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JEFF RUBY STEAKS FAVORITE ENDLESSLY FINALIZES PREPARATION AHEAD OF SATURDAY'S ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY 'CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES RACE'

FLORENCE, Ky. (Friday, March 22, 2024) – Amerman Racing's Jeff Ruby Steaks (Grade III) favorite **Endlessly** finalized his preparations for Saturday's Road to the Kentucky Derby "Championship Series" race with an easy 1 1/4-mile gallop Friday morning at Turfway Park before schooling in the paddock after training hours.

Endlessly shipped to Turfway Park from his Southern California base on Tuesday. The colt had an easy gallop around 7:45 a.m. ET Friday before schooling in the paddock after training hours with trainer **Michael McCarthy** walking at his side.

Listed as the 5-2 choice in the \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks, Endlessly will attempt to win his second-straight race after a victory in the El Camino Real Derby six weeks ago at Golden Gate Fields.

"We tried to give him a short break after the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (GI) but he's a feel-good type of horse," McCarthy said. "He likes to train and we were able to get him back slowly after that race to the El Camino Real Derby.

"His works on dirt haven't really stood out, they've just been steady. He's a different type of horse than **Rombauer** (who won the El Camino Real Derby before winning the 2021 Preakness Stakes on dirt)."

Jockey **Umberto Rispoli**, who was aboard Endlessly in the El Camino Real Derby, will have the return-call in the Jeff Ruby Steaks.

"I worked him at Del Mar before he made his first start and he's a very nice horse," Rispoli said following the El Camino Real Derby. "I was just taking my time with him early with the speed ahead of me. This type of horse needs to be settled with his action. Around the turn I had to ask him to get going. Once he switched leads, he took off. I could've went another pole."

The Jeff Ruby Steaks is a pivotal stop for many of the nation's top 3-year-olds on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. The 1 1/8-mile affair will go as Race 12 of 13 with a post time of 6:25 p.m. (all times Eastern) First post for the stellar program will be 12:45 p.m. Along with the Jeff Ruby Steaks, stakes-laden card will also feature the 42nd running of the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed); the 24th running of the \$300,000 TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic (GIII); the 38th running of the \$250,000 Animal Kingdom Stakes; the 42nd running of the \$250,000 Latonia Stakes and the 37th running of the \$250,000 Rushaway.

Horses in the Jeff Ruby Steaks will be competing for a total of 200 qualifying points as they attempt to earn a position in the starting gate for the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI), held Saturday, May 4 at Churchill Downs. The top 5 finishers of the Jeff Ruby Steaks will be awarded points on a 100-50-25-15-5 scale.

Here is the complete field for the Jeff Ruby Steaks in order of post position (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Freedom Principle** (Adam Beschizza, Jose Garaffalo, 30-1); **Dancing Groom** (Frankie Dettori, Antonio Sano, 20-1); **Lucky Jeremy** (Gerardo Corrales, Bill Morey, 8-1); **Noted** (Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher, 10-1); ~~**Agate Road** (Ortiz, Pletcher, 7-2)~~; **Northern Flame** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeck, 5-1); **Woodcourt** (Luan Machado, Cipriano Contreras, 8-1); **Otello** (Javier Castellano, Christophe Clement, 15-1); **Seize the Grey** (Nik Juarez, D. Wayne Lukas, 6-1); Endlessly (Rispoli, McCarthy, 5-2); **Baytown Chatterbox** (Albin Jimenez, Paul McEntee, 50-1) and **West Saratoga** (Jesus Castanon, Larry Demeritte, 20-1). Also-Eligibles: ~~**Circle P** (Tyler Conner, Flint Stites, 30-1)~~ and **Triple Espresso** (Jose Ortiz, Pletcher, 12-1).

Agate Road has been scratched from the race by his connections and will run in Saturday's \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII). Circle P's connections also scratched him from the Jeff Ruby Steaks to run in the Private Terms at Laurel.

STONE, KRISTUFEK, KILROY GIVE OUT SUGGESTED TICKETS FOR SATURDAY'S BAYOU BLUEGRASS 5 – Saturday's \$1 Bayou Bluegrass 5 wager will join an all-stakes sequence between Fair Grounds and Turfway Park that's anchored on the \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (Grade II) and \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII).

Travis Stone, the "Voice of the Kentucky Derby", will join handicapping analyst **Kaitlin Free** on the Turfway Park feed while **Joe Kristufek** and **Kevin Kilroy** will lead the analysis at Fair Grounds.

The sequence will begin at Fair Grounds in Race 9 for the \$500,000 New Orleans Classic presented by Relyne GI by Hagyard (GII) at 5:04 p.m. (all times Eastern). The second leg will switch to Turfway Park for the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed) with a scheduled post time of 5:43 p.m. Then, the third leg will go back to Fair Grounds and feature the \$400,000 Fair Grounds Oaks presented by Fasig-Tipton (GII) at 6:12 p.m. The Jeff Ruby Steaks will be the penultimate leg of the bet at 6:25 p.m. and it will close at Fair Grounds for the Louisiana Derby at 6:46 p.m.

Here are their suggested plays and some thoughts about the sequence from Stone:

My approach to this Pick 5 is to try and fade a few favorites along the way including **Tarifa**, **Track Phantom** and **Money Supply**. In the New Orleans Classic, **Velocitor** is my wise-guy idea as a horse wanting dirt this whole time. **Best Actor** as the speed of the race and a small nod to **Happy American** who has done well at Fair Grounds.

The Bourbonette Oaks is a wild race. The pace figures to be legit but the pace also has quality. **Everland** is my wise-guy lean in here but respect several including **Trial** and **Winnable**. Spread.

In the Fair Grounds Oaks, Tarfia can win (of course) but she had an absolute dream trip last time. I'm going to single Intricate. She gave up ground last time, ran on well and feels like a horse that will move forward in here.

With a move forward **Endlessly** will be tough in the Jeff Ruby Steaks but **Triple Espresso** had no chance last time out given the pace and projects to get more of it today. **Otello** is bred for non-dirt racing and I'm inclined to toss his last start. **Northern Flame** has lots of non-dirt pedigree and trainer **Kenny McPeck** is good in spots like this.

In the Louisiana Derby, Track Phantom, from the far outside, will have to be much the best. I can't dismiss **Hall of Fame** off his stout effort two starts ago and a sub-optimal trip last time. Agate Road is a more serious dirt player than most will give him credit for. And finally, **Common Defense** ran sneaky well last time and is fast enough to contend.

Good luck!

Travis Stone Suggested Play: \$180

New Orleans Classic: 6, 8, 9
Bourbonette Oaks: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10
Fair Ground Oaks: 6
Jeff Ruby Steaks: 4, 6, 8, 14
Louisiana Derby: 2, 4, 10

Joe Kristufek Suggested Play: \$72

New Orleans Classic: 3, 7
Bourbonette Oaks: 2, 7, 8
Fair Ground Oaks: 1, 5, 6
Jeff Ruby Steaks: 3, 10
Louisiana Derby: 7, 12

Kevin Kilroy Suggested Play: \$75

New Orleans Classic: 3
Bourbonette Oaks: 4, 7, 8
Fair Ground Oaks: 6
Jeff Ruby Steaks: 3, 7, 9, 10, 13
Louisiana Derby: 4, 5, 7, 10, 12

SIX WEEKS TO THE KENTUCKY DERBY, ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CONTINUES WITH LOUISIANA DERBY, JEFF RUBY STEAKS LIVE THIS SATURDAY ON CNBC/PEACOCK – NBC Sports presents live coverage of the \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII), a key prep race ahead of the 150th Kentucky Derby, this Saturday, March 23, live at 6 p.m. ET on CNBC and Peacock from Fair Grounds Race Course in New Orleans, La. The hour-long program will also feature the \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII) and the \$400,000 Fair Grounds Oaks (GII).

2024 Lecomte Stakes (GIII) winner **Track Phantom** is the morning-line favorite (3-1) in the Louisiana Derby and currently sits fifth in the Road to the Kentucky Derby standings. 2024 Smarty Jones Stakes (Listed) winner **Catching Freedom** and **Common Defense** are also expected to be contenders in the 1 3/16-mile race.

Six weeks ahead of the running of the Kentucky Derby on Saturday, May 4, the Louisiana Derby and Jeff Ruby Steaks will both award Kentucky Derby qualification points, with 100 going to the winners of each race. The Fair Grounds Oaks will award Kentucky Oaks qualification points, with the winner of the race earning 100 points. Also on Saturday, the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks from Turfway Park in Florence, Ky.

Britney Eurton hosts Saturday's coverage alongside analysts **Jerry Bailey**, the Hall of Fame jockey who has twice won the Louisiana Derby, and **Randy Moss**.

The Louisiana Derby begins three consecutive Saturday afternoons with Kentucky Derby prep coverage on CNBC and Peacock, continuing with the Florida Derby (GI) on March 30, and the Santa Anita Derby (GI) on April 6.

NBCSports.com and the NBC Sports app will stream live coverage to desktops, mobile, tablets, and connected TVs via authentication, giving consumers additional value to their subscription service, and making high-quality content available to MVPD customers both in and out of the home and on multiple platforms.

FINAL FLORENCE FURLONG – Trainer **Brad Cox** reported Rushaway Stakes morning line favorite **Tennessee** will be scratched from the race after getting sick. Fellow Rushaway contender **Blue Eyed George**, the second choice on the morning line odds at 4-1, scratched from the race in favor of Saturday's Crecent City Derby at Fair Grounds. ... Several Jeff Ruby Steaks contenders had their final training sessions Friday morning at Turfway Park including **Seize the Grey**, who vanned to Turfway Park with his stablemate **Saratoga Secret**. Hall of Fame trainer **Wayne Lukas'** longtime assistant "**Bas**" **Nicholl** accompanied the two horses to Turfway Park and watched them both jog Friday morning. ... Trainer **Todd Pletcher's** Jeff Ruby Steaks duo of **Noted** and **Triple Espresso** both had an easy gallop Friday morning at Turfway Park. The duo is being overseen by Pletcher's assistant **Sophie Green**. ... For more information about Jeff Ruby Steaks Day, visit www.turfway.com.

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