



CHURCHILL DOWNS

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CHURCHILL DOWNS BARN NOTES

Thursday, July 2, 2009

- **NO DECISION ON NEW RIDER FOR MINE THAT BIRD**
- **THORN SONG REWARDS CONNECTIONS' CONFIDENCE**
- **ST. JOE FINDS CALLING AS A TURF SPRINTER**
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NO DECISION ON NEW RIDER FOR MINE THAT BIRD – Trainer Chip Woolley said Thursday morning that he had a couple of riders under consideration to ride Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (Grade I) winner **Mine That Bird** in the West Virginia Derby (Grade II) on Aug. 1.

Woolley had not received a firm commitment from Calvin Borel, who rode Mine That Bird to the Kentucky Derby victory, for the West Virginia Derby, which led Woolley to seek a new rider. Woolley is seeking a three-race commitment covering the West Virginia Derby, Shadwell Travers (GI) and the Breeders' Cup Classic (GI).

"I thank Calvin for the job he has done for us, but going race to race is not a good option for us and we think we are better off going with someone who will be there when we need him," Woolley said. "It is strictly a business decision and Calvin and (agent) Jerry (Hissam) will always be welcome in my shedrow."

Mine That Bird, who went twice around the main track Thursday morning with exercise rider Rudy Gallegos up, had his first work since finishing third in the Belmont Stakes (Grade I) on Monday when he covered a half-mile in :51 under Borel.

Woolley has three more Churchill Downs works scheduled for Mine That Bird before leaving for Mountaineer. Woolley had planned to ship Mine That Bird to Mountaineer on July 16 or 17 to get two breezes over the track, but that has changed.

"I think we are better off staying here and move up there closer to the race," Woolley said. "He will work here on the 20th and we'd go up the 24th in time to gallop him twice over the track before one work there. But even that is subject to change."

THORN SONG REWARDS CONNECTION'S CONFIDENCE – The past performance lines may have hinted otherwise, but trainer Dale Romans insists he never lost confidence in Zayat Stables' **Thorn Song**.

After a victory in the Shadwell Turf Mile (GI) at Keeneland, Thorn Song failed to finish better than fifth in his next four starts. Undeterred, Romans sent Thorn Song west for Memorial Day and the 6-year-old gray responded with a gutsy, wire-to-wire victory in the Shoemaker Mile (GI) at Hollywood Park.

"We still have faith in him," Romans said. "If we didn't, we wouldn't have shipped him across the country."

Thorn Song immediately returned to Churchill Downs and the Louisville-born Romans set his sights on Saturday's 19th running of the \$150,000-added Firecracker Handicap (Grade II), a race Thorn Song won last year.

"He has done well since he returned here and I think he's still got it," he said. "He is as good as he has ever been and I think he can put two good ones back to back."

Romans cited circumstances in the races Thorn Song lost as the major reason for the poor results and the past performance lines bear that out.

In his two 2009 starts before the Shoemaker, Thorn Song had trouble at the break. In his final two starts of 2008, the Breeders' Cup Mile (GI) and the River City Handicap (GIII), Thorn Song broke from outside post positions.

Mike Smith will have the mount Saturday and break from post position four in the one-mile Firecracker over the Matt Winn Turf Course. At the mile distance on the grass, Thorn Song has four victories and a third from seven starts.

ST. JOE FINDS HIS CALLING AS TURF SPRINTER – Throughout his three-year racing career, **St. Joe** has been a bit of a puzzle for trainer Darrin Miller. After Sunday's 3 ½-length romp on the turf, the guessing game may be over for the Silverton Hill runner.

"You can take a breath now and not worry how he'll perform," Miller said after St. Joe's second consecutive dazzling performance sprinting five furlongs on the grass.

On May 31, St. Joe broke in the air and spotted the field a lot of ground in his sprint debut. Under Julien Leparoux, St. Joe circled the field and drew away to win by a length in :56.84. On Sunday, St. Joe stalked the pace, took command leaving the backstretch and coasted home in :56.83.

"His first win was really good for him," Miller said. "Sunday, that was more the way that he runs."

St. Joe was on the Kentucky Derby trail early last year until a ninth-place finish in the Coolmore Lexington Stakes (Grade II) ended the run.

"When you have a 3-year-old with speed, you have to take a shot to see how far they can carry that speed," Miller said. "He's a gelding now, more mature and has really settled down."

A winner on closing day, April 24, at Keeneland going seven furlongs on the Polytrack for a \$40,000 claiming tag, St. Joe could return to stakes company soon.

"We are looking at the Arlington Sprint heavily," Miller said of the \$200,000-guaranteed race at 5 ½ furlongs on July 11. "It depends on how he comes back from Sunday."

AT LAST, THOMAS ENJOYS SOME GOOD FORTUNE AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – Trainer Gary Thomas still winces every time a video of the 1986 Kentucky Derby shows up.

You remember that race, don't you? **Ferdinand** darts through a narrow opening under Bill Shoemaker to give Charlie Whittingham his first Kentucky Derby victory.

The horse Ferdinand beats to the hole is **Rampage**, trained by Thomas. Stuck behind horses in the stretch, Rampage finally gets clear late to be a fast-closing fourth.

"Every year around the Derby, they show that race and I can't watch it. It makes me sick," Thomas said.

However, Dame Fortune finally smiled on Thomas beneath the Twin Spires on Sunday when Thomas won the qualifier for the 2010 National Handicapping Championship on Jan. 29-30 in Las Vegas. Total prize money available in the tournament is \$1 million with the winner getting \$500,000.

“It is the first time I played in one of those,” Thomas said. “A friend talked me into playing and the first time I played I qualified (for the final round).”

The horse that put Thomas over the top was **Knockout Bertie** when she won the ninth race and returned a \$14 payoff.

“I was third going into the last race, maybe \$3 or \$4 behind the leader,” said Thomas, who may head to Oklahoma’s Remington Park after the meet closes on Sunday.

Thomas sends his stable to Oaklawn Park for the winter. The 2010 meet will open on Jan. 15, but the barn will have to do without Thomas the third weekend of the meet.

EQUINE HYDROTHERAPY SPA OPEN FOR BUSINESS – What’s new on the backstretch at Churchill Downs? Take a walk down to the Gate 10 side of Barn 45 and in front of Barn 48 and feast your eyes on the Equine Coldwater Hydrotherapy Spa.

“We are open from 5-11 a.m. and in the afternoon by appointment,” said John Christensen of Honor Roll Racing who installed the apparatus. “This is our second one. We have one at Trackside and we will be taking that one to Turf Paradise in the winter.”

When the “Spa” opened Tuesday morning, trainer D. Wayne Lukas was the first customer with five horses scheduled for treatment.

“It is a 520-gallon tank with three filters and the water temperature is 34 degrees,” Christensen said. “There are more than 250 pounds of a combination of sea salt and Epsom salt used to go with massage and oxygen. Generally each treatment lasts about 15 minutes.”

A variety of packages are available according to Christensen.

“We have a 20-treatment package for \$500, which is \$25 a treatment,” Christensen said. “Depending on what the trainer needs for a horse, we can do packages of four or six treatments, whatever they require.”

MILESTONE WATCH -- William Connelly, who has 999 career victories, failed to reach the 1,000 mark Wednesday night when **Brilliant Bid** finished second, beaten a half-length in the fifth race at Indiana Downs. Connelly’s next chance comes Friday when he sends out **Knownforstone** in the 11th race at Churchill Downs. On Saturday, Connelly will saddle **Seaside Princess** in the first race at Churchill Downs.

BARN TALK – James Spence’s **El Caballo**, who figured to be a major player in Saturday’s Firecracker Handicap, was injured during a five-furlong turf work on Tuesday morning. “He has the start of a condylar (fracture) and is out for the year,” trainer Ralph Nicks said.

WORK TAB – **Dubai Majesty**, winner of the Winning Colors (GIII), worked a half-mile on a fast main track in :49.40, eighth fastest of 24 at the distance. Stablemate **Chamberlain Bridge**, winner of the Aegon Turf Sprint (GIII), worked a half-mile on firm turf in :53.20.

Churchill Downs Spring Meet Leaders (through June 28)		
	Starts	1-2-3
JOCKEYS		
Julien Leparoux	242	61-43-33
Calvin Borel	228	53-34-31
Robby Albarado	243	39-37-42
Miguel Mena	270	38-47-41
Shaun Bridgmohan	211	37-30-31
Corey Lanerie	225	33-30-30
Jon Court	241	25-19-36
Jamie Theriot	118	21-18-18
Jesus Castanon	208	19-32-18
Brian Hernandez Jr.	213	17-31-26
TRAINERS		
Steve Asmussen	133	25-21-21
Mike Maker	71	17-12-5
Greg Foley	60	15-11-5
Tom Amoss	52	14-15-6
Dale Romans	115	13-16-20
Eddie Kenneally	66	14-11-14
Ken McPeck	81	12-11-15
Bret Calhoun	34	11-4-7
Bill Mott	49	10-9-10
George "Rusty" Arnold II, Ian Wilkes and Jim Baker tied at nine (9) wins		
OWNERS		
Ken and Sarah Ramsey	73	17-11-7
Maggi Moss	30	8-11-2
Zayat Stables LLC	36	6-5-5
Westrock Stables LLC	16	5-2-3
Carl Moore Management LLC	10	5-1-2
Heiligbrodt Racing Stable	40	4-7-4
Richard, Elaine and Bert Klein	31	4-5-4
Elisabeth Alexander	17	4-4-4
G. Watts Humphrey Jr.	15	4-2-3
Billy Hays	23	4-2-1
Kim and John Glenney	14	4-2-0
Kenneth Kaelin	6	4-0-0
Ten (10) owners tied at three (3) wins		