



Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



King Zachary ready for Indiana Derby at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Jennie Rees, Eclipse Award winning freelance racing writer
Photos by Coady Photography

SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; – July 9, 2018 – Trainer Dale Romans long has said that King Zachary is as good as any 3-year-old in his large Churchill Downs-based stable.

Owner Tom Conway has been talking up his homebred son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin long before King Zachary ever ran.

Now King Zachary takes another step toward backing up their beliefs when the strapping chestnut runs in Saturday night's \$500,000 Indiana Derby at Indiana Grand, where he'll likely be one of the favorites after taking Churchill Downs' Grade 3, \$100,000 Matt Winn in his last start.

"Tom and I talked about it (Sunday) night," Romans said Monday. "It just made a lot of sense. A half-million dollars is a lot of money, and the timing is good to try to make the Travers at Saratoga with him. This is a really good horse. You know the (handicapping) number he ran in the Matt Winn is the same thing that (Triple Crown winner) Justify has been running."

Especially being a longtime Louisvillian, the 80-year-old Conway was very much hoping to run King Zachary at his hometown track the first Saturday in May. He did, just not in the Kentucky Derby, with King Zachary winning of an entry-level allowance that went off as the 13th race.

"He got some 'shins' at a bad time last year and had a few little issues that kept him from getting into the Derby," Romans said. "But he's ready to run now."



Conway bred King Zachary in partnership with a lifelong friend, buying the colt outright for a bid of \$550,000 at the Keeneland yearling sale, albeit having to put up only half that.

"I've liked him since he was a baby," said Conway, who is an attorney. "You know how sometimes a horse stands and its ears are up; and they've got a wandering eye, they're looking around to see who's watching them? Taking everything in. This horse has presence. I think he's a classy individual."

King Zachary started his career with a pair of thirds before winning March 18 at Gulfstream Park. But Conway says it was the second start, when King Zachary was a late-running third, that convinced jockey Robby Albarado that the colt was the real deal.

"A horse came out of the 6 hole and ran over him in the 1 hole, and then stopped right in front on him," Conway said. "He was coming up off his knees and lost all chance. He got up and got beat a length and a half for all of it. That's when Robby said we had a runner. We brought him back in another maiden special, and he won in the easiest of ways. So that got the old Derby beat going. Sorry to admit I had Derby Fever in the worst way. But I asked too much of him in the Wood Memorial."

King Zachary finished sixth of nine in New York's Grade 2 Wood, beaten 13 1/2 lengths behind victorious Vino Rosso.

"He was making a move about the half-mile pole, got blocked and he just lost interest," Conway said. "He just wasn't ready."

Romans won't go that far, saying, "I don't have any explanation. I didn't care that he was coming off a maiden race. I thought he'd win the Wood and go on to the Derby. But he didn't pick his feet up."

Conway said running two hours from home for \$500,000 rather than shipping early to New York for Saratoga's Jim Dandy was "a no-brainer." The goal remains the prestigious Travers Stakes Aug. 25 at Saratoga.

"Dale's awful high on him, about half as high as I am," Conway said with a laugh during a phone interview. "But we're having fun with him, very fortunate to have a horse of this caliber. I think he'll win some Grade 1 races before he's through. I know he will if he doesn't get hurt. That sound you hear is me pounding my fist on my head. That's how I knock on wood."

Conway frequently names horses after relatives and people he knows, including his 2010 Toyota Blue Grass winner Stately Victor, whom he owned with his son Jack and named for a high school friend of Jack's killed in an auto accident while in law school. King Zachary is named for Conway's 8-year-old grandson as well as a young man he represented as a baby 18 years ago in a medical malpractice lawsuit.

"I thought about naming him Two Zachs, and then I thought I'd just name him King Zachary and tell both he was named after them," Conway said.

The 16th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. Thursday racing will be held July 19 and Sept. 6 at 2:05 p.m. EST.

About Indiana Grand Racing & Casino: Indiana Grand Racing & Casino holds multiple awards from industry publications for customer service, entertainment, gaming and dining. Located in Shelbyville, Ind., Indiana Grand features 2,200 of the latest slots and electronic table games in addition to a one-mile dirt race course and a seven-eighths mile turf course offering live Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing each year. Simulcast wagering is also offered year-round at Winner's Circle Brewpub & OTB located on the casino floor as well as an off-track betting facility located in Clarksville, Ind. For more information, please visit www.IndianaGrand.com.