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UNDEFEATED ALWAYS A RUNNER TAKES 152ND LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS

LOUISVILLE, KY (Friday, May 1, 2026) – Douglas Scharbauer and Three Chimneys Farm's Always a Runner surged past **Meaning** and **Explora** at the sixteenth pole and pulled away to a 1 ¼-length victory in the 152nd running of the \$1,500,000 Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) for 3-year-old fillies Friday evening at Churchill Downs before a crowd of 103,290.

Trained by **Chad Brown** and ridden by **Jose Ortiz**, Always a Runner remained undefeated in three starts and completed the mile and eighth on a fast main track in 1:48.62. It is the first Oaks win for Brown and second for Ortiz who scored in 2019 with **Serengeti Empress**.

Ortiz also rode five winners on the Oaks Day program.

Exiting post 1, **Explora** set the pace while under token pressure from **Dazzling Dame** through opening fractions of :23.08 and :46.85 with Pashmina racing third and Counting Stars fourth while getting an inside trip. Always a Runner raced in mid pack early while between horses.

The top two remained unchanged approaching the stretch while behind them Always a Runner was launching a five-wide move that put her clear of traffic.

At midstretch, Meaning began to draw from Explora but Always a Runner was in high gear and took over at the sixteenth pole and drew off for the victory.

Counting Stars rallied late to get third by a neck over Explora.

The victory was worth \$855,600 and increased her earnings to \$987,800.

Bred by Three Chimneys Farm, Always a Runner is a Kentucky-bred daughter of Gun Runner out of the Malibu Moon mare Always Carina.

Always a Runner returned \$13.04, \$7.46 and \$5.44. Meaning, ridden by **Juan Hernandez**, returned \$7.44 and \$5.62 and finished a length in front of Counting Stars who paid \$5.36 to show under **Francisco Arrieta**.

Following Explora in order were **Prom Queen**, favored **Zany**, **Percy's Bar**, **Resist**, **Search Party**, **Pashmina**, **Lovely Grey** and **Brooklyn Blonde**.

KENTUCKY OAKS QUOTES

Jose Ortiz (Jockey, Always a Runner, winner) – “Around the far turn she really started coming with a big run. She had to really work hard to get by those fillies on the lead. It's such an incredible experience to win the Oaks. It was a great day of racing and to cap it off in the Oaks it was amazing.”

Chad Brown (Trainer, Always a Runner, winner) – “I'm so proud of this horse. She's overcome so much and to be able to be rewarded this way is unbelievable. She had a very serious case of pneumonia. When horses experience things like that, we just had to take things day by day. Her career was really up in the air. I never imagined she'd get to this day.”

Juan Hernandez (Jockey, Meaning, second) – “I had a really good trip. She Broke really well and got in a good position. Around the turn, I swung out because the horse in front of me was kind of stopping. When I asked her, she exploded. I thought we had it for a second, the other filly was just a little faster than we were today. She's going to improve from this race.”

Michael McCarthy (Trainer, Meaning, second) --- “I thought she would show up and she did. I am happy with her race.”

Francisco Arrieta (Jockey, Counting Stars, third) – “She broke well. I had a couple of horses covering me and I sat just behind them. I tried to make a move but the gap closed so I had to wait a little longer.”

Mark Casse (Trainer, Counting Stars, third) --- “I am very proud of her and I thought Francisco (Arrieta) gave her a great ride.”

Flavien Prat (Jockey, Explora, fourth) – “She bounced out of there very well. She was going well on the lead and ran a very good race overall.”

Bob Baffert (Trainer, Explora, fourth) – “They went fast. She was in a good spot and hung in there. Turning for home, she gave us a scream. I am proud of her; she ran her heart out.”

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Javier Castellano (Jockey, Prom Queen, fifth) – We didn't have the best break out of the gate. I had to decide to early position quickly, we feel too far behind and had a lot of traffic in front of us. I then had to go outside but we lost to a really good horse."

Irad Ortiz Jr. (Jockey, Zany, sixth) – "I was right next to the winner (early on). At the three-eighths pole, we were moving good but at the quarter poke, they opened up in front me and she did not respond when I hit her left handed. Not today."

Luan Machado (Jockey, Percy's Bar, seventh) – "She broke well out of the gate but she just didn't quite have the kick to get into the first group. It was a little bit of a wide trip but I was just off the winner so we really didn't have much of an excuse."

Luis Saez (Jockey, Dazzling Dame, eighth) – "I had a great trip and was in a beautiful spot. It's the spot I wanted to be in but when we turned for home, it was a little tough for my filly."

Brian Hernandez Jr. (Jockey, Resist, ninth) – "I am proud of her. She broke from the 17 hole and broke out a bit and was a little further back than I first envisioned. From there, I tried to work out a trip. She came with a run but in these Grade 1s, they don't come back to you. You have to try and chase them down."

Cristian Torres (Jockey, Search Party, 10th) – "I had a great trip all the way around. When it was time to run, she just wasn't there for me."

Ramon Vazquez (Jockey, Pashmina, 11th) – "I got a perfect and was in a good position on the backside behind the speed. My filly was just flat."

Dylan Davis (Jockey, Lovely Grey, 12th) – "She got outfooted. She broke OK and was behind the (early) pace. She could not get any finish today."

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