



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

CALHOUN HOPES TEXAS-BRED STILETTOS CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE IN SATURDAY'S POCAHONTAS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, Sept. 13, 2024) – Collinsworth Thoroughbred Racing's undefeated Texas-bred filly **Stiletto**s will attempt to win her third career race as the 4-1 morning-line favorite in Saturday's \$300,000 Pocahontas Stakes (Grade III), the kickoff of the Road to the Kentucky Oaks at Churchill Downs.

Trained by **Bret Calhoun**, Stiletto dominated her five-furlong debut at Lone Star Park, winning by an eye-catching 16 ³/₄ lengths. Following that start, Calhoun shipped the daughter of Upstart to his string at Churchill Downs and six weeks later she gamely defeated seven rivals in the Ellis Park Debutante.

"She just dominated her competition in Texas, but you're never really sure of the caliber of horses she faced there, so we decided to ship her here for the Debutante at Ellis," Calhoun said. "It was a big step up, but we were optimistic about her chances against those fillies. I thought it was a very impressive race on her part. It looked like she was going to win that race like her debut, but I think she got a little tired, a little green, and a little lost. That race should move her forward. I don't think she got a lot out of her debut, but she got a little tired on us in the Debutante."

Stiletto has won both of her starts in gate-to-wire fashion but Calhoun believes she can be more versatile.

"We never intended to be on the lead in the Debutante," Calhoun said. "Watching the race, you could tell **Brian (Hernandez Jr.)** was trying to sit, but the horse to her inside wanted the lead and couldn't get there. She just took us to the front. I'm going to leave it up to **Jose (Ortiz)** in the Pocahontas. There's a lot of speed in the race, as these juveniles often show early in the year. Most of them have won on or close to the lead. It'll be interesting how things play out down the backside, but I've got a pretty good rider to figure that out."

Stiletto will break from post No. 12.

The Pocahontas drew an over-subscribed field of 14 2-year-old fillies plus two also-eligibles. The fillies will head to post in Race 8 with a post time of 4:25 p.m. (all times Eastern). The first of 11 races will get underway at 12:45 p.m.

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

Here is the field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

- **Chattanooga Crew** (Brian Hernandez, Kenny McPeck, 20-1)
- **Icona Mama** (Florent Geroux, Flint Stites, 15-1)
- **La Cara** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Mark Casse, 5-1)
- **Empirical Mischief** (Edgar Morales, John Ennis, 20-1)
- **Hearts United** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeck, 30-1)
- **Pretty Sure** (Joel Rosario, Brendan Walsh, 12-1)
- **Quinn's Promise** (Martin Chuan, Dale Romans, 10-1)
- **Atomic City** (Luan Machado, Eddie Kenneally, 15-1)
- **Strong State** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Al Stall Jr., 5-1)
- **Lady Kathryn** (Cristian Torres, Riley Mott, 10-1)
- **West Memorial** (Rey Gutierrez, George Weaver, 15-1)
- **Stiletto** (Jose Ortiz, Calhoun, 4-1)
- **Kimchi Cat** (Tyler Gaffalione, Tom Amoss, 9-2)
- **Liam in the Dust** (Luis Saez, Rodolphe Brisset, 15-1)
- (AE 15) **Claire's Charm** (Joel Rosario, Phil Bauer, 12-1)
- (AE 16) **Good Cheer** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 12-1)

Several fillies not regularly based in Kentucky have arrived for Saturday's race, including New York-based West Memorial, who has galloped three days over the track, and Pennsylvania-based Icona Mama, who arrived early Friday morning.

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 of 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.

LEGENDARY KENTUCKY HORSEMEN NEIL HUFFMAN DIES AT 87 – Neil Huffman, a well-known horseman and respected figure in Kentucky's horse racing community, has died at the age of 87.

Huffman's deep love for horses and contributions to the Thoroughbred racing industry spanned more than 50 years, leaving behind a legacy of hard work, dedication and warm personality.

Born in the midst of the great flood of 1937, Huffman's love for horses began when he was just a teenager. As recounted in *Better Lucky Than Good: Tall Tales and Straight Talk from the Backside of the Track*, Huffman's first horse, Rusty, came to him unexpectedly.

"A buddy of mine who lived two blocks down the street rode the horse into my backyard and said, 'I gotta find somethin' to do with Rusty. I'm goin' away to Lexington.' My uncle **Ben Masden** bought him for \$100... Saddle and everything." From that day on, horses would become central to his life.

Masden was a clocker at Churchill Downs and played a significant role in Huffman's early education in horse racing. Masden's mentorship helped Huffman develop a deep understanding of horse racing, and his career would eventually take him to some of the most prestigious farms in Kentucky, including the iconic Calumet Farm along with Tin-Dor, Lasater and Longfield Farms in Goshen, Ky. There, Huffman managed Thoroughbreds for top owners and oversaw many significant wins in the racing world.

Alongside his late brother, **William "Blackie" Huffman**, he co-managed Skylight Training Center, where they broke and trained dozens of horses.

While Huffman took on much of the public role, Blackie was content to work behind the scenes.

"Blackie won the Stephen Foster at Churchill Downs, and I don't think he even got in the Winner's Circle... He didn't want the publicity," Huffman recalled in *Better Lucky Than Good*.

Blackie was known not only for his horsemanship but also for his sharp wit and knack for spinning tall tales. "There were hats going around back here that said 'Lying Blackie.' Everybody had a Lying Blackie hat. He left a bit of a legacy," Huffman wrote.

Huffman was responsible for foaling hundreds of horses throughout his career, a source of great pride.

"In hindsight, the biggest pleasures I ever got out of fooling with horses was on those farms," Huffman said.

His work at Skylight along with farms throughout Kentucky helped shape the next generation of racehorses, and his expertise earned him the respect and admiration of his peers. Huffman often credited his love for the industry to his experiences on Kentucky's farms, where he lived and worked hands-on with horses every day.

Huffman was a man of stories as much as he was a man of horses. He could hold an audience with his tales from the track, the barn and life in the Kentucky racing community. Whether it was breaking young horses trying to make their way to the racetrack or recounting Derby Week memories, Huffman's presence in the racing world extended beyond his professional accomplishments. His storytelling was legendary, captivating friends and colleagues alike in places like Wagner's Pharmacy and on the Churchill Downs backside.

In his later years, Huffman remained active in the racing community, continuing to share his knowledge and passion for horses with others, especially in Barn 46 at Churchill Downs. He spent time at the track, visiting old friends and, of course, looking after many cats on the backstretch.

Huffman is survived by his daughters Carla (Andy) Lucas, Lori (Bob) Liter and Deanna (Keith) Bunner; eight grandkids (Katie, Ally and Sam Dedich; Adam and Andrew Bunner; Christopher Drew Lucas, Kate McMorro and Emmy Kupper); five nephews (Michael, Patrick, Ben, Daniel and Gary Lee Huffman) and numerous grandnieces and nephews.

A celebration of Huffman's life will be held at a later date on the backside of Churchill Downs.

'INSIDE CHURCHILL DOWNS' RETURNS FRIDAY TO ESPN LOUISVILLE – "Inside Churchill Downs" will make its return Friday at 6 p.m. to ESPN Louisville as the 10th season of the weekly radio show continues following a summer break.

Churchill Downs' **Darren Rogers** and **Kevin Kerstein** will be joined Friday by expert handicapper **Joe Kristufek** to discuss Saturday's phenomenal 11-race program beneath the Twin Spires.

Fans can listen to the show locally on ESPN 680/105.7 or worldwide on www.espnloouisville.com.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Ten races were on the schedule for Friday at Churchill Downs with a first post of 12:45 p.m. Following steady early morning rain, the main track was listed as “sloppy”. ... Jockey **Cristian Torres** served a one-day HISA whip suspension on Friday. He’s scheduled to return to action Saturday. ... **Winchell Thoroughbreds’ Extra Anejo** returned to the winner’s circle Thursday at Churchill Downs with a gutsy three-quarters of a length victory over **Bromley** in the featured conditioned allowance contest. The highly-regarded colt earned a 93 Brisnet Speed Rating. ... Jockey **Keith Asmussen** was cleared by doctors Thursday to return to action following more than three months on the sidelines. He was scheduled to be named on horses next Friday at Churchill Downs. Asmussen remarkably began getting back on horses in early August after suffering a fractured right femur and three broken ribs during a riding mishap on June 1. ... Turfway Park stall applications for the Winter/Spring season are due Friday. The link to the stall application is available here: www.turfway.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2024-stall-application.pdf. ... For more information about the September Meet, visit www.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-