has been during this whirlwind journey to racing’s promise land and gives full credit to his legendary conditioner for making an improbable opportunity come to fruition.

“It’s very rare,” Coelho said of his experience. “The amount of knowledge with Mr. Lukas and spending the time with him learning the sport, it’s been amazing just to sit and talk with him and learn so much from him. He’s always available, it’s been a great learning experience the last few years for sure.”

MYSTIK DAN – Lance Gasaway, 4 G Racing and Daniel Hamby III’s Mystik Dan was out for trainer **Kenny McPeck** for a typical gallop of about a mile and three-eighths with jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** on Wednesday, along with a little gate schooling.

“We stood him in the gate for like a minute, 45 seconds, to kind of simulate what’s going to happen Saturday,” Hernandez said. “Then we popped him out and let him go for about a sixteenth of a mile. Then he came back to us and trained well. It seems like he’s ready to go.”

“We just did a little gate schooling, since we drew inside,” said McPeck, whose colt will start from the post 3 with Hernandez. “We wanted to make sure we leave there clean. We don’t want to leave there flat-footed.”

The scratching of **Encino** could make a difference in the Derby. “I do think he was a little speed in there,” McPeck said. “I’m not sure how that will unfold.”

RESILIENCE – It was a “thumbs up” kind of morning for trainer **Bill Mott** as he watched Wood Memorial Stakes (GII) winner **Resilience** complete his latest day of training without a hitch days out from the Kentucky Derby.

As has been the standard routine for **Resilience**, he and champion stablemate **Just F Y I** visited the paddock and then took to the Churchill Downs track. The son of **Into Mischief** galloped twice around the oval with Mott keeping watch from his pony.

In addition to fielding multiple questions about his latest Kentucky Derby contender, Mott still gets asked about how he would feel to have one of his proteges actually cross the wire first in the 10-furlong classic. Mott famously won the Derby with **Country House** in 2019 when the colt was elevated to the victory after **Maximum Security** was disqualified because of interference.

Mott stated he was already feeling like a winner when **Country House** outran his 65-1 odds to hit the wire in second. Over the next 23 minutes that passed as the stewards reviewed the incident that led to the historic decision to take **Maximum Security** down, Mott remembers thinking a change in order in his favor was inevitable.

"I was happy to win the other one the way we won it, it was fine. But actually if you're competing you want to win -- and 99 percent of time you have to cross the wire first to get the victory," the Hall of Fame trainer recalled. "There was some suspense. During that 23 minutes there was a TV in the tunnel and I went in the tunnel and the stewards were showing the view of the stretch run and it was becoming pretty obvious there would probably be a disqualification.

"I think the stewards knew right away there would be a disqualification and what took a while was figuring out where to place (Maximum Security). He bothered 3-4 horses in the race. We didn't get really get bothered in the race. We were thrilled the way our horses ran, even to be second, my son **Riley** and I were going down and you would have through we won the race."

STRONGHOLD – Trainer **Phil D'Amato** was back from his two-day sojourn to his stable headquarters at Santa Anita Wednesday morning at Churchill Downs and gave his Kentucky Derby rider – **Antonio Fresu** – a leg up on his Santa Anita Derby winner **Stronghold** for an early tour of the track.

The two went trackside just after 5:30 and took a mile and one-half gallop around the strip, then headed back to Barn 48. "I wanted to get (Fresu) up on him and let him get the lay of the land," D'Amato said. "We'll probably do the same thing tomorrow."

The Italian Fresu, who is making quite a name for himself with his riding exploits in Southern California, will be making his first start in the Kentucky Derby. That will be true, too, for D'Amato, as well as the colt's owners and breeders, **Eric** and **Sharon Waller**.

Saturday, Stronghold will come out of post 18 in the 20-horse lineup.

T O PASSWORD (JPN) – Tomoya Ozasa's **T O Password (JPN)**, who worked a half-mile in :46.80 on Tuesday, walked in the mile chute for 15 minutes under jockey **Kazushi Kimura** and then walked to the paddock for a schooling session.

"I spent some time in North America and I'll never forget the experience I had here learning from some great people like **Dale Romans**," trainer **Daisuke Takayanagi** said. "It really helped my training career when I got back to Japan.

"(T O Password) had a long trip from Japan and I wanted to see how he'd do going a little faster than normal. I didn't care about time, I wanted to see how he was moving. I was very pleased with how he was moving. He has only run two times but improved in his second start. I think he can keep improving."

Following the paddock stop, T O Password walked back to the Quarantine Barn.

TRACK PHANTOM – Lecomte Stakes (GIII) winner **Track Phantom** galloped about 1 3/8 miles at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday and schooled at the starting gate, which is normal for most **Steve Asmussen** trainees on Wednesday.

Track Phantom is scheduled to school in the paddock during racing Wednesday.

WEST SARATOGA – **Harry Veruchi's West Saratoga** visited the starting gate under exercise rider **Donte Lowery** and then galloped a mile and a half for trainer **Larry Demeritte**.

For Veruchi, the Derby experience is one to relish.

"I bought my first horse in 1982, and two weeks later he won at Centennial Racetrack in Littleton, Colorado," Veruchi said. "I thought, this is easy. And now, to be here, who would have thought it. I don't know anybody who has been in the Kentucky Derby or even anybody who has won a graded stake."

ALSO ELIGIBLE – **Average Joe Racing Stables** and **Dan Wells' Mugatu** (No. 21) galloped a mile and a half at 7:30 under jockey **Joe Talamo** for trainer **Jeff Engler**.

THE KENTUCKY DERBY FIELD – Here is the field for the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) in order of post positions (with rider and morning line odds): **Dornoch** (Luis Saez, 20-1), **Sierra Leone** (Tyler Gaffalione, 3-1), **Mystik Dan** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 20-1), **Catching Freedom** (Flavien Prat, 8-1), **Catalytic** (Jose Ortiz, 30-1), **Just Steel** (Keith Asmussen, 20-1), **Honor Marie** (Ben Curtis, 20-1), **Just a Touch** (Florent Geroux, 10-1), ~~**Encino** (Axel Concepcion, 20-1)~~, **T O Password (JPN)** (Kazuski Kimura, 30-1), **Forever Young (JPN)** (Ryusei Sakai, 10-1), **Track Phantom** (Joel Rosario, 20-1), **West Saratoga** (Jesus Castanon, 30-1), **Endlessly** (Umberto Rispoli, 30-1), **Domestic Product** (Irad Ortiz Jr., 30-1), **Grand Mo the First** (Emisael Jaramillo, 50-1), **Fierceness** (John Velasquez, 5-2), **Stronghold** (Antonio Fresu, 20-1), **Resilience** (Junior Alvarado, 20-1), **Society Man** (Frankie Dettori, 50-1); **Epic Ride** (Adam Beschizza, 50-1). Also Eligible: **Mugatu** (Joe Talamo, 50-1). All starters will carry 126 pounds.

LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS UPDATE

EVERLAND – **Foster Family Racing, William Wargel, R.K. Eckrich Racing** and **Maxis Stable's Everland**, winner of the Bourbonette Oaks (Listed) in her most recent start for trainer **Eric Foster**, went out for a gallop of about 1 1/16 miles Wednesday with her Oaks rider, **Abel Cedillo**.

"I know she's going to run her race, if she transitions to the dirt," said Foster, who has been in the horse business his entire life, other than about 10 years when he worked as a boilermaker. "We're gonna find out Friday if she belongs. Going from the artificial to the dirt was my biggest concern. I always said that I'd never run in the Oaks or Derby just to run. Saying that, I think she has a legitimate shot."

Foster claimed the daughter of Arrogate for \$30,000 in a Dec. 30, 2023, race at Turfway Park.

"In claiming, it is a numbers game," he said. "We try to pick the ones we like the breeding on, or the past performances."

Foster couldn't cite anything specific that he's done which has made a difference in Everland's rise from the claiming ranks to competing in one of the top graded stakes for 3-year-old fillies.

"There aren't a lot of secrets out there," he said. "She was getting beat, but I actually thought she put some effort in for most of her races. They're the same as we are – you give a horse three, or four, or five chances at the upper level, and most of the time there's just one thing to do to get their confidence up.

"I try to do the minimum, to keep it simple for the horse," he added. "We just put her on our program, and try to keep her happy. All we do is take care of them so they last a long time. I try to do everything to keep them healthy to where they can keep running."

Everland drew the post 9 for the Oaks, and was 30-1 on the morning line with Cedillo.

FIONA'S MAGIC – Stonehedge LLC's homebred **Fiona's Magic** had her morning routine switched up a bit Wednesday morning by trainer **Michael Yates**.

"Instead of breaking off when she came on the track, I took her over to the front side to let her get a look at all the people (for Dawn at the Downs)," Yates said. "Then she galloped about a mile and three-eighths."

Alejandro Mariano was aboard Fiona's Magic, who will be ridden in the Oaks by **Luis Saez** from post 7.

GIN GIN/TARIFA – Calumet Farm's **Gin Gin** along with **Godolphin's Tarifa** both galloped about 1 ½ miles Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. for trainer **Brad Cox**.

INTO CHAMPAGNE – Six Column Stables, **Randy Bloch, Jim Gladden, Mike Davis and Michael Steele's Into Champagne** went to the track Wednesday at the 7:30 a.m. training time for trainer **Ian Wilkes**.

"She galloped about a mile-and-three-eighths with her exercise rider, **Adelso Orantes**," Wilkes said. Later in the morning, he said, she was going to be schooling in the paddock.

Jockey **Julian Leparoux** likes his chances in the Oaks with Into Champagne. The filly drew the post 10 and was bet down to 34-1 in advance wagering Tuesday.

"She doesn't have any bad races, she's always run good, so hopefully we get the trip, and we'll see what happens," he said.

JUST F Y I – **George Krikorian's** champion filly **Just F Y I** had another standard morning for trainer **Bill Mott**, visiting the paddock before putting in her gallop over the main track.

Just F Y I capped off her 3-for-3 2-year-old season with a victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI). The daughter of Justify ran second to fellow Oaks contender **Leslie's Rose** in the Ashland Stakes (GI) on April 5.

LEMON MUFFIN -- Trying to keep **Lemon Muffin** on the ground in recent days has been the challenge for Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. To that end, the steel-colored daughter of Collected jogged once around the track and in the

chute Wednesday in an effort to try and harness some of her abundant energy.

"She galloped real strong again yesterday morning, she's been doing a little too much in her mornings," Lukas said. "That work the other day (five furlongs in :58.20) was all her. She came back the first day after that, we gave her a day off, and then the next day she was rolling around there again. But that's her, that's what we need to see."

Jockey **Keith Asmussen**, who will be aboard **Lemon Muffin** in the Oaks, was on hand to watch his filly train Wednesday. As the young rider sat in Lukas' office during the break, the Hall of Fame trainer let his pilot know "she's a different horse than you rode last time."

The last race Lukas was referring to was **Lemon Muffin's** seventh-place run in the Fantasy Stakes (GII) on March 30, an effort he says he is drawing a line through.

"She never spiked a temperature that day but she wasn't herself that day," Lukas said. "She saddled quiet even. If she goes over there on Friday like she's been this week, we're in good shape."

LESLIE'S ROSE/CANDIED – Hall of Fame trainer **Todd Pletcher's** Kentucky Oaks candidates – **Leslie's Rose** and **Candied** – followed pattern Wednesday morning and galloped during the special training session between 7:30-7:45 at Churchill Downs on a lovely Kentucky morning.

The trainer assigned the duo's regular riders to handle the duties with **Joel Osorio** on Leslie's Rose and **Carlos Quevedo** aboard Candied.

Following their gallops of approximately a mile and one-quarter, the riders jogged their horses into the track's mile chute and took turns standing them in the starting gate. Pletcher was nearby to see that all went well. Then it was back to Barn 39 for a bath and a snack.

"All's quiet," the trainer noted. "Quiet is good."

Leslie's Rose, the lukewarm favorite for the classic at 4-1, will break from post 14 in the full field for the nine-furlong Oaks Friday with regular rider **Irad Ortiz Jr.**

Candied is on the outside looking in. She's on the also-eligible list and will need two defections from the body of the race to be a starter.

POWER SQUEEZE – **Lea Farms' Kentucky-bred Power Squeeze** went to a Churchill Downs track Wednesday for trainer **Jorge Delgado**, with exercise rider **Edwin Castro**.

"She just did her routine, and galloped a mile-and-a-half," Delgado said. "She looked really good. She's having some fun out there. I can't wait until Friday. I just wish the race was this afternoon, and not two days away. People are noticing her now."

If the upset winner of the Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII) captures the Kentucky Oaks, she'll extend her win streak to five. The filly, bet down to 8-1 in advance wagering, breaks from the post 12 with **Daniel Centeno**.

REGULATORY RISK/WAYS AND MEANS -- Klaravich Stables' Kentucky Oaks duo of **Regulatory Risk** and **Ways and Means** continued to go through their paces without drama. Each galloped twice around during the 7:30 a.m. training session Wednesday with trainer **Chad Brown** looking on.

TAPIT JENALLIE – Willis Horton Racing's Tapit Jenallie was out stretching her legs on Wednesday with trainer **Eddie Milligan Jr.** at 6 a.m. in preparation for Friday's Oaks.

"We just jogged her two miles," Milligan said. "Two days to go, if we're not ready now, we're not going to be ready. She's blooming at the right time."

Kevin Horton, who's in charge of the stable started by his late father, was on hand to check out his filly's progress.

"We're looking forward to it," he said. "Eddie's done a great job getting her ready, he's hands-on, that's for sure. There aren't many like him."

The Horton stable has campaigned such Eclipse Award champions as **Will Take Charge** and **Take Charge Brandi**, and 2006 Kentucky Oaks winner **Lemons Forever**.

"He was fixing to retire on me, to go traveling with his wife," Horton said of his trainer. "I just thought there was something better for him to do. We've had a good relationship, and he's horseman so deep. Eddie's first class, he's on the horse every day, how can you get any better?"

In addition to Lemons Forever, the Horton stable finished third in the 2021 Oaks with **Will's Secret**.

"We're pretty excited, since we're coming in under the radar," Horton said. "She's improved so much, and I think she's gonna be a shocker to some people."

Tapit Jenallie, who will start in the Oaks from post 1 with jockey **Manny Esquivel**, was 44-1 after Tuesday's advance wagering for the Oaks.

"I'm a fan of the 1-hole, if you have a horse that breaks good," Horton said. "She breaks good. One of those fears is going wide in the first turn and getting hung out. Well, there's no reason to be wide if you've got the speed to get away."

THORPEDO ANNA – Brookdale Racing, Mark Edwards, Judy Hicks and Magdalena Racing's Thorpedo Anna went out Wednesday morning for a gallop with another jockey that trainer **Kenny McPeek** regularly calls on, **Robby Albarado**.

"The filly galloped a mile-and-a-half, and stood in the gate, too," McPeek said.

Thorpedo Anna, winner of three of her four career starts including the Fantasy Stakes (GII) at Oaklawn Park, drew the No. 5 post for the Oaks. The filly, who will have jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** aboard, was bet down to the 5-2 favorite after Tuesday's advance wagering.

WHERE'S MY RING – Trainer Val Brinkerhoff had a good problem on his hands Wednesday morning at Churchill Downs. His filly **Where's My Ring** was scheduled to stretch her legs under exercise rider **David Rodriguez**; just something simple was the plan.

"She's feelin' good though, real good," Brinkerhoff said. "I was just going to jog her around there one time, but now I might have to gallop her one, too."

The well-made daughter of Twirling Candy did just that during the special 7:30-7:45 training session for Oaks and Derby horses, proving to be part of the show put on for a large crowd on a sunny morning.

Michael McMillan, the filly's owner, was on hand for the activities.

"She's the first horse I ever bought," the Las Vegas resident said. "It's exciting being with her and coming up to a big race like the Oaks."

McMillan, whose business is medical billing, was living in Del Mar out in California and found himself going to the racetrack there looking for entertainment. He discovered that he and his family liked it and they decided to become involved. Now he owns eight horses on his own and shares parts of several others.

"I just bought a home here in Simpsonville," he said. "We're going to shift our emphasis to Kentucky and race here. The purses are amazing and Val (Brinkerhoff) and I are going to set up shop."

Where's My Ring gave him a taste of big-time success last out when she captured the Gazelle (GIII) in New York and earned Kentucky Oaks points. Now New York rider **Jose Lezcano** will be back aboard the filly Friday as they take a big-time swing at the \$1.5 million purse in the 150th Kentucky Oaks.

SHAPING UP: THE KENTUCKY OAKS – Here is the field for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (Grade I) in order of post position (with jockey and morning line odds): The field for the Kentucky Oaks, from the rail out with riders and morning line odds, is: **Tapit Jenallie** (Manny Esquivel, 30-1), **Gin Gin** (Florent Geroux, 30-1), **Where's My Ring** (Jose Lezcano, 15-1), **Regulatory Risk** (Jose Ortiz, 20-1), **Thorpedo Anna** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 5-1), **Lemon Muffin** (Keith Asmussen, 30-1), **Fiona's Magic** (Luis Saez, 30-1), **Tarifa** (Flavien Prat, 7-2), **Everland** (Abel Cedillo, 30-1), **Into Champagne** (Julien Leparoux, 30-1), **Ways and Means** (Tyler Gaffalione, 5-1), **Power Squeeze** (Daniel Centeno, 12-1), **Just F Y I** (Junior Alvarado, 9-2), **Leslie's Rose** (Irad Ortiz Jr., 4-1). Also-eligible: **Our Pretty Woman** (Joel Rosario, 15-1), **Candied** (Luis Saez, 20-1).

KENTUCKY DERBY MEDIA PORTAL – The Kentucky Derby Newsfeed will be providing a media portal to access high quality video and audio files. Files are 1080 HD and will be uploaded on a daily basis.

This service is available via any web browser. To access, type the following into your web browser address bar:

kyderby.hammondcg.com

When you get to the media portal page, you will be prompted to enter credentials to access & download training footage, b-roll, color, interviews and press conferences.

Username: kyderby2024

Password: D3rby2024

Please tag your footage with the following: **CREDIT: CHURCHILL DOWNS**

For further information, inquires or to report technical difficulties, please contact Jesse B. Kelsey, Vice-President of Hammond Communications Group, Inc. at (859) 492-5768 or at jkelsey@hammondcg.com.

COADY PHOTOGRAPHY MEDIA PORTAL – Media can access photos of Kentucky Derby and Oaks contenders training at <https://www.coadyplus.com/gallery-collection/Media-Share/C0000V.ZvPCj5oVo>.

Please credit photos to: Coady Media/Churchill Downs

KENTUCKY DERBY MORNING WORKS PROGRAM AIRS DAILY – The Kentucky Derby Morning Works Show will air daily through Thurby and feature Churchill Downs' expert handicappers **Joe Kristufek**, **Kaitlin Free**, **Tony Calo** and **Kevin Kilroy** along with an array of popular industry figures such as former leading rider **Rosie Napravnik** and Churchill Downs Track Announcer **Travis Stone**.

The 20-minute program will be streamed live on @KentuckyDerby on YouTube, Facebook and X.

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