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Rip-roaring action in Best of Ohio at Thistledown

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by Kimberly Rinker, Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund

JACK Thistledown played host to another trio of \$100,000 Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund (OTRF) stakes later in the afternoon on a bright and sunny Aug. 14 at the Cleveland one-miler.

Circus Rings, a striking, nearly black 6-year-old mare, kept her crown intact by capturing the \$100,000 Best of Ohio Pay The Man stakes for the second consecutive season. Ridden by Hector Berrios, the daughter of Wilburn—Ring Ring Ring, by Petionville, covered the one and one-eighth miles in 1:53.48 against ten Ohio-registered fillies and mares, 3-year-olds and up.



Circus Rings (#9) wins the \$100,000 Pay The Man Stakes

"I was really worried because it was close," Knight said. "She (Circus Rings) was the best here today, but there always seems to be drama in the Pay The Man stakes."

Knight, who races under the moniker Knight's A to Z Racing, LLC, had to endure a lengthy multiple jockey's objections against Circus Rings, before she was declared the winner. Knight then described his ascension into racehorse ownership.

"My father was a trainer at Thistledown years ago, and I thought I wanted to be a jockey," Knight quipped. "However, I grew too much, and so after I retired, I decided to become a horse owner. My trainers Doug and Valerie (Shanyfelt) take excellent care of our horses."

Knight began owning horses in 2017 and thus far his two charges (Circus Rings & Panamianiac) have earned \$585,762, with his best season coming in 2020, when that pair put \$166,002 in his coffers.

Circus Rings, who left the gate as the 7-1 choice, bested 4-1 rival **Sally Strong** (Luis Rivera), with 7-1 **Market Success** (Malcolm Franklin) third and favored 9-5 **Moonlit Mission** (Jose Bracho) fourth. Circus Rings, who was bred by Michael and Penny Lauer, now has \$356,541 in career earnings from ten wins, four seconds and three thirds in 33 lifetime starts.



Magna Man and rider Chelsey Keiser win the 2021 Best of Ohio Governor's Buckeye Cup

The 72nd running of the Best of Ohio Governor's Buckeye Cup provided racing fans with a real nail-biter as **Magna Man** captured the 1¼ mile contest in a photo finish for rider Chelsey Keiser. The beautiful black 8-year-old gelding appeared to be beaten coming to the wire by rival **Forewarned** (Sonny Leon), but came back in the final strides to best his rival by a whisker.

Magna Man, who left the gate at 13-1, held off 7-1 Forewarned, with 7-1 **I Wanna Win** (Malcom Franklin) third and 1-5 favorite **Wicked Warrior** (Ricardo Feliciano) fourth.

“I’ve never clicked with a horse like this, he’s always had my back,” said an emotional Keiser in the winner’s circle. “When that horse came up beside us, I said, ‘boy you’ve got to give me more,’ and he did.”

Trained by Ivan Vasquez, Magna Man is owned by John Hoctel and breeder Ron Treadway, and now has \$324,280 in lifetime earnings. This was his first stakes triumph, as the son of Magna Graduate—Personal Notebook, by Miner’s Mark has found his greatest success at the allowance level to date. Magna Man was clocked in 2:03.44 in the Governor’s Buckeye Cup.



Dougie D Oro captures the Best of Ohio Honey Jay Stakes

Dougie D Oro scored an impressive 1:09.62 victory in the 33rd running of the \$100,000 Best of Ohio Honey Jay Stakes for Ohio-registered runners, 3-year-olds and up. The chocolate brown son of Mio d’Oro sprinted from the gate as the 7-2 choice for rider Ricardo Feliciano and trainer-owner Jerry Sparks and used come-from-behind tactics to notch his sixth career win.

“It worked out well for us today and I owe a lot to (jockey) Ricardo Feliciano,” Sparks admitted. “I felt the horse had the ability and had earned his way into this stake.”

Dougie D Oro bested 5-2 rival **Nick Can Fix** (Indel Beato), with 8-1 Liberate (Malcolm Franklin) third and 4-1 **Altissimo** (Erik Barbaran) fourth.

“I’ve always been impressed by this horse,” Feliciano stated in the winner’s circle. “He was really strong today.”

Dougie D Oro upped his lifetime earnings to \$159,315 with his first stakes triumph. It was the 5-year-old gelding’s third consecutive victory this season, with his last two coming in the allowance ranks at this same racetrack.