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**Bourbon Courage upends Kilmister; Strong Poison lethal at Red Mile
By Kimberly French, for Red Mile**

Lexington, KY --- On Sunday (Sept. 4) Bourbon Courage handed Kilmister, the undefeated Peter Haughton Memorial winner, his first loss and Strong Poison collected her third win in sire stakes action in the two \$80,000 Kentucky Championship series fourth round legs for freshman male and female trotters and pacers. The 13-race card also included two \$30,000 fourth round legs of the Kentucky Commonwealth series for 2-year-old female and male trotters and pacers and six \$15,000 fourth round legs of the Kentucky Golden Rod series for freshman female and male trotters and pacers.

The division for 2-year-old male trotters was the last race on the card, but the adage of saving the best rang true here as Bourbon Courage (Trace Tetrick) overhauled leader Excalibur Bi (Andrew McCarthy) to score by a neck in 1:53.1 for Hall of Famer Erv Miller. The complexion of this contest changed before the field of nine left the starting gate as heavy favorite Kilmister (Brian Sears) went off stride. Todd McCarthy placed Point Of Perfect on the lead and they set the first fraction of :29 seconds. Excalibur Bi moved from third position to take the lead before the teletimer flashed :56.4 for the half-mile and led the field through three-quarters in 1:25. Dire Straits (Mathias Melander) had moved into second as Bourbon Courage advanced from seventh, then sixth to place himself in third.

Excalibur Bi proved to be a stubborn foe and it took the length of the stretch for Bourbon Courage to get his nose down on the wire in a new lifetime best. French Wine (Andy Miller) closed from sixth to finish third.

Kilmister, who won the first five starts of his career, was never a factor and came home last.

Bred by Carter Duer, Bourbon Courage (You Know You Do-Luv U All) is a half-sibling to last year's Hambletonian winner Captain Corey, (Googoo Gaagaa, \$1.09 million). He commenced his career with a third-place finish in a \$47,000 Indiana Sire Stakes leg at Harrah's Hoosier Park on July 16 and broke his maiden in the second leg of that series on July 30. The colt was fourth in the second leg of this series on Aug. 8 behind French Wine before returning to the Hoosier State to collect his second victory in a \$68,000 third round leg of the Indiana Sire Stakes on Aug. 17.

Bourbon Courage rewrote the record books in Indiana when he was purchased for \$225,000 by Bowie Racing, D & M Trading II, Anthony Lombardo and Erv Miller Racing Stable at the 2020 Hoosier Classic Yearling Sale. He was the most expensive yearling ever to go through the ring in that state and is from his sire's first crop.

Miller now only trains and no longer owns the colt.

Bourbon Courage now sports a record of 5-3-0-1 and has banked \$119,290.

He paid \$31.18 to win.

Strong Poison (Sears) outlasted Zanatta (A. Miller) to collect her second consecutive victory and third in the Championship series for freshman filly pacers by a nose in 1:51. Trained by Ron Burke, the daughter of Always B Miki-Fiyonce left from post position two and was

second by a head to Zanatta as that rival led the field of five through the first quarter in 29 seconds. Strong Poison assumed command through a half-mile in :56 and continued on the lead through three-quarters in 1:23.4 when Zanatta in second.

It was a battle to the wire as the two fillies dueled down the stretch, but Strong Poison came out on top. Caviart Marcella (A. McCarthy) was along for third.

Bred by Steve Stewart, Charles Nash and Julie Nash, Strong Poison was purchased by Burke Racing Stable, J&T Silva Stables, Knox Services and Beasty LLC for \$50,000 at last year's Lexington Selected Yearling Sale.

The filly improved her record to 7-4-1-0 and she has now amassed \$144,000 in purse money. She has performed admirably in this series as her only loss has been a second-place finish behind Twin B Joe Fresh in the second leg of this series in a 1:48.4 mile.

Strong Poison paid \$2.34 to win as the heavy favorite.

The \$30,000 Commonwealth division for 2-year-old filly pacers was won by Hungry For Love (Sears) and the split for freshman male trotters was won by Espresso (A. Miller)

The three \$15,000 Golden Rod contests for freshman filly trotters were captured by Prideful (A. Miller), Late For Dinner (T. McCarthy) and Caris (A. McCarthy). The three events for 2-year-old male pacers were won by Mohatu As (Tony Hall), Prince Of Honor (T. McCarthy) and Country Dagger (Sears).

Sears had three wins in sire stakes events and T. McCarthy had three wins on the entire card.

Sire stakes action continues Monday (Sept. 5) and Tuesday (Sept. 6) at The Red Mile.

On Monday there will be a \$7,500 guaranteed Pick-4 beginning in race six in conjunction with the U.S. Trotting Association's Strategic Wagering program. The same wager beginning in the same race will also be available on the Tuesday card.

First post is 1 p.m. EDT.

Cutlines:

Photo One: Bourbon Courage defeats Excalibur Bi by a neck in a lifetime best 1:53.1 to improve his record to 5-3-0-1. **Photo credit:** Amanda Stephens

Photo Two: Strong Poison holds off Zanatta by a nose in 1:51 and her record now stands at 7-4-1-0. **Photo credit:** Amanda Stephens

