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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HORSEMEN EYE OPENING DAY OF PRAIRIE MEADOWS THOROUGHBRED SEASON

Leading Owner Danny Caldwell Returns With New #1 Rider, Young Trainer Rushton Tries Iowa

April 18, 2018 – Altoona, IA. As opening day Thursday, April 26 fast approaches, horsemen from around the country are looking forward to the start of the 2018 Thoroughbred season at Prairie Meadows.

FOUR-TIME LEADING OWNER DANNY CALDWELL RETURNS TO DEFEND TITLE

Owner Danny Caldwell doesn't mince his words. "I'm in it to win races, to make money," he said. "I don't like to lose and I'm disappointed that my team and I couldn't win the leading owner title at Oaklawn Park again this season."

So Caldwell returns to Prairie Meadows and seeks a fifth consecutive leading owner crown in Iowa. His streak of four straight titles began in 2014 when he became the first owner in 12 years other than Maggi Moss to record leading owner honors at this track.

"I think we're in good shape to start the Prairie Meadows season," Caldwell commented. "We had some injuries late in the season at Remington Park. Those horses got time off and then worked their way into condition down in Arkansas. They should be ready to win in Iowa."

At Oaklawn Park, Caldwell was chasing his 14th consecutive leading owner title overall, a streak that began at Remington Park in 2013 and included his four Prairie Meadows titles, four more at Oaklawn Park, and five at Remington Park. Caldwell won 17 races this season in Hot Springs, second to M and M Racing (Michael Sisk) with 21 victories.

"We got behind early in Arkansas," noted the affable Caldwell. "I had to go home to Oklahoma when my father died, I was dealing with issues behind the scenes, and we just got going too late."

Caldwell, who was an accomplished softball coach in Oklahoma before turning his fulltime attention to the racing business, decided to make a significant change before the end of the Oaklawn Park season.

"I hired a very hungry young jockey, David Cabrera, to be my first call rider," Caldwell said. "He's had a great meet in his first season at Oaklawn Park, he knows how to win races, and he's done well before at Prairie Meadows."

Cabrera won 92 races and finished second to leading jockey Ramon Vazquez (118 wins) last season at Prairie Meadows. He also gained a reputation as a hard-working, strong, and heady rider.

"I'm excited to have David on our team," Caldwell added. "I watched him closely last season at Prairie Meadows and I saw how well he did throughout the season at Oaklawn Park. He's already won some races for us in Arkansas."

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AGENT JOSE SANTOS, JR. TO HANDLE BOOKS OF DAVID CABRERA, TERRY THOMPSON IN IOWA

Up and coming agent Jose Santos, Jr. will handle business for David Cabrera and veteran Terry Thompson this summer at Prairie Meadows.

The son of Hall of Fame jockey Jose Santos, Sr. shifts his base to Iowa for the first time after working meets in Florida, Kentucky, and Indiana.

The younger Santos –known to family and friends as Joe– has already booked mounts for a number of well-known jockeys including Victor Lebron, Rafael Mojica Jr., Kent Desormeaux, Carlos Marquez, and Didiel Osorio.

“David (Cabrera) and I had been talking about hooking up for the 2018 season at Oaklawn Park and we did,” said Santos. “We started out strongly, David was the first rider to hit 10 wins at the meet, but a couple of three-day suspensions hurt us.”

Santos noted that Cabrera led the standings by eight wins before serving his days, but was seven wins down by the time he got back in the saddle.

“It’s pretty tough to beat Ricardo Santana, Jr. at Oaklawn Park,” Santos noted. “But we gave him a good fight early in the meet and David should be able to hold second in the standings.”

TWO-TIME ARAPAHOE PARK LEADING TRAINER STETSON RUSHTON SETS UP SHOP IN IOWA

Fourth-generation trainer Stetson Rushton from Colorado will stable a string of horses at Prairie Meadows for the first time.

Only 24 years old, Rushton has already notched a pair of leading trainer titles at Arapahoe Park just outside of Denver.

“I’m looking forward to my first season in Iowa,” said the well-spoken young horseman. “I considered Prairie Meadows a couple of years ago, but I was just starting out on my own, we had a quarantine situation in Colorado, and financial concerns forced me to stay at Arapahoe Park.”

Rushton saddled 33 winners from 255 starters at Arapahoe Park in 2016 to win his first career training title, then sent out 28 winners from 239 runners in 2017 and recorded his second straight leading trainer title at the Colorado track.

“Some of my owners have been acquiring better stock in Kentucky and they want to see if they can be successful against the tougher competition at Prairie Meadows,” Rushton commented. “I know what we’ll be up against in Iowa, owners and trainers like Danny Caldwell, Federico Villafranco, Karl Broberg, Robertino Diodoro, and all the rest, but we’re gonna give it our best.”

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Rushton comes from a long line of accomplished Colorado horsemen. He took over his grandfather Temple Rushton's stable in 2016 when the elder Rushton, Arapahoe Park's top trainer in 2015, retired after 33 years on the backside. Shannon Rushton, Stetson's father, is the Executive Director of the Colorado Horse Racing Association.

Stetson Rushton became a star athlete at Holly High School in eastern Colorado, playing football, basketball, and baseball, as well as running track. He attended college for a short time at West Texas A&M and Oklahoma Panhandle State before returning to the race track.

"It was an easy decision," Rushton recalled. "I've always wanted to be a trainer just like my grandpa!"

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About Prairie Meadows

Prairie Meadows began operations as a non-profit organization in 1989 with the goal of promoting economic development, jobs, agriculture, and tourism in the state of Iowa. Through taxes, grants, and charitable donations, Prairie Meadows has given more than \$1.6 billion to the state of Iowa. Prairie Meadows offers more than 1,700 slot machines, table games, live and simulcast racing, hotel accommodations, entertainment, and more.

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