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AT CHARLES TOWN RACES

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By John Scheinman

Game on Dude Out to Add Second Charles Town Classic to Growing Legacy

Charles Town, WV (April 16, 2014) – When Mucho Macho Man and Will Take Charge moved to the attack against **Game On Dude** on the far turn in the Santa Anita Handicap on March 8, Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert** momentarily thought it might be the end of the line for his heroic handicap star.

The blazingly fast 7-year-old gelded son of Awesome Again had lost three straight starts, and he might have had enough after a brilliant 30-race career.

Game on Dude, however, had other plans. He not only repelled the challenges by the 1-2 finishers in the 2013 Breeders' Cup Classic but pulled away to win his record third Big Cap by 1 3/4 lengths.

Now, with his reputation restored and once again triumphantly atop the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings, Game on Dude lures all eyes to Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races on Saturday night, where he will attempt to defend his crown in the Grade 2, \$1.5 million Charles Town Classic.

The sixth running of the Classic, the richest race in the country outside of the Triple Crown and Breeders' Cup, will be televised by HRTV. Post time for the feature race is scheduled for 10:30 p.m. EDT.

The Classic, contested at 1 1/8 miles, will serve as the climactic race in a \$100,000-guaranteed All Stakes Pick 4 on the biggest card of the year at the racetrack.

Game on Dude, the 4-5 favorite on the morning line, will face a strong field of six under Hall of Fame jockey **Mike Smith**. Headlining the opposition are **Moreno**, who will make his seasonal debut in the Classic after a scintillating 3-year-old season, and **Clubhouse Ride**, long a nemesis of Game on Dude and runner-up in the Classic last year.

For the Hall of Famer Baffert, Game on Dude's return to form is a relief. In his race prior to the Santa Anita Handicap, Game on Dude had tired to fifth in the Grade 2 San Antonio. Baffert knew heading into the Big Cap he needed to buckle down on his training.

"He got tired [in the San Antonio], and I thought that race would set him up for the next one, so I honed in on him," Baffert said. "I used that as a steppingstone to the Big Cap. At the three-eighths pole when those horses came to him, for a split second I said, 'If they engulf him, we're watching Game on Dude's last

race ever.' My wife, who loves him, put her head down and said, 'I can't watch.' I said, 'He's not done! He's kicking on!' and she picked her head back up."

Game on Dude is perhaps the most accomplished racehorse of the past decade. Along with his three Big Cap scores, he has five other Grade 1 victories and six more graded stakes under his belt. He has won 16 of 31 lifetime starts and earned \$6,163,893.

Game on Dude first contested the Charles Town Classic in 2011, finishing second to Duke of Mischief. He returned last year and survived a withering battle with Clubhouse Ride for the final quarter-mile to prevail by a half-length.

Baffert said Game on Dude is ready to roll.

"He's doing really well," he said. "He worked great the other day, and he's happy."

In the Classic last year, Game on Dude rated close off the pace set by Percussion, a high-class allowance runner in the barn of Todd Pletcher. This year, however, there appears to be a far more formidable pace presence to deal with in Moreno.

Trained by **Eric Guillot**, the 4-year-old gelded son of Ghostzapper has only won 2 of 15 lifetime starts, but there is no doubt he was one of the fastest and determined 3-year-olds in the country last year.

After breaking his maiden in his 10th start last June, Moreno crushed the field in the Grade 2 Dwyer at Belmont Park, winning by seven lengths.

Guillot sent his rising runner up to Saratoga Race Course for his next start, the Grade 2 Jim Dandy, and Moreno made the pace the entire way before setting off on an erratic run down the stretch, where he was passed by Palace Malice and Will Take Charge.

Guillot, a fun-loving Cajun, jokingly vowed to slick bear grease on the tail of Moreno for his next start - the Grade 1 Travers - to scare off Palace Malice. He didn't need it. In a tremendous front-running effort, Moreno put away Kentucky Derby winner Orb only to lose by a nose to Will Take Charge in the final stride at odds of 31-1.

After a poor performance in the Breeders' Cup Classic, Guillot gave Moreno the winter off. The horse was scheduled to return in the Oaklawn Handicap, but the trainer decided to re-route him to West Virginia for the Classic.

"His pedigree indicates he should be better at 4," Guillot said. "He's been working lights out at Santa Anita."

The trainer sent Moreno to Keeneland on Monday, where he worked a half-mile the following day under jockey **Joel Rosario**, who has the mount in the Classic.

"He had 13 races last year, and now he's a fresh horse," Guillot said. "My main concern is he's a looky-loo" - meaning he looks around during the race - "so he's got earplugs and blinkers. Game on Dude? He's the horse to beat. No question."

Co-third choice at 6-1 on the morning line, along with **Long River**, is Clubhouse Ride, who got a steady diet of Game on Dude in 2013 and, without winning, acquitted himself well.

He finished second behind "The Dude" in the Grade 2 San Antonio, the Santa Anita Handicap and Charles Town Classic before getting a break from his tormenter to win the Grade 2 Californian at Hollywood Park. They met again in July in the Grade 1 Hollywood Gold Cup, and Clubhouse Ride finished fourth.

This year, Clubhouse ride has run three times without winning, but he performed sensationally when third in a blanket finish in the Grade 2 San Carlos at seven furlongs, not his preferred distance.

Veteran trainer **Craig Lewis** doesn't mind tackling Game on Dude again, especially with a horse he purchased for \$22,000 that has gone on to win \$1,038,882.

"Chasing him around the country is like trying to catch the wind," Lewis said of Game on Dude. "He's coming up to this as well as I could hope. He's feeling good, acting good."

Lewis is used to having outstanding horses running up against legends. His \$1.5 million earner Music Merci had the misfortune of being in the same class as Sunday Silence and Easy Goer, while his \$1.4 million earner Cutlass Reality raced in the shadow of Alysheba.

Told Clubhouse Ride, who will be ridden by **Tyler Baze**, might be considered one of the best horses in the country if not for Game on Dude, Lewis laughed. "Funny you should say that," he said. "One of the clockers at Santa Anita told me that this morning."

Long River, owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's powerful **Godolphin Stable**, enters the Classic off a second-place finish by a neck to Romansh in the Grade 3 Excelsior on March 22 at Aqueduct for trainer **Kiaran McLaughlin**.

The 4-year-old son of A.P. Indy out of 2006 Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Round Pound, has won four of 10 starts and \$278,072. He was on the Triple Crown trail last year before suffering a minor bone chip. He returned after more than seven months off and closed out 2013 with two stakes victories, including a win in the Time for a Change Stakes against high-class runners Micromanage and Battier.

McLaughlin likes that Game on Dude and Moreno might heat up the teletimer on the lead in the three-turn Classic, knowing his runner likes to come from off the pace.

"Maybe we can sit third, fourth or fifth and make a run," McLaughlin said. "Game on Dude is obviously the horse to beat and a nice horse. He's coming off a big effort in California but has to fly [to West Virginia]. We're coming off a big effort at Aqueduct. There are a million and five reasons to come. He deserves a chance, and it's a Grade 2, and we're trying to win a graded stakes with our horse. There's no reason not to run."

Irad Ortiz Jr. has the mount.

Local star **Lucy's Bob Boy** will make his first start in the Classic for trainer **Sandra Dono** following a nice four-furlong breeze in 48.40 on April 14. The 5-year-old gelded son of Flatter is an incredible 17-for-21 with three seconds in races at Charles Town. He has won his past two starts at the track, a 6 1/2-furlong allowance race by 8 1/2 lengths and the 1 1/8-mile A Huevo Stakes by 8 3/4 lengths on the lead.

Dono said Charles Town management offered Lucy's Bob Boy a spot in the Classic last year, but she declined. This year, she's ready.

"He's been training a little bit better and stuff than last year," Dono said. "He's a little bit more ready, more mature."

"He kind of accelerates on the turns here while everyone else slows down a little bit. He might have a little bit of a hometown advantage, but just to run with this class of horses – like Game on Dude – is a privilege."

Dono was born in Brooklyn, and she sees her path to the Classic like a storybook adventure.

"Definitely," she said. "Girl born in Brooklyn, N.Y., comes down to Charles Town, West Virginia, gets to have a dream horse everyone would die for and win the Classic. He's family, this horse."

Arnaldo Bocachica will ride the 12-1 shot.

Imperative (20-1), a 4-year-old gelded son of Bernardini, finished ahead of Game on Dude this year when second at 26-1 in the San Antonio and then checked in seventh in the Santa Anita Handicap.

Hall of Fame jockey **Kent Desormeaux** will ride for trainer **George Papaprodromou**.

Rounding out the field is **Ruler of Love** (20-1) for trainer **Joan Scott**. The 4-year-old Peace Rules colt finished second last year to Departing in the Grade 2 Super Derby and Grade 2 West Virginia Derby. He also was third in the Grade 3 Derby Trial.

Jose Montano will ride.

Post time for the first race on the 14 race Charles Town Classic program is set for 5:00 p.m. EDT with the Classic serving as the 12th race with the aforementioned 10:30 p.m. start.

\$1,500,000 CHARLES TOWN CLASSIC (G2)

April 19, 2014

Race 12 – Post time 10:30pm EST

4&up, 1 1/8 miles

PP. Horse, Jockey, Weight, Trainer

1. Clubhouse Ride, Tyler Baze, 118, Craig Anthony Lewis
2. Moreno, Joel Rosario, 118, Eric J. Guillot
3. Game on Dude, Mike E. Smith, 123, Bob Baffert
4. Ruler of Love, Jose Montano, 118, Joan Scott
5. Long River, Irad Ortiz, Jr., 118, Kiaran P. McLaughlin
6. Lucy's Bob Boy, Arnaldo Bocachica, 118, Sandra A. Dono
7. Imperative, Kent J. Desormeaux, 118, George Papaprodromou

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About Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races

A Penn National gaming property, Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races is a world-class resort destination, offering visitors a truly Las Vegas-style gaming experience that includes 3,200 slot machines, 98 table games, a 26-table poker room, and both live and simulcast horse racing year round. A wide range of quality restaurants and bars are offered, including classic fare with incomparable views overlooking the racetrack in Skyline Terrace, authentic Hong Kong cuisine and sushi at 9 Dragons, and Final Cut Steakhouse – proud recipient of the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. The casino also offers an exciting nightlife experience including free concerts and entertainment at the H Lounge. Conveniently located about a one-hour drive from the Baltimore and DC beltways, Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races is one of the region's fastest growing gaming and entertainment destinations with more than four million visitors each year.

