

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**CARL SPACKLER (IRE) OUTDUELS TALK OF THE NATION TO WIN OPENING VERSE  
WEST MEMORIAL SPRINGS 17-1 UPSET IN KENTUCKY JUVENILE  
O BESOS UPSETS STABLEMATE BANGO TO WIN ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES**

LOUISVILLE, KY (May 2, 2024) – E Five Racing Thoroughbreds’ Carl Spackler (IRE) edged past Talk of the Nation in the final yards to win the 19th running of the \$304,100 Opening Verse (Listed) for 4-year-olds and up by a head on a sun-splashed Thursday afternoon before a record Thurby crowd of 60,015 at Churchill Downs.

Trained by Chad Brown and ridden by Tyler Gaffalione, Carl Spackler completed the mile on a turf course rated as firm in 1:35.31.

Talk of the Nation led the field of 10 through fractions of :23.95 and :48.11 as Gaffalione had Carl Spackler racing three wide and in the clear in the second flight of runners.

On the far turn, Carl Spackler went after the leader and the two hooked up at the three-sixteenths pole with neither yielding until the final yards when Carl Spackler edged clear in his first start in eight months.

Favored in the field of 10, Carl Spackler returned \$5.98, \$3.82, \$2.78. Talk of the Nation, ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr., returned \$4.56 and \$3.38 and finished 2 ¼ lengths in front of Smokin’ T, who paid \$2.94 to show under John Velazquez.

It was another neck back to Churchtown with Skyro, Accredited, Stitched, Ice Chocolat (BRZ), Harlan Estate and Tiverton (GB) following in order.

### OPENING VERSE QUOTES

**Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Carl Spackler, winner)** – “I got back a little bit further than I wanted to be. I wasn’t too worried, because he was traveling well. He had a heated battle down the stretch but you could tell he did not want to give in and lose.”

**Chad Brown (trainer, Carl Spackler, winner)** – “I am real proud of this horse today. His dam (Zindaya) is one of the first horses I trained and won with. He came off the layoff and ran great. That was a real good horse inside him (Talk of the Nation) and we had to fight all the way. We are probably going to take him up to Saratoga and see what we can do from there.”

**Irad Ortiz Jr. (jockey, Talk of the Nation, second)** – “It was a tough race, unfortunately we got beat. He was fighting, he kept trying. He changed the lead getting close to the wire, I think, and we lost momentum. That’s when we got beat. He was feeling the other horse, and didn’t want the other horse to go by him, he was fighting back.”

**John Velazquez (jockey, Smokin’ T, third)** – We tucked in, then had nowhere to go from the three-quarter pole to the quarter pole, and I couldn’t get him loose. When I finally got him loose, he actually started running. It was too little, too late, and it was a slow pace. My horse is not supposed to be that close with such a slow pace. I got a position that I wanted at the half-mile pole, but the horse in front of me stopped, and I’m stuck behind him.”

**WEST MEMORIAL SPRINGS 17-1 UPSET IN KENTUCKY JUVENILE** – Swinbank Stables’ West Memorial roared past odds-on favorite Shoot It True at midstretch and went on to post a 1 ¾-length victory in the 30th running of the \$247,165 Kentucky Juvenile for 2-year-olds.

Trained by John Hancock and ridden by Rey Gutierrez, West Memorial completed the five furlongs on a fast track in :58.29.

Shoot It True dueled early with Mensa through an opening quarter-mile in :21.91 with West Memorial running third.

At the top of the stretch, Shoot It True began to open up on Mensa, but Gutierrez had West Memorial in high gear and she swept past the favorite at the eighth pole.

West Memorial returned \$37.88, \$16.54 and \$8.30. Strummin, ridden by Victor Lebron, rallied for second to return \$15.24 and \$7.12 and finished two lengths in front of Akinmusire, who paid \$6.02 to show under Flavien Prat.

It was another length back to Shoot It True with Tuxedo Park, Mensa, Turnbuckle and Jet Sweep Joe following in order.

### KENTUCKY JUVENILE QUOTES

**Rey Gutierrez (jockey, West Memorial, winner)** – “She had an unbelievable performance. For a filly to do that against open company was just wow. I just let her get into stride but she traveled so comfortably and really kicked for home.”

**Matthew Hillard (grandson of trainer John Hancock, West Memorial, winner)** – “My grandfather is over on the backside. He doesn’t go for all of this publicity. This is a great filly. She has a great mind. We can do pretty much anything we want with her and you saw how strongly she closed today. I’m not sure what is going to happen with her next, but we may wind up going to Saratoga during Belmont Week.”

**Victor Lebron (jockey, Strummin, second)** – “He ran an awesome race. I couldn’t ask for anything more out of him. He gave me everything that I wanted. And his running mate won. I’ve told John (trainer Hancock) that after he gets over six furlongs to a mile, he’ll be unbeatable. The longer, the better for him. And he’s been maturing every race.”

**Flavien Prat (jockey, Akinmusire, third)** – “He ran a good race. He’s a bit green, and didn’t negotiate the turn as well as I wanted him to do. But he had a nice run down the lane. He’ll figure things out and get better.”

**O BESOS UPSETS STABLEMATE BANGO TO WIN ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES – Bernard Racing, Tagg Team Racing, West Point Thoroughbreds and Terry Stephens’ O Besos** rallied from last in a field of five to post a 1 ¼-length victory over **Bourbon Bash** to win the third running of the \$198,700 St. Matthews Overnight Stakes for 4-year-olds and up and deny stablemate Bango a record 12<sup>th</sup> Churchill Downs victory.

Trained by **Greg Foley** and ridden by **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, O Besos completed the six furlongs on a fast track in a stakes-record 1:08.72.

Bango, winner of this race in 2023, and **Surveillance** dueled through an opening quarter-mile in :21.97 with Bourbon Bash third. On the far turn, Bourbon Bash joined the top two and took the lead at the top of the stretch with O Besos starting to launch a bid from fourth.

O Besos shot to the front at the eighth pole and drew clear for the victory.

O Besos returned \$9.12, \$4.56 and \$4.12. Bourbon Bash, ridden by **Keith Asmussen**, returned \$4.28 and \$3.62 and finished 3 ¼ lengths in front of Surveillance, who paid \$5.04 to show under **James Graham**. It was another two lengths back to Bango with **Necker Island** finishing fifth.

### ST. MATTHEWS OVERNIGHT STAKES QUOTES

**Irad Ortiz Jr. (jockey, O Besos, winner)** – “They went pretty quick in front of me but he traveled beautifully. He just ranged up to them and came home really good.”

**Greg Foley (trainer, O Besos, winner and Bango, fourth as the favorite)** – “I’m proud of the winner; he’s a good horse. I’m sorry my other horse (Bango) got beat today but he was away a long time and probably needed this. O Besos has had a bunch of tough beats throughout his career. It’s hard to believe, but this is his first stakes win. He went into this race really well. He was ready to run.” (O Besos ran fifth in the 2021 Kentucky Derby but was moved up to fourth with the disqualification of Medina Spirit).

**Keith Asmussen (jockey, Bourbon Bash, second)** – “Man, he broke so sharp and got away so easy, I just tried to keep him in the three path and comfortable. He jumped into the bit, and I tried to not slow him down. It was smooth sailing, we were movin’ and groovin’ at the three-sixteenths, and we got blown by.”

**Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Bango, fourth as the favorite)** – “I wouldn’t count him out yet. Today just wasn’t his day. It was his first race back, and today was really warm, the big crowd. It just wasn’t our day, you know. He came back good, he came back happy, and he’ll live to fight another day. We’ll get ’em next time.”

### ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

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