

# News Release



---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein  
Kentucky Racing Communications  
Churchill Downs, Ellis Park, Turfway Park  
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)  
(502) 635-4712 (office)  
[Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com](mailto:Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com)

## APPRENTICE XAREL FORDE SETTLES INTO TURFWAY JOCKEY COLONY

**FLORENCE, Ky. (Friday, Jan. 9, 2026)** – Apprentice jockey **Xarel Forde** has begun to make his presence felt at Turfway Park this winter, continuing his transition to the Kentucky circuit after building skills both in his native Barbados and last year at Woodbine.

Forde, 21, learned his trade riding at Garrison Savannah, a small track that he said helped shape his race awareness and decision-making before his move to larger circuits.

“Coming from a small track with tight turns teaches you to be sharp,” Forde said. “You have to think quickly and stay aware. When you move to a bigger track, that actually becomes an advantage.”

After leaving Barbados, Forde advanced to the Canadian circuit, riding primarily at Woodbine, where he gained experience on both turf and synthetic surfaces. The transition, he said, came with its own challenges.

“The biggest adjustment was the weather,” Forde said. “That was the only thing that really gave me a fight at first, but I pushed through it and got comfortable.”

Now riding at Turfway Park, Forde has teamed with leading jockey agent **Jose Santos Jr.** as he continues to establish himself in Kentucky. Forde has won 56 races overall in his career and has already picked up three victories since arriving at Turfway on Dec. 17.

“Trainers keep telling me I’m not really riding like a bug boy,” Forde said. “I just focus on executing my rides and being confident, whether I’m on a long shot or a favorite.”

Santos said Forde’s background and approach have translated well to Turfway’s Tapeta surface.

“Xarel has been a pleasure to work with,” Santos said. “He’s quickly gotten noticed by the way he carries himself in the mornings and during the races. The way he rides races, you’d think he’s been a professional for years.”

Forde is named on nine horses across the next four live racing days at Turfway Park.

-END-