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## **MODEST BEGINNINGS, BIG DREAMS: CHUNK OF GOLD PUTS ETHAN WEST ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY**

**FLORENCE, Ky. (Monday, Feb. 17, 2025)** – **Ethan West** has spent years quietly building his training career, working tirelessly at Turfway Park and throughout racetracks in the Midwest. On Saturday, the 32-year-old horseman found himself on the national stage for the first time as **Terry Stephens' Chunk of Gold** finished a hard-fought second in the \$500,000 Fasig-Tipton Risen Star Stakes (Grade II) at Fair Grounds, securing 25 qualifying points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and propelling West into the Derby conversation for the first time.

"It was the greatest second-place finish I've had my entire career," West said with a laugh. "I thought he'd handle the surface but you never know until you try. What we did know going in was that he was going to try. He does every time he trains and runs. Trying something new on the biggest stage for 3-year-olds so far this year—that was the real question."

West's path to this moment has been anything but traditional. Raised in Cambridge City, Indiana, he got his first exposure to horse racing through his grandparents, who had a couple of horses while he and his older brother, **Aaron**, were growing up. That early introduction to the sport sparked their interest and when Aaron pursued a training career, Ethan followed him to the track, learning to gallop and break young horses. The brothers worked at a training center in Russell Springs, Kentucky, where they gained hands-on experience with young horses. Hard work and horsemanship quickly earned Ethan the respect of his peers and he steadily built his operation with a focus on developing young talent.

Since going out on his own in 2018, West has started more than 1,100 horses and won 168 races, primarily in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio. His lone graded stakes victory came in the 2023 Bryan Station Stakes (GIII) at Keeneland with **Runaway Storm**.

West keeps his horses based year-round at Turfway Park, allowing him to stay close to his family—something many nomadic trainers don't get the luxury of doing. Chunk of Gold got his start there, breaking his maiden on debut while showing a potent late kick. In his next start, he again made a bold late rally to finish second in the Turfway Prevue Stakes behind **Baby Max**. With earnings that wouldn't have secured a spot in Saturday's oversubscribed \$175,000 John Battaglia Memorial (Listed), West and Stephens made the call to ship south for the Risen Star.

It was a bold decision but one that nearly paid off in full. Making his dirt debut, the son of Preservationist, out of the Cairo Prince mare Play for Gold, settled mid-pack along the rail in eighth, tracking early pacesetter and eventual winner **Magnitude**. Heading into the far turn, West saw his horse gearing up for his known late kick. From the eighth pole to the wire, West could only yell, "Get second, get second!" knowing there was no catching the winner. Chunk of Gold did just that, closing strongly to finish ahead of **Built**, a horse jockey **Jareth Loveberry** had ridden in his last two starts before being replaced by **Luis Saez**.

"I've been with Ethan the last two mornings, watching replays and talking about the horse," Loveberry said after the Risen Star. "The trip went pretty good, but there's still a little greenness. He's still learning and developing, but he knows how to finish."

Not only has Chunk of Gold exceeded expectations on the track, but he has also turned out to be an incredible bargain. Purchased for just \$2,500 as a yearling at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton October Sale, the colt has now banked \$148,818 and put himself on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Beyond his growing success, West remains grounded in family. His first call after the race wasn't to an owner or fellow trainer—it was to his wife, **Paige**, who was home with their children: **Lane**, 15; **Nash**, 12; **Jett**, 9; and **True**, 16 months.

"Ten seconds after we talked about the race, I immediately asked how the game was going," West said. "That's just how it is—family comes first."

With 10 weeks until the Kentucky Derby, West isn't getting ahead of himself. The next decision is whether to point toward the \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII) at Turfway on March 22 or return to Fair Grounds for the \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII) on the same day.

"We've got options, which is a great thing," West said. "We'll let the horse tell us. Stabling year-round at Turfway has been great, not just to develop horses like Chunk of Gold but also to be here with my family. Family always comes first and they know the tough life it is to train horses. I've got a great group of horses and clients supporting me. What more do you need? Maybe one day, we'll even get to smell the roses."

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