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MCPEEK SAVORS OAKS BREAKTHROUGH VICTORY WITH THORPEDO ANNA

LOUISVILLE, KY (May 4, 2024) – The morning after winning the 150th Kentucky Oaks with **Thorpedo Anna**, trainer **Kenny McPeek** pulled up at his barn around 7:30 a.m., looking refreshed despite a short Friday night of sleep.

“Our house was full late last night,” he said after Thorpedo Anna scored a nearly gate-to-wire victory in the \$1.5 million Grade I race for 3-year-old fillies with jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. “We had a lot of good friends over, and partners on the horse. Some people wanted to come over after midnight, we were shooing them away.”

Later Saturday, McPeek was shooting for an Oaks-Kentucky Derby double with **Mystik Dan**. “An Oaks-Derby double?” he said, looking skyward and gesturing a sign of the cross. The last time that happened was 1952, when legendary **Ben Jones** did it with **Real Delight** in the Oaks and **Hill Gail** in the Derby. Jones also accomplished it in 1949.

“I think we’ve got a good chance,” he said. “This horse has been training super, and I think the inside draw is going to help him. Brian is a fantastic young man. He can ride the same kind of race.”

McPeek won the Oaks on his 15th try. Although he has had strong finishes, he never had won the Oaks since finishing second with **Take Charge Lady** in 2002. For Hernandez, it was his first Oaks victory in six tries, and his first in-the-money finish.

“It was somewhat a relief,” McPeek said, “and I was gonna be upset if she didn’t win, because we felt like she was sitting on tilt.

“You don’t ever know in this game. You hook one toughie, or you break bad, something goes wrong, there are no givens. If we had lost, we would have dealt with it, but it was nice to check that box.”

For much of the week, Thorpedo Anna, owned by the partnership of **Brookdale Racing**, **Mark Edwards**, breeder **Judy Hicks** and McPeek’s **Magdalena Racing**, was the betting favorite in the Oaks. Breaking from post 5, she went off as the second betting choice, 4-1, to 7-2 runner-up **Just F Y I**. McPeek said he talked over race strategy with Hernandez.

“She’s flat fast,” he said. “Brian and I talked at length before the race. It didn’t look like there was any speed inside of her, and maybe there was one horse outside of her that could go with her, but she wasn’t going to go with her that long.

“I just didn’t want him taking back, and getting a bunch of mud in her face,” McPeek continued. “Just let her go, she’s capable.”

The Oaks fit her running style, something that she showed in winning the Fantasy (GII) at Oaklawn Park in March.

“When she broke out of the gate at Oaklawn,” McPeek said, “and even in her other wins, she was forwardly placed. We were working to teach her to rate, if you needed her to. So you don’t want any of them where you have to commit to the lead. She’s got the talent to go, so obviously she went.”

Thorpedo Anna showed just how capable she was, in gradually opening up the space between her and early pace presence **Fiona’s Magic**, then holding off Just F Y I and jockey Junior Alvarado in the stretch, for a 4 3/4-length victory. She finished the 1 1/8 miles in 1:50.83, on a sloppy track.

In the last sixteenth of a mile, McPeek said, “I was thinking don’t let anything go wrong, or don’t let anything silly happen. She did drift off the rail there a bit, to the 3 or 4 path. I was just hoping that no one would come up inside and get her.”

Thorpedo Anna came out of the Oaks in fine shape, McPeek said, although he could tell that she was tired. “She left a little bit of grain last night, about half a scoop, but it’s nothing to be worried about. It’s something we watch regularly, and she typically eats up every night. She’s tired. She ran hard.”

McPeek is weighing the options for Thorpedo Anna, a daughter of Fast Anna, out of the Uncle Mo mare Sataves. One option would be to take on the males in the Preakness at Pimlico in two weeks, but he indicated that’s probably not likely, at least as of the morning after the Oaks. McPeek did win the Preakness with 2020 Oaks runner-up Swiss Skydiver.

“We’re gonna look at the Preakness, but she’s gonna have to show us in the next three or four days,” he said. “We’ll get some clarity. There are some fees (\$150,000) involved. Probably, at this point, it’s less than 50 percent.”

He is looking forward to some stakes possibilities in New York. “I’ll see what the calendar says for 3-year-old fillies,” he said. “You don’t want to run her back in the Black Eyed Susan. Where do you find Grade I races for 3-year-old fillies? I definitely want to get her in the Coaching Club Oaks, Alabama, the Acorn, races like that. The Acorn is a mile-and-an-eighth at Saratoga, so that seems like an ideal spot. There’s a lot of math to do.”

McPeck said he's assembled a great staff, and loved sharing Thorpedo Anna's victory with them. "It takes an army of people," he said, "you can't do this alone. I've got some great guys behind me. We all row together."

JUST F Y I (2nd) – Trainer **Bill Mott** reported that all appeared to be good with reigning juvenile filly champion **Just F Y I** following her runner-up effort in the Kentucky Oaks.

The daughter of Justify got the trip Mott was hoping for as she rated in fourth in a clear outside path just off the flank of Ways and Means. When she rolled past Ways and Means at the top of the lane, George Krikorian's homebred filly had dead aim on Thorpedo Anna but was unable to reel in the speedy pacesetter.

"We haven't had her out this morning but initially she looks good," Mott said. "I thought everything looked fine. She'll go to Saratoga next, I don't know what we're going to run her in next, but that's where she's going. She was in position to win (in the Oaks) and didn't win."

REGULATORY RISK (3rd)/WAYS AND MEANS (4th) – **Baldo Hernandez**, assistant to trainer **Chad Brown**, said all appeared well with **Regulatory Risk** and **Ways and Means** the morning after their respective Oaks efforts.

Regulatory Risk outran her 29-1 odds to finish third in the Oaks while Ways and Means faded to fourth after sitting just off the quick fractions set by race winner **Thorpedo Anna**.

"I have to think about at this point if she needs to be cut back a little bit because her debut (at six furlongs) was so breath taking," Brown said of Ways and Means. "Maybe she's a seven-eighths horse at the end of the day."

EVERLAND (5th) – **Foster Family Racing**, **William Wargel**, **R.K. Eckrich Racing** and **Maxis Stable's Everland**, came out of the race in good shape, tired but happy after finishing fifth in trainer Eric Foster's said first try in the 150th Oaks.

"She's eating good, looking good," Foster said. "She ran hard, and finished good. Speed held ... that happens on a muddy track. But I was proud of her."

Foster is weighing his options with Everland. "She's still eligible for a 2X race, so I'll try to find something for her to help build up her confidence," he said.

POWER SQUEEZE (6th) – **Lea Farms' Kentucky-bred Power Squeeze** exited the Oaks in good shape and was standing in her stall at trainer **Jorge Delgado's** barn Saturday morning at Churchill Downs after finishing sixth.

INTO CHAMPAGNE (7th) – **Six Column Stables**, **Randy Bloch**, **Jim Gladden**, **Mike Davis** and **Michael Steele's Into Champagne**, who finished seventh in the Oaks, came out of the race in good shape, trainer Ian Wilkes said.

"She came out good, no problem," Wilkes said. "No thoughts about where we'll go next, since we just ran yesterday. We'll shorten her up and look at that. She ran a winning race but wasn't good enough. The distance hurt me, so we'll regroup and we'll find a spot for her."

Wilkes said he has some ideas that he's kicking around. "Ultimately, I'd like to point to the Test (Stakes, on Aug. 3 at Saratoga)," Wilkes said. "How I get there, I don't know."

LEMON MUFFIN (8th) – **Sebastian "Bas" Nicholl**, assistant to trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**, reported that **Lemon Muffin** appeared to come out of her eighth-place finish in the Oaks in good order.

"She's fine," Nicholl said. "She didn't really seem to handle the track. Little disappointing."

TARIFA (9th)/GIN GIN (12th) – Trainer Brad Cox reported all was OK with Tarifa and Gin Gin Saturday morning following their disappointing performances in the Longines Kentucky Oaks.

"We'll regroup. Things didn't work out in our favor yesterday in the Oaks," Cox said.

WHERE'S MY RING (10th) – **Michael McMillan's Where's My Ring** was back in her stall at Barn 30 Saturday morning just a bit worse for the wear following her 10th-place finish in Friday's Grade I Kentucky Oaks. The Twirling Candy filly sustained a tendon injury to her right rear leg during the running of the nine-furlong classic.

"I don't know if it was coming out of the gate, or going into the first turn," trainer **Val Brinkerhoff** said. "It's not too bad, but it's something we've got to deal with and get right. We surely would have liked to have seen a better showing yesterday, but that's horse racing. Now we've got to get her right for things upcoming during the year."

The conditioner was frustrated with the situation concerning his rider for the Oaks. He originally had commissioned veteran **Jose Lezcano** to again handle his charge after they had combined to win New York's Gazelle Stakes (GIII) in her previous start. But Lezcano was involved in a spill resulting in a concussion in the week before the big race and there was a medical question as to whether he could ride.

Brinkerhoff went to Plan B and lined up top rider **Javier Castellano** to serve as his pinch hitter, but then was told by local stewards that he would have to ride his “named” rider Lezcano.

“I wasn’t too happy with how that worked out, especially dealing with Lezcano’s people,” the veteran trainer (and former rider) said. “But again, that’s horse racing. All in all it was an honor to be here and be part of an event like this.”

OUR PRETTY WOMAN (11th) – Courtlandt Farm’s **Our Pretty Woman** came out of her Oaks race in fine shape, according to the **Steve Asmussen** barn.

The filly had a wide journey under **Joel Rosario** and Asmussen said, “She just couldn’t overcome the post.”

LESLIE’S ROSE (13th) – Following her disappointing 13th-place finish in Friday’s \$1.5 million Kentucky Oaks, **Whisper Hill Farm’s Leslie’s Rose** was reported to be “fine” Saturday morning at Barn 39.

“She came back fine,” trainer Todd Pletcher said on an overcast morning on the Churchill Downs backside. “She looked good this morning. We’ll take her up to New York and regroup.”

Leslie’s Rose, who was handled by **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, never really got in the hunt after showing just a bit of lick early on. The consensus among her connections was that she didn’t care at all for the sloppy/sealed racetrack during the nine-furlong journey

FIONA’S MAGIC (14th) – Stonehedge LLC’s homebred **Fiona’s Magic** walked the shedrow at Barn 43 following her Kentucky Oaks run. Fiona’s Magic is scheduled to return to her home base at Gulfstream Park on Sunday according to trainer **Michael Yates**.

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