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IMPRESSIVE OHIO-BRED JONATHAN'S WAY LEADS ALL THE WAY, TALLIES 10 POINTS ON 'ROAD TO DERBY' WITH IROQUOIS WIN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024) – Rigney Racing's **Jonathan's Way** is the early points leader on the 2025 "Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve" after the Vekoma colt bred in Ohio won Saturday's 43rd running of the \$254,745 **Iroquois** (Grade III) for 2-year-olds in gate-to-wire fashion by 2 ¾ lengths over **Owen Almighty** at Churchill Downs. **Giocoso** was another 4 ¼ lengths back in third, **Mesero** was fourth and **Sandman** finished fifth.

Sent to post as the 6-5 favorite, **Jonathan's Way** ran one mile over a fast track in a swift 1:36.08 under jockey **Joel Rosario** for trainer **Phil Bauer** and local owner **Richard Rigney**. For comparison, **Jonathan's Way** ran :01.74 faster than Pocahontas winner **La Cara** two races earlier.

Jonathan's Way banked the \$131,130 first prize and 10 points on the "Road to the Kentucky Derby" point system that will determine the field for next year's 151st Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on May 3, 2024 at Churchill Downs. The **Iroquois** was the first in a series of 36 select races on the "Road to the Kentucky Derby," and the top five finishing positions earned points on a sliding scale of 10-5-3-2-1, respectively.

Breaking from post position No. 9 in field of 11 2-year-olds, **Jonathan's Way** zipped away from the gate in the one-turn mile. Pressured from the outside by **Magnitude** down the backstretch, **Jonathan's Way** ran the first quarter mile in :23.21 and the half in :46.62. **Giocoso** ranged into contention midway through the turn, but **Jonathan's Way** spurred clear at the top of the stretch.

Owen Almighty, the Ellis Park Juvenile winner, who tracked the leaders between horses early on, put in a late charge in deep stretch but was no match for the clear winner.

"In his last start he didn't show that much speed from the gate, but when he broke so well today, he just took himself to the front and traveled so easily around there," Rosario said. "Being only his second start, you have to be impressed with how he's handled so far and I think anything is possible for him down the Road to the Kentucky Derby."

Jonathan's Way paid \$4.52, \$3.04 and \$2.62. **Owen Almighty**, the 5-2 second choice under **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, returned \$3.64 and \$2.88. **Giocoso**, with **James Graham** up at odds of 24-1, paid \$7.66.

Meroso and **Sandman** were fourth and fifth, respectively, and were followed by **Jack's Time**, **Magnitude**, **Strummin**, **Authentic Strike**, **Firmus** and **Politicallycorrect**. **First Resort** was scratched.

Jonathan's Way is perfect in two starts. He impressively broke his maiden by 4 ¼ lengths at Saratoga on Aug. 17 after being pinched back after the start. His career earnings now total \$276,815.

"From the first day we bought him as a weanling we were impressed by him," Bauer said. "We always knew how impressive he was training into his debut, and when he ran that day at Saratoga, he did so professionally after missing the break. Now, today showing a totally different dimension being on a lead, it's an amazing feeling moving forward. I'm still trying to put it all in perspective – we're the favorites on the Road to the Kentucky Derby."

A \$290,000 purchase at the 2022 Keeneland November Sale, the dark bay or brown colt was bred in Ohio by **Susan L. Anderson Racing LLC** and is out of the Indian Charlie mare **Female Drama**.

The next races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby come Saturday, Oct. 5 with the \$500,000 Champagne (GI) at Aqueduct; \$600,000 Breeders' Futurity (GI) at Keeneland; and \$300,000 American Pharoah (GI) at Santa Anita.

IROQUOIS QUOTES

Joel Rosario (jockey, Jonathan's Way, winner): "In his last start he didn't show that much speed from the gate, but when he broke so well today, he just took himself to the front and traveled so easily around there. Being only his second start, you have to be impressed with how he's handled so far and I think anything is possible for him down the Road to the Kentucky Derby."

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Brian Lynch (trainer, Owen Almighty, runner-up): “He had a little bit of a rough trip down the backside and I think he’s going to get a lot out of that. We were just second best to an extremely nice horse today.”

LA CARA ROLLS HOME IN GRADE III, \$292,335 POCAHONTAS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024) – Tracy Farmer’s homebred **La Cara** validated her runaway maiden victory last month at Saratoga with a come-from-behind three-quarters of a length victory over **Liam in the Dust** in Saturday’s 56th running of the \$300,000 Pocahontas (Grade III) for 2-year-old fillies at Churchill Downs.

La Cara ran one mile in 1:37.82 for jockey **Ricardo Santana Jr.** and trainer **Mark Casse**.

A Kentucky-bred daughter of Street Sense out of the Bernardini mare Cara Caterina, La Cara, banked \$171,945 for the win and is the early points-leader on the “Road to the Kentucky Oaks” after collecting 10 points. The Pocahontas was the first of 33 qualifying races to the Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to be run next May, and points were awarded to the top five finishers on a 10-5-3-2-1 scale.

Breaking from post three in the field of 14 2-year-old fillies, La Cara was away from the gate a bit slow and found herself in midpack down the backstretch as **Stiletto**s and **Kimchi Cat** set a pace of :22.70 and :46.33.

In her previous start on Aug. 11 at Saratoga, La Cara led every step of the way en route to an eight-length first victory in a seven-furlong maiden special weight. She handled the adversity Saturday just fine.

After being positioned in 11th after the first quarter mile, La Cara advanced her way into seventh at the half-mile marker along the rail and tipped out to fifth with a quarter mile to run. In the clear on the outside at the top of the stretch, she began to hit her best stride. La Cara grabbed the lead at the eighth pole and outran Liam in the Dust and **Icona Mama** to the wire.

“She was so impressive winning last time at Saratoga that I had a lot of confidence in her today,” Santana Jr. said. “She’s still learning and improving. I don’t see why she can’t handle going two turns with as impressive as she’s been her last two starts.”

La Cara (5-2-1-0—\$258,520) paid \$12.72, \$7.44 and \$5.36 at odds of 5-1. Liam in the Dust, second under **Luis Saez** at 9-1, returned \$11.18 and \$7.12. Icona Mama, with **Florent Geroux** aboard, was another head back in third and paid \$11.14 to show at odds of 30-1.

Pretty Sure, Atomic City, Empirical Mischief, Strong State, Hearts United, Chattanooga Crew, Stilettos, **Quinn’s Promise, West Memorial, Lady Kathryn** and mild 7-2 favorite **Kimchi Cat** completed the order of finish. **Claire’s Charm** and **Good Cheer** were scratched.

POCAHONTAS QUOTES

Ricardo Santana Jr. (jockey, La Cara, winner): “She was so impressive winning last time at Saratoga that I had a lot of confidence in her today. She’s still learning and improving. I don’t see why she can’t handle going two turns with as impressive as she’s been her last two starts.”

Allen Hardy (assistant trainer, La Cara, winner): “It was a great effort by her today to back up her maiden win at Saratoga. We got her back at the Churchill string a couple weeks ago and she’s been impressing us each day training into this race.”

Rodolphe Brisset (trainer, Liam in the Dust, runner-up): “She dug in late and ran great. It was only her second start and handled it great.”

MUSICAL MISCHIEF UPSETS GRADE III, \$400,000 FASIG-TIPTON LOCUST GROVE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024) – Stoneway Farm’s **Musical Mischief** overcame traffic trouble at the top of the stretch and shot through an opening at the three-sixteenths pole to power home and score a 16-1 upset in Saturday’s 40th running of the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Locust Grove (Grade II) for fillies and mares at Churchill Downs with a 3 ¼-length triumph over 43-1 longshot **Corningstone**. Shotgun Hottie, the 6-5 favorite, was another half-length back in third.

Ridden by **Edgar Morales** and trained by **Michael McCarthy**, Musical Mischief ran 1 1/16 miles over a fast track in 1:42.91.

Free Like a Girl dictated the early pace of :24.16 and :48.29 as **Pigalle** chased from the outside and Musical Mischief tracked in third along the rail. Around the far turn after six furlongs in 1:12.17, Free Like A Girl began to tire. Musical Mischief was positioned just behind the fading leader but had nowhere to run and Morales was forced to check hard at the quarter pole. Soon thereafter, a seam opened between Free Like A Girl and Pigalle and Musical Mischief surged past those two with an eighth of a mile to run and widened her margin down the stretch for the surprise victory.

“When she ran (fourth) last time at Ellis in the Groupie Doll we thought the flat mile might be a bit too short for her that day,” Morales said. “She still ended up running well but we had a lot of confidence in her that she’d improve going two turns today. She was loaded turning for home. I waited a little bit at the rail to try and find room. Once we got outside and she got clear running room she just took off.”

Musical Mischief, a 4-year-old Kentucky-bred daughter of Into Mischief out of the Bellamy Road mare Sophia’s Song, returned \$35.64, \$17.26 and \$7.48. Corningstone, ridden by **Julien Leparoux**, returned \$29.68 and \$9.22. Shotgun Hottie, with **Jose Ortiz** up, paid \$2.40 to show.

Pigalle was fourth and was followed by **Taxed, Loved, Hoosier Philly** and Free Like a Girl.

The victory was worth \$240,420 to Musical Mischief and increased her earnings to \$515,024 with a record of 4-2-1 from 12 starts. This was the first stakes win of her career.

“Early in the winter she really wasn’t herself so we sent her home and when she came back here in Kentucky she was back to her old self,” McCarthy said. “Today, three furlongs from home, I could tell she was loaded. Edgar did a great job to bide his time and be as patient as he could. It really paid off.”

The Locust Grove is named after the 1790 Georgian mansion in Louisville that played home to ancestors of Churchill Downs founder **Col. M. Lewis Clark**.

LOCUST GROVE QUOTES

Edgar Morales (jockey, Musical Mischief, winner): “When she ran last time at Ellis in the Groupie Doll we thought the flat mile might be a bit too short for her that day. She still ended up running well but we had a lot of confidence in her that she’d improve going two turns today. She was loaded turning for home. I waited a little bit at the rail to try and find room. Once we got outside and she got clear running room she just took off.”

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Greg Geier (assistant trainer, Corningstone, runner-up): “You can’t be at all upset with how she ran. She tried her heart out and ran a huge race to finish second.”

Jose Ortiz (jockey, Shotgun Hottie, third): “She ran an OK race but was just a little even around there. We were a little wide into the first turn but she never really picked it up turning for home. She’s a very nice filly and you can’t take anything away from her but it wasn’t her day today.”

HAPPY IS A CHOICE BEATS SKELLY IN \$300,000 LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024) – Saturday’s fourth running of the \$299,500 Louisville Thoroughbred Society at Churchill Downs was a thriller as 14-1 longshot **Happy Is a Choice** nailed tiring even-money favorite **Skelly** at the wire to win the sprint by neck.

Happy Is a Choice ran six furlongs over a fast track in 1:08.97. **Ramon Vazquez** rode the well-timed winner for trainer **John Ortiz** and owners **Hooties Racing LLC, WSS Racing LLC and 4G Racing LLC**.

This was the first stakes win for the gelded 4-year-old son of Runhappy.

Skelly, who entered the race with three stakes wins and three stakes seconds on the year, popped out of the gate from the outside stall in the field of seven older sprinters and led until the final jump through fractions of :22.10, :44.99 and :56.52. Happy Is a Choice had one horse beat early on and was positioned to race in the clear down the backstretch. He gradually improved his position, ranged into the third leaving the turn and was within three lengths of Skelly at the top of the stretch. Happy Is a Choice caught the leg-weary Skelly inside the final yards for the upset victory.

“I know there would be some pace in the race so I just rode my race,” Vazquez said. “My horse belongs with these type of horses and he showed it today.”

Happy Is a Choice rewarded his backers with \$30,18, \$8.08 and \$5.74. Skelly, who has now finished first or second in all but one of his 18 career starts, paid \$2.86 and \$2.38 while being ridden by **Ricardo Santana Jr. Here Mi Song**, with **Edgar Morales** aboard, was another 1 ¼ lengths back in third and returned \$4.22 to show.

Necker Island, Manny Wah, Cyclone Mischief and **Closethegame Sugar** completed the order of finish. **Disco Ball, Gulfstream Way** and **My Buddy B** were scratched.

Happy Is a Choice, a Kentucky-bred out of the Afleet Alex mare Fast Alexia, won for the fifth time in his 11-race career. He also sports a trio of third-place finishes. The \$181,900 payday jumped his earnings to \$561,580.

“Steve (Asmussen) is such a great competitor and Skelly is a very nice horse,” Ortiz said. “We got the better of him today. I can’t thank the owners enough who have supported me when we started claiming horses and now we’re being rewarded with some very nice horses like him in our barn.”

The race is named for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society, which opened for regular hours of operation in March 2021. The **Louisville Thoroughbred Society** is Louisville’s only on-site wagering by Churchill Downs in the heart of Louisville’s metropolitan scene. The premier club for Thoroughbred enthusiasts is open for private membership applications, and reservations for special events are being accepted. For more information, visit www.thelouisvillethoroughbredsociety.com.

LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY QUOTES

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Edgar Morales (jockey, Here Mi Song, third): “We were in a great position early just tracking Skelly. He really tried the entire way and ran a good race.”

ZEITLOS RALLIES TO WIN \$300,000 OPEN MIND

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024) – Stonestreet Stables LLC and **Peter Leidel’s Zeitlos** rallied from last to win Saturday’s 15th running of the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) at Churchill Downs by 1 ¾ lengths over **Positano Sunset**.

Ridden by **Cristian Torres** for Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen**, Zeitlos ran 6 ½ furlongs over a fast track in 1:16.87 to collect her fourth win in six starts at Churchill Downs.

Run for the Hills emerged as the early leader down the backstretch after an opening quarter mile in :22.29 with **Happy Am I** and **Unsung Melody** chasing. Positano Sunset was settled in fourth along the inside and was followed by **Backyard Money** and the trailing Zeitlos.

After rounding the turn and a half-mile in :45.17, Zeitlos remained in last at the top of the stretch but was hitting her best stride. Run for the Hills began to tire with an eighth of a mile to the finish and Zeitlos collared her at the sixteenth pole and drew clear for the win.

“She’s such a nice filly and a fun horse to ride,” Torres said. “Up the backside we were pretty relaxed as **Jose (Ortiz)** and (Run for the Hills) got a pretty easy lead but was going fast. In mid-stretch his filly was getting tired and we were finding our best stride. She comes with such a big closing kick that I’m always confident I’ll have a lot of horse beneath me in the stretch.”

Zeitlos banked the \$183,450 first prize and improved her record to seven wins, four seconds and one third in 15 starts. Her career earnings total \$817,017. The Open Mind was her third career stakes triumph after landing the \$150,000 Carousel at Oaklawn Park and \$200,000 Roxelana at Churchill Downs earlier this year.

“She’s a very versatile filly and with the closing kick you’d think she could be turf but she continues to show her versatility on both surfaces,” Asmussen said. “We’re very fortunate to have her in our barn, being a Stonestreet homebred and a testament to their program. I think Cristian fits her beautifully and has ridden her very well.”

Zeitlos returned \$4.88, \$2.90 and \$2.18 as the 7-5 favorite. Positano Sunset, ridden by **Julien Leparoux**, returned \$2.96 and \$2.46 with Happy Am I another 1 ¾ lengths back in third under **Tyler Gaffalione** and paying \$3.46 to show.

Run for the Hills was fourth and was followed by Unsung Melody and Backyard Money.

Zeitlos is a 4-year-old daughter of Curlin out of the Redoute’s Choice (AUS) mare Thyme For Roses (AUS) and was bred in Kentucky by **Barbara Banke’s Stonestreet Thoroughbred Holdings LLC**.

Saturday's race saluted the late **Eugene Klein's** Hall of Fame filly **Open Mind**, the **D. Wayne Lukas**-trained winner of the 1988 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) at Churchill Downs who returned to the Louisville track the following spring to win the Kentucky Oaks. The New Jersey-bred filly was an Eclipse Award champion at ages two and three. A winner of 12 races and \$1,844,372 in 19 starts, the daughter of Deputy Minister was enshrined in Racing's Hall of Fame in 2011.

OPEN MIND QUOTES

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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. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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