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OTRF Stakes highlight racing in the Buckeye State

May 2, 2019

by Kimberly Rinker, Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund

A pair of Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund (OTRF) stakes highlight the weekend racing action for Ohio-bred runners at both ends of the Buckeye State.

Cleveland's JACK Thistledown hosts the 13th running of the \$75,000 Dr. T. F. Classen Memorial Stakes for Ohio-Accredited fillies and mares, 3-year-olds and up, while Cincinnati offers the \$75,000 Tall Stack Stakes for Ohio-Registered 3-year-olds.

The Classen has drawn a field of seven distaffs from 13 nominees and has a scheduled post time of 3:20 pm, ET for the six-furlong sprint. The Tall Stack also sports a seven-horse field from 15 nominees with a post of 3:50 pm, ET vying at a distance of 6½ furlongs.

Last year's victress **Leona's Reward** returns to claim the Classen crown for a second time. The 6-year-old Parents' Reward lass makes her 2019 debut for owners Blazing Meadows Farm LLC and Michael Friedman. Trained by Tim Hamm, the beautiful chestnut homebred has \$678,606 in career earnings for her connections. Leona's Reward also finished second in this same stake in 2017 to **True Cinder**, a Michael Rone owned and trained 5-year-old daughter of Alcindor who also battles in here once again.

Leona's Reward is a multiple, stakes placed contestant with 14 wins in 38 starts with three of those victories coming over the Cleveland dirt from nine starts. She wrapped up her 2018 campaign by winning her last three starts—all stakes events: the \$75,000 Ohio Debutante Stakes on Oct. 13 at Thistledown; the \$75,000 Ruff/Kirchberg Stakes on Nov. 17 at Mahoning Valley; and the \$75,000 Bobby Bricker Memorial on Dec. 1 at Mahoning Valley.

Likewise—there is a clear standout in the Tall Stack Stakes in **Diamond Dust**, a five-time winner in seven starts who is also conditioned by Tim Hamm for WinStar Farm LLC and Blazing Meadows Farm LLC. The homebred Diamond Dust has earnings of \$238,100 and has three stakes triumphs to his credit: the \$75,000 Hoover Stakes at Belterra on July 7, 2018; the \$150,000 Juvenile Stakes at Thistledown on Oct. 12, 2018; and most recently, the \$75,000 Noonan Stakes on April 13 at Mahoning Valley to cap off his 3-year-old debut.

A surprising sleeper in the Tall Stack field may come in the form of **Sister's Creed**—the only filly in the field of seven. Trained by Ken McPeck for Magdalena Racing, the bay daughter of Jimmy's Creed

finished third impressively in her career debut on April 5 at Keeneland in a seven-furlong maiden special weight. Bred by Daniel and Patricia Yates, Sister's Creed brought a \$70,000 tag at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky 2017 Fall Yearling Sale.



Multiple stakes winner Leona's Reward goes postward in Saturday's Dr. T. F. Classen Memorial Stakes at JACK Thistledown on Saturday, May 4. *Photo by Brad Conrad*

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