

Target shifts to Irish War Cry in Fountain of Youth

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One month after toppling juvenile champion and early **Kentucky Derby (G1)** favorite Classic Empire in the Holy Bull (G2), Irish War Cry will be out to enhance his Derby prospects on Saturday in the \$400,000 Fountain of Youth (G2) at Gulfstream Park.

The 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth, a Championship Season prep that awards Derby qualifying points of 50-20-10-5 to the top four finishers, is the final major prelude to next month's Florida Derby (G1).

Hero of his first two starts at Laurel for Graham Motion, Irish War Cry was the 4-1 third choice in the 1 1/16-mile Holy Bull. Sent to the lead by Joel Rosario and setting a moderate pace, the son of Curlin extended his advantage to 3 3/4 lengths at the wire to remain undefeated.

"It's going to be a little different this time. We didn't have a target on our back last time. I couldn't believe how comfortably he beat the two-year-old champion. That was exciting," Motion said. "This time...people will have expectations, as they should. I just would like to see him run a similar race. He's doing great and I see no reason not to run in the Fountain of Youth. We're looking forward to it."

Classic Empire, sidelined since the Holy Bull with foot issues, is not in the Fountain of Youth cast, but Holy Bull runner-up Gunnevera is back for a rematch. Talk Logistics, 14 lengths fourth in the Holy Bull, is another returnee.

The Fountain of Youth marks the return to action of **Practical Joke**, who captured the Hopeful (G1) and Champagne (G1) last season before running third in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1). The Chad Brown-trained son of Into Mischief has recorded three bullet works since late January.

Likely pace players in the Fountain of Youth include Three Rules, who swept the Florida Sires Series at two and most recently finished second in the seven-furlong Swale (G2) in his sophomore bow, and the Grade 2-placed Takafal.

Made You Look, a two-time graded winner on turf, takes a first swing at dirt following a third-place effort in the \$100,000 Kitten's Joy for Todd Pletcher. Stepping up in class are the allowance-placed Beasley and last-out graduate Lookin for Eight, while Huracan Americo adds some foreign intrigue coming off a win in the 1 1/2-mile Derby Nacional (G1) in Peru.

(Adam Coglianese Photography)