



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

### **Classic Notes Thursday, Nov. 2, 2017**

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**Arrogate, Collected, Mubtaahij, West Coast** – All four of trainer Bob Baffert's runners for the \$6 million Breeders' Cup Classic went out for 1 1/2m gallops at Del Mar Thursday morning. Baffert said that everything was fine with his quartet as he seeks his record-extending fourth-straight Classic victory.

"They all look good," Baffert said. "I wouldn't be surprised if West Coast were to win. I've won it with 3-year-olds and he looks good."

All three of Baffert's wins have been with 3-year-olds: Bayern (2014); American Pharoah (2015); Arrogate (2016).

"You don't know about the other horses," Baffert said. "Gun Runner should love it. This (track) is made for a horse like Collected or Gun Runner, where they can get out there and their speed is dangerous. They can zip around those turns. Gun Runner is the horse to beat."

Arrogate and West Coast went out for their morning exercise under Dana Barnes, Manny Avila rode Mubtaahij and Augustine Laura was up on Collected.

Juddmonte Farms' Arrogate, the leading career earning Thoroughbred in North American history at \$17.3 million will make his final career start in the Classic before being retired to stud for the 2018 season. He is seeking to become the second two-time winner of the Classic. Hall of Fame member Tiznow won the Classic in 2000 at Churchill Downs and the 2001 Classic at Belmont Park.

After winning seven consecutive races, including the 2016 Classic, the inaugural Pegasus World Cup and the Dubai World Cup, Arrogate has lost his last two starts, both at Del Mar. The first was a 15 1/4-length setback in the San Diego Handicap on July 22, his first start after the trip to Dubai. He finished second, beaten a length by Collected in the Pacific Classic on Aug. 19.

Baffert said the colt may have not liked the track in the San Diego, but said he was at fault for Arrogate's performance.

"The surface that first race was weird," Baffert said. "It's not like that at all (now). They had just put in a new track. But he was way behind and you couldn't do that. You had to be up close. He still could have run better, but I think a lot of it is the way I prepared him. I take the blame for him getting beat the first time. The second time, it looked like he wasn't going to run and all of a sudden he started running at the end.

"I think he should run well."

Twenty-five years ago, not long after transitioning from Quarter Horses to Thoroughbreds, Baffert won the 1992 Sprint with Thirty Slews. Now he has 14 victories, second only to D. Wayne Lukas in the Breeders' Cup history, is the leading money winner, has the record for most purse money earned and this year will saddle 11 runners, including a record four in the Classic.

Baffert smiled when asked to put it all in perspective, especially the four Classic starters.

"First of all, I would never have dreamt that I was going to be a horse trainer," he said. "Maybe a

Quarter Horse trainer, because I loved Quarter Horses. But being a Thoroughbred trainer? I never thought about that. That's a whole different league, a whole different level. It's like being in the majors.

"I still can't believe that I have accomplished what I have accomplished. Every once in a while I will look back and say, 'Wow, look at all this stuff!' Those memories go by so fast and we never really stop and smell the roses. We're just constantly going, worrying about this and that. I've never had a chance to really get into it, but I know one thing: since Arrogate got beat his last two times I'm really appreciating that Dubai World Cup more and more."

**Churchill** – Breeders' Cup Classic hope Churchill with Donnacha O'Brien in the saddle was the second of the O'Brien string out on to the track. Having walked and jogged a circuit of the track he appeared to get a little warm, but having gone for a gentle canter seemed a lot more relaxed.

Aidan O'Brien who was outside the European barn after the exercise said: "We were very happy with his run at Ascot last time. He did not get the greatest of runs and got stopped twice over a furlong out. We were very pleased with that performance, and as long as we were happy with the horse after the race, it was always a possibility that we would come for the Classic"

**Gunnevera** – Gunnevera galloped 1 ½m under exercise rider Victor O'Farrel Thursday at Del Mar after completing Wednesday's morning exercise with a 3/8m open gallop.

"He just wanted an easy gallop after his open gallop (Wednesday). He looked very good going over the track," trainer Antonio Sano said. "The exercise rider said he was even better today than he was [Wednesday]. He is 100 percent."

Gunnevera, a multiple graded-stakes winner who finished second behind West Coast in the Aug. 26 Travers at Saratoga in his most recent start, is owned by Venezuelan businessman Salomon del Valle, who has been on hand at Del Mar to observe the 3yo son of Dialed In's preparation for a start in Saturday's Classic.

"I can't put into words what this horse means to me," said del Valle in words translated by Sano's son Alex.

"I am happy to own a horse like him," added del Valle, who bought out his partners in Peacock Racing Stable and chose the stable name of Margoth, his late mother's first name. "He is going to run a very big race."

Gunnevera is del Valle's only racehorse at the present, but his owner recently purchased three yearlings, two fillies and a colt, at auction.

**Gun Runner** – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm's Gun Runner, the 9-5 morning-line favorite for the \$6 million Classic, went through his morning routine smoothly as he prepares for what appears to be his toughest test. The earner of \$5,688,500 schooled at the gate and galloped about 1 1/4m Thursday morning.

Trained by Steve Asmussen, the four-time Grade 1-winning son of Candy Ride is piloted by two-time reigning Fair Grounds title holder Florent Geroux, whose three Breeders' Cup wins include the 2014 Sprint on Work All Week and a pair of 2015 wins — the Juvenile Fillies Turf with Catch a Glimpse and Turf Sprint with Mongolian Saturday.

Gun Runner and Geroux have teamed up in 14 consecutive starts, including eight graded stakes victories, seconds in the Dubai World Cup and Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile and thirds in the Kentucky Derby and Travers. Speaking to their versatility and rapport, their victories include five front-running scores, two stalking wins and one closing victory.

"He means a lot to me and is the best horse I've ever ridden," Geroux said. "He's taken us to so many places, from the (Kentucky) Derby, to the Travers as a 3yo to Dubai this year. With him you always know he's in with a chance. He always runs hard and tries and we have been lucky enough to win many graded stakes along the way. He's proven himself and now is the favorite in the (Breeders' Cup) Classic.

"He's really matured very nicely," Geroux continued. "Sometimes they get better from two to three and then from three to four and he did — but he really got bigger, stronger and faster from three to

four and you can see that in his races. He has more speed now, but you can do what you want with it. He keeps you out of trouble and he has plenty of stamina.

“I think a mile and a quarter is always a question mark because it’s a tough distance for any horse, but he ran a great race in Dubai and the track wasn’t fast that day. It was deeper and looser than what he will run over at Del Mar and he galloped out great that day.”

**Pavel** – With all his serious preparation done, Pavel was content to put in his regular gallop of 1 ½m Thursday morning as his Classic showdown moved to within a couple of days of fruition. He’ll go to the gate for the \$6 million Classic in a field of 11 of the world’s best Thoroughbreds.

Pavel’s resume shows the fewest starts among the contestants – only four, with two victories. Saturday’s run on Del Mar’s main track will be the first for the son of Creative Cause, but he spent the summer training at the seaside track so he is familiar with the surface.

His regular exercise rider, Gabriel Planchard, was aboard for the morning gallop and his regular rider, Mario Gutierrez will ride Saturday.

**War Decree** – War Decree, like his stablemate Churchill, cleared quarantine Wednesday night and took his first gallop over the Del Mar main track Thursday morning.

**War Story** – The Brooklyn winner War Story is up against it versus the top dirt horses in the world, but will at least be testing them at his best.

“You never know,” trainer Jorge Navarro said. “It happened with Arcangues and it happened with Volponi. It could happen to me!”

The 5yo gelding War Story had a snappy breeze Saturday that impressed Navarro and gave him hope that he might pick up a sizable check, as he did in January when fifth in the world’s richest race, the Pegasus World Cup Invitational.

“I worked him on this track and he really caught my attention,” Navarro said. “Paco Lopez said the longer he went the better he got. I can’t ask more of the way he’s training.”

“If we run fifth we make the same as we would make winning the Marathon (on Friday’s undercard). I do believe he’ll be a top horse when he’s running in better spots.”

**Win the Space** – Trainer George Papaprodromou is hoping the second time is the charm for his 5yo roan son Pulpit as the horse heads into his second try at the Classic. The trainer is hoping, also, that Win the Space doesn’t have to endure another bad trip that last year began with a bump and a push to the outside shortly after the gates opened.

That experience led to his being eased in the stretch.

“I’m hoping for a much cleaner trip this year, obviously,” Papaprodromou said.

Win the Space used a 1 ½m gallop for his morning exercise Thursday with exercise rider Shane Parks in the saddle.

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