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## **HERNANDEZ STILL ON CLOUD NINE AFTER OAKS, DERBY DOUBLE**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, May 10, 2024)** – Fresh off his victories in the 150<sup>th</sup> runnings of the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) and Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** resumed his routine at Churchill Downs on Thursday night, riding in Races 1 and 7. However, Hernandez was not just another jockey on the program; he was now a Kentucky Derby- and Kentucky Oaks-winning rider following **Mystik Dan** and **Thorpedo Anna**'s triumphs one week ago.

"It's still pretty unbelievable last weekend actually happened," Hernandez said. "I think it's going to take a lot of time to actually sink in, especially all of the things we were able to experience the last week.

"I was pretty confident in Mystik Dan in the Derby when I was able to cut the corner at the top of the lane and get in position before the closers. I know the type of horse he is and that he'd dig in for me when it mattered. I got a little nervous at the wire because (**Sierra Leone** and **Forever Young**) surged so late and they were way out in the middle of the track. I wasn't sure if we actually won or not."

Hernandez, a native of Lafayette, La., has been a fixture on the Kentucky circuit since 2004. When he arrived in Kentucky, he did so under the guidance of now retired jockey **Shane Sellers** who helped pair Hernandez with the late agent **Fred Aime**.

On April 27, 2004, days shy of his graduation from Acadiana High School, Hernandez won with his first mount at Churchill Downs, **Cherokee Prospect** in a starter allowance event for trainer **Pat Byrne**.

Since that day, Hernandez has compiled 2,483 additional victories, an Eclipse Award for outstanding apprentice rider, a Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) triumph aboard **Fort Larned** and 11 Grade I wins.

Hernandez's latest accolades garnered the attention of Louisiana Governor **Jeff Landry**, who invited Hernandez and wife, **Jamie**, to the Governor's mansion Wednesday for a ceremony recognizing his Derby and Oaks victories.

"We were actually supposed to go back home to Louisiana Sunday after the Derby for Jazz Fest," Hernandez said. "Those plans changed quickly after the Oaks and the Derby.

"I'm just so grateful of everyone's support. It was an amazing experience going to the Governor's mansion and being recognized on that type of stage."

How did Hernandez celebrate his victories in the Oaks and the Derby?

"We went out to Jeff Ruby's that night to celebrate. Then, Jamie and I got home and we watched the NBC coverage of the Derby until about 3:30 a.m. I got about two hours sleep and we came out to the track," Hernandez said.

Hernandez was at trainer **Kenny McPeek**'s Barn 6 early Sunday morning celebrating the Derby and Oaks victories with members of his family, McPeek's barn staff and his current agent, **Frank Bernis**.

Since 2012, Bernis has booked the mounts for Hernandez. Like Hernandez, Bernis was born into a racing family. His father, jockey **Glynn "Tee Red" Bernis** was a fixture at racetracks in Louisiana. While Frank did not pursue a riding career, he found his calling as a jockey agent.

Hernandez passed down a unique trophy to Bernis on Sunday after the Kentucky Derby, a one-of-a-kind personalized WWE Universal Championship Belt etched with the Kentucky Derby 150 logo.

"I think that's the happiest I've ever seen Frank," Hernandez joked. "He might like that belt a lot better than an actual trophy."

Mystik Dan continued his training at Churchill Downs for his possible start in the Preakness Stakes (GI). The colt galloped about 1 3/8 miles Friday morning under retired jockey **Robby Albarado**.

"If we'd go to the Preakness, it would certainly be a different scenario than the other times we've gone," Hernandez said. "It would be a fun lead up with the Derby winner. We'd have a little more press on us."

The draw for the Preakness Stakes is Monday.

**DOWN THE STRETCH** – Racing resumed at Churchill Downs on Friday with a nine-race card and first post of 12:45 p.m. There was a \$4,353 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 Jackpot and \$4,349 carryover in the \$1 Super Hi-5. ... The temporary rail on the Matt Winn Turf Course will be set in Lane 4, 36 ft. from the inside for racing Friday. The rail will move to Lane 2, 12 ft. from the inside for racing Saturday and Sunday. ... “**Inside Churchill Downs**” resumes Friday at 6 p.m. on ESPN 680/105.7. The one-hour show will recap Kentucky Derby weekend with hosts **Darren Rogers, Kevin Kerstein** and Churchill Downs Racing Analyst **Kaitlin Free**. ... For more information about the Churchill Downs Spring Meet, visit [www.churchilldowns.com](http://www.churchilldowns.com).

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

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