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TAPIT TRICE ‘TRAINING SHARP’ AHEAD OF 4-YEAR-OLD DEBUT IN SATURDAY’S \$275,000 BLAME STAKES

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, May 31, 2024) – **Whisper Hill Farm** and **Gainesway Stable’s** Grade I winner **Tapit Trice** is set to make his first start in nine months as he tackles a talented field of older horses entered in Saturday’s fifth running of the \$275,000 Blame Stakes (GIII) at Churchill Downs.

“Like many Tapits, I think he’ll only improve with age,” trainer **Todd Pletcher’s** local assistant **Stu Hampton** said. “We’ve seen him more focused in the mornings now as a 4-year-old and he’s been very sharp the last few days with the cooler weather. He’s done really well here at Churchill and we’re very happy with his preparation off the layoff.”

Tapit Trice was one of the top contenders on Kentucky Derby 149 following his gutsy victory in the Blue Grass (GI) at Keeneland. He would go on to finish seventh in the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) and third in the Belmont Stakes (GI). The Blame will be Tapit Trice’s first start since finishing third in the Travers (GI) in late August at Saratoga.

“I think we saw some of that improvement with age in the Travers when he added blinkers,” Hampton continued. “He ran a very credible race that day and since we got him back in the barn he’s continued to mentally move forward.”

Breaking just to the outside of Tapit Trice is his stablemate, **Repole Stable** and **St. Elias Stable’s** Pennsylvania Derby (GI) runner-up **Dreamlike**, who will make his second start of the year following a narrow runner-up effort to fellow Blame combatant **Cagliostro** in a first-level allowance race at Keeneland.

“He’s a horse that will sometimes save himself in the mornings during his works,” Hampton said. “However, last week we’ve seen him be more aggressive in his training and put in a really solid half-mile in preparation for this race.”

Run at 1 1/8 miles, the Blame Stakes will go as Race 10 of 11 on Stephen Foster Preview Day with a post time of 5:27 p.m. (all times Eastern). First post is 12:45 p.m. Along with the Blame, the stellar Saturday afternoon of racing will also feature the \$275,000 Arlington (GIII), \$275,000 Regret (GIII), \$275,000 Shawnee (GIII), \$275,000 Aristides (Listed) and \$275,000 Audubon (Listed).

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

- **Frosted Departure** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeek, 15-1)
- **Highland Falls** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 5-2)
- **War Campaign** (Tyler Gaffalione, Phil Sims, 9-2)
- **Uncle Jake** (Joel Rosario, Carlo Vaccarezza, 30-1)
- Tapit Trice (Flavien Prat, Pletcher, 3-1)
- Dreamlike (Irad Ortiz Jr., Pletcher, 4-1)
- **Classic Causeway** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeek, 30-1)
- **Last Samurai** (Cristian Torres, Eddie Milligan Jr., 20-1)
- **Cagliostro** (Jose Ortiz, Cherie DeVaux, 6-1)
- **Five Star General** (Corey Lanerie, Grant Forster, 30-1)
- **Trademark** (Martin Garcia, Vicki Oliver, 12-1)

Fans can watch and wager on all the action from Churchill Downs on www.twinspires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

SANTANA READY TO SHOWCASE SKELLY’S SPEED IN ARISTIDES STAKES – **Red Lane Thoroughbreds’** ultra-talented sprinter **Skelly** is poised to showcase his scintillating early turn of foot against seven rivals in Saturday’s \$275,000 Aristides Stakes (Listed) at Churchill Downs.

“He’s such a nice horse,” jockey Ricardo Santana Jr. said. “(Trainer) **Steve (Asmussen)** and his team have done such a nice job with him. He’s so fast early that really no other sprinters have done well going with him. I’m sure if he really wanted to he could go a half-mile in 42 seconds; he’s that fast. I obviously don’t think we’ll be going that fast Saturday but he’ll be quick early.”

Skelly, who boasts a record of 15-10-4-0—\$1,574,163, is tabbed as the 4-5 morning line favorite in the Aristides. The crack sprinter enters the race following his second-consecutive victory in the Count Fleet Handicap (GIII) at Oaklawn and, most recently, a 2 ¼-length score in the Lake Hamilton Stakes.

Asmussen has won the Aristides a record five times including last year's race with future Breeders' Cup Sprint (GI) runner-up **Gunite**. His other victories were from **Volatile** (2020), **Rothko** (2012), **Riley Tucker** (2010) and **Mountain General** (2003).

The Aristides is one of six stakes events on Saturday's "Stephen Foster Preview Day" program. The stellar 11-race card will begin at 12:45 p.m. with the Aristides going in Race 7 at 3:51 p.m. All six stakes events, led by the \$275,000 Blame (GIII), are local preps to the June 29 Stephen Foster Day.

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

- **Tejano Twist** (Rafael Bejarano, Chris Hartman, 5-1)
- **Closethegame Sugar** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Adam Rice, 10-1)
- Skelly (Santana, Asmussen, 4-5)
- **Angkor** (Martin Garcia, Phil Bauer, 4-1)
- **Payne** (Keith Asmussen, Steve Asmussen, 30-1)
- **Bourbon Heist** (Luis Saez, Ian Wilkes, 10-1)
- **Surly Furious** (Abel Cedillo, Glenn Wismer, 30-1)
- **Here Mi Song** (Tyler Gaffalione, Billy Stinson Jr., 6-1)

DOWN THE STRETCH – Friday's nine-race program got underway at 12:45 p.m. and featured a stout \$80,573 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 Jackpot which began in Race 4. ... Seven stakes totaling \$1.9 million will be run at Churchill Downs this weekend: six on Saturday's Stephen Foster Preview Day and one on Sunday. ... Six millionaires are scheduled to run in stakes on Stephen Foster Preview Day: **Last Samuari** (\$2,252,364, Blame); **Skelly** (\$1,574,163, Aristides); **Tejano Twist** (\$1,359,604, Aristides); **Wet Paint** (\$1,228,425, Shawnee); **Tapit Trice** (\$1,213,650, Blame); and **Trademark** (\$1,113,035, Blame). ... "**Inside Churchill Downs**" will air Friday at 6 p.m. on ESPN 680/105.7. The hour-long horse racing radio show will preview Saturday's Stephen Foster Preview Day card with Churchill Downs Racing Analyst **Joe Kristufek**. Fans outside the Louisville area can stream the show on www.espnlouisville.com. ... Entries for the \$400,000 Matt Winn (GIII) will be taken Sunday. The field is expected to include Kentucky Derby 12th-place finisher **West Saratoga**. ... Jockey **Jaime Torres** was off his Friday mounts at Churchill Downs to ride **Pink Polkadots** in the \$150,000 Penn Oaks at Penn National. ... Veteran trainer **Jinks Fires** was on the Churchill Downs backstretch Friday morning. The 83-year-old Fires said most of his horses have been turned out for the summer following Oaklawn's meet but he sent a few to trainers based in Ohio and Louisiana. Fires stated he's scheduled to have rotator cuff surgery in a month but is looking forward to getting back to training this fall. ... Fans looking ahead to next Thursday's eight-race card should note in Race 1, there was a late name change to horse No. 1. The horse's name should be **Keep It Easy**. ... For more information about the 2024 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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