



Breeders' Cup World Championships Friday, Nov. 3 and Saturday, Nov. 4

Saturday News & Notes Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017

Contact Notes Team: 859-250-0358

LONGINES DISTAFF

Forever Unbridled – Charles Fipke's homebred Longines Breeders' Cup Distaff champion Forever Unbridled exited her powerful Friday victory in fine style, according to trainer Dallas Stewart. Moving boldly on the turn and into the lead under Hall of Famer John Velazquez, she stayed a perfect three-for-three with said rider – following the 2016 Apple Blossom Handicap and 2015 Comely Stakes – when she held off Kentucky Oaks winner Abel Tasman by a half-length. The daughter of Oaks winner Lemons Forever, who was trained and part-owned by Stewart, and Breeders' Cup Juvenile champion Unbridled's Song became the third Distaff winner for her sire following Unrivaled Belle (2010) and Stewart-trained Unbridled Elaine (2001).

"She left about 5 a.m. this morning and is heading back home to Kentucky," Stewart said. "She looks great and made herself a champion. She's three-for-three and we couldn't be prouder of what she's accomplished this year."

Plans call for the multiple Grade 1 winner to return to Kentucky and ultimately join Stewart's New Orleans string at Fair Grounds Race Course to prepare for a run at the world's richest race, the \$16 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational. In the meantime, Stewart has one more runner this weekend, Valene Farms' Givemeaminut, who takes on the \$2 million Sentient Jet Juvenile.

"We're still rolling," Stewart said. "We got one more today in Givemeaminut in the Juvenile and he's doing well. We're hoping for a big successful weekend."

The late Taylor Made Farm stallion Unbridled's Song pushed himself to the top of the Breeders' Cup progeny earnings board in the process, becoming the first stallion to eclipse \$10 million with what was his sixth World Championships winner (\$10,802,400). Previous winners also include Midshipman (2008 Juvenile), Liam's Map (2015 Dirt Mile) and last year's Classic winner Arrogate. The total would increase with Arrogate once again competing in today's Classic.

Abel Tasman – Trainer Bob Baffert said the 3yo filly came out of her runner-up finish in the Distaff well and indicated that she would race as a 4yo. Co-owned by the China Horse Club International and her breeder Clearsky Farms, Abel Tasman made a strong rally from far back under Mike Smith in the Distaff and finished a half-length behind Forever Unbridled.

“She ran a great race,” Baffert said. “The last couple of times he was hustling her out of there and then she would drop back and then she would take off with him. We didn’t want that. She broke and let her relax on her own back there. She was right behind the winner the whole way. When they took off, she started moving along. Johnny (Velazquez on Forever Unbridled) took off a little bit early and probably got the jump on her. Johnny left about the three-eighths pole; she waited and took off at 2 1/2.

“It looked she was coming and trying to get there. I think we just got beat by a really good filly. Those two fillies in the paddock. The winner, she looked really great in the paddock. She looked really healthy. She looked strong. I thought ‘wow.’ I had never really seen her up close.

“We thought Abel could win it and she ran her heart out. It looked like she was running out of room. I was really proud of her race.”

Abel Tasman has four wins and two seconds in Grade 1 races in 2017 – including a victory in the Kentucky Oaks – but Baffert did not take the opportunity to make the case for her as the 3yo filly champ.

“I don’t have a vote so I really don’t get caught up in that,” Baffert said. “I was really upset with the way she ran at Parx (second in the Cotillion), running off early. I think she redeemed herself yesterday and showed that she was the best 3-year-old in that race.”

Baffert smiled when someone noted that Abel Tasman might have another opportunity or two to face Forever Unbridled in 2018.

“You’re supposed to give me good news,” he said. “Our mare will get older, bigger and better. As they get older they can run further. I think we just needed a little bit more stretch. This stretch is a little bit short for her. Next year the Breeders’ Cup is at Churchill Downs and she likes that stretch.”

Paradise Woods – Paradise Woods, a 3yo Union Rags, filly showed her fight once again Friday as she battled her way to a third-place finish in the Breeders’ Cup Distaff and in the doing send her earnings well past the half-million-dollar mark.

She came out of the race in great shape, said Richard Mandella assistant Angel Vega, and walked the shedrow for her Saturday morning limbering-up exercise.

Vega echoed his boss’ after-race words by saying the whole barn crew is looking forward to the filly’s 4yo season. “She’ll be stronger and know more about racing,” Vega said.

Stellar Wind – The 5yo mare wrapped up her career with a disappointing last-place finish in the Distaff. A bobbling start compromised her chances, an issue that has plagued her in the most high-profile events, including the 2015 Kentucky Oaks and last year’s Distaff.

“Stellar Wind looks OK,” trainer John Sadler said this morning. “She stumbled a little bit, but it was more she was trapped on the inside and eating dirt, she coughed a lot after the race. She just was in the wrong place on the track all the time and never got comfortable.”

Stellar Wind now will head to the Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale. Her career record will show as 16-10-2-1 with earnings of \$2,253,200. She won six Grade 1 events and her only off-the board finishes came in those three spots where she had bad starts – the Oaks and the last two Distaffs.

Sadler also noted that his Dirt Mile ninth-place runner, Accelerate, “may have come out with a little bit of foot soreness but looks OK.”

LAS VEGAS DIRT MILE

Battle of Midway – The newest millionaire in the barn of Hall of Fame trainer Jerry Hollendorfer was bright and happy on the morning following his victory in the Las Vegas Dirt Mile.

“He’s doing great. He’s just relaxing and getting ready to ship back to Santa Anita,” said the trainer, who also captured the 2010 edition of the race and sends out Unique Bella as the favorite in today’s Filly & Mare Sprint.

Hollendorfer said that he would like to run Battle of Midway, who was unraced as a 2yo, but has earned a record of 10-5-2-2 and earnings of \$1,249,949 as a 3yo this season, in the Malibu Stakes at Santa Anita Dec. 26, but plans for his future are not firm.

“I don’t know what Don Alberto Stable & WinStar (the owners) have planned,” Hollendorfer said. “The horse could possibly retire because he’s the best miler in the country and I don’t know if they want to run him anymore.”

The owners privately purchased Battle of Midway from Rick Porter’s Fox Hill Farm this spring in between his races in the Santa Anita Derby and the Kentucky Derby in which he finished third.

“Mr. Porter wanted to sell him. We bought him two weeks before the Kentucky Derby. I put that deal together and it worked out good,” said Hollendorfer, who got to keep the horse on his formidable roster.

WinStar’s Elliott Walden was a visitor at the barn this morning and when asked what was next for the horse, he replied that was still undetermined and the connections would discuss it today.

Meanwhile, the trainer was proud of Battle of Midway’s Breeders’ Cup performance.

“He looked powerful even down the backside,” Hollendorfer said. “It looked like Flavien (Prat) had a lot of horse under him. When he turned for home he had enough to get by Sharp Azteca, who is definitely a nice horse.”

As he reflected one of his two 2017 Breeders’ Cup entrants, Hollendorfer was looking ahead with the other.

“Unique Bella is doing great. We’re walking over there with no excuses,” he said. “Like Battle of Midway, she’s won here so that will be helpful.”

Sharp Azteca – The speedy Sharp Azteca gave all he had in the Dirt Mile, controlling the pace on the inside for most of the race and fighting Battle of Midway every step through the last eighth before giving way in the final strides.

“It was a tough loss,” trainer Jorge Navarro said. “He ran a hell of a race. What else could I ask for?”

Navarro will consider the \$16 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational and a return trip to Dubai for the Godolphin Mile in 2018, but before that his 4yo will aim for one of the few prestigious Grade 1 races run annually after the Breeders’ Cup festival.

“He came back good,” Navarro said. “I’ll give him a couple days to see how he comes out of it and if everything’s good we’ll point him to the Cigar Mile (Dec. 2 at Aqueduct).”

JUVENILE FILLIES TURF

Rushing Fall – e Five Racing Thoroughbreds' Rushing Fall gave her owner a perfect 2-for-2 record in the Breeders' Cup when the Chad Brown-trained filly won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf on Friday. The daughter of More Than Ready has exited her well-timed Javier Castellano ride and resulting triumph in top order for the reigning Eclipse Award champion conditioner. Brown reported that plans are not yet made for the two-time graded stakes winner, who was the trainer's unprecedented fourth victory in the \$1-million one-mile grass event. Previous winners were Maram (2008), Lady Eli (2014) and e Five Racing Thoroughbreds' New Money Honey (2016).

###