

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **HOT ROD CHARLIE RE-RALLIES ON RAIL TO EDGE KENTUCKY DERBY WINNER RICH STRIKE IN GRADE II, \$500,000 LUKAS CLASSIC THRILLER AT CHURCHILL DOWNS**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022)** – Saturday’s \$500,000 Lukas Classic (GII) at Churchill Downs didn’t deserve a loser. But following a thrilling stretch run in the ninth running of the 1 1/8-mile race for 3-year-olds and up, it was a determined **Hot Rod Charlie** who re-rallied along the inside rail to hang a head defeat on this year’s Kentucky Derby (GI) winner **Rich Strike**, who briefly took the lead inside the final sixteenth of a mile and looked as if he’d continue his success beneath the Twin Spires.

Hot Rod Charlie, ridden by **Tyler Gaffalione** and trained by **Doug O’Neill**, clocked 1 1/8 miles over a fast track in 1:49.77 for owners **Roadrunner Racing** (Greg Helm), **Boat Racing** (Patrick O’Neill), **William Strauss** and **Gainesway Thoroughbreds** (Anthony Beck).

“Tyler (Gaffalione) gave him a great ride,” O’Neill said. “He’s one of those type of horses that I’d love to have blinkers on him for half the race and take them off for the other half. It was an incredible effort. Rich Strike ran a winning race as well. He ran huge. (Hot Rod Charlie) is a great horse and we’re so lucky to have him.”

Added Rich Strike’s trainer **Eric Reed**: “It’s a tough beat but we are so proud of the step forward our horse took today. It was a big ask of him to run against these type of older horses and he proved he is just as talented. He was a little bit closer to the pace today but he was still able to fight hard to the wire.”

Sent to post as the 6-5 favorite, Grade I-winner Hot Rod Charlie sat just off the right hip of Charles Town Classic (GII) winner **Art Collector**, who led the field of six through fractions :23.55, :47.94 and 1:11.77. **Happy Saver**, winner of the 2020 Jockey Club Gold Cup (GI), tracked in third and Rich Strike was closer than usual in fourth.

Around the final turn, Hot Rod Charlie engaged Art Collector and the two ran head and head as jockey **Sonny Leon** urged Rich Strike to make his move. The Derby winner responded from the outside and loomed boldly with a furlong to run. Rich Strike gained a head advantage from Hot Rod Charlie inside the sixteenth pole and looked as if he might become the first Derby winner since 1997 champion **Silver Charm** to return to Churchill Downs victorious. However, Hot Rod Charlie never wavered and fought on gamely to re-rally and prevail in a tight photo finish.

“Doug (O’Neill) and his team really had him ready to run today,” Gaffalione said. “We broke well and he doesn’t really have to be asked to get into a good spot. He really never gave up on me. (Rich Strike) ran a huge effort and my horse just kept on fighting the entire way. He really didn’t want to get beat.”

Overall, Hot Rod Charlie has won five of 18 starts with six seconds and three thirds. The \$305,520 first prize boosted his career earnings to \$5,556,720.

This was Hot Rod Charlie’s fourth stakes win. At 3, he won the \$1 million Pennsylvania Derby (GI) and \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII). Earlier this year, Hot Rod Charlie won the \$350,000 Al Maktoum Challenge at Meydan Racecourse before finishing second to **Country Grammer** in the \$12 million Dubai World Cup (GI).

His next target is the \$6 million Breeders’ Cup Classic (GI) on Nov. 5 at Keeneland.

“I couldn’t tell live if we won and had to look up at the screen,” said co-owner **Bill Strauss**. “He’s a game horse and Doug (O’Neill) and his team did a great job. He’s based over at Keeneland and we’re excited to go down the road for the Breeders’ Cup. The Breeders’ Cup is setting up to be a great race as a fan and as an owner it’s great to have a game horse like this.”

Hot Rod Charlie returned \$4.66, \$3.20 and \$2.32. Rich Strike, at odds of 9-2, paid \$4.68 and \$3.22. It was another 4 ¼ lengths back to **King Fury** in third under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** who paid \$4.20 to show at odds of 16-1.

Happy Saver, Art Collector and **Chess Chief** completed the order of finish.

Hot Rod Charlie, a dark bay or brown son of Oxbow out of the Indian Charlie mare Indian Miss, was bred in Kentucky by **Edward A. Cox Jr.**

The Lukas Classic honors the iconic 87-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs’ Barn 44 since 1989. He was on hand to present the trophy.

## SENIOR BUSCADOR WINS GRADE III, \$300,000 ACK ACK; BREEDERS' CUP DIRT MILE NEXT

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022)** – Joe R. Peacock Jr.'s **Senor Buscador** relaxed off a sharp early pace, grabbed the lead at the top of the stretch and out-kicked **Injunction** late to win Saturday's 30<sup>th</sup> renewal of the \$300,000 Ack Ack (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by 1 ¼ lengths. Grade I winner **Speaker's Corner**, the 7-5 favorite, finished seventh.

Senor Buscador, a 4-year-old son of Mineshaft, ran one mile on a fast track in 1:34.60. The Ack Ack is a Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" event for the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (GI). By winning the race, Senor Buscador will receive an entry-fees paid berth to the Nov. 5 race at Keeneland along with a travel stipend.

**Francisco Arrieta** rode the winner for the first graded stakes win of his riding career. Trainer **Todd Fincher** saddled him to victory for his second graded stakes triumph. Previously, he won the 2018 Sunland Derby (GIII) with Senor Buscador's older half-brother **Runaway Ghost**.

**Surly Furious** went right to the front and led the field of eight older horses down the backstretch in the one-turn mile through fractions of :22.91, :45.74 and 1:10.08 with Speaker's Corner chasing from the rail and Injunction to the leader's outside. Senor Buscador was travelling comfortable mid-pack and in the clear on the outside.

Leaving the turn, Speaker's Corner began to fade and Senor Buscador ranged up to Surly Furious' right hip. He took command in upper stretch and edged away from Injunction nearing the wire.

"I was able to get him into a really good rhythm down the backside," Arrieta said. "He was travelling in a good position behind the speed in front of us. In the stretch he showed a lot of fight to him. It's really exciting to win a race like this and I'm so thankful for Joey (Peacock) and Todd (Fincher) for letting me ride him."

The first prize was \$180,350 and hiked Senor Buscador's bankroll to \$376,677 with a record of 4-0-1 from six starts. It was his second career stakes win. At age 2, he won the 2020 Springboard Mile at Remington Park.

Next up is the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, according to Fincher.

"He showed his talent today," Fincher said. "We knew he was a talented horse by the way he won the Springboard Mile in 2020 and he's now maturing and I think is coming into his own."

Six of the last nine Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013), **Tapiture** (2015), **Tom's Ready** (2016), **Awesome Slew** (2017), **Seeking the Soul** (2018) and **Mr. Money** (2020) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, which is scheduled for Nov. 5 at Keeneland with a \$1 million purse.

Senor Buscador paid \$14.36, \$6.70 and \$4.08 at odds of 6-1. Injunction, ridden by **Gerardo Corrales**, paid \$11.72 and \$6.76.

**Three Technique** was another 3 ½ lengths back in third under **Rafael Bejarano** and paid \$4.74 to show.

Surly Furious was fourth and was followed by **Fulsome**, **Silver Prospector**, Speaker's Corner and **Untreated**. **Mailman Money** and **Twilight Blue** were scratched.

Senor Buscador, out of the Desert God mare Rose's Desert, was bred in Kentucky by **Joe R. Peacock Sr.** and his son, the owner.

The race is named in honor of **Cain Hoy Stable's** 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who is enshrined in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. In his only Churchill Downs appearance, Ack Ack won the 1969 Derby Trial in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

## MANDATORY CLOSING PAYOUT OF \$33,734 DERBY CITY 6 ON SUNDAY

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022)** – A Derby City 6 carryover pool of \$33,734 awaits bettors Sunday for closing day of Churchill Downs' 14-day September Meet.

Because Sunday is closing day, there is a mandatory Derby City 6 payout with all monies distributed to ticket holders with the most winners in the six-race series. Sunday's Derby City 6, which only costs 20 cents per combination, is scheduled to cover Races 5-10 starting at approximately 2:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Takeout on the Derby City 6 is just 15 percent, which is one of the lowest multi-race wager takeout rates in American racing.

Fans can wager on the Derby City 6 on track at Churchill Downs; [www.TwinSpires.com](http://www.TwinSpires.com), the track's official online wagering platform; other online wagering outlets; and select satellite betting centers throughout North America.

The first of 10 races Sunday is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

There also is a \$3,740 carryover in the \$1 Super Hi-5 Race 10 finale, which also must be paid out.

## LUKAS CLASSIC QUOTES

**Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Hot Rod Charlie, winner)** – “Doug (O’Neill) and his team really had him ready to run today. We broke well and he doesn’t really have to be asked to get into a good spot. He really never gave up on me. (Rich Strike) ran a huge effort and my horse just kept on fighting the entire way. He really didn’t want to get beat.”

**Doug O’Neill, (trainer, Hot Rod Charlie, winner)** – “Tyler (Gaffalione) gave him a great ride. He’s one of those type of horses that I’d love to have blinkers on him for half the race and take them off for the other half. It was an incredible effort. Rich Strike ran a winning race as well. He ran huge. (Hot Rod Charlie) is a great horse and we’re so lucky to have him.”

**Bill Strauss, (co-owner, Hot Rod Charlie, winner)** – “I couldn’t tell live if we won and had to look up at the screen. He’s a game horse and Doug (O’Neill) and his team did a great job. He’s based over at Keeneland and we’re excited to go down the road for the Breeders’ Cup. The Breeders’ Cup is setting up to be a great race as a fan and as an owner it’s great to have a game horse like this.”

**Eric Reed, (trainer, Rich Strike, runner-up)** – “It’s a tough beat but we are so proud of the step forward our horse took today. It was a big ask of him to run against these type of older horses and he proved he is just as talented. He was a little bit closer to the pace today but he was still able to fight hard to the wire.”

**John Velazquez, (jockey, Happy Saver, fourth)** – “We got in a little tight at the eighth pole (from Rich Strike) and I think that stopped some of his momentum in deep stretch.”

## ACK ACK QUOTES

**Francisco Arrieta (jockey, Senor Buscador, winner)** – “I was able to get him into a really good rhythm down the backside. He was travelling in a good position behind the speed in front of us. In the stretch he showed a lot of fight to him. It’s really exciting to win a race like this and I’m so thankful for Joey (Peacock) and Todd (Fincher) for letting me ride him.”

**Todd Fincher, (trainer, Senor Buscador, winner)** – “He worked really well over this track the other week so we were confident he’d run a big effort. He’s shipped well in the past and handled it well coming here to Kentucky. He showed his talent today. We knew he was a talented horse by the way he won the Springboard Mile in 2020 and he’s now maturing and I think is coming into his own.”

**Bill Mott, (trainer, Speaker’s Corner, seventh as 7-5 favorite)** – “Junior (Alvarado) said he couldn’t quite make the lead and really didn’t handle the trip well when he got behind (Surlly Furious) who ended up getting the early advantage. I thought being drawn to his inside it would be a little tough to get out front but it proved too difficult to ask today.”

## 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).