

# News Release



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **SERENA'S SONG 1995 TURFWAY PARK TRIUMPH STILL RESONATES 31 YEARS LATER**

**FLORENCE, Ky. (Sunday, March 15, 2026)** – The passing of Hall of Famer **Serena's Song** last week brought renewed attention to one of the most memorable performances in the history of Turfway Park's premier race.

On April 1, 1995, Serena's Song defeated her male counterparts in the \$600,000 Jim Beam Stakes (Grade II), the race now known as the Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), while delivering a commanding victory that solidified the Bob and Beverly Lewis-owned filly as one of the top 3-year-olds in the country.

Trained by the late **D. Wayne Lukas** and ridden by **Corey Nakatani**, Serena's Song entered the race already regarded as one of the nation's top fillies following victories in the Santa Ynez Stakes (GIII), Las Virgenes Stakes (GI) and Santa Anita Oaks (GI). Her presence in the Jim Beam Stakes drew national attention as Lukas once again tested a standout filly against male competition.

Even before the race, longtime Turfway Park announcer and morning-line maker **Mike Battaglia** believed Serena's Song belonged among the best of her generation.

"She's the best 3-year-old filly in the country right now, and actually, I think she's one of the top 3-year-olds in the country," Battaglia told the Louisville Courier-Journal in the days leading up to the race.

Lukas had long been willing to challenge traditional divisions but said only exceptional fillies deserved that opportunity.

"My rule of thumb is that they have to be exceptional," Lukas said in the Courier-Journal the day before the race. "They should have tactical speed. I never thought you could come from left field and beat colts. And you have to look at the field of horses you're about to enter against and feel like you have a very legitimate chance of beating them."

Showing her customary tactical speed, the filly dueled with **Mighty Magee** early in the race before drawing off by 3 ½ lengths over **Tejano Run** in the 1 1/8-mile test.

Lukas later noted how effortlessly Serena's Song handled her rivals during the race.

"When you see those other guys, they're knuckling and pushing and chirping and trying to stay in the race and she's rocking along," Lukas told the Lexington Herald-Leader the day after the race. "If you glance at them and then look back at her you can see things start to get tough for them when they come off that turn."

Nakatani said riding the filly gave him a level of confidence rarely experienced by jockeys.

"I ride her with so much confidence that it's hard to explain the feeling that you get when you've got a filly like Serena's Song underneath you," he said.

The victory sparked discussion about a possible run in the Kentucky Derby the following month. Lukas acknowledged the possibility but remained measured about the challenge ahead.

"We've stepped out of our division already and been successful. We can do it again and get immortality (in the Derby)," Lukas said. "But it's a tough race and I think this filly's got a chance to make serious money down the line. Beating seven horses in the Jim Beam Stakes the first of April is not the same as beating 15 or 16 or 17 head May 6."

Serena's Song ultimately contested the 1995 Kentucky Derby but finished 16<sup>th</sup> before returning to dominate her own division.

Her victory in the Jim Beam Stakes proved to be one of several highlights in a remarkable career. Serena's Song won 18 of 38 starts and earned more than \$3.2 million.

Her accomplishments earned her the 1995 Eclipse Award as Champion 3-Year-Old Filly and she was inducted into the National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame in 2002.

In recognition of her impact on the sport, Turfway Park now honors her annually with the \$125,000 Serena's Song Stakes. This year's running of the race is scheduled for Saturday, March 28.

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