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WEST SARATOGA TALLIES 10 POINTS ON ‘ROAD TO DERBY’ WITH IROQUOIS WIN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 16, 2022) – Harry L. Veruchi’s West Saratoga is the early points leader on the 2024 “Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve” after the Exaggerator colt won Saturday’s 42nd running of the \$300,000 Iroquois (Grade III) for 2-year-olds by 1 ¾ lengths over 6-5 favorite **Risk It** at Churchill Downs. **Liberal Arts** was another neck back in third, and **Seize the Grey** was another neck back in fourth.

Sent to post at odds of 12-1, West Saratoga ran one mile in 1:37.28 under jockey **Rafael Bejarano** to give Keeneland-based trainer **Larry Demeritte**, who collected his first graded stakes win since **Memorial Maniac** won the 2010 Stars and Stripes Turf (GIII) at Arlington Park.

West Saratoga banked the \$180,315 first prize and 10 points on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” point system that will determine the field for next year’s 150th Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on May 4, 2024 at Churchill Downs. The Iroquois was the first in a series of 37 select races on the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” and the top five finishing positions earned points on a sliding scale of 10-5-3-2-1, respectively.

“It’s very special to get started on the Road to the Kentucky Derby,” Veruchi said. “We ran a couple times here in the spring and so we knew he’d like the track. After he broke his maiden last time at a mile we were confident he’d like stretching out in distance as he got more experienced. He’s a very nice horse.”

Breaking from post position No. 2 in field of eight 2-year-olds, West Saratoga raced down the backstretch in the clear in fourth as Virginia-invader **Patriot Spirit** set torrid fractions of :22.37, :44.63 and 1:10.14 under **Jesus Castanon** with **Market Street** in second and **Risk It** in third.

The strides of **Patriot Spirit** began to shorten at the top of the stretch and he maintained his lead until the final eighth mile until a grinding West Saratoga charged down the stretch with a four-wide move to grab the lead and inch clear of **Risk It** for the win.

“I just let him get comfortable after seeing a lot of speed in the race on paper and then the outside horse (**Patriot Spirit**) went really fast early,” Bejarano said. “I thought I’d just let my horse settle and start to get going around the turn. I could tell at the three-eighths pole I had a lot of horse beneath me and I was seeing the horses in front of me still going fast. I figured they would come back to me a little bit. I got a great trip into the stretch, and had a lot of horse still beneath me.”

West Saratoga paid \$26.96, \$8.24 and \$5.22. **Risk It**, under **Tyler Gaffalione**, returned \$3.24 and \$2.88. **Liberal Arts**, with **Cristian Torres** up at odds of 9-1, paid \$5.44.

Seize the Grey at odds of 9-2 was fourth and was followed by **Edified**, **Patriot Spirit**, **Union Roll** and **Market Street**. **Gettysburg Address** was scratched.

“It took him a little while to get settled off a fast pace,” trainer **Steve Asmussen** said of favorite **Risk It**.

This was the sixth career start for West Saratoga, who broke his maiden at Ellis Park in his fifth start on Aug 5. His career earnings now total \$276,815 from a record of 2-3-0 in six starts.

“We’ve been just trying to let him progress naturally,” Demeritte said. “He went a mile last time and we were confident today going the same distance. We’ll decide in the next day or so what’s next. I’m based in Lexington and run at Keeneland a lot so that could be a good option (in the Grade I Breeders’ Futurity).”

An \$11,000 purchase at the 2022 Keeneland September Yearling Sale, the grey or roan West Saratoga was bred in Kentucky by **Two Hearts Farm II LLC** and is out of the Unde Mo mare Mo Wicked.

IROQUOIS QUOTES

Rafael Bejarano (jockey, West Saratoga, winner): “I just let him get comfortable after seeing a lot of speed in the race on paper and then the outside horse (**Patriot Spirit**) went really fast early. I thought I’d just let my horse settle and start to get going around the turn. I could tell at the three-eighths pole I had a lot of horse beneath me and I was seeing the horses in front of me still going fast. I figured they would come back to me a little bit. I got a great trip into the stretch, and had a lot of horse still beneath me.”

Larry Demeritte (trainer, West Saratoga, winner): “We’ve been just trying to let him progress naturally. He went a mile last time and we were confident today going the same distance. We’ll decide in the next day or so what’s next. I’m based in Lexington and run at Keeneland a lot so that could be a good option (in the Grade I Breeders’ Futurity).”

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Harry Veruchi (owner, West Saratoga, winner): “It’s very special to get started on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. We ran a couple times here in the spring and so we knew he’d like the track. After he broke his maiden last time at a mile we were confident he’d like stretching out in distance as he got more experienced. He’s a very nice horse.”

Steve Asmussen (trainer, Risk It, runner-up): “It took him a little while to get settled off a fast pace.”

V V’S DREAM POSTS POWERFUL 8 ¾-LENGTH WIN IN GRADE III, \$300,000 POCAHONTAS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023) – V V’s Dream, owned by **Michael J. Mackin’s MJM Racing**, sat just off pacesetters **Hot Beach** and **Youalmosthadme** in the early stages of the race before easily running past those foes down the stretch to win Saturday’s 55th running of the \$300,000 Pochontas (Grade III) for 2-year-old fillies by a widening 8 ¾ lengths over **Youalmosthadme** at Churchill Downs.

V V’s Dream ran one mile in 1:36.45 for jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** and trainer **Kenny McPeek**. This marked the second straight year that McPeek trained a Mackin-owned runner to win the Pochontas after doing it in 2022 with **Fun and Feisty**.

V V’s Dream, a Kentucky-bred daughter of **Mitole** out of the **Tapit** mare **Quay**, banked \$183,105 for the win and is the early points-leader on the “Road to the Kentucky Oaks” after collecting 10 points. The Pochontas was the first of 32 qualifying races to the Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to be run next May, and points were awarded to the top five finishers on a 10-5-3-2-1 scale.

“She’s still young but has shown a lot of talent already,” said **Greg Geier**, McPeek’s assistant trainer. “She spent the summer in New York training for this race. It’s been the plan to run here in the Pochontas and then to the Breeders’ Cup. I don’t see why she wouldn’t improve stretching out in distance after this.”

Breaking from post three in the field of six 2-year-old fillies, V V’s Dream tugged her way into third after leaving the chute as **Hot Beach** and a tracking **Youalmosthadme** dictated the pace through fractions of :22.83, :45.55 and 1:10.24. At the top of the stretch, V V’s Dream was full of run and cut loose with a powerful three-wide move to demolish her rivals.

“She sat in a perfect spot just behind the two pacesetters,” Hernandez Jr. said. “She got a little bit of a breather around the turn and really went by them on her own. She’s won impressively in two starts here. I think stretching out around two turns shouldn’t be a problem in the future.”

V V’s Dream (3-2-1-0—\$297,605) paid \$4.40, \$2.92 and \$2.44 as the 6-5 betting choice. **Youalmosthadme**, second under **Tyler Gaffalione**, returned \$3.62 and \$2.70 at odds of 2-1. **Hot Beach**, with **Flavien Prat** up, was another three-quarters of a length back in third and paid \$2.38 to show.

Courbe, **Riperton** and **Regal Rumor** completed the order of finish. **Empire Island**, **Peignoir** and **Raining Sugar** were scratched.

The winner was bred by **Mark Stansell**.

POCAHONTAS QUOTES

Brian Hernandez Jr. (jockey, V V’s Dream, winner): “She sat in a perfect spot just behind the two pacesetters. She got a little bit of a breather around the turn and really went by them on her own. She’s won impressively in two starts here. I think stretching out around two turns shouldn’t be a problem in the future.”

Greg Geier (assistant trainer, V V’s Dream, winner): “She’s still young but has shown a lot of talent already. She spent the summer in New York training for this race. It’s been the plan to run here in the Pochontas and then to the Breeders’ Cup. I don’t see why she wouldn’t improve stretching out in distance after this.”

Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Youalmosthadme, runner-up): “She was second best today. She traveled well early on the lead but just couldn’t hold that pace late.”

SEARCH RESULTS LEADS ALL THE WAY IN GRADE III, \$400,000 LOCUST GROVE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023) – **Search Results**, the 9-5 favorite owned by **Seth Klarman's Klaravich Stables Inc.**, set moderate early fractions and led every step of the way in Saturday's 39th running of the \$400,000 Locust Grove (Grade III) for fillies and mares at Churchill Downs on her way to a 3 ¼-length triumph over **Hidden Connection**.

Ridden by **Tyler Gaffalione** and trained by **Chad Brown**, Search Results went right to the front from post position No. 4 and rattled off fractions of :24.30, :48.16 and 1:11.83 with Hidden Connection in close pursuit to her outside. The reasonable early pace meant Search Results would have plenty left for the stretch run and she responded with the comfortable win – her first victory since winning the Grade III Molly Pitcher at Monmouth Park in July 2022.

Search Result's docking for 1 1/16 miles over a fast track was 1:42.40 – the fastest in 10 runnings of the Locust Grove over the surface and distance, edipsing Kentucky Oaks winner **Shedaresthede**'s 2021 mark of 1:42.86.

"She ran a great race today," Gaffalione said. "I just sort of inherited the lead and she settled really well. In the stretch when I asked her to quicken, I had a lot of horse beneath me."

Search Results, a 5-year-old Kentucky-bred daughter of Flatter out of the Candy Ride (ARG) mare Co Cola, returned \$5.74, \$3.30 and \$3.04. Hidden Connection, ridden by **Cristian Torres**, returned \$7.58 and \$5.30 with Misty Veil another 4 ¼ lengths back in third under **James Graham** and paying \$10.96 to show.

Pauline's Pearl was fourth and was followed by **Le Da Vida (CHI)**, **A Mo Reay**, **Falconet**, **Soul of an Angel** and **Fannie and Freddie**. **Music Street** and **Royal Take Charge** were scratched.

The victory was worth \$238,560 to Search Results and increased her earnings to \$1,903,810 with a record of 7-3-5 from 16 starts. This was her sixth stakes win and fifth against graded stakes company. She won the 2021 Acorn (GI) at age 3.

"We got Search Results in earlier this week from the New York string and she settled in well to her surroundings here," said **Josh Flores**, who oversees Brown's Kentucky string at Churchill Downs. "She's very professional and ran a great race on the lead today. I'm not sure what will be next for her but we're very proud of the way she ran today."

The Locust Grove is named after the 1790 Georgian mansion in Louisville that played home to ancestors of Churchill Downs founder **Col. M. Lewis Clark**.

LOCUST GROVE QUOTES

Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Search Results, winner): "She ran a great race today. I just sort of inherited the lead and she settled really well. In the stretch when I asked her to quicken, I had a lot of horse beneath me."

Josh Flores (assistant trainer, Search Results, winner): "We got Search Results in earlier this week from the New York string and she settled in well to her surroundings here. She's very professional and ran a great race on the lead today. I'm not sure what will be next for her but we're very proud of the way she ran today."

Bret Calhoun (trainer, Hidden Connection, runner-up): "We had a really good trip sitting just outside of Search Results. In the stretch we just ended up being second best to a Grade I winner."

YUUGIRI RUNS DOWN FIRE ON TIME TO WIN \$300,000 OPEN MIND

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023) – **Mr. and Mrs. Tsunebumi Yoshihara's Yuugiri** overcame a stumble leaving the gate, stalked pacesetter **Fire On Time** from the inside and tipped out down the stretch to collar the leader inside the final sixteenth of a mile and win Saturday's 14th running of the \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) at Churchill Downs by three lengths. Odds-on 1-4 favorite **Wicked Halo** never threatened and finished third.

Ridden by **Flavien Prat** for trainer **Rodolphe Brisset**, Yuugiri ran six furlongs over a fast track in 1:09.43.

Yuugiri went to her knees from post position No. 1 when the gates opened and the usual front-runner was forced to track four-time Churchill Downs winner Fire On Time from the inside. After splits of :22.09 and :45.20, Prat took Yuugiri off the rail and angled out for her run down the stretch. After five furlongs in :57.08, Fire On Time began to retreat and Yuugiri cruised right on by for the comfortable win.

"She broke a step slow but was able to relax and really finish well," Prat said. "She showed a new style today."

Yuugiri banked the \$185,000 first prize and improved her record to six wins, two seconds and one third in 13 starts. Her career earnings total \$979,010. The Open Mind was her fourth career stakes triumph.

“We’ve tried her on a couple different surfaces this year but she’s shown success on the dirt,” Brisset said. “Today, after she broke slow, she showed a new dimension relaxing in the pocket. She’s an accomplished filly who’s won several stakes throughout her career. We’re very proud of how she won this race today.”

Yuugiri returned \$8.74, \$7.26 and \$2.10. Fire On Time, ridden by **Martin Garcia**, returned \$11.06 and \$2.30 with Wicked Halo another 5 ¾ lengths back in third under **Tyler Gaffalione** and paying \$2.10 to show.

More Than Vows was fourth and was followed by **Sharp Hero. Ten Rings** was scratched.

Yuugiri is a 4-year-old daughter of Shackleford out of the Medaglia d’Oro mare Yuzuru and was bred in Kentucky by her owners.

Saturday’s race saluted the late **Eugene Klein’s** Hall of Fame filly **Open Mind**, the **D. Wayne Lukas**-trained winner of the 1988 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) at Churchill Downs who returned to the Louisville track the following spring to win the Kentucky Oaks. The New Jersey-bred filly was an Edipse Award champion at ages two and three. A winner of 12 races and \$1,844,372 in 19 starts, the daughter of Deputy Minister was enshrined in Racing’s Hall of Fame in 2011.

OPEN MIND QUOTES

Flavien Prat (jockey, Yuugiri, winner): “She broke a step slow but was able to relax and really finish well. She showed a new style today.”

Rodolphe Brisset (trainer, Yuugiri, winner): “We’ve tried her on a couple different surfaces this year but she’s shown success on the dirt. Today, after she broke slow, she showed a new dimension relaxing in the pocket. She’s an accomplished filly who’s won several stakes throughout her career. We’re very proud of how she won this race today.”

Martin Garcia (jockey, Fire On Time, runner-up): “She ran great. She relaxed on the lead but was just second best.”

BANGO GET RECORD 11TH CHURCHILL DOWNS WIN WITH HEAD VICTORY OVER GULFSTREAM WAY IN \$300,000 LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023) – The popular crack sprinter **Bango** grabbed the lead at the top of the stretch and determinedly turned back a late bid from **Gulfstream Way** to win Saturday’s third running of the \$300,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society by a head and collect his 11th career victory at Churchill Downs to tie **Ready’s Rocket** for the most documented wins beneath the Twin Spires.

Bango ran six furlongs in 1:09.02 under jockey **Tyler Gaffalione**, who piloted the winner for trainer **Grey Foley** and owners/breeders **Fred and Debbie Schwartz’s Tamaroak Partners LLC**.

“Churchill Downs has been our home for a very long time,” Foley said. “It’s so special to have one of our horses go into the history books as tying the all-time win record at Churchill. These owners, Fred and Debbie Schwartz, have been with us for a very long time. They’ve stuck with me through my career and it’s special their horse is part of history. And a homebred, too. We’ve got a lot of our family here with us today and it’s great to be able to celebrate this win with all of them.”

Sent to post as the even-money favorite in a field six older horses, Bango sat just off the right hip of **Strobe** down the backstretch and into the turn as the leader rattled off swift early fractions of :21.55 and :44.75. Bango emerged with the lead leaving the turn with a quarter mile to run and battled gamely down the lane to hold off Gulfstream Way, who dosed from the outside and inched closer with each and every step until the finish.

“This horse is very special and just loves it here at Churchill,” Gaffalione said. “I’m very thankful for the entire Foley team for letting me ride him. He’s very talented and it’s great to be a part of history. He’s such a hard-trying horse. I had plenty of horse beneath me but it got a little closer than I would’ve liked. He’s always going to try hard so I’m confident every time I ride him.”

Bango won for the 14th time in 33 career starts and the \$183,450 payday jumped the Kentucky-bred’s career earnings to \$1,459,261. It was his ninth career stakes win.

Eleven of his 14 victories have come at Churchill Downs. Bango’s local record of 19-11-1-2—\$1,120,746 since 2019 tied Ready’s Rocket documented Churchill Downs mark of 27-11-3-3—\$135,071 set between 2005-12.

Bango paid \$4.32, \$2.56 and \$2.10. Gulfstream Way, ridden by **Ricardo Santana Jr.**, returned \$4.64 and \$2.84. **Necker Island**, with **Mitchell Murrill** in the saddle, was another 3 ¾ lengths back in third and paid \$3.30.

After Necker Island, it was another 2 ¼ lengths back to **Awesome Aaron** in fourth, who was followed by **Baytown Bear** and 6-5 second betting choice **Strobe**.

The race is named for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society, which opened for regular hours of operation in March 2021. The **Louisville Thoroughbred Society** is Louisville's only on-site wagering by Churchill Downs in the heart of Louisville's metropolitan scene. The premier hub for Thoroughbred enthusiasts is open for private membership applications, and reservations for special events are being accepted. For more information, visit www.thelouisvillethoroughbredsociety.com.

LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY QUOTES

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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.

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