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DOYLE RETURNS TO RIDING AT CHURCHILL DOWNS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE BECOMING A MOM

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, May 23, 2024) – Jockey **Sophie Doyle** returned to riding at Churchill Downs on Sunday, marking her first mount beneath the Twin Spires since her daughter, **Emilie**, was born nearly two years ago.

Doyle, who began riding professionally in Kentucky in 2014, wasted no time returning to the racetrack in the mornings, breezing horses for her fiancé, trainer **Chris Davis**, just three months after giving birth. Doyle's expertise was crucial in the preparation of **Epic Ride** for Kentucky Derby 150 being the regular exercise rider for the talented **John Ennis**-trained 3-year-old colt. Epic Ride would go on to finish 14th in the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I).

Doyle began her triumphant return to riding races earlier this spring, winning two races from 13 starts with two seconds and one third. She's named to ride **You Make Me Happy** on Saturday at Churchill Downs as well as several horses throughout the week at Belterra Park and Presque Isle Downs.

"It's wonderful to be back here at Churchill Downs," Doyle said. "It's been almost two years since I've been back riding here. It was the first place I won a race when I began my career in North America and having Emilie beside me makes it even more special.

"I really enjoy seeing Emilie's love for horses and how she interprets them. When mommy is winning she knows it's great. I've been told after children, mom's have superpowers. My day starts pretty early taking care of her and working horses. Plus, I have my off-track Thoroughbred **Jaz N Tap**. Now, it's back to race riding again."

In Doyle's last full-time season in the saddle, she tallied 83 wins from 493 starts with purse earnings of \$2.5 million.

CHOP CHOP SCHOOLS IN PADDOCK AHEAD OF SATURDAY'S KEERTANA STAKES – Selective LLC's recent Bewitch Stakes (Grade III) winner **Chop Chop** finalized her serious preparation ahead of Saturday's \$250,000 Keertana Stakes (Listed) by schooling in the paddock Thursday morning after training hours.

Run at 1 ½ miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course, the Keertana Stakes sets the stage for a rematch between the top four finishers from Keeneland's Bewitch Stakes, held one month ago. Chop Chop finished 2 ¼ lengths clear of runner-up **Atomic Blonde (GER)** in the Bewitch, marking a successful return to turf after 13 months competing on either the dirt or Tapeta. The third and fourth place finishers of the Bewitch, **Vegara** and **Tower Bridge**, respectfully, are also entered in the Keertana.

Trained by **Brad Cox**, Chop Chop was tabbed as the 9-5 morning line choice against six rivals in Saturday's race. The filly emerged as one of the top prospects on the Road to Kentucky Oaks 149 following her game runner-up finish to **Wonder Wheel** in the Alcibiades (GI) as a 2-year-old. In her 3-year-old season, Chop Chop went on to finish second to **The Alys Look** in the Silverbulletday Stakes before her disappointing fifth-place effort in the Rachel Alexandra (GII). Following that start, Cox briefly switched Chop Chop back to turf, where she finished third in the Allen "Black Cat" LaCombe Memorial. Chop Chop would compete on dirt in her next three starts before switching to Tapeta for her next four.

Jockey **Axel Concepcion** will pilot Chop Chop in the Keertana from post No. 2.

Here is the complete field for the Keertana Stakes from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

- **Heavenly Appointed** (Kevin Gomez, Graham Motion, 8-1)
- Chop Chop (Concepcion, Cox, 9-5)
- Tower Bridge (Brian Hernandez Jr., Cherie DeVaux, 10-1)
- Atomic Blonde (Tyler Gaffalione, Christophe Clement, 3-1)
- Vegara (Jose Ortiz, Graham Motion, 5-2)
- **Sand and Sea** (Rey Gutierrez, Riley Mott, 15-1)
- **Holey Foley** (Frankie Dettori, Brian Lynch, 10-1)

Carded as Race 10 of 11, the Keertana is set to take place in Lane 2 on the Matt Winn Turf Course, positioned 12 feet from the inner rail. First post is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern) and the featured Keertana will go at 5:27 p.m.

For more information, visit www.churchilldowns.com.

GAFFALIONE, ASMUSSEN, JUDDMONTE EARLY SPRING MEET LEADERS – Jockey **Tyler Gaffalione**, trainer **Steve Asmussen** and owner **Juddmonte** led their respective categories through 14 days of the 44-day Churchill Downs Spring Meet stand.

Gaffalione, who's tallied 13 wins from 90 starts, had a two-win lead over **Jose Ortiz** and three-win cushion over **Florent Geroux** and **Luis Saez**.

Asmussen's 10 wins from a whopping 57 starts led all trainers. **Brad Cox** was in second with nine wins followed by **Mike Maker** with eight wins.

Juddmonte's six victories led all owners. They were followed by **Anthony Tate**, **TEC Racing** and **Three Diamonds Farm** with three wins.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Live racing at Churchill Downs resumed Thursday for a five-day week. The Twilight Thursday program featured eight races, \$2 domestic beers at the East Paddock Bar, live music from **Kevin Niehoff** and local food trucks **Acme Chicken Bowls**, **Bamba Eggrolls**, **Con Aji y Café**, **HurriKanes** and **Spinelli's Pizza**. First post was 5 p.m. ... Following overnight rain and scheduled scattered thunderstorms throughout the afternoon, there was no turf racing Thursday. The main track was labeled as fast for training Thursday morning. ... "**Inside Churchill Downs**" will resume Friday at 6 p.m. on **ESPN 680/105.7**. The one-hour broadcast, hosted by Churchill Downs' **Darren Rogers** and **Kevin Kerstein**, will look back on the Preakness Stakes (GI) and preview the Saturday program at Churchill Downs with racing analyst and the voice of Ellis Park and Turfway Park, **Tony Calo**. ... Monday is Military Appreciation Day at Churchill Downs and all active and retired military members can receive free general admission with a valid military ID. ... For more information about racing from Churchill Downs, 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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