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30 YEARS AND UNDER 30 STALLS: SALUTING VETERAN TRAINER JIMMY BAKER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, May 12, 2024) – In a new series, we will be showcasing veterans of the horse racing industry who have dedicated more than 30 years to the sport while training fewer than 30 horses. The first article in the series will highlight trainer **Jimmy Baker**.

Baker, a multiple graded stakes-winning trainer, began his stable in 1989. Over the past three decades, he has overseen more than 3,600 starts with his runners banking more than \$16.7 million in purse earnings.

However, Baker's journey to success hasn't always been smooth, particularly in recent years.

"I trained for a lot of great clients throughout my career and I still train for some great people," Baker said. "It's just a little bit of a different game now than when it was back when I first started. Back when I first started training, I was very lucky to train for some high-powered clients like the **Steinbrenners** and **Governor (Brereton) Jones**. Those type of clients really invested in their mares and homebred programs. So I had different horses in the barn."

Last year proved challenging for Baker as his stable recorded just 30 starts and three wins, marking the lowest of his career.

"We hopefully have a couple nice allowance-type horses in the barn," Baker noted optimistically. "With the purses here in Kentucky, that's not a bad thing to have."

Baker grew up in a racing family. His father, **George**, was a trainer in New York and gave Baker his start at the racetrack. In the 1970s, Baker eventually branched out from his father and went to work for trainer **David Whiteley**.

Following his stint with Whiteley, Baker then went to work for future Hall of Famer **Shug McGaughey**.

"I was very fortunate to learn from some very talented horsemen," Baker said. "I remember working for the Whiteleys and they'd always tell me 'quality versus quantity.' I still think that's true to this day.

"I never trained more than 40 horses at a time and when I did, I had to be at three different places because of the stall situation. I just went back to what the Whiteleys told me and never really wanted to expand from that many horses."

When Baker first began his own stable, he credited McGaughey for helping get him started. Five years later, Baker had arguably the most successful horse in his care, **Robert Hoeweler's Mahogany Hall**. The colt finished third in that year's Blue Grass Stakes (GI) and ninth in the Kentucky Derby (GI). As a 5-year-old, Mahogany Hall gave Baker his lone Grade I victory, the Whitney Handicap (GI) at Saratoga.

"He was a game-changer for my career," Baker said with a smile. "He was such a fun horse to have in the barn that raced from a 2-year-old all the way to six. Growing up in New York, I always thought the Belmont Stakes was the race to win until I ran Mahogany Hall in the Derby. Then I quickly realized the Derby is the race. He changed the course of my career for the better and ran against some very talented horses throughout his career. Maybe one day we'll get another one like him in the barn."

Today, Baker oversees a small string of about 10 horses in Barn 46 at Churchill Downs.

"We got a couple 2-year-olds that just came into the barn not too long ago," Baker said. "We'll see. We'll always hold out hope."

KENTUCKY DERBY WINNER MYSTIK DAN SHIPS TO PIMLICO – Kentucky Derby 150 hero **Mystik Dan** left Churchill Downs early Sunday morning and was en route to Pimlico Race Course on a nine-hour van ride.

The **Kenny McPeck**-trained colt was scheduled to arrive in Baltimore late Sunday afternoon and would have his first day of training at Pimlico on Monday.

Three other local horses are possible to compete in the Preakness Stakes: trainer **Wayne Lukas'** duo of **Just Steel** and **Seize the Grey** along with Kentucky Derby fourth-place finisher **Catching Freedom** for trainer **Brad Cox**.

The trio is tentatively scheduled to ship to Pimlico on Monday, the same days entries will be taken for the Preakness.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Racing resumed at Churchill Downs on Sunday with a 10-race program and first post of 12:45 p.m. There was a \$5,581 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 jackpot that spanned Races 5-10. ... Several trainers have begun moving their horses into Churchill Downs following Kentucky Derby week. Among the new arrivals are horses from **Kelsey Danner** and **Neil Pessin**. ... For more information about the Churchill Downs Spring Meet, visit 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.

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