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FINAL GAMBIT STAMPS SPOT IN KENTUCKY DERBY WITH 15-1 UPSET IN JEFF RUBY STEAKS

FLORENCE, Ky. (Saturday, March 22, 2025) – Juddmonte’s **Final Gambit** stamped himself in the starting gate for the 151st Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve with an authoritative 3 ½ length victory in Saturday’s 54th running of the \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (Grade III), the richest race in the history of Turfway Park Racing & Gaming.

Trained by **Brad Cox** and ridden by Turfway Park’s leading rider **Luan Machado**, Final Gambit completed 1 1/8 miles in 1:50.10 while earning 100 qualifying points toward the Kentucky Derby.

Final Gambit, a gray son of Not This Time, was last into the first turn of the Jeff Ruby Steaks with **Charlie’s to Blame** setting a swift opening quarter-mile of :22.97. Up the backstretch, Final Gambit remained 12th and last through a half-mile in :47.91.

As the field entered the far turn Final Gambit started to range in contention while Charlie’s to Blame underwent pressure to his outside by **California Burrito** and **Innovator**. Machado kept Final Gambit positioned in the clear around the turn while going seven wide around the pacesetters. At the eighth pole, California Burrito took the lead but Final Gambit quickly swept past and kicked clear to an open-length victory.

Flying Mohawk, who was 11th early, closed to finish second. He was followed by **Maximum Promise**, **Poster**, **Giocoso**, **Curvino**, California Burrito, Innovator, Charlie’s to Blame, **Baby Max**, **He’s Not Joking** and **Calling Card**.

“I knew keeping (Final Gambit) in the clear around the turn would probably be best but I was worried with how wide the horses on the front end were going,” Machado said. “Sometimes when he’s between horses he doesn’t try as hard as when he’s in the clear. He really closed fast down the lane and was impressive late.”

Final Gambit returned \$32.14, \$12.78 and \$8.40 for the second win of his young career.

The Juddmonte homebred is by Not This Time out of the Tapit mare Pachinko. Final Gambit broke his maiden on Feb. 15 at Turfway Park.

“He was visually impressive when he broke his maiden here,” Cox’s local assistant **Tessa Walden** said. “It gave us confidence he’d come with a run, especially with how he handled the surface this winter.”

The top 5 finishers of the Jeff Ruby Steaks earned qualifying points on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale toward the Kentucky Derby.

“When you’re from Louisville, there’s only one race you’re aiming for and that’s the Derby,” trainer **Whit Beckman** said of Flying Mohawk.

Live racing resumes Wednesday-Saturday at Turfway Park for the final four days of the Winter/Spring Meet. Daily first post is 5:55 p.m. ET.

BLESS THE BROKEN SCORES 2 ¾-LENGTH VICTORY IN BOURBONETTE OAKS, EARNS 50 QUALIFYING POINTS FOR SPOT IN LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS – Cypress Creek Equine and Madaket Stables’ **Bless the Broken** secured 50 qualifying points and a likely spot in the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (Grade I) by winning Saturday’s 43rd running of the \$280,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed) at Turfway Park Racing & Gaming.

Trained by **Will Walden**, Hall of Fame jockey **John Velazquez** rode Bless the Broken to victory while completing 1 1/16 miles in 1:44.65.

The speedy **White Rocks** set the early fractions in the Bourbonette Oaks with **Admit** applying slight pressure to her inside going to the first turn. Following a quarter-mile in :24.24, White Rocks drew a length clear of Admit and completed a half-mile in :49.02. Meanwhile, Velazquez tipped Bless the Broken to the three path and, around the far turn, drew within a length of White Rocks. At the top of the lane, Bless the Broken struck the front and kicked 2 ¾ lengths clear of **As Catch Can**, who closed late to finish second.

Admit, who had a troubled trip down the lane, finished third. She was followed by **Bracelet**, White Rocks, **Zealous Moon**, **Golden Sunshine**, **Somethinaboutther**, **Getting After It**, **Resolve** and **Just Ruthless**.

“We had her here at Turfway over the summer and saw how well she worked over this track,” Walden said. “So we had that in the back of our minds when prepping for this race that we knew she would handle the racetrack. It’s great to be in the Kentucky Oaks. Rain or shine, we will be there.”

Bless the Broken returned \$15.18, \$7.94 and \$5.36.

“Once she was able to get into the clear she really came with a big run,” Velazquez said. “She handled the surface very well today and was impressive.”

The top five finishers of the Bourbonette Oaks earned 50-25-15-10-5 qualifying points toward a spot in the starting gate for the Longines Kentucky Oaks on Friday, May 2 at Churchill Downs.

MERCANTE SPRINGS 13-1 UPSET IN GRADE III, \$290,000 TWINSPIRES KENTUCKY CUP CLASSIC – Carl Pollard’s Mercante battled the entire length of the Turfway Park stretch with **Encino** to pull a 13-1 upset victory in Saturday’s 25th running of the \$290,000 TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic (Grade III).

With jockey **Joe Ramos** in the saddle for trainer **Brian Knippenberg**, Mercante completed 1 1/8 miles in 1:49.08 for a one length victory.

It was a good start to the TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic with Encino going to the early lead under jockey **Luan Machado** while completing quarter-mile fractions of :23.48 and :47.48 with Mercante tracking his every move in second. Around the far turn, Ramos began to ask Mercante to engage with Encino and the two battled the entire length of the Turfway Park stretch with Mercante sticking his head in front inside the sixteenth pole.

“I can’t thank the connections enough for allowing me to ride this horse back,” Ramos said. “He was so game today and fought hard the entire stretch. We’re out here having fun on Turfway Park’s biggest day in front of a great crowd. You can’t really ask for anything more.”

Mercante rewarded his backers by returning \$2 mutuel payouts of \$28.50, \$11.54 and \$7.40.

It was 6 ¾ lengths back to **Hush of a Storm** in third who was followed by **Utah Beach, Gamer, Lord Bullington, Paros, Tapit Shoes, Highestdistinciton, Chiron** and **Verstappen**.

The TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic was Mercante’s fourth victory from 11 starts with three of those wins coming at Turfway Park. Mercante has now banked purse earnings of \$367,017.

A 5-year-old son of Gun Runner, Mercante is out of the Pollard’s brilliant mare Caressing.

DANA’S BEAUTY SCORES REPEAT VICTORY IN LATONIA STAKES – Resolute Racing’s Dana’s Beauty surged past pacesetter **Takemetothebeach** at the top of the stretch and drew clear late for a repeat victory in Saturday’s \$228,000 Latonia Stakes at Turfway Park Racing & Gaming.

Ridden by **Juan Hernandez** for trainer **Mike Maker**, Dana’s Beauty completed the 1 1/16-mile contest in 1:44.95.

Takemetothebeach set the pace in the Latonia through opening fractions of :23.56 and :47.21. Dana’s Beauty tracked the leader from third, about two lengths off the pace. Around the far turn, Hernandez kept Dana’s Beauty in the three path and at the eighth pole, she overtook Takemetothebeach and kicked clear for a 3 ½-length victory.

“She simply loves it here at Turfway Park,” Maker said. “We were definitely excited to get her back here after winning here in December.”

Sent off at odds of 2-1, Dana’s Beauty returned \$6.80 for a \$2 win wager.

Sand and Sea rallied late to finish second followed by **Austere, Dazzlin Dictator**, and **Long Ago**.

With her Latonia triumph, Dana’s Beauty improved her record to 12 wins from 45 starts with career earnings of \$974,603.

KALE’S ANGEL KICKS CLEAR LATE TO WIN ANIMAL KINGDOM STAKES – Tom Kagel and Ernest Marchosky’s Kale’s Angel had a perfect trip under jockey **Ramon Vazquez** to win Saturday’s \$250,000 Animal Kingdom Stakes at Turfway Park.

Trained by **Peter Miller**, Kale’s Angel completed six furlongs in 1:11.24.

The speedy **Big Vince** set the early fractions of the Animal Kingdom with quarter-mile splits of :22.45 and :45.73. Around the far turn, Vazquez ranged up to Big Vince and at the top of the stretch began to power clear for a 3 ¾-length victory.

“He ran hard at Oaklawn and got a little tired on us,” Miller said. “He won his last start down there on pure guts. So we took him back to California, freshened him up and it definitely got him back to his best. I could tell by the way he was acting in the mornings that he’d run big today.”

Mo Hair Sam closed from last to finish second and was followed by Big Vince, **Coming in Hot, Piquant, Shan** and **Killjoy**. Kale’s Angel returned \$8.24 for his victory.

A 3-year-old son of Complexity out of the Malibu Moon mare Love Affair, Kale’s Angel was bred in Kentucky by Brereton C. Jones.

The Animal Kingdom marked Kale’s Angel’s fourth win from eight starts. He’s now banked earnings of \$400,765.

BANKS HOLDS OFF LATE CHARGE OF MEGALODON TO WIN \$240,000 RUSHAWAY – Tom Lambro's **Banks** and jockey **Frankie Dettori** made a bold move around the far turn and held off the late charge of **Megalodon** to win Saturday's 38th running of the \$240,000 Rushaway Stakes at Turfway Park Racing & Gaming.

Set off as the 2-1 favorite, the **Joe Sharp**-trained Banks completed 1 1/16 miles in 1:45.92

It was a moderate early pace to the Rushaway with **Coalmoon** setting an uncontested opening quarter-mile of :24.68. Up the backstretch, **Baker Hayfield** ranged to Coalmoon's outside to apply mild pressure through a half-mile in :49.84. Meanwhile, Banks was rating off the leaders in sixth until the far turn when Dettori began to ask Banks to engage the leaders. At the quarter-pole, Banks struck the front and was able to hold off Megalodon by 1 ½ lengths.

"It was a pretty straightforward trip," Dettori said. "**Johnny (Velazquez)** sort of forced my hand when he started to make his move (aboard End of Romance) and he had a good kick to the wire."

Banks paid \$6.74 while recording his third-career victory from just six starts. He's now banked earnings of \$210,387.

End of Romance finished third followed by **Game Warrior, Urban Planner, Coalmoon, Banker Hayfield** and **Mister Rosso**.

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