

2022 Louisiana Champions Day

by Chad Schexnayder

On a warm sunny Saturday, December 10th the top current Accredited Louisiana Breds faced off in the 32nd edition of Louisiana Champions Day at Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots. Beginning in 1991, the best horses, jockeys, and trainers from across Louisiana have put on a show for racing fans as owners enter for prestige and a piece of the generous purses, and best of all the bragging rights for a Louisiana Champions Day winner.



Louisiana Champions Day Classic

\$150,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, Mile and one eighth

TOUCHUPONASTAR

Star Guitar-Touch Magic, by Lion Heart

Owner: Set-Hut, LLC • Breeder: Coteau Grove Farms

Trainer: Jeff Delhomme • Jockey: Timothy Thornton



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Touchuponastar wins the 31st running of the Louisiana Champions Day Classic.

STARS ALIGN FOR DELHOMME FAMILY WITH TOUCHUPONASTAR

The stars were out on Saturday Dec. 10 at Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots for the 32nd annual Louisiana Champions Day.

The brightest one was undoubtedly \$150,000 Classic winner Touchuponastar, who established a new stakes record with a front-

running score under Tim Thornton for the Delhomme family operation Set-Hut LLC.

Thornton allowed Touchuponastar to use his speed to open up an easy lead through comfortable fractions of 24.55 and 49.34 for the half-mile. Thornton stayed

patient as Behemah Star made his run to get just about on even terms as the horses straightened away down the long Fair Grounds stretch.

Touchuponastar responded to some urging to quickly open back up by as many as six lengths in the



Brothers Jake Delhomme (right) and Jeff Delhomme (center) waiting for Touchuponastar to join the winners circle.



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

lane cruising under the wire in 1:50.66. Behemah Star did hold second 4-¾-lengths back.

“He’s a horse we’ve been extremely high on since the beginning,” said Delhomme, who had cross-entered him in both the Classic and the Sprint. “He’s so versatile. We would have felt just as confident in the Sprint but we wanted to test him in the Classic

and keep him two turns and he showed up and rewarded us.”

Trained by Jeff Delhomme, Touchuponastar became the first son of his three-time Classic winning father, Star Guitar, to win the marquee event for older horses. Star Guitar was a three-time Classic winner (2009-11). Touchuponastar, out of the Lion Heart mare Touch Magic bred in

Louisiana by Coteau Grove Farms, now owns a gaudy 6-4-1-1 record good for \$163,100 in earnings.

Delhomme did not rule out the chance of testing his barn star against open company in the future.

“He’s run some crazy numbers so far, he’s a gelding and to be honest I want to have him around for a long time,” Delhomme said. “Will we step out in open company at some point? Who knows. I certainly see that. When and where I’m not so sure yet.”

Allied Racing’s Who Took the Money, the reigning 2021 Champion Louisiana-bred 3-year-old colt, entered the Classic on a three-race win streak trying to become the first horse to win both the Classic and the Turf in his career.

Sent off as the heavy .50-to-1 favorite, the Chester Thomas homebred settled sixth in the seven-horse field but could only muster a non-threatening third with his closing kick under Deshawn Parker.

“We knew going in he would need a bit of a set up to run his best,” trainer Bret Calhoun said. “We have been getting away running him on the dirt even though we think he is a much better turf horse. Take nothing away from the winner; he’s a nice horse.”

Cosmic Train, Highland Creek and Maga Man completed the order of finish. Beauregard was scratched.

Louisiana Champions Day Juvenile

\$100,000, 2-year-old colts and geldings, 6 furlongs

LATE SEPTEMBER

Munnings-Hello Maggie May, by Lemon Drop Kid

Owner: Kevin Stedman • Breeder: Coteau Grove Farms

Trainer: Jose M. Camejo • Jockey: Jose Rodriguez



Hodges Photography / Jamie Newell

Late September wins the Louisiana Champions Day Juvenile.

LATE SEPTEMBER IMPRESSES

Late September survived a claim of foul to give trainer Jose Camejo his first of two Louisiana Champions Day wins on the card in the \$100,000 Juvenile Stakes.

Late September broke sharp but shifted inward from the seven-hole under jockey Jose Luis Rodriguez. The Munnings colt then sped off for the front end quickly passing Half Full after a first quarter in 23.57 and a half mile in 45.62. Rodriguez and Late September prevailed through the stretch to post a 2-14-length win over 3-to-5 favorite Tumbarumba.

Calicoco was another four lengths back in third.

Bred by Coteau Grove Farms, Late September (\$12) broke his maiden in open company in his second start at Churchill Downs early in the 2-year-old season.

He was given the summer off before resurfacing in the Bayou state in Camejo's barn to make an October start in a state-bred stakes victory at Delta Downs.

He splashed to a third place finish opening weekend at Fair Grounds in the Joseph R. Peluso stakes in his prior race.

"His last race he moved from seven furlongs (at Delta) to 5-1/2 furlongs here which can be a little confusing for a 2-year-old like him," Camejo said. "Plus the track was wet. We've kept him happy, and with the extra half-furlong today with the outside post I think that made a big difference."

Late September navigated the six furlong race in 1:11.04.

Owner Kevin Stedman paid \$60,000 for the son of Munnings at the 2022 Fasig Tipton July Horses of Racing Age sale. Out of the Lemon Drop Kid mare Hello Maggie May, Late September now owns a record of 5-3-0-1 with \$97,870 in career earnings.

"One of the reasons I got into the game was to follow the horses around," Stedman said. "There's a lot of beautiful tracks around the world and obviously Fair Grounds is one of them. We had eyes on coming here [and plans] that this would be a meet we targeted."



Kevin Stedman



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Louisiana Champions Day Lassie

\$100,000, 2-year-old fillies, 6 furlongs

FREE DROP MADDY

Free Drop Billy-Solo Buena, by Half Ours

Owner: Mansfield Racing (Landon Jordan) • Breeder: Clear Creek Stud, LLC

Trainer: W. Bret Calhoun • Jockey: Reylu Gutierrez



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Free Drop Maddy wins Louisiana Champions Day Lassie.

FREE DROP MADDY BATTLES TO WIN AT THE WIRE

Trainer Bret Calhoun has celebrated plenty of wins on Champions Day at Fair Grounds but not many of them were as close at the wire as Free Drop Maddy's victory in the \$100,000 Lassie.

Ridden by Reylu Gutierrez, Free Drop Maddy had to hold off a fast-charging Norah G up the rail as the two favored fillies went head-to-head the last 70 yards.

Bred by Clear Creek Stud, Free Drop Maddy won by a neck in a six-furlong time of 1:11.66 giving her back-to-back stakes win versus Louisiana-bred fillies at the meet.

Tensas Candy finished third.

"I actually had my eye on the other filly coming up the rail in the stretch," Calhoun said. "You could see it was getting tight and I thought Reylu did a good job of feeling that horse coming and steering our filly

down there to meet her and she really dug in. I was impressed by that."

Free Drop Maddy is owned by Landon Jordan's Mansfield Racing. The Texas native is a former professional drag-racing driver who ponied up \$200,000 for the daughter of Free Drop Billy topping the Texas Thoroughbred Association Two-Year-Olds in Training



W. Bret Calhoun

Sale in April. She is out of the Half Ours mare Solo Buena and bred at Clear Creek Farm.

"Landon has been great as a relatively new owner to the game," Calhoun said. "He was pretty active at the sales this past year and we have a few horses together now that we are looking forward to running."

Free Drop Maddy paid \$4.40 in the eight-horse field. She finishes her 2-year-old season with a 6-3-1-2 record for \$225,800 in earnings that includes three restricted stakes wins sprinting on the dirt.



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Distaff

\$100,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, fillies and mares, One mile and one sixteenth

A G'S CHARLOTTE

Mo Tom-Adrienne G by Indygo Shiner

Owner: Thomas Galvin • Breeder: Thomas Galvin

Trainer: Patricia G. West • Jockey: Marcelino Pedroza, Jr.



Above left: Owner/Breeder Thomas Galvin. Above right: Patricia G. West, trainer.

A G's Charlotte (inside, green blinkers) gets her nose down over Winning Romance in the Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Distaff.

A G'S CHARLOTTE CONTINUES HER WINNING WAYS

By grinding out a hard-fought victory over Winning Romance in the \$100,000 Champions Day Ladies Distaff, Thomas Galvin's homebred A G's Charlotte proved her upset win in the Big World Stakes on opening weekend was no fluke.

Under a brave rail-skimming ride by Marcelino Pedroza, A G's Charlotte didn't get the same setup she got in her prior victory but the results were the same.

Pedroza saved every inch of ground, sneaking up the rail in the stretch to slip by the pace-setting Winning Romance. The two fillies battled back and forth from the eighth pole home with the nose decision going to A G's Charlotte in a final time of 1:45.72 for 1-1/16-miles on the main track.

Fort Polk, winner of last year's Distaff, settled for third.

"I never thought it was going to be that slow," Pedroza said of the fractional splits of 24.97 and 49.19 for the half established by 3-to-5 favorite Winning Romance. "So, there wasn't as much pace as last time. I saw the opening at the top of the stretch and I said let's go for it and hope she is there with me. And she

showed a lot of heart."

Trainer Patricia West was impressed by her 3-year-old Mo Tom filly whose 12 starts at Louisiana ovals have earned her \$184,660 with a record of 5-1-2 and three wins at Fair Grounds.

"We're very proud of our filly," West said. "I thought she was close enough to the pace. I thought all along she just needed to be more mature, and I think she's only getting better from here."

A G's Charlotte paid \$7.80 as the second choice in the eight-horse field.



Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Sprint

\$100,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, fillies and mares, 6 furlongs

OVA CHARGED

Star Guitar - Charged Cotton, by Dehere

Owner: Brittlyn Stable, Inc. (Evelyn Benoit) • Breeder: Brittlyn, Inc.

Trainer: Jose M. Camejo • Jockey: Reylu Gutierrez



Above left: Trainer, Jose Camejo. Above right: Brittlyn Stables' Evelyn Benoit.

Ova Charged wins the 16th running of the Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Sprint.

OVA CHARGED CONTINUES HER REIGN

Evelyn Benoit's Brittlyn Stable's star filly Ova Charged dominated her division in the Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Day Sprint.

The daughter of Louisiana-bred super sire Star Guitar romped home to a 4-3/4-length win over multiple stakes winner Free Like and Girl.

Spirited Beauty, owned by Brittlyn Stable, was third followed by Snowball in the reduced four-horse field.

Ova Charged proved she's ready to get back to open stakes company against the nation's best older fillies and mares sprinting. This was her second straight win in the Ladies Sprint running her record to a gaudy 7-1-0 from eight starts.

Sent to the lead under Panamanian upstart jockey Jose Luis Rodriguez, Ova Charged set splits of 22.13, 45.26, and 57.24 finishing off six furlongs in a solid 1:10.38. She returned \$2.40 as the 1-to-5 odds-on favorite.

"For 2022, we're done, we'll give her time and then we'll see how she starts training," trainer Jose Camejo

said. "We will check the condition book and see what she's got for next year. The way she ran today was very impressive. I expected that because she came back from the last race like it was a breeze. We just kept her happy and she proved today that she is the best filly."

Brittlyn Stable now owns 15 wins on Louisiana Champions Day and continues to excell with their Fair Grounds runners.

"I want everyone in Louisiana to be a part of Star Guitar's success," Benoit said. "That's why I stay here in Louisiana. I'm trying to prove that we are tough in Louisiana and to stop any laughing or joking about Louisiana stallions."

BRITTLYN STABLE HAS NOW EARNED 15 LOUISIANA CHAMPIONS DAY WINS



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

Louisiana Champions Day Sprint

\$100,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, 6 furlongs

BIG CHOPPER

Shackleford-Miss Well Molded, by Unusual Heat

Owner: Kendel D. Standlee • Breeder: Kendel D. Standlee

Trainer: Scott Gelner • Jockey: Corey Lanerie



Hodges Photography / Jan Brubaker

Big Chopper wins the Louisiana Champions Day Sprint.

BIG CHOPPER RALLYS TO WIN SPRINT

Kendel D. Standlee's homebred Big Chopper unleashed a devastating closing kick to run past most of the 12-horse field winning the \$100,000 Classic Sprint.

Big Chopper has spent most of his 14-race career competing in two-turn races near the lead but the cut-back to six furlongs proved he could be a nice sprinter for trainer Scott Gelner.

"After the prep race in the Scott's Scoundrel we decided his best chance on Champions Day could be the sprint," Gelner said. "(Jockey) Corey (Lanerie)

and I talked before the race and decided his best chance was breaking good and dropping back out of it and coming with one run and that's what he did."

The overflow field of 14 starts was reduced to 12 when two pace players, Schnell and Takes Two to Tango, scratched but that didn't affect the pace set up when longshot Mike J and race favorite Bertie's Galaxy duelled back and forth in 21.57 for the first quarter and 44.79 for the half-mile.

Big Chopper (\$15) raced along from the inside but steered six-wide at the three-sixteenths pole under Lanerie flying past horses to a convincing 3- $\frac{3}{4}$ -length win. Relentless Dancer made his run from midpack to finish second in front of Mike J in third.

Big Chopper is a 3-year-old son of Shackleford out of Miss Well Molded, by Unusual Heat. The victory was his fourth win in 14 starts. Three of those wins have come at Fair Grounds.



Scott Gelner



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

STARTER STAKES GO TO ZYDECO MUSIC, DIXIE STREET

The two \$50,000 starter races were won by the rapidly improving mare Zydeco Music for owner Richard Anthony Tompkins, trainer Shane Wilson and jockey Jose Luis Rodriguez and the gelding Dixie Street for owner Vanessa Motta, trainer Sean Alfortish and jockey Tracy Hebert respectively.

Louisiana Champions Day Ladies Starter
\$50,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, 5 1/2 furlongs

ZYDECO MUSIC

Maclean's Music-Pint, by Afternoon Deelites

Owner: Richard Anthony Tompkins

Breeder: Barney Core and Regina Bourgeois Core

Trainer: Shane Wilson • Jockey: Jose Luis Rodriguez

Zydeco Music (\$4.80), claimed in the summer at Louisiana Downs for \$7,500, picked up her first win at the Fair Grounds in six starts defeating a field of six other fillies and mares.



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

"She ran her race today after getting beat by a nod last time," said Wilson, who has watched his filly reel off three wins in her last four starts. "She got a fantastic trip and with the way she's been doing that's all she needed. We're feeling good about our barn and it's great working with owners like Richard."

A 5-year-old mare by Maclean's Music out of the Afternoon Deelites mare Pint, Zydeco Music finished off 5-1/2 furlongs on the main track in 1:05.09. She improved her race record to nine wins in 26 starts with six seconds and five thirds.



Barney Core, Shane Wilson, Regina Bourgeois Core and Tom Early.

Louisiana Champions Day Starter
\$50,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, 5 1/2 furlongs

DIXIE STREET

New Year's Day-Scouties, by Macho Uno

Owner: Vanessa Motta

Breeder: J. Adcock & Neal McFadden

Trainer: Sean Alfortish • Jockey: Tracy Hebert

Dixie Street (\$18), claimed for \$15,000 in October at Delta Downs, rewarded his connections by drawing away from the eight-horse field in his division of the starter handicap.

Dixie Street established a stalking position behind front runner Mr. Production under Hebert winning the 5-1/2-furlong sprint in 1:03.93.

"This was the plan when we claimed this horse at



Sean Alfortish



Hodges Photography / Lou Hodges, Jr.

A Toast to Louisiana Champions Day

Owners, breeders, family and fans all turned out for a spectacular day of racing at New Orleans Fair Grounds. Looks like a good time was had by all!





Louisiana Champions Day Turf

\$100,000, 3-year-olds and Upwards, 6 furlongs

WHO TOOK THE MONEY

Street Boss-Speights' Colony, by Speightstown

Owner: Allied Racing Stable, LLC • Breeder: Allied Racing Stable, LLC

Trainer: W. Bret Calhoun • Jockey: Deshawn Parker



Who Took The Money wins the Louisiana Champions Day Turf.

WHO TOOK THE MONEY STORMS HOME IN RESCHEDULED LOUISIANA CHAMPIONS DAY TURF

Due to problems with the Fair Grounds Turf Course, the Louisiana Champions Day Turf Stakes was re-scheduled nearly a month after the official Louisiana Bred Stakes Day. This created the unusual circumstance that allowed Who Took the Money to run in both the Louisiana Champions Day Classic on December 10, 2022, when he came in third, and the Louisiana Champions Day Turf on January 7, 2023.

Even though he had won three of his last five starts on dirt, Allied Racing Stable's Who Took the Money welcomed a return to grass,

winning the rescheduled \$100,000 Louisiana Champions Day Turf in high-stepping fashion for trainer Bret Calhoun and jockey Deshawn Parker.

Touchuponastar, who posted an upset over the 1-2 favorite in the Champions Day Classic on dirt, was scratched from Saturday's Turf, opening the door for Who Took the Money to make amends. With the rails 34 feet out and long-shots Play Mo and Charlie G in chase mode, Maga Man dictated early terms through tough to gauge fractions of :25.09 and :52.90. Meanwhile, 2-5 favorite Who Took

the Money bided his time in sixth while in the clear. The race began to fall apart on the turn for home, and Who Took the Money displayed his patented late kick. Eventual second and third place finishers Smarty Alex and Ballinonabudget also ran on well late, but the favorite prevailed by 2 ½ lengths in 1:50.59 for 1 1/16 miles.

"He has a really big turn of foot on the turf," Parker said. "He has it on the dirt too, but on the turf it just feels totally different. I let him do his own thing. He tells me what to do. Turning for home he'll kick it in gear himself. I really don't have to do anything. I just let him do his thing and stay out of his way."

Calhoun agreed.

"I think we had overstayed our welcome on the dirt a little bit," Calhoun said. "He ran well, very consistent, but I think he had enough of it after the last time out (third in the LA Classic). I was happy to get back on the grass. It's his much preferred surface. We are going to try to keep him on the grass in the Louisiana program for as long as we can. After that, we may have go to the open horses a little bit at some point. He's kind of his own worst enemy. Like Deshawn (jockey Parker) said, he kind of does things his own way. If he gets a little bit better mentally, he might be a really good older horse."