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COX SET FOR BUSY SATURDAY UNDER THE LIGHTS WITH HIT SHOW, SAUDI CROWN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2024) – Trainer **Brad Cox** is set for a potentially huge weekend at Churchill Downs as two of his standout horses, **Hit Show** and **Saudi Crown**, headline the \$500,000 Lukas Classic (Grade II) and \$400,000 Ack Ack Stakes (GIII), respectively, on the Downs After Dark program.

Wathnan Racing's Hit Show is the 2-1 morning-line favorite for the Lukas Classic, which will be run at 1 1/8 miles under the lights as Race 10 at 10:40 p.m. ET. The 4-year-old son of Candy Ride (ARG) comes off a determined half-length victory in the West Virginia Governor's Cup (GIII) at Mountaineer. Earlier this year, Hit Show made his seasonal debut with a sharp 2 1/4-length victory in an allowance race at Churchill Downs. He finished fifth in last year's Kentucky Derby but was sidelined for the remainder of the season after a disappointing performance in the Oklahoma Derby (GIII). Hit Show has posted four strong workouts at Churchill leading up to Saturday's race, according to Cox.

"Hit Show ran a big effort at Mountaineer," Cox said. "He had to dig in late to get the job done. He bounced out of that race in good shape, especially with how big he ran. We got him back here to Churchill and he put together four solid works leading into this race. He's shown he can be pretty tactical within the race. In the (West Virginia Governor's Cup) they went fast early, so he was pretty far out of it. He's shown he's able to be more tactical and if the pace isn't as fast early, I'd expect him to be a little closer early, like he was in the allowance race at Churchill earlier this year."

Meanwhile, **FMQ Stables'** Saudi Crown is the 4-5 favorite in the Ack Ack, which will be run at one mile as Race 8 at 9:37 p.m. ET. The 4-year-old colt is entering the race off a gate-to-wire victory in the R.A. Cowboy Jones Stakes at Ellis Park, where he returned to top form after a 12th-place finish in the Godolphin Mile (GII) earlier this year. Saudi Crown, who had an impressive 3-year-old season with a win in the Pennsylvania Derby (GI) and close runner-up finishes in both the Jim Dandy (GII) and Dwyer (GIII), has been training well at Churchill Downs in preparation for Saturday's race.

"Saudi Crown is a very talented horse," Cox said. "We were very pleased with how he came back over the summer at Ellis Park, winning the Cowboy Jones. Obviously, we were disappointed he didn't win when he shipped overseas this winter, but we're happy with the way he responded when we brought him back to Kentucky. He's worked very well at Churchill since the Cowboy Jones, and we're expecting him to run another big race on Saturday night."

Both Hit Show and Saudi Crown will face competitive fields in their respective races. Hit Show's primary challengers in the Lukas Classic include Grade III winner and 2023 Travers (GI) runner-up **Disarm**, as well as eight-time winner and Stephen Foster (GI) runner-up **Rattle N Roll**. Saudi Crown's main opposition in the Ack Ack includes Hanshin Stakes top two finishers **Cagliostro** and **Tumbarumba**.

Here are the fields for the Lukas Classic and Ack Ack from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

Lukas Classic, Race 10, 10:40 p.m.:

- **Stilleteo Boy** (Evin Roman, Ed Moger Jr., 20-1)
- **Rattle N Roll** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 5-2)
- **Happy American** (Corey Lanerie, Neil Pessin, 20-1)
- **Cooke Creek** (Luis Saez, Mike Maker, 5-1)
- **Disarm** (Tyler Gaffalione, Steve Asmussen, 3-1)
- **Hit Show** (Florent Geroux, Cox, 2-1)
- **Bolzy** (Francisco Arrieta, Donnie K. Von Hemel, 30-1)
- **Warrior Johnny** (Jose Ortiz, Phil Bauer, 5-1)

Ack Ack Stakes, Race 8, 9:37 p.m.:

- Tumbarumba (Luis Saez, Brian Lynch, 6-1)
- **Stage Raider** (Brian Hernandez Jr., DeVaux, 15-1)
- Cagliostro (Jose Ortiz, Cherie DeVaux, 7-2)
- **Mufasa (CHI)** (Tyler Gaffalione, Ignacio Correas IV, 4-1)
- **Three Technique** (Rafael Bejarano, Jason Cook, 15-1)
- **Big Blue Line** (Axel Concepcion, Will Walden, 20-1)
- Saudi Crown (Florent Geroux, Cox, 4-5)

The Ack Ack will award the winner an automatic entry into the Breeders' Cup Big Ass Fans Dirt Mile on Nov. 2 at Del Mar. The nominated winner also will be entitled to have their pre-entry and entry fees waived along with a travel stipend if they are based outside California.

Saturday is the final Downs After Dark of the year as Churchill Downs presents "Oktoberfest," bringing the spirit of Munich to the Twin Spires. The event will feature a beer garden showcasing local brews from West Sixth Brewing and Gravely Brewing Co., along with bratwurst, pretzels, polka dancing, a yodeling contest, live music and world-class horse racing.

Admission gates open at 5 p.m. with the 11-race program running from 6-11:10 p.m. General admission is \$20 and includes an official program. Guests under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Outdoor box seats range from \$28 to \$38 per person, and limited premium dining packages are available starting at \$91, including the exclusive Oktoberfest VIP Package.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.churchilldowns.com.

MEET LEADERS – With just five days of racing remaining at the September Meet, the battle for leading jockey, trainer and owner is far from settled.

Jockey **Tyler Gaffalione** entered Wednesday's nine-race card with a 14-13 win lead over **Luis Saez**, well clear of third-place **Florent Geroux** who had five wins.

In the race for leading trainer, **Brad Cox** led the way with five wins. There was a four-way tie for second between **Steve Asmussen**, **Phil Bauer**, **Kenny McPeck** and **Joe Sharp** who all had four wins.

Rigney Racing led all owners with four wins from 10 starts. They were two wins ahead of **Fern Circle Stables** and **Three Chimneys Farm**, **Gervais Racing**, **Kaleem Shah** and **Peter E. Blum Thoroughbreds**.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Wednesday's nine-race program got underway at 12:45 p.m. and featured a \$245,040 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 Jackpot spanning Races 4-9. There will be a mandatory payout in all wagers Sunday. ... **Rigney Racing's** highly regarded 2-year-old filly **Claire's Charm** received an 85 Brisnet Speed Rating for her 1 ½-length maiden special weight victory on Sunday at Churchill Downs. ... Following more than an inch of rain the Louisville area Monday-Tuesday, the main track was listed as "good" to start the Wednesday card. ... Churchill Downs will host the final Twilight Thursday of the year from 5-8 p.m. in the Paddock Plaza. There will be \$2 select domestic can beer, live music by Shane Dawson and food truck appearances from Black Rock Grille, DonutNV and Hurrikanes.

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.

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