

Media Advisory



CHURCHILL DOWNS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)
Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com

STATUE UNVEILING OF LEGENDARY BLACK JOCKEY OLIVER LEWIS SET FOR WEDNESDAY AT 11 A.M. OUTSIDE FIRST TURN CLUB

What: The Oliver Lewis Foundation and Churchill Downs will unveil and commemorate a monument that honors African-American jockey Oliver Lewis, who rode Aristides to victory at age 18 in the inaugural 1875 Kentucky Derby. Led by Executive Director of the Oliver Lewis Foundation and direct descendant Rodney Van Johnson (acclaimed actor and great-great-grandson of Lewis), the Oliver Lewis Foundation has spearheaded this historic homecoming.

“This statue is not just about a jockey who won a horse race that happened over 150 years ago,” Van Johnson said. “It is about honoring a man who refused to be broken when the world tried to erase him. My great-great-grandfather was a champion jockey, but he was also an inventor, a notary, and a businessman who forged his own path. The Oliver Lewis Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that his complete genius — and the genius of all the Black horsemen who remained as trainers and behind-the-scenes employees who owned their own stables and trained for other horsemen — is permanently represented in the history of Churchill Downs.”

When: **Wednesday, June 24, 2026 at 11 a.m. ET.**

Where: **Just Inside the Ford First Turn Club Entry Gate, Churchill Downs.** Please enter Churchill Downs through Derby Drive and proceed to the First Turn Club. 700 Central Ave., Louisville, KY 40208.

Contact: Oliver Lewis Foundation/Octane Design Studios:
Danielle Meadows-Stinnett at info@lexoctane.com.

Churchill Downs Racetrack:
Darren Rogers at (502) 345-1030 or Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.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. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

ABOUT THE OLIVER LEWIS FOUNDATION

The Oliver Lewis Foundation is a non-profit organization established by the descendants of Oliver Lewis. The foundation is dedicated to preserving the multifaceted legacy of Oliver Lewis as an athlete, entrepreneur, and innovator, while creating economic, educational, and athletic pipelines for minority youth in the equine and tech industries.

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