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## HIGHLAND FALLS SURGES PAST CAGLIOSTRO TO WIN GRADE III, \$270,000 BLAME

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, June 1, 2024)** – **Godolphin's** promising homebred **Highland Falls** landed his first graded stakes victory when the 4-year-old Curlin colt surged past **Caligostro** inside the final 50 yards to win Saturday's fifth running of the \$270,000 Blame Stakes (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by one length.

**Florent Geroux** rode the winner for trainer **Brad Cox**. Highland Falls ran 1 1/8 miles over a "fast" track in 1:48.51, which is the fastest clocking in five runnings of the race.

The race was the highlight of Stephen Foster Preview Day as the home of the Kentucky Derby staged six takes events as preps for other marquee races on Saturday, June 29, including the \$1 million Stephen Foster, a coveted Grade I event over 1 1/8 miles for older horses.

Should Highland Falls opt to target the Foster he would have to be considered as one of the favorites for the race following his performance in the Blame.

**Frosted Departure** led the field of seven older horses in the Blame through fractions of :23.31, :47.72 and 1:11.71 as Cagliostro raced just off his right hip and Highland Falls tracked about three lengths back of the leader down the backstretch.

Cagliostro made the first run at Frosted Departure and left the final turn in front with Highland Falls under a three-furlong drive. Highland Falls tipped off the rail and into the three-path as he chased Caligostro, who spurted clear to a couple lengths advantage. But Highland Falls continued to grind away over the extended distance, drew within a length at the final furlong marker and surged past the tired leader inside final 50 yards for the win.

"On paper there wasn't a lot of speed in the race but he always breaks pretty sharp," Geroux said. "So we kept him pretty close to the pace. He seems to need a little bit of encouragement to keep focused and not level off. He kept finding more late down the lane and did some of his best running inside the eighth pole."

Highland Falls, made the odds-on 4-5 favorite after a second-place finish to **Skippylongstocking** in the \$1.25 million Oaklawn Handicap (GII) on April 20, returned \$3.90, \$2.98 and \$2.10. Cagliostro, ridden by **Jose Ortiz** at odds of 7-1, paid \$5.76 and \$3.64. **Dreamlike**, the 2-1 second choice under **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, paid \$2.56 to show.

After Dreamlike, it was **Trademark**, Frosted Departure, **War Campaign** and **Last Samurai**. **Uncle Jake**, **Tapit Trice**, **Classic Causeway** and **Five Star General** were scratched.

The victory was worth \$166,900 and increased Highland Falls' bankroll to \$562,060 with a record of 4-1-1 in seven starts.

"I think this is a breakthrough performance for him," Cox said. "He needed to win a race like this and I think it can really kickstart his campaign. He's regally bred and can run all day long. A mile-and-a-quarter race down the road shouldn't be a problem for him. Godolphin has two really nice older horses between First Mission, who's targeting the Stephen Foster, and Highland Falls."

Highland Falls is a Kentucky-bred son of Curlin out of the Awesome Again mare Round Pond.

The Blame is named after the 2010 Eclipse Award-winning older horse that handed Zenyatta her lone defeat in that year's Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) at Churchill Downs.

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## REGALLY BRED SCYLLA SCINTILLATING IN GRADE III, \$275,000 SHAWNEE

**Juddmonte's** regally bred homebred **Scylla** was scintillating while collecting her first stakes win as she tracked pacesetter **Xigera** before grabbing the lead at the top of the stretch to easily win Saturday's fifth running of the \$275,000 Shawnee (Grade III) by 3 1/4 lengths at Churchill Downs.

A full sister to \$3.7 million-earner **Tactius** and promising maiden-winning 3-year-old **Batten Down**, Scylla ran 1 1/16 miles in 1:42.38 to give Juddmonte their second straight win in the race. Last year, **Idiomantic** led every step of the way to score the first of five consecutive stakes wins en route to an Eclipse Award as the Champion Older Dirt Female.

Fresh off a seven-length allowance win over one mile on the Kentucky Derby undercard, Scylla was sent to post as the odds-on 6-5 favorite. She sat just off Xigera's right hip through the first five furlongs as Xigera set fractions of :24.06 and :48.33 in the field of nine fillies and mares.

Entering the turn, Scylla pulled jockey **Javier Castellano** to even terms with Xigera as they crossed the six-furlong marker in 1:11.85. Scylla grabbed the lead with a quarter mile to run and drew away for the comfortable win.

“There wasn’t a lot of speed in the race on paper so I wanted to make sure to keep her close to the pace,” Castellano said. “Up the backside, we were going at a good pace, not too fast. She was ranging up to (Xigera) on her own. We always knew her talent was there and the way she’s opened up late in her last two starts she’s really shown that. I thought adding blinkers would keep her a little bit more sharp and focused going two turns. Bill (Mott) agreed and we added them for today’s start and it really worked out.”

Scylla, trained by Hall of Famer **Bill Mott**, returned \$4.54, \$3.20 and \$2.44. Xigera, under **Julien Leparoux** at odds of 5-2, returned \$3.18 and \$3.10. **Wet Paint**, with **Flavien Prat** up at 4-1, was another 1 ¼ lengths back in third and paid \$2.74.

**Hoosier Philly, Hidden Connection, Magical Lute, Bellamore, Take a Stand** and **Malloy** completed the order of finish.

Scylla is a 4-year-old Tapit filly out of the First Defence mare Close Hatches.

With her victory in Saturday’s Shawnee worth \$163,800, Scylla improved her record to 6-4-1-1—\$414,835.

“She’s been very impressive in her time we’ve had her at Churchill,” said Mott’s chief Churchill Downs assistant **Kenny McCarthy**. “I think bigger and better things are definitely in her future.”

The Shawnee Stakes is named after a neighborhood in western Louisville.

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## CLOSETHEGAME SUGAR SHUTS DOWN SKELLY IN \$260,000 ARISTIDES

**Closethegame Sugar**, owned by trainer **Adam Rice** and **New York Mets’ closer Edwin Diaz’s Sugar Diaz LLC**, scored the biggest upset in the 36-year history of the \$260,000 Aristides (Listed) when the 4-year-old gelding ran down crack sprinter and odds-on 1-4 favorite **Skelly** to win Saturday’s six-furlong sprint at Churchill Downs by one length.

Closethegame Sugar, off at odds of 18-1, paid \$2 mutuels of \$38.92, \$7.92 and \$4.72.

Skelly, a deserving favorite with a record of 15-10-4-0—\$1,574,163 prior to the race, broke slowly for the third consecutive start but quickly rushed to the front to lead the field of seven through fractions of :21.73 and :44.19. Closethegame Sugar, under champion rider **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, tracked along the inside in fourth down the backstretch, tipped out on the turn to move into third and powered home down the Churchill Downs stretch to collar Skelly inside the final 100 yards for the upset victory.

Closethegame Sugar clocked six furlongs over a “fast” track in 1:08.39 and earned \$151,900 for the triumph.

“We broke well but just let him sort of get settled with the leaders going fast in front of us,” Ortiz Jr. said. “(Skelly) is a really nice horse but I knew my horse was ready to run a big race here this afternoon and he did.”

Runner-up Skelly, under **Ricardo Santana Jr.**, paid \$4.50 and :2.64 to place. **Tejano Twist**, at odds of 6-1 under **Rafael Bejarano**, was another length back in third and paid \$2.90.

The order of finish was completed by **Here Mi Song, Payne, Bourbon Heist** and **Angkor**. **Surly Furious** was scratched.

This was Closethegame Sugar’s second stakes win. Last year, he won the \$150,000 Mahony at 5 ½ furlongs on turf at Saratoga. He entered Saturday’s race off a second-place finish to Angkor in a Churchill Downs allowance on May 2.

“He came off a pretty long layoff last time here at Churchill running in the allowance race on Derby Day,” Rice said. “I thought he may have needed that race and he came back really strong today. Irad (Ortiz Jr.) gave him a great ride and is a difference maker. We won a stakes last year on turf but having him show another dimension today on dirt was very impressive.”

Closethegame Sugar is a son of Girvin out of the Magna Graduate mare Casual Cocktail. He was bred in Kentucky by the **Gov. Brereton C. Jones**.

The Aristides is named in honor of the inaugural Kentucky Derby winner of 1875.

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## OTTOMAN FLEET (GB) POWERS HOME TO WIN GRADE III, \$258,750 ARLINGTON

**Godolphin’s Ottoman Fleet (GB)** from the international powerhouse stable of trainer **Charlie Appleby** charged down the stretch over Churchill Downs’ Matt Winn Turf Course with an authoritative late kick to score a one-length victory over **Chasing the Crown** in Saturday’s 88<sup>th</sup> running of the \$258,750 Arlington Stakes (Grade III).

A multiple graded stakes winner in England and the United States, Ottoman Fleet (GB) ran 1 1/16 miles on “firm” turf in 1:41.45 under jockey **Flavien Prat** to record his fourth graded stakes triumph. Last year, he won the Group 3 Earl of Sefton at Newmarket and \$200,000 Fort Marcy (GII) at Belmont. In April, he defended his title in the Earl of Sefton but ran second last time out in the Fort Marcy, a neck back of **Master Piece (CHI)**.

Ottoman Fleet (GB) earned \$153,450 for Saturday’s victory and improved his record to 6-5-5 in 18 starts with earnings of \$812,507.

**Northern Invader** found himself on the lead when **Emmanuel** was squeezed at the start. He led the way through modest fractions of :24.48, :48.16 and 1:11.87 with Ottoman Fleet (GB) tracking about two lengths off the lead down along the inside rail. Leaving the far turn, **Irish Aces** drew even with Northern Invader as Ottoman Fleet (GB) tipped out to the three-path for his late run. Ottoman Fleet (GB) caught the duo with a furlong to run and comfortably inched clear late to turn back Chasing the Crown.

"In his last start, he closed very strongly late going the mile-and-an-eighth distance in New York," Prat said. "A lot of his prior races you could see he liked to lay closer to the pace. He traveled really nicely around the turn and down the backstretch. He had a really strong kick turning for home."

Ottoman Fleet (GB), off as the even-money favorite, paid \$4.16, \$2.88 and \$2.16. Chasing the Crown, the 3-1 second betting choice under **Joel Rosario**, returned \$4.56 and \$3.10. **Irish Aces** was another length back in third under **Luis Saez** at odds of 15-1 and paid \$4.38 to show.

**Northern Invader**, **Smokin' T** and **Emmanuel** completed the running order. **Stitched** and **Harlan Estate** were scratched.

Ottoman Fleet (GB), a 5-year-old gelded son of Sea the Stars (IRE) out of the Motivator (GB) mare Innevera (FR), was bred in Great Britain by **SCEA Marmion Vauville** and **Alain Jathiere**.

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### PIN UP BETTY RALLIES FROM LAST TO WIN GRADE III, \$272,500 REGRET

**Three Diamonds Farm's Pin Up Betty** launched an impressive four-wide rally from last around the final turn, kicked home to collar **Gavea (GER)** with three-sixteenths of a mile to run and easily held off a charging **Buchu** to win Saturday's 55<sup>th</sup> running of the \$272,500 Regret Stakes (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by 1 ½ lengths.

Trained by **Mike Maker** and ridden by **Luis Saez**, Pin Up Betty covered 1 1/8 miles on "firm" turf in 1:50.70.

**Way to Be Marie**, the 3-2 favorite in the field of seven 3-year-old fillies, dictated the terms as she clipped off modest fractions of :23.82, :49.10 and 1:14.01. **Gavea (GER)** tracked in second, **Buchu** raced in fifth and Pin Up Betty was last down the backstretch. In the final turn, Pin Up Betty made the first run and shot towards the leaders as Way to Be Marie gave way down on the inside. **Buchu**, the 2-1 second betting choice, made a late charge but Pin Up Betty made the first run and kicked on for the win.

Pin Up Betty, at odds of 6-1, paid \$15.30, \$6.56 and \$4.92. **Buchu**, under **Martin Garcia**, returned \$3.88 and \$3.26. **Gavea (GER)**, with **Julien Leparoux** in the saddle at odds of 27-1, finished another 1 ½ lengths back in third and paid \$7.40.

**Everland**, **Way to Be Marie**, **Hello Hollywood** and **Sassy Princess** completed the order of finish. **Dancing N Dixie**, **Poolside With Slim (IRE)** and **Faith Understood** were scratched.

With her victory worth \$166,900, Pin Up Betty boosted her career earnings to \$319,365 from a record of 2-4-1 in nine starts. In her prior start on May 9, Pin Up Betty broke her maiden over the Churchill Downs turf by five lengths.

Pin Up Betty is a daughter of Constitution out of the Into Mischief mare I'm Betty G and was bred in Kentucky by her owner **Kirk Wycoff**.

"We've tried to get her to the turf a couple of times last year but got excluded from some races," Maker said. "Her dam, I'm Betty G, was a really nice turf mare for us. So, I think once we switched her to the turf she's really improved for us. Being a homebred for Three Diamonds Farm, it's really special to win with her."

The Regret honors the 1915 Kentucky Derby-winning filly.

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### CUGINO WIRES \$275,000 AUDUBON

**Cugino**, owned by **West Point Thoroughbreds LLC** and **Jimmy Kahig LLC**, collected his first stakes victory with a gate-to-wire job over eight rival 3-year-olds in Saturday's fifth running of the \$275,000 Audubon Stakes (Listed) at Churchill Downs.

Cugino, ridden by **Flavien Prat** and trained by **Shug McGaughey**, rattled off fractions of :23.83, :48.17 and 1:13.16 en route to easily beating **Lagynos** by 4 ¼ lengths in 1:50.22 for the 1 1/8 miles over "firm" turf.

"He broke very well and I was able to get to the front pretty easily," Prat said. "He traveled very well and had a lot left down the lane."

The \$163,800 first prize jumped Cugino's earnings to \$364,100 from a record of 2-3-0 in six starts.

In April, Cugino finished a neck back of **Neat** in the \$400,000 Transylvania (GIII) at Keeneland. In his start prior to the Audubon, Cugino was fourth behind **Trikari**, **Formidable Man** and **Lagynos** in the \$600,000 American Turf presented by Twin Spires (GII) on the Kentucky Derby undercard.

"I think the blinkers have helped him keep focus and has really made him step up his game," said Reeve McGaughey, assistant to his Hall of Fame father. "We put them on him last time and he ran a good race but I think the inside post today helped him a little more."

Cugino paid \$7.34, \$4.14 and \$2.96 as the 5-2 second betting choice. Lagynos, with **Cristian Torres** up at odds of 6-1, returned \$6.56 and \$3.62. **Camaro Z** was another head back in third under **Jopse Ortiz** at 25-1 and paid \$6.78 to show.

**Rock 'n a Halo**, 9-5 favorite **Cameo Performance**, Formidable Man, **Thomas Aquinas**, **Nomos** and **Can Group** rounded out the placings. **Twirling Point** was scratched.

Cugino, a son of Twirling Candy out of the Kitten's Joy mare Adorable Miss, was bred in Kentucky by **Gage Hill Stables LLC and W. S. Farish**.

The Audubon is named after a Louisville neighborhood located nearby Churchill Downs.

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### ARISTIDES QUOTES

**Irad Ortiz Jr. (jockey, Closethegame Sugar, winner):** "We broke well but just let him sort of get settled with the leaders going fast in front of us. (Skelly) is a really nice horse but I knew my horse was ready to run a big race here this afternoon and he did."

**Adam Rice (trainer, Closethegame Sugar, winner):** "He came off a pretty long layoff last time here at Churchill running in the allowance race on Derby Day. I thought he may have needed that race and he came back really strong today. Irad (Ortiz Jr.) gave him a great ride and is a difference maker. We won a stakes last year on turf but having him show another dimension today on dirt was very impressive."

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### ARLINGTON QUOTES

**Flavien Prat (jockey, Ottoman Fleet, winner):** "In his last start, he closed very strongly late going the mile-and-an-eighth distance in New York. A lot of his prior races you could see he liked to lay closer to the pace. He traveled really nicely around the turn and down the backstretch. He had a really strong kick turning for home."

**Joel Rosario (jockey, Chasing the Crown, runner-up):** "He tried to cut into the margin down the stretch but just couldn't quite get there. I thought he ran a really nice race and I'm proud of his effort against a pretty nice winner."

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### AUDUBON QUOTES

**Flavien Prat (jockey, Cugino, winner):** "He broke very well and I was able to get to the front pretty easily. He traveled very well and had a lot left down the lane."

**Reeve McGaughey (assistant trainer, Cugino, winner):** "I think the blinkers have helped him keep focus and has really made him step up his game. We put them on him last time and he ran a good race but I think the inside post today helped him a little more."

**Cristian Torres (jockey, Lagynos, runner-up):** "I was just second best to the winner today. He tried hard late to get up for second."

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### BLAME QUOTES

**Florent Geroux (jockey, Highland Falls, winner):** "On paper there wasn't a lot of speed in the race but he always breaks pretty sharp. So we kept him pretty close to the pace. He seems to need a little bit of encouragement to keep focused and not level off. He kept finding more late down the lane and did some of his best running inside the eighth pole."

**Brad Cox (trainer, Highland Falls, winner):** "I think this is a breakthrough performance for him. He needed to win a race like this and I think it can really kickstart his campaign. He's regally bred and can run all day long. A mile-and-a-quarter race down the road shouldn't be a problem for him. Godolphin has two really nice older horses between First Mission, who's targeting the Stephen Foster (GI), and Highland Falls."

**Cherie DeVaux (trainer, Cagliostro, runner-up):** “I thought he ran a great race. I’m very proud of him. Inside the eighth-pole I thought he was going to win. He ran great.”

**Stu Hampson (assistant trainer, Dreamlike, third):** “Around the turn he made a big move to get into contention. He was a little green going wide at the quarter pole but ran a solid race.”

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### REGRET QUOTES

**Mike Maker (trainer, Pin Up Betty, winner):** “We’ve tried to get her to the turf a couple of times last year but got excluded from some races. Her dam, I’m Betty G, was a really nice turf mare for us. So, I think once we switched her to the turf she’s really improved for us. Being a homebred for Three Diamonds Farm, it’s really special to win with her.”

**Phil Bauer (trainer, Buchu, runner-up):** “She ran a good race. She was tracking the leaders from off the pace and when the race started coming back to us, the winner ended up getting the jump on us and we couldn’t make up the ground to catch her.”

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### SHAWNEE QUOTES

**Javier Castellano (jockey, Scylla, winner):** “There wasn’t a lot of speed in the race on paper so I wanted to make sure to keep her close to the pace. Up the backside, we were going at a good pace, not too fast. She was ranging up to (Xigera) on her own. We always knew her talent was there and the way she’s opened up late in her last two starts she’s really shown that. I thought adding blinkers would keep her a little bit more sharp and focused going two turns. Bill (Mott) agreed and we added them for today’s start and it really worked out.”

**Kenny McCarthy (assistant trainer, Scylla, winner):** “She’s been very impressive in her time we’ve had her at Churchill. I think bigger and better things are definitely in her future.”

**Julien Leparoux (jockey, Xigera, runner-up):** “We were just second best today. She ran a good race but couldn’t hold off the winner late.”

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### 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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