



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Kentucky Racing Communications
Churchill Downs, Ellis Park, Turfway Park
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY 151 KICKS OFF SATURDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS WITH GRADE III, \$300,000 IROQUOIS STAKES

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Monday, Sept. 9, 2024) – The Road to the 151st Kentucky Derby officially kicks off Saturday at Churchill Downs with the 43rd running of the \$300,000 Iroquois Stakes (Grade III), headlined by **Flying Dutchmen's** undefeated stakes winner **Owen Almighty**.

The Iroquois, run as Race 10 on the 11-race card, will go off at 5:29 p.m. (all times Eastern), with the first post at 12:45 p.m.

The one-mile race will award qualifying points on a 10-5-3-2-1 scale to the top five finishers, kicking off the Road to the Kentucky Derby, a series of races across the world that will set the stage for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 3, 2025.

Trained by **Brian Lynch**, **Owen Almighty** stormed onto the scene with a 3 ½-length maiden win at Churchill in June before returning to dominate the Ellis Park Juvenile by 4 ¾ lengths in mid-August. With jockey **Irad Ortiz Jr.** set to ride, the son of Speightstown will look to keep his perfect record intact from post No. 5.

Among the top challengers in the Iroquois is **Politicallycorrect**, winner of the Bashford Manor Stakes and second to Owen Almighty in the Ellis Park Juvenile. Owned by **Walmac Farm, Five Fillies Stable** and **Ryan Ritt**, **Politicallycorrect** will have **Florent Geroux** aboard for trainer **Chris Davis** and will break from post 14.

Also entering the fray is **Jonathan's Way**, a dazzling debut winner one month ago at Saratoga for **Rigney Racing** and trainer **Phil Bauer**. The Ohio-bred son of Vekoma had a difficult break in his Aug. 17 debut but easily circled his eight rivals around the far turn before drawing away by 4 ¼ lengths under **Joel Rosario**. The duo will reunite for the Iroquois from post 10.

In addition to its role in the Road to the Kentucky Derby, the Iroquois Stakes is part of the Breeders' Cup "Dirt Dozen" series that provides entry fee credits toward the \$2 million FanDuel Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) for the top three Breeders' Cup-nominated finishers.

Here is the complete field for the Iroquois Stakes from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **First Resort** (Rafael Bejarano, Eoin Harty)
- **Giocoso** (James Graham, Keith Desormeaux)
- **Jack's Time** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kelly Von Hemel)
- **Authentic Strike** (Luis Saez, Rodolphe Brisset)
- **Owen Almighty** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Lynch)
- **Strummin** (Cristian Torres, John Hancock)
- **Sandman** (Jose Ortiz, Mark Casse)
- **Magnitude** (Tyler Gaffalione, Steve Asmussen)
- **Firmus** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Wayne Catalano)
- **Jonathan's Way** (Rosario, Bauer)
- **Mesero** (Corey Lanerie, Dale Romans)
- **Politicallycorrect** (Geroux, Davis)

The Iroquois leads a thrilling day of racing at Churchill Downs, which features four other stakes races, including the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), part of the Road to the Kentucky Oaks; the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove (GII); the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed); and the \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

Fans can get expert insight throughout the day from Churchill Downs' team of handicappers, including **Joe Kristufek**, **Kaitlin Free**, **Tony Calo** and **Kevin Kilroy**, whose selections and analysis will be featured on the simulcast feed and on TwinSpires.com. Additionally, **Travis Stone** will return as the track announcer, calling the action for his 10th September Meet at Churchill Downs.

The September Meet kicks off Thursday with 14 racing days through Sept. 29. Fans can enjoy Twilight Thursday, offering \$2 domestic beer, live music and food trucks. Gates open at 4 p.m., and tickets are available at www.ChurchillDowns.com. Thursday also will double as Military Appreciation Day where military members with a valid ID will receive free general admission and discounted tickets on Millionaires Row and the Skye Terrace.

Saturday is College Day at Churchill Downs. In partnership with the KTA-KTOB, \$20,000 in scholarships will be awarded to full-time students with a valid college ID. Students who show a valid college I.D. will receive free admission.

For those unable to attend, www.TwinSpires.com is the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and every race will be broadcast on FanDuel TV.

For more information on the September Meet, visit www.ChurchillDowns.com.

ELLIS PARK DEBUTANTE WINNER STILETTOS TRIES TO KEEP UNBEATEN RECORD INTACT IN POCAHONTAS STAKES – Collinworth Thoroughbred Racing's undefeated Texas-bred stakes winner **Stiletto**s leads an oversubscribed field of 14 2-year-old fillies plus two also-eligibles that entered Saturday's 56th running of the \$300,000 Pocahontas Stakes (Grade III), the kickoff of the Road to the Kentucky Oaks at Churchill Downs.

Stiletto, who recently won the Ellis Park Debutante, faces several talented fillies in the one-mile Pocahontas including fellow stakes winner **Kimchi Cat**. The fillies will head to post in Race 8 with a post time of 4:25 p.m. The first of 11 races will get underway at 12:45 p.m.

The Pocahontas Stakes will award the top five finishers qualifying points on a 10-5-3-2-1 for a spot in the starting gate in the 151st running of the Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), held Friday, May 2 at Churchill Downs.

Stiletto, trained by **Bret Calhoun**, dominated her debut on June 29 at Lone Star Park, winning a five-furlong maiden special weight contest by 16 ³/₄ lengths. Six weeks later, the daughter of Upstart returned in the Ellis Park Debutante and defeated seven rivals by 1 ¹/₂ lengths under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** Stiletto will be ridden in the Pocahontas by **Jose Ortiz** out of post No. 12.

Another other young stakes winner in the Pocahontas is **Joel Politi's** Kimchi Cat who won the 5 ¹/₂-furlong Bolton Landing Stakes at Saratoga after the scheduled turf race was moved to the main track. Trained by **Tom Amoss**, Kimchi Cat debuted at Churchill Downs on June 14 when she finished second to **Veggiedal**, who would go on to finish third in the Bolton Landing. Jockey **Tyler Gaffalione** has the mount on Kimchi Cat for the Pocahontas out of post 13.

Here is the field for the Pocahontas from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Chattanooga Crew** (Brian Hernandez, Kenny McPeck)
- **Icona Mama** (Florent Geroux, Flint Stites)
- **La Cara** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Mark Casse)
- **Empirical Mischief** (Edgar Morales, John Ennis)
- **Hearts United** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeck)
- **Pretty Sure** (Joel Rosario, Brendan Walsh)
- **Quinn's Promise** (Martin Chuan, Dale Romans)
- **Atomic City** (Luan Machado, Eddie Kenneally)
- **Strong State** (Irad Ortiz Jr, Al Stall Jr.)
- **Lady Kathryn** (Cristian Torres, Riley Mott)
- **West Memorial** (Rey Gutierrez, George Weaver)
- Stiletto (Jose Ortiz, Bret Calhoun)
- Kimchi Cat (Tyler Gaffalione, Tom Amoss)
- **Liam in the Dust** (Luis Saez, Rodolphe Brisset)
- (AE 15) **Claire's Charm** (Joel Rosario, Phil Bauer)
- (AE 16) **Good Cheer** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox)

The Pocahontas is one of five stakes races featured on Saturday's card at Churchill Downs. The lineup includes the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), the kickoff on the Road to the Kentucky Derby; the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove (GII); the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed); and the \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

For more information and to purchase tickets for Saturday's card, visit www.churchilldowns.com.

FLEUR DE LIS RUNNER-UP SHOTGUN HOTTIE SEEKS GRADED STAKES GLORY IN FASIG-TIPTON LOCUST GROVE – Omar Aldabbagh and Jeff Ganje's millionaire 5-year-old mare **Shotgun Hottie** will seek her first graded stakes victory in her impressive career when she faces a well-matched group of eight fillies and mares entered in Saturday's 40th running of the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove Stakes (Grade II) at Churchill Downs.

The Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove, run at 1 1/16 miles, is part of five stellar stakes on the Saturday program which also features the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII); \$300,000 Pocahontas; \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed); and \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society. First post is 12:45 p.m. and the Locust Grove will go as Race 7 at 3:53 p.m.

Trained by **Cherie DeVaux**, Shotgun Hottie finished a neck behind **Scylla** 10 weeks ago in the Fasig-Tipton Fleur de Lis (GII) at Churchill Downs. A six-time winner, Shotgun Hottie reached millionaire status in her last start when she finished second to **Raging Sea** in the Shuvee Stakes (GII) at Saratoga. The daughter of Gun Runner will be ridden by **Jose Ortiz** from post No. 7.

Shotgun Hottie is set to face several other impressive fillies and mares in the Locust Grove including **Claiborne Farm's** recent Groupie Doll Stakes heroine **Pigalle**. The homebred daughter of Blame pulled a shocking 23-1 upset one month ago in the Groupie Doll Stakes at Ellis Park when she made a bold rally in deep stretch and surged late to defeat **Fancy** by a neck. Jockey **Luan Machado**, who rode Pigalle in the Groupie Doll, will have the return call in the Locust Grove and break from post 5.

The Locust Grove field will also include the top Louisiana-bred earner of all-time, **Free Like a Girl**. Owned by **Gerald Bruno, Carl Deville, Chasey Deville Pomier** and **Jerry Caroom**, Free Like a Girl burst into the Louisiana-bred record books three weeks ago at Charles Town when she won the \$500,000 Pink Ribbon Stakes by three-quarters of a length to boost her career earnings to \$1,916,978. Trained by Pomier, Free Like a Girl will be ridden by **Luis Saez** out of post 2.

Here is the field for the Locust Grove from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Musical Mischief** (Edgar Morales, Michael McCarthy)
- Free Like a Girl (Saez, Pomier)
- **Taxed** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Randy Morse)
- **Loved** (Tyler Gaffalione, Brendan Walsh)
- Pigalle (Machado, Drury)
- **Corningstone** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeck)
- Shotgun Hottie (Jose Ortiz, DeVaux)
- **Hoosier Philly** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Tom Amoss)

Wagering is available on www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and fans can catch all the action live on FanDuel TV.

For more information, visit www.ChurchillDowns.com.

TOP SPRINTER CLOSETHEGAME SUGAR HEADLINES LOUISVILLE THOROUGHbred SOCIETY STAKES – **Closethegame Sugar**, widely regarded as one of the top sprinters in the country, will return to Churchill Downs on Saturday and face a competitive field of 10 horses entered in the fourth running of the \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society Stakes.

The six-furlong race is carded as Race 9 of 11 with a post time of 4:58 p.m. First post is 12:45 p.m.

Co-owned by trainer **Adam Rice**, along with New York Mets' pitcher **Sugar Diaz**, Closethegame Sugar enters the Louisville Thoroughbred Society Stakes following a second-place finish six weeks ago in the Bing Crosby (GI) at Del Mar. The speedy son of Girvin has been a force on the track, winning five of his nine lifetime starts and amassing \$587,865 in earnings. At Churchill Downs, Closethegame Sugar boasts two wins from just three starts, including victories in the Aristides Stakes and Kelly's Landing Stakes during the Spring Meet. **Irad Ortiz Jr.** will guide Closethegame Sugar from post No. 2.

Among the talented sprinters set to challenge Closethegame Sugar is **Red Lane Thoroughbreds' Skelly**, who finished second in the Vanderbilt (GI) earlier this year along with **Nathan Hayden's Here Mi Song**, the recent winner of the Jeff Hall Memorial at Ellis Park.

The Louisville Thoroughbred Society Stakes is one of five stakes races featured on Saturday's card at Churchill Downs. The lineup includes the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), the kickoff on the Road to the Kentucky Derby; the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), part of the Road to the Kentucky Oaks; the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove (GII); and the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed).

Here's the field for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society in order of post position (with jockey and trainer):

- **Gulfstream Way** (Florent Geroux, Norm Casse)
- Closethegame Sugar (Ortiz, Rice)
- **Cyclone Mischief** (Corey Lanerie, Dale Romans)
- **My Buddy B** (Yan Aviles, Krista Hetrick)
- **Disco Ball** (Luis Saez, David Jacobson)
- Here Mi Song (Edgar Morales, Billy Stinson Jr.)
- **Happy Is a Choice** (Ramon Vazquez, John Ortiz)
- **Manny Wah** (Brian Hernandez Jr., John Ennis)
- **Necker Island** (Mitchell Murrill, Chris Hartman)
- Skelly (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen)

Wagering is available on TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated, and fans can catch all the action live on FanDuel TV.

For more information, visit ChurchillDowns.com.

ROXELANA WINNER ZEITLOS RETURNS IN OPEN MIND – Stonestreet Stables' Roxelana Stakes winner **Zeitlos** will head a compact field of six filly and mare sprinters entered in Saturday's 15th running of the \$300,000 Open Mind Stakes (Listed) at Churchill Downs.

Run at 6 ½ furlongs, the Open Mind goes as Race 5 at 2:48 p.m., first post for the 11-race stakes-laden program is 12:45 p.m.

Zeitlos, trained by Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen**, gamely defeated **Dazzling Blue** by a neck in the April 27 Roxelana Stakes at Churchill Downs. A daughter of Curlin out of the Australian-bred mare Thyme For Roses, Zeitlos tested turf in her last start, the Caress Stakes (GIII), but finished fifth. Zeitlos will make her return to dirt in the Open Mind out of post No. 2 under jockey **Cristian Torres**.

Here is the field for the Open Mind from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Run for the Hills** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Mark Casse)
- Zeitlos (Torres, Asmussen)
- **Positano Sunset** (Julien Leparoux, Ian Wilkes)
- **Happy Am I** (Tyler Gaffalione, Dallas Stewart)
- **Backyard Money** (Luis Saez, Wayne Lukas)
- **Unsung Melody** (Ricardo Santana Jr., John Ortiz)

The Open Mind is one of five stakes races featured on Saturday's card at Churchill Downs. The lineup also includes the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), the kickoff on the Road to the Kentucky Derby; the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), part of the Road to the Kentucky Oaks; the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove (GII); and the \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

Wagering is available on TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated, and fans can catch all the action live on FanDuel TV.

For more information, visit ChurchillDowns.com.

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 and Race and Sports Book. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

-END-