



Breeders' Cup World Championships Friday, Nov. 1 and Saturday, Nov. 2

Longines Breeders' Cup Classic Notes Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2019

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Code of Honor – Hall of Fame trainer Shug McGaughey's said Tuesday morning, William S. Farish's homebred colt Code of Honor shipped well across country Monday and has settled into his new surroundings at Santa Anita Park.

"He seemed to travel fine," McGaughey said. "It's a long day for him, but he seemed to come out of it fine. He ate last night and was good this morning. We took him up there and galloped him a mile today and let him walk on through the paddock. It all seems to be good."

Exercise rider Lexi Pradun was up for Code of Honor's first trip to the track at Santa Anita Park. McGaughey is enthusiastic about how his chestnut 3yo is coming into the race.

"I feel really good. I think we've got a very, very good horse and he matches up with any of them in the race," he said. "I love having Johnny Velazquez on him. All I'm going to do is try to keep him as fresh as I possibly can until Saturday. He's coming off two mile-and-a-quarter races. Johnny worked him last Monday (at Belmont Park) and he worked very good (5f in 1:00 1/5), so I think we've got him in a very good spot that way. All I'm doing is waiting to go over there."

Code of Honor is by Noble Mission, a full brother to the unbeaten European star Frankel. He was second in the Kentucky Derby, won the 1m Dwyer July 6 and picked up victories in the Travers at Saratoga and the Jockey Club Gold Cup at Belmont Park. He finished second to Vino Rosso in the Gold Cup, but was moved into the top spot when Vino Rosso was disqualified and dropped to second for bumping in the stretch.

The Gold Cup was Code of Honor's first start against older horses. In the Classic he faces a group of seasoned runners led by 3-1 morning-line favorite McKinzie trained by Bob Baffert. Code of Honor is the co-second choice at 4-1 and will start from the outside in the field of 11.

"I've seen McKinzie run some great races. If he runs his Whitney back or something, he'll be tough. It's a mile and a quarter. We've had to ship out here to Baffert's back yard. That's OK, too. When he takes him over there he's going to be ready. We better be ready, too."

Elate/Yoshida (Bill Mott) – Making a favorable impression in the morning never has been an issue for multiple Grade I winner Elate, a trend that has continued during her time at Santa Anita Park as she prepares for her slated run against males in the Classic.

The daughter of Medaglia d'Oro returned to the track Tuesday after breezing 3f in 36 3/5 Sunday, turning in an easy gallop under exercise rider Juan Quintero. Always one to catch the eye with her willingness to go about her work, Elate is aiming to draw the ultimate attention to herself Saturday if she can join Hall of Famer Zenyatta (2009) as the only female runners to prevail in the \$6 million Classic.

"I couldn't have been more happy with her the way we came into the Personal Ensign (finishing second by a nose to Midnight Bisou)," trainer Bill Mott said. "I thought she was doing great and we got beat in a spectacular race. And I thought she went into the Spinster (second to Blue Prize) in good shape so you never know. But she is good right now. I'd say to me, she looks as good as she did going into those two races. We just hopes she holds that form."

Elate's aptitude over the 10-furlong distance is what helped sway her connections to try a Classic run rather than knocking heads with her nemesis Midnight Bisou in the Breeders' Cup Distaff. She is 3-for-3 at 1 1/4m having won the 2017 Alabama Stakes and the past two editions of the Delaware Handicap.

"You know she's a Grade 1 winner at both distances (a mile and an eighth and a mile and a quarter) and it just seems like for whatever reason she just cruises along very well and she still has run in her going a mile and a quarter," Mott said. "Some horses seem to flatten out a little bit at that distance, but she always seems to be coming on strong."

One of Elate's top challengers Saturday is a friendly foe of sorts in stablemate and fellow multiple Grade I winner, Yoshida. The son of Heart's Cry hasn't been able to find the winner's circle since taking the 2018 Woodward Stakes but was beaten only 1 3/4 lengths for the victory when running fourth in last year's edition of the Classic.

"He's very good. He's a good competitor and he's done well at a mile and a quarter," Mott said of Yoshida. "In the Breeders' Cup at Churchill Downs, he got beat a length and a half and finished fourth but ran a very good race to a very good group. Thunder Snow and Accelerate were in front of us and I think Thunder Snow beat us a nose. If he repeats that race, that will put him in the mix."

Yoshida galloped Tuesday under Quintero, having worked a half-mile in 50 flat Sunday.

Higher Power – A year ago, the conversation around John Sadler's barn heading into the Breeders' Cup World Championships centered around whether the longtime trainer would finally get off the duck where the two-day was concerned.

In the latest example of what a difference 365 days can make, the biggest query the longtime horseman is now having to field is whether he can carve out his own place in history with a Classic repeat.

One year after throwing a 600-pound gorilla off his back by conditioning Hronis Racing's Accelerate to victory in the \$6 million Classic, Sadler and his biggest clients are aiming to keep the Breeders' Cup hardware in house by sending out Higher Power in this year's 1 1/4m test.

When Accelerate gave Sadler his first Breeders' Cup win with his 45th starter by taking the 2018 Classic, it was a fittingly culmination to a season in which the chestnut runner dominated the handicap ranks with six wins from seven starts. Higher Power's path to the 36th edition of the race has been a more complicated one, but one that could nonetheless give Sadler the distinction of joining Jay Robbins (Tiznow – 2000 and 2001) and Bob Baffert (Bayern – 2014, American Pharoah – 2015, and Arrogate – 2016) as the only trainers to saddle Breeders' Cup Classic winners in consecutive years.

"Like, 10,000 percent better," Sadler laughed when asked how satisfying it was this season not to have to answer the question of whether he is the best trainer without a Breeders' Cup win. "I'm in a good frame of mind and we have fun horses that we're going to be running over the week. You know some of those races, there are some pretty heavy favorites in there so you don't always know how well you're going to do. But we bring good horses."

Higher Power galloped 1 1/2m Tuesday morning under exercise rider David Pineda and is slated to gate school Wednesday.

Purchased for \$250,000 out of the Horses of Racing Age portion of the Keeneland April 2-year-olds in training sale, Higher Power joined the Hronis/Sadler team this spring having only made one prior start against graded company. In his fourth outing for his new connections, however, the 4yo son of Medaglia d'Oro captured the Pacific Classic by 5 1/4 lengths on Aug. 17, defeating a field that included eventual Awesome Again Stakes winner Mongolian Groom.

Though he comes into the Breeders' Cup off a third-place run in the Awesome Again, he also brings with him a valid excuse as he stumbled badly at the start and nearly unseated rider Flavien Prat.

"He still got around there third with a big excuse so hopefully we'll get a good do-over here," Sadler said. "He's a Medaglia d'Oro, he can run a mile and a quarter, he's got a really good family and they kind of improve over time as they get older. And the people who had him before me did a nice job with him. I got him in good shape and we've just been able to move him up a little bit."

Math Wizard – Pennsylvania Derby winner Math Wizard was en route from South Florida to Southern California Tuesday morning. Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. arrived at Santa Anita several hours before the 3yo son of Algorithms, who is scheduled to start in Saturday's Classic.

"He landed in Memphis an hour ago and will be there for an hour and a half," Joseph said mid-morning. "He's going to land in L.A. at 5:45 today."

Math Wizard is owned by John Fanelli, Khalid Mischref, Cash Is King LLC, LC Racing LLC, Collarmele Vitelli Racing Stables LLC, Ioannis Zoumas and Bassett Stables.

McKinzie – Tuesday was a quiet, easy day for Classic favorite McKinzie, whose exercise consisted of walking outside trainer Bob Baffert's barn.

McKinzie had his final timed work for the \$6 million race Monday – a bullet 5f in 1:00.20 – and Tuesday was his day to relax and recover. Later Monday, McKinzie drew post eight in the field of 11 and was named the 3-1 morning-line favorite.

In the Classic, McKinzie will face the 3yo star Code of Honor, Preakness winner War of Will and Bill Mott's 5yo mare Elate for the first time. Though Baffert did not handicap the field, he said McKinzie has to perform at a high level to be successful.

"He's a good horse and it's a tough race," Baffert said. "He needs to get away from the gate and get into the race early. That's the way he wants to run and he gets stronger as he goes. But he's got to show up that day. It's all about showing up. I've seen great fields put together but a lot of horses don't show up. It's who shows up is going to get the big prize."

McKinzie is 0-for-2 at the 1 1/4m distance of the Classic. He ended up a well-beaten 12th in last year's Classic and was nipped a nose by Gift Box on April 6 in the Santa Anita Handicap.

"He got beat by a really nice horse," Baffert said. "This horse is a little tricky horse to ride. I know how he has to be ridden so we'll see that happens."

After McKinzie finished second in the 1 1/8 m Awesome Again Sept. 28 at Santa Anita, Baffert decided to change jockeys. He has replaced Hall of Famer Mike Smith, who was aboard for the 4yo colt's 13 races, with Joel Rosario. A year ago, Rosario rode Accelerate to a win in the Classic.

"There's a lot about this horse; I'm going to sit down with Joel," Baffert said. "He's ridden against. He's beaten him. He knows him. These guys are so good. They see the videos. They know the horses."

Mongolian Groom – Trainer Enebish Ganbat spent several minutes quietly watching his 4yo gelding Mongolian Groom being bathed Tuesday morning after he jogged 2m under exercise rider Jesse Cardenas.

Ganbat said he is pleased with how Mongolian Groom, longshot winner of the Awesome Again, a Breeders' Cup Challenge "Win and You're In" race, looks to him approaching the Classic.

Mongolian Groom drew post nine in the field of 11 for the Classic Monday and Ganbat said that he is fine with that spot for the son of Hightail.

"I'm OK with the post position. Nine is good," he said. "I like being outside."

Jockey Abel Cedillo, who guided Mongolian Groom to this gate-to-wire victory at 25-1 in the Awesome Again, will be aboard for the Classic.

Owendale – Rupp Racing's Owendale boarded an early morning flight along with a large contingent of Kentucky-based horses and arrived at Santa Anita just after noon. Trainer Brad Cox was also en route to California and will be on hand for Owendale and his four stablemates' first appearance at Santa Anita Wednesday.

Seeking the Soul – Charles Fipke's Stephen Foster Handicap winner came on the track at 6:45 a.m. Tuesday and had an easy gallop under the watchful eye of trainer Dallas Stewart, who arrived from Kentucky Monday.

“He trained beautifully,” Stewart said. “He’s training really well since we left him here. He’s comfortable. He’s got three works over the track and is really doing well. We’re trying to win (the Breeders’ Cup Classic), that’s our goal, so we wanted to get a race over the track (in the Awesome Again). We were coming off a bad race at Del Mar (in the Pacific Classic), where he got the Thumps and it just didn’t work out. He’s healthy and he’s back at 100 percent. I’m happy. I’m happy anytime I’m in a big race.”

Vino Rosso – Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable’s Vino Rosso galloped 1 1/4m Tuesday on the morning after arriving at Santa Anita from Belmont Park for a scheduled start in Saturday’s Classic.

“He shipped in great. He settled in overnight. I thought he had a good gallop this morning, so things are going to plan so far. Knock on wood,” trainer Todd Pletcher said.

Vino Rosso drew post 10 for the Classic, which met with Pletcher’s approval.

“You get a good run to the first turn and we’ll try to establish position. You can have your plan, but some of that is dictated by what some of the other horses do. I think we can get a trip where we’re in a good stalking position,” Pletcher said. “We know he likes the mile and a quarter. We’ll hope to put him in a position to where he can show his strength.”

Vino Rosso captured the 1 1/4m Gold Cup at Santa Anita May 27 and also finished first in the 1 1/4m Jockey Club Gold Cup at Belmont in his most recent start, only to be disqualified and placed second behind Code of Honor.

“We always felt like he’d improve as a 4-year-old. That’s part of the reason why we decided to stop after the Travers last year and give him some time. As you know, things don’t always go according to plan, but this is what we had in mind when we made that decision,” Pletcher said. “We’re happy everything’s fallen into place so far and hope it continues.”

Irad Ortiz Jr. has the return mount about the 4yo son of Curlin.

War of Will – At the risk of stating the obvious, it has served Mark Casse well to heed his clients when they have a particularly strong opinion about one of their charges.

When owner Gary Barber urged the Canadian Hall of Fame trainer to run his filly Got Stormy against males in the Aug. 10 Fourstardave Handicap on one week’s rest, Casse was happy to give credit where credit was due as they celebrated a course record-setting triumph by the 4yo chestnut. In the lead up to the \$6 million Classic, Barber again went slightly outside the Team Casse norm when he suggested shipping his Preakness Stakes winner War of Will to California early to get an extended feel for the Santa Anita Park track.

Were it left up to him, Casse likely would have not put the son of War Front on the plane until about four or five days out from his expected run. After seeing first-hand on Tuesday how at home his first career classic winner looks while galloping beneath the San Gabriel Mountains, Casse is hoping Saturday goes down as another instance where Barber can say ‘Told you so.’

In his first morning getting to lay eyes on the colt in person at Santa Anita, Casse was reaffirmed in his belief that the West Coast is doing wonders for War of Will’s mental and physical state. Four days after putting in his second workout over the Arcadia oval, the bay sophomore again made his time over the deep surface look easy during a routine gallop and trip through the paddock Tuesday under Shane Tripp.

“If you look in the past, we’ve had great success just shipping out four or five days before. We did that with (2016 Juvenile winner) Classic Empire, we’ve done it with (2017 Mile winner) World Approval, we did it with all our Breeders’ Cup winners pretty well,” Casse said. “But Gary was concerned. He said that the Santa Anita track is much deeper now and said ‘I really would like to get a couple works over the track, I think it would be beneficial’. So I said to Gary, ‘I’m not sure that’s the best idea but if that’s what you want to do, you’re the boss and we’ll do it.’

“I think too many times as a trainer, we don’t pay attention enough to what the owners want. Ultimately it is their horse. That’s the reason I think I’ve had some great relationships with owners for a

long time. It's not a one-man show and I don't think I know it all. But if I said it was a terrible idea and I didn't want to do it, Gary is not one of those guys who would push me into it."

Getting accustomed to a surface has been key for War of Will this season. When he finished ninth in the Belmont Stakes on June 8, Casse felt the deep going at Belmont was more a contributing factor behind that run than the toll of dancing every dance in the Triple Crown.

"You can tell after a race how he cools out how he handles a race and how he handles the track," Casse said. "For instance, after the Preakness, 15 minutes after the Preakness he was fine. It took him hours to get over the Belmont. He was just stressed. His second breeze here (at Santa Anita) when he went, not a deep breath. He came back and he recovered quickly."

After turning in a half-mile breeze in 47 2/5 on Oct. 25, the word was that War of Will was getting better with every trip over the surface.

"Shane, who has gotten on him the entire time at Saratoga and all summer long, said he feels he's never gotten over the track any better," Casse said. "He looks good. He may look health wise the best I've ever seen him. Our feeling is...if he comes with his big race, everyone is going to know he's there."