



Breeders' Cup World Championships, Oct. 24-25

\$5 million Breeders' Cup Classic (Grade I) World Championships Three-Year-Olds and Up 1 1/4 Miles

Friday, October 24, 2008

Contact Notes Team (626) 254-1307

Casino Drive (Tr: Kazuo Fujisawa; ex. rider: Naruhito Kasai) – The lightly raced but unbeaten Mineshaft colt, who arrived at Santa Anita mid-morning on Thursday from Hollywood Park, cantered 1m over the Pro-Ride main track here Friday morning with assistant trainer Naruhito Kasai aboard.

The Japan-based 3yo, who won at Santa Anita on Oct. 12 in just his third career start, is coming to the \$5 million Breeders' Cup Classic the right way, according to Nobutaka Tada, racing manager for owner Hidetoshi Yamamoto.

Trainer Kazuo Fujisawa was on hand at Santa Anita Park for the first time Friday morning after arriving Thursday from Japan with the owner.

“He shipped very well from Hollywood Park yesterday and everything went well,” said Tada. “Mr. Fujisawa was very pleased with his conditioning. He said he was coming up to this race better than he was for the Belmont Stakes.

“He has settled in better than expected,” Tada said. “We are very happy with the way he is coming into the race. Kasai said he was very pleased with his canter this morning.”

Casino Drive won his maiden race in Japan in February, then did not race again until he won the Peter Pan at Belmont in May. A stone bruise forced him to the sidelines, and he did not make his next start until the Oct. 12 race here.

Champs Elysees (Tr: Robert Frankel; ex. rider: Goncalino Almeida) – The Juddmonte Farms' homebred, a 5yo horse by Danehill out of the even more-exceptional mare Hasili, completed his conditioning for Saturday's Classic with a gallop of 1 3/8m Friday morning as the sun was coming up at Santa Anita.

Trainer Robert Frankel left stable business Friday to his longtime aide, Humberto Ascanio, and the veteran horseman – who first came to work for the Hall of Fame conditioner in 1973 – reported the British-born runner was in fine fettle.

“All's good,” Ascanio noted.

Champs Elysees, who has finished in the top three in 15 of his 19 lifetime starts and earned \$1.2 million in the process, will break from the outside 12-post in the Classic field and be partnered for the first time by the young New York-based star Alan Garcia.

-more-

2-2-2-2

Colonel John (Tr: Eoin Harty; ex. rider: Iggy Puglisi) – Colonel John, a 3yo son of back-to-back Breeders' Cup Classic winner Tiznow (2000-01) galloped around the track Friday morning under the watchful eye of trainer Eoin Harty, who knocked wood and said the colt is in excellent shape and ready to go in the Breeders' Cup Classic.

No matter how the Santa Anita Derby and Travers Stakes winner fares against older horses on Saturday, his owners, Sue and Bill Casner of WinStar Farms, pledged to run Colonel John next year.

"He was bred and born at our farm in Versailles (Kentucky) and I picked out the mare and she was bred to Tiznow," said Sue, who throughout the week has been attired in a wardrobe of hats, jackets and T-shirts all bearing the name of the horse and military insignia. "We are going to run him next year. Hopefully, he will repeat his daddy's accomplishments and win the Classic."

Harty has saddled six Breeders' Cup horses and won the 2001 Juvenile Fillies with Tempura but Colonel John is his first Classic horse. Edgar Prado gets the call and although he has ridden in 56 Breeders' Cup races and won three, the Classic has eluded him.

As for WinStar, the Casners bred five entrants, including Kentucky Derby victor Funny Cide, and owned one Breeders' Cup starter but have yet to win any of those races.

The Casners also bred and own Well Armed, the favorite in the Dirt Mile.

"My husband and I have been on the racetrack for a long time and we love this business," said Sue, who has been married to Bill for 35 years and mucked stalls and walked their horses when they started out. "We go where our horses are. We love to travel and be around them."

"Colonel John is Sue's horse and Well Armed is our horse," said Bill, "They're both homebreds and that makes them a little more special."

Curlin (Tr: Steve Asmussen; ex. rider: Carlos Rosas) – Steve Asmussen sent out Stonestreet Stables' Curlin out for his usual gallop on Friday, getting his final preparations for the Classic.

"The horse looks beautiful," Asmussen said. "The weather is still going to be in play, it's been pretty warm. But that's why we brought him out here in advance, to give him a chance to adjust, just like we did in Dubai."

"Will he run his race on a synthetic surface? That's the huge question. And that's why all the handicappers don't have him picked (on top) in the selections (see *Daily Racing Form*). You wouldn't see that if this race were on the dirt."

Asmussen is reluctant to look past Saturday, but if Curlin were to secure Horse of the Year honors for the second year in a row and join the ranks of two-time winners like Affirmed, Secretariat, Forego and Whirlaway, he responded, "That's good company."

Speaking about his emotions surrounding Curlin, Asmussen said, "What a catalyst he's been for great experiences, for our entire family. We have a room at the house with photos of all the races he's won. He's got his own room."

Asmussen holds the record for most wins in a season (North America) of 555, set in 2004. Through yesterday, his horses have won 508 races and he could very well break his own record this year.

-more-

3-3-3-3

“It’s been a tremendous year and it all began with the announcement of Curlin returning to training,” said Asmussen. “And how he’s put together back-to-back \$5 million years (in earnings). For him to set the all-time earnings record is amazing and the condition in which he’s come out of it all is the best part.”

It’s too early to tell whether or not Stonestreet Stables’ Jess Jackson will decide to campaign Curlin in 2009. Asmussen doesn’t even want to think about it right now and wants to savor Saturday.

But he does concede, “Next year is going to be a rebuilding year for us. It’s going to be a different look next year without many of these horses in the shedrow.”

Stablemates Student Council (Classic contender) and Pyro (Dirt Mile) are both destined for stud duty after the Breeders’ Cup.

With all the races Asmussen has won over the years, he has one Breeders’ Cup victory from nine starters to his credit: the 2007 Breeders’ Cup Classic with Curlin.

Duke of Marmalade (Tr: Aidan O’Brien) – At 6:50 a.m. Friday, Duke of Marmalade and the five other members of trainer Aidan O’Brien’s Ballydoyle stable to race on Saturday left the quarantine barn to canter 1m on the main track.

O’Brien said Duke of Marmalade quickened a bit in the second half of his trip around the Pro-Ride track.

Duke of Marmalade won five consecutive Group 1 turf races in Europe this season. He is moving to the synthetic surface Saturday for the Classic, where he will compete against defending champion Curlin.

“The Duke has been an exceptional horse all year and you can see why,” O’Brien said. “He always steps up to the plate. He cantered well. We’re very happy.”

O’Brien sent the 4yo Danehill colt to the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe, where Duke of Marmalade finished seventh, 3 ¾ lengths behind the winner, the filly Zarkava. According to O’Brien, the Classic has been on Duke of Marmalade’s schedule for a long time.

“It’s great to be here and great to be taking part in such a great race,” O’Brien said. “Duke is one of these horses who has danced every dance. You can see the physique of him and the power, the strength and the toughness. He has all the things. We look forward to seeing him running.”

Fairbanks (Tr: Todd Pletcher) – Team Valor’s potential spoiler Fairbanks galloped 1 1/2m on the morning before his greatest challenge, the hopes of his connection buoyed by the affinity shown for the distance by the Giant’s Causeway 5yo, who is 4-2-2-0 at 1 1/4m and the apparent pacemaker with veteran Richard Migliore in the stirrups.

“Pretty straightforward,” trainer Todd Pletcher said. “We’re going to the front and taking them as far as we can. We’re hoping to go fast enough to spread out the field and slow enough to have something left.”

-more-

4-4-4-4

Go Between (Tr: Bill Mott) – If there were any nerves in the barn of the Pacific Classic winner, you couldn't detect them from his trainer, the unflappable Bill Mott.

"We're ready to race right now," said the Hall of Famer, who won this race with Cigar in 1995. What many people probably don't remember is that Cigar lost the Classic in 1996 to Alphabet Soup at Woodbine, the only Breeders' Cup ever run outside the U.S.

Go Between has had a few days to acclimate himself to the Pro-Ride surface at Santa Anita since shipping in from Churchill Downs, but he hasn't raced since the Pacific Classic on Aug. 24 over the Polytrack at Del Mar.

"I wasn't at Del Mar, but I guess this track is somewhat different," Mott said after sending the son of champion Point Given out for his usual 1 3/8m gallop. "He seems to be moving very well over it, that's all I can tell you. There are going to be slight variations to all of them (artificial surfaces). He seems to handle it well."

Go Between has run first or second in all six of his starts on artificial surfaces, including a victory in Sunshine Millions Classic at Santa Anita, but that was a different surface then. He has two wins in five starts with three seconds this season as a 5yo.

"I'm optimistic in that the horse has been training well," Mott said. "His works have been as good as you could ever expect them to be. He's coming into it real good, and that's all we can ask."

Mott seldom gets too excited about any victory, and a win in the Classic would probably not alter his post-race demeanor.

"It'd give us a reason to do a few high-fives, I guess," he said. Garrett Gomez, who rode in the Pacific Classic, will be aboard and breaking from the inside post.

Henrythenavigator (Tr: Aidan O'Brien) – After competing in top-level mile turf races in Europe this season – where he won four consecutive Group 1's – Henrythenavigator will try 1¼ m in the Classic.

A total of 12 horses from North America, Europe and Japan will compete in the first Classic to be run on a synthetic surface.

"I think it's as fair as it can get, really, isn't it?" trainer Aidan O'Brien said. "With the surface, it's going to allow dirt horses and grass horses to compete in some kind of middle ground."

American jockey John Velazquez will ride Henrythenavigator for the first time in the Classic.

Raven's Pass (Tr: John Gosden) – The 3yo son of Elusive Quality, who will stretch out to 1 1/4m for the first time in the Classic, finished his preparations Friday morning.

"He galloped a mile-and-an-eighth and then he stood in the gate," said trainer John Gosden. "That's it for him. Everything's good, and he's ready to go."

Jockey Frankie Dettori was aboard this morning as he gets ready to ride Raven's Pass for the first time.

A Kentucky-bred, Raven's Pass has become one of the best milers in Europe, winning the Queen Elizabeth II and Celebration Mile his last two starts.

The Classic will be his first start on a synthetic surface.

-more-

5-5-5-5

Smooth Air (Tr: Bennie Stutts Jr.; ex. rider: Sue Milne) – Trainer Bennie Stutts, Jr. predicted Friday morning, “There could be world records (race times) set this weekend...the track is like lightning.”

The statement came a day after he sent out Mount Joy Stables’ 3yo Smooth Air for a “two-minute lick.”

“The clockers actually got him in 1:48 yesterday,” said Stutts. “So he only galloped around one time today. He did enough yesterday,” said the 70-year-old trainer.

Stutts, based at Calder Race Course in Miami, Fla., met up with another Breeders’ Cup trainer from back home this morning: Pete Anderson, who trains Marathon contender Delightful Kiss. The two reminisced about the old days.

“I have a win photo back home,” said Stutts, “from 1948 at Belmont Park. Pete was the winning jockey on a horse for my father. He was an apprentice and just 16. I’m not in the picture, though. I was 10.”

The two have known each other for 60 years and they will both have their first Breeders’ Cup starters on Saturday. Ironically, neither of them will saddle their own horses.

“My cousin, trainer Charlie Stutts, will saddle Smooth Air for me,” Stutts said. “He’s stabled out here. I have a torn rotator cuff that’s hurting me.”

Anderson’s daughter, Aggie Ordonez, will saddle Delightful Kiss. “He’s too much for me right now,” Anderson said. He stands over 16 hands...I’m about 4-11.”

Student Council (Tr: Steve Asmussen; ex. rider: Carlos Rosas) – Millennium Farms’ Student Council galloped at Santa Anita under exercise rider Carlos Rosas on Friday. The 6yo horse will make the final start of his racing career in the Classic as he is destined for the stallion barn.

“He’s a beautiful horse and is doing extremely well,” said trainer Steve Asmussen on Friday morning. “He’s aggressive and very sharp. He drew extremely well and should have a good run to the first turn.”

Student Council is Asmussen’s “other” horse in the Classic. Curlin, last year’s Classic winner, is getting most of the attention. Regarding questions from the media about the horses, Asmussen said, “The ratio is about 10 to one (Curlin to Student Council).

“He (Student Council) is a very good horse, though. He’s here for the right reasons. He has plenty of accomplishments in his own right. And he’s in great physical condition,” he added.

Asmussen said that each of his Breeders’ Cup horses would fly back to Kentucky on Monday.

Tiago (Tr: John Shirreffs; ex. rider: Frankie Herrarte) – A sign at the entrance of Barn 55 South at Hollywood Park reads: Giacomo 2005 Kentucky Derby winner, owner Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Moss, trainer John Shirreffs, jockey Mike Smith.

-more-

6-6-6-6

The same connections seek another of the biggest prizes in American racing Saturday when Tiago--a half-brother to Giacomo--starts in the Classic. The 4yo galloped 1m Friday morning under regular exercise rider Frankie Herrarte to the satisfaction of Shirreffs after being shipped Wednesday from Hollywood Park.

Shirreffs, Smith and the Mosses hope to get the two-day extravaganza off to a winning start with favored Zenyatta in the Ladies' Classic Friday.

Smith has ridden 10 Breeders' Cup winners while Shirreffs and the Mosses seek their first victory.

Giacomo finished fourth in the 2006 Classic while Tiago finished fifth in the race last year on a sloppy Monmouth Park surface.

Tiago has enjoyed previous success at Santa Anita. He has recorded three firsts, two seconds and two thirds in nine starts at the Arcadia track, highlighted by a victory in the 2007 Santa Anita Derby.

#####