



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## RHETORICAL MUCH THE BEST IN OLD FORESTER BOURBON TURF CLASSIC

**LOUISVILLE, KY (Saturday, May 2, 2026)** – Gary Barber, Cheyenne Stable and Wachtel Stable’s favored **Rhetorical** led every step of the way in posting a 3 1/4-length victory in the 40th running of the \$1.5 million Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic (GI) for 4-year-olds and up Saturday afternoon.

Trained by **Will Walden** and ridden by **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, Rhetorical completed the mile and eighth over a firm Matt Winn Turf Course in a stakes-record 1:45.96. It is the fourth victory in the race for Ortiz with previous wins coming in 2019 with **Bricks and Mortar**, 2021 with **Colonel Liam** and 2023 with **Up to the Mark**.

Rhetorical posted uncontested fractions of :23.51, :47.40, 1:10.70 and increased his advantage in the stretch with more than enough left in the tank to hold off a late bid from **Make Me King (FR)** who had finished fourth in the Dubai Turf (GI) at Meydan five weeks ago.

Rhetorical is a 5-year-old New York-bred son of Not This Time out of the Distorted Humor mare Sheet Humor. Now a two-time Grade I winner with a record of 9-6-0-2, Rhetorical has earned \$1,806,680 that includes \$833,280 from Saturday’s performance.

Rhetorical returned \$5.92, \$3.76 and \$3.04. Make Me King, ridden by Jose Ortiz, returned \$7.18 and \$4.72 with Corruption finishing another 3 ½ lengths back in third under John Velazquez and paying \$5.42 to show.

It was another three-quarters of a length back to **Program Trading (GB)** in fourth with **Mercante, Dashman, Gold Phoenix (IRE), Test Score** and **Asbury Park (GB)** following in order.

### OLD FORESTER BOURBON TURF CLASSIC QUOTES

**Irad Ortiz Jr. (Jockey, Rhetorical, winner)** – “It was beautiful. He broke great and relaxed really well for me. He showed another gear when I asked him to go. I was confident the whole way.”

**Will Walden (Trainer, Rhetorical, winner)** – “The key for this horse was getting him in front. He’s a real Alpha male; he wants to dominate every group of horses. When he got out front today, I saw everything change. His demeanor, his body language, he liked it out there. We had him down at Palm Meadows this winter and did a lot of basic things with him. It was real good for him. Yes, he’s the best horse I’ve had so far; far and away.”

**Jose Ortiz (Jockey, Make Me King-FR, second)** – “It was a very good trip coming from the outside post. I was able to save a lot of ground on both turns. On the final turn, I was able to drop behind Flavien (Prat on Asbury Park) and work my out half around the turn. It was beautiful. The winner got away with some easy fractions but my horse is really nice.”

### 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 saddling paddock and 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](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

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