



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

Longines Breeders' Cup Classic Notes Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2019

Contact Notes Team: 859-250-0358

Code of Honor – William Farish's homebred colt jogged for a while Wednesday morning, then galloped 1 1/2m for exercise rider Lexi Pradun.

Rider and horse returned to the barn area through the paddock at Santa Anita and returned to the paddock in mid-morning for more schooling in preparation for Saturday's \$6 million Longines Breeders' Cup Classic.

Code of Honor drew the outside post in the field of 11 and is the 3-1 second choice on the morning line. He will be ridden for the eighth consecutive time by Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez.

Trainer Shug McGaughey said he was happy with the way the Travers and Jockey Club Gold Cup winner moved on the track.

"It looks like to me that he gets over it fine," McGaughey said. "I asked Lexi too and she said fine. She took hold of him the whole way. I can't worry about the track."

McGaughey has nine victories in the Breeders' Cup, but is winless in eight starts in the Classic. His best finishes have been seconds by Seeking the Gold in 1988 and Easy Goer in 1989. McGaughey said he feels good about his chances of finally getting his Classic with Code of Honor.

"There are two really major races in the United States that I haven't won, the Preakness and the Breeders' Cup Classic," he said. "I've been close in both of them, so they're both on my list. I hope that maybe this year we can get the one behind us."

After Code of Honor was moved up from third to second in the Kentucky Derby, McGaughey decided to skip the last two Triple Crown races and ran the Noble Mission colt back in the 1m Dwyer on July 6 at Belmont Park. He won by 3/4 lengths then won the Travers and the Gold Cup, on the disqualification of Vino Rosso.

"I think the key to him is that after the Derby he got a little bit of time until the Dwyer and then he got a little bit of time until the Travers," McGaughey said. "For me to see his development, not only mentally but physically too, has been something I've seen in very few horses. As much as he's grown up, as much as he likes doing what he's doing, is something."

"A lot of that was the Dwyer when he was kind of back there going a mile and Johnny kind of made of a move and he had to bully his way through a hole. I think the horse learned a lot that day and maybe we learned a lot about how he wants to run and how he wants to be ridden. We kind of laugh and say we wish we had this horse today on Derby Day, but we didn't. It's an entirely different horse now than it was then."

Elate/Yoshida (Bill Mott) – Elate and stablemate Yoshida both galloped Wednesday and went through the paddock with exercise rider Juan Quintero aboard each.

With this being the 10-year anniversary of champion Zenyatta becoming the first and – to date – only female runner to win the Classic, more than one observer has mentioned how fitting it would be should Elate match that feat Saturday. That Hall of Fame trainer Bill Mott is even putting such a challenge before the daughter of Medaglia d'Oro speaks volumes about his confidence in the multiple Grade I winner.

“We’re throwing her in deep water. We seldom run the fillies against the colts unless we think we’ve got a top class horse and one that would fit the race,” Mott said. “I think she fits the conditions of the race very well and she’s proven it. Of course we’re running against good competition so she still has to run her very best race to compete.”

Yoshida is winless in five starts this year but, with Grade I triumphs on dirt and turf, is one of the most versatile runners on the entire Breeders’ Cup card.

“It’s very rare. Generally, with most horses they are either clearly one or the other,” Mott said of Yoshida’s dual surface top-level ability. “I mean it’s just interesting how sometimes you can have a horse who is so good on the dirt. I mean you can have a champion horse and run them on the turf and they just don’t do that well. It should make him an interesting stallion prospect just the fact that he’s done both.”

Higher Power – Hronis Racing’s Higher Power galloped and stood in the gate Wednesday, coming to the track around 6:30 a.m. along with stablemate Ollie’s Candy.

This year’s Classic field is widely considered one of the more wide open editions of the race, as evidenced by the tepid 3-1 favoritism for McKinzie on the morning line. Higher Power has been worse than third just once in his past seven starts and scored a victory in the Pacific Classic on Aug. 17. Though trainer John Sadler said the son of Medaglia d’Oro still needs to prove he can duplicate that form, the bay colt is far from the only one with questions hanging over them heading into Saturday.

“It’s an interesting field, it’s probably a great gambling race this year because you could take a lot of horses and say they have a pretty good chance,” Sadler said. “There are a lot question marks on all of them. With Higher Power, can he repeat that performance that he had at Del Mar and do it again? Because he’s got that one. But he has to do it again. Can McKinzie go a mile and a quarter? That’s another one. Then, how do the 3-year-olds stack up against the olders? So there are a lot angles you can look at. (Elate), she looks like she wants that distance, she’s also a Medaglia d’Oro. That’s another fascinating look at that race.”

Math Wizard – Pennsylvania Derby winner Math Wizard jogged once around the Santa Anita track under assistant trainer Sabine Langvad Wednesday on the morning after arriving from South Florida to prepare for the Classic.

“He got in late last night. He got in around 10 [p.m.]. His flight was delayed because of weather,” trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. said. “He ate well. He traveled well. He likes to travel. Whenever he travels, he wakes up when he gets there.”

Math Wizard, who woke up at Parx to post a 31-1 upset victory in the Sept. 21 Pennsylvania Derby from the rail post position, will break from post one again Saturday.

“I like the one. We actually wanted the one. A lot of people don’t like the one but in Pennsylvania he was one and in Ohio he was one, and those were his two best races,” said Joseph, whose trainee finished second in the Ohio Derby at Thistledown in June. “We were actually rooting for the one. He’s not a front-runner, but he can sit off them and save some ground.”

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 –What’s in a name? For Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert, there is a significant emotional attachment for McKinzie, his morning-line favorite for the Classic.

The chestnut son of Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense was named for the late racing executive Brad McKinzie, a Baffert pal since their college days at the University of Arizona and a friend of the co-owners, Mike Pegram, Karl Watson and Paul Weitman. Purchased for \$170,000, he is 7-5-0 in 13 career starts and has earned more than \$2.2 million. More important, he has more than delivered as a tribute to Brad McKinzie, who died of cancer at 62 in August 2017.

Baffert typically has a cool approach, but he was visibly moved after McKinzie won the Whitney on Aug. 3 at Saratoga Race Course.

“A lot of people don’t think I have a heart, but I do,” Baffert said. “I’m a softy and Brad was the biggest softy of all. I remember when I won my first Kentucky Derby I was up on the podium and I looked down and see Brad and he’s in tears, he’s just crying. We have known him forever and that’s just the kind of guy he was. My No.1 fan. He’d show up for all the Triple Crown races. When he got sick, that last year it was tough watching him go through what he went through. And, the things he sacrificed in life to take care of his family. And he would never complain. Until the last day. I would always say ‘Brad, how are you feeling?’ ‘Great.’ That was him. He didn’t want anybody to feel sorry for him. He was tough. I wish I could be that tough.

“To me, I think we’re all living through this horse, thinking about Brad. He’s got a lot of friends. You’d be surprised of the inner circle that he had of people. I feel a little extra pressure on me when this horse runs because I know we’re all thinking about him. I’m just glad that we named a really good horse after him because it would have been horrible if I had to geld this horse.

“Brad was probably one of the funniest guys I’ve ever been around. We just loved him. We still tell stories when my family gets together. There was no one more fun to be with when you went to a football game because he was just hysterical. But a great human being. He’s still very missed.”

On Wednesday morning McKinzie jogged a mile under exercise rider Humberto Gomez.

Mongolian Groom – Trainer Enebish Ganbat said he is using the same recipe for success with Mongolian Groom as he approaches the biggest test of his career.

Ganbat sent the 4yo gelding for his morning exercise Wednesday and morning and had rider Jesse Cardenas jog him a mile then gallop a half-mile.

“I want to do exactly what I did before the Awesome Again,” Ganbat said.

It proved to be a winning approach when Mongolian Groom led from gate to wire to win the “Win and You’re In” Breeders’ Cup Challenge race at odds of 25-1.

Abel Cedillo, who worked out the Awesome Again victory, will ride Mongolian Groom in the Classic.

Owendale – Rupp Racing’s Owendale made his presence felt Wednesday, his first morning to gallop at Santa Anita since arriving Tuesday from Kentucky and the confidence he was exuding carried over to his trainer Brad Cox.

“He’s moving as well as he can move, looks as well as he can look,” Cox said. “It’s a step up from the Oklahoma Derby, but’s a nice horse going the right way at the right time.

“He hasn’t run a bad race all year. Once he took off this spring, when he won the Lexington, that was his coming out party. It showed he can run with the big horses. His training has been the exact same all year. He’s a very consistent horse and keeps getting better. He galloped a mile and a half this morning and was putting off 16s for every eighth (of a mile). He couldn’t be doing any better.”

Seeking the Soul – Charles Fipke’s Stephen Foster Handicap winner Seeking the Soul followed his usual routine of galloping 1 ½m before daylight and continues to “train beautifully,” according to his trainer Dallas Stewart.

Vino Rosso – Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable’s Vino Rosso galloped 1 3/8m and stood in the starting gate at Santa Anita Wednesday morning in preparation for a start in Saturday’s Classic.

“He’s doing great,” trainer Todd Pletcher said. “He showed a lot of energy going on and off the track.”

Vino Rosso already has a 1 1/4m GI victory at Santa Anita on his resume. The 4yo son of Curlin captured the May 27 Gold Cup, seven weeks after finishing fourth in the 7f Carter Handicap at Aqueduct.

“The Carter was a Grade 1 opportunity and he’s always run well at Aqueduct. Unfortunately, it was probably the slowest half-mile pace in the history of the Carter and it didn’t set up well for him,” Pletcher said. “If we could do it all over again, we’d probably put a pacesetter in there to insure that there’s decent fractions. But you’d never expect a Grade 1 sprint to go almost :47 to the half.”

The Carter experience did, however, move Vino Rosso forward.

“He was training super and it seemed like the Santa Anita Gold Cup was coming up at the right time,” Pletcher said. “He was doing well and we felt getting a race over the track would let us see where we are as far as the Breeders’ Cup.”

Vino Rosso stalked the early pace in the Gold Cup before moving to the lead on the turn into the homestretch and edging away to victory by three-quarters of a length.

“It gives us encouragement. He has a good race over the track at the distance,” Pletcher said. “It’s good to know that.”

War of Will – Trainer Mark Casse is always encouraged whenever the son of War Front gets to bucking on the track, and War of Will threw in one of playful jumps while galloping along with stablemate and Breeders’ Cup Mile contender Got Stormy Wednesday morning.

With Shane Tripp in the irons, War of Will visited the gate after his routine exercise.

It would be unfair to frame a campaign that includes a Preakness Stakes triumph and two other graded-stakes wins as a disappointment but War of Will has stumped his connections with some less than stellar runs that didn’t have obvious excuses. The bay colt trained in superior fashion leading up the Jim Dandy Stakes at Saratoga, but could only manage a fifth-place run that day. His third-place effort in the Pennsylvania Derby was an improvement but trainer Mark Casse felt the colt lost focus in the lane, hence the decision to add blinkers to War of Will for Saturday’s Classic.

One of the many reasons why War of Will’s Kentucky Derby outcome – in which he was elevated to seventh via disqualification after being interfered with by Maximum Security – stung so deeply for Casse was because he felt his charge was coming into that race in peak form.

“In all honesty, he’s thrown some clunkers at us that I don’t really know why. So that’s a bit disappointing,” Casse said. “He needs to come with his Derby race (on Saturday). Everything we’ve kind of done up to this now has been looking at how we did the Kentucky Derby. I think he came with his ‘A’ game in the Kentucky Derby. Probably a B-plus game in the Preakness. Our feeling is he’s older, he’s more mature now and why not. If he comes with his big race, then everyone will know he’s there.”

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