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COX CONFIDENT IN FIRST MISSION AHEAD OF SATURDAY'S STEPHEN FOSTER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, June 26, 2024) – Godolphin's First Mission, the 6-5 morning line favorite for the \$1 million Stephen Foster (Grade I) at Churchill Downs, continues to finalize his preparations ahead of Saturday's marquee race beneath the Twin Spires while trainer, **Brad Cox**, remains confident in the colt's bid for his first Grade I victory.

"We've had this race on our schedule for a long time now," Cox said. "The plan has been if he ran well in the Alysheba to run him in the Stephen Foster. He came out of the Alysheba very well and has been training great at Churchill. The Stephen Foster is always a tough race year in and year out. It's a Grade I, so that's expected. This year's field is no different but we like our chances to try and get him his first Grade I win."

First Mission, a talented 4-year-old son of Street Sense, cruised to a four-length win eight weeks ago in the Alysheba Stakes presented by TwinSpires (GII). Overall, First Mission has won five starts with other graded stakes scores in the Lexington Stakes (GIII) at Keeneland and Essex Handicap (GIII) at Oaklawn Park. First Mission will be ridden in the Stephen Foster by **Florent Geroux** out of post No. 2.

"Florent has been aboard him his last two starts and has been working him in the mornings," Cox said. "They get along very well and Florent knows how to ride him."

Run at 1 1/8 miles, the Stephen Foster is the marquee race of the Churchill Downs Spring Meet following Kentucky Derby Week. The Stephen Foster also is part of the Breeders' Cup Challenge Series and is a "Win and You're In Classic Division" race. The winner will earn a spot in the starting gate for the Nov. 2 Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) at Del Mar with a free automatic entry to the race.

Carded as Race 11 of 12, the Stephen Foster is the highlight of a stakes-filled program at Churchill Downs that also includes the \$500,000 Fasig-Tipton Fleur de Lis (GII); \$500,000 Wise Dan (GII); \$250,000 American Derby (Listed); \$250,000 Kelly's Landing (Listed); and \$250,000 Tepin (Listed). First post is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern) and the field for the Stephen Foster will go to post at 6:03 p.m.

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

- **Pyrenees** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Cherie DeVaux, 12-1)
- First Mission (Geroux, Cox, 6-5)
- **Happy American** (Corey Lanerie, Neil Pessin, 30-1)
- **Disarm** (Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen, 6-1)
- **Dreamlike** (Irada Ortiz Jr., Todd Pletcher, 10-1)
- **Classic Causeway** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeck, 30-1)
- **Kingsbarns** (Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher, 6-1)
- **Steal Sunshine** (Paco Lopez, Bobby Dibona, 20-1)
- **Skippylongstocking** (Jose Ortiz, Saffie Joseph Jr., 5-2)

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.

Saturday is the penultimate day of the 2024 Spring Meet. Fans can purchase tickets on www.churchilldowns.com. Admission gates will open at 11:30 a.m.

In addition to the stellar racing action, the winning connections of this year's Kentucky Derby (**Mystik Dan**) and Kentucky Oaks (**Thorpedo Anna**) will be presented with their engraved trophies during a winner's circle ceremony between races. Also, the trophies will be on display beforehand for guests to take photos.

PYRENEES RIDES FOUR-RACE WIN STREAK INTO STEPHEN FOSTER – Blue Heaven Farm’s 4-year-old colt **Pyrenees** will attempt to win his fifth-consecutive race when he takes on nine rivals in Saturday’s \$1 million Stephen Foster (Grade I) at Churchill Downs.

Trained by **Cherie DeVaux**, Pyrenees enters the Stephen Foster after a game three-quarters of a length victory over **Kingsbarns** in the May 17 Pimlico Special (GIII).

“He’s a very nice colt who is clearly starting to figure things out,” DeVaux said. “He’s passed every test given to him so far and the Stephen Foster is another test stepping up to a Grade I. He had a setback and the end of his 2-year-old year and when he came back this winter at Fair Grounds you could tell he mentally and physically matured.”

Listed at 12-1 on the morning line odds, Pyrenees will break from the rail under jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.**

STEPHEN FOSTER DAY CARD FEATURES ALL-STAKES DERBY CITY 6 SEQUENCE – Saturday’s phenomenal 12-race card will feature an all-stakes sequence for the 20-cent Derby City 6 Jackpot, which spans the final six races on the program.

Race 11’s Grade I, \$1 million Stephen Foster is the highlight of a stakes-filled program at Churchill Downs that also includes the \$500,000 Fasig-Tipton Fleur de Lis (GII); \$500,000 Wise Dan (GII); \$250,000 American Derby (Listed); \$250,000 Kelly’s Landing (Listed); and \$250,000 Tepin (Listed). First post is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern)

Here are the fields for all six stakes contests (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

The \$500,000 Wise Dan (GII) (Race 7, 3:52 p.m.):

- **Strong Tide** (Manny Esquivel, Mike Lauer, 20-1)
- **Ottoman Fleet (GB)** (Flavien Prat, Charlie Appleby, 1-1)
- **Chasing the Crown** (Joel Rosario, Mike Maker, 3-1)
- **Johnny’s Fireball** (Tyler Gaffalione, Norm Casse, 6-1)
- **Win for the Money** (Jose Ortiz, Mark Casse, 9-2)
- **Exalted** (Juan Hernandez, Peter Eurton, 4-1)

The \$500,000 Fasig-Tipton Fleur de Lis (GII) (Race 8, 4:25 p.m.):

- **Free Like a Girl** (Corey Lanerie, Chasey Deville Pomier, 6-1)
- **Shotgun Hottie** (Paco Lopez, Cherie DeVaux, 4-1)
- **Taxed** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Randy Morse, 5-1)
- **Scylla** (Javier Castellano, Bill Mott, 6-5)
- **Oculta** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Chad Brown, 6-1)
- **Xigera** (Julien Leparoux, Phil Bauer, 9-2)

The \$250,000 American Derby (Listed) (Race 9, 4:58 p.m.):

- **Green Light** (Jose Ortiz, Rodolphe Brisset, 3-1)
- **Moonlight** (Tyler Gaffalione, Todd Pletcher, 8-1)
- **Freedom Principle** (Luis Saez, Jose Garoffalo, 12-1)
- **Lagynos** (Cristian Torres, Steve Asmussen, 9-2)
- **Agate Road** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Todd Pletcher, 7-2)
- **Depiction** (Joel Rosario, Cherie DeVaux, 6-1)
- **First World War** (Frankie Dettori, Walsh, 4-1)
- **Brilliant Berti** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Cherie DeVaux, 8-1)

The \$250,000 Kelly’s Landing (Listed) (Race 10, 5:31 p.m.):

- **Anarchist** (Antonio Fresu, Doug O’Neill, 6-1)
- **Spankster** (Joe Bealmear, Jade Cunningham, 15-1)
- **Ryvitt** (Cristian Torres, Steve Asmussen, 12-1)
- **Tejano Twist** (Rafael Bejarano, Chris Hartman, 4-1)
- **Hoist the Gold** (Luis Saez, Dallas Stewart, 3-1)
- **Closethegame Sugar** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Adam Rice, 7-2)
- **Angkor** (Jose Ortiz, Phil Bauer, 5-1)
- **Bango** (Tyler Gaffalione, Greg Foley, 6-1)

The \$1 million Stephen Foster (Race 11, 6:03 p.m.):

- **Pyrenees** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Cherie DeVaux, 12-1)
- **First Mission** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 6-5)
- **Happy American** (Corey Lanerie, Neil Pessin, 30-1)
- **Disarm** (Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen, 6-1)
- **Dreamlike** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Todd Pletcher, 10-1)
- **Classic Causeway** (Julien Lejaroux, Kenny McPeck, 30-1)
- **Kingsbarns** (Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher, 6-1)
- **Steal Sunshine** (Paco Lopez, Bobby Dibona, 20-1)
- **Skippylongstocking** (Jose Ortiz, Saffie Joseph Jr., 5-2)

The \$250,000 Tepin (Listed) (Race 12: 6:32 p.m.):

- **Simply in Front** (Luis Saez, Eddie Kenneally, 4-1)
- **Mo Fox Given** (Joel Rosario, Ron Moquett, 10-1)
- **Kathrynmarissa** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Rick Dutrow Jr., 5-1)
- **Voodoo Magic (FR)** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Cherie DeVaux, 12-1)
- **Poolside With Slim (IRE)** (Tyler Gaffalione, Rusty Arnold, 5-1)
- **My Brazilian Girl** (Luan Machado, Kathleen Wadsworth, 50-1)
- **Kodiak Wintergreen (IRE)** (Florent Geroux, Arnold, 12-1)
- **Pipsy (IRE)** (Flavien Prat, Will Walden, 7-2)
- **Dancing N Dixie** (Jose Ortiz, Mark Casse, 9-2)
- **Dozen Diamonds** (Rafael Bejarano, Vicki Oliver, 20-1)
- **Just Better** (Frankie Dettori, Steve Asmussen, 12-1)

DOWN THE STRETCH – Live racing at Churchill Downs resumed Wednesday for the start of closing week of the 2024 Spring Meet. First post was 12:45 p.m. for the nine-race card that featured a massive \$275,082 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 Jackpot in the final six races. ... Racing on the Matt Winn Turf Course is scheduled to take place Thursday and Friday in Lane 3, 24 ft. from the inside rail. Saturday and Sunday's turf races are slated to take place in Lane 1. ... Mandatory payouts in all wagers will be Sunday at Churchill Downs. The phenomenal 11-race program will have a first post of 12:45 p.m. and feature the \$300,000 Hanshin (Listed) along with the \$225,000 Bashford Manor (Listed); \$225,000 Debutante (Listed); \$175,000 Anchorage Overnight Stakes; and \$175,000 Maxfield Overnight Stakes. ... The Spring Meet finale of "**Inside Churchill Downs**" will air Friday at 6 p.m. on **ESPN Louisville** and preview Saturday and Sunday's 11 stakes events. Join Churchill Downs' **Darren Rogers** and **Kevin Kerstein** as they preview the weekend action with the voice of Ellis Park and Turfway Park **Tony Calo**. Listeners in the Louisville area can tune in live on ESPN 680/105.7 and those worldwide can stream the show on www.espnlouisville.com. Following Friday's show, Rogers and Kerstein will have a 60-day freshening at the farm before returning for the September Meet. Beginning July 12, fans are invited to listen to the "**Ky Racing Spotlight with Louie Rabaut presented by the Kentucky HBPA**" which will air during the same timeslot throughout the summer. ... The Churchill Downs backstretch is scheduled to be at capacity this summer and house more than 1,400 horses. Several trainers who were based at Churchill Downs' Trackside Louisville are beginning to move over to the main track while the training facility undergoes scheduled maintenance. Among the new faces on the main track will be **Bobby Barnett, Jason Cook, Grant Forster, Billy Gowan, Barry King, Michael Puhich, Denis Roberson, Marty Rouck, Brent Taylor, Mike Thompson, Brian Williamson, Freddie Winston** and **Nick Zito**. ... For more information about the Churchill Downs Spring Meet and to purchase tickets for the remaining five days, 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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