



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Contact: Gary Yunt  
Kentucky Derby Notes Team Captain  
Churchill Downs Racetrack  
(502) 636-4460 (office)  
[Gary.Yunt@KyDerby.com](mailto:Gary.Yunt@KyDerby.com)

## VAHVA TURNS TABLES ON ALVA STARR TO WIN DERBY CITY DISTAFF

LOUISVILLE, KY (May 4, 2024) – Belladonna Racing, Edward Hudson Jr., West Point Thoroughbreds, Nice Guys Stables, Twin Brook Stables, Steve Homstock, LBD Stable, Manganaro Bloodstock and Runnels Racing's Vahva overtook nemesis Alva Starr at the eighth pole and drew clear for a two-length victory in the 38<sup>th</sup> running of the \$1 million Derby City Distaff presented by Kendall-Jackson Winery (GI) for fillies and mares Saturday afternoon.

Trained by Cherie DeVaux and ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr., the winner completed the seven furlongs over a main track listed as "good" in 1:21.75.

Spirit Wind set a pressured pace of :22.36 and :45.12 with Alva Starr tracking a length back while Vahva raced in the clear three wide in fourth. Leaving the far turn, Alva Starr swept past Spirit Wind but Vahva was right on her heels.

Alva Starr, who had defeated Vahva by a half-length in the Madison (GI) at Keeneland last month, tenaciously clung to the lead only to have Vahva draw even at the eighth pole and push by for her third victory in as many starts at Churchill Downs.

Vahva now has defeated Alva Starr in two of their three meetings dating back to last fall's Raven Run (GII) at Keeneland that Vahva won by a half-length.

Favored in the field of 10, Vahva returned \$5.44, \$3.46 and \$2.76. Alva Starr, ridden by Tyler Gaffalione, returned \$3.66 and \$2.92 and finished three-quarters of a length in front of Flying Connection, who paid \$5.20 to show under Florent Geroux.

It was another half-length back to Chi Town Lady, who was followed in order by Sterling Silver, Three Witches, Red Carpet Ready, Olivia Darling and American Band.

### DERBY CITY DISTAFF QUOTES

**Irada Ortiz Jr. (jockey, Vahva, winner)** – "The last time I rode her, I didn't know her very well and it wasn't one of my best rides. Today, I was able to sit a perfect trip and turning for home she really finished strong for me."

**Cherie DeVaux (trainer, Vahva, winner)** – "That was an unbelievable performance to win a Grade One on this type of stage is so special. It's really hard to describe. I'm just so happy with everyone involved with this horse and our team."

**Tyler Gaffalione (jockey, Alva Starr, second)** – "She did the same thing last time (in the Madison). I don't think she wants to use all of that speed early. If you can wait on her, she has a bit more of a finish. She ran her race today. Seven furlongs is stretching it a little bit but was doable."

**Florent Geroux (jockey, Flying Connection, third)** – "I was hoping (I could catch the leaders). She was trying really hard. I feel like my filly had a little trouble at the three-eighths pole but the two fillies in front weren't backing up. Maybe this was a little short for my filly. A flat mile might be better."

### 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 and Race and Sports Book. [www.ChurchillDowns.com](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

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