

Eight To Run In Oaks

Courtesy of wfpl.com
Rick Howlett April 28, 2009, 5:27 pm

A field of eight is entered for Friday's running of the 135th Kentucky Oaks.

Post positions for the \$500,000, fillies only race were drawn Tuesday morning at Churchill Downs.

The heavy favorite is Rachel Alexandra, with 3-to-5 odds for the mile-and-an-eighth race. She'll run from the number six post position.

Rachel Alexandra is trained by Hal Wiggins and will be ridden by Calvin Borel.

The post position draw for Saturday's Kentucky Derby will be held Wednesday at noon at Churchill Downs.

Here's a rundown of the Oaks field from Churchill Downs:

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (April 28, 2009) – L and M Partner's brilliant Rachel Alexandra, who closed 2008 with a dominating victory in the Golden Rod (Grade II) beneath the Twin Spires of Churchill Downs, will put a four-race win streak on the line Friday when she faces seven rivals in the 135th running of the \$500,000-added Kentucky Oaks (Grade I) at the legendary Louisville track.

The Oaks, America's top race for 3-year-old fillies, will go as the 11th race on Friday with a 5:45 p.m. (all times EDT) post time. The 12-race Oaks Day card has a first post time of 10:30 a.m.

Rachel Alexandra drew post position six for the Oaks and Churchill Downs oddsmaker Mike Battaglia has installed Rachel Alexandra as the 3-5 odds-on favorite for the 1 1/8 mile Oaks. The daughter of Medaglia d'Oro is trained by Hal Wiggins and scheduled to be ridden by Calvin Borel. Each of her connections is seeking their first victory in the Kentucky Oaks.

Following last fall's Golden Rod victory, Rachel Alexandra reeled off impressive victories in her 3-year-old campaign in the Martha Washington on Feb. 15 at Oaklawn Park, the Fair Grounds Oaks (Grade II) on March 14 at Fair Grounds and the Grade II Fantasy on April 5 at Oaklawn Park. She has a career record of 6-2-0 in nine races and has earned \$621,440.

The second choice on the morning line at 5-2 is West Point Thoroughbreds, Lakland Farm and R. Dee Hubbard's Justwhistledixie. Trained by Kiaran McLaughlin, the daughter of Dixie Union brings a five-race winning streak into her first meeting with Rachel Alexandra. Her two most recent scores came in the Davona Dale (Grade II) and Bonnie Miss (Grade II) at Gulfstream Park.

Julien Leparoux, who rode Justwhistledixie to the Bonnie Miss victory, has the mount Friday and will break from post position five.

Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas, who had sent out four Kentucky Oaks winners, will be represented by a trio of runners in the 135th renewal of the race: Lukas will saddle Westrock Stables' Be Fair and the Marylou Whitney Stables' duo of Stone Legacy and Tweeter in Friday's race.

Lukas' Oaks winners are Blush With Pride (1982), Lucky Lucky Lucky (1984), Open Mind (1989) and Seaside Attraction (1990). Lukas will be one of three Oaks trainers trying to accomplish a sweep of the Oaks and Saturday's \$2 million-guaranteed Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI). That Oaks-Derby sweep was last achieved in 1952 when Calumet Farm's legendary trainer Ben Jones sent out Real Delight to win the Oaks and followed with a Derby win by Hill Gail.

Lukas will send out Flying Private in the Derby on Saturday.

Bob Baffert, who will enter racing's Hall of Fame this year with his 1999 Kentucky Oaks winner Silverbulletday, will saddle Arnold Zetcher's Gabby's Golden Gal in Friday's Oaks with Victor Espinoza to ride. Baffert's Kentucky Derby hopeful is Pioneerof the Nile.

Bill Mott, another member of racing's Hall of Fame and the all-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs, will saddle Mike Rutherford's Flying Spur in the Oaks. Flying Spur's best career effort was a runner-up finish to Rachel Alexandra in the Fair Grounds Oaks. Garrett Gomez, who won the 2007 Oaks on Rags To Riches, has the mount.

The field for the 135th running of the Kentucky Oaks, from the rail out, is as follows: Tweeter (Miguel Mena), Be Fair (Rafael Bejarano), Stone Legacy (Kent Desormeaux), Gabby's Golden Gal (Victor Espinoza), Justwhistledixie (Julien Leparoux), Rachel Alexandra (Calvin Borel), Nan (Corey Nakatani) and Flying Spur. Garrett Gomez). All starters will carry 121 pounds.

KY Oaks: Everyone Chasing Rachel Alexandra

By [Esther Marr](#)

Updated: Friday, May 1, 2009 1:39 PM

Courtesy of TheBloodHorse.com

Prior to the [Kentucky Oaks](#) (gr. I) post position draw the morning of April 28, Mike Rutherford, owner/breeder of [Flying Spur](#), and Michael Lauffer, co-owner of [Rachel Alexandra](#), discussed the chances of their fillies in the 1 1/8-mile, \$500,000 race May 1.

It was ironic that the two men were sitting next to each other, talking casually about the industry, considering the fact Rachel Alexandra and Flying Spur finished one-two, respectively, in the March 14 Fair Grounds Oaks (gr. II). But there was a feeling of mutual respect between them as they conversed about their fillies' rematch in the run for the lilies.

"Do you think I did the right thing by entering Rachel in the Oaks instead of the (Kentucky) Derby (gr. I)?" Lauffer asked Rutherford.

“Well, I would have liked to see her run in the Derby, but I wouldn’t have run her in the Derby,” Rutherford said with a laugh.

After Rachel Alexandra drew the six post, and Flying Spur drew the eight, Lauffer and Rutherford rested easy and they both seemed satisfied with their respective positions.

“I think she’s going to be tough,” said Lauffer of Flying Spur, a daughter of [Giant's Causeway](#) —Lakeway, by Seattle Slew, who has won just once in six starts, a Jan. 5 maiden event at Fair Grounds. “She likes to run long distances, and I think a mile and an eighth is going to help her.”

In regards to her most impressive race, in which she was runner-up to Rachel Alexandra by 1 3/4 lengths, Rutherford noted, “(Flying Spur) was closing in at the end...Rachel Alexandra is obviously the big filly in this race, but they all go down sometimes. Maybe we’ll get lucky; we’re going to have to get lucky.”

Trained by Bill Mott, Flying Spur will be ridden by jockey Garrett Gomez.

Said trainer Hal Wiggins of Rachel Alexandra's post position: “It’s OK; it probably doesn’t make a whole lot of difference. I’d just as soon be on the outside...with eight horses (in the field), and going a mile and an eighth, you’ve got a long run up to the first turn, so I’m very satisfied (with her post).”

Rachel Alexandra, a daughter of [Medaglia d'Oro](#) —Lotta Kim, by Roar, who has won her last four starts by more than a combined margin of 23 lengths, will be ridden by jockey Calvin Borel. She was bred by co-owner Dolphus Morrison, who named her after his granddaughter.

[Justwhistledixie](#), who has the second most impressive record in the field, will break from post five. Owned by West Point Thoroughbreds, Lakland Farm, and R. Dee Hubbard, she is trained by Kiaran McLaughlin, who had not yet traveled to Churchill Downs as of April 28.

Justwhistledixie, a daughter of [Dixie Union](#) —General Jeanne, by [Honour and Glory](#) , has won five consecutive starts, including the March 1 Davona Dale Stakes (gr. II) and the March 27 Bonnie Miss Stakes (gr. II) at Gulfstream Park. Bred in Kentucky by Hermitage Farm, she has career earnings of \$337,927.

Julien Leparoux gets the mount on Justwhistledixie, who will be facing Rachel Alexandra for the first time at Churchill. Rachel Alexandra has one major advantage over Justwhistledixie in that she has already won under the Twin Spires in last year’s Golden Rod Stakes (gr. II). This will be Justwhistledixie’s Churchill debut.

Who is the greatest filly to ever win the Kentucky Oaks? [Rank your top 10!](#)

Trainer Bob Baffert will saddle [Gabby's Golden Gal](#), one of the horses trainer Hal Wiggins said could pose a threat to Rachel Alexandra. Also a daughter of Medaglia d’Oro, Gabby’s Golden Gal has never finished worse than third in four lifetime starts, and she won her last race, the March 29 Sunland Park Oaks, by an impressive 13 lengths.

“(The Oaks) is a big step up for her, but the way she ran at Sunland Park, we felt like she deserved a shot at the big event,” said Baffert of the Arnold Zetcher homebred, who has raced exclusively on the West Coast circuit. “She’s trained well, and looks fantastic. This filly isn’t very big, but she’s very aggressive and will be one to be near the lead. She’ll be up on the pace. I just can’t see Rachel (Alexandra) getting beat...after watching her work, she’s just amazing. But Gabby’s tough. She’s little, but she’s a strong filly and she’s doing really well.”

Gabby’s Golden Gal drew the four post and will be ridden by Victor Espinoza

Oaks: Finley Has No Concerns About Rachel

By [Esther Marr](#)

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Courtesy of The BloodHorse.com

Terry Finley of West Point Thoroughbreds is looking forward to simply enjoying the ride in the May 1 Kentucky Oaks (gr. I) at Churchill Downs. And even though the pressure will be high on his filly [Justwhistledixie](#), who will try to measure up against the heavy morning line favorite [Rachel Alexandra](#), Finley is refusing to let himself get anxious about something he can’t control.

“(Rachel Alexandra) is not really a concern of mine, because if she runs her race and she’s better than us, she deserves to win,” said Finley, who owns Justwhistledixie in partnership with Lewis Lakin’s Lakland Farm and Breeders’ Cup board member R. Dee Hubbard. “I think too many times owners and trainers get fixated and threatened about whether they have the best horse, and it kind of takes away the fun and excitement of being in a race like the Oaks.”

While Rachel Alexandra has won her last four straight races, Justwhistledixie has won her last five, including the March 1 Davona Dale Stakes and March 27 Bonnie Miss Stakes (both gr. II) at Gulfstream Park. And although Rachel Alexandra has the advantage of already having a grade II Churchill Downs victory under her belt, Finley believes his filly could still come out in front on Friday.

“Certainly on paper, I probably think (Justwhistledixie) is a little closer to Rachel than a lot of other people do,” he said of the Kiaran McLaughlin trainee. “I’m certainly biased in that respect...but her sheet numbers are very similar. It’s not like Rachel Alexandra is on another planet. I know Rachel is a quality filly, and I know she’s been managed very well and she’s been very impressive, and I respect her a lot.”

Finley, who watched Justwhistledixie gallop a mile and a quarter at Churchill the morning of April 29 said the filly will have no excuses come Oaks Day.

“It was a wet racetrack, and she looked like she was very comfortable,” he said of Justwhistledixie, who is the second choice in the Oaks at odds of 5-2. “Everything looks very good. She’s not a filly that has shown she’s going to go right to the lead. I don’t think she’s going to outrun Rachel Alexandra in the first turn. I think we’ll be third or fourth and just hope there’s a legitimate pace up in front of us.

"We just hope we're good enough, that's all. We just hope everybody's safe and gets a chance to run their race."

Justwhistledixie is the first horse Finley has bought in partnership with Hubbard. The two men became friends through mutual connections in the industry and had dinner the night before the 2007 Keeneland September yearling sale, where they discussed going into partnership together on a horse.

"The next day we bought Justwhistledixie, and I called (Hubbard), and he said, 'I'm in,'" Finley remembered.

Bred in Kentucky by Carl Pollard's Hermitage Farm, the daughter of [Dixie Union](#) —General Jeanne, by Honour and Glory was purchased for \$425,000 by Buzz Chace, agent on Finley's behalf.

Finley said Justwhistledixie's other part-owner, Lakin, is also a vital part of the ownership group. Two of the four other horses Finley and Lakin have owned together in the past, Dream Rush and Irish Smoke, are grade I winners.

"We've been really lucky together," said Finley. "We really enjoy each other's company, and I think we both bring different things to the table. He's a really great partner and a great man."

Area pair thrilled with stake in Oaks

By From staff reports • May 1, 2009
Courtesy of LOHUD.com

Chris Larsen admits there was some luck involved.

When the owner of Halmar International, a construction firm in Pearl River, started buying interests in horses, he did a lot of homework. He did research and studied bloodlines, making sure he got the right animal.

At least in most cases.

"I plunked my money down sight unseen on this one," Larsen said.

"This one" turned out to be Justwhistledixie, the second choice in today's Kentucky Oaks, the filly version of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville.

Larsen is one of the investors in the horse. Another is Mark Canno of West Harrison, the golf and girls tennis coach at his alma mater, Rye Neck High School.

Canno has gotten into racing in the last few years.

"I've had a couple that have won minor races at Belmont and Aqueduct," he said yesterday from Churchill Downs, "so I've had fun with that, and others that only raced once or twice and got injured. Nothing like this."

Both got a piece of Justwhistledixie through West Point Thoroughbreds. The owners often don't know the other partners until they meet at the track to see their horses race.

"It's basically totally random," Canno said. "I can be in with 10 people on one and 10 different people on another one."

Larsen arrived at Churchill Downs yesterday with his wife and son. He knows he has a good horse - one that has won five in a row - but also knows Justwhistledixie will have to overcome 3-5 favorite Rachel Alexandra.

"We're definitely David up against Goliath," he said.

Still, both he and Canno are expecting a big thrill no matter what the outcome. The Oaks attracts big crowds, with a record 111,243 attending in 2005.

"For a horse racing fan, it's like getting to the Super Bowl," Larsen said.

Larsen won't be able to see the Derby. He's flying out tomorrow morning so he can attend his parents' 50th anniversary party that night. But Canno will be able to catch the Run for the Rose.

"I wouldn't miss that," Canno said. "I care obviously more about the Oaks because I have a horse in it, but being down here, I have to stay for the Derby."