

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Publicity Manager
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY KICKS OFF SATURDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS; DAMON'S MOUND, ECHO AGAIN MEET IN GRADE III, \$300,000 IROQUOIS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2022) – The Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve will begin Saturday at Churchill Downs where eight 2-year-olds, including impressive maiden winner **Echo Again**, were entered to face undefeated Grade II winner **Damon's Mound** in the 41st running of the \$300,000 Iroquois (Grade III).

The Road to the Kentucky Derby, a series of select races that award a sliding scale of points to the top finishing positions, has determined preference for its 20-horse Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) field since 2013. The 1 ¼-mile classic for 3-year-old Thoroughbreds will be run at the historic Louisville, Ky. racetrack for the 149th consecutive year on Saturday, May 6, 2023.

The 1 1/16-mile Iroquois was carded as Race 9 of 11 with a post time of 4:55 p.m. The race shares the Saturday spotlight with the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society. The five stakes will be run as the last five races on the card and comprise an all-stakes 50-cent Pick 5.

Cliff and Michele Love's homebred Damon's Mound, the headliner in the Iroquois, is trainer **Michelle Lovell's** first starter in a Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifying race. The Florida-bred son of Girvin dominated in his debut at Churchill Downs on July 2 where he demolished a field of 10 rivals by 12 ½ lengths. In his second start, Lovell shipped the homebred to Saratoga where he defeated a compact field of four in the Saratoga Special (GII) by 3 ¼ lengths.

"He's done everything right since we got him into our barn this spring," Lovell said. "He has the mind of an older horse and that's what makes him so special. The Loves have been in this game for a very long time and it's very rewarding they are able to have a horse like him, especially being a homebred. The two-turns in the Iroquois is obviously a test but he's passed his others we've given him with flying colors. I think this is the next progression to take."

Damon's Mound has done the majority of his training this summer at Colonial Downs but shipped back to his home base of Churchill Downs on Tuesday to continue preparing for the Iroquois. Jockey **Gabriel Saez** will have the return mount from post No. 3.

The top rival to Damon's Mound in the Iroquois is **Winchell Thoroughbreds** highly-touted Saratoga maiden special weight winner **Echo Again**. The son of former Horse of the Year Gun Runner cruised to a 6 ¾-length debut score on Aug. 20 under jockey **Ricardo Santana Jr.**, who was filling in for regular pilot **Joel Rosario**.

"We're extremely excited about who this horse is," Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** said. "It's a family affair. He came from mom and dad's farm in Laredo, Texas. He was my son **Erik's** favorite horse all winter and **Keith's** favorite all summer. He gets on him regularly. It was a very meaningful victory."

Rosario will be back aboard Echo Again and break from post 9.

Another 2-year-old with potential star power that was entered in the Iroquois is **West Point Thoroughbreds** and **Albaugh Family Stables' Jace's Road**. The son of Quality Road was a first-out winner on Aug. 6 at Ellis Park under jockey **Joe Talamo**. Trained by **Brad Cox**, Jace's Road was a \$510,000 Keeneland September Yearling Sale purchase in 2021. Horses campaigned by **Dennis Albaugh's** Albaugh Family Stables have won three runnings of the Iroquois: **Not This Time** (2016), **Dennis' Moment** (2019) and **Sittin On Go** (2020). Jace's Road will be ridden by **Florent Geroux** from post 6.

Here's the complete field for the Iroquois from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): **Hayes Strike** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeek); **Zaici** (David Cohen, Ricky Courville); Damon's Mound (Saez, Lovell); **Jin Tong** (Rafael Bejarano, Doug O'Neill); **Curly Jack** (Edgar Morales, Tom Amoss); **Jace's Road** (Geroux, Cox); **Honed** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeek); **Confidence Game** (James Graham, Keith Desormeaux); and Echo Again (Rosario, Asmussen).

GRADE III WINNER NAUGHTY GAL CLASHES WITH UNDEFEATED ELLIS PARK DEBUTANTE HEROINE JUSTA WARRIOR IN GRADE III, \$300,000 POCAHONTAS – Holy Cow Stable's \$200,000 Adirondack (Grade III) winner **Naughty Gal** was entered to face a full field of 11 rivals including **Stone Bridge Farm's** undefeated \$125,000 Ellis Park Debutante winner **Justa Warrior** in Saturday's \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII) at Churchill Downs.

The 1 1/16 mile Pocahontas kicks off the 2022-23 Road to the Kentucky Oaks. The Pocahontas was carded as the 11th race finale with a post time of 5:58 p.m. Saturday's program also will feature the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), the Pocahontas' male counterpart which kicks off the Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve. Along with the duo of 2-year-old stakes events, the program includes the \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

Trained by Hall of Famer **D. Wayne Lukas**, Naughty Gal broke her maiden at second asking on July 4 at Churchill Downs by 9 ¼ lengths. One month later the daughter of leading stallion Into Mischief became a graded stakes winner when she led every step of the way in the 6 ½-furlong Adirondack. Just two weeks ago, Naughty Gal tested Grade I competition in the \$300,000 Spinaway (GI) but faded to ninth. She'll be ridden in the Pocahontas by **Mitchell Murrill** from post No. 3.

Justa Warrior, the daughter of Triple Crown winner Justify, is undefeated from two starts for Ellis Park leading trainer **John Ortiz**. In her debut, Justa Warrior drew away from a field of nine by five lengths under jockey **Rey Gutierrez**. Four weeks later, Justa Warrior was victorious by one-length in the Ellis Park Debutant as the 5-2 post time favorite. Gutierrez will be back aboard Justa Warrior in the Pocahontas and break from post 11.

The Pocahontas also includes impressive maiden winner **Fun and Feisty** for trainer **Kenny McPeek**.

Here is the complete field for the Pocahontas from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): **Boss Lady Bailey** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Ortiz); **Kiss Me On Oconee** (Edgar Morales, Tom Amoss); Naughty Gal (Murrill, Lukas); **Shoplifter** (Rafael Bejarano, Eddie Kenneally); **Grand Love** (Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen); **Outofnothingatall** (David Cohen, Ricky Courville); **Southlawn** (Tyler Gaffalione, Norm Casse); **Need Some Money** (Francisco Arrieta, Sarah Hamilton); **Jet Setting** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox); Fun and Feisty (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeek); Justa Warrior (Gutierrez, Ortiz); and **Friendlypersuasion** (James Graham, Michael McCarthy).

MULTIPLE GRADED STAKES WINNER ENVOUTANTE LEADS COMPETITIVE CAST IN GRADE III, \$400,000 LOCUST GROVE – **Walking L Thoroughbreds** and **Three Chimneys Farm's** multiple graded stakes-winning mare **Envoutante** leads a field of six fillies and mares that were entered in Saturday's \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) at Churchill Downs.

The Locust Grove, run at 1 1/16 miles, was tabbed as Race 8 with a post time of 4:22 p.m. The 11-race program at Churchill Downs will get underway Saturday at 12:45 p.m. and include five stakes events. Along with the Locust Grove, the card will feature the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) and the \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

Trained by **Kenny McPeek**, Envoutante finished third in last year's Locust Grove behind former Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) winner **Shedaresthedevil**. Envoutante has recorded four of her six lifetime victories beneath the Twin Spires and most notably has won the last two runnings of the Falls City (GII) in the Fall Meet. **Brian Hernandez Jr.** will have the mount from post No. 2.

Another top entrant in the Locust Grove is multiple stakes winner **Li'l Tootsie**. The 4-year-old daughter of Tapiture recently won the \$125,000 Groupie Doll for owner **Joel Politi** and trainer **Tom Amoss**. Li'l Tootsie has seven lifetime victories from 17 starts with \$532,874 in earnings. Li'l Tootsie will be ridden by **Edgar Morales** from post 4.

Here's the complete field for the Locust Grove from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): **Gold Spirit (CHI)** (Tyler Gaffalione, Todd Pletcher); Envoutante (Hernandez, McPeek); **Crazy Beautiful** (Julien Leparoux, McPeek); Li'l Tootsie (Morales, Amoss); **Played Hard** (Joel Rosario, Phil Bauer); and **Princess of Cairo** (Geovanni Franco, Michael Puhich).

BELL'S THE ONE FACES DEFENDING CHAMPION SCONSIN IN \$300,000 OPEN MIND – Over the last 18 months, racing fans have enjoyed the rivalry of **Bell's the One** and **Sconsin** and will be treated to their eighth clash against one another in Saturday's \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) at Churchill Downs.

The six-furlong Open Mind will go as Race 7 of 11 with a post time of 3:50 p.m. The compact field of five female sprinters will be one of five stakes featured on the program. The others are the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), the \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) and the \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society. First post is 12:45 p.m.

Four weeks ago, Bell's the One and Sconsin met for the seventh time and duelled in the \$200,000 Lady Tak. Bell's the One got the better of her rival and scored a 1 ½-length victory. Owned by **Lothenbach Stables** and trained by **Neil Pessin**, Bell's the One is 8-for-9 lifetime when she competes at six furlongs. Bell's the One has also run some of her best races beneath the Twin Spires. The 6-year-old daughter of Majesticperfection has won five of 11 starts at Churchill Downs with three seconds and one third. In last year's Open Mind, Bell's the One closed ground late but could not get by Sconsin, who scored a three-quarters of a length victory. Regular rider **Corey Lanerie** will once again be in the saddle in the Open Mind and the duo will break from post No. 4.

Lloyd Madison Farms's Sconsin finished a disappointing fourth in the Lady Tak as the 4-5 favorite. Trained by **Greg Foley**, Sconsin has five wins from 10 lifetime starts at Churchill Downs and three wins from five starts at the six-furlong distance. Jockey **Tyler Gaffalione** will be back aboard Sconsin and break from the rail.

Through 12 runnings of the Open Mind there have been no repeat winners of the race. Sconsin set the stakes record in last year's running when she scorched six furlongs in 1:08.75.

Here is the complete field for the Open Mind from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): Sconsin (Gaffalione, Foley); **Joyful Cadence** (Rey Gutierrez, John Ortiz); **Cheetara (CHI)** (Vincent Cheminaud, Ignacio Correas IV); Bell's the One (Lanerie, Pessin); and **Club Car** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Ben Colebrook).

MULTIPLE STAKES WINNER ISOLATE TOPS \$275,000 LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY – Reeves Thoroughbred Racing's multiple stakes winning sprinter **Isolate** will lead a group of nine colts and geldings that were entered in the Saturday's second running of the \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society at Churchill Downs.

The six-furlong Louisville Thoroughbred Society will go as Race 10 of 11 with a post time of 5:26 p.m. The first post on the Saturday program is 12:45 p.m. and will feature the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) and the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed).

Isolate, trained by **Tom Amoss**, will enter the Louisville Thoroughbred Society on a two-race win streak after open-length victories in the \$75,000 Work All Week Stakes at Hawthorne and \$125,000 Tale of the Cat at Saratoga. The six-time winning son of Mark Valeski will be ridden by **Joel Rosario** and break from post No. 6.

Chief among his rivals in the Louisville Thoroughbred Society is **The Scherr Boys'** multiple stakes winner **Necker Island**. Trained by **Chris Hartman**, Necker Island won the \$75,000 Jeff Hall Memorial at Ellis Park and crossed the wire first in the \$150,000 Chesapeake Stakes at Colonial Downs but was subsequently disqualified and placed third due to interference in deep stretch. The 5-year-old son of Hard Spun has recorded five wins from 12 starts at Churchill Downs, most notably a head victory in last year's \$300,000 Bet On Sunshine Stakes. **Francisco Arrieta** will have the mount from post 4.

Here's the field for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): **Manny Wah** (Corey Lanerie, Wayne Catalano); **A C Expressway** (Tyler Gaffalione, Norm Casse); **Robo Man** (Florent Geroux, Lacy Pierce); Necker Island (Arrieta, Hartman); **Miles Ahead** (Martin Garcia, Paul McGee); Isolate (Rosario, Amoss); **Top Gunner** (Rey Gutierrez, John Ortiz); and **Baytown Bear** (Jack Gilligan, Paul McEntee).

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.

-END-