



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

Classic Notes Wednesday, Nov. 1, 2017

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Arrogate, Collected, Mubtaahij and West Coast – All four of trainer Bob Baffert's runners for the \$6 million Classic went to the track at Del Mar for the first time Wednesday morning. They shipped from Santa Anita Park early Tuesday morning and walked after arriving. Defending Classic champion Arrogate and Awesome Again winner Mubtaahij both jogged because they had timed works Monday. Collected and West Coast galloped.

Baffert spent the morning on the front side of the track grounds watching all 11 of his Breeders' Cup horses during their time on the track and then scooted off for a scheduled video shoot that will be part of NBC's coverage of the Breeders' Cup. Assistant trainer Jimmy Barnes, who is recovering from injuries suffered in an accident on the track during training hours Sept. 17, handled the logistics back at the barn and stayed on contact with Baffert by radio.

"Everything's fine. It's all good," Baffert said. "No surprises. Everything is smooth. Nothing has changed. They shipped well. They got here and they all looked happy on the track. That's all that matters."

Barnes said that Arrogate and Mubtaahij galloped 1m. Collected galloped 1 ½ m with exercise rider Augustine Laura and West Coast galloped 1 1/4 m with Dana Barnes.

Churchill – Churchill, one of 13 total Breeders' Cup starters for powerhouse trainer Aidan O'Brien, but one of only two dirt runners for the stable, is expected to clear quarantine Wednesday night and will make his first appearance on the Del Mar track Thursday.

Gunnevera – Margoth's Gunnevera's preparation for Saturday's Classic got a little more serious Wednesday morning at Del Mar.

The Antonio Sano-trained 3yo colt galloped 1 ½ m, the last 3/8ths of a mile in an open gallop under exercise rider Victor O'Farrel.

"He did it very easy. He was really striding out," Sano said. "My horse is a very fresh horse. I really like my horse."

Gunnevera finished second behind West Coast in his most recent start in the 1 ¼ m Travers Stakes at Saratoga Aug. 26.

"My horse is better now than at Saratoga. He has gained weight and is in the best condition," Sano said.

Gun Runner – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm's Gun Runner went to the track Tuesday morning, leaving Del Mar's Barn DD at 6:30 under exercise rider Angel Garcia. The 9-5 morning-line favorite for the Breeders' Cup Classic stretched his legs with an easy gallop on the main

track while assistant trainer Scott Blasi observed on pony. Trainer Steve Asmussen was in attendance for the first time week.

“We’re just blessed to have a horse like him, obviously,” Asmussen said. “He’s very confident. He’s a popcorn right now; ready to run. We’ll school him later today in the paddock and we’ll see how that goes. He’ll school at the gate tomorrow and gallop and then gallop again on Friday.”

“I’m feeling good about it,” added Ron Winchell, principal of Winchell Thoroughbreds. “He’s doing great and is improving. I feel like you must look at Arrogate (as a major contender). He’s a mile and a quarter specialist and at that distance he ran down California Chrome last year. That being said, Del Mar being the shortest stretch run might be a difference maker, as well, and be to our advantage. You have to respect horses like Collected, who hasn’t done anything wrong. I’m not too concerned about a mile and a quarter and I think he proved that in Dubai. If Arrogate was not in that race, Gun Runner wins by five. He’s gotten stronger as he’s aged and is training great.

“I think if he were to be fortunate enough to win, we’ll map out what happens next,” Winchell continued. “He’s probably 50-50 to run next year. Obviously I’m more of a racing guy and my partners (Three Chimneys Farm) are more about breeding. We’ll look at the Pegasus, but this race is our first focus. If he runs in both, he can still go to stud next year, but likely not if he went to Dubai again.”

Being denied a shot to run in this year’s inaugural \$12 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational because of a restriction on horses shipping in from EHV1-marred Fair Grounds appears, in hindsight, to be a bit of a turning point for the team surrounding Gun Runner and leaves the racing world with no shortage of “what might have been” in its collective mind. Had Gun Runner raced in the Pegasus, an event in which Arrogate romped, he may not have faced said foe in March’s Dubai World Cup, thus not setting up the remainder of what has become an astoundingly successful season in the same fashion.

“I like to look forward and not backwards, but obviously we couldn’t run in the Pegasus, which was frustrating at the time,” Winchell said. “Did that play a part? No one can tell. We have had a great year thus far and now we are here. Getting into the Breeders’ Cup is always about one hurdle after the next. He seems to like the track: check. My first choice in post positions was post five: check. Is he training well: check. It usually doesn’t happen like this in horse racing, but it has with Gun Runner and hopefully it keeps happening. Now we are in the Breeders’ Cup with a chance at Horse of the Year.”

The Winchell name has had a storied history in racing and its fair share of Breeders’ Cup success, including Southern California victories in the past five years with Tapizar (2012 Dirt Mile) and Untapable (2014 Distaff) and owning and developing America’s perennial top stallion, Tapit, who stands at Gainesway. In tandem with Three Chimneys, they finished second in the 2016 Dirt Mile with Gun Runner, but return in the 2017 Classic with a noticeably improved horse, having reeled off four Grade 1 wins in the past 11 months and three consecutive leading into Saturday’s \$6 million affair.

“I kind of look at horses and dream big in the beginning with big hopes for their talent and then taper it back when they start running,” Winchell said. “With Gun Runner, we haven’t had to do that. Last year we had a choice for the Classic or Dirt Mile and we went for the latter thinking he would improve when he got older. He has done that and that is one of those situations where he’s always been thought of highly since day one and that has never changed.

“You just want him to keep going, but at some point they have to stop racing,” Winchell said. “Obviously we are overjoyed with having had Tapit (as a stallion) and Untapable, but winning the Classic would be something different. To win the Classic and be crowned Horse of the Year would be two huge things. You hope to get those bronze (Eclipse Award) statues, but to get that gold one... that puts it into context. Those are things you chase.”

Pavel – With a record of two wins in four tries, in on-and-off fashion, Pavel is giving trainer Doug O’Neill the hope that this will be another “on” moment as the lightly raced son of Creative Cause heads for the Breeders’ Cup Classic on Saturday.

“He’s doing super-great and we’re hoping that he’ll come up with another great effort on Saturday,” O’Neill said. “It’s a very tough race but we believe he deserves to be in there.”

O’Neill sent Pavel out for a 1 ½m gallop as he progressed toward Saturday.

War Decree – War Decree, the second half of the Aidan O’Brien Classic entry, was expected to clear quarantine Wednesday night along with his 12 other stablemates and make his first trip to the Del Mar track Thursday.

War Story – In his 23 starts at tracks across the country, Looch Racing Stable and Glenn Ellis’ War Story has been saddled by nine trainers. Now, he’s found home in the barn of Jorge Navarro.

“He’s doing really good and he likes this track. But, I know we are asking a lot of him,” Navarro said of the 5yo gelding. “We were going to try the Marathon (on Friday), but then Ron (Paolucci, the owner) said, ‘Why not?’ I love the way he’s training on this track and he’s going to run a big race.”

The Classic is loaded with speed and the pace should be hot, and although the son of Northern Afleet has run some of his best races on or near the lead, he’s proved he can come from behind as well.

“I’m going to sit down today or tomorrow and go over the plans, but I think that’s the best way, to sit back and see what develops and then come running home at the end,” said Navarro, who will lead him over for the sixth time Saturday and also runs Sharp Azteca in Friday’s Las Vegas Dirt Mile.

The 30-1 longshot in the 11-horse field will be ridden by Jose Ortiz, Jr., who was aboard when they finished a well-beaten fourth to Classic favorite Gun Runner in the Woodward at Saratoga. War Story might need a pep talk before getting in the gate.

“We’ve already had that talk,” laughed Navarro. “He can be a little crabby, but today he went excellent out there. He really was amazing. He’s been in so many big dances and they take a toll. But, he’s getting right at exactly the right time.”

Competing for two previous trainers, War Story finished eighth in the 2016 Classic and eighth in the 2015 Dirt Mile.

Paolucci, who won the Juvenile Fillies with adjudged winner Ria Antonia, privately purchased War Story for \$275,000 after the horse won his first race at Churchill Downs in 2014. The owner will also be represented at the 2017 Breeders’ Cup by Tell Your Mama, trained by Bob Hess Jr., in the Juvenile Fillies and the Phil D’Amato-trained Proper Discretion in the Filly & Mare Sprint.

War Story jogged 1m and galloped 1m under Carlos Ortiz at 6 a.m., and they will go out again tomorrow at the same time.

Win The Space – The 5yo son of Pulpit, making his second appearance in the Breeders’ Cup Classic, jogged 1m over the Del Mar main track the second day after he put in his final workout Monday.

The roan showed a laid-back attitude as he walked during warm-ups before heading to the track. That brought a bit of a chuckle and a small smile from trainer George Papaprodromou.

“He wakes up when he gets to the track,” the native of Cyprus said. “He’s pretty aggressive then.”